

## RESOURCE CENTRES OR????

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*The first Resource Centres (RCs) emerged in MYRADA about 2 years ago. However the first three or four RCs were conceived as Centres which provided free services to the CBOs, similar to what MYRADA Sector Offices have been doing. It was only later that the concepts of and strategies promoting the following features which distinguish the MYRADA RCs emerged, namely: a) self reliance; b) rating of CBOs before they are admitted as RC members and annual ratings thereafter c) A RC Management Committee comprising members from the CBOs d) a separate account managed by the RC Committee. For the sake of clarity therefore, it may be useful to distinguish between the date of "formation" of the RC which is the date when the RCs were formed and b) the "Foundation" date when the RCs introduced the four features mentioned above. All the 53 RCs functioning in MYRADA project areas as on March 31,2004 exhibit these three features but at different levels.*

*Over the past two years several notes were issued by MYRADA Head office analysing the progress of the RCs and sharing insights drawn from visits to the RCs and from the monthly progress reports and financial statements received from the RCs. A team of outside auditors with experience in assessing institutions was engaged in early 2004 to assess a few sample RCs with a focus on assessing the level of sustainability they had achieved. Their report as well as Progress Reports from the RCs formed the content for a Workshop of all RC Managers and Project Officers held in the month of March 2004 in the Training Centre in Hosur. This paper also attempts to consolidate the learnings that emerged during the past two years as well as from the Workshop. It attempts to clarify some of the key issues related to the formation and functioning of the RCs and their relations with other institutions. It is a working paper, which will be discussed in each RC and Project. Feedback and additions will be incorporated in another paper which will be brought out later in 2004.*

*There is a general feeling in MYRADA that the RCs are the appropriate institutions to manage affairs after MYRADA withdraws; there is also a realisation that much has to be done to develop: 1) a capacity building training package for the RC Management Committee, 2) criteria for assessing the RC, 3) staff and systems that will respond more proactively to emerging needs and 4) new skills. However the several visits from senior Government Officers and NGOs from various parts of the country to study the RCs gives one the impression that others are more convinced than we are that the RCs provide one answer to the question: "What after withdrawal"? We have welcomed these visits so that MYRADA can learn from their feedback as well.*

### **1. Does the name RC reflect the reality?**

The name "Resource Centres" does not reflect fully the reality that has emerged on the ground in MYRADA's projects. A "Resource" implies that it has a stock of skills and assets. The first Resource Centres which emerged in MYRADA's projects fitted this limited description. The popular use of the word "Resource Centre" also portrays an

image of control/ownership from outside (by an Institution/NGO or Government) and usually backed up by financial support from outside. Those RCs which emerged subsequently do have a stock of skills and assets; but they are not the central distinguishing features of these RCs; there are several others which will be briefly listed here.

In MYRADA's projects, the RC is managed by a Board called the RC Management Committee - comprising representatives of CBOs -mainly SAGs- who govern and are governed by a set of rules and conventions which the CBOs have decided are the most appropriate to run an institution which can achieve their own vision and mission. One RC in MYRADA covers a specific area and a limited number of CBOs - around 120 - who apply to join the RC as members. However, a CBO cannot automatically join as a RC member just because it happens to exist in the area covered by an RC. It has to reach a certain standard of performance and maturity, which is assessed by the RC Board. This assessment is repeated annually. As regards financial support, the RCs share MYRADA's strong commitment to be self-sufficient. Accordingly, the CBOs pay a monthly fee to retain membership and are assessed or rated yearly to ensure that their standards have not declined to a level where they lose RC membership. The RCs have a separate office, a separate account and a financial management system; they present their Annual Reports before the General Body. Each RC has a full time staff, called the RC Manager; so far he/she is an experienced MYRADA staff with at least 10 years experience in MYRADA - and several years in the RC area of operation - who reports to the RC Management Committee. The Manager performs an executive function and is supported by several Community Resource persons selected by the CBOs. The RCs have several features in common, but also differ in terms of management policy and functions; there is no standardised framework that all the RCs have to fit into.

What then do we call the RCs that have emerged in MYRADA's projects in order to indicate that they have these distinctive features? This paper asks for suggestions. But when you do make suggestions remember that the RCs are managed by the CBOs and supported financially by them. In turn the CBOs are rated by the RC Board annually to ensure that they are still eligible for membership. This makes them more participatory, accountable and yet independent than the Gram Panchayat. The degree of ownership, on-going and systematic review, monitoring and control of the RC exercised by institutions at the grass roots is far greater than the degree of control by people of the Gram Panchayat and its institutions. As with any institution however, this cannot be taken for granted, but must be a constant concern of the CBOs. Please also keep in mind that the SAGs whose representatives are on the Board of the RC are institutions of the poorer families and marginalised sectors; they have gained confidence to lobby for their rights and are increasingly recognised socially as a result of their experience in the SAGs and their success in initiating programmes and change in the village. Therefore the objective of equity is also promoted through the RCs which is not the case with the PRIs which reflect (and usually promote) the feudal, social and caste status dominant in society.

## **2. How did the RCs emerge?**

MYRADA's Mission gave them the institutional space and ideological support to emerge. MYRADA's Mission is to promote poor people's institutions which includes building, a) their institutional capacity to manage their organisational affairs; b) their ability to raise resources thru savings and mobilisation and to manage them as well as the ability of each member to invest them to improve their livelihoods in a sustained manner; c) their empowerment to be agents of change; and d) to be respected partners in linkages with other institutions. Underlying this Mission is MYRADA's ideology to promote institutional and financial self reliance at various levels; the former through investment in upgrading staff skills and constantly reviewing the organisational structure and culture and the latter by responding to demand for services and being paid for services provided. The RCs emerged from this corporate culture which supported and nurtured them. MYRADA did not rest with "preaching" self reliance; it has shown that self reliance is achievable within the context of NGO programmes - at the level of the Head Office, the Training Centres (CIDORs) the SAGs and the institutions it helped establish like Sanghamithra and MEADOW<sup>1</sup>; the RCs are the newest institutions to follow this established path.

## **3. Where did the RCs emerge?**

A supportive culture is important but not enough for a new institution to emerge. It also requires that there are pressures on the ground which support the emergence of an institution which is appropriate to respond to or cope with these pressures. The major pressure that triggered the emergence of the RCs was the decision to withdraw from areas where MYRADA had worked for several years. MYRADA management had long debated the strategy of withdrawal; opinions ranged from complete withdrawal of all staff and services at one end to a strategy which provided space for the emergence of a new institution in which MYRADA would continue to play some role mainly to provide a stable executive component during the transition or withdrawal period; this strategy would require in the short term (for 3-4 years) that MYRADA provides and finances an experienced and competent staff as well as supports the RC financially till it becomes self-reliant and is able to manage its own affairs.

The SAGs were identified as the most appropriate institutions to take the lead in developing an RC; other CBOs could follow as the idea caught on. The SAGs had managed their institution well, raised resources through savings and from the Banks, settled problems when they arose, lobbied for change and for better management of government institutions and programmes as well as for their rights. Most of the SAGs had the experience of forming and managing Federations. MYRADA staff met with the SAGs and proposed the idea of an RC. The staff were amazed with the response and the speed with which the RCs sprouted. Within eighteen months 53 RCs have emerged in nine MYRADA Projects which were scaling down their programmes in clusters of villages where MYRADA had worked for several years. These projects are HD Kote,

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<sup>1</sup> MEADOW - Management of Enterprises and Development of Women - an enterprise managed by women in collaboration with TITAN Watches.

Kadiri, Holalkere, Dharmapuri, Kamasamudram, Gulbarga, Kattery, Huthur and Germalam. A general overview indicates that a) the emergence and strength of the RCs depends to a large extent on the quality of the SAGs. Where the SAGs are functioning well, the RCs emerge quickly and also function well and b) where the nature of the programmes were conditioned largely by the donors priorities and systems, it took some time for the people to respond to the change required that gave priority to self reliance.

#### **4. The core features of RCs.**

There are a few features which have been identified by visitors to and evaluators of the RCs and senior MYRADA staff as the "core features" of the RCs. Though these features are listed here it does not imply that all the RCs have incorporated these features in their organisation and culture; in fact most have a long way to go, but what is important is that they are working towards institutionalising these core features in their organisation. This in turn requires that all the RC Managers and MYRADA staff supporting them agree to these core features, understand their implications and develop a strategy and a plan to support the RCs to move towards achieving the objective of institutionalising them.

These core features are the following:

1. Only institutions (CBOs) are eligible for membership, not individuals. Unfortunately there is no Act that allows institutions to be members of a Registered Body.
2. Membership in the RC depends on the quality of the CBO which is assessed by the RC in a participatory manner; even if the CBO exists in the "service area" of the RC it does not become eligible automatically for membership
3. Each member CBO pays a monthly membership fee to the RC which entitles it to certain services decided by the RC Management Committee. Most RCs have started with a figure of Rs 50/ per month per CBO; this figure is emerging as the norm.
4. All other services are paid for on an ad hoc basis.
5. The RC is managed by a Management Committee elected from the CBOs.
6. One RC can serve around 120 CBOs only; if more CBO emerge another RC is to be formed to support them
7. The RC Manager must be competent, committed and with entrepreneurial skills who is trusted by the people; he/she reports to the RC Management Committee, but continues to remain a staff of MYRADA
8. The functions of each RC will be determined by the demand coming from the CBO members. Each RC will decide whether to respond to non-CBO members and if they decide to respond -on the terms.
9. Lending money is not a function of the RC. The only recommendation that MYRADA made to the RCs was that they should not lend money to the SAGs - this is the role of the Financial Institutions. In fact there was no RC that wanted to lend money on its own; however there are several Government sponsored programmes in the States where MYRADA is working which have set up bodies at the village level which lend money to the CBOs; MYRADA anticipated that this practice may prompt the RCs to follow suit and hence its caveat.

10. In areas from where MYRADA has still not fully withdrawn, the RC should not implement any programme which is part of MYRADA budget. In other words MYRADA should not view the RC as an implementing agency of its programmes as this will undermine the independent image of the RC

### **5. Which CBOs are eligible for membership?**

The brief answer is: "Any CBO which is a **participatory** body (as distinct from a representative one), which has evolved as an institution and rates high on all the six features as described in MYRADA's RMS Paper 33 as well as against other features which may be specific to it. In general such CBOs do not achieve the level of performance to become eligible members of RCs before 18 to 24 months. Any CBO below that age applying for membership of an RC should be requested to wait; there may be exceptions but care should be taken to ensure that in such cases there is unanimous support from the RC Committee as well as adequate rating preferably by an outside team.

The present membership is largely of SAGs but gradually Watershed Management Associations (User or Area groups covering micro catchments of 150-200 ha., with about 35 families) are also joining in. The strength of these two categories of CBOs is that their members include all castes and creeds and are united by a degree of affinity among its members who are from the poorer sectors. The feature of affinity (mutual trust and support) is shared by all the SAG members even before the SAG is formed, but in the case of the Watershed Associations a special effort has to be made to strengthen this affinity since the Watershed Associations also include the landless cultivating in the upper reaches who in many areas tend to be marginalised. In the final analysis it is for the RC Boards to decide which of the CBOs are eligible. The Boards assess the SAGs and Watershed Associations before admitting them to membership.

It must however be pointed out that the RCs have not yet considered thoroughly the question of which type of CBOs to admit as members. The exclusion of CBOs which are representative bodies (namely bodies formed through elections), therefore, is largely a MYRADA suggestion. It is based on MYRADA's belief that though representative bodies are an essential feature of a democratic system and therefore must be promoted, yet, given the present scenario in the rural areas, the representative bodies reflect (and often strengthen) the feudal, caste and oppressive relations in society; besides elections to these bodies requires money, and is therefore considered to be an investment for which there must be an adequate return -the means adopted to achieve this return are often questionable.

What about SHGs promoted by other Institutions (Banks, Government and NGOs)- can they become members of the RC? All RC Committees have decided that they are all eligible. In fact many Stree Shakti SHGs have applied to join the RCs in Karnataka; there are similar experiences in Andhra (Velugu SHGs) and Tamil Nadu (Mahilar Thittam SHGs). Unfortunately, while welcoming them, the RC Committees found that most of them are not up to standard. However, the matter has not been left to rest

there. The RCs took up the task of building the capacity of these SHGs in order to become SAGs and make them eligible to join the RC.

What about individuals in the RC service area who are not members of the CBOs? Most RCs have considered this issue and the decision is to provide services even to individuals who are not members of CBOs. However they would be charged for all services and in some cases they would be charged more than the CBO members. However, they are not eligible for membership in the RC.

## **6. Relationship with MYRADA**

This relationship is perhaps the most difficult to define clearly at this time since it depends on how self reliant financially the RC is, on the level of skills available to cope with its regular functions and on its capability to raise resources (skills and finance) to support new demands. The level of capacity to cope with these requirements differs from RC to RC and from project to project. It also depends on whether the RC is functioning in an area from which MYRADA has withdrawn its programmes entirely (and therefore there are no MYRADA Programme staff in the RC service area) or in an area from which the withdrawal is not complete. Once again this differs from Project to project.

Another factor that affects this relationship is the emergence of the Training Centres (CIDORs<sup>2</sup>) in most of MYRADA's Projects as independent bodies in terms of management and self reliant in terms of financial support. These CIDORs are managed by a Director and a small team of Trainers who are all experienced staff drawn from the MYRADA Project area because they have training skills. A majority of the CIDORs are today financially self sufficient; they earn enough to cover costs of staff salaries and maintenance of the Training Centre. These CIDORs will remain in the area after the project withdraws. The project is managed by a Project Officer and a team which is reducing in size. The Director of the CIDOR starts by reporting to the Project Officer in the first few years; but as he/she develops the Training programme and the CIDOR reaches a stage of self-sufficiency, the Director of the CIDOR becomes fully in charge of the CIDOR. He/she however collaborates closely with the Project Officer.

MYRADA's strategy is to bring all the RCs which are functioning in areas from which programmes have withdrawn under the CIDOR which will function both as a coordinating body of the RCs, as well as play a support and monitoring function. During the transition period, however, when the RC is being established and taking over several functions while at the same time the programmes are scaling down but still operating, both the Project Officer and the CIDOR Director have to work closely to ensure that the transition is smooth and mutually supportive.

In fact it is in the interest of both the Project Officer and the CIDOR Director to work together. The Project Officer needs the CIDOR to provide training to the CBOs

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<sup>2</sup> CIDORs - Centres for Institutional Development and Organisational Reforms

and others while the CIDOR Director needs the Project to provide exposure visits to the trainees and to draw trainers with specific skills (like soil engineers/agricultural officers) from the Project to support the training programme. The Project Officer and the CIDOR Director are co-ordinated by the Programme Officer in charge of over all support to the project.

The RC staff continue to be on the roles of MYRADA even though the RC may contribute to his/her salary; they are transferable and may be shifted both within the project area as well as to other projects; they may also be transferred to the CIDORs and vice versa

The relationship with MYRADA also functions on an over arching level. For example MYRADA endeavours to share its organisational vision/mission with the RC as it has done with the SAGs and other CBOs. The major features of this vision/mission are: a) the building of poor people's institutions which are participatory; b) the thrust towards self reliance in resources; c) the concern to absorb new skills to cope with people's requirements; d) the confidence to initiate and sustain change in the home and in society; and e) the institutionalisation of learning and self assessment.

The financial aspect which links MYRADA with the RC is a critical factor that determines this relationship. Until the RC reaches self sufficiency, MYRADA has to raise resources to support it; but what happens thereafter? It is not realistic to believe that a financial relationship does not influence the overall give and take between two institutions. However, this relationship should not be based on dependency of one for its very existence on the other . The healthiest situation would be one where the RC is self reliant - which means that its raises enough money to cover all costs including the salary of the RC Manager - and yet MYRADA provides a certain amount to the RC every month to help it to improve its capacity to cope with emerging local situations and needs. To put figures to words, one RC costs about Rs 18,000 per month (including the salary of the RC Manager). Many RCs have been able to raise this amount and have proved that it can be done. Would MYRADA provide a sum of Rs.5000 to Rs.6000 monthly even to these RCs? I am inclined to answer "yes" which means that MYRADA has to be able to raise this amount from somewhere. However, contrary opinions are welcome.

## **7. Relations with CIDORs (Centres for Institutional development and Organisational Reform)**

As the project withdraws from particular areas, the RCs in these areas begin to relate with the CIDORs. The number of RCs relating with the CIDORs increases every year. The CIDORs role is to support the RC and to monitor its progress; this involves:

- ❖ ensuring that the RCs are observing all the rules and regulations that they have evolved to manage their institution and developing new R & Rs to meet emerging situations

- ❖ assisting the RCs to enhance the skills of the RC Managers and the Community resource Persons who are attached to the RC; in this context helping the RC to analyse the list of visitors and the purpose of their visit to the RCs
- ❖ ensuring that the RCs monitor the performance of the Book writers of the CBOs and provide training to those who require it
- ❖ assisting the RCs to mobilise resources both financial and technical including marketing skills support and linkages.
- ❖ Playing a role in assisting the resolution of issues that may arise between the CBOs and RC or among the Board Members of the RC or between the RC Manager and the Board - if required.
- ❖ Documenting case studies which have a learning potential
- ❖ ensuring that the data from the CBOs regarding loans, purposes, etc., according to the formats provided are regularly collected, computerised and analysed to assess potential areas where value can be added to people's investments in livelihoods. These findings may be passed on to MYRADA with a request for support if required.

The CIDORs in brief will not directly supervise the functioning of the RCs, but ensure that the RCs and CBOs have the appropriate systems in place and the skills and linkages required for sustainability and that these systems are functioning effectively.

### **8. Profile and Organisational Responsibilities of the RC Manager:**

The papers prepared by Projects for the Hosur Workshop identified the following qualities of the RC Manager.

The RC Manager must be a middle level MYRADA staff (Sector Officer and above) with at least 10 years experience in the organisation whose performance has been consistently good; he/she needs to have a good rapport with people, to be a good communicator, to be honest and transparent in dealings, punctual, able to bring people together and to provide support to the RC to become self reliant and the Community Resource Persons to grow. He/she should be aware of latest developments related to services provided by Government and of the general political-economic scenario. He/she must have a grasp of accounting systems and procedures and basic computer skills and be able to write reports. He/she functions like an Executive who is responsible to the RC Management Committee whose members are elected from the CBO members of the RC. He/she is considered to be part of the core staff of MYRADA. Great care should therefore be taken to ensure that the right people are selected for the position

Apart from managing the RC, including all the equipment and assets, and keeping all records updated, the RC Manager needs to

- ❖ Call for a monthly meeting of the RC Management Committee
- ❖ Submit a monthly report of activities to the RC Management Committee with a critical analysis and suggestions for improvement and new initiatives



- ❖ Submit a monthly income and expenditure statement to the RC management Committee with a critical analysis and suggestions of how to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.
- ❖ Monitor the performance of the Community resource Persons, Book writers and the CBOs
- ❖ Introduce the latest MYRADA computer package to collect SAG data and ensure that data is collected
- ❖ Analyse the SAG data monthly to identify patterns of loans taken for various purposes to see if the RC can provide service to add value to products or services through technical support or marketing. If the RC cannot provide this support, the RC Manager needs to approach MYRADA for it. It is particularly important to identify patterns in lending for non-farm activities.
- ❖ Visit CBOs which are not approaching the RC for services. A CBO should be visited in any case at least once in 3 months.
- ❖ Build a corpus fund for the RC
- ❖ Open and operate one Bank account, the signatories of which are the RC Manager and one (or two) members of the RC Management Committee
- ❖ Audit the Account half yearly
- ❖ Prepare an annual report and present it to the Annual General Body Meeting of all the CBO members.

The above are some of the organisational responsibilities of the RC Manager which are critical for the good functioning of the RC and which cannot be overlooked. There are several others which are not listed here. It will be helpful if the RC Managers can put together an Operations Manual to guide the RC Managers.

## **9. RC Infrastructure**

The RC office must be separate from MYRADA's infrastructure. If the MYRADA Project wishes to donate its Sector office to the RC, as it withdraws from the area, it can do so, but the RC should not implement any MYRADA programmes through its office.

The RC office should be located near the centre of the RC service area; it should be easily accessible by a regular bus service and preferably close to a Bank. If it is close to the market place it would be an additional advantage.

The Office should have: A pucca building which has at least one large common room and two additional rooms with electricity; it must have attached toilets and piped water, a telephone, internet facility, a motor bike and one or two computers. Some RCs have a Fax machine and a camera, but these are not priority items.

## **10. Services provided by the RC**

The RCs are already providing a wide variety of services which need not be listed here. However it must be noted that there is general agreement that the RC should focus on its service area before it provides services outside. The RC's priority is to ensure "consumer satisfaction" or the satisfaction of its member CBOs and not to become

another CIDOR. The RC therefore needs to be careful about accepting to provide services to areas outside its service area like training to SHGs in other districts. The RC members are paying for services -they must therefore get "value for money". Though the full list of service being provided will not be given here, a few categories of services need comment since they are at the cutting edge of development strategy; some of these are being provided but need much more organisation and support, while others need to be considered:

❖ The need to support small and marginal farmers:

- With information and possible linkages: There is an increasing demand by farmers who are going in for cash crops to know the prices prevailing on a particular day in various local markets. Does the RC have all the linkages to get this information? There is also the need to assess and respond to promoters of new technologies and opportunities related to contract farming in agriculture and horticulture.
- With attitudinal change: The RCs need to focus on changing the attitudes of farmers. To begin with, it is necessary to introduce a culture of "business and entrepreneurship" among the farmers. For example today if one farmer gets a good price for tomatoes, all the farmers shift to tomatoes in the next season; the price collapses. The change to tomatoes may be an innovation bordering on entrepreneurship, but it is surely not good business. We can compare it to a situation where because one company produces toothpaste and makes a profit, a hundred other companies decide to produce toothpaste. You know the result. Infact such a situation is unthinkable in the commercial/industrial sector. Why then is it prevalent in the agricultural sector. Does the RC have a role to play here?
- By promoting a culture of efficiency and management of scarce resources. So often we find minor irrigation programmes wasting water through seepage in the irrigation channels, because plants are far apart with large gaps etc. Every drop should produce a crop – should be our motto. We find mango groves which are covered with bushes in the intervening spaces; these spaces are valuable for short duration crops or even for medicinal plants which ensure that the area is well maintained and fertilised (which also improves the mango crop). I find that space is wasted in our country. This is criminal waste especially in areas like Kote where soils and rainfall are comparatively better than in dry areas like Kadiri. The RC needs to promote attitudinal change among farmers so that they realise that just producing tomatoes is only the first step; they need to earn an income which depends very much on the demand and supply situations; they need to realise that water and good land are scarce resources. Another related issue is the overuse of ground water through a large number of bore wells .The water is often used for crops which in the first place should not be grown in the area since the rainfall is not adequate. An example is the spread of area nut plantation in the west of Chitradurga District and adjoining areas which lie in the rain shadow area and do not get much rain, yet arecanut plantations spread rapidly and so did the number of borewells. Result? Today the wells are dry and

the plantations have disappeared. The farmers who purchased cars cannot afford petrol to run them. The RC needs to make farmers aware of this danger; attitudinal changes are required.

- By providing or ensuring quality inputs in agriculture. The market is flooded with spurious and poor quality seed. Can the RC ensure that this is controlled? The quality of fertilisers and pesticides is not uniform and often it is the trader who advises the farmer what to use -which in turn depends not on which input and what amount is appropriate or required - but on which company pays him the highest percentage by way of commission. Can the RC Committee make farmers aware of what to buy and how much and later organise meetings of farmers to assess the result of using inputs from each trader so that a black list can be brought out of those traders who regularly indulge in malpractices.
  
- ❖ The need to support marginal farmers and landless to take up off farm activities including training in job related skills. MEADOW promoted by Dharmapuri Project and its tie-up with Titan watches-which has lasted 8 years - is a good example of off-farm activities; its Non Formal technical training Centre is a good example of skills training for jobs that are in demand. There is a growing demand for information regarding the availability of training in skills for which there are job opportunities Does the RC have the outreach required to collect the information regarding the types of skills required in the job market and the institutions which can provide these skills, and the sources from which funds can be obtained to support trainees? Similarly information regarding job opportunities is regularly sought? Can the RC provide this updated information?
  
- ❖ There are several people approaching the RC for counselling support related to domestic problems (violence, rape, drunkenness, dowry, abandoned women). Is the RC Manger equipped to deal with these issues or can the RC call on professionals or even experienced local people in some cases, for their services? Related to this is the possibility of setting up a legal cell and of keeping the local police station in the loop.
  
- ❖ The Government of Karnataka has agreed to provide the Bhoomi land records to three RCs as a pilot experiment; if this works, the facility will be extended to all RCs functioning at the sub-taluka level. The RC can charged Rs 25 of which Rs 15 will go to Government. The Revenue official will be asked to endorse/sign these documents.. This of course implies that the RC involved has a computer. This is an opportunity to update these records with details of the land treatment carried out through our watershed projects as well s to check whether the records are up to date
  
- ❖ The RCs needs to work out a strategy to help those who are sick and have health related problems. A Team of doctors can be mobilised who are willing to be contacted on e-mail for their advice; this presupposes that the local health workers

have the capacity to identify symptoms that help with diagnosis There are various initiatives being proposed which we will discuss at the appropriate time.

- ❖ The RCs need to evolve a strategy to cater to the market in its service area. With 120 CBOs as members, it has contact with at least 8000-10,000 people; besides there are at least 25,000 people in the service area who are not members of the CBOs. The SAG members are trading, producing homemade articles (edible ones like processed foods as well as rearing poultry etc) and non-edible ones, (articles for use like cloth, mats, plates, ropes, pots, etc). There is ample scope for processing agricultural produce for local markets. Indonesia is a good example. The village people never serve us snacks from multinational companies in that country; they are all locally produced. Can the RC help its members to add value in terms of quality and packaging so that they can cater to this internal market and compete with major brands? Added to this should be a campaign to boycott multinational products and to buy local ones with the RC brand name. Alongside the RCs can come together to have melas periodically in nearby large towns and cities; the CAPART Mela which MYRADA used to organise was successful in selling a number of articles made by the SAGs. There is also growing demand for organic products even in smaller cities like Mysore
- ❖ RCs could also focus on promoting proper storage practices, local market places and "small is beautiful" where technology is concerned. Proper storage and well-organised local markets are essential for trade to grow. Could each RC not encourage the local government to establish a market place with proper and adequate facilities - water, storage and hygiene? These markets could also function as the central points from where traders could purchase commodities in bulk for a wider market. Some form of institution managed and controlled by the CBOs which protects the interest of the producers could be established to manage this trade in bulk. The RC could set up this institution. Even MYRADA should consider including the establishment of such small markets in its project strategy and budget. Finally, though it is more difficult but we should think about it, there is a need for small machines like mini tractors, threshers, mini units for processing, storing, packaging etc. The RCs can play a role in all these areas to identify innovations and introduce them if appropriate.

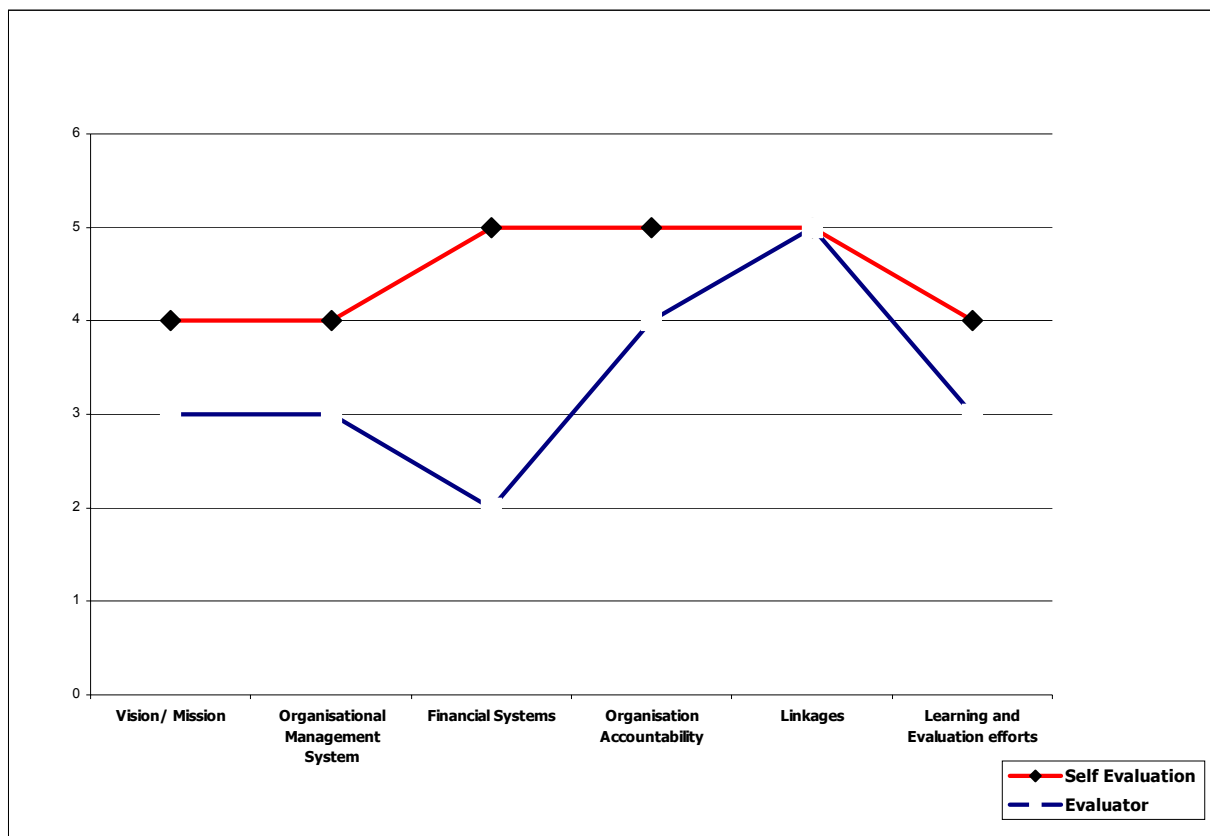
*Should the RCs get involved in improving governance in the Panchayat Raj System and in the management of institutions like schools and Primary Health and Veterinary centres and in monitoring services like sanitation, electricity supply and drinking water facilities? – These are all closely related to the PRIs and Line Departments. One opinion to which I subscribe is that the direct involvement of the RC (which would mean the involvement of the RC manager who will be seen by others to be taking the lead) will easily cross the line and enter into the forest of "party politics"; this is best left to the CBOs, particularly the SAGs who have shown that they are quite capable of handling these issues; they can therefore continue to be involved directly in improving governance and the performance of service providers.*

### **11. The objectives of Organisational and Financial Sustainability:**

These are major objectives. Unless the RC has the potential to achieve these two objectives it will soon collapse. Financial sustainability requires that the RC is capable of raising - not immediately, but over a period - about Rs 18,000/to Rs 20,000/ Per month to cover all costs (including the salary of the RC Manager, payments to the Community Resource Persons, rents, postage, telephone, stationery, transport etc). Several RCs have proved that this can be done within 2 years. They have some advantages (close to towns, well established SAGs, good location near markets, donations of land and computers from Private persons, Panchayat and Government, etc). It is consoling to note that all the 53 RCs are moving towards financial self sufficiency, though at various paces; however what is important is that the determination to achieve this objective is clear and shared by all the RC members. This culture was difficult to achieve in some project areas, especially where the strategy of some Donors did not promote and recognise people's efforts to raise local resources during the project period which undermined a culture of self-reliance.

Organisational sustainability is more difficult to achieve and to assess. However attempts have been made to assess the level of organisational sustainability that each RC has achieved. The assessment based on RMS Paper 33 selected six indicators namely: Vision/Mission, Organisational Management Systems, Financial Management, Organisational Accountability, Linkages and Learning/Evaluation efforts.

The table below which is a sample assessment of one RC shows two lines — one depicting the assessment of the outside team and the other the self-assessment of the RC Management Board and CBO members.



What is of concern in the graph is the large gap between the two assessments related to the RCs performance in the domain of financial systems. I am not particularly concerned if both assessments agree to rate any feature low on the scale; this performance can be approved; what is of concern is the case where there is a wide gap -this indicates that the RC members have not set their sights high enough and tend to be satisfied with a low level of performance. In most cases it is due to a lack of awareness of what they can achieve. This must be addressed by training and institutional capacity building exercises.

## 12. RCs Relations with Federations:

It is difficult to comment on the nature of this relationship, because the performance of Federations differs from project to project. In general I have noticed that the Federations are able to function effectively as long as MYRADA's programmes continue in the area. MYRADA's sector offices provide the secretarial support that the Federations require. The Federations on their own do not have full time senior staff and offices that function throughout the day. After MYRADA withdraws and its Sector Offices no longer function, there is no executive or secretarial support for the Federations. This is where the RCs step in. After the emergence of the RCs, there was some concern about their relationship with the Federations. In some projects, the CBOs were paying a monthly fee of Rs.25/- to the Federations. This practice made it difficult to support the Resource Centre as well. However, in general these problems have been resolved. Where Federations are functioning well, even after MYRADA's withdrawal, their role has been clearly defined as "monitoring the performance of the RCs". The RCs also support the Federations whenever required.

### 13. RC Documents/Publications/Reports

The MYRADA Kamasamudram Project proposed a list at the Workshop in Hosur; this list is reproduced below with the changes and important comments in bold; explanations are added. However it must be noted that the number of documents and need for each document was not discussed at the workshop. Therefore the Projects are requested to identify the essential documents required and to share the list and reasons for each with one another and with the Head office.

- ❖ A Register of daily visitors including the name of the visitor, name of CBO of which he/she is member (or non-member), and the purpose of visit.  
**This should be analysed monthly** to assess the pattern of demand and whether the RC is capable and equipped to handle emerging needs. The **CIDORs** should ensure that this analysis is done monthly as part of its monitoring role.
- ❖ Membership list/renewal date/rating date. **There was not enough of awareness and discussion at the Workshop about the need to rate the CBO annually before renewing membership. This should be discussed in the Project Team.**
- ❖ Monthly consolidated progress and financial reports; the Progress Report to be discussed at the monthly meeting of RC Managers either as part of the monthly Project Team Meeting or at a meeting called by the CIDOR after the Project withdraws entirely. The Financial statement must be sent to Head Office (c/o Balu) before **the 15th of the following month.**
- ❖ List of outside resource organisations and persons
- ❖ Stock Register
- ❖ District Information and map **highlighting RC Service Area. It is important to identify what information is considered to be useful by people; please let us not clutter up the RC walls with information which is of little use.**
- ❖ Photo documentation (Programmes?)
- ❖ Accounts Books (Which?)
- ❖ Display charts (Of what?)
- ❖ Telephone and address directory of private and Government offices.
- ❖ **Applications forms for various schemes and services (pension, insurance, etc)**
- ❖ **Local newspapers/magazines**

*Aloysius P Fernandez*

*MYRADA*

*May 10,2004*