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The Development Planning Unit  
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**COMMUNITY LEARNING INFORMATION AND  
COMMUNICATION  
CASE STUDY**

**KERALA  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY  
ALLEPPY**

Working Paper No. 105

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## PROJECT PROFILE

<b>Name</b>	The Community Development Society
<b>Location</b>	Alleppy (Alappuzha), Kerala
<b>Start date</b>	1993 onwards
<b>Sectors involved</b>	The principal participants in the initiative are poor communities in Alleppy, the Community Development Society in the town, and Alleppy Municipality, with other key stakeholders being UNICEF, NABARD and Costford.
<b>The initiative</b>	The Community Development Society in Kerala is a system of organising women in poor communities to plan for their own development. It operates through a tiered structure of neighbourhood committees, which prepare micro-plans, area development societies, which consolidate these into min-plans, and finally community development societies operating at the municipal level, which integrate these area plans into a municipal level action plan.
<b>CLIC processes</b>	CLIC processes are key to the CDS system, involving as it does various levels of information collection, planning and dissemination. The case study examines how CLIC processes have affected the organisational structure of CDS, the resolution of conflicts, the empowerment of individuals, the identification of needs and proposing of solutions, and accessing of facilities and further information.
<b>Lessons learned</b>	Women's groups have potential to develop a supportive environment in which both formal and informal communication and learning processes can bring about changes such as the empowerment of women and access to better services. The sustainability of the process can be ensured by organising groups around continuing needs such as savings and credit. The fact that the CDS system originates in and is approved by government reduces the potential for conflict and increasing the impact upon municipal policy. The Area Chairperson plays a key strategic role in effectively channelling information. Finally, the mechanisms built into CDS to prioritise problems are important in disaggregating information and allowing users to weigh the information generated by the CDS system.

## SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Government poverty programmes over the last decade

Over the last 20 years, a number of anti-poverty programmes have been implemented in India. One of these, the Urban Basic Services Programme (UBS), was initiated during the Seventh Five Year Plan period and funded by the central and state governments in partnership with UNICEF. This programme later became the Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP) Programme, which in turn was integrated with other Urban Poverty Alleviation programmes to form the Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar (SJSRY) Programme. The SJSRY was launched in December 1995 and reviewed and amended in 1997. It is complemented by the National Slum Development Programme (NSDP), which was launched in 1996.

### 1.2 The CDS system

A key feature of the SJSRY, which it inherits from the UBSP, is its use of the Community Development Society (CDS) system, which aims to organise women in low-income communities to plan for their own development, thus ensuring that poverty-focused programmes reach their intended target groups, without diversion or leakage. The active participation of women in the process is achieved through a three-tiered structure comprising:

- neighbourhood committees, which prepare micro-plans;
- area development societies, which consolidate these micro-plans into a mini-plan; and
- municipal-level community development societies, which integrate these area plans into a municipal-level action plan

This case study focuses on the development of the CDS system in Alleppey, Kerala and the subsequent experience of the system in the town, paying particular attention to the ways in which it provides opportunities for information transfer and community learning.

### 1.3 Focus on the poor

The CDS, like other anti-poverty programmes targets the poor. Income provides a basic measure of poverty, the poverty line for the urban areas of Kerala being set at Rs 327.96 per capita per month (1999 figure). For the purposes of the CDS, the poor are not recognised by this criterion alone. An index based on 9 non-economic indicators is used to identify families at risk. These indicators are:

1. A kutcha house (house made from temporary materials)
2. No access to safe drinking water
3. No access to sanitary latrines
4. An illiterate adult member in the family
5. No more than one earning member in the family
6. Family receiving barely two meals a day or less
7. Children aged 5 or under in the family
8. Family are members of a Schedule Caste or Schedule Tribe
9. An alcoholic or drug addict in the family

Families characterised by four or more of these indicators are considered to be at high risk. Assistance under the CDS programme is prioritised according to the degree to which communities and families are considered to be at risk. When infrastructure and health projects are planned, the locality with the largest number of at risk families is given priority.<sup>1</sup> Within these localities, priority is given to those individuals and families that are most at risk.

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<sup>1</sup> *State Level Guidelines on Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) and the National Slum Development Programme (NSDP)*

## **1.4 Alleppy**

Alleppy is a medium-sized town. At the last census in 1991, it had a population of 177,606, distributed among 32,124 households. The average population density is quite low at around 56 persons per hectare. Politically, the town is divided into 36 wards.

Alleppy has a relatively stable population. According to Municipal officials, CDS functionaries and two local NGOs, there is very little rural to urban migration. Consequently the number of street dwellers is minimal and the itinerant community is small. There are also no large colonies in the town. The colonies that exist are small in size and most have been established for some time. This situation is very different from that in Kerala's larger cities, particularly Trivandrum and Cochin, which have large 'slum' colonies and significant numbers of street dwellers.

## **SECTION 2 - THE CDS SYSTEM IN ALLEPPEY**

### **2.1 Origins and development of the system**

The CDS system originated in Kerala through the convergence of the UBSP, the Community Based Nutrition Programme (CBNP) of UNICEF and the Self Help Group programme provided by the quasi-governmental organisation, the National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). In the early nineties, a community based impact assessment carried out in Alleppy found that the UBSP programme was not reaching the most vulnerable groups. It was neither responding adequately to the needs of women and children nor effectively facilitating the participation of the poor. Following this, thirteen demonstration towns, including Alleppey, were selected to pilot implementation of an improved version of the UBSP programme and the Government of Kerala, with the assistance of UNICEF, developed an approach that became known as the Alleppy (Alappuzha) CDS model.

#### *Piloting the CDS approach*

The approach was piloted in 7 wards in Alleppy. Families in need were identified through the mechanism described in section 1.3. Women from these families were then organised into a total of 88 neighbourhood groups (NHGs), each consisting of no more than 40 women, with an average group size of 25. At ward level, 7 Area Development Societies (ADSs) were formed with 10-15 NHGs under each.

At the apex, the town level CDS was formed and registered as a society under the Charitable Literacy Act. The society started functioning on 6th February 1993.

#### *Expanding the CDS*

The success of the initial CDS initiative led to pressure to extend the programme to the whole municipality. In 1993, once again with the help of UNICEF, the approach was expanded to include a total of 292 NHGs, representing over 10,000 at-risk families, which were brought together to form 24 ADSs. Following this, the approach was replicated in 58 municipalities in Kerala. It now has 36,800 poor women members. The approach has influenced Government of Kerala policy on poverty eradication, and has been adopted, in part, in the recent national revisions to the successor of the UBSP, now known as SJSRY.

### **2.2 The CDS structure as developed in Alleppey**

Each NHG elects one woman, known as the resident community volunteer (RCV), as their leader. Another woman is elected president and three other volunteers are elected to carry out the responsibilities relating to community health, community infrastructure and community income generation. This five member committee is known as the NHG Committee (NHC).

Groups usually meet at the house of one of the NHC, normally the RCV. Some groups meet less regularly and rely on information being passed on by word of mouth. Neighbourhood group meetings are replicated at the area level, usually at the Area Chairperson's house but sometimes in a rented room.

The governing body of an ADS is made up of all committee members of the NHGs that fall

within its area. A governing committee is then elected from among the wider body and includes a Chairperson, Vice President and seven other members as well as a member secretary. The member secretary is a community organiser appointed by the municipality to work with CDS. In Alleppey, there are three community organisers. The governing committee can also co-opt an Anganwadi worker (pre-school teacher), ICDS supervisor, literacy worker and two other suitable persons. These additional members do not have voting rights.

At the town level, the CDS has a general body made up of all the ADS chairpersons and vice chairpersons and community organisers. Their activities are facilitated by a CDS Project Officer, appointed by the municipality, who functions as the member secretary of the CDS. A governing body is elected from the general body, including a president, vice president and several non-executive members. The governing body can also co-opt suitable members but coopted members do not have voting rights.

To develop the linkages with local bodies, advisory committees are formed at both the CDS and ADS level. A Town Co-ordination and Monitoring Committee operates at the municipal level with the Mayor as the chairperson and the municipal secretary as the convenor. At the area level, there is an advisory committee, for which the municipal councillor is the chairperson and the ADS chairwoman is the convenor. In the initial stages of the development of CDS, these committees played a significant role in determining the structure and organisational framework of CDS. Now their main function is to advise on the production of the annual area level and town level action plans.

All the municipal appointed staff in Alleppey, including the project officer and the three community organisers are men. Most of the senior officials in Alleppey are also men.

### **2.3 CDS programmes in Alleppey**

Various developmental programmes have been initiated through the CDS structure. They include :

- management training for elected members of the ADS and CDS;
- training of trainers in the NHGs;
- a micro credit programme, supported by NABARD, which helped inculcate the idea of thrift societies; and
- specific programmes to improve water supply, sanitation, housing and access, generate income and improve health.

### **2.4 CDS funding arrangements**

The largest share of CDS finances comes from the centrally allocated budget through the SJSRY and the NSDP. The GoI provides seventy-five per cent of the budget for these programmes and the state government provides the remaining twenty-five per cent.

Individual municipalities supplement SJSRY/NSDP resources by earmarking 2% of municipal revenues to the Urban Poverty Alleviation (UPA) fund, as required by statutory provisions. Municipalities can give more than the mandatory 2% from their own budget, though this is very unusual. The more common practice is to use the CDS system as a conduit for funds from other programmes, as described in the next sub-section

In addition NABARD coordinates efforts to attract funds from banks and other financial institutions and participating communities make small contributions in kind, cash or labour.

### **2.5 Impacts of CDS**

Through the NHGs, women's awareness of their vulnerability and the possibilities for reducing it have been enhanced. This has led to some reduction in dependence on money lenders and the creation of employment through various income generation schemes.

As the CDS has gained recognition in Alleppey for its apolitical approach to community upgrading, the municipality has increasingly used it as a vehicle for implementing a wider

portfolio of programmes. As a result, a substantial list of activities that have traditionally been the responsibility of the health, education and engineering departments of the local municipality now fall under the umbrella of the CDS. The CDS thus provides a mechanism for the convergence of various government programmes, at the same time reducing delays and leakages through the hands-on involvement of 'beneficiaries' in the schemes implemented through these programmes.

NABARD has also extended the idea of NHGs and ADSs to other families outside the high risk category, working through what it calls Self Help Groups (SHGs). These SHGs work primarily as thrift societies and, like NHGs, they play an important role in empowering local women and reducing vulnerability.

## **2.6 The Future of CDS**

In the CDS plan put forward for the financial year 1999 -2000, there is a request for a new survey to be conducted. It is thought that the programme has benefited some families sufficiently for them to move out of the high risk category. Conversely, there is an awareness that certain families that should have been included after the 1993 survey, were excluded from the CDS net. However, Alleppey's low rate of rural to urban migration means that development patterns are fairly stable so that there has been little need to change the number of NHGs or the arrangements for ADSs.

The success of CDS has led to increasing pressure, particularly from municipal councillors, for it to be integrated in to the existing political system. There are fears that this will dilute its current focus on those who are most at risk. For this reason, CDS and key secondary stakeholders like Costford and NABARD are keen that the CDS should maintain its independence.

The next stage of the programme will be influenced by CDS's relationship to the Kerala Peoples Planning Campaign (KPPC), particularly as there has been some cross-over between programmes implemented through the KPPC and CDS. It is expected that, in essence, the CDS will remain in its current form. However, discussion is ongoing as to whether it should be linked more formally with the KPPC. State UPA cell officials in Trivandrum stated that the CDS will become one of the sub-systems of the People's Planning Campaign, focusing particularly on women's empowerment, housing and providing for basic needs. However, they expected it to retain its independence and not become subordinate to the planning process as a whole. (For a more detailed analysis of the KPPC see *Case Study Two - The Peoples Planning Campaign, Kerala*). At the moment the KPPC initiative does not extend below ward level. There is, however, significant support for moves to extend it down to the neighbourhood level and this would have a direct impact on NHGs.

Several municipal councillors expressed dissatisfaction with the independent nature of CDS and felt that they needed to have more control over the process if they were going to learn from the initiatives developed through CDS.

## **SECTION 3 - INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND LEARNING PROCESSES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

From the outset, information, communication and learning processes were vital to the success and development of the CDS approach. Local stakeholders needed information on the organisational structures that underpin the approach. They also had to learn how to resolve conflicts, ensure that all NHG members were empowered, reduce vulnerability, prioritise needs, solve problems and gain access to further information where necessary. This section looks at the various ways in which information, communication and learning processes are incorporated into the CDS process or facilitated by it.

The focus of the CLICs research is on services and infrastructure. However, information from other sectors will be considered as appropriate, bearing in mind the fact that the vitality of the CDS derives from its multi-sectoral approach.

### **3.2 Savings and credit - the basis for continued group activity**

The savings and credit component provides a reason for NHGs to meet regularly, and thus establishes a framework for learning. The process adopted for the component is incremental, starting by developing an awareness of the benefits of savings and then progressing to the provision of first small and later larger loans. This ensures that individual beneficiaries can move at their own pace in determining their own savings and credit needs. The focus on groups rather than individuals encourages stakeholders to use a joint problem solving approach when addressing community needs.

The early focus on savings and micro credit helped to ensure that men tolerated the programme in its initial stages. This gave sufficient space for the NHGs to operate, allowing effective learning to take across the other project components over the medium to long term.

NABARD<sup>2</sup> was instrumental in establishing thrift societies and later in initiating a programme to provide credit for income generation. To support these activities, it conducted a large number of training programmes for group leaders and associated officials. These focused on group dynamics, prioritisation and decision making, basic accounts maintenance, and thrift collection and loaning. Simple accounting modules were developed particularly for this purpose, so that management of records and accounts could be carried out at the various levels of the CDS system. Though the use of lectures is still common, NABARD is currently developing a more participative methodology.

### **3.3 Communication and information needs**

#### *3.3.1 Initial needs*

The CDS idea did not emerge from the community itself but was introduced by government and this meant that community members were initially unclear about the purpose of the programme. This created a need for information about the functions of the CDS itself, the way in which it was intended to work, the benefits that might be expected from it and what might be expected of NHG members. Clarification on wider issues was also required, in particular on when and how men could be involved.

In the initial stages of CDS, individuals wanted to know how CDS allocations for services and infrastructure provision, particularly housing, were made. In particular, NHG members were keen to understand the prioritisation system for the allocation of housing. (This system is intended to ensure that priority is given to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable families).

The government needed to know what communities wanted so that the UPA budget could be allocated accordingly. NHG and area level mini plans were used as a mechanism for defining

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<sup>2</sup> National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

community needs and were finally combined into a single municipal level action plan. To ensure that the resources were allocated to those most in need, a prioritisation system was developed, based on the nine point risk index already referred to in the Section 1. If the prioritisation process was to work, it was important for the CDS stakeholders themselves, particularly the RCVs and the Area Chairpersons, to be aware of how the system worked.

### *3.3.2 Needs at the local level*

As the programme developed, the primary concern of community members shifted to the ways in which they could benefit from the system. For instance, in relation to housing, they required information on the extent to which the use of low-cost building materials might compromise the sustainability of the structure. They also needed to know what they were expected to contribute to the building process. In some cases, there was a need to explain particular aspects of a technology, particularly when these differed from those with which people were already familiar. For example, it was necessary to explain why a twin pit latrine WC should be located within or adjacent to the dwelling structure when the previous practice was to locate latrines so that they could discharge directly to a public waterway

### *3.3.3 The needs of ADSs and NHGs*

ADSs and NHGs have their own information needs, which are usually channelled through the Area Chairpersons and Resident Community Volunteers (RCVs). These include information on the operation of the CDS system, methods for assessing and responding to the needs of the urban poor, key CDS functions such as the maintenance of the thrift societies and the services and infrastructure that can be provided through the CDS process. NHG committee members referred to some of these subjects. Some of the needs of Area Chairpersons related to management tasks, for instance how to conduct a meeting and how to develop general leadership skills. Others related to coordination and communication, for instance how to speak in public, how to access municipal departments and what role should be played by wards in the KPPC. Others again related to information, how to gather and disseminate it, how to empower women more effectively and how to gain a greater understanding of planning issues.

### *3.3.4 Information needs at the municipal level*

The CDS organising committee must receive information on prioritised needs at the local level in good time so that these can be incorporated into the annual CDS development plan, upon which their budget is based. The intention is that the ADS and RCVs will be used to gather much of the information required for the survey for the financial year (1999/2000). This will require further training of the Area Chairpersons and RCVs to ensure that they have the necessary skills to carry out this process.

In the initial stages of CDS, elected representatives and municipal officials needed to know about the CDS process and the needs of the urban poor. As the organisation took shape, the information needs of the municipality shifted and focused more on individual CDS projects. Councillors sought information on activities in their own wards, at least partly in the hope of using any positive local impact to their own political advantage.

Municipal project officers who are responsible for implementing CDS initiatives need to know something of what communities can bring to the process. They often need to take a wider view than other stakeholders. For instance, they need to know how local water supply improvements can be linked to the overall city water supply. They also need to know how CDS initiatives link with current and longer-term service plans.

Finally, with the implementation of the Kerala People's Planning Campaign and the development of ward level planning, there has been an increased need to share information between different stakeholders. An example at the municipal level is the need for communication between CDS and the municipal council. At a more local level, the Area Chairperson needs to share information with the municipal representatives at the ward level.

### *3.3.5 The development of a more integrated and strategic approach*

As information in areas such as health and microcredit grew, NHGs began to look at their developmental needs in a more integrated manner. For instance, health education led to increased awareness of the importance of good hygiene and environmental sanitation and increased demand for safe drinking water and sanitary latrines, which are probably the greatest concerns of CDS members.

CDS's integrated approach allows NHGs to think more strategically about their needs. For instance, two focus groups said that in the first year of the programme they had prioritised house repairs as their main concern. In the second year the increased understanding of the negative health effects of flooding, low lying and contaminated water engendered through the CDS process led them to prioritise drainage. They had also realised that flooding was constraining income generation activities such as the raising of fowl and small animals for several months of the year.

### **3.4 The Transfer and Delivery Process.**

#### *3.4.1 The development of information flows within CDS*

Initially, information transfers were mainly vertical in nature, from the 'centre' to NHGs via the formal support structures. The next stage was also vertical as NHGs transferred information to the CDS so that the first action plan could be drawn up. The role of Area Chairpersons was limited, partly by their limited capacity. This pattern continued as the programme expanded from the initial seven wards up to a total of thirty-six wards divided into twenty-four CDS area groups.

Horizontal flows of information between different individuals and groups did start to occur over time. However, despite an early focus on providing appropriate training for relevant municipal officials, these horizontal information flows have remained weak.

#### *3.4.2 Information flows in the services and infrastructure component*

The flow of infrastructure-related information is fairly straightforward at the initial planning stage. Specific interventions are requested through micro-planning and CDS channels are used to prioritise activities and decide their timing. At the implementation stage, information flows become more complex. The need for skills that are not available within the community is greater for infrastructure than for either savings and credit or health. Initially, implementation took place in a rigid top-down manner with the only role of the community being to provide cheap labour. As the CDS system has developed, there has been some increase in the municipality's awareness of CDS capacity to assess the needs of the community. Nevertheless, focus groups suggested that communication flows for infrastructure provision, which is the responsibility of the municipality, tend to be linear and vertical. Plans are submitted through the CDS mechanism and implemented through municipal project officers. Most municipal officials continue to believe that it is professionally inappropriate to allow communities too much in the way of self-determination. Conversely, while NHGs see the CDS micro-planning process as effective, they are unhappy about the slow response time of municipal authorities.

Some change may be about to take place with the introduction of the Kerala People's Planning Campaign (KPPC). There is some expectation that the KPPC will help to strengthen horizontal ties at the ward level, enhancing the role of NHGs and, in particular, that of the Area Chairpersons.

#### *3.4.3 The role of third parties*

Third parties, in particular the NGO Costford, have been involved in building activities, leading to a need for three-way communication between community members, the municipality and the NGO. Costford tries to present information about buildings and building processes in a form that is understandable to the local community. It uses appropriate visuals and photographs wherever possible instead of relying on conventional architectural drawings. People are encouraged to visit neighbouring sites to look at existing structures and discuss

issues with the people living in them. Costford is also producing a series of simple guides to making and repairing low-cost structures. . An important aspect of the Costford approach is its linking of training to ongoing work. Training is designed to help professionals to see for themselves the priorities and actual needs of poorer communities. At the same time, Costford tries to ensure that the community looks to the future, for instance by encouraging community members to collect a small amount each week to provide for the eventual desludging of latrines.

#### *3.4.4 The role of local groups in the transfer and dissemination process*

The thrift societies established under the savings and credit component of the programme provide a reason for NHGs to meet regularly, thus ensuring their continued existence and providing a mechanism for the transfer and dissemination of information and skills. These meetings provide an opportunity for CDS-related issues other than savings and credit to be raised and discussed. For many women, these group meetings provided a first opportunity to meet and discuss issues, such as women's health, that were important to them. The end result has been increased confidence among community members, which translates into an increased ability to engage with other stakeholders to exchange and dissect information.

The focus group discussions revealed that men tend to be more involved in services and infrastructure initiatives than in other programme components. There were significant differences of opinion between NHGs on the role of men in CDS-initiated programmes. Most believed that men should be involved at appropriate times, particularly during implementation, but that women should choose when and how they should be involved. However, a few NHGs felt that they were making decisions on behalf of the whole community and would be more representative if men were included

#### *3.4.5 The role of the Area Chairpersons and Neighbourhood Group Committees*

The Area Chairperson and, to a lesser extent, the RCV play a critical role in determining information flows. The former provides the interface between a range of secondary stakeholders and the NHGs. Various organisations have provided formal training to Area Chairpersons and RCVs. These include the CDS Organising Committee, government training institutions, including the Institute for Management in Government, the Kerala Institute for Local Administration, the Loyola Institute Sociology Department and NABARD, and municipal departments such as the Engineering Section and the Health Section. UNICEF has provided more comprehensive training, which focused on confidence-building and strengthening leadership skills. Training has been mainly lecture-based but time has been allowed for discussion. The amount of training provided has decreased significantly over the years. All Area Chairpersons and RCVs thought that the training was beneficial and that the methodology adopted was appropriate.

Informal learning also takes place on a person to person basis when Area Chairpersons come together at meetings and less formal gatherings. The fact that women can be re-elected to their positions for a second two year term, allows them time to gain experience and pass it on to less experienced colleagues. Personality clashes can inhibit the flow of information but interviewees did not see these as a big problem.

#### *3.4.6 The role of the municipality in the transfer and dissemination process*

The role of the municipality has generally been to provide 'technical' inputs in response to the priorities identified through the CDS process. Municipalities in India are commonly criticised because they are poor at promoting and developing effective communication and learning processes. Their weakness in this area can be explained partly by the traditional hierarchical government structure, which encourages vertical flows of a top down nature and does not provide strong and effective information feedback channels.

A related problem is the compartmentalisation of municipal government. Networks for the transfer of information are weak and coordination between departments is poor. Delegation of responsibilities for coordinating the CDS system to a separate CDS organisation worked reasonably well when the number of tasks to be coordinated was limited. However, problems arose as the scope of CDS activities grew and the organisational capacity of the CDS system is now stretched to its limits. Focus group discussions highlighted the fact that many

community members are not sure which part of the municipality is responsible for which intervention and suggested the need for a single, more accessible, interface.

Despite these limitations, involvement with the CDS has led at least some municipal officers to develop an increased awareness of community. Information has been channelled through the CDS programme officer to the municipal council and down to the project officers. Where horizontal information flows have occurred, this has been on an individual project by project basis, taking place informally and with a strong dependence on the participation of interested individuals and groups. More formal arrangements for communication, including efforts to link communities into the technical planning and implementation stages, will be required if a more substantial impact is to be made. This may involve joint workshops and seminars with women from CDS and municipal project officers working on issues together, involvement of NHGs and Area Chairpersons in the action planning process and even perhaps relocating some offices or improving technology so that communication is physically easier. With the implementation of the People's Planning Campaign many of these initiatives are gradually being explored. One of the key aims of the Campaign is to ensure that these local level flows can be enhanced and established in a more formalised way.

#### *3.4.7 Strengths and weaknesses in the transfer and dissemination process*

The major strengths of the CDS programme include the following.

1. It facilitates information exchange and allows for a more focused use of resources. This enables municipal officers and secondary stakeholders such as Costford to assess the transfer and dissemination mechanisms required.
2. It encourages integrated development since its activities are not restricted to one sector. This, in turn, should lead to intersectoral and interdepartmental cooperation.
3. The regular contact provided through the savings and credit component establishes a solid foundation which ensures that effective transfer of information can take place across the whole spectrum of CDS activities, including services and infrastructure.
4. Its structure allows a 'cascade' approach to training through which a few key individuals are initially trained and then made responsible for ensuring that the information is subsequently transferred and disseminated throughout the organisation, thus reducing the training burden on the municipality. (See KPPC case study for further discussion of this mechanism).

Paradoxically, some of these strengths are also weaknesses. Weaknesses include the following.

1. Women in the NHG are often quite willing to delegate responsibility communication requirements to the RCV and Area Chairpersons, weakening their sense of ownership of information and decreasing their ability to participate fully in the learning process.
2. As a result, the capacity the organisation to grow is limited by the capability of the Area Chairperson and the RCV. If the Area Chairperson, and to a lesser extent the RCV, is weak or unsuitable, she can have a significant negative impact on the overall transfer and dissemination process.
3. CDS is reliant on third parties for training inputs and has little influence over the training process. To overcome this weakness, CDS might take a more hands-on approach to training but this would mean employing someone in a training role within the organisation.
4. The multi-sectoral nature of CDS creates a need for training spread across a variety of fields. This stretches available resources and means that specific training needs are not always met.

Costford personnel believe that there is a lack of transparency at the apex of the CDS system. They believe that the CDS is tied too closely to the municipal structure at the top level and would like it to be more organisationally independent so that there is more scope for it to develop in accordance with the real needs of the local communities.

The Kerala People's Planning Campaign represents both threats and opportunities. One threat is that it will take a dominant role vis- a-vis the CDS, reducing the scope for women to play an active role in determining the development needs of the community. It might also over-politicise the CDS, as local municipal councillors attempt to play a stronger role in the

deciding and implementing of programmes.. At the same time, a successfully managed KPPC will decentralise government power, strengthening horizontal links, enhancing the communication functions of the CDS and further developing the capacity of Area Chairperson to link directly into municipal structures.

### **3.5 Learning**

#### *3.5.1 Balance between infrastructure implementation and learning*

The services and infrastructure component of CDS focuses on implementation, paying less attention to the need for improvements in communication and knowledge transfer. Some NHGs feel that they lack the skills to be involved in the implementation of infrastructure schemes and that the work should be left to the council. However, the overall perception is that the more community participation is encouraged, the more sustainable the overall development impact will be. A number of NHGs feel that greater efforts could be made to use the processes of house and latrine construction to train local people in skills that they could subsequently use for the benefit of themselves and their local communities.

In the case of housing, Costford use local labour to provide a voluntary basic manual contribution that can help to offset the cost of paid labour. This allows a more substantial structure to be provided for the set basic price. They believe that training people at the time of building the house would be a rather ad hoc process, which would add to the cost unnecessarily, and would prefer that a more formalised approach to training is incorporated into future building programmes. One possible model is provided by the way in Costford employs those who are being trained as masons under the CDS training schemes in the construction of CDS-initiated construction programmes.

#### *3.5.2 How Area Chairpersons and NHG Committees contribute to the learning process*

As with transfer and dissemination of information, the Area Chairperson plays a pivotal role in the case of learning. There is a need to improve their leadership skills, and also to train them to be trainers. More effort is needed to provide materials that could assist them in this regard. This is particularly true in the case of health education where CDS is being used more widely as a channel for the dissemination of information.

The danger of communication gaps is bound to be present in such a tiered system. Interviewees felt that, while the existence of the Area Chairperson and the RCV helped to reduce this gap, there was scope for further improvement.

#### *3.5.3 Institutional learning*

Changes in attitude have been confined to individuals and there are still no effective mechanisms for learning and change within the administrative structure itself. While most officials have undergone some kind of training related to poverty alleviation, this has generally been limited to one or at the most two courses, run by the various government training institutes. Municipal councillors often fail to attend training sessions to which they are invited. Reasons given for this include time constraints and the fact that councillors do not see the need for training. Very little joint training takes place with both CDS members and municipal staff, so opportunities for joint consideration of issues and concerns are limited. The underlying problem appears to be that human resource development is not seen as particularly important.

Poverty alleviation has normally been considered as a sub issue within training that focuses primarily on either management development or the introduction of national and state level programmes. A few project officers had also attended training on gender issues, courses included *women's empowerment and institutional alternatives* and *gender in development*. Nearly all training sessions have taken the form of lectures, with some discussion around issues raised by participants. Some were held in Alleppey itself, others were in Trivandrum or Cochin. There is no field based application of the training and no focus on developing problem solving skills or enhancing management skills.

At the start of the process, few municipal officers believed that women should be involved with the provision of services and infrastructure. As time has passed, there has been an

increasing recognition that women can and should be involved in this sector although some municipal officers still hold strong views on the lack of capacity in poorer communities.

The existence of CDS reduces the incentive for government officials to develop the skills that are necessary to interact directly with low-income communities.

In general, the municipality is not a learning organisation. Any monitoring and evaluation that does take place is output orientated and there is little formal assessment of process.

Some of these issues are being addressed through the People's Planning Campaign. Since the campaign began two years ago, a process of institutional learning has taken place. For the municipality, the fact that it has been so fast and all encompassing, means that most of the institutional learning that has taken place has related specifically to the Campaign itself. There has been very little time for reflection on wider institutional implications, including those for the CDS.

#### 3.4.4 *Women's learning*

The acquisition of knowledge has given women the confidence to contribute to the learning cycle in areas, such as infrastructure provision, that have been traditionally dominated by men. When CDS began, women would usually defer to men on infrastructure issues but they now have more confidence in their ability to manage the whole process of infrastructure provision.

This increased confidence has led to a desire to learn about some of the more practical aspects of infrastructure provision. The most obvious example has been the recent promotion of a CDS programme to train women masons. This has created interest in receiving training in more complicated male-dominated skills such as carpentry. Recently, there have been requests through the planning process for women to be trained as auto-rickshaw drivers

Focus group participants suggested that women were concerned almost solely with their immediate needs prior to the CDS. As CDS has developed, women were able to focus on needs arising from the analysis of women's subordination to men. These could be described as strategic gender needs<sup>3</sup>. They include, among others, the abolition of the sexual division of labour, the removal of institutional forms of discrimination, such as the right to access credit and the adoption of adequate measures to counter male violence and control over women.

Some women believe that there has been an increase in domestic violence as a direct result of the empowerment of women brought about through CDS. This problem does not appear to have been addressed in any formal sense. However, women do feel that the existence of the NHGs, while potentially increasing the risk of domestic violence, has also played a role in preventing it - through direct community pressure on violent men following discussion of the problem in meetings. Other, typically younger, men from the community helped women to exert this pressure.

Interviewees also felt that informal support networks also offer opportunities to share information of a more general nature, for instance that relating to women's health, the education and welfare of children and the role of cultural programmes in enhancing community spirit. This has led to the recent formation of a youth CDS in February 1999. There did appear, at least superficially, to be a correlation, between the regularity with which a group met and the success of a particular NHG. This may be as much to do with either social conditions or the leadership qualities of the RCV/ADS as the regularity of the meetings.

#### 3.5.5 *The danger of mixed messages*

There are some discrepancies between the ground rules for funding established by CDS and the KPPC. For instance, CDS assumes that the minimum cost of a housing unit is Rs20,000 as against the Rs35,000 assumed by KPPC. This has resulted in discussion at the neighbourhood level about whether it is better to wait and try your luck through the People's Planning Campaign or to take a house through CDS. It also means that people are more

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<sup>3</sup> This idea of strategic gender needs is one that was developed by Caroline Moser among others in the 1980's.

sceptical that a sustainable house can be built for 20,000 Rupees, thus undermining work that is being done by Costford and CDS to convince people of this.

### 3.5.6 CDS Alleppey as a model for development

The impact of CDS in Alleppey extends beyond the local level in that, as a successful model, it has attracted considerable national and international attention. The danger with this is one of complacency since the development of a successful model does not necessarily lead to continued experimentation and innovation. In fact, according to state level UPA officials more innovative programmes are now being developed elsewhere.

## SECTION 4 LESSONS LEARNT

### 4.1 The integrated nature of CDS

One of the strengths of CDS is that it provides an effective framework, within which the different stakeholders can develop their ability to apply what they have learnt. Its integrated framework provides a mechanism for the information gained and skills developed in one area to be used in another area. For instance, improvements in physical services have sometimes been prioritised as a direct result of knowledge gained through the health components of the programme. (An example has already been provided, that of NHGs prioritising drainage improvements after learning more about the health impacts of poor drainage). The CDS experience suggests a model for services development in which integrated groups at the local level interact with sectoral departments and agencies at the municipal and state levels.

### 4.2 The importance of women only groups

The women's groups provided a supportive atmosphere, which facilitated the communication and learning processes. This not only improved formal communication channels but also enhanced informal ones. It led to indirect benefits such as improved social conditions for children, better social cohesion and a greater understanding of general issues affecting women in the community. In mixed groups it is more likely that women will be marginalised, with key decisions made by the men.

Women-only groups have also provided the space required for women to start to address their strategic gender needs. They may also provide benefits in relation to the KPPC. Women who have been involved in CDS groups feel much more confident about being involved in the decision making and implementing process of the KPPC as it relates to the community as a whole, while also being able to play an active part in the promotion of gender related issues.

Another potential benefit relates to the role of women in the planning process. KPPC organisers are aware that women have not been as involved in planning as they would have hoped, with the percentage of women present at ward committee meetings being as low as 5-10%. At the same time they are aware that women's involvement has usually been better in areas where CDS is strong. Area Chairpersons have gained skills and confidence through CDS and have been able to have a greater impact on the planning process than would have been the case without CDS. This is important in that it reduces the marginalisation of both women and poorer communities in the wider planning process. In Alleppey, at least three of the current municipal councillors were previously Area Chairpersons. They feel that their role in CDS acted as a stepping stone to a more political role in the community and gave them the insight and confidence to acquire the skills that are necessary to make a successful councillor.

### 4.3 The advantages of being located within government

The CDS experience highlights the advantages of being a government approved organisation, located under the general municipal umbrella. In particular:

- Its place within the municipal system enables it to be used to bring about convergence of various programmes. This allows a more focused use of municipal resources than was previously possible and enables the community to draw on municipal skills more readily.

- The fact that CDS has legislative support allows it to be used as a vehicle for wider government-led initiatives particularly in the health sector and for projects that are implemented under the People's Planning Campaign.
- It facilitates formal links between civil society and government, for instance through the statutory requirements that each Area Chairperson is a member of the Ward Committee and that the CDS Project Officer be regularly invited to attend and participate at municipal council meetings.
- Formal recognition of the CDS allows widespread replication and, in theory at least, a more direct transfer of ideas into the relevant educational institutions for wider dissemination.

One caveat should be added here. While CDS funds are separate from the general city budget, it still suffers institutional delays in the transfer of funds and incorrect budget forecasts.

#### **4.4 The importance of the Area Chairperson**

The Area Chairperson and to a lesser extent the RCVs play a critical role in determining, channelling and directing information, providing the main interface between NHGs and a range of secondary stakeholders as well as between the NHGs themselves. The ability of the poor to communicate their needs and to participate actively in formal learning processes is constrained or promoted by the skills of the Area Chairperson. There are two broad implications for the future:

1. As the use of CDS as a delivery mechanism for a wider array of municipal services grows, there is a corresponding need to develop the capacity of Area Chairpersons
2. Similarly, there is a need to develop the capacity of Area Chairpersons in order that they can effectively represent the interests of the poorer sectors of society in the decentralisation process being undertaken through the People's Planning Campaign. This will require increases in their knowledge base, their power base within the wider society, and their individual negotiation and leadership skills.

#### **4.5 The need for local organisations to have a cornerstone function**

The savings and credit aspect of the programme provides a rationale for NHGs to meet regularly and this is important for the sustainability of the whole CDS approach. Without regular meetings, it would not be possible to use the NHGs as the vehicle for the exchange of information. This in turn provides a basis for the involvement of NHGs in prioritising needs, developing micro-plans and resolving intra-group conflicts. In terms of CLICS it allows the incremental development of ideas and knowledge exchange. These, in turn, reinforce ongoing learning and promote a problem-solving approach to development.

#### **4.6 The importance of the prioritisation mechanism**

The prioritisation mechanism helps to disaggregate the information needs of each community, allowing its members to work together to assess the relative importance of different proposals. Prioritising also helps the community to rationalise the information that they have, thus allowing a more strategic response to their needs. It also helps to structure information in a way that can be communicated back to the municipality in a form that facilitates the municipality's response and encourages mutual learning.

## **SECTION 5 - OPTIONS**

CDS and the municipality suggested the following options for building on the existing CLICs mechanisms and removing blockages.

1. **Action to reduce the communication gap between CDS and the NHGs.** A previous attempt to solve this problem by providing bicycles to Area Chairwomen had had limited success. There were problems with repairs and few women were willing to hand over the bicycle at the end of their term of office. An added problem was that the extended wet

season in Alleppey made it difficult for Area Chairpersons to get from area to area because of the flooding. Phones could be installed in the houses of Area Chairwomen but this would be expensive. Again there would be the problem of what happened to the phone once a person's term of office had been completed. Interviewees favoured the establishment of community notice boards, accompanied by the establishment of independent Area offices. A bi-weekly or monthly newsletter and the employing of a second office messenger. All of these are conditional on funds being allocated in the budget.

2. **Additional training for Area Chairpersons and, to a lesser extent, RCVs.** All Area Chairpersons and some NHGs identified the need for additional training. They noted the need to develop skills in leadership, management and training of trainers. They also suggested the need to increase the ability of area level committees to plan, with a particular focus on the development of action planning techniques Training should be more practically orientated and joint sessions with CDS members and municipal officials should be considered where appropriate.
3. **Developing the training capacity of CDS.** This was suggested by two Area Chairpersons They felt that more use could be made of the training centre to develop learning and training techniques with more relevance to the needs of the poor. The training specialist should also develop materials and assess the options offered by external training providers, particularly those relating to the skills necessary to promote income generation. The training specialist would have to work closely with existing training institutions in the area.
4. **Developing Alleppey as a training base for other CDS organisations** CDS organisers in Alleppey suggested this, arguing that it would encourage inter-city NHG to NHG transfer. The training function could be linked to the wider capacity building needs of the Kerala People's Planning Campaign.

## **Annex 1**

### **Fieldwork Methodology**

The following diagrams provided the structure for obtaining and documenting the findings of the fieldwork.

Diagram 1: The Fieldwork Process

#### *Flows to and from the Community*

Diagram 2: The Nature and Content of Knowledge, Information and Skills

Diagram 3: The Transfer and Delivery Process.

Diagram 4: The results of the Information Transfer

#### *Flows to and from the Municipality*

Diagram 5: The Nature and Content of Knowledge, Information and Skills

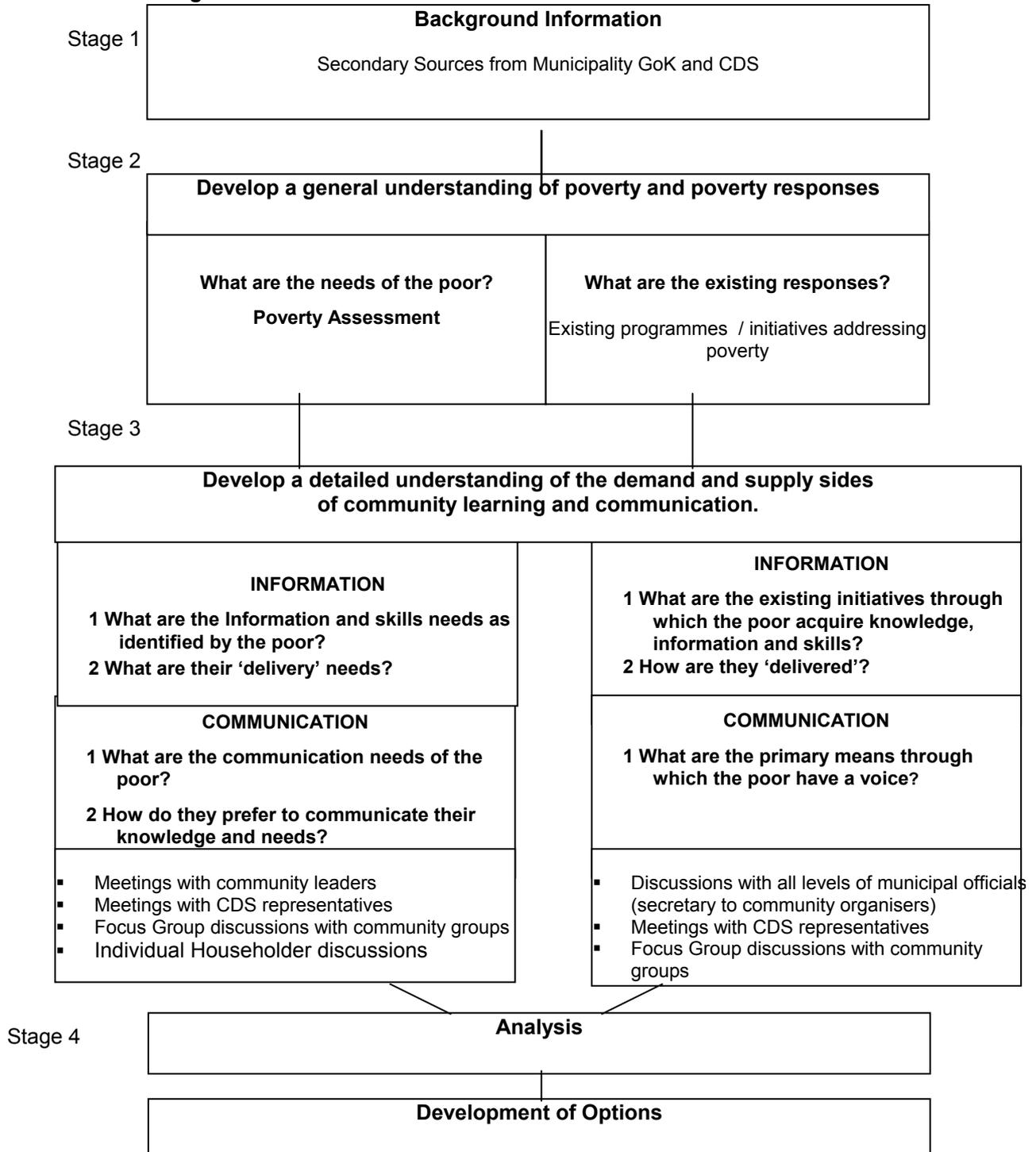
Diagram 6: The Transfer and Delivery Process.

Diagram 7: The results of the Information Transfer

These diagrams are based on a simple analytical process of identifying needs and responses, identifying the gaps between these, identifying the direction and flows of communication and information, the type and nature of these channels, identifying the constraints encountered, and finally considering the impacts.

Knowledge, Learning Information and Communication Processes  
for improving the delivery of housing, services and infrastructure  
**Flows to and from the Community**

**Process Diagram for Fieldwork**

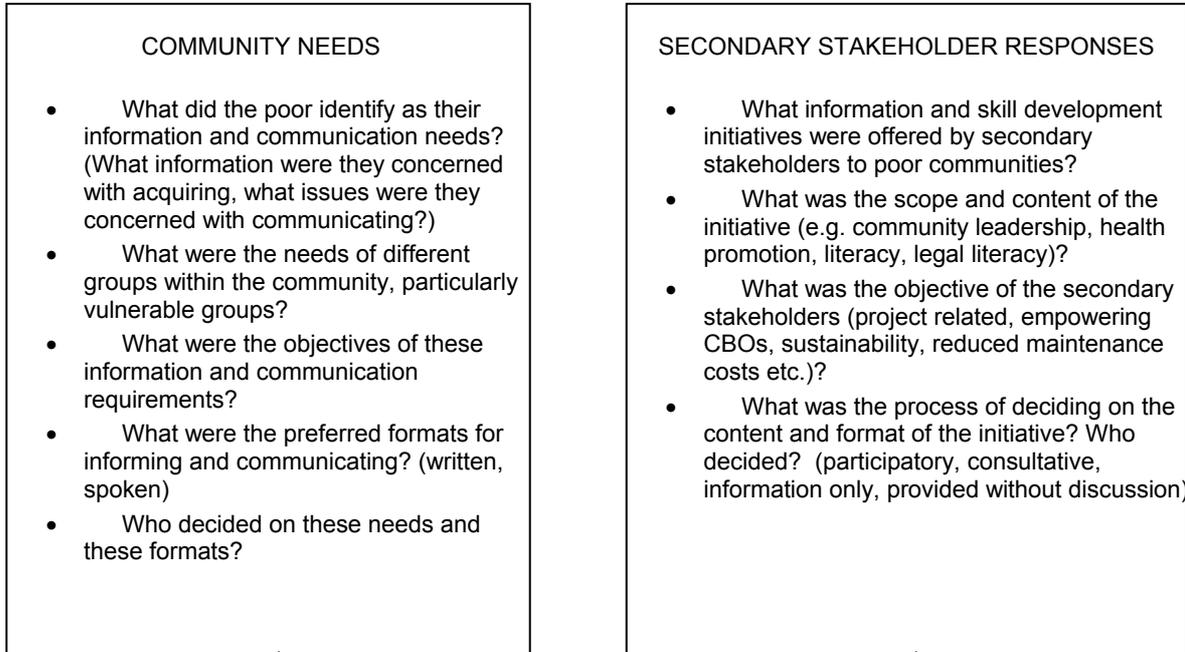


Knowledge, Learning, Information and Communication Processes  
for improving the delivery of housing, services and infrastructure  
**Flows to and from the Community**

**2.**

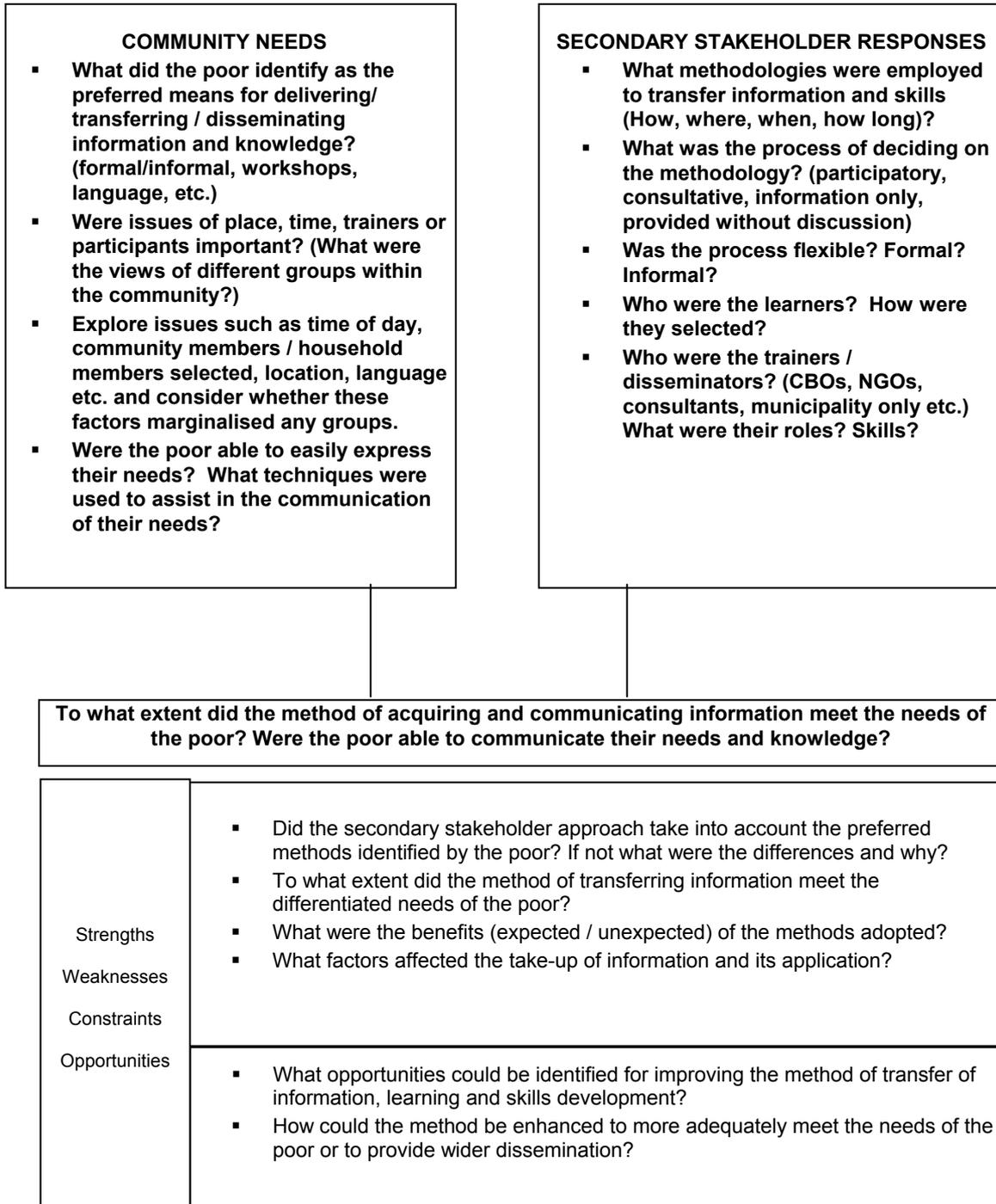
**What?**

**Describe the Nature and Content of the Knowledge, Information and Skills.**



<b>Were the poor able to acquire the information they needed? Were the poor able to communicate their needs and knowledge?</b>			
Strengths Weaknesses Constraints Opportunities	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent did the information provided meet the differentiated needs of the different vulnerable groups?</li> <li>▪ What were the gaps in the information provided versus the information needed?</li> <li>▪ What were the benefits (expected / unexpected) of the information provided?</li> <li>▪ What factors affected the degree to which the information meets the needs of the poor and was able to be applied??</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent did the poor communicate their needs and knowledge?</li> <li>▪ What were the primary constraints to communicating effectively?</li> <li>▪ Were all groups represented by this communication and able to state their views?</li> <li>▪ Was this communication effectively received?</li> <li>▪ What factors affected the degree to which the message being communicated was received?</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent did the information provided meet the differentiated needs of the different vulnerable groups?</li> <li>▪ What were the gaps in the information provided versus the information needed?</li> <li>▪ What were the benefits (expected / unexpected) of the information provided?</li> <li>▪ What factors affected the degree to which the information meets the needs of the poor and was able to be applied??</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent did the poor communicate their needs and knowledge?</li> <li>▪ What were the primary constraints to communicating effectively?</li> <li>▪ Were all groups represented by this communication and able to state their views?</li> <li>▪ Was this communication effectively received?</li> <li>▪ What factors affected the degree to which the message being communicated was received?</li> </ul>
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**Who, How, Where, When, By Whom?  
Describe the Transfer and Delivery Process.**



4.

**What was learnt and what was the impact of the learning?**  
**Describe the results of the information and communication flows.**  
**(The absorption of the knowledge, information and skills that are transferred, and the impacts).**



**Learning**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What were the principal lessons learned from the information flows to the community?</li> <li>▪ What were the primary constraints to information being absorbed and assimilated?</li> <li>▪ How was the information received? (Accepted? rejected? By whom? Why?)</li> <li>▪ What factors affected the extent and types of lessons learnt? Content, methods, actors, time, duration and location.</li> <li>▪ Which individuals or groups received the information most effectively? Which were marginalised? Was the information more relevant to all groups?</li> <li>▪ Did learning occur from the delivery process itself.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who received the community's message/ information/ knowledge?</li> <li>▪ Was this communication effectively received? Accepted or rejected?</li> <li>▪ What factors constrained the degree to which the message being communicated was effectively received?</li> <li>▪ Did the method employed promote or constrain effective transfer / Learning? Did the method promote two-way information flows?</li> </ul>

**Use and Impact**

<b>Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent did learners apply knowledge and skills? In what sectors? How, when where did they use their new knowledge and skills?</li> <li>▪ What were the direct impacts of the information / communication on individuals, vulnerable groups and the CBO? What were the impacts of the delivery mechanism?</li> <li>▪ What were the direct impacts of the information / communication on project objectives</li> <li>▪ What were the indirect impacts?</li> <li>▪ Were sustainable information transfer and communication channels established?</li> <li>▪ Have the nature and process of informing / communicating been replicated? What are the constraints to replication? How was the replication achieved?</li> </ul>
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**Options and Lessons Learnt**

Options Lessons Learnt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What options could be identified for improving the information transferred and the methods employed to enhance the impact of the poor's learning?</li> <li>▪ What options can be identified to improve the poor's communication of needs and knowledge? And their access to mechanism to communicate their knowledge?</li> <li>▪ What lessons have been learnt from the overall process and how can these be disseminated? Have they been taken up elsewhere?</li> </ul>
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Knowledge, Learning, Information and Communication Processes  
for improving the delivery of housing, services and infrastructure  
**Flows to and from the Municipality**

5.

**What?**

**Describe the Nature and Content of the Knowledge, Information and Skills**

**MUNICIPAL NEEDS**

- What did the municipality identify as their communication and information needs?
- What were the CLICs needs within the different sectors of the municipality?
- What were the different needs within the municipality heirachy?
- How were these decided upon?
- Did the municipality have wider needs to which the CDS were only partially linked?

**MUNICIPAL RESPONSE**

- What provisions exist within the municipality to ensure that their communication and information needs are met?
- Were these provisions different in the various sectors of the municipality or at different levels?
- What was the process for deciding on the content and format of the initiative? Who decided?
- Did the municipality link it's responses to CDS together with other wider responses?

Knowledge, Learning, Information and Communication Processes  
for improving the delivery of housing, services and infrastructure  
**Flows to and from the Municipality**

6.

**Who, How, Where, When, By Whom?**

**Describe the Transfer and Delivery Process .**

**MUNICIPAL NEEDS**

- What did the municipality identify as their preferred means for delivering/transferring disseminating information and knowledge ?
- Did these vary according to the section involved?
- Describe the information flows that existed within the municipality or were initiated from the within the municipality? Did they help the municipality to transfer information?
- Were these flows formal or informal in nature?
- Did the municipality have to link CDS focused initiatives into a wider framework?

**MUNICIPAL RESPONSE**

- Was the municipal interface adequate to deliver transfer and receive information?
- Who decided how this interface was to be set up? Did it encourage horizontal flows of information? Was it a formal structure or did it operate informally?
- How did the municipality link with other secondary stakeholders to transfer information? Was this compatible? What was the process used to transfer information? Was this flexible?
  - Were municipalities responsive to the needs of the poorer communities?
  - Who were the trainers? What were there roles?

7.

**What was learnt and what was the impact of the institutional learning?  
Describe the results of the information and communication flows.**



**Learning**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the principal lessons learned from the information flows to the municipality?</li> <li>• What were the primary constraints to information being absorbed and assimilated?</li> <li>• How was the information received?</li> <li>• Did municipal staff undergo formal training in poverty alleviation?</li> <li>• Which individuals departments received information most effectively?</li> <li>• Did learning occur from the delivery process itself?</li> <li>• What were the benefits (expected / unexpected) of the information provided?</li> <li>• What factors affected the degree to which the information meets the needs of the poor and was able to be applied?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did change occur as learning developed?</li> <li>• Did the municipality monitor and evaluate which methods of transferring information had been successful?</li> <li>• Did the methods employed promote or constrain effective transfer / learning? Did these methods promote two-way information flows?</li> </ul>

**Use and Impact**

<b>Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent did the municipality apply knowledge and skills it had learnt? In what sectors?</li> <li>• What were the direct impacts of the information / communication on individuals, and different groups in the municipality? What were the impacts of the delivery mechanism?</li> <li>• What were the direct impacts of the information / communication on project objectives</li> <li>• What were the indirect impacts?</li> <li>• Were sustainable information transfer and communication channels established?</li> <li>• Have the nature and process of informing / communicating been replicated? What are the constraints to replication? How was the replication achieved?</li> <li>• What is the potential impact of the People's Planning Campaign on CLICs, from a municipal perspective?</li> </ul>
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**Options and Lessons Learnt**

Options Lessons Learnt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What options could be identified for improving the information transferred and the methods employed to enhance the impact municipal learning ?</li> <li>▪ What options can be identified to improve the municipalities response to the needs of poorer communities?</li> <li>▪ What lessons have been learnt from the overall process and how can these be disseminated?</li> </ul>
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## **Annex 2**

### **Savings, Credit and Income Generation Skills**

#### **Communication and information needs**

It is in the area of savings, credit and income generation where the disaggregated needs of the various communities is the most obvious. Loans that are taken very often represent the specific needs of a given community. The majority of loans by members of the fishing community will be for nets, small makeshift boats, shrimp holding tanks. Muslim women will often take loans which reflect their desire to work from home and the fact that they are a strong trading community, for example, to set up small neighbourhood shops, tricycles for selling vegetables or a sewing machine. Peri-urban communities would normally use the loans for buying poultry or livestock or seeds for backyard gardens.

Initially, small individual loans were taken but as confidence grew on both sides, slightly larger individual loans were requested and approved. Also as confidence has grown within individual groups, in terms of their ability to repay their loans, larger loans have been taken out to set up small group industries or micro-manufacturing units involving up to a dozen local women and in some cases men. Examples include: making/manufacturing of washing powder, converting large bags used for transporting cement into smaller bags used for cereals, coir mat weaving, utensil fabrication, weaving and furniture making. Where such initiatives have taken place, groups have begun to include basic training costs within the overall loan cost. On the whole, it should be noted that women have not taken out many loans for training only.

Even though women have not tended to take out loans for training, there is a strong demand for training in a variety of skill areas that would give them access to new forms of income generation. On the whole these are similar and include tailoring, embroidery, book binding, shoe repair, coir work and typing. There are other training needs that have been requested that are much more specific to needs of a particular community, for example in the fishing community - where there have been requests for training in the drying, preserving and storage of fish. There are also new areas of training that are being requested by women which were previously thought of as male jobs such as in house upgrading e.g. masonry, carpentry, electrical repairs or to attend driving training so as to be able to take out a loan to run an auto-rickshaw. CDS has a programme of skill upgrading and these training needs are being responded to gradually as funds become available.

As income generated opportunities have grown since the inception of CDS, this has in itself dictated to some degree the type of information that has been subsequently requested by women. There is a desire to know more about existing and potential income generating opportunities for women as well having access to a range of information that will allow them to make a more informed decision. For example, at the time of the case studies the first women auto-rickshaw driver had just taken to the streets of Alleppey. This had generated a lot of interest and information was being sought by women on a range of issues; cost, training and security aspects. Not all this information is obtained through CDS but is often obtained informally through the women themselves. Area Chairpersons often play a key role in channelling information between NHGs.

#### **Transfer and dissemination**

NABARD were instrumental in getting the thrift societies and the subsequent credit for income generation programme off the ground and have continued to act as the key force in ensuring that ongoing training has been maintained. They have used the model that they first helped to develop in Alleppey to transfer it across the province as well as nationally.

NABARD conducted a large number of training programmes for group leaders and associated officials that focused on group dynamics, prioritisation and decision making, basic accounts maintenance, and thrift collection and loaning. Simple accounting modules were developed particularly for this purpose. The training programmes were designed to keep issues simple,

interesting and participative. Though the use of lectures is still common, NABARD have done a lot of work in developing a participative methodology. Training aids such as mythological stories, anecdotes, popular games, management games, display cards and role plays have all been used. To enable NHG members to be able to maintain their own books they developed a simple and efficient *Community Financial Management System*. They also developed a simple *Community Financial Monitoring and Audit System*, so that management of records and accounts could be carried out at the various tiered levels of the CDS system, as well in the banks. CDS also acts as a resource base and regular contact between the various tiers allows woman to informally update their skills in relation to the mechanics of the thrift and microcredit scheme.

NABARD have ensured there is a core group of trainers of trainers. These people can then be drawn on at the district level to conduct the necessary workshops. This group also includes CDS organisers. NABARD senior staff have also had intensive training in the functioning of CDS and the resulting capacity building methodology that has been developed. Of all the government officials with whom I met in Alleppey (with exception of CDS staff), NABARD's were the most aware of training needs and issues relating to the poor communities in Alleppey. Much of the training is now conducted by the CDS themselves, though there is still regular review by NABARD officials. For the first several years of the programme NABARD and CDS had regular bi-monthly meetings to discuss progress, though in the last couple of years, these meetings have become much less frequent.

In Alleppey the configuration of the various NHGs has been fairly constant. This has meant that after the initial training block there has only been infrequent training relating to updating members of the thrift societies as to recent developments. At the time of election of new committee members and Area Chairwomen there is specific training of these individuals as to procedure. New and comprehensive elections are due in the first half of this year which will mean a fresh round of training will be necessary.

## **Learning**

It has already been mentioned that this component of CDS provides a cornerstone to the whole programme. In relation to learning the same also applies. One of its significant contributions is that it provides a framework for incremental learning. By starting with developing an awareness of saving through the thrift societies and then the provision of small loans and then as confidence builds the provision of larger loans, individual beneficiaries can move at their own pace in determining their own information and learning needs. This applies not just for the individual beneficiary but also to the NHG, as well as to the Area Development Society.

The group aspect to the savings and microcredit programme strengthens the learning capacity between individual members as well as within the organisation and community as whole. The fact that individuals have a reason to come together on a regular basis encourages a joint problem solving approach to development and the generation of collective and strategic ideas, which is crucial to the integrated functioning of the wider CDS programme. Without this regularity of contact, the capacity of both individuals and the group would be significantly reduced both in terms of them as communicators of information and also in terms of their ability to assimilate the ideas that are being transferred. The group function also provides a solid basis for the continuing role of the RCV and the Area Chairwoman.

Several focus groups also indicated that the existence savings and micro credit component of the programme was also of the main reasons why men tolerated the programme in the initial stages. This initial accepting of CDS by the men in the community was necessary in terms of giving the NHG the necessary space to operate, so that effective learning could take place across the various components over the medium to longer term.

## **Annex 2**

### **Health**

#### **Communication and information needs**

Health was probably the area where in terms of formal information requests the response from the community was the most obvious and the most positive. The information and communication needs of the community could be broken down into several categories; health education, diagnostic, access to medicines and finally access to facilities.

Every focus group had felt that they learnt a lot from the health education camps (workshops). They felt that before CDS they had only learnt what they might get through the media or hear through others. They did not have information presented to them in any official capacity or in a way that they could clearly relate to and be able to have the opportunity to ask questions. Previously, the only official source of information had been through angenwadi workers or when attending a hospital.

Initially, the health education camps were general in nature but as time has gone on and the women's exposure grew they have had more specific requests. These have included asking for more specific camps related to particular diseases or on issues relating to particular areas of concern such as mother and child health. This also applies to the medical camps where the emphasis is on a physical check up and the handing out of medicines. When CDS was first initiated, communities felt a general medical camp was sufficient but over time requests highlighting more informed needs have emerged. These include eye camps or pre and post natal check-ups and the setting up of mother and child health care centres. The scope and format of these initiatives is decided upon by the health services itself. However, because CDS can initiate programmes through its own budget, it can also influence the nature of the information required.

#### **Transfer and dissemination**

The Health aspect of the CDS programme is probably one where the communication and information flows are the strongest and more apparently going in both directions.

Health Education camps are one of the main forums used for the exchange and transfer of information to poorer communities. There are normally between 150-400 women present at these camps. The size is often restricted by the availability of a suitable venue. Camps can be specifically requested through the action planning process or are instigated by the health authorities themselves and then promoted through the CDS network. All focus groups thought that the lecture/visuals based presentations were their preferred method of information transfer, particularly if there was time for a question and answer session at the end.

The main form of one to one transfer of information is still through the Junior Public Health Nurses and also the angenwarry teachers. There are also chances at medical camps to meet doctors and more senior nurses and to ask questions, though the time for individual consultations is kept fairly short. For many women this has been the first time that they had the chance to talk individually with a more senior health professional on a one to one basis, outside of a hospital. The women felt that this was important. Even though they were aware of the fact that staff constraints do not allow for this facility to be overly extended, when it occurs it is much appreciated and there is a strong expressed desire for this to be built in to more of the general health interventions even if only in a limited way.

A third kind of transfer that occurs in the health sector is referred to locally as training. In this capacity key individuals will be trained for one or at the most two days. In these situations there will normally be a specific focus to the training. At the time of undertaking the case study, there were two such undertakings. One was in relation to the problem of stray dogs and the danger of rabies. A rabies awareness programme was being conducted at the same time as a campaign was being undertaken to round up and put down stray dogs. The second related to promoting a new approach to mother and child health that was being adopted by the Health department. Though called training by the local authorities they normally consisted

of lecture based awareness training. In these programmes, key individuals are given training and it is then expected that these individuals will impart information to the wider community.

Initially, the flow of information was much more directed from the Health sector down to the communities through the health workers implementing programmes. In the initial stages of the CDS programme, there was the transfer of suggestions through CDS planning up to the Health sector but these still represented quite general needs and the method of implementation was still very much Municipal led. As CDS has developed as an organisation there has been increasing awareness of it's capacity to initiate more specific programme requests, to target areas of more acute need and to a much lesser extent, to have an input into the nature of the implementation itself. Some of this has come with increased awareness among the women themselves as to their wider health needs and their desire to use the micro-planning exercise to ask for more specific interventions.

With a gradual but growing acceptance of community initiated communication flows there has also been a growing understanding of the need for horizontal flows particularly at the area (ward) level. Area Chairwomen, particularly the ones with more apparent leadership qualities, are more and more directly initiating contact with local health officers to ensure services are focused more appropriately. Though NHGs see CDS micro-planning process as effective, it is perceived as slow to respond, with a significant time delay between the proposing of a particular idea and its actual implementation. With the confidence generated through the CDS organisational structure, NHGs and Area Chairwomen have more confidence to deal with local health services directly and to ask for specific services in addition to those requested through the CDS planning. On the municipal side, there is still a strong perception that it is professionally inappropriate to allow communities too much scope by way of self determination. However, a growing number of individual health workers are seeing the benefits of developing these two way horizontal channels, so that they can target their work more appropriately and reach the people who are seen as more deserving or requiring of a specific interventions.

## Learning

The health component of the CDS programme is interesting in terms of learning as it represents what some focus groups referred to as 'soft' skills. By this they meant that as opposed to income generation programmes or the provision of services and infrastructure where there were often visible tangible benefits and the acquisition of identifiable skills. With health, the benefits were not as visible, yet equally important. As a result, skills and lessons learnt in this regard could potentially be harder to acquire and to subsequently develop. Yet as the programme has developed, it is in this area where there has been the greatest shift in emphasis. Nearly all focus groups now point to health education and awareness as being one of the most obvious contributions that CDS has made to their lives. The fact that health issues can be linked into a variety of other areas such as environmental sanitation, work safety issues and children's welfare means that the learning in regard to health is continually being reinforced, as it is applied to these different contexts.

CDS also provides a forum that brings women together regardless of caste, religious or age differences and allows them to examine issues that were relevant to them as women. Several focus groups highlighted the fact that they had rarely discussed women's health issues with other women before but through regular contact significant peer learning had taken place. This has been important in breaking down the propensity for partial medical truths or superstitions to be interpreted as fact by individuals within the group. It has also helped to overcome one of the problems that has constrained information being accepted in the past, that is the fear individuals had, to ask questions about an issue because it appeared to be overly technical. In the group they feel they can ask each other questions about an issue and then if it is a commonly felt that they don't understand a particular issue, it can be followed up at a future health camp or with the relevant health official. These regular meetings have also encouraged a gender perspective to be sought on a variety of issues, not just health.

The prioritisation process that is adopted by CDS in its planning, also helps to reinforce what are seen to be key needs. By having to prioritise what are the most pressing needs means that NHGs have had to examine why certain issues are important. It was felt that this process of ongoing analysis of their concerns reinforces the learning that is taking place. Interestingly, this prioritisation system, has in a way disadvantaged those groups who are considered less needing of such interventions because they live closer to existing health services. By determining which groups should participate in the Health Camps and Health Education Camps based on where the need is perceived to be the strongest and also where the distance to existing health services is the greatest, in a sense these people have been able to leapfrog the system. They have gone from a state of affairs where they received virtually no information, to receiving more than is available through conventional services. The groups who are nearer to a hospital, who are considered to have greater access to information accordingly, now feel more disadvantaged because they are not provided with the same number of health camps. Health camps are seen as targeting the needs of the poor more effectively than existing services within a local hospital or clinic. The same logic applies when it comes to providing mother and child health centres. The health authorities used knowledge gained through CDS to start up six such centres in areas where the need was perceived to be the greatest. Once again focus groups pointed out that these groups were now actually getting better access to information than those who had to rely on existing services because their need was considered to be less urgent. This is now being taken into account in the prioritisation and planning stages of CDS but sufficient organisational learning and awareness of the impact of previous actions has to in force for this to occur.

Overall, women felt that the two way nature of learning, between themselves and the secondary stakeholder was more effective in the health component of the programme than in other areas.

## **Annex 3**

### **Fieldwork methodology**

#### **Stage 1**

In the initial instance, background information was collected through the internet and through contact with various organisations in India. In the first few years after its inception there was quite a lot of interest in the CDS Alleppy model, and so it was quite well documented. Much of the literature focuses on the mechanics of CDS as an organisational structure. However, there appears to be virtually no material analysing its role as a facilitator of the communication and learning process.

Before arriving in Alleppey, general background information on CDS was collected from various State and Municipal officials in Trivandrum and Cochin. In Alleppey itself, background information on CDS was collected from a number of secondary sources within the Municipality and CDS. These included: the Chairman, the Secretary, various representatives of the Health and Engineering sections of the Municipality, the Assistant General Manager of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Directors of two of the three banks who act as disbursing agents between NABARD and the CDS, the community organisers and project officer responsible for running CDS, the current CDS president and the previous CDS president.

#### **Stage 2**

Given the intention of the research and the particular focus on CLICs, a comprehensive poverty assessment was not possible. Nevertheless, it was important to have developed a broad understanding of the nature and extent of the poverty in Alleppey in order to be able to understand the Community Learning Information Processes. On the second and third day of the case study, a series of transect walks across the city were undertaken in order to get an overview of the physical and social differences between various poor communities. Communities that were visited included a coastal fishing community, peri urban community, Muslim community, a low lying community that was particularly vulnerable to flooding, and a cross section of poor and less poor communities. A range of individual discussions were held with various household members and people working in different occupations which are normally undertaken by the poor. Finally, a discussion was held with a focus group that fell outside the CDS network, as it was considered just outside the designated municipal boundary.

This process was particularly useful in terms of adding a realistic sense of everyday colour to the broad backdrop of issues had been highlighted in background briefings with the Municipality. Finally, it provided an informal chance to speak with women as well as a range of people that were not to be the focus of subsequent group discussions with CDS; children, men, male community leaders and local community employers.

The most obvious point that came out through conducting these transect walks was the different ways that the municipality disaggregated the general needs of the poor and the communities disaggregated their own general needs. The municipality tended to group the needs of the poor together and where disaggregation took place this was normally done vertically (e.g. very poor/less poor, vulnerable/less vulnerable). On the other hand, the poor themselves seemed to see their needs more within a geographic or social context, therefore disaggregated in a horizontal sense. In terms of determining need this was as important or more important than the above stated perceived vertical indexes of poverty. Even at this initial stage needs could be looked at as reflective of the needs of particular groupings e.g. the fishing communities along the coast, the peri-urban communities, the predominantly Muslim communities, or the communities that lived in particularly low lying areas. Then within these communities there were clear differences emerging in terms of need, depending on the level of vulnerability that individual families were under. Both of these factors had a significant bearing on CLICs and so subsequent discussions would have to be structured accordingly.

#### **Stage 3**

The next four days consisted of discussions with six focus groups. Each focus group represented a different neighbourhood group (NHG) who were themselves chosen to represent the range of socio- economic groups within the families identified as at risk. There was also one vertical focus group with people from a neighbourhood groups, RCVs, Area Chairpersons and the CDS President. Individual meetings were also held with the Area Chairperson and RCV of each of the six NHGs.

Follow up meetings were also held with CDS project staff, various people in the Municipality, NABARD, the Banks, and a local NGO Costford which is responsible for much of the provision of services and housing. Individual meetings were also held with municipal councillors, standing committee members, municipal engineer, officer in charge of municipal health and training staff at the Institute for Management in Government with the specific focus of looking at institutional learning.