The obsolete and rickety delivery system is crying for up-gradation. Urgent changes are needed in 1) Team-building, motivation and development of awareness among service-providers and service-users, 2) Systemic changes in the present hierarchical structure of administration with compartmentalisation on departmental lines at State, District and sub-districts levels thereby ensuring horizontal integration of the delivery mechanisms and 3) Empowerment of service-users through formation of participatory groups such as SHGs, and other functional groups, who should have enough flexibility to reflect local priorities and needs and also secure accountability, transparency of funds and services rendered.
CBOs and PRIs for NRM

Synergies through Convergence

Workshop on

Convergence of
Community Based Organisations and
Panchayat Raj Institutions
for Natural Resource Management

10th and 11th December 2002 at NIRD, Hyderabad
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Intercooperation (IC) is supporting Natural Resource Management (NRM) activities in rainfed areas of Andhra Pradesh through NGOs since 1993 with the objective of enhancing rural livelihoods and addressing key concerns such as participation, equity, gender and sustainability.

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List of Acronyms

APPR Act – Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act
CBO – Community Based Organisations
CESS – Centre for Economic Social Studies
CROSS – Comprehensive Rural Operations Service Society
CWS – Centre for World Solidarity
DARCEE – Development Action And Research Centre
GP – Gram Panchayat
ITDA – Integrated Tribal Development Agency
JFM – Joint Forest Management
LEAP – Livelihood Enhancement Action Plan
MARI – Modern Architects for Rural India
MP – Member of Parliament
MPLADS – Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme
MPTC – mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency (representative)
NGO – Non-Government Organisation
NIRD – National Institute of Rural Development
NRM – Natural Resource Management
PILUPU - Name of an NGO
PIM – Participatory Irrigation Management
PRI – Panchayat Raj Institutions
RIDF – Rural Infrastructure Development Fund
SAPAP – South Asian Poverty Alleviation Programme
SERP – Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty
SC – Scheduled Castes
WHY THIS INITIATIVE?

In Andhra Pradesh, with the growing emphasis on decentralisation and local governance by the government has promoted community based organisations (CBOs) at the village level. As a result, several CBOs were formed around natural resources and sectors like education. The non-governmental organisations have also initiated different forms of CBOs for enhancing people's participation in the development process. The purpose of each CBO look is appreciable given the objectives it is expected to achieve. However, there are no linkages and coordination between various CBOs or with Gram Panchayats, which are constitutionally elected bodies. Lack of intra and inter CBO linkages is apparently causing confusion in the villages.

Responding to this situation, SDC-IC NGO Programme AP felt that a dialogue process would help come up with a workable framework that would bring in convergence to strengthen the unity and collective working of these grass root level institutions. Discussions and events in this direction by involving different organisations and individuals have finally lead to an output that is in your hands. Although much more needs to be done, I believe that this small effort has certainly thrown light on the issue and generated ideas for deepening the debate. It has also given inspiration to initiate field interventions for piloting the experience.

I thank very much WASSAN, one of the partners of SDC-IC NGO Programme, for undertaking the responsibility for the field study and to organising a workshop on convergence. I also thank Mr. Janardhan, the
In our social and economic programmes and projects, the most elusive difficult elements have been community based convergent action and processes for participatory development. This is despite the fact that the absence of convergence and popular participation has been matter of serious concern in securing sustainable delivery of services. The design of programmes and projects, their management structures, processes of implementation and their monitoring and evaluation are all characterised by vertical, departmental, bureaucratic and top-down approaches.

Field studies indicate that there are about 40 departments working in economic, social and service sectors, which are implementing nearly 200 schemes. Most of these schemes are mechanically implemented as per the guidelines and norms fixed by the respective departments at the state or central levels. Even when some of the departments are working in the same sector or area there is a lack of integration, problems in resource matching and a plethora of missing links.

The obsolete and rickety delivery system is crying for up-gradation. Urgent changes are needed in 1) Team-building, motivation and development of awareness among service-providers and service-users, 2) Systemic changes in the present hierarchical structure of administration with compartmentalisation on departmental lines at State, District and sub-districts levels thereby ensuring horizontal integration of the delivery mechanisms and 3) Empowerment of service-users through formation of participatory groups such as SHGs, and other functional groups, who should
have enough flexibility to reflect local priorities and needs and also secure accountability, transparency of funds and services rendered.

The proceedings of the workshop on ‘Convergence of Community Based Organisations and Panchayat Raj Institutions for Natural Resource Management’ organised under the auspices of SDC-IC NGO Programme, A.P. and WASSAN is a valuable contribution in several ways in dealing with this vexatious and difficult problem. It demonstrates clearly through field studies the crying need for convergence and coordination. It establishes the sub-critical and poor results that have plagued for isolated delivery. It clearly demonstrates the momentum amongst stake-holders and rural people for securing better planning and implementation roles and responsibilities. The Study and the workshop have also benefited by the contribution and discussions upon the relationship between Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) for greater convergence. It contains eminently sensible insights which demonstrate the manner in which our patronage based and isolated delivery mechanisms which are controlled vertically have destroyed the dynamism and creativity in our communities. It also contains useful suggestions for the redesign and revamp of project management structure and implementation process. It is my earnest hope that this contribution would spur the senior managers and policy makers to regenerate local planning, bona fide decentralisation and promotion of participatory development.

November, 2003

B.N. Yugandhar
Hyderabad

Workshop on

Convergence of Community Based Organisations and Panchayat Raj Institutions for Natural Resource Management
10th and 11th December 2002 at NIRD, Hyderabad.

Development of the villages and the community is the ultimate goal of several departments, programmes and schemes. However, the sectoral and shortsighted approach of these has not resulted in sustainable achievements at the grass root level. Lack of co-ordination between various actors at the cutting edge might lead to overlap, conflicts and duplication of work. On the other hand, a co-ordinated effort would lead to fruitful utilisation of funds and matching of grants for higher and better results.

Thus convergence has become the buzz word in the circles of development. The constitution has envisaged greater role for Panchayat Raj Institutions in the issues of governance and development. The issue of convergence with special reference to natural resources management needs to be explored. With this objective in mind a field study and a workshop were organised by SDC-IC NGO Programme, AP and WASSAN.

This workshop was organised along with NGO’s and research institutions. Its active collaborators are NIRD, CESS, CWS, NGO’s Committee on Participatory Forest Management, MARI, PILUPU and TREES. The process was facilitated and anchored by WASSAN. The list of participants is given in Annexure I.

Synergies through Convergence
The workshop was intended to develop an operational framework and processes for promoting convergence among various primary institutions in the area of natural resources management (NRM). In this sense, it has an operational agenda.

1. DESIGN OF THE WORKSHOP

It was scheduled for two days. The main objective of the workshop is to develop an approach and operational steps to promote convergence among different Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in developing and managing natural resources of a village.

1.1 Field Study

The workshop was preceded by a short study of two villages in Turkapally mandal where Pilupu is working. The partners of the workshop mentioned above conducted the study jointly. It analysed the functioning and perceptions of various CBOs and PRIs in the two villages and in the Mandal on the issues of convergence for developing and managing natural resources. The study report is presented in Annexure II. The study provided a common background for deliberations in the workshop.

1.2 Workshop

The workshop was organised on 10th and 11th of December, 2002 at NIRD.

a. Input Sessions

With the field study providing the necessary background, input sessions were planned on three aspects viz., pre-requisites for collective action in natural resources management, issues in the existing relations between CBOs and PRIs and on the issues related to participatory and representative democracy. All these input sessions are related to natural resources management.

b. Field Study Report

The field study report was also shared and the observations were discussed.

c. Exploring Scope for Convergence

The partners in the workshop include organisations and individuals specialising on Community/ Joint Forest Management, Watershed development, Participatory Irrigation Management and Panchayat Raj Institutions. As a part of the workshop process these organisations/ persons prepared a background note on the scope of convergence within the programs that they have been working since long.

d. Sharing of Experiences

The experiences of four organisations MARI, Centre for World Solidarity, Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty and DARCEE on promoting convergence were also shared.

e. Group Work

Against the above backdrop the group deliberated on the pre-requisites for convergence, operational steps in promoting convergence and the next steps. The workshop resulted in an operational strategy and steps to promote such strategy in the villages.
2. PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP

Vinod of SDC-IC, NGO Programme, AP welcomed the participants and explained the objective of the workshop. It began with the input sessions after the participants introduced themselves.

2.1 INPUT SESSIONS

2.1.1 Input Session 1

Prerequisites of collective action for NRM

This input session from Ravindra of WASSAN was intended to lay down the broad spectrum of institutional prerequisites for collective action to serve as a background for the deliberations of the workshop. It draws from the survey of literature on the subject.

The problem of natural resources management is essentially a problem in the realm of ‘collective action’ as the benefits and/or costs accrue to more than one individual. The problem crosses the private property boundaries; and becomes a problem of commons.

If members of a group have a common interest and all of them benefit if that interest is served, it is logically thought that the individuals in the group (if they are rational) would naturally act to achieve the objective. But experience has shown that unless a) the number of individuals is quite small, or b) unless there is some special device to make them act in their common interest, or c) unless there is coercion self-interested, rational individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests.

The problem is essentially a free-rider problem, as one person cannot be excluded from the benefits of action from others each person is motivated not to contribute to the collective effort. If all the members chose to free ride the collective benefit would not be produced. The problem of NRM then is how individuals jointly using a common-pool resource might be able to achieve an effective form of governing and managing their own commons.

Group size, group symmetry and a ‘political entrepreneur’ then becomes the necessary prerequisites for such a process.

- Small group size is essential as the individual member’s actions becomes less noticeable if the size is large and the transaction costs of bringing them together also becomes higher; thus increasing the tendency to free-ride.
- If the group is asymmetric the privileged dominate the underprivileged.
- It also needs a ‘political entrepreneur’ providing leadership, having trust or fear of the community with a desire to organise the group for collective action and with necessary abilities for facilitating a process of negotiation. Success depends on using selective incentives to motivate participation in collective action. Assurance to the resource users that the expected benefits from participation would accrue to them and that the benefits are equally distributed is important.

If the above prerequisites are met certain small groups can provide themselves with collective goods without relying on coercion or any positive inducements apart from the collective good itself.
The following table illustrates the nature of various parameters when we move from a ‘messy’ common property resource management spectrum towards a ‘clean’ one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPR Mgmt. Spectrum</th>
<th>Controlling access to resource</th>
<th>Perceived cost/benefit linkage</th>
<th>Sanctions against free riders</th>
<th>User desire to preserve resource</th>
<th>Class mix of users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Obvious</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Similar – small farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messy</td>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Obscure</td>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Very Mixed – all classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the above context the key to collective action is small, homogenous groups having higher desire to conserve the resource, and with ability to control access and be able to impose sanctions on free riders. Visibility of costs and benefits are clear and certainty of benefits from resource conservation accruing to individuals in itself would be a driving force. These factors have good bearing on the institutional framework of convergence.

2.1.2 Input Session 2

**CBOs- PRIs & NRM – Questions from a Study by NIRD**

Venugopal Sharma and Annamalai from National Institute of Rural Development, shared their analysis on Panchayat Raj Institutions and CBO inter-linkages in the context of natural resources management. The analysis is based on their study of four projects across the country viz., a) watershed development program implemented by Lupin Foundation at Obaidullahgunj in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh, b) Drinking Water project of KRWSSA at Pookkothur in Kerala, c) Mushtikovela forest protection program of Timbaktu Collective in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh and d) Tawa Matsya Sangh in Madhya Pradesh.

The 73rd constitutional amendment has the following mandatory provisions viz., Gram Sabha at village level, a three-tier structure, regular elections, reservation of seats for SCs, STs and Women, State Finance Commission and State Election Commission. The 73rd amendment sought to achieve the broad objectives of empowering people through PRIs to meet their felt needs and to ensure that the benefits of development really percolated down to the poorer sections of the society. The 73rd amendment provides a framework for decentralized rural development administration. In accordance with the Article 243 (G) of the constitution, the amendment provides state legislatures to enact laws with provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein with respect to:

a) the preparation of plan for economic development and social justice,

b) the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the **Eleventh schedule** (29 subjects).
Social Forestry, drinking water, minor irrigation, water management and watershed development, minor forest produce, fuel and fodder are the seven subjects related to NRM mentioned in the eleventh schedule.

The experiences in the four project studies mentioned above are varied. The nature of formation of CBOs differs and different patterns of interaction with PRIs were observed. Integrating the concerns of the community and equity are the key concerns identified. The study observed that there is no real conflict of interests between PRIs and CBOs. The reason could be that the devolution of powers has not gone to such an extent as to warrant a conflict.

There can be various approaches for synergising the efforts of CBOs and PRIs.

1) One could attempt to bring about synergy between PRIs and CBOs by stipulating that for all government schemes, funds are devolved on the PRIs and that the CBOs are the implementing agencies. In other words, the CBO undertakes ‘agency’ functions for the PRI.

2) Another approach could be to formulate government programs with CBOs as implementing agencies without much functional role for PRIs.

3) A third approach could be to attempt to bring synergy between CBOs and PRIs by methods like having CBO representatives as members of standing committees of PRIs for the concerned subject.

4) Another approach could be to allow CBOs and PRIs to play their respective roles and allow dissent or criticism wherever it is due. This approach assumes that multiple institutions working in a geographical area in the field of development are an indication of strength and not weakness. Gram Sabha can become an effective platform for problem solving. Devolving the powers to Grama Sabha is a necessary step towards transparency and conflict resolution.

### Approaches for synergising CBOs and PRIs

- stipulate that for all government schemes, funds are devolved on the PRIs and CBOs as implementing agencies
- formulate government programs with CBOs as implementing agencies without much functional role for PRIs
- having CBO representatives as members of standing committees of PRIs for the concerned subject
- allow CBOs and PRIs to play their respective roles and allow dissent or criticism wherever it is due

2.1.3 Input Session 3

**Convergence for NRM and issues in representative and participatory democracy**

These inputs were provided by B. N. Yugandhar. Convergence is at present very narrowly perceived. We should look at convergence among natural resource management, delivery and social systems for effective results.

If the activities are taken in isolation there is a tendency for these activities to become sub-critical and non-synergetic thereby, loosing their relevance. We must discover the natural convergence of activities and define a cluster of activities that involve all the members of the village. Watershed development is one such convergent program. The community based organisations and even institutions like NIRD are products of
CBOs and PRIs for NRM

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'historical accidents' rather than a well thought out and designed process. Most of the development programs are also 'accidental'.

The first question to ponder over is what exactly is the natural synthesis of a cluster of activities?

Seeking ‘Monkey Justice’!

The programs and the development related affairs at the state government level itself are highly segmented and departmentalised, while we are looking at the village level and asking the state government to adjudicate. This ineffect is asking a monkey who is continuously eroding the powers of PRIs and also participatory institutions to give a ruling! We must concentrate on decentralisation and deconcentration of powers at all levels.

‘Principle of Subsidiarity’ as a basis

We may track (from national to local levels) the functional domains and map them and then break up these functional domains based on the principle of subsidiarity. For example what are the ways in which the National Grass Lands Research Institute can be linked to the needs of a CBO in a village? The Task Force Report on Devolution of Powers & Functions Upon Panchayati Raj Institutions (2001) has elaborated on the devolution of functions on all the 29 subjects to the PRIs.

The MPLADS scheme is one such example. This has created a space for MPs to interfere in the local development programs, which are in the functional domain of the PRIs or local departments. The ZPTC members are trying to create a role for themselves when the institution itself does not have a role under the present circumstances.

How do you tackle the monkey and establish a platform for the cats to do justice among themselves is the issue at hand.

More decentralisation creates more elbowroom for CBOs to function. The first agenda therefore, is to get the decentralisation of powers unduly concentrated at the state government. The Panchayats should have a role in what the ministers are doing at present! But in the debate on PRIs and CBOs, the issue of endowing the PRIs with funds and responsibilities is not coming up adequately. Diverting this core agenda, the conflict is shown as the one between CBOs and PRIs, where as the true conflict is between the PRIs and sectoral, central structures.

In Andhra Pradesh, we have immense number of community based organisations. Autonomy, democracy, viability and sustainability are the four principles of CBOs. A nominal committee functioning under some program does not mean a CBO.

The essential feature of a CBO is the commonality of interest. This is a process of redefining the ‘community’. The three Fs – funds, functions and functionaries do not work in a CBO, which do not have a commonality of interest. It is therefore, important to question what CBOs that we are talking about!

If the NGO sector understands and does convergent action it would play a multiplier and catalytic role. We need to provide sensitive support and

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<th>Principles for CBOs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viability</td>
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<tr>
<td>sustainability</td>
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1011
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Synergies through Convergence

technical backstopping to the CBOs that are emerging strongly like the Mandal Samakhyas under SAPAP program. Building such institutions on a convergent model is the need.

We cannot be neutral when forces are clearly divided and when we know what interests are dominating.

2.2 FIELD STUDY REPORT

The objective of the study was to prepare a background paper for the workshop. Ravindra shared the major findings of the report. The detailed report is in Annexure II.

Study Team & Methodology

The study team consisted of members from various institutions and a Sarpanch from Narsapur village. These institutions/members are working on Joint Forest Management, Panchayat Raj Institutions, watershed development, Water Users’ Association, NRM etc. The study was organized in two villages of Nalgonda district and was hosted by the organisations PILUPU and TREES.

The study methodology consisted of three steps: 1) A half-day group discussion among the study team members to share viewpoints and arrive at a common frame of analysis. 2) Field visits to the two villages for discussions (using participatory methods like resource mapping) with different CBO and PRI representatives on the theme. 3) Compiling and sharing of study team observations with Mandal level representatives of PRIs (Sarpanches & MPTC members) and CBOs (watershed, WUA, JFM, SHGs, Vidya Committee etc).

Study of the Two Villages

In Laxmapur village an informal group of influential persons dominates the power structure and provides leadership to all the activities. This group is more inclusive and broad based. The role of Gram Panchayat is minimal. Though there are committees for various government projects like JFM, water and sanitation etc., decisions are mostly made in this group. They collect taxes from those extracting stones from the Panchayat Commons. This amount is rotated within the village and the proceeds are accumulated. With this money they have taken up activities like construction of a bus shelter, renovation of a temple, etc.

Competitive digging of borewells precipitated ground water crisis and many lost their investments because of drying up of existing borewells. There is large tract of forest area surrounding the village. The area under commons is not protected. The villagers and this group strongly felt that a government program/intervention is necessary to protect their commons and also to make any regulation on ground water use.

Even effective informal institution and its leadership are not taking up management of natural resources in spite of an apparent crisis. There are no norms in ground water management and they expect government initiative to deal with commons.

Even strong, local CBOs have been taking initiatives in non-controversial areas like temples, bus stand etc. but turn cold feet in taking challenging or more complicated issues like ground water management or protection of commons. Do even strong community based institutions need external facilitation (and a government program- JFM in this case) to take up natural resources management initiatives?

In the second village- Venkatapuram, a process of mobilisation by a local organisation over the years diffused the traditional leadership. Several committees like Vana Samrakshana Samithi, Water Users Association, Watershed Committee, Water and sanitation committee were formed under government NRM programs. It was observed that the perceptions
Shift in Focus Group

In Venkatapur village CROSS (an NGO) mobilised and organised the dalit women against the domination of the upper castes. In this process the traditional dominant power structure got diffused and the dalit community came out of the grips of the dominant caste leaders.

But still, they could not get into the key positions of the ‘committees’ formed under the participatory programs.

Pilupu an off-shoot of CROSS has continued to support the dalit groups. ‘Convergence agenda’ may present a dilemma in terms of shifting the focus group from exclusively dalits to the dominant interest groups in the village! What such an agenda holds for the dalits need to be looked into.

The contention was more for ‘who should implement the works’ and execute the program rather than any other concern!

Both the CBOs and Panchayats are dominated by vested interests and leaders representing such interests. The study team felt that there is an inherent danger in pursuing convergence agenda in such an environment (see box) for two reasons a) may become convergence of contractual interests and b) the focussed attention if any, on the poor may get diluted. In the above context, the group felt that there is a need to have clear focus on the ‘objectives of convergence’, which goes beyond project implementation. Clearly defined stakes for the poor should be up-fronted in this process.

Interaction with PRI Members and CBO Leaders at the Mandal Level

At the mandal level there was a general consensus that Gram Panchayat should have the overall responsibility for coordinating all the programs while the CBOs should have an independent identity. The mechanism of a ‘coordination committee’ was proposed by an MPTC member. Concern was expressed on the dominating political interests in the Panchayat which makes it difficult to arrive at decisions. The PRI members pointed out that the CBOs do not have much accountability; while the GP has to pass a resolution for any expenditure, which is not the case with the other committees. There was discussion on the strong political alliances of the PRI members. The work/ program allocations are also largely on the basis of political allegiances.

Majority think that the CBOs would be dysfunctional once the program budgets are over as they perceive that implementing the project/ spending the budgets is their only agenda. In general the participants appreciated the performance of SHGs (Samabhavana Sanghas, as they are called in Nalgonda) in making credit easily available. Also, it is observed that working with women may be less political and therefore, easier.

There is no support mechanism for conflict resolution within the institutions – all depends mostly on individual’s ability and there is no backstop. One example cited is of a Village Education (Vidya) Committee where the chairperson objected to teachers coming late but the teacher’s federation took up the issue and protected the erring teacher. The Vidya Committee does not have any such back-stop mechanisms. In general the levels of awareness and understanding of the committee members on their roles is very low.

When confronted with the question why the CBO/ PRI leadership is not addressing the issue of ground water depletion or degradation of common
lands, they showed much resistance to the idea that such a collective action is possible.

The following points have come up in the team’s review: Efforts to improve the quality of CBOs is crucial for promoting the agenda of convergence; quality in terms of the processes of inclusion of poor, collective action on the natural resource management, etc. To benefit from convergence, CBO should be strong. Convergence has to be structured with series of steps and not be artificially imposed. With a vision of regeneration of natural resources and flow of development gains from such a process various CBOs can effectively liaison with Panchayats in terms of institutionalizing appropriate norms, management functions and fund flows.

2.3 SCOPE FOR CONVERGENCE

Four organisations viz., NGOs Network on Participatory Forest Management, WASSAN (on watersheds), CWS (on PRIs) and MARI (Participatory Irrigation Management) have presented notes on the scope for convergence. The need for convergence from the point of view of each of these programs, the provisions made in the guidelines of these programs to facilitate convergence and the current practices on ground were the three aspects considered.

2.3.1 Forest Management by Communities

Sowmithri presented an assessment of the Community Forest Management on the above aspects. The scope and need for convergence was identified in four functional areas – protection of assigned forests, in building awareness on protection, catching forest offenders and in treating the upper reaches of the watersheds that are mainly forest areas. Constituting the general body, providing upward linkages to the VSS are the two areas where functionaries can be converged. The District/Divisional Forestry Committees and ITDA committees established above the village level to strengthen the VSS provide an opportunity for structural convergence at a higher level. Auditing of VSS accounts is an area where other CBOs/PRIs need to converge. Such a convergence at higher levels will help in strengthening VSS by up-ward linking.

The Government Order – GO MS No. 13, Dt. 12-02-2002 makes two provisions for convergence with Panchayat. Primary purpose of VSS is to protect forests, managed through community participation, and share the benefits. The present framework allows the Sarpanch to be chairperson of the advisory board to VSS management committee. The board shall help in planning, monitor, evaluate activities carried out by VSS along with providing necessary inputs for successful forest management. This is the first area of convergence where in the PRI can play a proactive role in forest development.

VSS with help of Forest Department takes up several soil and moisture conservation works and plantations leading to increase in the productivity of forests. A watershed approach may help for achieving larger benefit to the community as a whole and to the holistic development of the watershed ecosphere. This may be the second area of convergence.

2.3.2 Participatory Watershed Management

M V Ramachandrudu of WASSAN presented a paper on the scope for convergence in the watershed development program. There are several provisions in the watershed guidelines for convergence. The program starts with the consent of the Gram Panchayat in terms of a resolution that the Panchayat will ensure maintenance of assets created and would actively participate in the program in the areas of planning, monitoring and reviewing of progress. The program ends with handing over the assets created to the Panchayats or groups. A member of the Panchayat would also serve as one of the Watershed Committee members. Various departments/ schemes are also to converge with the program to be
facilitated by the implementing agency. Convergence of various CBOs is not clearly articulated. The Vana Samrakshana Samithis can be recognised as watershed committees where forest lands fall under watershed area. Conservation in these lands can be taken up in accordance with the Forest Conservation Act.

In spite of the above provisions in the watershed guidelines, there are little efforts on ground to give a meaningful role to Panchayats. Owing to operational complexities, forest lands are generally excluded from treatment plans. The SHGs are also not functionally integrated into any natural resource management aspects. The budgets for tank rehabilitation from other sources still need to be converged into watershed program.

The scope for convergence on the other hand, is substantial. Gram Panchayats helping in mobilising people to contribute, granting usufruct rights for common property resources, formulating and enforcing regulation of resource use – particularly of ground water and grazing, would help in long term sustainability of benefits of the watershed program. Forest areas within watersheds need immediate attention. Tank management and integrating the fisher cooperatives are other areas identified.

2.3.3 Participatory Irrigation Management

Though many users in the village have a right on the tank, only the command area farmers are taken into the Water Users' Association. There are no provisions / mention of roles of the Panchayat or other CBOs in the Water Users' Association Act. PRIs therefore disown the tank management. Murali of MARI made a presentation on the subject. There is an immediate need to broad base the water users’ association, by way of including the fisher-folk, the interests of drinking water for livestock and other users. The Panchayat Tanks/ Kuntalu (tanks with command area less than 100 acres) are not brought under participatory irrigation management. In the programs like Neeru-Meeru, there is no role for Water Users' Association or the Panchayats; line departments are directly working with Water Users' Associations.

The watershed development plans need to consider the interests of the tanks where ever it is conflicting. If the command area falls in two villages, it becomes more difficult to manage. Functionally, the water users’ association is also restricted to a few persons in the committee; the general body is completely in the dark as to what is happening. The village tanks play very important role in meeting the drinking water & domestic needs and in production systems of the local community.

There is a need to mobilize the entire community for sustainable tank management. Few individuals based WUA functioning in isolation has not made any progress towards sustainable tank management.

While there is a need to form the primary stake holder’s organization, the processes and activities should elicit participation of the entire community. To avoid conflicting and secluded functioning of CBOs, capacity building and leadership strengthening is essential. Proper perspectives and attitude would create an atmosphere of collective functioning of the CBOs for village development. Tank is an integral part of the natural resource base and eco system of the village. Hence there is a need for different village based organizations like VSS, Watershed Association, Farmers associations, WUA and Gram Panchayat to work towards integrated development of natural resources. Tanks need to be focussed as part of a village level comprehensive water conservation, sharing and utilization plan.

2.3.4 Panchayat Raj Institutions

Prabhakar Reddy leading the Panchayat Raj program of Centre for World Solidarity made a brief presentation on the provisions in the Andhra
Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1994 (APPR Act) for NRM in the overall context of the 73rd constitutional amendment. The eleventh Schedule of the Constitution (Article 243-G) vests the powers and responsibilities for managing natural resources with Panchayats. The state governments have to take up steps to transfer the powers to the self-government institutions. Prabhakar quoted several sections in the APPR Act that make provisions for Panchayats managing their natural resources. Maintenance of irrigation works and execution of kudhimaramat in Section 56, managing ferries in gram Panchayat in section 57, vesting of poramboke (village commons) with gram Panchayats in Section 58 were some of the examples cited. The Act also creates space for standing or subject or functional committees.

In the discussions that followed, questions on the levels of participation in the Gram Sabha were raised. The Panchayats’ abdication of their responsibilities in terms of its inability to collect the user charges and in managing the resources was also discussed. In the ensuing discussion a consensus on the need for strengthening Gram Sabha as a nodal platform for all CBOs emerged.

The need for making a clear distinction between a mere ‘Committee’ and a ‘community based organisation’ was brought out. When does a group become a bonafide CBO that converge with other services? What are the entry point activities and what are the graduation mechanisms? These are the other questions to ponder. A CBO is a community defined in a geographical space with a commonality of interest and having an element of interdependence among its members. It can take up any activities for which it is a primary stakeholder.

There is no legal sanction for ward or habitation committees in Andhra Pradesh and the Gram Sabha’s functions are not well defined. The Kerala experience was brought out in this regard. The Subject Committees meet two days before the Gram Sabha and develop an agenda note for the Grama Sabha. The government has given substantial untied funds for the Gram Sabha to take a decision regarding the projects to be taken up. A committee of beneficiaries will implement each project thus decided. In Andhra Pradesh the Gram Sabha is not empowered – giving it some teeth is a prime necessity. In A.P. the delegation of powers to Panchayats is very weak. Even the Panchayat Secretary is not under the control of the Sarpanch! The Panchayat also gets very meagre funds.

If a CBO exists it should implement any program for which it is a primary stakeholder. If the entire village is to be benefited by a program the poor would loose (excluded); and if the poor are to be benefited they should be given the program.

### 2.4 SHARING OF EXPERIENCES

In a subsequent session Taru Pallanival from SERP shared the convergence strategies followed in the Velugu program. A Mandal and district level convergence committee was formed to facilitate the processes of convergence as part of Velugu. Convergence of various actors, government programs is also facilitated in enhancing the livelihoods options of the poor; particularly in the areas of marketing and value addition of products accessible to poor like non-timber forest products and Red Gram. The team has developed a tool called LEAP (Livelihood Enhancement Action Plan) for the purpose.

As the present village organisations of the groups are strategically weak
there is a need to strengthen these groups and their federations and work with others with less friction and more benefits.

Madhavi from DAARCEE shared the organisation’s experience in promoting convergence of CBOs and Panchayats in few villages in Vikarabad as a part of the Panchayati Raj program of Centre for World Solidarity. The organisation has promoted a common platform at the Panchayat level where the Panchayat meets all the CBOs and reviews their respective programs. The need for such a convergence is not felt explicitly as Gram Sabha has similar role. There is also a sense of the Sarpanch ‘losing power’ because of the convergence efforts.

Janardhan from PILUPU shared the details of the program on convergence that his organisation has recently taken up in Turkapally Mandal of Nalgonda district with support from SDC-IC, NGO Programme, AP. The program aims at developing convergent platforms both at the village and mandal level; which is at a nascent stage. He felt that convergence was not an expressed need in the village. Murali of MARI suggested that convergence is happening in an informal sense in the village, but it has to be introduced in a programmatic way to be functional. There is a need to document the success stories.

In the discussion that followed it was suggested that the CBOs should not work under PRI but both should have a common and convergent approach. Such a convergent approach though benefiting the entire village, should yield special benefits to the poor and therefore the need for latter’s independence. Identifying the roles and management functions of each institution and then developing an agenda on convergence was suggested. Once such roles are identified any activity could serve as an entry point. The group also felt the need for generating more experience in working with PRI and convergence following this workshop.

Convergence is necessary at three levels viz., at the Sectoral/department level, at District and at Village (Program level). Preparing an approach paper for sectoral and district level convergence and orienting the people’s representatives on the subject was felt important. An effort to document best practices around the country and compiling various studies and policies on the subject is much needed. Such an initiative may continue as a forum. Yugandhar offered to initiate the process. Annamalai of NIRD offered to prepare a bibliography on the subject. Generating good work experiences in this field is important. A mention was made about an exposure visit of PRI members in Pilupu area to ‘Koneru’, an organisation near Achampeta in Mahabubnagar district. Working on a booklet detailing the role of Panchayats in NRM was also suggested.

2.5 AGENDA AHEAD

Working for Convergence: Approach & Operational steps

The inputs, debates and discussions in the workshop finally led to outlining an approach and broad operational steps for initiating work on convergence in natural resources management.

Approach to Convergence in NRM:

Natural Resources Management is an important framework affecting sustainability of social and economic activities in a village. However, understanding issues of NRM and its development i.e., primacy of NRM is not recognised fully or appreciated among PRI, CBO and other facilitating organisations.

The primary task of convergence in NRM given the above context is to arrange for such a collective vision and objectives. Building a common vision for the entire village to develop its natural resources with the principles of equity, gender and centrality of the poor guiding
such a vision should be the first task.

The purpose of convergence is to realise such a common vision. The activities and programs towards this end should necessarily follow the principle of subsidiarity. Devolution of functions among CBOs and PRIs should include different elements and functions of natural resources management needed to realise the vision.

**Operational Steps:**

1. The first step is to facilitate such a collective (among all the village institutions) visioning process for development and management of natural resources.
2. This need to be followed by a participatory planning process to identify different action points to realise the common vision.
3. Identifying the roles, responsibilities, functions and institutional prerequisites to operationalise the NRM action plans is the next step.
4. Such emerging functions need to be shared by different institutions on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity. It is important to ensure that the decision making be in the hands of the primary stakeholders/users/managers of a natural resource.
5. Convergence happens on the vision and action plans. The Grama Sabha is a key platform on which such a convergent action may be mounted.

The group felt that field experience need to be generated on convergence with the above approach. The workshop concluded with a vote of thanks and lots of hope and energy to take the agenda forward.

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**Annexure - I**

**List of Participants**

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As a preparatory process to the workshop on the theme, a study team organized this study in two villages. These are the program villages of “Pilupu”, which is working on the convergence issues with the support of SDC - IC, NGO Programme, AP.

Objective of the study is to prepare a background paper on situation analysis on the theme of convergence of CBOs and PRIs on NRM. This paper would serve as a background note for the workshop.

Study Team

Members from NGO’s Committee on Participatory Forest Management, CWS, NIRD, SDC - IC, MARI, CESS, PILUPU, TREES and a Sarpanch from Narsapur village participated in the study. WASSAN prepared the background material and facilitated the study. These institutions/ members are working on different thematic areas viz., Joint Forest Management, Panchayat Raj Institutions, watershed development, Water Users’ Association, NRM etc. This diversity has provided a multi-dimensional perspective to the analysis. List of study team members is given in the end. PILUPU and TREES have locally hosted the study team.

Villages

The study was organized in the villages Chinna Laxmapur and Venkatapur in Turkapalli Mandal of Nalgonda district.
Process

1. **Group Discussion within the team**
   A half-day brainstorming session on the subject. This has helped in getting the ideas from different areas of work and in arriving at a common frame of analysis.

2. **Field Visit**
   - Field visit to two villages by the study team in two groups
   - Reflection on the observations from the field situation by the team

3. **Mandal Level Meeting with PRIs and CBO leaders**
   - A half-day workshop with participants from Panchayat Raj Institutions i.e.- Sarpanches, MPTC members, members of panchayats and various CBOs.

4. **Summing Up**
   - A summing up session- where the team reflected on the two days.

The workshop dates were fixed as 10th and 11th of December, 02.

1. **Group Discussion within the team**

   During the brainstorming session the group observed that
   - The presence of CBOs in the current situation need to be acknowledged and the group should focus on how to converge various CBOs and PRIs; rather than taking a position either for PRI or CBO.
   - How to evolve a platform for various CBOs to engage in discussion.
   - The present efforts in programs like watershed development tend to stop at implementing the projects. But the issues of real management of natural resources like social regulation of grazing, ground water management are not being addressed.
   - Convergence needs to be discussed in terms of funds, functionaries, functions and convergence in the organizational structures.
   - The group felt the need for working on more functional aspects of convergence, which are beyond project implementation.

   The group then identified the participatory methods for the village level exercises viz., Transect, Resource map, identifying stakeholders, timeline exercises etc. Team was also divided into 2 groups to visit Chinna Laxmapur and Venkatapur villages in the afternoon.

2. **Field Visits**

   **a. Village Chinna Laxmapur**

   After explaining the purpose of the study, resource mapping exercise was carried out and the linkages among various resources identified. Around 25 villagers participated.

   The village has village level committees under RIDF- watersheds, JFM, and Water & Sanitation. There are also some SHGs.

   **Structure**

   The village has Reddy, Golla, Mudiraj, SC, ST, Vadder, Muslim, Chakali,
Vadrangi, Mangali and Pitchi Kuntla castes. The Sarpanch, an ST candidate (male) was unanimously elected. Most of the village affairs are taken care of by a group of informal leaders consisting of all the castes. They even dominate the affairs of CBOs like VSS, WatSan, and RIDF watersheds. All meetings related to these CBOs and Gram Panchayat take place in the village common place. Villagers can participate in all these meetings. Because it is a small village, they said, all the villagers participate in the discussions and in decision making process.

Collective action
This informal group levies tax on cutting of stones in the hillocks at the rate of Rs.25 per trip. Since last two years they accumulated Rs.18000/-. This amount is being rotated under a Chit to be repaid within a period of one month. They have purchased a plot for village meetings and also plan to renovate a Temple with this money.

Natural Resources
It has 1000 acres of land of which around 350 acres area is on hillocks. Of the total 13 tanks in the village, three are under Panchayat and others are in individual lands. Four major streams starting from the hillocks drain the village. It has about 100 irrigation borewells and 40 open wells, which are dry. Paddy is the main crop (50% area) followed by Jowar and maize. Drinking water supply is from a bore-well and four hand pumps.

Several households depend on the common lands in the hillocks and in forest areas for grazing, collection and selling of Seetaphal fruits. Under the VSS the forest lands are being protected.

This is a small village. To survive a drought in the seventies many of the tamarind trees were cut and sold out. Impact of degradation of the forests on drying up of wells was clearly articulated by people. The forest area was brought under protection by VSS. When asked why they could not initiate such protection earlier, they felt that it needs collective action and it can be protected only by government intervention.

Issues Emerging:
- The leadership seem to be inclusive, broad based and involves all the communities in the village in discussions and decision-making.
- The informal committee takes all the decisions – the roles of Panchayat and other committees seem to be very minimal.
- One interpretation is that the traditional leadership of ‘Patels’ (revenue officials) got entrenched in this informal leadership but has become more inclusive as the changing power situations necessiates such process.
- Though GP is the owner of the commons from where stones are extracted, the proceeds from taxes are not deposited in the Gram Panchayat account.
- As in any other village, there is a competition for digging borewells resulting in their drying up, but there is no collective action to regulate or share ground water.
- There are no instances of this leadership thinking about development of the natural resources or village development. They are just accommodating all the new government programs.

The key question emerging here is why the effective informal institution and its leadership is not moving towards natural resources management in spite of an apparent crisis. The two instances viz., lack of any norms in ground water management and the feeling that it needs a government initiative to deal with commons, are good pointers. This is in spite of the strength of the leadership and its proactive spirit.
- Is it that local community based institutions however strong they
may be, can easily take up initiatives in non-controversial areas like temples, bus stand etc. on their own initiative, but are unlikely to take up challenging or more complicated issues in NRM like ground water management or protection of commons?

❖ That even for such strong community based institutions, it needs external facilitation by a government program in this case, to take up NRM (JFM), is an important issue to debate.

b. Village : Venkatapuram

This village has two hamlets with total households at about 230, including 30 households in Mamidi Kunta Thanda. It is a mixed village having many castes. Madiga, Reddy and Chakali castes have 30 households each followed by Mudiraj (10), Yadava (21), Goud (12) castes. Other artisan castes like Kummari, Kammar, Vaddera, Avusula, Vadla, Mangali also have about 2 to 6 households each. Brahmin, Vaisyas castes also have 2 to 3 households each. The Reddy caste used to dominate the SCs and others traditionally. But over years the traditional leadership has been challenged and the relations also changed. An NGO - CROSS intensively worked in the area on mobilization of SC community in the past. They formed SHGs of SC and worked towards their betterment. This being a reserved panchayat, the Sarpanch is a woman from the SC community. Politically the village is highly stratified.

Many of the artisan households have shifted their occupation base and some of them have been regularly migrating to cities. Some households in Mudiraj community are involved in the fruits business. Agriculture and livestock are the principal means of livelihoods for many.

The village has about 600 acres of forest lands in the hillocks, which is being protected by VSS. The farmers adjacent to the forests have taken up responsibilities for protection. Two main streams drain the village. There are several medium and small tanks along the drainage lines. Only one tank has a Water User’s Association jointly with the village upstream. Rest of the small tanks are mostly in the individual lands. There is also a committee to implement RIDF- watersheds.

The traditional institutional mechanisms -‘Banjar Doddi’ – a system for imposing fines on stray animals has collapsed. No other instances of collective action were reported. Participants attributed the cause of failure of Banjar Doddi to the diffusion in the leadership and the breakdown of traditional domination by few leaders – which is a fall-out of development itself.

There is no convergence of any sort among various committees – JFM, WUA, Water and Sanitation, Vidya Committee etc., or between any of these committees and the Panchayat.

❖ Perceptions on the need for convergence differed; the committee members felt that the platforms like VSS would also get highly politicized if converged with Panchayat and it would be better that they perform independently. The Panchayat members on the other hand, expressed that Panchayat has a legitimate right to these programs.

❖ Before the VSS was formed, the Mudiraj community used to take the tamarind and seetaphal trees in the forests on lease from the revenue / forest office, protect and sell the produce. Monkeys are a major problem in this business. After the formation of VSS the perception that the protected forests belong to ‘all’ prevailed. The Mudiraj community was not given the lease and no mechanism was institutionalized in the VSS to protect the fruits from monkeys. The produce was left out. This instance points out to the need for
‘deepening the participation’ in terms of having small ‘user groups’ of real stakeholders in the CBOs like VSS.

**Issues Emerging:**

- The perceptions of the committees in all the natural resources programs – VSS, WUA, RIDF watersheds are limited to implementation of government projects without much agenda for ‘management’ of the resources. Only in JFM some kind of protection mechanisms are institutionalized.

- The demand for convergence if any, is seen only in terms of sharing the implementation responsibilities/ expenditure or getting the works done.

- Vested interests and leaders representing such interests dominate both the CBOs and Panchayats. The team felt that there is an inherent danger in pursuing convergence agenda in such an environment, as it would reinforce these vested interests; and that it may end up in convergence for sharing works/ implementation with contractual interests. The NGO’s identity and credibility among the marginalized communities built up over years may get diluted as most of its time would be consumed in interacting with the dominant caste groups and their leaders. In this sense, there is a danger of it leading to disempowerment of the weak. There were perceptions (by some of the team members) of such a threat during the meeting.

- In the above context, the group observed that there is a need to have a clear focus on the ‘objectives of convergence’, which goes beyond project implementation and also, defined stakes of the poor in the process.

- Also, the desire for collective action depends on the scarcity of a particular resource or the intensity of the need for such an action. Where resources are abundant, there may not be adequate drivers for collective action. This will in turn, limit the scope for convergence for NRM.

- Political stratification may be a major hurdle in promoting convergence agenda.

- Diffusion/ demystification of traditional leadership, achieved over time with mobilisation of marginalized, has disabled local institutions like Banjar Dodd as the norms could not be enforced. Institutional mechanisms for enforcing the norms therefore, become a major issue.

**3. Mandal Level Meeting with CBOs and PRIs Leaders**

This was organized during the afternoon of the 2nd day. About 30 persons consisting of Sarpanches, MPTC members, VSS, RIDF-watershed, Water and Sanitation Committee presidents/ chairpersons, few leaders of SHGs participated. They are from the seven villages where ‘Pilupu’ is working in the Mandal. The issues of convergence - instances, its need, potential etc., were discussed.

The points emerging from this discussion are as follows.

- Participants identified the following CBOs in the Mandal:
  - Neeti Sangham: for repairing tanks with funds provided by the government
  - Vidya committee
  - VSS
  - Sectoral Reforms Committee: *(this is an irony of the situation that Water and Sanitation Committee is recognized by the name of Sectoral reforms!)*
RIDF- watersheds for developing fallow lands,
Samabhavana Sanghalu (SHGs)
Anganwadi – just started
Neeru-Meeru committees – they observed that these committees have not gained much ground.

- Most felt that the Gram Panchayat (GP) is an overall body and should work with all other CBOs.
- Some participants (particularly from CBOs) have felt that the CBOs should have independent identity.
- GP is ridden with party politics and at times it is difficult to conduct its own meetings; how can it work with others in this way? As diverse view points, political interests dominate the Panchayats it is difficult to arrive at quick decisions.
- All participants responded positively to a suggestion made by a MPTC member that Sarpanch should discuss with all committees and have an understanding of all other programs. There may be a ‘Samanvaya committee’ (coordination committee) to coordinate.
- There are several examples of such a coordination being exercised at the level of GP. For e.g., in Ibrahimpur all the CBO committee members are asked to explain about the work in their own committees in the general body meeting of the GP. This seems to be a common practice in many other villages.
- Some PRI members felt that VSS and other committees do not have much accountability. Observing that the accountability with the CBOs is low, these members pointed out that while the GP needs to show a resolution for any expenditure, it is not the case with other committees.
- The CBOs would be dysfunctional once the program budgets are over as they think implementing the project/ spending the budgets is their agenda.
- In general the participants appreciated the performance of SHGs (Samabhavana Sangham) in making credit easily available. Also, observed that working with women may be less political and therefore, easier.
- There is no space/ support/ mechanism for conflict resolution within the institutions – all depends mostly on individual’s ability and there is no backstop. One example is of a Vidya Committee where the chairperson objected to teachers coming late/ taking unauthorised leave. But the teacher’s federation took up the issue and protected the person. The Vidya Committee does not have any such back-stop mechanisms.
- There was discussion on strong political alliances of the PRI members. The work/ program allocations are also largely on the basis of political allegiances. On this, Sarpanch from Rajapet Mandal felt that the sarpanch should be politically neutral once they get elected and get the work done from different political parties. Personally they may follow a leader, but in the village affairs s/he should be neutral.
- Some of the chairpersons and other key members of committees do not have the necessary awareness and understanding on their roles other than expenditure.
- When confronted with the question why the CBO/ PRI leadership is not addressing the issue of ground water depletion or degradation of common lands, they showed lot of resistance to the idea that such a collective action is possible.

Reflecting on the discussion in the Mandal meeting the study team felt the following:

1. Efforts to improve the quality of CBOs is crucial for promoting the...
agenda of convergence; quality in terms of the processes of inclusion of poor, collective action on the natural resource management, etc.

2. If participation level in a CBO is weak the scope for beneficial convergence would be limited.

3. Instead of artificially grafting convergence it has to be structured with series of steps starting with orientation, awareness building etc. Convergence agenda should not be artificially imposed.

4. Visioning exercise for the village institutions may be a good driver for convergence. If such a vision of regeneration of natural resources and flow of development gains from such a process could be created, then various CBOs can effectively liaison with Panchayats in terms of institutionalizing appropriate norms, management functions and fund flows.

5. The agenda of convergence should uphold the interests of the poor and the marginalised in the forefront, else it may be subdued.

The study concluded with the above observations.

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<td>Centre for World Solidarity</td>
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<td>Dr. Annamalai</td>
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