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COMMUNITY LEARNING INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION CASE STUDY

KERALA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY
ALLEPPY

Janelle Plummer
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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY
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PROJECT PROFILE

Name	The Community Development Society
Location	Alleppy (Alappuzha), Kerala
Start date	1993 onwards
Sectors involved	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.
The initiative	The Community Development Society in Kerala is a system of organising women in poor communities to plan for their development. The case study examines the tiered structure of neighbourhood committees who prepare micro-plans, the area development societies who consolidate these into min-plans, and finally the community development societies who integrate these area plans into a municipal level action plan.
CLIC processes	CLIC processes are key to the CDS system, involving as it does various levels of information collection, planning and dissemination. The case study shows how CLIC processes effected 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.
Lessons learned	From the case study, the potential of women's groups emerges 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 importance of those groups being organised around the issue of savings and credit was also highlighted. Another lesson from the case study is the advantage for CLIC processes of the CDS being approved by government, thereby reducing the potential for conflict and increasing the impact upon municipal policy. Also the strategic role of the Area Chairperson was identified as key for the effective channelling of information, while finally, the mechanisms built into CDS to prioritise problems were shown to be important in order to disaggregate and weigh the information generated by the CDS system.

SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 Government poverty programmes over the last decade

Within the socio-political context of Kerala, and the drive for sustainable development, the Government of Kerala has *inter alia*, implemented the policies and distributed the funding for central government initiatives focused on the poor. Primary amongst these is the Urban Basic Services Programme (UBS), initiated during the Seventh Five Year Plan period and funded by the central and state governments in partnership with UNICEF. This programme was revised after a National Commission and became the Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP) which was integrated with other Urban Poverty Alleviation programmes, namely, Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (EIUS), Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY, an employment scheme) and Low Cost Sanitation (LCS).

Guidelines for the UBSP programme were issued by the Ministry of Urban Development in 1990. These were supplemented with orders and other guidelines from time to time, based on needs and requirements. During the implementation of the programme, different models based on diverse state situations emerged, and it was decided to give flexibility to the States to contextualise the approach in order to improve the efficacy of the programme. In December 1994, these guidelines were further developed in line with the 74th Constitutional amendment and the National Plan of Action for Children.

Most of the earlier programmes were implemented in a top down manner. The failure to achieve a visible reduction in poverty resulted in the search for alternative strategies, the most important achievement of which has been the evolution of the Community Development Society (CDS) system. CDS focuses on the poor as subjects rather than as objects of development. CDS provides a structure which empowers poorer women by allowing them to specify and demand services that are appropriate to their own developmental needs. CDS not only functions as a powerful demand network but also helps facilitate the convergence of government programmes at a grass root level.

With the advent of the 9th five year plan, the Government of India has reviewed the various urban poverty reduction programmes and has concluded that they can all be integrated into two major schemes - Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) and the National Slum Development Programme (NSDP) to incorporate successful elements of past programmes. The SJSRY was launched in December 1995 and the NSDP in 1996. They were both refurbished in 1997. Though these two schemes are independent they are complimentary and are unified under the

CDS system.

1.2 Profiles

Alleppy town profile

Area	46.71 sq. km
No of wards	36
No of households	32,124
Population (as per 1991 census)	177,606
Density of population	5592/sq km
No of hospitals	4
No of schools	41
No of colleges	3

CDS Profile

Area	46.71 sq. km
Population	177,606
Total number of households in the municipality	32,124 households
No of families at risk identified through survey	10,304 households
Population of risk families	49,520 household members
No of NHGs	292
No of ADSs	24
No of municipal wards covered	36
Thrift amount saved on 31/1/99	Rs 44 lakhs
Loans dispersed from thrift and self employment and consumption purposes	Rs 38 lakhs
Bulk loans available from banks under the refinancing scheme of NABARD, dispersed through CDS-ADS-NHG	Rs 30.66 lakhs
Total loans sanctioned in three phases by NABARD	Rs 153.28 lakhs
Rate of repayment to banks as of December 1998	100%

1.3 Identification of the poor

The CDS target group are families below the poverty line set for the state's urban districts who have lived in the municipal area for at least three years. The poverty line for the urban areas of Kerala is Rs 327.96 per capita per month. This would mean that a family of five, with an annual income of less than Rs 22, 375, would be below the poverty line.

However, the poor are not recognised by this criteria alone. They have to be identified through non-economic measures revealed by a community based survey. According to State level guidelines, the income ceiling is used as an exclusion criterion, i.e. any family having an income above the prescribed ceiling is not eligible for assistance under the scheme. Aside from poverty indicators based solely on nutrition levels or per capita income, risk indicators are also used

to identify high risk families. A risk index with 9 non economic criteria has been adopted and the community involved in cross checking the findings.

The 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 the Schedule Caste or Schedule Tribe
9. An alcoholic or drug addict in the family

If a family meets four or above of these nine indicators, it is considered to be at high risk. In a survey undertaken in the 7 initial wards designated for implementation, 2003 families were identified as high risk families.

In Alleppy, non-economic criteria have predominantly formed the basis for determining which families are eligible to join CDS. Assistance under the CDS programme is also prioritised according to the degree to which a family is considered at risk, i.e. the individual or family considered most at risk gets assistance first and where infrastructure development and health projects are planned, the locality with the largest number of at risk families is given priority.¹

Alleppy has a relatively stable population. According to Municipal officials, CDS and two local NGOs, there is very little rural to urban migration. Consequently the numbers of street dwellers are minimal and the itinerant community small. There are also no large colonies in Alleppy. The colonies that exist are small in size and have normally been established for some time. This is quite different to the larger cities in Kerala such as Trivandrum and Cochin. As a result, there are very few urban poverty programmes in Alleppy which specifically focus on such groups, unlike the larger cities. This is quite important in terms of CDS because of the three year residency requirement to be eligible for benefits. If there was a large degree of inward migration, these people would not be supported by the CDS scheme. There are a few small NGO programmes but they are normally quite specific in their target group. The municipality has relied nearly exclusively on CDS and programmes initiated under the health portfolio. This means that should anyone fall through the CDS safety net then there is little in the way of support.

The main cause for poverty in Alleppy is attributed largely to the natural conditions in the area. The

fact that over 25% of the area falls below sea level means that it is particularly subject to flooding and low-lying water. The most vulnerable groups are normally living in areas that are the most at risk from flooding. The low-lying geography of the area also means that there is a higher than normal incidence of associated health risks, which contributes to the general levels of poverty.

SECTION 2 - THE PROJECT

2.1 Background

i. What is CDS?

The Community Development Society (CDS) as applies in Kerala, is a system of organising women in communities to plan for their development. This is achieved through a tiered structure of neighbourhood committees who prepare micro-plans, area development societies who consolidate these micro-plans into a mini-plan and finally the community development societies who integrate these area plans into a municipal level action plan.

ii. What are the objectives of the CDS?

The primary aim of this process is to ensure that poverty-focused programmes reach their intended target groups, without diversion or leakage. The process focuses on improving the quality of life of women and children through the active participation of women in the governance of the poverty alleviation programme.

iii. The origins and development of Kerala CDS².

The CDS system evolved out of a convergence in Kerala of the UBSP and other centrally assisted poverty reduction programmes of the 1980's, 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 not adequately responding to the needs of women and children nor was it effectively engaging the participation of the poor.

In Kerala, in 1991, thirteen demonstration towns were selected to pilot implementation of the UBSP programme. The Government of Kerala, with the assistance of UNICEF, developed an approach which became known as the Alleppy (Alappuzha) CDS model. This programme sought to address the limitations of the UBSP programme, to focus on the empowerment of women, to target

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

² This section borrows heavily on the information provided by the GoK in the UNCHS Best Practices Database

the poorest of the community and to ensure the active participation of the poor in development processes.

The approach was initially developed in isolation from the political wing of the Alleppy municipality. Once finalized, political support was mobilized at state and local government level, and key individuals facilitated this process. These included Municipal Chairmen, Municipal Councillors, Ministers and Secretaries at state level, particularly the Minister for Local Government. Funding provisions were facilitated by the Government of Kerala.

CDS was piloted in Alleppy during 1993 and then replicated in 58 municipalities of Kerala. It now has 36,800 poor women members. The approach has influenced Government of Kerala policy in poverty eradication, and has been adopted, in part, in the recent national revisions to the successor of the UBSP, now known as SJSRY. One of the most important contributions the CDS system has had on local development has been to provide a mechanism for the mobilisation of women in Kerala.

iv. Piloting/Establishing the CDS

In Alleppy, 7 wards were selected initially as the implementation area. The families in need of the scheme were identified through the mechanism described earlier in section 2.3. Women from these families were then organised into local groups of no more than 40 women, with an average group size of 25. These are called Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs). In total, 88 NHGs were constituted. NHGs elect one woman as their leader who is called the resident community volunteer (RCV). Another woman is elected president and three other volunteers are elected to carry out the responsibilities of the main functional areas; community health, community infrastructure and community income generation. This five member committee is known as the NHG Committee (NHC).

At ward level, 7 Area Development Societies (ADSs) were formed with 10-15 NHGs under each. The governing body is made up of all the NHC committee members. 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 Alleppy, there are three. The governing committee can also co-opt an Anganwadi worker (pre-school teacher), ICDS supervisor, literacy functionary and any other two suitable persons. These additional members do not have voting rights.

At the apex, the town level CDS was formed and registered under the Charitable Literacy Act. This also has a general body made up of all the chairpersons, vice chairpersons and community organisers who form the general body of the CDS. A project officer is also appointed by the

municipality who functions as the member secretary of the CDS. This person is effectively the CDS co-ordinator. A governing body is then elected from the general body, made up of a president, vice president and several members of the general body of the CDS. The CDS project officer is the member secretary. The governing body can also co-opt other suitable officials onto the board but they will not have voting rights. The society started functioning on the 6th February 1993.

To develop the linkages with local bodies, advisory committees are formed at both the CDS and ADS level. At the town level this is called the Town Co-ordination and Monitoring Committee and the Mayor is the chairperson and the municipal secretary the convenor. At the area level, there is an advisory committee where 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 more significant role in determining the structure and organisational framework of CDS. Now their main function is to come together to advise on the production of the annual area level and town level action plans.

It is worth noting that all the municipal appointed staff in Alleppy, including the project officer and the three community organisers are men. Most of the senior officials in Alleppy are also men. There has been an attempt to ensure that some of the people co-opted by the ADS governing committees and CDS governing committee and some of the members of the advisory committee were women.

Various developmental programmes were initiated through the CDS structure. This included management training for elected members of the ADS and CDS, training of trainers in the NHGs and a micro credit programme with the support of NABARD who helped inculcate the idea of thrift societies. Specific programmes also included the improvement of water supply, the building of pit latrines, house upgrading and repair, the raising of pathways, income generation activities and training, health education camps (workshops), immunisation programmes and cultural programmes among others.

V Expanding the CDS

The CDS initiative attracted a lot of attention particularly at Municipal level where there was pressure to extend the programme to the whole municipality. In 1993, once again with the help of UNICEF, a risk index survey was carried out across the whole urban Municipal area, 36 wards in total. Elected members of the NHGs were involved in the risk survey helping them to further understand levels of vulnerability and risk in the town. Existing NHGs were then involved in the setting up and training of new NHGs. In all, out of 36,000 families surveyed, 10,304 families were identified as high risk families. These were then

organised into 292 NHGs which were subsequently arranged into 24 ADSs.

vi. Impacts of CDS

Through the NHGs, women have been able to develop a heightened awareness of their vulnerability. At the same time, they have been empowered to think collectively and through self help, can plan for and implement viable actions that will reduce their vulnerability and that of their families. The increased awareness and responsibility shown by women has created a suitable climate for the convergence of activities of various developmental departments in the social and financial sector. The CDS system has facilitated the delegation of powers to the women's groups thereby mitigating leakages, delays and exploitation which are seen in other programmes. To some extent, it has also helped to check the previously growing money lending market which constantly exploited the poorest of the poor who did not have access to formal money lending institutions. Through various income generation schemes, the women are gaining employment which in turn increases family income and raises living and social status. This has also helped to ensure longer term male acceptance of the programme which was less forthcoming in the initial stages of the programme.

As the CDS has gained recognition in Alleppy 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, there is now a substantial list of activities that fall under the umbrella of the CDS that would traditionally have come under the auspices of the department of health, education or engineering of the local municipality. NABARD have also extended the idea of NHGs and ADSs to other families outside the high risk category and called these Self Help Groups (SHGs). These SHGs work primarily as thrift societies, though like NHGs, they play an important role in empowering local women and reducing vulnerability, simply by their nature.

Vii The Future of CDS

In the CDS plan put forward for the coming financial year, there is a request for a new survey to be conducted. It is expected that a certain number of families have benefited sufficiently from the programme to have moved out of the high risk category. Conversely, there is an awareness that certain families that should have been included after the 1993 survey, missed the net. However, unlike some of the other larger towns in Kerala, Alleppy does not have a large rural to urban migration which makes it easier to maintain some constancy in the programme without always having to change the number of NHGs or the arrangement of ADSs.

The next stage of the programme will also be determined somewhat by CDS's relationship to,

and the development of, the Kerala Peoples Planning Campaign (KPPC). Even though it is expected that in essence, the CDS will remain in its current form, there is a lot of discussion as to whether it should be incorporated more fully into this larger structure in a more formal capacity or whether it should maintain its quasi independence and run parallel to any subsequent developments. 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 but there is significant support to extend it down to the neighbourhood level and this would then have a direct impact on NHGs.

Viii Finances

The largest share of CDS finances come from the centrally allocated budget that is made up of the two schemes Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) and the National Slum Development Programme (NSDP). Seventy-five per cent of this budget is funded by the Government of India with the state government providing for the remaining twenty-five per cent.

The municipalities supplement SJSRY/NSDP resources by earmarking 2% of municipal revenues to the UPA fund which is set out in statutory provisions. In addition, municipalities can give over the mandatory 2% from their own budget, though this is very unusual. More common is that convergence funds will be linked to CDS. This is where the municipality will implement certain municipal programmes and funds through CDS. This is normally done in relation to health programmes and has been quite common in Alleppy. These funds are in addition to normal programme funds.

In addition funds would be attracted from banks and other financial institutions. This is co-ordinated by NABARD and the bank linked savings generated through the thrift societies. Finally, there is a small amount of community contributions in kind, cash or labour.

SECTION 3 - INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND LEARNING PROCESSES

3.1 Introduction

Due to the unprecedented nature of CDS, right from the outset information, communication and learning processes were vital to the success and development of the organisation. These processes help to develop several key and interdependent functions, including: determining organisational structure, resolving conflict, empowering of individuals, reducing vulnerability, prioritising needs, problem solving, accessing facilities or further information, bringing individuals together and differentiating between practical and strategic

needs.

Though the format of this case study differentiates between the different aspects of the communication and learning process as indicated in the following diagrams 1-7, it is essential to bear in mind that one does not necessarily precede the other. When it comes to developing options, analysing information that is being presented, or determining points of entry, it is important to remember the interdependency that exists between the different aspects and that rather than being a linear process it is much more circular in nature with no clear start or end point.

3.2 The types of knowledge, information and skills that are transferred.

3.2.1 General communication and information needs

The general needs of the poor can be grouped into several broad sub-sections:

- Health education and access to health services.
- Improved access to services and infrastructure
- Access to small and medium sized loans
- Income generation skills
- Access to information on a broad range of topics including individual rights, municipal actions and new potential benefits and the nature of the Kerala Peoples Planning Campaign, among others.

Though the focus of the CLICs research is on services and infrastructure, it is important to see this part of CDS in the context of the other two main components; first, savings, credit and income generation skills and second, health. For as will be demonstrated in subsequent sections, it is the inter-relationship between these different areas that gives the CDS system its vitality and ensures that CDS can be effective as a provider and determiner of service and infrastructure needs.

3.2.2 An overview of the savings and credit component of CDS in relation to CLICs³

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 such as the fishing community, Muslim community or peri-urban community. Initially, small individual loans were taken but 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.

³ For a fuller description see Annex 1

Transfer and dissemination

NABARD⁴ 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 Alleppy to replicate 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, 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. Though the use of lectures is still common, NABARD have done a lot of work in developing a participative methodology.

Learning

The savings and credit component provides a rationale for the regular meeting of the NHGs, which establishes 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. It 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.

The existence savings and micro credit component of the programme was also one 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.

3.2.3 An overview of the health component of CDS in relation to CLICs⁵

Communication and information needs

Health is probably the sector where the community is the most positive about how their information

⁴ National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

⁵ For a fuller description see Annex 2

needs have been responded to. The information and communication needs of the NHGs can be broken down into several categories; health education, diagnostic assistance, access to medicines and finally access to facilities.

Transfer and dissemination

The health component of CDS information is also where communication flows are the strongest. The main forms of transfer and dissemination include: health education camps; one to one transfer of information through the Junior Public Health Nurses, the Anganwadi teachers and to a lesser extent senior medical officers at health camps; specific issue training of key individuals, normally RCVs and Area Chairpersons, who will then disseminate the information to the NHGs.

Learning

The health component of the CDS programme is interesting in terms of learning as it represents what many 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.

3.2.4 Initial communication and information needs

In the initial stages of the development of CDS, the community required information and skills relating to the formation and function of the CDS itself. The fact that the structure had been imposed and not generated by the community itself, meant there was some confusion as to the exact purpose of the organisation. In the beginning, there was a lot of mistrust on behalf of the community both in terms of the government's motives for setting up CDS, as well as to whether it would deliver in terms of what was suggested. A lot of information needs related to what benefits could be obtained through the organisation⁶ and what was required of them as

⁶ CDS funds are now divided into two categories and most of the funding allocated to services and infrastructure come under the allocation for the *National Slum Development Programme*.

Under its guidelines, the following kinds of infrastructure

members. There was also a need for greater understanding of the mechanics of the organisation and the role and function to be undertaken by people elected to various positions within the CDS structure. Clarification was also required regarding wider community inputs into the CDS system, in particular when and how men could be involved.

In the initial stages of CDS, individuals were most keen to understand on what basis CDS allocations regarding the provision of services and infrastructure, particularly housing, were made. Before the formation of CDS, there had been no state support for the provision of housing among the urban poor in Alleppy. When CDS came into being, NHG members were particularly concerned about being able to access information relating to the prioritisation system CDS used to determine the allocation of housing. The CDS prioritisation process dictates that housing is allocated in turn, beginning with the needs of the poorest and most at risk families.

CDS on their part, felt there was a particular need to communicate the mechanics of the CDS system in order to get the programme up and running and be assured of getting information they needed from the community, to take the programme forward. It is not the intention of this case study to document this process as it has evolved since CDS's inception in 1993. However, it is important to note that information, communication and skill development formed an integral part of the make up of CDS right from the outset. Several key issues relate to the essential requirements of CDS and have continued to act as cornerstones of the overall system.

First and foremost, CDS needed to know what it was that communities wanted so that the UPA budget could be allocated accordingly. This was achieved through the development of the NHG and area level mini plans that were finally combined into a single level action plan. To ensure that the allocation of resources went to those most in need, CDS developed a prioritisation system. The basis for this was the nine point risk index. CDS needed the communities themselves to be

can be requested by the NHGs: water supply, storm drains, sewers, community and individual latrines, street lights as well as the widening and paving of lane ways. A range of general community infrastructure can also be requested, like foot bridges, non-formal education, recreation centres, community markets, health sub-centres, wells for washing water and infrastructure required for traditional occupations like fishing.

One third of this assistance, is to be used for the construction of new houses or shelter upgrading. In reality, at the NHG level the whole programme is integrated and groups express their needs as an overall set of needs, with guidance from the Area Chairperson and the RCV as to issues of prioritisation. At the CDS planning level, this is then divided up into the respective categories.

aware of how this worked, particularly the RCVs and the Area Chairpersons, in order that requests could be prioritised on the basis of need which would help the sifting process necessary to end up with a CDS action plan. This information was also used to cluster needs which would allow for more strategic interventions that affected more than one person. Several focus groups⁷ gave the provision of drainage as an example of this.

3.2.5 *Practical communication and information needs*

At first, the community needed to understand the mechanics of CDS and what specific benefits the CDS system could provide. However, once the programme began to take shape, the community needed to know more about how they could benefit from the system, more than how CDS itself operated.

The provision of specific services or infrastructure created practical information needs. With the building of houses and latrines, key information issues included: the sustainability of the structure; how much was being compromised in terms of providing a low cost house; who the contractor was and what was expected in terms of community involvement. In addition to this, there were often cultural factors that had to be addressed. For example, explaining why a latrine should be included within or adjacent to the dwelling structure as was often the case with a two pit latrine, when backing on to a public waterway might have previously been the case.

The provider/contractor, which was normally Costford⁸, had its own information needs. They would need to know what level of skilled or unskilled contribution an individual community was prepared to make to a building project, as this would impact on the overall costs. They would also need to find out how much environmental sanitation knowledge a community had, as this would affect the level of informal input they would have to make in this regard.

Primary interventions would then lead to secondary, often more complicated, information needs. As areas received access to latrines for the first time or where single public latrines were replaced by individual latrines, the community required information about how to organise

⁷ The use of focus groups was a key element of the fieldwork methodology. See Annex 3.

⁸ Costford stands for Centre of Science and Technology for Rural Development. It is a registered non-profit making organisation. The founder Chairperson was Kerala's former Chief Minister Shri. C. Achutha Menon. The current Chairperson is Dr K.N. Raj and Dr Laurie Baker is the Vice Chairperson. Costford's aim is to provide low cost and environmentally sustainable technical solutions to the problems of the poor, particularly the rural poor. Costford has been given responsibility for the provision for housing and latrines organised through CDS. They also undertake a lot of the training provided through the services and infrastructure component of CDS.

maintenance and clearance. Likewise, the advent of street lighting would lead to information requirements about how to seek help from the municipality for maintenance and repair.

3.2.6 *Integrated and strategic communication and information needs*

As information in other areas such as health and microcredit grew, NHGs began to look at their developmental needs in a more integrated manner. There is, for example, a direct correlation between the increasing awareness of environmental sanitation and the prioritising of subsequent infrastructure needs. Women said that before health education classes, they had a limited awareness of the acute need for safe drinking water and sanitary latrines. These two needs are now probably the two highest concerns among CDS members. CDS provides a framework for this kind of needs integration and allows individuals to more easily relate information gained in a specific context to a wider social environment. It also means that they can use information gained through the health or savings and credit components of CDS to determine secondary information and communication needs regarding the provision of services and infrastructure.

A more integrated approach also allows NHGs to think more strategically in terms of community development. 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 they revised this and prioritised drainage. They said that they had done this because their knowledge had increased about the negative health effects of flooding, low lying and contaminated water. They had also realised that their income generating ability was affected by flooding when they were unable to raise fowl and small animals for several months of the year. Drainage, they had realised, would also help reduce their need for such regular house repairs.

3.2.7 *Area Development Society and Neighbourhood Group Committee information and communication needs.*

According to the CDS structure, both the area and neighbourhood levels have committees that are responsible for the function of operations at their level. These committees have their own information, communication and learning needs which are in addition to the wider needs of the group. In reality, the committee delegates many of these needs to either the Area Chairperson or the Resident Community Volunteer (RCV) who undertakes most of the co-ordination work, leadership and training responsibilities.

When a householder becomes an office bearer, it is necessary to ensure that they are provided with a thorough overview of their role and responsibility within the organisation. This is achieved through a series of workshops. Knowledge and skills that are needed by Area

Chairpersons and RCVs include:

- how to assess the needs of the poor;
- how to work effectively for poverty eradication;
- how the CDS prioritisation system is organised.
- how the survey process that determines families most at risk is undertaken;
- specific understanding of the mechanics of key functional areas such as the maintenance of the thrift societies;
- a clear understanding of what can be provided by way of services and infrastructure, as well as issues to do with environmental sanitation.

Though there is a merging of information needs between the NHG Committee level and the ADS level, Area Chairpersons more often referred specifically to needs which included:

- needing knowledge about how to gather and disseminate information;
 - how to conduct a meeting;
 - how to speak in public;
 - how to empower women more effectively;
 - information concerning general leadership skills;
 - who to access within municipal departments regarding specific issues or requests raised by the NHGs;
 - the role that would be played by wards in the Kerala People's Planning Campaign⁹;
 - a greater understanding of planning issues.
- When CDS was first formed, a lot of

⁹ In July 1996, in the context of strong legislative framework provided by the 74th Constitutional Amendment and the Kerala Municipality Act 1994, the Chief Minister of Kerala, initiated the *Kerala People's Planning Campaign*. The broad goals of the campaign aimed to develop the commitment and responsibility of elected representatives; to activate the 'people' to become partners in a democratic development process; to develop the capacity of municipal officials to work with the people in a team; and to mobilise the expertise of the private sector and voluntary sector to assist in a new approach to development.

The People's Planning Campaign is a mechanism for planning and budgeting, specifically established for the development of the 9th five year plan, through a hierarchical compilation of plans (not dissimilar to CDS). The most localised plan is developed at ward level through a ward convention under the leadership of the local politician, the Ward councillor. It aims to identify the local needs and establish local development options through a process of consultation and participation with the people of the ward. These are then, compiled into Municipal Plans then framed into block plans, district plans and ultimately into the State wide 9th five year plan.

The People's Planning Campaign has just completed its second year in which the first one year projects implemented under this plan have been completed.

attention was paid to the training of the various elected office bearers, particularly in the practicalities of running CDS, leadership skills and confidence raising. In recent years there has been a rationalisation in training so the focus now is on the more practical and functional. There is still a clear felt need for training that relates to leadership qualities and group facilitation, particularly at the ADS level, but this is not being met.

The CDS organising committee, for their part, also has clear information needs, particularly with regard to the Area and Neighbourhood Committees. This includes access to summarised yet comprehensive information on NHGs that would help them to clarify the prioritised needs of specific individuals. This information would also allow for the production of the annual CDS development plan, upon which their budget is based. When the new survey is undertaken this coming financial year (1999/2000), CDS will rely on the ADS and RCVs to gather much of the information. This will require further training of the Area Chairpersons and RCVs to ensure that they have the necessary skills to carry out this process.

3.2.8 Municipal information and communication needs

In the initial stages of CDS there was a strong municipal focus on how the organisation was being set up and the practical day to day mechanics of how the associated programmes were to be implemented. For municipality officials, much of this attention was because of potential impact on the municipal structure in terms of the provision of services. Though CDS had its own funding through State channels the work that had to be carried out still had to be factored into the work schedule of the municipality. There was also a realisation that with the formation of CDS there was also a stronger need to focus attention and skills on the needs of the urban poor than had necessarily been the case before. Also, the national and international attention that was focused on CDS Alleppy meant that senior officials needed general information on the functioning of the organisation so that this could be presented as and when was necessary.

As the organisation took shape, less information was required by the municipality about how CDS operated. Over the years there have been requests by the municipal council itself for more specific information to do with individual CDS projects. Much of this is because the municipal council is made up of ward councillors who are often threatened by the role that CDS has undertaken in their local area or are keen to be able to manipulate any positive local impact to their own political advantage. This debate has been heightened recently with the first year of the implementation stage of the Kerala People's Planning Campaign having taken place; ward councillors are having to show the results of the

planned implementation under the Campaign and have hoped in some cases to include CDS programmes within this.

Municipal project officers implementing programmes initiated under by CDS also have their own needs that in many ways relate to the needs of the community. They need to know what level of skilled or unskilled contribution an individual community is prepared to make to the building project as this would impact on the costing structure. They also need to be able find out how much environmental sanitation knowledge a community has, as this will affect the level of informal input required.

The fact that the municipality also needs to look at wider issues when it comes to the implementation of certain services, affects the information that it requires. These include issues such as an areas link to city water supplies, the distance from existing facilities as well as current and longer term municipal plans for the wider area.

Finally, with the implementation of the Kerala People's Planning Campaign and the development of ward level planning, there has been an increased need for cross dissemination of information between either between CDS and the municipal council or the Area Chairperson and the municipal representatives at ward. Even though there are plans to have CDS function as a much more integral part of the municipal planning structure as yet how this will take shape is not clear and so there is a need for information to be shared so that there is not duplication of purpose.

3.2.9 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Constraints

One of the major strengths of CDS is that the structure provides a much more focused and appropriate targeting of community needs than was previously possible. Poorer communities have the chance to communicate and prioritise information and skill needs as they relate to their local community. It allows for more appropriate disaggregation of information, communication and skills both across the community and within it.

Another significant feature of the CDS programme is that it helps individuals and NHGs to identify information, communication and learning needs in a much more integrated manner. Both technical and non-technical information and skills are exchanged allowing for further integration to occur. The aforementioned drainage example is a case in point. The CDS system allows for an incremental acquisition of knowledge based on local capacity. The programme also encourages a group based problem solving approach to information acquisition, which is vital if the process is to be self sustaining in the longer term.

The existence of an ADS and in particular the Area Chairperson is also a strength of the CDS system. They play a key role in the prioritising of current and subsequent services and infrastructure needs. They help significantly in determining

integrated and strategic information and communication needs, that will promote wider and longer term social development.

Finally, one of the noticeable strengths of the system is in preparing women to participate more fully in the Kerala People's Planning Campaign. At the NHG level women are more aware of their needs and more focused in terms of what they want to communicate and the kind of projects that can be feasibly undertaken. They also have more confidence in their own ability to express themselves within the community as a whole and to also make sure that the community has the information that it needs to implement and monitor projects successfully. This is also the case for the Area Chairpersons, who have statutory representation on the ward committees, and who feel more confident to communicate the ideas of the community and target specific information requirements on their behalf.

While being considered a strength in terms of focusing information, the tiered nature the CDS structure is also one of it's potential weaknesses. If the information, communication and skill needs of the various NHGs are to be prioritised correctly then the RCVs and Area Chairpersons require the capacity to do this correctly. If integrated and strategic information and communication needs are to be developed then this also relies heavily on the skill of the elected office bearers. Another constraint is that even within the CDS system, office bearers are seen essentially as a conduit for expressing the information and communication needs of the NHGs and there is less of a focus on the needs that they might have to carry out this task.

Another weakness of CDS is the fact that it's multi-faceted nature means that it cannot back up it's programme with consolidated training in any given area as it has to spread training across a variety of fields. As a result, specific training needs are not always met.

3.3 The Transfer and Delivery Process.

3.3.1 The development of communication and information flows within CDS

The initial flows of information were very linear in nature. Initially, the focus was on transferring the mechanics of CDS as an operating system to the beneficiaries. At this early stage much of the transfer was more directly to the NHGs, as the capacity of the Area Chairpersons was still limited. UNICEF support was very important in the early stages of the organisation. The next stage was also quite vertical as NHGs transferred information to CDS so that the first action plans could be drawn up. This was then repeated as the number of wards included in the programme increased from seven to a full complement of thirty six, divided into twenty four CDS area groups.

Very quickly however an increasing amount of horizontal flows of information and

communication began to occur. Substantial training occurred at the outset to ensure that relevant people within the municipal system were aware of operational nature of CDS so that they could facilitate and carry out the necessary functions. This led to an increase in horizontal information flows between the community and the municipality. These flows have not developed substantially and have remained weak, particularly in terms of the municipal interface. There were also the flows of information within the community as people adjusted to the advent of the women only groups. As projects were implemented and the programme began to roll then these horizontal flows increased.

As the programme emerged from its infancy so did the key role of the Area Chairperson as both a channel and directional valve for information and communication flows. The Area Chairperson plays a pivotal role in creating an interface between a range of secondary stakeholders and the NHGs as well as between the NHGs themselves. The overall result is a complex web of interactions and the multi-faceted and tiered nature of CDS has meant that the nature of these flows can become quite complex and this has an impact not just on the transfer and dissemination process but also on the overall learning process.

3.3.2 Communication and information flows in the services and infrastructure component of CDS

Of the three major components of CDS including health, savings and credit and services and infrastructure it is in this final area upon which this case study focuses where communication and information flows appear to be the weakest.

When services and infrastructure are requested through the CDS planning process, information flows are quite straightforward. Specific interventions are requested through micro-planning and CDS channels are used to determine the prioritisation and timing. Information tends to move vertically up and down through established channels. This normally remains the case up until the implementation stage, at which point, issues concerning these flows become more complex.

There are several factors that together help to weave these information flows into a much more complex web than is necessarily the case in the savings and credit or the health aspects of the CDS programme and give them the appearance of functioning less satisfactorily. These include: the fact that there is a much higher degree of implementation requiring outside skills not necessarily available in the community, that this will often mean the involvement of third parties implementers such as Costford that are separate from the either CDS or the Municipality and therefore add another layer of communication; that community involvement is often needed in the implementation or upkeep of services; that primary interventions often lead to more complex secondary information needs which require a more

integrated development approach involving a number of stakeholders both primary and secondary and finally that it is an area where the men of the community are more directly involved in CDS programmes.

When CDS first began, once a project was requested and included in the CDS action plan, implementation then took place in quite a rigid top down fashion through municipal project officers, with little in the way community participation except to provide cheap labour. It was presumed that the implementing officer knew what was best for the community. As CDS has developed as an organisation there has been increasing awareness by the municipality of CDS's capacity to accurately access the needs of the community, 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 wider community needs and their desire to use the micro-planning exercise to ask for more strategic interventions. The increased involvement of Costford has also helped CDS determine appropriate methodology and the kind of transfer and dissemination that is sought.

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. 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. As confidence grows among RCVs and Area Chairpersons, particularly the ones with more apparent leadership qualities, then more direct contact with local project officers has taken place. This is the case particularly in reference to secondary information issues like repairs and community management issues. 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 number of individual municipal staff are seeing the benefits of developing these two way horizontal channels, so that they can target the needs of communities more effectively.

3.3.3 Approaches to transfer and dissemination

The community preferred approach for the dissemination and transfer of information in relation to the services and infrastructure component of CDS, was for the implementers to hold a practical based formal information giving session/meeting. At which point technical and non-technical issues would be discussed, community involvement would be assessed and there would be time at the end for the community to ask questions. Costford are the main agent that CDS use for construction. Their stated aim is to work with local communities as much as possible. They see it as important that the community are involved in understanding the various issues that arise so that they can make an informed assessment of the process. They work

hard to provide data about the building in a way that is understandable to the local community. Where possible they will transfer ideas using appropriate visuals and photos to convey an idea rather than rely on architectural plans which communities normally don't understand. They encourage people to go to a neighbouring site to look at an existing structure and discuss issues with local beneficiaries so that they can then raise any outstanding issues at a subsequent meeting with a Costford representative. Costford is also gradually producing a series of simple, do it yourself brochures for making and repairing low cost structures. There was a general agreement that in respect to the transfer and dissemination of general information, Costford actions correlated with the needs as expressed by the communities themselves.

Costford also see the development of horizontal links as important. They make a point of linking training with ongoing work. One of their intentions is to ensure that through their training, technicians and professionals can also see for themselves what the priorities and actual needs are for poorer communities. They also encourage inter community communication as well as intra community discussion about the implementation process. They discuss and often initiate topics that are of concern to communities that normally arise where primary information needs will lead to secondary, often more complicated ones. In these situations they will endeavour to ensure that the community is thinking about future issues like collecting a small weekly sum that will provide for the clearance or upkeep of a public latrine or where the soil has a high clay content and reduced absorption means that the two pit latrine will not work as effectively and will also have to be cleaned that potential arrangements have been thought of. As an organisation they see that the NHG, more than the individual, is the key beneficiary and this is reflective in much of their methodology. Though expedient and cost effective they also see it as important that communities use the CDS tiered structure to organise their finances and Costford work with the Area Chairperson to ensure that individual grants are brought together and then the materials for several houses or latrines are purchased and delivered en bulk, reducing overall costs.

The provision of other services, particularly infrastructure, is normally held to be the responsibility of the municipality. In this area, communication links seem to flow in a much more traditional linear sense. Plans are submitted through the CDS mechanism and then implemented through municipal project officers. Focus groups felt that there was less transference of information in relation to services and infrastructure as compared to with other sectors. Here the focus was much more exclusively on implementation. There were individual project officers who were interested in developing a

relationship with the community but on the whole this was felt to be rare. Generally, where information about project implementations is transferred to the communities, this is carried out in a group meeting involving the main beneficiaries. This normally occurs at the beginning of a particular phase of work and though at this point community input is expected, it is more by way to clarify that they are aware of certain issues that are relevant to the implementation process, rather than as a way to increase participation and learning.

Some of this is changing with the implementation of programmes initiated under the Kerala People's Planning Campaign. There has been some cross over with programmes implemented under this programme and through CDS. There is currently a lot of discussion at the Municipal level as to whether to bring them under the same umbrella. It is however expected that the Kerala People's Planning Campaign will help to strengthen horizontal ties particularly at ward level and this will have an impact on the role of the NHGs and in particular on the role of the Area Chairpersons.

3.3.4 The role of group meetings in the transfer and dissemination process

The establishment of the thrift societies through the savings and credit component of the programme is a key factor in the transfer and dissemination of information and skills, across the whole spectrum of CDS activities. They provide a practical rationale for the NHGs to meet on a regular basis which in itself is a cornerstone to the success of CDS. This occurs in a number of ways. It allows for regular communication and development of ideas and leads to knowledge acquisition at an acceptable rate, which in turn ensures better overall transfer and dissemination. Communication within the group is strengthened as is group unity. The group is therefore able to more easily identify and prioritise individual needs as well the needs of the whole group.

NHG's are encouraged to meet as frequently as is required, preferably on a bi-weekly basis. The main purpose of the meeting is to collect and record thrift savings and loan repayments and encourage and support those that are falling behind in their payments. However, at such meetings other issues concerning all CDS related activities are raised and discussed. This is important because often problems or concerns are dealt with while still at an early stage rather than waiting till they become more consequential and a special meeting of the NHG has to be called to look into it. The group meetings also provide a regular 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. For many women these group meetings were the first opportunity where they had been able to regularly discuss issues that were important to them as women

including women's health, the role of women in male dominated areas such as the provision of services and infrastructure and subsequent employment opportunities such as in masonry and carpentry. These meetings have also helped to overcome one of the reasons 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 and then if it is a commonly felt that they don't understand a particular issue, it can be followed up at a future point with the appropriate technical person.

Groups tend to meet at the house of one of the NHG Committee, normally the RCV. Some groups meet much less frequently and knowledge is passed on more by word of mouth. These meetings are then replicated at the Area level. In each area there is a space that has been allocated as the ADS. This is either in the Area Chairperson's house, or in a few cases where this is not available, a space is rented for the purpose. CDS would like to develop these facilities and their use by having permanent ADS offices in each area that are independent of the Area Chairperson but this is presently curtailed by a lack of funds. Dispute resolution often takes place at this level. CDS organisers are quite often present at these meetings which normally occur on a monthly basis. The meetings both at Area and NHG level also provide a time when training can be conducted both formally and informally.

3.3.5 Intra community flows and the involvement of men

Services and infrastructure programmes also encourage more intra community communication flows. In such projects, more than in other components of the CDS programme, there is a natural tendency for men to be involved in the discussions and at the time of implementation. There are significant differences among the various NHGs about the role of men in CDS initiated programmes. Most groups feel that men should be involved at appropriate times but that women should choose when and how to involve men in the discussions and that CDS should remain fundamentally a women's organisation. There is also a perceived generational difference with younger women less willing to defer fully to men on issues that have traditionally been seen as the men's domain such as construction. Younger women often feel that since they actually use the house more than men, so that if simple choices of construction design were available then women should naturally be involved.

The general view is that it is important to involve men in the implementation stage because they have more background in these areas and can ask questions that are pertinent and relevant to the overall design that perhaps women might overlook. A few NHGs did not see the purpose for

excluding men from CDS and felt that it should be a more representative organisation because the NHG was making decisions that are for the benefit of the whole community. There are also differences of opinion as to whether male involvement should be in a formalised way, that is through NHG meetings or in a less formal sense, where information was shared informally by word of mouth.

Even as the case study was being undertaken these differences could be appreciated. In the various discussions held with focus groups there were marked differences in approach as to the involvement of men in discussions. In some groups the meeting was a women only meeting and men did not attend though they were around in the community at the time of the meeting. In discussions with other focus groups just the man of the house, where the meeting was held, would attend. In a few groups a half a dozen or more men would sit around the outside of the focus group as the discussions were taking place.

Infrastructure projects also afford an opportunity for wider information sharing. For projects such as drainage, raised pathways and electrification often impact on the wider community, outside the confines of the NHG that made the request. In this situation information transfer will take place informally through individual discussions. On certain occasions municipal project officers will hold a more formal meeting that might involve wider community members should this be appropriate. During the course of the case study, when non CDS members were asked about what programmes they were aware of that had been initiated by CDS they normally gave examples of services and infrastructure projects rather than ones that related to health or microcredit.

3.3.6 The role of Area Development Societies and Neighbourhood Group Committees in the transfer and dissemination process

The role of the Area Chairperson and to a lesser extent the RCV are critical in determining information flows. The Area Chairperson acts both a channel and directional valve for information and communication flows and as a result plays a pivotal role in creating an interface between a range of secondary stakeholders and the NHGs as well as between the NHGs themselves.

A range of secondary stakeholders have at various times provided training to Area Chairpersons and RCVs. These include CDS Organising Committee, government training institutions such as Institute for Management in Government, Kerala Institute for Local Administration, Loyola Institute Sociology Department, NABARD, and municipal bodies like the Engineering section and Health section. In the early stages of CDS there was a more comprehensive training that was provided under

the auspices of UNICEF, which while making sure that practical operational training was conducted also focused on confidence building and strengthening of leadership skills. This additional training aspect has diminished significantly in recent years. In subsequent discussions with the UPA director at State level, they said that this was something they hoped to reintroduce onto the agenda after the next elections of Area Chairpersons due this year.

All Area Chairpersons and RCVs thought that the training was beneficial and that the methodology adopted by the various training institutions seemed appropriate. Though mostly lecture based there was time for discussion. There was a general feeling that the discussions could be more guided with stronger teacher facilitation.

Even though training was generally seen to refer to the more formal training there was also significant peer training as Area Chairpersons came together at meetings or at the CDS offices and developed each others skills. The fact that women could be re-elected into their position for a second term of two years meant there was one to one mentoring between older hands and more recently elected members. As with any tiered system there were also personality clashes between members at the various levels that also hampered communication flows. This however did not seem to be common.

3.3.7 The role of the municipality in the transfer and dissemination process

Though many of the issues to do with information flows and the transfer of information to and from the municipal government have already been raised, it is worth looking at a couple of specific issues here. One of the common criticisms of the municipality is the fact that it is quite weak at promoting or developing effective communication and learning processes that involved the community and in this case CDS.

One of the key issues is that traditionally the government structure has been set up to enhance vertical flows of a top down nature. Even where suggestions are put forward from within the municipality, that could significantly improve communication particularly at the level where implementation is taking place, these suggestions struggle to be included on any significant agenda where policy is being created. This is because there are not really strong and effective feedback channels within the municipal structure and monitoring and evaluation of the transfer process has been less of an issue than the result of the implementation itself. This has meant that traditionally there is also not the necessary capacity within the municipal government to effectively use and develop more horizontal flows of communication and information flows. Where this has happened, it is normally because of an individual projects officer's interest in facilitating this process rather than any formal mechanisms of

transfer.

Another issue relates to the existence of task networks. These develop where you have several actors involved in the transfer and dissemination process surrounding one particular task. It is felt that effective interactions among different organisations in any given task network is normally very weak, with little co-ordination of information taking place. It was interesting that speaking to a number of municipal officials who were involved directly or indirectly with the provision of services and infrastructure, that they were unaware that Costford had a significant training component. More active co-ordination is felt to be needed if services are to be focused more appropriately on the needs of the beneficiary. The municipality has often delegated this co-ordination role to CDS. This is often effective when CDS was only co-ordinating a few specific interventions but as the scope of CDS activities has grown and the core competency of the organisation is being stretched then so is it's capacity to co-ordinate effectively.

With the development of CDS as an organisation, there is now an increased awareness by the municipality, of a communities ability to understand and prioritise its own needs. Initially, this information was channelled through the CDS programme officer to the municipal council and down to the project officers, but as the scope for this kind of information sharing has increased and CDS has been seen more as a body through which poverty alleviation can be addressed, wider and more direct horizontal flows between the community and the municipality have been encouraged.

In the health sector these links are considered quite strong but less so in the engineering sector. There is however a growing appreciation within the municipality for the fact that CDS can be used as a facilitating and implementing body for government interventions that affect poorer communities and some project officers have developed positive links with local communities, particularly through Area Chairperson and are using these linkages to more appropriately focus the implementation of specific programmes.

The problem is that though there has been an increase in these kinds of localised communication flows, and a growing awareness of their existence, they are normally developed one an individual project by project basis, in an informal capacity and depend on the degree of intuition or leadership of a given individual or group. There is still a lack of awareness on behalf of many project officers as to the capacity of local communities and the express needs of the very poor. For this to have a more substantial impact then a more formalised concerted approach has to be undertaken to improve the interfaces on both sides but in particular the municipal side. There is a need to build on these informal networks and build them

into active mechanisms for interaction and co-ordination. Formal means of communication have to be created which include linking communities into the technical planning and implementation stages, 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 looked at and developed. 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 capacity.

3.3.8 Strengths and weaknesses in the transfer and dissemination process

One of the major strengths of the CDS programme is that it facilitates information exchange and allows for a more focused use of resources. As a result, municipal resource people and secondary stakeholders, such as Costford, can more appropriately assess the kinds of transfer and dissemination mechanisms required and take into account preferred methods of delivery as identified by the poor themselves while generally be less prescriptive in their delivery approach. Fuller participation in the implementation process also has the effect of adding value to the transfer of information since the community has taken partial ownership of the overall communication process. This not only facilitates the transfer process but helps to build responsibility for secondary information acquisition whether that be in finding out about repairs of services such as street lighting or linking health education and environmental sanitation concerns to construction.

The fact that CDS concentrates in several areas apart from services and infrastructure including health and savings and credit, encourages integrated development as well as intersectoral and interdepartmental cooperation. A heightened awareness of the wider needs of the urban poor and the related transfer and dissemination processes has led to substantial reforms within various sectors for example the banking sector and the low cost housing sector.

Another strength is the regularity of contact that is provided through the savings and credit component. This establishes a solid foundation which ensures effective transfer of information can take place across the whole spectrum of CDS activities, including services and infrastructure. It also provides the rationale for the role of the Area Chairwoman who is key to developing information flows particularly of a horizontal nature and therefore developing wider community links. The regularity of contact is also important for encouraging informal community information exchanges, peer support and incremental learning.

The CDS system also provides scope for

significant and relevant training. It also offers beneficiaries the opportunity to dictate to some extent their own training needs and to a lesser extent how, when and where they want the training to take place. It also provides a structure, where initially only a few key individuals have to be trained but who are then responsible for ensuring that the information is subsequently transferred and disseminated throughout the organisation, thus relieving the training burden on the municipality.

While being considered a strength in terms of gathering and focusing information, the tiered nature the CDS structure is also one of its weaknesses. Women in the NHG are often quite willing to delegate responsibility communication requirements to the RCV and Area Chairpersons. This can mean that they have not fully taken ownership of the information and this in turn can weaken its overall impact and decrease the actual amount of learning that might take place. It also brings about the potential for a communication gap to occur.

The tiered nature of CDS can therefore be a constraint because the ability of the organisation to function and grow is limited by the capability of the Area Chairperson and the RCV. It also affects the amount of information loss that occurs in the transference process. This at the same time provides an opportunity, should the leadership needs of these individuals be more substantially addressed. If the Area Chairperson, and to a lesser extent the RCV, are not suitable they could have a significant negative impact on the overall transfer and dissemination process. A lot rests on their leadership qualities and ability to act as a facilitator and resource person. In this regard, training to strengthen these qualities is needed but has been lacking in recent years.

Training, while a strength of CDS, could also be seen to be a weak link. One of the constraints is that CDS is reliant on third parties for training inputs and their resultant methodology and has little influence over this process except to use CDS to organise formal training where gaps are detected. There is also the question as to whether an increase in training will result in a corresponding increase in productivity or benefit to the community, bearing in mind the increased costs that training brings and the raised expectations that go with it. There is the opportunity for CDS to centralise training and take a more hands on approach to the training but this would mean employing someone in a training role within the organisation. Another opportunity for CDS would be to develop and improve the leadership training of office bearers as well as involving other key individuals its training in order to improve the interface between CDS, the Municipality and other secondary stakeholders, particularly at the area(ward) level.

Another area that could be seen both as a threat and an opportunity relates to the role Kerala

People's Planning Campaign. On one hand there is the fear that it will have the effect of dominating the function of CDS and reduce the scope for women to play an active role in determining the development needs of the community. There is also the fear that it will over politicise the CDS, as local municipal councillors attempt to play a stronger role in the deciding and implementing of programmes and that funding will become more linked to the local municipality further eroding the micro-planning process. At the same time if it is managed successfully the decentralisation of government power and funds, that is being established through the People's Planning Campaign could have the effect of strengthening horizontal links, enhancing the communication functions of the CDS and further developing the capacity of Area Chairperson to link directly into municipal structures.

3.4 Learning

One of the features of CDS is the fact that it has provided opportunities to develop a positive learning environment for both beneficiaries and secondary stakeholders alike. Just as information is transferred and disseminated across the range of CDS initiated activities, absorption and assimilation also takes place across all of its various components.

3.4.1 Services and infrastructure focus on implementation rather than learning

The services and infrastructure component of CDS is seen to be more focused on direct implementation rather than improving communication and the transference of knowledge. A number of NHGs feel that there could be more of an attempt to use the opportunity of constructing houses and of latrines, to train local people in skills that they could subsequently use in the repairing of houses or in terms of general skills upgrading. For Costford the main use of local labour is to provide a voluntary basic manual contribution that can help to offset the cost of paid labour, enabling them to provide a more substantial structure for the set basic price. Costford feel that training people at the time of building the house would be a rather ad hoc process and add to the cost unnecessarily. They would prefer to link more formalised training requirements into ongoing building programmes. For example they use people being trained as masons under the CDS training schemes in the construction of CDS initiated construction programmes. The CDS committee feel that comparatively Costford has a stronger training focus than other building centres, for example the state run Alleppy Building Centre, and this is why they used them. However, they agreed that that this is an area that needs to be developed if correct patterns information transference are to be established and maintained so that the communities can become more self sufficient in the longer term.

The municipality is seen as responsible for the provision of other services and infrastructure. Where implementation has taken place there is general satisfaction with the result. The municipality, is however much less focused, than Costford, on actual community development. As with Costford, there are missed opportunities to develop community skills during the implementation process. Some NHGs feel they do not have the skills to be involved in the implementation of such 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 would be. This did not just mean participation in terms of providing cheap labour, but participation in the fuller sense. Another issue is that though the micro planning process allows NHGs to identify needs, they are not actually involved in the planning stage of the implementation process. Essentially, microplans are lists of what is required rather than an attempt at more detailed action planning. Until this next step is taken then NHGs will not really be able to get the full benefit of the potential learning.

Secondary information needs, such as how to go about getting repairs of electrical services, were also not felt to be dealt with adequately by the municipality. Focus groups highlighted the problem of not being sure which part of the municipality was responsible for what intervention and suggested the need for a single and more obvious interface that could be dealt with, to cover a range of service and infrastructure issues. Horizontal links are also apparently quite weak in this area. Area Chairpersons felt that it was more difficult to work directly with the municipality on issues to do with services and infrastructure than health and that the council interface was much weaker in this area.

3.4.2 Shift in attitude towards learning

Originally, municipal project officers felt it was inappropriate to be dealing with women on issues to do with services and infrastructure. Yet, as CDS has developed as an organisation there has been a shift in attitude. Though there are still strong views held by municipal project officers about the lack of capacity among poorer communities, there is increasing acknowledgement that where women are involved the degree to which wider community learning that can occur is potentially greater.

As the Kerala People's Planning Campaign develops it is expected that the current views held by municipal project officers towards community involvement will change. Now in second year of the campaign, this was the first year where implementation of projects has taken place. The first year of the campaign was dedicated to training and developing the appropriate plans that would lead to implementation. During the implementation

phase of the Kerala People's Planning Campaign there has been some cross over with programmes being implemented by CDS. As a result, there is a lot of discussion at the Municipal level as to whether to bring them under the same umbrella. In discussions with the State UPA cell in Trivandrum it was stated the CDS will become one of the sub-systems of the People's Planning Campaign, particularly in relation to women's empowerment, housing and the achieving of minimum basic needs. It is expected that it will retain its independence and not become subordinate to the planning process as a whole. 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.

Many of the aims of the Kerala People's Planning Campaign and CDS are the same, in terms of fostering integrated development at the community level. It will therefore be interesting to see whether they can work together to promote complimentary learning outcomes or whether in fact they will act against each other and undermine the learning that is taking place through the two different systems.

For both NABARD and Costford, working with CDS has also represented another kind of shift in organisational attitude. Previously they had a predominantly rural focus. Working with CDS was the first substantial involvement in the urban setting and as a result a lot of their own internal procedures had to be altered as did their understanding of the development process. Much of what was assumed in the rural environment could not be assumed in the urban setting. They therefore had to redefine their own organisational learning outcomes in order to be able to take on board the more dynamic, multidisciplinary, stakeholder driven nature of urban development.

3.4.3 The role of Area Development Societies and Neighbourhood Group Committees in the learning process

It has already been suggested that the Area Chairperson plays a pivotal role in the transfer and dissemination process but this is equally the case for learning. Their role in the prioritisation process also helps them in their capacity to present information succinctly as well as managing and presenting conflicting demands. This function is important if effective institutional and organisational learning is to occur and key learning outcomes are to be highlighted from within the wider array of responses. They also play a key role in assessing learning that has taken place at the NHG level and passing these assessments on to the CDS or to relevant municipal authorities.

Apart from the need for increased leadership skills, there is also a need to train Area Chairpersons to be trainers. They are expected to

pass on a lot of information to the NHGs and in some cases train NHG members but have received very little guidance in how to be trainers. More effort is also needed to provide materials that could assist them in this process. Though this applies to all areas of the programme it is specifically the case in relation to health education where CDS is being used more widely as a channel for the dissemination of information.

There is also a communication gap that inevitably occurred in such a tiered system. This also has an impact on the appropriateness of information and how well lessons are being learnt. Though it was generally felt that the existence of the Area Chairperson and the RCV helped significantly to alleviate this, there are still improvements could be made.

3.4.4 Institutional learning

The change of attitudes towards poorer communities and how best to interact with them has been significant since CDS was formed several years ago. Though institutional learning that has taken place over that time, this does not appear to be uniform across the municipality but is stronger in certain sections like health. This is more as a result of certain significant individuals or the ground swell of change that had taken place at the local level that could not be ignored, rather than the putting in place of effective mechanisms of learning and change within the administrative structure itself.

Most officials have undergone some kind of training related to poverty alleviation, though this was generally limited to one or at the most two courses, run by the various government training institutes. Some of this training has been specifically related to poverty alleviation, but normally it was considered as a sub issue within management development training or training for 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 these training sessions took the form of lectures with some discussion about the issues that had been raised. Some were held in Alleppy itself, others were in Trivandrum or Cochin. There is no field based application of the training which some feel would be bring added value to the training offered. Training is also seen as a way to get across the mechanics of implementation. There is not a focus on developing problem solving skills or enhancing management skills that will help to facilitate more productive communication channels with communities themselves and generating sustainable development. There is also very little joint training that occurs with both CDS members and municipal staff, so opportunities to look jointly at issues of concern are limited.

The existence of CDS in some ways acts a counter incentive to the municipality further

developing its skills. The fact that there is a quasi governmental body that is seen to be working efficiently in addressing the needs of poorer communities means there is not the same need for the municipality to be seen to be doing something in this regard. The issue of motivation and incentives is also an issue. Though there have been legislative changes and policy changes that promoted greater integrated community development. For effective actions in this regard to take place, then there has to be motivation among officials to want to work with the poorer communities. Effecting this kind of motivation is seen to be the difficulty. Linked to this, is the fact that human resource management is not a strong feature at municipal level. Particularly in terms of coming up with an effective framework for assessing capacity gaps within the municipal structure and being able to work to close these gaps.

Many of these issues are now being looked at under the People's Planning Campaign, which in itself is another issue when looking at recent municipal learning. Since the campaign began two years ago, a tremendous amount 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 and taking stock of what that this has meant for the municipality in terms of the institution, how to assess that learning in a more formal manner and what are the wider implications in terms of its relationship with CDS.

Another issue that affects municipal learning is that municipal councillors have a very poor record when it comes to attending training. Several reasons are put forward for this, they include: lack of political incentive, that they often consider that they do not need this kind of training and time constraints. This is an issue not just for creating more effective links between Area Development Societies but for the Kerala People's Planning Campaign in general.

Within the municipality itself when monitoring and evaluation do take place this is normally very product orientated and often quite statistically bound. There is very little formal assessment of process and where this has occurred it is normally done through one to one feedback from a junior officer to a higher official. There is not really a co-ordinating body within the municipality that looks at issues of institutional learning. Issues are dealt with as and when a problem arises. There is no mechanism for producing an action plan to look at how these issues could be addressed in a more strategic sense and a framework developed that will result in better practice.

3.5 Use and Impact

One of the strengths of CDS is the fact that not

only does it act as a vehicle for the transfer and dissemination but also it provides an effective framework through which the different stakeholders can develop their ability to apply the information that has been learnt. This is the case in all the individual components of CDS including services and infrastructure but reinforced by the fact that there is significant cross over between these various components.

3.5.1 The integrated nature of CDS

In assessing the impact of the information, communication and learning process as developed through CDS, on the lives of poorer women in Alleppy, there is a need to understand the synergy that exists between the various components and the relevant stakeholders. The fact that knowledge being acquired by women through one sector of CDS could then have impact on their understanding and use of information and skills in another area, was seen by them as an important realisation.

In this capacity, services and infrastructure are seen as often providing a physical output for knowledge which has been gained through the health component of the programme and promotes a more strategic use of resources. The fact that a couple of NHGs re-prioritised drainage after learning more about environmental health issues is an example of this kind of action.

3.5.2 Women's empowerment

The acquiring of this wider knowledge has also given women the confidence to contribute to the learning cycle in what were traditionally seen as areas dominated by men. Services and infrastructure are a good example of this process. When CDS first began, women would defer most issues to do with this to men. However, as their confidence in the value their own contribution has increased so has their desire to manage the process more fully through the NHGs, without having to defer to men in the community and only involve men when they see it is appropriate.

With women's involvement in the provision of services and infrastructure has come a corresponding desire to learn about this field in a more active way. The most obvious result of this has been the recent promotion of a CDS programme to train women masons. This has had several knock on effects because though masons are still considered quite low in the construction pecking order, it was traditionally a male only domain and now since its inception there are plans to ask for training in more complicated skills like carpentry. This has led to an interest to be trained in other areas traditionally occupied by men. The most recent encroachment into traditional male areas of employment are requests through the planning process for women to be trained as auto-rickshaw drivers

The knowledge of how to look at things in a more strategic fashion is very important when

looking at how integrated development should take place and assessing gender specific needs and women's empowerment in general. Focus groups said that prior to CDS there was a much stronger tendency to simply concentrate on more practical gender needs which were usually in response to a perceived daily necessity. However, as CDS has developed there has however been a chance to focus on what could be described as strategic gender needs which arise from the analysis of women's subordination to men.¹⁰ This includes amongst others: the abolition of the sexual division of labour, the removal of institutional forms of discrimination such as the right to access credit, the adoption of adequate measures of male violence and control over women.

Interestingly, one of the negative aspects of CDS is that among certain women there is a perceived increase in domestic violence as a direct cause of the empowerment of women that has been brought about through CDS. As far as this case study could gather, this is an area that has not been addressed in any formal capacity. Women did feel that the existence of the NHGs while potentially increasing the risk of domestic violence, had also played a role in preventing it. Domestic violence is something that had occasionally been brought up in meetings and in some cases, as a direct result of these meetings, community pressure had been brought to bear on an individual either by other women or with the support of other men in the community, often younger men. This concept of a women's support network is something that was felt to have been much weaker before the existence of CDS.

This kind of informal support network also offers a chance to share information that relates, in more general terms, to the community in which they live. General aspects of women's health, the education and welfare of children were areas which were understood had been enhanced through these meetings, as had the understanding of the role of cultural programmes as a way of enhancing community spirit. This has led to the recent formation of the 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 however could have had as much to do with social conditions or the leadership qualities of the RCV/ADS as the regularity of the meetings.

3.5.3 *The development of horizontal linkages*

The crossover of acquired skills between the different components of CDS is also important because it encourages the development of horizontal information flows and promotes more effective links to institutional bodies and other relevant secondary stakeholders like Costford. The

fact that CDS is a quasi state body means that links between the municipality and the community are encouraged. Its multi focus also encourages integrated development as well as inter-sectoral and interdepartmental cooperation. A heightened awareness of the needs of the urban poor and the related transfer and dissemination processes has led to substantial reforms within various sectors for example the banking sector and the low cost urban housing sector.

Costford also see development in an integrated sense and promote the understanding of wider health and environmental sanitation issues in the application of building. One of their stated organisational aims is to interact with other bodies struggling with similar problems and are particularly interested in breaking down some of the red tape and bottlenecks that exist in development work and to bring about more effective interdepartmental cooperation. They feel that though they have made progress in this sense they still have not been terribly effective. However, they do see that in the longer term, their links to CDS could help to improve this. Under the People's Planning Campaign, Costford are to be one of the organisations that will take over the training of municipal officials and key resource people. At the moment this is currently being organised by the state planning board themselves. In this capacity, Costford would like to use its relationship with CDS to promote increased understanding among officials of the needs and capacity of poorer communities. This would be done by developing and encouraging more practically focused field based training than currently exists.

One of Costford's issues as a secondary stakeholder is what they perceive as a lack of transparency at the apex of the CDS system. They would like to have more access to information as to how CDS is allocating its funds and how they are prioritising this allocation. They feel that as an organisation it is too closely tied to the municipal structure at the top level and would like to see more organisational independence so that it can develop more in accordance with the real needs of the local communities and as a result would have a more direct impact on the needs of local people.

3.5.4 *Political impact*

One of the most significant impacts that CDS has had is on the nature of local politics. With the success of CDS has come increasing pressure for it to be integrated in to the existing political system. This has particularly been the case with municipal councillors who in many cases have been threatened by the fact that CDS is working directly with a large section of the community but at the same time maintains its own independence from the municipal council. As the People's Planning Campaign has gathered momentum, studies are being undertaken to establish how the successes of CDS can be incorporated into the wider political

¹⁰ This idea of strategic gender needs is one that was developed by Caroline Moser among others in the 1980's.

system to bring about more effective integrated social development.

Organisers of the People's Planning Campaign are aware that the involvement of women in the planning process has not been as effective as state planners would have hoped. In some areas, the percentage of women turning up to ward committee meetings has been as low as 5-10%. At the same time they are also aware that often there has been a direct correlation between areas where CDS is strong and where there has been an unusually high turn out of women at the ward conventions, which are the cornerstone of the decentralisation process. With the skills and confidence that Area Chairpersons have gained through CDS, they had been able to have a greater impact in these forums and on the ward committees than they otherwise could have. This is important in terms of ensuring that the voice both of women and of the poorer communities is not marginalised in this wider planning process. In Alleppy, 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.

The impact that the Kerala People's Planning Campaign could have on CDS is key issue that will need to be followed over the coming years. Whether closer integration to the municipal structure will over politicise the CDS, as local municipal councillors attempt to play a stronger role in the deciding and implementing of programmes and funding becomes more linked to the local municipality further eroding the micro-planning process. On the other hand, if it is managed successfully the decentralisation of government power and funds that is being established through the People's Planning Campaign could have the effect of strengthening horizontal links, enhancing the communication functions of the CDS and further developing the capacity of Area Chairpersons to link directly into municipal structures.

This idea that CDS becomes fully incorporated into the local political planning process is being resisted by both CDS and also key secondary stakeholders like Costford and NABARD who see it as important that CDS maintains its independence to ensure that the focus remains on those that have been identified as most at risk and less influenced by local party political influence.

One of the results of this merging of CDS and the People's Planning Campaign is that there is a tendency for mixed messages to emerge. An example is in the allocation of housing. At present Costford is building houses for CDS for 20,000 Rupees while under the People's Planning Campaign a similar prioritisation process to that used by CDS is providing housing costing 35,000

Rupees. This has resulted in a lot of 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 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. It is expected however that overall the Kerala People's Planning Campaign will help to strengthen horizontal ties particularly at ward level and this will have an impact on the functioning of the NHGs and in particular on the role of the Area Chairperson.

3.5.5 Impact on CDS Alleppy of it being a model for development

The impact of CDS should not be looked at just in terms of what it has been able to provide on a local level. The fact that it has been seen as a successful model means that there has been a lot of national and international attention placed on it as an organisation. This initially encouraged a reflective process, where the organisation was asked to look at its own strengths and weaknesses, which is very important if longer term organisational learning is to take place. One of the problems with having been a successful model means that while initially a reflective process was encouraged in Alleppy CDS, the fact that it has also been able to rely on an existing formula means that it has not had to work particularly hard to adapt it to the changing environment. This has in a sense created a form of organisational complacency and according to state level UPA officials more innovative programmes are now being developed elsewhere.

SECTION 4 LESSONS LEARNT

4.1 The importance of women only groups

The women's groups allowed for a supportive atmosphere to develop that facilitated the communication and learning processes. This not only improved formal communication channels but also enhanced informal ones. This 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 there is more of a chance that the women's voice will be marginalised and key decisions made by the men.

The fact that the making of decisions about issues to do with community development are being facilitated by women, means that strategic gender needs are also simultaneously being addressed. This means that not only is their role within the immediate local community strengthened but the wider community as well, contributing

significantly to overall social development. This will be of noticeable benefit with the decentralised role of government being advocated under the Kerala People's Planning Campaign where women feel much more confident about being involved in the decision making and implementing process 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.

4.2 The importance of an institutional environment

The importance of being a government approved organisation is highlighted in the CDS example. The fact that it comes under the general municipal umbrella means that the use of CDS to bring about convergence of various programmes is significant. This linkage helps both the community and the municipality to identify both technical and non technical information, communication and learning needs in a much more integrated manner. It also allows for a more focused use of municipal resources than was previously possible and allows the community to draw on municipal skills more readily. One of the downsides of CDS's links to the municipality is that though funds are separate from the general city budget it still suffers institutional delays in the transfer of funds and incorrect budget forecasts.

The fact that the organisation has legislative support also makes it easier for it to be used as a vehicle for wider government led initiatives particularly in the health sector and also in relation to projects being implemented under the People's Planning Campaign. It also facilitates the formation of horizontal links across from CDS to and from senior figures in the municipality as well as at the area/ward level. Without its official capacity, there would not necessarily be the statutory requirement that Area Chairperson be a member of the Ward Committee or the CDS Project Officer to be regularly invited to attend and participate at municipal council meetings. All of which contribute to learning at the municipal level and social development in the wider sense.

The institutional framework also provides a successful mechanism for replication. Policy can be more easily formulated, that promotes transfer best practices. This would be more difficult if there wasn't the institutional machinery in place to support it. It also means that there is more direct transfer of ideas into the relevant educational institutions for wider dissemination.

4.3 The importance of the Area Chairperson

The Area Chairperson and to a lesser extent the RCVs are critical in determining the success of information flows. They play a pivotal role in determining, channelling and directing information and communication and in this process creating an interface between the NHG and a range of secondary stakeholders as well 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. 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. Also if the involvement of poor sections of the society are to be more fully involved in the decentralisation process being undertaken through the People's Planning Campaign, then also the capacity of the organisation as a whole will have to be increased. At the moment the extent to which the area chairpersons can impact on the decision making process is quite limited because of their knowledge base, power base within the wider society, and their individual negotiation and leadership skills.

4.4 The importance of a cornerstone function to the organisation

The savings and credit aspect of the programme provides a rationale for women to come together as a group on a regular basis which is central to the sustainability of the organisation as a whole and plays a key role in the dissemination and transfer of information. There are clear direct impacts that this has including: ensuring group support for savings and credit initiatives, facilitating the prioritisation process, developing the micro-plans, providing a forum for conflict resolution. In terms of CLICS it is also central in terms of promoting the incremental development of ideas and knowledge exchange that is so important to reinforce ongoing learning and promote a problem solving approach to development. It also provides a rationale for the role of the Area Chairwoman, enhances the effectiveness of horizontal links and provides a mechanism for regular assessment and evaluation for group effectiveness.

4.5 The importance of the prioritisation mechanism

This is an important function of CDS. It gives both the community and the municipality increased understanding into the issues of vulnerability. It helps to disaggregate the kind of information needs that a particular community has and work together as a community to judge the relevant importance of each proposal. This also allows communities to more effectively target information needs and skills according to the disaggregated needs of their particular community. Prioritising also helps the community to rationalise the information that they have and to structure this information so that it can be communicated back to the municipality in a way that allows for them to respond more appropriately and improve corresponding communication flows and mutual learning.

The prioritisation process develops the capacity to cluster needs into a more strategic assessment of a communities needs and to decide what are essential information and training needs and what are more general. When strategic needs

are addressed the impact on community development is stronger, as is the potential for replication.

SECTION 5 - OPTIONS

There were several options put forward by CDS and the municipality to build on the existing CLICs mechanisms and to remove and alleviate blockages.

The first relates to the improving of the communication gap that is seen to exist between CDS and the NHGs. A proposal that was given in nearly every focus group discussion is for phones to be installed in the house of the Area Chairwoman. Though this would significantly improve the time delay surrounding information transfer there were issues of cost and sustainability to consider. Who would pay for the installation fee (c4,000 Rupees) and the monthly rental (c400 Rupees) and what happened when the person was no longer elected to the position or if they were too far from an existing telephone line for connection to be feasible. Would that area be even more disadvantaged? UNICEF had previously supplied bikes to women in these positions but there were issues to do with repair and very few were willing to hand over the bike at the end of their term. Also a bike did not address the problem that the extended wet season in Alleppy made it difficult for Area Chairpersons to get from area to area because of the flooding. CDS are also considering various more sustainable options including the establishment of community notice boards, this would be enhanced 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.

One area that was discussed by all Area Chairpersons and some of the of NHGs was the need for additional training for Area Chairpersons. It was felt that since they play a pivotal role in the CLICs process that training to develop leadership, management and training of trainer skills among the Area Chairpersons and also RCVs is very important. This needs to be developed in co-ordination with work being done simultaneously to improve the municipal interface particularly at ward level. Joint training needs to be conducted with

members of CDS and the municipality. This is something that is being considered by the health authorities as it would develop more effective horizontal flows of communication and information and more integrated planning at ward level.

Suggestions for training were that it be more practically orientated with the potential for site visits to improve joint understanding and interactive skills as well as develop problem solving ability. It was also felt that there is a need for the planning ability of the Area level committees to be strengthened and the development of action planning techniques.

A couple of the Area Chairpersons suggested that it would be of benefit to have someone in CDS who was responsible for developing the training component of the organisation, with more of a focus on methodology and for more use to be made of the CDS training centre facilities. At the moment, the training centre is used mostly as a location where training is held rather than a centre for developing learning and training techniques that are relevant to the needs of the poor. The role of this person could also be to assess third party implementers of training in relation to income generation skills. This person could also help to link different training that was being undertaken by secondary stakeholders such as Costford and NABARD. They also felt that there was a need to develop more materials that they could use to subsequently train people at the NHG level. This could be done through a CDS training centre in co-ordination with a training institute.

CDS organisers in Alleppy would like to see this process take place on a wider scale. They would like to develop Alleppy as a training base for other CDS organisations and encourage inter-city NHG to NHG transfer. To use successful NHGs as the practical basis for training to improve the work of other NHGs. At the moment, NHGs are reliant on the Area Chairperson or CDS organisers to facilitate the transfer of examples of successful ideas and learning, between the various NHGs. Up until now the idea model training centre or inter NHG linking has not been approved for funding.

It is also felt that developing this kind of training function could then be linked in to wider needs of capacity building needs in relation to 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

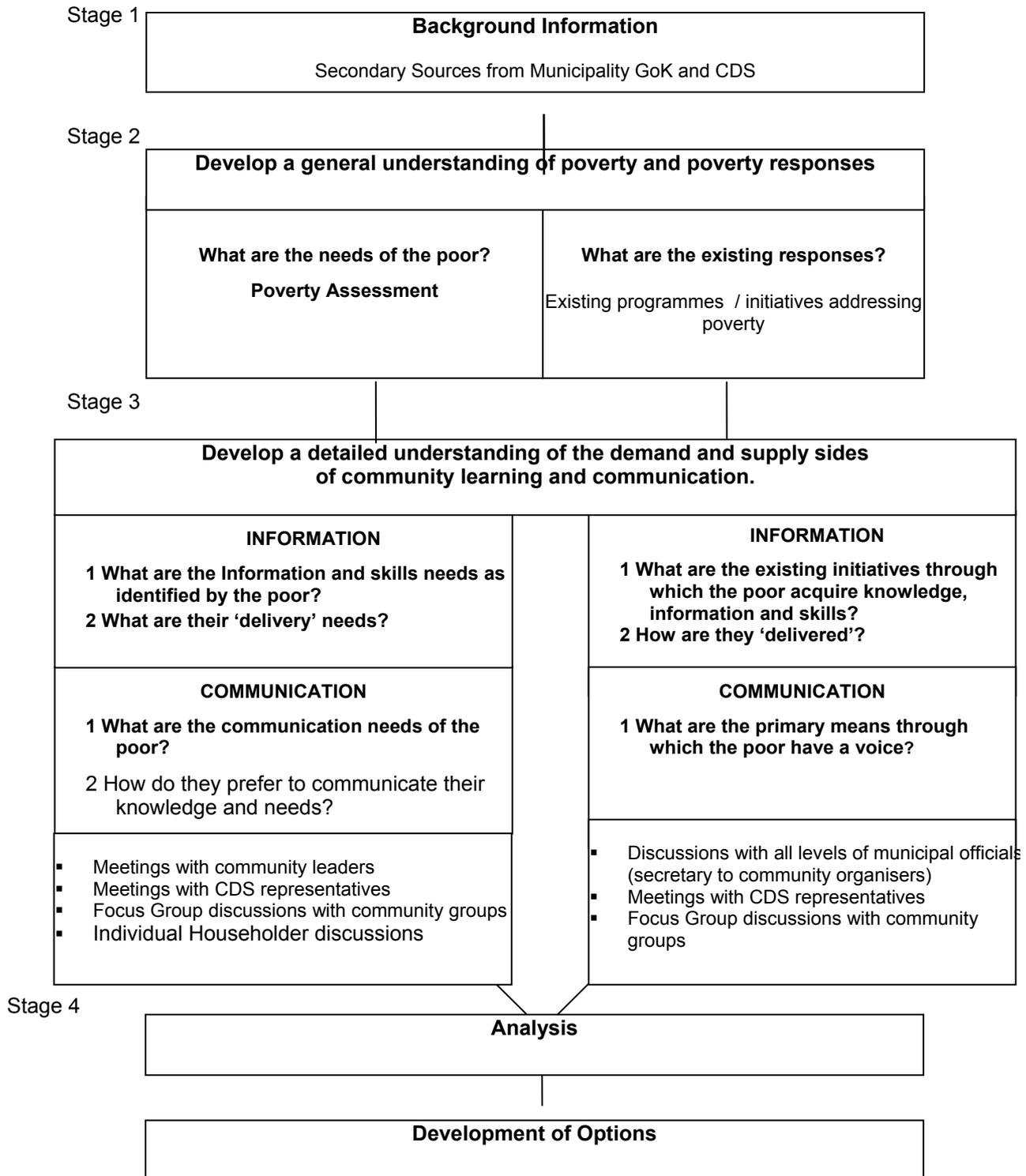
Diagram 6: The Transfer and Delivery Process.

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

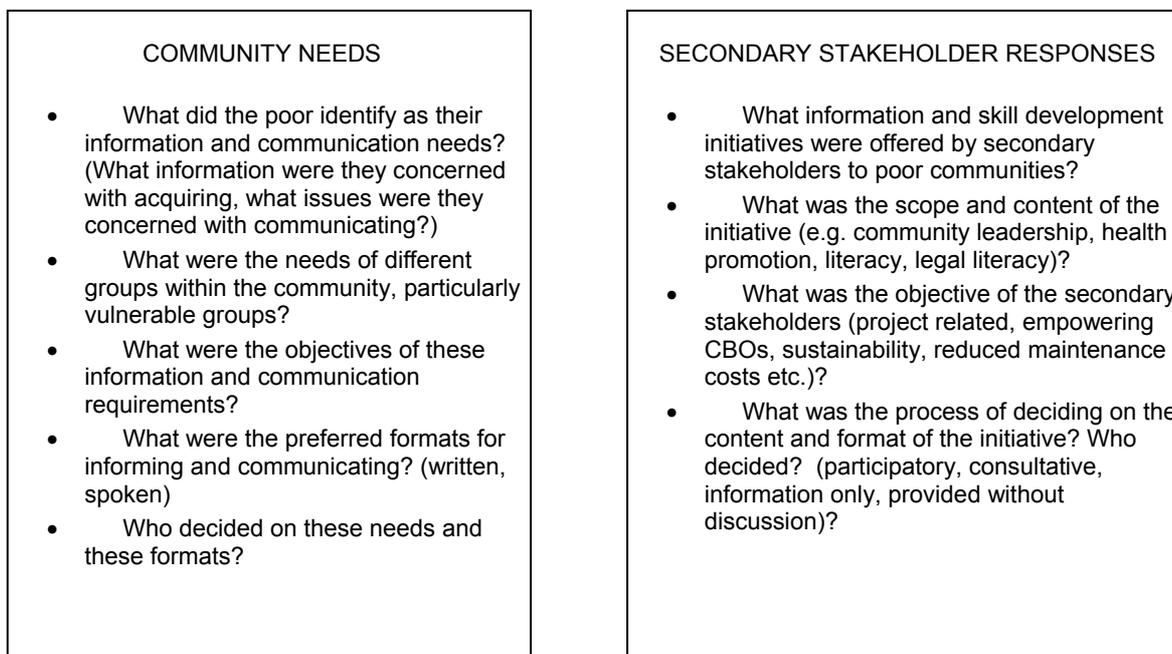


Knowledge, Learning, Information and Communication Processes
for improving the delivery of housing, services and infrastructure
Flows to and from the Community

2.

What?

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



Were the poor able to acquire the information they needed? Were the poor able to communicate their needs and knowledge?	
Strengths Weaknesses Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent did the information provided meet the differentiated needs of the different vulnerable groups? ▪ What were the gaps in the information provided versus the information needed? ▪ What were the benefits (expected / unexpected) of the information provided? ▪ What factors affected the degree to which the information meets the needs of the poor and was able to be applied??
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent did the poor communicate their needs and knowledge? ▪ What were the primary constraints to communicating effectively? ▪ Were all groups represented by this communication and able to state their views? ▪ Was this communication effectively received? ▪ What factors affected the degree to which the message being communicated was received?

3.

**Who, How, Where, When, By Whom?
Describe the Transfer and Delivery Process.**

COMMUNITY NEEDS

- What did the poor identify as the preferred means for delivering/ transferring / disseminating information and knowledge? (formal/informal, workshops, language, etc.)
- Were issues of place, time, trainers or participants important? (What were the views of different groups within the community?)
- Explore issues such as time of day, community members / household members selected, location, language etc. and consider whether these factors marginalised any groups.
- Were the poor able to easily express their needs? What techniques were used to assist in the communication of their needs?

SECONDARY STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES

- What methodologies were employed to transfer information and skills (How, where, when, how long)?
- What was the process of deciding on the methodology? (participatory, consultative, information only, provided without discussion)
- Was the process flexible? Formal? Informal?
- Who were the learners? How were they selected?
- Who were the trainers / disseminators? (CBOs, NGOs, consultants, municipality only etc.) What were their roles? Skills?

To what extent did the method of acquiring and communicating information meet the needs of the poor? Were the poor able to communicate their needs and knowledge?

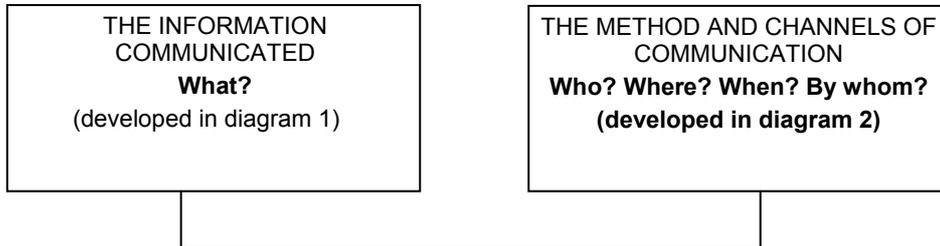
<p>Strengths</p> <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Constraints</p> <p>Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did the secondary stakeholder approach take into account the preferred methods identified by the poor? If not what were the differences and why? ▪ To what extent did the method of transferring information meet the differentiated needs of the poor? ▪ What were the benefits (expected / unexpected) of the methods adopted? ▪ What factors affected the take-up of information and its application?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What opportunities could be identified for improving the method of transfer of information, learning and skills development? ▪ How could the method be enhanced to more adequately meet the needs of the poor or to provide wider dissemination?

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

Use and Impact

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

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

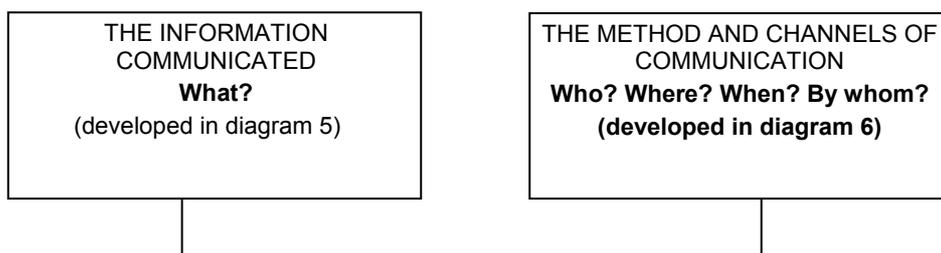
- What did the municipality identify as their preferred means for delivering/transferring disseminating information and knowledge ?
- Did these vary according to the section involved?
- Describe the information flows that existed within the municipality or were initiated from the within the municipality?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

Use and Impact

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

Options Lessons Learnt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What options could be identified for improving the information transferred and the methods employed to enhance the impact municipal learning ? ▪ What options can be identified to improve the municipalities response to the needs of poorer communities? ▪ What lessons have been learnt from the overall process and how can these be disseminated?
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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 Alleppy. 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 Alleppy 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 Alleppy (with exception of CDS staff), NABARD's were the most aware of training needs and issues relating to the poor communities in Alleppy. 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 Alleppy 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 3 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 angenwary 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 its 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 4 Fieldwork Programme

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 Alleppy, general background information on CDS was collected from various State and Municipal officials in Trivandrum and Cochin. In Alleppy 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 Alleppy 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.