A Study of Convergent Community Action Approach in The Districts of Chandrapur & Yavatmal - UNICEF
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report is the outcome of my meeting with the State program Officer Mumbai and his colleague – the first of which took place in the month of February 2001. Subsequently it developed as a story of optimism after visiting Kolwahi, Keagaon, Dhamni, Varaj, and also to Dampur Mauda and Bhorgaon Bhosale. A visit which was jointly made along with my colleague Ms. Manjula Dash through the active support of Mr. Nand Kumar including the local Government staff and NGO representatives.

We would specially like to recognize and appreciate the work carried out by the small and newly formed NGOs in Yavatmal and Chandrapur who are anxious to learn and have great vision towards the development of the villages by promoting the concept of Partners in Development. Together with the villagers they have made it possible to believe what Michel Lipton had once said, “Small is beautiful”. They have indeed understood the importance and power of Convergent Community Action (CCA).

Like always it is the visiting team that has learnt the most from this process – a learning process that has been made possible by the help and kindness shown to us by Mr. Gopi Menon, Ms. Vijaya Chauhan, Mr. Nand Kumar, Mr. Sunil Bhele, Mr. Jirafe, Ms. Sadhana Dube, Pushpatai and all other supporting staff in Yavatmal and Chandrapur. We would also like to convey to the villagers of all the villages that we visited, our heartfelt thanks for their time, kindness, generosity and hospitality.

Though it is customary in every report to write the acknowledgements, I would sincerely like to put in record the insisting of Mr. Menon on my preliminary visit to these villages before embarking upon a detailed process evaluation. The visit truly brought a sense of satisfaction and renewed hope in me on the celebrated concept that people are knowledgeable and they know best not only their problems but also their solutions. It equally helped immensely in formulating the TOR for the detailed evaluation that is to follow soon after this.
INTRODUCTION

A. Background

United Nations Children’s Fund perhaps is one of the most direct action United Nations wings whose presence is felt as a potential child development organisation in most of the developing nations in general and India in particular. With its multifaceted and composite development program, UNICEF has not only emerged as a perfect partner with the Government but also with NGOs. Emerging as a learning organisation, it has encompassed several structural changes in its approach towards development, especially from working with watertight bureaucratic Government setup to a more participative and community action approach.

In the year 1999, the Government of India and UNICEF jointly agreed on a framework of Master Plan of Operation, which contains a consorted implementation strategy on Mother and Child development. This well thought of document known as “A Programme for Children and Women in India” Plan of Operations 1999-2002, has been conceived of two parts. The first part deals with conceptual framework while the second describes the program. Though the programs are expected to be implemented by the Government, there is major shifts that can be noticed in the implementation strategy which calls for greater community participation through the process of empowerment. Convergent Community Action (CCA) is the strategy applied to build community based planning, implementation and monitoring throughout the country program. The strategy revolves around the Gram Sabha as the community and calls for its participation and ownership of programs seeking to fulfil children’s and women’s rights. CCA also requires sector service responsiveness to the priorities and demands identified by the community through an inter-sectoral facilitating team of grassroots functionaries. The strategy reflects the decentralization of Governance through the 73rd constitutional Amendment and seeks to strengthen this process through building the capacities of elected members of Panchayats, especially women and youth.

While CCA is the strategy to be integrated in all GOI-UNICEF programs, provision is also made for programme support to facilitate the building of effective community processes and to train members of Panchayat. Thus, two projects are incorporated under CCA Rural:
• Expansion and strengthening of cross-sectoral processes
• Capacity building of Panchayats to fulfill children’s rights

On the basis of the above-mentioned principle, UNICEF expects to bring about a **planned social change** in the community. The envisaged social change would not only bring about basic attitudinal change of the community towards Child Rights and Child Protection, but also expects to enhance the overall quality of life in the community, through community participation and empowerment. Planned social change however has gone through several controversies time & again and have been severely criticized by many social activists. The unfortunate misconstrued objection brought by social activists is that the planned social change preconceives a set pattern how a community should behave in the future days to come rather than empowering them to think for themselves. Since the major approach of the current GOI-UNICEF program is towards planned social change, it may be necessary at this point to briefly understand what planned social change is all about and how is it understood in the current contextual framework.

**B. What Is Planned Social Change?**

Human beings are a social species. We need to belong, to identify with a group. Social systems are our natural human environment: interdependent, interactive groups, which share important concerns - for example, a neighborhood or a community. Like individuals, social systems must *change* - adapt and grow - or they risk becoming unsuccessful or dysfunctional.

The key to successful adaptation and growth is to *plan* for change, so that changes are proactive rather than reactive. Planned social change, then, is a rational approach to implementing significant changes in the structure or function of our social systems. It takes the big picture into account, seeking long-range growth and health rather than finding a "quick fix."

Planned change implies direction-a vision of the future for the neighborhood or community. If you think 5, 10, or even 25 years into the future, how would you wish your neighborhood or community to be? What would be different? What would be the same? Planned social change turns that vision into a new reality.
However, change is not always comfortable. Most of us have reached some level of accommodation to the status quo, and the prospect of significant changes may leave us feeling threatened and uneasy. When faced with this discomfort, we may deny the need for change, resist it, or rationalize our desire to remain unchanged. Though it is a natural part of the change process, we can still initiate social change while lessening or avoiding resistance by using these three types of strategies:

**Power strategies** bring about change by the threat of punishment or consequences. For example, passing a city ordinance imposing a fine for smoking in municipal buildings is a power tactics. Such strategies aim for behavior change rather than a change in attitudes or beliefs, thus avoiding one cause of resistance. Using power tactics requires adequate and appropriate resources to provide enforcement, but may bring about behavior change very quickly.

**Persuasion** strategies create change by convincing us that is the socially acceptable thing to do. Persuasion tactics urge us to identify with new group norms as we become convinced, for example, that "Friends don’t let friends drive drunk." This quotation, from a public service announcement aired some years ago, illustrates how persuasion tactics lower our resistance to change by assuring us of our group identity and acceptance.

**Education** strategies bring about change by offering information, knowledge, and/or skills. Change through education is often slow, but tends to be long lasting because we have shifted our attitudes, values, or beliefs. The early warning on cigarette packages is an example of an education tactics. It took a while; many of us denied the validity of a link between smoking and cancer; but once that knowledge was accepted it became part of our personal identity as nonsmokers.

Each of the categories - **Power, Persuasion, and Education** - is valid and useful. The most effective campaigns typically employ all three.

Planned change takes time. After all, people create social change, and it takes time to communicate and accept new ideas. Even a power strategy will be very difficult to implement without the acceptance and cooperation of most members of the social system. (Witness the difficulty of enforcing extremely unpopular laws.)
The odds of successful change implementation increase, however, if:

- People see its advantages;
- It does not violate existing values or customs (or it establishes new ones);
- It is understandable and usable;
- It is easily tried out;
- Its results are visible to others (Rogers, 1983).

For a new idea or behavior to spread and take hold throughout a social system, regardless of its size, all constituencies must be included in the planning and implementation. Opinion leaders from all constituencies must communicate its acceptance. (Opinion leaders are those people we tend to listen to, just because of what they are.)

Collaboration is more than just a popular "buzzword." Bringing together representatives of all constituencies to work in concert toward planned social change is a critical underlying principle. Planning and implementing social change collaboratively maintains communication networks, makes efficient use of resources possible, protects vulnerable groups, allows opportunities for leaders to emerge, and ensures the most rapid and widespread acceptance of change. Planned social change by definition is a group process. By including all constituencies, we ensure that it is a successful and a humane process as well.

In continuation of the response to the changing approach of UNICEF development program, the State Program Officer of UNICEF Maharashtra, is keen to undertake a process evaluation particularly to understand the effectiveness of the path while implementing CCA. In this regard the program office is keen to undertake a detailed and scientific analysis of the process, and to what extent the current implementation strategy is following the process as laid down in the path proposed in the GOI-UNICEF Master Plan of Operation 1999-2002. While the detailed scientific evaluation follows, it was felt necessary that a preliminary visit be undertaken by an external expert so that a framework could be developed for the detailed evaluation on the basis of first hand impression by visiting a few villages in the district of Chandrapur and Yavatmal.
LIMITATIONS

The study undertaken in 6 villages of the 2 districts has been impressionistic in nature. Time has been the main constrains of this report. It is important that sufficient time be spent in probing while interacting with the villagers. Being an outsider and visiting for the first time, not opening up to a stranger is a natural phenomena. Hence there is human tendency to put their best and give more success stories rather than their failures. The maximum time that we could spend in each village was between 2-3 hours only. As such it is to shorter time for rapport building and doing any in-depth analysis. Hence relying on the information given by the villagers in an unstructured manner was the only way left with us. In this report no quantitative method has been applied.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used was basically Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) technique as well as referring to certain available secondary data. The PRA included transect walk, semi-structured interviews, learning and experience sharing. Due to constrain of time techniques such as social mapping, scoring, ranking, time-line analysis and seasonality diagramming could not be used. Efforts were made to interview a few key persons in the village as well as direct village development functionaries. However the most effective interaction was felt as the group discussion method since the villagers opened up more easily.
VISIT REPORT

The UNICEF State office of Mumbai is responsible for the UNICEF initiated programs in state of Maharashtra, which is situated between 16.4 degrees to 22.1 degrees north latitude and 72.6 degrees to 50.9 degrees east longitude. In accordance with 1991 census the state ranks third in population as well as area in the country, the geographical area being 3.0777 lakhs square kilometers. UNICEF has primarily based its program in all those districts where the indicators of health, education and environmental sanitation are lower in rank. Yavatmal and Chandrapur are amongst these districts where UNICEF has initiated comprehensive program related to maternal & child health as well as education and environmental sanitation. As a preliminary visit, it was decided that an exploratory bird’s eye view of the recently initiated UNICEF program under the GOI-UNICEF Master Plan of Operation 1999-2002 be undertaken to get a first hand impression of these two districts.

In accordance with 1991 census, the total area covered by the Yavatmal district is 13,584 Sq. Kilometers. With a total population of 22,77,000 the average total literacy in the district in accordance with 1991 census was 57.96% as against the state average of 67.32%. There has been a remarkable improvement in the literacy figure of this district in the last decade where the literacy rate of the district has gone upto 74.06% as against the average literacy of the state being 74.14% in accordance with 2001 census. The increase in literacy rate amongst male during the last decade (1991 –2001) has been 14.07% whereas the female literacy rate has been 18.21% in the district. The district rank 20th in the state in terms of overall literacy.

Chandrapur, area-wise originally was a much larger district having a total of 25923 Sq. kilometers in accordance with 1981 census and subsequently was divided. As per 1991 census it has an area of 10695 Sq. Kilometers. The total population of the district as per 1981 census was 20,55,000 and according to 1991 census the population was 17,72,000. The total literacy rate of the district as per 1991 census was 59.41% as against average literacy rate of the state being 67.32%. In accordance with census 2001 there has been marked improvement in the literacy rate in the district i.e. 73.07% as compared to state average of 74.14% literacy rate. The average growth of literacy in the district as compared to 1991 census is 13.67% in which the female literacy is 15.76% and male literacy is 11.89%, ranking 23rd in the state in terms of literacy.
Yavatmal and Chandrapur have fair presence of tribal population i.e. 21.47% of total population of Yavatmal and 19.70% of Chandrapur are dominated by tribal population as against the average of 9.27% in Maharashtra. The major tribes found in Yavatmal are:

- Andh,
- Dhanwar
- Gond
- Kolam
- Pardhan

The major tribes found in Chandrapur are:

- Kawar
- Gond
- Pardhan

The average literacy rate amongst the tribes of Yavatmal as per 1991 census is 41.3 % (55.09 male and 27.26 female) and Chandrapur is 47.30 % (60.44 male and 33.82 female) as against the state average of 64.87 %(76.56 male and 52.30 female).

1. Visit objectives

On the basis of several discussions held in UNICEF office Mumbai the following objectives were worked out for the visit:

i. To gather the general impression of community involvement in PEEP project and assess the general level of participation.

ii. To assess the general level of awareness of the field functionaries in the area of RCH, primary education and environmental sanitation.

iii. To assess the level of actual inputs being provided to the village level committees by the trained field functionaries of PEEP project.

iv. To gather information and methodology of involvement of youth and women as agent of change.

v. To get a general impression of confidence level of the community in solving their own problem as a group.
vi. To gather a general impression on the monitoring system of the process.

vii. To observe critical points of sustainability in regards to continued community involvement in the village development process.

2. **Factual information of the visit**

The main theme of the program demands participation as core product at all levels. The central idea is to empower the villages in order to demand and make use of the existing Government programs through focused and collective participation of Youth Group and Mahila Mandals. Capacity building through a properly designed training program instills the empowerment process. To do this, several NGOs have been identified as input agents (19 in Yavatmal and 16 in Chandrapur district). The major input being given by these NGOs are training and awareness program. Hands on training in micro planning and PRA technique are being used to involve youth group who makes the canvas of the village micro-plan. These plans are by and large time bound in nature. The two major coordinating NGOs are Yuva Ved Manch in Yavatmal and Nehru Yuvak Kendra in Chandrapur district. A point to be noted here that most of the NGOs who are involved in the project have an average age of 6 years of existence. All of them are registered under the societies registration act. Almost all of them have undergone intensive training in micro planning. The micro planning training is of 5-8 days duration. Participation of the villagers are sought right from the beginning i.e. each household in the village contribute in taking care of the participants while the training is going in the village.

**Training:**

Training formed the main element of capacity building in the process. It was mainly divided in two components:

a. Training of trainers in micro planning
b. Training of the village youth in micro planning

**Training of trainers:**

The selection of trainers was done through several stages. In initial stage general five days orientation training on various aspects of development and micro planning was imparted to the youth group. They were further screened on the basis of their initiative and capacity to grasp the subject. These selected youth
were then sent to villages for practical interaction and work, which formed the basis of the final selection. The finally selected group was imparted with further intensive training on micro planning. Currently they are the key agents/resource persons available to the villages as direct contact people. The final selection of the trainers was done over period of 5-6 months process.

Training of the village youth

Since youth, women and children have been carved as the central change agents in the development process of the PEEP program, training of village youth formed as the fundamental component in the path of success to this program. 3-4 youths from each village out of which one women candidate were selected for the training in micro planning. The training was imparted for the cluster of 10 villages thus making it a maximum of 40 trainers for each training program. One of the villages within this cluster became the host village to conduct the program. An interesting component of the development process was observed at this point wherein the participation of the villagers has been sought right from the beginning. For example, in case of this training, it was the host village, which had borne the entire cost of the training program. This included their participation in arrangements of the venue as well as accommodating the trainees in the village during the entire program.
**Visit I**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>District</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the village</td>
<td>KOLWAHI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of visit</td>
<td>14th May 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the coordinating NGO</td>
<td>Priyadarshani Mahila Mandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population of village</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major emphasis</td>
<td>Women’s empowerment program</td>
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Village Kolwahi was the first spot of visit, which is situated in the Dharwa block of Yavatmal district. The initial introduction was with group of village men who were available during the afternoon. Most of them were small farmers having a land holding between 3 – 10 acres. Generally it is rain-fed agricultural practice in this area. Only one crop is predominant specially due to no Government irrigation facilities being available in the village. The first hand impression was that of friendliness and cooperative. The village has very strong presence of womens group/ Mahila Mandal. The men folk well recognized the fact that there have been significant improvements in the village condition due to the active participation of the women. There are three Self Help Groups (SHG) of women. The group came together as small savings group and subsequently diversified their activities to other major developmental aspects.

These are environmental sanitation by provision of soaking pits for 100% household in the village. Infact this was the first village in this block that achieved this target. Safe drinking water by way of preparing indigenous filters and also change in the place of keeping the drinking water pot. The drinking water pot is now kept on a height in order to keep away from dust and also all the pots have fitted tap in them, which prevents direct hand contacts.

Each of these SHGs has between 10-20 members and makes contribution between Rs. 20-30 per member per month. Every SHG has a president and secretary elected from within the members. Usually they have two meetings per month – one to deal with contributions and financial transactions and the second for discussing and planning various developmental issues of the village. During the visit members from all the three SHGs were present for the meeting. It was noted that majority of the women knew to sign their names and awareness regarding literacy was very high. It was also observed that the men folk though were cooperative, did not take any direct interest on womens activities and only
associated themselves where physical labor was involved. For example, the men in the house generally did the digging of the pit for building the soaking pits in the house. However, the women took the subsequent maintenance and upkeep of the pit. It was also observed that in the meeting with the women's group, the dominant topics were related to sanitation, health and education, the men folk who were present did not find it interesting and slowly left the meeting. This was earlier observed during the informal discussion with the men who stated that though they knew that the women were doing a very good job, they did not know what exactly are discussed and planned by the women during the meeting.

It was also noted that there is a “Yuvati Group” having members comprising of adolescent girls who also meet and discuss peer group problems.

It was observed during the discussion that awareness about the small family norms was very satisfactory. It was also noticed that one of the members of the group who had two-girl child had undergone family planning operation.

While 100% household had soaking pits as well as provision of clean drinking water it was noticed that majority of the families did not have their own toilets. However during the discussion the point on having individual toilets came out very distinctly. The UNICEF representative explained the group regarding the Government scheme, which has been initiated recently. In this scheme every family could get upto Rs. 500/- for construction of toilets. It was further observed that the members were very keen to avail of this scheme.

The group also discussed regarding the future plan and stated that immediate priority would be to achieve the following:

- Connecting of road from Kolwahi to Chikli
- Two more primary school teachers for their school
Visit II

<table>
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<tr>
<th>District</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the village</td>
<td>KEAGAON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of visit</td>
<td>14th May 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of the coordinating NGO</td>
<td>Janseva Pratishtan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total population of village</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major emphasis</td>
<td>Women’s empowerment program</td>
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The second visit was undertaken during the late evening hours in the village Kegaon. This village comes under Pandharkawada block. The visit to this village was completely unannounced which made the visit more interesting. On reaching the village along with two members of the coordinating NGO and the coordinator for womens program DRDA, one of the members of the womens group was contacted by the Sahayogini and request was made to her to assemble for a discussion. Organizing the meeting was a little difficult, as there was a power cut in the village and it was difficult to approach all the families due to darkness. Yet word of mouth spread across and soon a good number of women came for the meeting.

This village also had exemplary women’s participation in the village development activities. The method of coming together was similar to the former village (Kolwahi) that was visited earlier i.e. by small savings group. These SHGs then diversified their activities to other areas of development such as health, sanitation etc. however the method adopted by the women of this village stands out as an unique example.

The members of all the SHGs came together and decided to go for an exposure visit all by themselves. They took the help of the Sahayogini and decided to visit village Bhorgaon Bhosale in Chandrapur district to see the construction of soak pits. The group hired 3 vehicles and went for the visit. The women stated with great pride that in addition to making all preparations for their visit without the assistance their men folk, they were also able to handle the administrative problems on the way i.e. handling the traffic police as well as the check port. On return from a successful visit, they decided to go in for construction of soaking pits in their individual house. They had not only successfully achieved their stated target but also had done good amount of improvement and improvisation.
in the structure that they had seen in their exposure visit. As a matter of fact, when compared to Bhorgaon Bhosale the structure made in this village was found to be far superior, and neat. It was also noted that each household had planted small kitchen garden plants as well as flower plants on top of the pits, which helped in keeping the soil together and also provided beautification to the premises.

Awareness level on health as well as safe drinking water was very high in the village. Almost all households were using water from a tap fitted pot and a strainer. Practice and maintenance of general health of children were found to be satisfactory with 100% immunization and breast feeding the baby within one hour of birth. They also had the knowledge regarding consumption of iron tablets by the expecting mothers for the better growth of the baby.

The level of awareness was found to be good in both men and women. During the meeting it was noticed that the men voluntarily joined the meeting and were answering to certain questions and giving their inputs whenever required. It was also observed that a good compatibility between men and women existed – each one of them was generous enough to give importance to one and another.

The leadership and initiative of the village women also came in light very distinctly by the incidence of their organizing inter village women’s meeting. They took a lot of pride in narrating how successfully they hosted the event of meeting of 5 villages. The entire contribution was arranged by them, from within the village. They collected money, food grains etc. from all households in accordance to the capability of each family. It was a daylong event including night stay where over 500 women participated in the meeting. The major point of discussions were issues related to development of their own village as well as some common agenda like connectivity of roads and so on. Discussions regarding mother and child health and education was also a part. The village has primary school upto 4th standard and it was stated that 100% attendance is ensured including that of the girl child.

There is a recently formed “Yuvati Group” which has 16 members. 2 of the members were present though they were not very vocal. Their meeting had recently started and it is expected that with more interactions amongst themselves they will develop their leadership skills. While discussing the men folk stated that they were keen to organize “Youth Group” and particularly were concerned about the irrigation facilities, which does not exist at the moment.
They were keen to start a watershed development project and were looking for guidance in this subject. However, they were open enough to admit that it was difficult to maintain cohesiveness in the youth group and sustain them as compared to the women.

**Visit III**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>District</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the village</td>
<td>: DHAMNI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of visit</td>
<td>: 15th May 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the coordinating NGO</td>
<td>: Yuva ved manch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population of village</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major emphasis</td>
<td>: Development of the village through micro planning</td>
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Dhamni is a village in Yavatmal district where the process of development has been initiated through micro planning. The process by n large remain same i.e. mobilizing the youth and training them in micro-planning and subsequently the time bound village micro-planning was prepared. The major emphasis was given towards 100% children attending the school, total control of dropouts and absenteeism in the school. In addition, making of soaking pits for environmental sanitation was also an important point in the agenda. While taking birds eye view of the village, though several soaking pits were seen, they upkeep and maintenance was not satisfactory as compared to other villages that were visited earlier. It was not possible for us to meet the “Youth Group” who had undergone micro planning except for two of them who was present in the village. One of them was the headmaster designate of the school. An informal meeting was organized with a few villagers and general discussions were held. One of the main point that came up very distinctly was regarding the awareness of the villagers towards education. It was found that in addition to 100% girls and boys going to school all the youth of the village had a minimum basic education level of the matriculation. An idea of starting a village library was mooted during the discussion, which was unanimously accepted by the members present. One of the major problems stated by the villagers regarding secondary school education, wherein the students go to Maregaon for their schooling. Maregaon is situated on the other side of the stream, which makes it impossible for the children to go to the school during monsoon season as the river gets flooded. While it is difficult for all students during the monsoon to attend the secondary school, the girls face additional problems. Realizing that the stream being not too wide, it was
suggested to make a monkey bridge, which will be both low cost as well as less time consuming. In addition, the methodology of maintaining the bridge which is very simple in nature, can be handed over to the villagers thus giving them both ownership and responsibility.

This village did not receive any specific input in womens program. Thus there were no Mahila Mandal or Yuvati Group in this village. A very distinct comparison could be made between the villages which received inputs for empowerment of women where the environmental sanitation specially maintenance of the soaking pits etc. were much better as compared to the one which did not receive the inputs. However on talking to the village women it was found that they were very keen to start womens group and looking for necessary support.

This village also had “Saksharata Mela” as a total literacy campaign. The walls of the village were a living proof for this as the reflexive method of learning was visible.
Visit IV

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<th>District</th>
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<tr>
<td>Name of the village</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of the coordinating NGO</td>
<td>Yuva ved manch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total population of village</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major emphasis</td>
<td>Development of the village through micro planning</td>
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Varaj was the 4th village that was under the visit schedule. It is in Maregaon block, which is adjoining to Chandrapur district. It is a tribal dominated village—the major tribes being Gond and Pardhan. The expected process of development was through micro planning. In addition to environmental sanitation this village has also gone for individual low cost toilets.

A general visit of the village was undertaken to look into the progress of the construction of toilets. It was noted, while a number of households had already completed the construction part, there were several which were under progress. The general upkeep of the village was found to be good. It was also noted that a few household though had their own toilets did not start to use them. The visiting team halted to discuss on the use of both toilet as well a soaking pit with one of the village women when she offered to continue the discussion in details and also took initiative in assembling other village women and men in her own house.

While the villagers were being called the team interacted with her children, one of them was a mentally challenged child – Jyoti. Jyoti is a distinctive boarder line case of mental retardation. Extremely social in nature, she has speech problem. Soon she became very friendly with the visiting team and was keen to show her skills. She enjoyed scribbling in a piece of paper, which she considered as her writing. While we were interacting with her, she was told by her mother to call other women of the village in their house for a meeting. She was very happy to go and call all others and every time the villagers came she was quick enough to point out that “she” had called them. It was very encouraging to note the unique and indigenous method of inclusion of a person with disabilities in the main social system in a village which otherwise are termed as ignorant.
The discussion with the women’s group was initiated while asking them regarding the formation of SHGs. Currently there were 4 SHGs functioning in the village. Each one of them has between 8 as their minimum number and 18 at the upper limit. These SHGs are small savings group and the monthly contribution per member was between Rs. 20 to Rs. 30 per month. The oldest SHG was 4 years old and the one, which was formed more recently, was just 6 months. Generally it took a while for the women to open up and talk freely with the visitor. After discussing the role of SHGs the discussion took a turn on the health issues and mother and childcare. Several questions were asked in the area of pre and postnatal care. It was however observed that the general health awareness was very low. It was also realized that micro planning with youth was the only input given to the village and there were no specific programs related to women as in the 1st two villages that was visited earlier. Promotion of individual toilets in every household was also discussed in the meeting. There was a mixed reaction felt on this issue. While a large number of them were keen to have their own toilets, there were several others who felt that they neither have enough space for the toilet nor they felt the necessity. Some of them reacted regarding the cost of the toilet to which the Unicef representative explained regarding the latest Government scheme of provision of Rs. 500/- per household for construction of toilets. It was further explained giving the example of Bhorgaon Bhosale where every household owns individual toilet and the construction was done at a cost of Rs. 380/- only.

Awareness regarding education was fairly high amongst the villagers. Education was thought to be equally important for both boys and girls hence all families sent their children to the primary school. The village is also covered under Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). The Anganwadi worker was also called who joined the meeting later. The Anganwadi worker was asked regarding her role and if she was also imparting basic health knowledge the expecting mothers. In the initial stage of the discussion she was defensive and thought that she was being challenged in connection with her performance. A few children were at randomly asked to speak-out what they learned at the Anganwadi. With some moments of hesitation the children spoke out the poems. The mothers were also requested to speak out what ever they knew and whatever they heard from their children either at Anganwadi or in the school as was applicable. Two of the women who were also members of one of the SHGs recited local nursery rhymes. It was then explained to them the importance of continuous communication during the first three years of the child.
While the awareness regarding education (as mentioned earlier) were high, a large majority of the women who were present did not know to sign their name. On raising this point most of them felt that there was no requirement for them to do any reading, writing or even to sign their names as they thought they were managing reasonably well without it. This generated some amount of discussion and the visiting team tried to bring home the point of importance of their being able to sign their names. Not so convincingly they agreed on the importance, but on emphasizing for a date by which they should be able to sign their names, they made no commitments.

We were able to see a distinct feature of the requirement and importance on the special inputs to women, and their level of participation in the village development.
Visit V

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the village</td>
<td>DAMPUR MAUDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of visit</td>
<td>15th May 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the coordinating NGO</td>
<td>Nehru Yuva Kendra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population of village</td>
<td>640 per division (2 divisions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major emphasis</td>
<td>Development of the village through micro planning</td>
</tr>
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Dampur Mauda is a tribal dominated village having 1/3rd of its population as tribal population. There are two main tribes in this village – Mahadev Koli and Kolam. The village is situated in Korapna block in the eastern part of the state.

Though our visit was scheduled in the night in this village, the response in attending the meeting was very high as both the youth group involved in micro planning as well as the women’s group were present in large number. The discussion was initiated with the youth group who explained regarding their involvement in micro planning.

The process of development in this village was initiated through micro planning. Basically the process remains same i.e. mobilizing the youth and training them in micro planning and subsequently the time bound village micro plan was prepared. The youth group started 1st micro plan on education by 21st June 2000. They prepared the list of total students between the age group of 16-18 years. A large checklist of problems was discussed while preparing the micro plan. 14 of them were short-listed by the group in which action was taken to be initiated immediately. Out of these 4 of them were solved by the end of plan preparation. The problems identified by the group in the field of education were as follows:

- Unavailability of lady teacher which hampered the education of girls
- Problem of space in the school
- Unavailability of adequate school furniture.

After understanding the active role of the youth, the discussion was initiated with the women. The women’s program has been initiated in this village and a good amount of inputs was received through the Sahayogini of this village. In addition to the trained persons amongst the women’s group who had considerable
knowledge in various health issues, there were a number of other women who were very vocal and took active participation in the discussion. The method of women coming together was through small savings group, which subsequently diverged itself to other issues of the village. A lot of lively discussions took place in the area of mother and childcare, which seem to be very satisfactory. They stated that all the deliveries in the village are performed only by the trained midwives. On asking about the precautions during deliveries, almost all women seem to know about the basic precautions required. They also knew the primary knowledge of breast-feeding within three hours of the childbirth. Though they had the knowledge regarding consumption of iron tablets by the expecting mothers for the better growth of the baby, the actual practice was not satisfactory as a number of women stated that they did not consume the tablets due to fear of difficulty during child-birth. A matter, which initiated some discussions and Sahayogini, was specifically advised to bring the practice of consumption of iron tablets into prevalence more vigorously. The practice of immunizes the both expecting mother and the newborn babies were common. The Balwadi teacher kept the records of all pregnancy and deliveries. It was also noted that the marriage age of girl was between 19-21 years and not earlier.

A point to be mentioned here that Sahayogini has been very active and had extremely good rapport with the women in the village. In fact she has been spending a lot of time in the village including staying overnight with different families. Such one to one rapport does make considerable difference in enhancing the level of awareness as well as accepting a program that has been initiated.

The village was equally conscious about environmental sanitation and cleanliness of the village. Basic drainage facility being available in the village, requirement was felt for construction of 2 soaking pits only. The water is filtered through a strainer and used. Every household used the pot having a tap and placed at a higher level.

The general level of awareness on education in the village was very high with 100% children (both girls and boys) attending school. There was a total check on the drop out rate. On discussing with the women and other male members who attended the meeting, were keen on their children attending basic education level. On asking the general question as to how many women were bale to sign their names it was found that approximately 50% of them did not know to sign though they were keen to do so. On further probing whether they wanted to set
the deadline for themselves in learning to sign their names, they agreed to become literate (signing their own name) by end of June 2001.

The villagers did not have individual toilets, a point which was brought out in the meeting. A lot of discussions generated amongst the men folks who were apprehensive of availing of the Government scheme, stating that they actually never reach them. It was however stated that Nehru Yuvak Kendra (NYK) would help and guide them in approaching the Government for sanction of money for toilets provided 100% household agree to have individual toilets.

Though the village is electrified it was noted that all households did not have electricity. 100% having electricity was one of the agenda in the micro plan in the village.
**Visit VI**

<table>
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<th>District</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the village</td>
<td>BHORGAON BHOSALE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of visit</td>
<td>16th May 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of the coordinating NGO</td>
<td>PEEP cell</td>
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<td>350</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major emphasis</td>
<td>Development of the village through micro planning</td>
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Bhorgaon Bhosale was the 2nd village in Chandrapur district and last in the series where we visited. Located in Warora block, the village has a very active youth group who was trained in micro planning. Altogether 13 in number these youngsters played the most crucial role in making every household in the village own individual toilets. The cohesiveness and enthusiasm of each member of the group is praiseworthy with a very high level of commitment towards upliftment of their village.

Our contact point was a grocery shop, which is being run by one of the members of the youth group. After taking a round of the village to have a feeling of the general upkeep and cleanliness, we sat down for a broad discussion with them. Large number of youth from the group was out of the village visiting friends and relatives attending marriage.

After making the micro plan in 1999, a survey was undertaken by the group of school going children. They discovered that there was a backlog of students in 8th standard. This was primarily due to the students not attending the school. The problem was discussed together with the teacher who was extremely cooperative. The youth group paid special attention to the attendance by motivating the parents and the students themselves for attending school regularly. The pursuance worked well and there was a significant improvement noticed in the result of 8th standard. As stated by the members there is no existing backlog in any of the classes and the village has attained 100% attendance in the school. The awareness of education of girl child is also very high as 100% of the girls go to school.

The environmental sanitation was one of the prime item in the agenda of the micro plan, where they decided to have 100% individual toilets as well as soaking
pits. The SHGs look after the awareness of health in the village. The villagers’ filter drinking water through the strainer. For avoiding the dust infection villagers kept drinking water pot at some height. In every household the drinking water pot has tap in it similar to the other villages. It may be noted that the women’s group from Keagaon of Yavatmal district had their exposure visit to this village before they embarked upon the environmental sanitation program. The village also has a system of weekly cleaning of the entire village by the villagers themselves.

The youth group also played significant role in ensuring 100% success in owning of individual toilets, including arranging for money for those villagers who could not afford. The youth group that also has a small saving lent out money from their kitty. Most of them have paid back their loans barring a few that still have to repay.

While soaking pit was a complete success in terms of both use and upkeep, the toilets remained unutilized in the initial stage. The group played an incisive role in promoting the utilization of the toilets. They formed a method of vigilance during the peak hours and deputed several of their members in different parts of the village to detect people who were otherwise not using their own toilets and going outside. A punishment was posed onto these families who did not use their own toilet. Thus use of the toilet was ensured.

It was observed during the visit that there was an acute shortage of water in the village. This reversed the whole process of toilet use in the village. The crisis of water was so severe that the women had to go several kilometers fetching the water from one of the well which had a slow stream, that they had to sometimes spend several hours to fill one bucket of water, many a times during late night.

Both the groups (Youth and women), stated that representations were made in three occasions regarding the problem of water at Panchayat, block and district level but no action were taken. However the administration suddenly took cognizance of the matter just before the visit of one of the senior Government officials, when water was released from one of the distant pump house into the main well of the village. Both the members of the group were grieved with the fact that importance was not given to their problem as such but visit of the government official. During the discussion one of the very vocal member of the youth group stated that they had lost their credibility with their own family members and the womens group. Also stated that efforts need to be made to renew their faith in the village for which they require support. They were also
open to the suggestion on receiving proper guidance in the field of water conservation and watershed management. A point to be noted here that the water in the village was diagnosed to be having high fluoride content resulting in fluoresces, which led the Government to close a lot of water sources within the village.

The discussion with the women’s group was initiated while asking them regarding the formation of SHGs. Currently there were 9 SHGs functioning in the village and 10 members in each SHG. Their major work is small savings wherein each member contributes Rs. 20-30 per month. Every SHG has a president and secretary elected from within the members. Usually SHGs meet twice a month for meeting and discuss their problem with Youth group. Youth group meets once a month. During the visit, members from all the 9 SHGs were present for the meeting. Being a conscious village, the members of the group decided to make 9 subcommittees leading to each development issue of the village.

The different committees are formed as follows:

- Health committee
- Education committee
- Cleanliness committee
- Parasbaug committee
- Sanitation committee
- Soak pit committee
- Personal water & hygiene committee
- Anganwadi committee
- Monitoring committee

Though these committees are formed, they stated that no training have been imparted to them till now. Due to this reason the committees do not have adequate direction to work. They also stated that the Sahayogini who was to impart and coordinate with the women’s group took no interest as well as seldom visited the village. Subsequently she has resigned from her post and a new Sahayogini has recently joined. Once again they reiterated adequate training and guidance.
CRITICAL ANALYSIS & CONCLUSION

There are many approaches to “Development”. Development itself is a relative term whose concept varies from nation to nation. While the approach towards development for an industrial nation may be larger accumulation of capital, it could mean fulfillment of basic needs for a developing nation. Accordingly methodologies have differed and theories advanced by many development economists reflected their experiences on the genesis of development in their own region. For example the modernization theory of development believed that people were poor because of their subsistence agricultural practice, traditional methods of production, primitive technology coupled with conservative outlook and natural apathy resulting in economic stagnation. To overcome this, massive capital investments in industry and application of modern technology and skill together with spirit of competitiveness and enterprise would result in high rate of economic growth. The absorption of subsistence labor force into modern wage employment market will have a steady reduction in poverty. A theory popularized on the basis of the result of accelerated growth in the war torn Europe in the 60’s – an experience, which was forwarded for replication by the countries with little or no experience in subsistence poverty. Countries adopting the model (India included) experienced increase in social inequalities. Thus most developing nations rejected the theory.

Subsequently several other theories were also brought into force, which included both macro and micro economic models. None of these models however seem either to emphasize or give adequate importance to peoples’ participation in development until early 90’s when the term Peoples’ Participation suddenly gained importance with every development person and organisation capturing it as a key phrase. However no concrete or clear methodology was established to ensure, monitor and measure peoples participation in development. Several approaches and experimentation are still on – some based on improvement method and some using transformation method. Amidst of the tug-of-war between these two approaches the term convergence emerged as a new approach for 21st century.

The dictionary meaning of “Convergence” is coming together in harmony. The developmentalist of 21st century has come to terms with this terminology and is being used in almost all fields. Nevertheless there are some interesting observations on this term that come in light as a point of view.
“Convergence' is arguably a word that to a great many people means precious little. Although most have heard of the concept, and can identify the fact that convergence embodies a 'coming-together' of the telecomms, information technology and the audio-visual sectors, it can be argued that the ‘convergence’ concept remains just that -- a concept -- to the general population.”

The emerging concept of development emphasizes the need for involvement and participation of the community in their own development. This can be fruitfully realized when involvement and participation is ensured at micro-level development initiatives and efforts. It makes a paradigm shift from the pyramidal top-down bureaucratic approach, which has stultified the effectiveness of many a well-intended plan. The new paradigm emphasizes that true development for the people comes only when it is by the people, showing community level initiatives in problem identification, planning and acting on them. This is at the center of Participatory Learning & Action (PLA) exercises, the logical extension of which is Convergent Community Action (CCA). CCA is an excellent strategy to involve the community in development and evolve plans to converge all basic services for the poor through community initiative together as a partner with the Government and civil societies.

Understanding the above as the central phenomena, Unicef’s CCA approach has been put to test at field level throughout the country. As I have understood it, the contextual meaning of convergence can also be synonym to “synergy”. When we are talking of convergent community action, the term community should be understood here in its broadest sense i.e. working as partners in the form of a triangle – the community, the Government and the civil societies. Any one of them not converging will be the missing angle of a triangle thus creating wide gap in the approach. Understanding the magnitude of the problem of country like India, ignoring the wide network of the Government and their program will be sitting in the fool’s paradise and dreaming of development. Hence the Government has to be an integral part in the process. The civil societies on the other hand can creatively concentrate in a community, relate to community people better and thus can evolve models for replications. This is generally not possible in a government system due to various rules, regulations and rigidities. Hence the civil societies are the second important angle of the approach. The third and the final arm as well as the base of the triangle is the community. Their participation and acceptance of a program, their ability to think for themselves and initiative to solve their own problem is the prime base of the triangle in the convergence approach.
During the visit, it was realized that it is not enough for all the above three forces mentioned in the triangle to come together for the convergent action, but also important to identify and understand the specific and critical elements of each of these forces that come into action. For example, the village Keagaon in Yavatmal district received the inputs on micro planning as well as the women’s program. The motivation, enthusiasm and confidence of the members in this village was distinctly higher than that of Varaj where only micro planning input was given and no women’s program implemented. There was a visible difference in the level of women’s participation in Varaj as compared to Keagaon including their level of health awareness and education. In Keagaon barring a few, all the women knew to sign their names and the rest were confident in learning in short time whereas in Varaj no enthusiasm was shown in this matter. Similarly Kolwahi is also one of the villages that we visited where women’s program has been implemented, owning of individual toilets received high priority in their agenda. The women in Varaj did not seem to think that toilet was a priority for them. The observation goes to suggest that input of women’s empowerment program was the basic missing element. Hence extreme care needs to be taken in recognizing the specific components of the CCA process.

The entry point of CCA through micro planning also seems to have yielded results. The training of the village youth and involving them in the process of planning for their own village, have not only given ownership to the program, but also has brought home the awareness that they need to be part of both success and failure of their plan. There seem to be a new meaning brought by the whole process which has generated immense hope and self-confidence amongst the villagers. Additionally it was also realized that some amount of external input was still required to keep the enthusiasm burning. In this case the external inputs can be called as the third force which was in the form of inputs from the civil societies that worked as catalyst.

During the informal interaction with the men folk in Kolwahi village, it was interesting to note that they had tremendous confidence on their women’s group, in solving many village problems such as public transport (already solved) and link road, which was traditionally thought to be man’s domain. Perhaps the fruit of true democratic decentralization and emergence of effective Panchayati raj system can be realized in such villages.

While interacting with the women of both Kolwahi as well as Keagaon regarding the benefit of soaking pits, one major common point mentioned by them was that of reduction in social tensions. It was stated that due to running water from one
house to the other, there used to be regular fights and quarrels amongst the neighbors. Having soaking pits has totally reduced such tensions in the village. It was interesting to observe this extremely important benefit which came as a corollary to the main program of environmental sanitation. Such elements need to be critically process documented.

During the interaction with both the youth and women’s group in Bhorgaon Bhosale, they were very agitated with the fact that their representation at block and district level regarding serious scarcity of water in the village was not given due importance, instead visit of senior state Government official carried more weight. Their realization of this fact proves their enhanced self-esteem. Also that togetherness is the path towards power and achievement. Such group, which continues to remain enthusiastic and hopeful needs constant fanning and fueling, lest it gets extinguished. One should also be careful with the fact that such motivated and enthusiastic groups are often target of vested political interest. Such power can be easily lured in wrong directions. One can find several such examples both in rural and urban areas.

The fact that CCA as an approach has yielded results needs to be further scientifically tested.

- Firstly to identify the critical elements within the path of CCA.
- Secondly prioritizing these elements in the order of their weightage.

To further clarify this point - if CCA is taken as the sum total of different elements in the process, the $r^2$ factor will give the total percentage of all the elements put together and their contribution in the process of development. The coefficient of each will project the contribution percentage of each of these elements in CCA. For this multiple regression equation needs to be applied to understand this.

Thirdly it needs to be seen, at what stage the changes are taking place in terms of participation, action initiation, continued motivation and monitoring mechanism within the community. Also at what stage the partnership emerged and confidence built in working with the Government. This can be understood through stepwise factorial analysis, which will give the score. Together with qualitative analysis the model can be tested by formulating appropriate hypothesis. These statistical results will either accept or reject the hypothesis.

Finally, plans can be then drawn out more realistically, where each of these elements will have scores where more emphasis needs to be given in terms of both time and money.