

A MESSAGE FOR 1993 A RETURN TO MISSION

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1. During the past year and a half we have spent considerable time and effort to streamline organisational matters. No doubt this was necessary because the expansion of MYRADA and the dissimilar situations prevailing in various projects, especially during the start-up phases of each one, had required *ad-hoc* decisions. While the variety of MYRADA's partners also fostered these differences, the decentralisation of programmes and authority which was promoted during the latter part of the 80's was mainly responsible for allowing diversity in organisational procedures to continue even where partners were quite open to change and where these differences were no longer required to cope with the local situation and had begun to be taken for granted.

Some of our donors also tended to focus exclusively on procedures. Together, therefore, the dominant message conveyed to the staff during the past year and a half was that procedures were not only important but that compliance with procedures was the only factor on which performance was assessed. During 1993, we intend to change the message; not to deny the previous one but to balance it with a strong focus on Mission; we will also consider the impact of the Mission on the organisation internally, namely in its style of functioning, and externally in its programmes and linkages with people's institutions, Government and other NGOs. This focus on the Mission will logically result in a stronger message on the importance of certain core values within MYRADA, on the fostering of participatory processes and institutions in our programmes, on the importance of innovation and commitment and on the need to work together and to rise above petty jealousies, self interest and politics of which, being human, MYRADA has its fair share.

2. This is not the first time that MYRADA has focused on its Mission. Way back during 1984 - 85 our staff spent considerable time in evolving a Mission Statement. The potential of each staff to implement this Mission was assessed in a participative manner with the peer group playing a major role in the exercise. On the basis of the findings, a HRD programme was designed to help develop staff potential to realise the Mission of the organisation. As a result of the programme

which spread over 2 years, the organisation developed a good second line of leadership and shared a common approach. The study entitled "Management by Values" carried out in 1988 - 89 indicated that people's participation, self-reliance and equity were high priorities on the value profile and were practiced within the organisation as well as in its approach and strategy. To my mind, the Mission Statement is still valid; however the organisation has absorbed new and innovative experiences during the past few years and a few modifications in the Mission Statement may be called for in order to reflect its present position more adequately.

3. The time has come, therefore, to shift gear again. No organisation can remain relevant if it does not make an effort periodically to revive and assess its Mission in the context of changing realities. Attitudes harden quicker than arteries. Therefore, this exercise is required atleast once in three to five years in order to remind older staff of the Mission and the values and strategies it incorporates, besides being necessary for new staff who join the organisation and need to absorb its culture. There is also an all-round deterioration in social and moral values which is bound to influence the staff. I am referring here not only to the increasing acceptance of corruption as a way of life, but also to the declining commitment to sincere and regular work, the increasing consumerism fostered by commercial television (TV) which reaches every home, and the increasing pressures to put career and self before the needs of others. It is even more imperative to nurture a value system for social workers who, like teachers and lawyers (and perhaps religious persons), cannot separate their work from their lives. All three categories nurture and uphold values in society. Therefore, even if they are excellent, committed and honest during working hours, they cannot afford to get drunk, steal, use foul language or disturb family relations after office hours. These remarks are not meant to cast aspersions on any one in particular, but to remind ourselves that complacency can easily set in unless we are constantly aware of our Mission and of the responsibilities it places on us. With the growing demand for MYRADA staff to share the organisations experiences outside the project areas, each staff is an ambassador whose clarity and coherence in thinking and presentation and whose behaviour on and off the field throughout the stay are essential dimensions of MYRADA's message.

4. Before we consider the Mission further, however, it may be useful to dwell on the organisations VISION. A Vision can be roughly described as 'how would we like the world to be'. From my discussions with colleagues during the past year the general picture I get is that most of us old like to have a world where there is no poverty. But what does this mean? We surely need to be little more precise or descriptive. An effort in this direction, indicates that we want everyone to have adequate shelter and clothes so that they can live like respectable human beings with a degree of dignity; together with these assets, they should also have adequate income generating opportunities to enable them to have not only sufficient

nourishment to live a normal and health life, but also to have adequate surplus to meet emergencies and to invest in a better future, at least, in terms of their children's education. It is this vision that prompted me to urge programmes to focus on ensuring that every poor family can have at least a pucca house and two income generating programmes to meet daily needs and to generate adequate surplus. Of course, given the inadequate medical and educational services provided by the Government's medical and educational systems, MYRADA has also to mobilise people to exert pressure for better management of these services at the village level and to provide equipment and support in these areas as well as in others - like animal health and milk marketing at least in areas where we work. Though by concretising the Vision into a pucca house and two income generating programmes may be anathema to some development experts, it is useful to enable all our staff to get a foothold and not get lost in theory.

5. Is a Vision important? What role does it play in the life and culture of an organisation? If there is no Vision, commitment tends to be diluted. A Vision gives rise to and nurtures values, values are strong beliefs supported by a deep understanding of reality and form the basis of stable and balanced behaviour patterns. A person who has values is not easily pulled here and there by fashions or the promise of recognition or awards, or even by personal interest when the common good is at stake. A Vision therefore helps to place the organisations goals ahead of one's own when there is a conflict of interests, and is particularly helpful in times of crisis or if one is in a leadership position when a higher level of commitment is called for. Without a Vision, a person (or an Organisation) will give priority to procedures in his/her dealings and will be content to operate at a low level of emotion and understanding. What gave the Gandhians, the churches and the radical movements their impetus, was a Vision which was not only written about and articulated in speeches but also expressed very clearly in the lives of their leaders. Unfortunately, organisations like MYRADA do not have a Gandhi, they do not even have the little Red Book of Mao; the source of their vision has to come from their religious upbringing; their education, or from their studies of and contact with eminent personalities; it can also come from being involved in disaster situations like floods or wars where the human spirit is seen and experienced at its best and worst. This is why I have often suggested that MYRADA staff should have the experience of working in a disaster situation. One of our colleagues who is now in Liberia and facing a major disaster, wrote to me saying that he now understood the value of this suggestion. To develop and sustain a vision, I recommend strongly that every staff member reads daily such writings of eminent persons that contain values. Besides, every staff member is strongly urged to spend at least 10 minutes daily in silence and meditation; this is food for the soul and will also help to give a sense of balance. Let us remember that procedures gain importance only when values and visions become weak; if self- discipline is not exercised than external controls through procedures are required.

6. What is a Mission? Though a Vision is important there are many ways to pursue the Vision; this is where a clearly stated Mission is important. For example though the common shared vision of MYRADA is a world where there is no poverty, the staff of MYRADA may have different ways of pursuing this vision. For example, there are those in the radical stream with a similar vision, who would opt for a Mission that "Fosters a process of ongoing change"; but more about this later. The issue gets further complicated since we have several sector specialists like Veterinarians or Foresters whose perceptions of their mission may be limited to the production of milk or the planting of trees which is appealing since the goals are tangible. The Mission Statement of MYRADA which emerged in the early 80's has been slightly modified to reflect the growth of the Organisation. It now reads as follows:

To foster a process of ongoing change in favour of the rural poor in a way in which this process can be sustained by them through building and managing appropriate and innovative local level institutions rooted in values of justice, equity and mutual support.

To recreate a self-sustaining habitat based on a balanced perspective of the relationship between natural resources and the legitimate needs of people.

To promote strategies through which the full potential of women and children are realised.

To influence public policies in favour of the poor.

To strengthen networks and linkages between and among formal and informal institutions that can foster and sustain the impact of development initiatives.

7. The key phrases in the Mission Statement are :

7.1. "TO FOSTER A PROCESS OF ONGOING CHANGE IN FAVOUR OF THE RURAL POOR".

This statement focuses on how, in general terms, MYRADA pursues its Vision, namely by "fostering process".

To "foster" means to provide regular, systematic personalised care. We foster process through our regular meetings with small groups, (we have on an average 200 meetings daily), by house visits and meetings with men and women at their work places or where they meet socially and with children in and out of school. MYRADA's approach is not expressed through *ad-hoc* and occasional melas, demonstrations or large gatherings - these are usually addressed by important speakers with little attention to personal interaction and processes. Such gathering seldom foster change and they often serve to "polarise" groups. Our meetings, on the contrary are regular (weekly), on days and times fixed by the groups, not by us, and with agendas set by the people. We do not indulge in - and discourage others from - calling meetings at times and in places convenient to us or to visitors. This why we are firm in discouraging village visits by Government and Bank staff at times convenient to them, but take visitors to regular meetings no matter how far away the scheduled meetings are on that particular day. To organise meetings to suit our agendas and timings is to "impose" not to "foster". People's institutions required to support change cannot be imposed, they have to be fostered - nurtured steadily and systematically; there is no short cut in development.

7.2. A Process requires that the source of the momentum for change shifts from an external agent to self motivation. In other words, we may initiate change, but the people must be provided with skills, opportunities and motivation to carry it along. Process also requires that people have a stake and take a certain level of risk so that the basis for sustained involvement exists; this is why we motivate people to save and to invest their savings in the common fund of the groups and to be fully involved in contributing, planning, managing and maintaining every activity from Watershed Management to Housing and Drinking Water Systems.

The process we seek to initiate is not a "Movement", though it has certain features of one. By a movement I mean a sudden surge in response to popular issues without adequate attention to institutionalisation. Movements are good but not necessarily the right strategy at all times. MYRADA's Mission however has features common to a movement. For one, both require people with values that motivate commitment to a vision; both have the capacity to spread on their own momentum.

7.3. “On-going Change” : Development for us is a sustainable process of ongoing change. This requires that we try to ensure that the very first action taken triggers off a process that becomes on-going and sustainable. This is where our PRA exercises in participatory planning play a significant role, since, more than the output (a plan) it is the beginning of a process in which the plan is reviewed, and if necessary revised by the people and all others involved. PRA spread so fast in MYRADA because it fitted in well with our Mission. PRA introduces participation in an organised and systematic manner at every stage of the process; the output of PRA is tangible; it provides documentation of the process while at the same time sustains the momentum; this also increases the level of accountability. The people therefore should not only be integral participants in preparing the final plan with the Government, they should also be free to discuss and revise it, if required, on their own. Today it is used by the people for participatory management, monitoring and evaluation - to decide which family has attained an adequate degree of self-reliance and no longer requires all the support provided.

If the change we seek to foster is not a one time affair but an on-going process, which is a significant feature of all sustainable development, then we need to equip people to cope with on-going change. This requires that people acquire certain skills to manage change and that they have the ability to establish and maintain stable institutions which they access and control of, so that in turn these institutions provide them with a degree of confidence to expose themselves to face new challenges and are also able to support them in this effort and in their new responses.

Change cannot be sustained by individuals alone who are poor and vulnerable but by people's groups, atleast in the first few years. Hence an important component of our Mission is the fostering of socially functional groups which are the basic institutions in the first phase of the development process. Once people have developed a certain degree of confidence they are able to conform to the rules and regulations of public institutions and are able to relate with them to sustain progress. This is also why we need to establish relationships (which are not exploitative but as equal as possible) between our groups and Banks, Cooperatives and Government Departments providing services since these will remain in the area when we withdraw. A constant flow of information is also required to motivate and sustain change. This requires that our people attain a level of literacy and numeracy and that they are exposed to the experiences of others and to information sources. This is also why we are encouraging regular literacy and numeracy classes and exposures for our people; it broadens the area of operation within which they feel confident. But an on-going process and the institutions that support it, must not only be sustainable they must also foster equity - the weaker groups must also have a stake in them. This is a strong thrust of MYRADA's Mission - to focus on the rural poor and to ensure that in all participatory activity they have an effective role to play. Our Credit Management Groups which focus

only on the poor, provides the clearest expression of MYRADA's Mission. These groups are not only appropriate to manage credit, but they are also autonomous, innovative and differ from each other, besides focusing entirely on the poor.

8. "SUPPORTING THE RURAL POOR IN THEIR EFFORTS TO DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FOUNDED IN APPROPRIATE AND INNOVATIVE LOCAL LEVEL INSTITUTIONS".

8.1. MYRADA considers that the need to sustain change is important enough for its Mission Statement to be more explicit in this matter. It explains that this 'on-going change' will be fostered by supporting the emergence and growth of appropriate and 'innovative' local level institutions which will in turn support sustainable livelihoods. Such institutions are required to support a process of 'on-going' change by providing all that is necessary to motivate and manage change in a constructive way. But care should be taken that institutionalisation does not kill or retard the process of change. This can happen if representatives of groups are not changed regularly and begin to consolidate their interests. This can also happen if staff become complacent and cease to provide adequate information and training to groups to motivate and manage change; it can also happen if the reasons for change, or lack of it, are not regularly analysed by all the staff and people and lessons learnt and incorporated in the group and organisation.

8.2. This strategy also marks a radical change from the accepted pattern of providing development inputs through a delivery system which deals directly with individuals and which operates according to its own agenda rules, procedures, criteria of viability and time schedules which seldom meet the needs of people. The people in fact have no control of these delivery systems and very limited access, if any, to them. Hence the need for alternate, institutions of the people over which they have control; these are usually innovative and not standardised but tailored by each group to meet its own needs. We have found that such institutions are not entirely new; they are often based on traditional linkages which form the basis of group formation and on cultural values, which have become dormant and need to be revived in a new social setting. I have described this aspect in detail in the Blue Book. These institutions operate on their own rules, have their own culture and sanctions and must be accepted by the official institutions as legitimate. Though the Blue Book focuses on alternate and innovative institutions which focus on managing credit, a similar approach has been applied with varying degrees of success to all our other major programmes like forestry, watersheds, drinking water, housing and health. What we must understand and explain to them is that MYRADA's Mission does not focus on the growing of trees or building of houses or water tanks.

8.3. MYRADA's Mission focuses on 'appropriate' management systems created by people, which are required to plan, manage and sustain forestry, housing, watersheds,

drinking water systems etc. Hence, though MYRADA does have engineers and foresters who provide technical expertise, our contributions is not in the technical areas; we provide these services only because they are not available locally. As one of our Board Members remarked : "We cannot teach the foresters about trees and nurseries". Our mission and contribution is to shift the management of forestry, watersheds and other resources from a pattern that is dominated (either by the Government or the powerful classes) centralised and standardised, to one in which all groups of people have a stake and which is largely organised and managed by the people and accountable to them. But by just saying so, or by calling people and telling them that they must manage watersheds or forests will be to create more confusion and result in disaster. What we are doing is to sit and listen to all parties concerned in a watershed or forests or village and to work out with various groups among the people (and the Government officers) a plan that they see is appropriate, viable and manageable, and to support all parties concerned to develop institutions and skills not only to implement this plan but to change or revise it, and to make the entire effort sustainable even if it is not technically perfect. What is technically perfect is not necessarily manageable by the local people. What is manageable however may not necessarily be equitable, unless, an external agent like MYRADA takes particular care to ensure not only that the poor receive benefits but that they become part of the process of on-going change; they will need extra support to achieve this, which MYRADA provides.

- 8.4.** It is not enough - and could prove disastrous to people - to foster only a process of change, what is also required as an integral part of the Mission is to support and build up the skills to manage change. This is where institutions (in this case peoples institutions which have a participatory character and are not dominated by an person and clique) have a critical role to play. From experience we have seen that these institutions if standardised and centralised loose their autonomy and voluntarism and will soon collapse. They have emerged in an autonomous way and must be supported to continue and strengthen this characteristic - in fact these are the peoples quality circles. The present Cooperative Societies which are large and comprise different groups are not quality circles; they resemble rather a company which consists of employees from different and competing industries and with conflicting interests.
- 8.5.** It is because of this thrust in our Mission that MYRADA runs head long into Government Departments and policies. Let us take a Watershed for example. Many Government Departments exercise proprietary rights over lands in the watersheds : The Forest Department own the upper reaches, the Revenue Department controls other common areas, the PWD the tanks etc. The people have legal control only over their own private plot. The rights over so-called common lands are not clear; hence no one is willing to invest time or resources in managing them; in most areas they are used by the dominant classes. Yet because a watershed is one drainage system, all the plots of land and the resources have to be managed together. A

technical plan to regenerate the resources of the watershed can only be implemented, first if all the departments give up a part of their proprietary rights and cease being exclusive with the remainder, secondly if their rights on all lands are clear and thirdly if the people are willing to raise their vision beyond their homesteads and fields to encompass the micro watershed which will help them to realise that all have a stake in the process. But to whom will these rights be transferred and who will manage the watershed? This is where MYRADA's roles come in. Our Mission is to help people to build up their capacity to manage their watersheds through acquiring appropriate skills and to set up institutions to which these rights are transferred voluntarily. This involves not only systems which ensure that the rights of each family are protected but that the overall objective of achieving the common good is achieved, on the strength of which depends the progress of each family. Within this context the value of equity also finds a place. The landless in the watershed where the process has been initiated have been given loans from the credit groups and the rights to harvest fodder from protected areas. This is a small beginning. No doubt there is tension at times where certain rights are claimed, but not recognised by others or by law; once again a process of negotiation and pressure is initiated by MYRADA and gradually institutionalised by the people. An analogous situation obtains in degraded forest areas and in wastelands. But this paper will become too long to explain them all. I hope that the example given serves to bring out the focus of MYRADA's Mission and is adequate as a basis for discussion and reflection. It is because of this focus on management systems that we have called the occasional papers which we bring out "Rural Management Systems Papers". They focus on our small but systematic break-throughs in helping people to establish "Management Systems" which are appropriate to their situation.

9. "WORKING TOWARDS RECREATING A SELF SUSTAINING HABITAT MOTIVATED BY A BALANCED PERSPECTIVE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE LEGITIMATE NEEDS OF PEOPLE."

- 9.1.** This part of the Mission Statement implies that there is a clear relationship between poverty and environment. They impact on one another. It implies that on-going change is not feasible unless the degenerated environment is also 'fostered' so that it revives and regenerates. As resources like soil, water and biomass degenerate, poverty increases. Any short term increase in productivity through inputs without a strategy to regenerate the environment necessary to sustain development, only becomes a symbolic gesture to cater to good photographs and visitors who leave and do not return. Since this Mission Statement focuses on the poor the reference to the environment is not primarily on excess consumption which characterises a luxurious style of living, but the statement does imply that unless there is a control on excessive consumption by a few, poverty will take much longer to be eradicated - hence a balanced perspective is required.

Concern for the environment as a 'Value' did not figure high on the list of values which emerged from the study 'Management by Values' conducted in 1988-1989; though there were pockets in MYRADA where this concern is high; the overall picture did not show that MYRADA staff gave importance to the environment in its programmes.

This concern for the environment needs to be analysed further if it is to have any operational meaning for our staff. A great deal is written about the Earth Summit in Rio and other major environment seminars; but what does all this mean to a MYRADA Team in Dharmapuri or Kote or Sira? It may therefore be useful, as a start, to separate the environmental concerns into three categories:

- 9.1.1. One - the ozone hole, it causes and other effects of an increasingly polluted atmosphere. I refer here to carbon and lead emission from automobiles and industries, to the release of CFCs from refrigerators and hair sprayers, to the release of methane from rice fields and animals, to the release of carbon from burning grasslands and forests. MYRADA's Mission does not cover these areas directly, though some of them are dealt with indirectly. Our Biogas programme for example, harnesses methane and uses it; but the objective of the programme is primarily to utilise a local resource more efficiently and for more uses than one. The fuel efficient stoves reduce carbon emissions, but they have spread because they are also smokeless and hence women want them; our extensive forestry programme which includes both planting and regeneration as well as the creation of micro-climates, surely helps to reduce carbon content in the atmosphere, though the objectives are to provide fuel, fodder, fertiliser, flower, fibre and to protect erosion (wind and soil). All these therefore do have an impact on the environment; but the thrust of the programmes, is to meet peoples needs though they are also an integral part of the strategy to provide a sustainable resource base. The issues discussed at this level however, like the ozone hole, are too remote to be of concern to the poor.

9.1.2. In the second category we have several environmental issues which are closer to the village, though they are not of immediate concern to the people. For example, we had a situation where local washermen and women were quite angry that most of the laundry contracts from large factories in the area were monopolised by businesses in Bangalore. The industries were approached by MYRADA and they agreed to give their laundry work to the local people provided MYRADA organised them. One local group was organised and provided with separate water sources, a place to wash and dry clothes and a drainage outlet which did not directly lead to any water body like a lake. Due to internal politics however another group bagged the contract; but this group used a tank for washing clothes; it is obvious that though the income of these families has risen dramatically, the water body will rapidly become polluted. The project has to work out a response to this situation. Another example was the introduction of a large number of sheep through a Government sponsored programme into an area which was already poor in grazing resources. Though MYRADA pointed this out when plans were being made, the local officials disregarded this advice; their objective was to achieve the targets given to them. Their superiors would not have pulled them up if grazing areas were rapidly degenerating, but they would surely have expressed strong displeasure if the targeted and planned number of sheep were not distributed. After all local officials are posted in an area for a very short period; who can fault them for not being concerned about long term strategies for environmental regeneration? It took some time for MYRADA to initiate a fodder strategy in the area, but this should have preceded the introduction of animals.

9.1.3. The third category of environmental issues which is relevant to our programme concerns the Management of Micro Watersheds. I will not write much about this here since we have already produced a great deal of material in our Rural Management System papers. However, from our experience we find that people are willing to regenerate areas only where the title to the land is clear. This is why in Gulbarga they first opted to regenerate private lands lying fallow. They entered into contracts with the absentee farmer to share the resources of the regenerated fields between the owner and watershed committee. We have also seen that the farmers will first work on their fields and homesteads before their vision and confidence broaden to embrace the entire micro watersheds. This also requires that the micro watershed is not too large, but small enough so that the people can relate all parts to their own private holdings and see the causal inter-relationships between parts and the whole. This is why the traditional rights to graze on common lands on the upper reaches of the micro watershed which are sometimes held by large farmers living outside the watershed, with no cultivable lands in low lying areas are a major obstacle to micro watershed management and sustainable regeneration.

9.2. It is this particular part of the Mission Statement that will be expressed in MYRADA's entry into the Uttara Kannada Forestry Project. Our role will not be to

plant trees or start nurseries, but to develop with the local people and the Forest Officers a sustainable and appropriate Forestry Management Plan at each village, a plan that will also take into account equity which was explained earlier in this paper.

Even within MYRADA the environmental status of the projects differ widely. Kote for example is at one end of the spectrum where the area is not as poor in environmental resources as Kadiri, Challakere, Bangarpet or Dharmapuri. Hence, while in Kote the emphasis should be on management of these resources, in the other four projects the strategy needs to include regeneration and management. The situation in Gulbarga and Holalkere lies in between these two, while Talavadi and Huthur are closer to Kote.

10. And finally the Mission Statement seeks **"TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC POLICIES IN FAVOUR OF THE RURAL POOR"**. Though the first part of the Mission Statement focuses on people's institutions which for the most part are alternate institutions and not a continuation of the Government's delivery system, MYRADA also seeks to influence Government policies so that they become more flexible and appropriate to meet peoples needs, and more importantly, so that they take into account peoples views and wisdom in developing and managing any plan for their progress. It is not enough for the Government to consult people in order to ascertain their views and then to prepare a final plan on its own. The people must be involved in the entire process, and if the plans that the participants (Government, People, NGO) have together drawn up require changes in existing policy, such changes must be considered and policy changes made without undue delay.
- 10.1 This part of the Mission Statement takes into consideration that the Government is the major player in the development field. Government policies in development therefore are important factors influencing the success or failure of development programmes. NGOs play an important role here, since the Government system is not 'friendly' to policy change where required. The feedback system is poor; subordinates prefer to agree to instructions from above, rather than to express their opinions, participation at meetings is limited to senior officers. The NGOs are in a position to contribute to discussions on policy matters. Unfortunately, many meetings become polarised; we NGOs must share a major part of the blame since we tend to react excitedly, without adequate preparation and to project on a much broader plane our experiences which are often limited. Ideology is another reason for the failure to dialogue though it often serves to hide our pride and a lack of professionalism; the desire for publicity is another factor that causes friction. This is why MYRADA has made every effort to keep a low profile and to avoid the press, while at the same time approaching every issue with a degree of professionalism which means little more than a serious and educated attempt to plan, monitor, assess results and learn from experiences. The ability of MYRADA staff to carry out these exercises has constantly been upgraded over the past five

years through trainings and workshops both in-house and outside, within India and abroad.

10.2 Policy changes can be brought about through a combination of several strategic thrusts.

- i) Through intervention in a professional manner at higher levels of decision making. At this level *ad-hoc* arguments and any claim by NGOs to be 'Holier than thou' are not effective. What is required is a thoroughly professional job, well documented, analysed and based on the NGOs experience, as well as adequate leverage in decision making centres. MYRADA's work on the Action Plan for Rehabilitation of the families affected by the Upper Krishna Project is one example that resulted in a policy change which falls in this category.
- ii) Through participatory planning and monitoring where Government, people and NGOs are involved, provided a system is set up to accept and process feedback at a sufficiently high level where policy changes can be recommended and followed through. Our experience in participatory planning and evaluation in Gulbarga and the proposed management pattern in the Forestry Project of Uttara Kannada are examples in this category.
- iii) Through actually fostering successful experiences in the field which serve as a basis for policy change. Our experience with the Credit Management Groups is a good example. Our experiment gradually took shape and attracted the attention of NABARD officials who after serious analysis of the experiment made significant changes in the pattern of lending to the rural poor. Our experience in Kote with community managed drinking water systems, is another example which was shared quite successfully though with lesser impact with the Government and other institutions involved with a major drinking water project in Karnataka.
- iv) Through actions such as 'padayatras' and other public demonstrations. While this strategy has good public impact it has to be carefully managed and followed through to be effective.

An NGO must be able to utilise all these strategies, since, by and large, policy change is not brought about by a single action. The right combination has to be worked out, one that is most appropriate and manageable in every situation.

10.3 As part of our on-going thrust for policy change, the few breakthrough experiences in participatory systems must be shared with Government staff so that the message spreads. One reason why MYRADA does not conduct its training programmes in the isolation of Training Centres, but in areas where people have

actually implemented such participatory management systems with some degree of success, is that the actual field work is the best learning situation and the people involved are the best resource persons. We all know that these experiences are not absolute or perfect and that there are ample grounds for improvement, but the basic trends are visible and can serve as adequate learning experiences for those who are willing to come with an open mind and without prejudice.