CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
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The findings of the study are summed up in this chapter. Some general observations are in order before the findings are listed.

As the researcher was conducting a pilot study to determine the desirable sample size, he learnt from the village panchayat president of Panchampatti Village, that the DRDA had convened a review meeting of all the elected VPPs of Dindigul District at the Collector's Office in Dindigul on 01-09-1997. The researcher, perceiving the value of this opportunity, promptly contacted the Project Officer, DRDA, Dindigul District, and obtained his permission to administer the proposed questionnaire on the socio-economic profile of the VPPs at this review meeting.

Since the researcher was now assured of an opportunity to meet all the VPPs of Dindigul District, he decided that all the 306 VPPs from the 14 development blocks of the district would constitute the universe for this study. Accordingly, the researcher went to the venue of the review meeting on 01-09-97 and administered the questionnaire on the socio-economic profile of the VPPs. The 279 VPPs who attended the review meeting became the sample for the socio-economic profile of the VPPs.

For identifying the training needs of the VPPs, 7 (50%) development blocks of Dindigul District were so selected as to contribute 50 per cent i.e., 153, of the universe of 306 VPPs, and, at the same time, lie in three different clusters so that variety of socio-economic conditions and training needs would be ensured. Since the researcher had already decided that the trainees to be invited to the proposed training programme would be from among the VPPs selected for the need identification exercise, the blocks remote from the
proposed training venue were not considered for the need identification. These 153 VPPs became the selected sample.

The training climate assessing respondents comprised 14 Schemes BDOs from the 14 blocks of the study area, 16 trainee BDOs from Kaniataka State who fortuitously happened to be undergoing training at GRI at the time of the study, and, 15 members of the staff of GRI noted for then-expertise in training and extension work. The 14 BDOs of the study area were all Schemes BDOs, who were in charge of the development programmes of the village panchayats in their respective blocks. The trainee BDOs were included because they had been through several training programmes over a period of two years and had had field training in spells.

The ideal number of trainees for a training programme, as per the advice of experts consulted by the researcher being 25 to 30, the researcher decided to invite 32 VPPs, bearing in mind the possibility of non-response, negative response and dropping out. This number, viz., 32, constituted 20.91 per cent of the selected sample and 10.45 per cent of the universe, which were ideal proportions according to experts consulted by the researcher.

8.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The analysis of the socio-economic profile of the respondents showed that the pattern of caste and religion distribution obtaining in the society in the study area was more or less maintained in the VPP population also. The overall male-female ratio of 2:1 as per the mandatory requirement was more or less maintained in most of the socio-economic characteristics studied. Characteristics like predominance of dependence on agriculture, educational status, indebtedness and political affiliation were not
unique to the VPPs but very much representative of the general population of the study area.

The majority of the VPPs were married and in the productive age group of 40 years and below. Most of the women tended to lose interest in community leadership beyond the age of 40, while the men tended to take interest in community leadership only after the age of 30.

The majority of the VTPs were Hindus by religion. Muslim women did not evince as much interest in community leadership as their Hindu and Christian counterparts. Generally literate and educated people took up community leadership but the better educated women did not take much interest in community leadership.

The majority of the VPPs had medium-sized families and women who had large families did not evince much interest in community leadership. The majority of the VPPs owned land and most of these were big farmers. Male landless labourers did not take much interest in community leadership.

The majority of the VPPs had moderate assets and amenities and the female ones among them were rather progressive in outlook, particularly with regard to modern facilities like means of transport.

Agriculture was the main occupation of most of the VPPs. The majority of them limited themselves to one occupation and only a few engaged in subsi dairy occupations. Some of the female VPPs were dependent upon cooly-work. The annual income and expenditure of the majority of the VPPs ranged from Rs. 12,000/= to 36,000/=. Their expenditure exceeded income and indebtedness was rather high. However, around one-third of the VPPs were free from any debt.
Though panchayat elections are to be apolitical, the majority of the elected VPPs had political affiliation of six years and more. Women's participation in active politics, which had been negligible 15 years ago, had registered a steady rise in the last 15 years. Women had begun to take up community leadership only in recent times and they tended to give it up after sometime. A few VPPs had association with other village level organisations.

Very few VPPs were motivated to take up community leadership by parental influence in terms of their parent(s) having served in village panchayals in their own time. Most of the VPPs had taken up community leadership because of their voluntary motive to serve the village community. However women still needed to be persuaded and urged to take up community leadership. The majority of the VPPs had not had prior experience or training in various aspects of planning and PR administration.

8.2 TRAINING NEED IDENTIFICATION

The analysis of the data gathered from the 153 selected respondents on the training needs of the VPPs showed that, generally, the women VPPs were less aware of the several aspects and components of MLP than their male counterparts. On the whole the analysis of the data underlined the need for training the VPPs in the several aspects and components of MLP.

The VPPs, particularly the women, needed to be made fully aware of their duties and rights as enshrined in the 73rd Constitutional (Amendment) Act of 1992.

The majority of the VPPs said that they needed training to discharge their duties and exercise their rights properly. A good number of the VPPs wanted more freedom, less domination by government officials, and, more
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The majority of the VPPs said that they needed training to discharge their duties and exercise their rights properly. A good number of the VPPs wanted more freedom, less domination by government officials, and, more
powers. The male VPPs were more vociferous in pointing out the defects of the current system, whereas the female ones were rather subdued in doing so.

The majority of the VPPs, particularly the women, needed to be made fully aware that, under the 73rd Constitutional (Amendment) Act, they have the right to prepare plans for their village panchayats. The majority, particularly the men, were fully aware of the subjects allotted to the village panchayats for planning, but many required to be refreshed of the subjects.

The majority of the VPPs had no knowledge of project identification, of setting goals and objectives, technical and economic analysis, preparation of work plan, resource planning, manpower planning, financial planning, planning for monitoring and evaluation, the methodology of final appraisal and triangular appraisal, preparing comprehensive village panchayat plan, and, the format and the tables for presenting the prepared plan. The level of ignorance was greater in the case of women.

The majority of the VPPs were not aware of the methods of assessing people's problems, identifying projects, classifying and prioritising projects, analysing and selecting viable projects, justifying the projects selected, and, defining the selected projects. The level of ignorance was greater in the case of women. Moreover, when the major head of project identification was split into several specific components, the VPPs acquired greater discrimination. So it was clear that they did require training in various components of project identification and selection.

With regard to setting goals and objectives, the majority of the VPPs were not aware of the methods of assessing the capacity of the implemented, the extent of involvement of the government and other organisations, the government's goals and objectives, the process of setting goals and objectives,
and, how to define goals and objectives. However, the majority were at least moderately aware of assessing the present status of the people and of estimating the scope for people's participation. While the majority were ignorant of the professional aspects of setting goals and objectives, they were moderately aware of the societal aspects. The level of ignorance was greater in the case of women. The VPPs comprehended the specific components of setting goals and objectives much better than the superordinate head. It was evident that they did need training in the specific components of setting goals and objectives.

The majority of the VPPs were not aware of the methods of selecting suitable project strategy and associated factors and of assessing the technology and the skill required, but they were moderately aware of the method of assessing the demand potential of projects and of identifying beneficiaries. While the majority were ignorant of the professional aspects of technical and economic analysis, they were moderately aware of the societal aspects of the subject. The level of ignorance was greater in the case of women. Moreover, the VPPs comprehended the specific components of economic and technical analysis much better than the superordinate head. It was evident that they did need training in technical and economic analysis.

The majority of the VPPs were not aware of the method of classifying and arranging the activities involved in a project, of estimating project duration and inputs, and, of preparing detailed work plan. However, the majority were moderately aware of the method of identifying project activities. While the majority were not aware of the professional aspects of work plan preparation, they were moderately aware of the experiential aspects of the subject. The level of ignorance was greater in the case of women. The VPPs comprehended the components of work plan preparation much better than
the superordinate head. It was evident that they did need to be trained in work plan preparation.

The majority of the VPPs were not aware of the method of assessing the type of resource required at different stages of resource planning, estimating the quantity, the quality and the cost of the required resources, assessing the non-financial resource support from the people and from outside, identifying substitutes, selecting ways and means of acquiring and preserving resources, and, estimating the total resource requirements of a project. However, they were moderately aware of the method of identifying locally available resources. While the majority were ignorant of the professional aspects of resource planning, they were moderately aware of its experiential aspects. The level of ignorance was greater in the case of women. The VPPs comprehended the components of resource planning much better than the superordinate head. It was evident that they did need training in resource planning.

The majority of the VPPs were not aware of the method of assessing skilled and technical manpower requirements, planning the role and the responsibilities of the people and others, and, estimating the total manpower requirement, employment generation and the training required. However, they were moderately aware of the method of assessing the manpower status of the village panchayat. While the majority were ignorant of the professional aspects of manpower planning, they were moderately aware of its societal aspects. The level of ignorance was greater in the case of women. The VPPs comprehended the components of manpower planning much better than the superordinate head. It was evident that they did need training in manpower planning.
The majority of the VPPs were not aware of the method of estimating the fixed and the recurring investment under financial planning, assessing the financial requirements at various stages of a project, preparing the budget and the balance sheet, and, appraising the financial viability. However, they were moderately aware of the government guidelines on financial matters, the sources of funds, internal as well as external, the ways and means of raising additional funds, and, the present financial status of the panchayat. While the majority were ignorant of the professional aspects of financial planning, they were moderately aware of the experiential and day-to-day aspects of financial planning. It was remarkable that all the VPPs were at least moderately aware of the present financial position of the panchayat. With regard to the other aspects of financial planning, the level of ignorance was greater in the case of women. The VPPs comprehended the components of financial planning much better than the superordinate head. It was evident that they did need training in financial planning.

The majority of the VPPs were not aware of the current methods of monitoring and evaluation, selecting the type of monitoring and evaluation, selecting the tools and techniques for it, and, fixing the person and the agency for it. The VPPs comprehended the components of planning for monitoring and evaluation much better than the superordinate head. It was evident that they did need training in planning for monitoring and evaluation,

8.3 TRAINING CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

From the analysis of the data gathered from the assessing respondents it was seen that the laboratory method of training and the action-oriented training strategy were favoured universally. A majority favoured the academic training strategy but the personal development training strategy was not favoured. In the case of the sequence of training contents, the majority of
the assessing respondents favoured the sequences from theory to practice, from the known to the unknown, from the general to the specific, from the simple to the complex and from stimulation to reflection, while only a minority favoured the observation to analysis sequence. The opinion of the experienced study area BDOs was universally in favour of the theory to practice sequence. A majority of the assessing respondents favoured specialised training institutions as the training agency and very few favoured the government or educational institutions. The experienced study area BDOs universally chose specialised training institutions.

All the assessing respondents urged the provision of lodging, boarding and medical aid as facilities at the training centre; a majority urged communication facilities and transport facilities; and, the experienced study area BDOs did not care for provision of recreation facilities, library facilities, bank facilities, helpers or childcare facilities.

All the assessing respondents predicted that the trainees would expect two-way communication, transparency, flexibility and congenial atmosphere during the training; a majority predicted commitment to the task, non-threatening situation, prejudice-free atmosphere, and provision for follow-up to the training programme.

All the assessing respondents expected the trainers to possess knowledge and experience, use the local language and audio-visual aids, and be able to communicate; a majority expected the trainers to be committed, involve the trainees, understand the trainees, possess flexibility, be unbiased, adopt innovative teaching methods, be non-judgemental in approach, adopt a stimulative attitude, and possess good character and a helping attitude. The study area BDOs consistently exhibited a pragmatic attitude, while the GRI training staff displayed an idealistic attitude.
The majority of the assessing respondents expected the trainers to play the roles of guides, catalysts and coordinators; only a minority named the roles of facilitators, teachers and information providers; and, while the minority of the experienced study area BDOs favoured the roles of guides, catalysts, coordinators and teachers, the majority of the GRI training staff favoured the roles of facilitators, catalysts, guides and coordinators.

The majority of the assessing respondents maintained that participation in training programme should be made compulsory. Only a few of the GRI training staff were in favour of voluntary participation. All the assessing respondents regarded pre-training motivation and monetary support to the trainees to be necessary. The majority favoured training batches of less than 31 trainees while the largest number of them preferred 11 to 30 trainees as the optimum number. All the assessing respondents were in favour of a mixed trainee batch of men and women.

The majority of the assessing respondents favoured involving the trainees in the process of problem-solving, sharing experience, promoting teamwork, decision-making, programme planning, concurrent and end evaluation, and, coordination; only a minority favoured involving the trainees in the process of selection of projects, arranging field visits, welcoming and thanking the trainers, managing the trainees and running the mess. It was significant that the experienced study area BDOs were uniformly against involving the trainees in running the mess, looking after day-to-day arrangements, evaluating the trainers and managing the trainees.

All the assessing respondents predicted that the trainees would expect active participation and transparency from their co-trainees; a majority predicted emotional control, freedom from family burden, sharing of
experience, freedom from bias and inhibitions, participation in team work, admitting differences, tolerating ambiguity, listening to others and attitude of acceptance.

All assessing respondents favoured full-time training; a majority favoured in-service training, semi-structured training, residential training, periodical training and continuous training; there were no takers for part-time training, ad hoc training and discontinuous training; and, there was insignificant enthusiasm for pre-service training and unstructured training.

All assessing respondents favoured group discussion as the desirable training method; a majority favoured lecture-cum-discussion, learning by doing, demonstration, observation visit, case study, PRA and RRA methods, home visit, brainstorming, field placement and role play; there was little enthusiasm for the syndicate method; and, the experienced study area BDOs had scry little faith in the efficacy of field placement method and the games method.

All the assessing respondents favoured the television as supplementary audio-visual aid; a majority favoured reading material, charts and posters, chalk and board, songs, audio-cassettes, diagrams and maps, OHP transparencies, drama and films; and, there was very little enthusiasm for flash cards.

The majority of the assessing respondents regarded project formulation and visiting model panchayats as the most suitable type of field training; a minority favoured household survey; and, there was poor enthusiasm for placement in NGOs.

The majority of the assessing respondents favoured a rural locale and a central place for conducting the training; not even one respondent favoured an
The majority of the assessing respondents favoured chairs as suitable seating for the trainees and none of the study area BDOs favoured the floor. A good number of the assessing respondents favoured a semi-circle as the suitable pattern of seating for the trainees; some favoured a circle and a 'ir shape; but, very few favoured seating in rows. None of the study area BDOs and GRI training staff favoured seating in rows.

The majority of the assessing respondents favoured 1 to 5 days as the minimum duration of the training programme and this majority comprised only the study area BDOs and the GRI training staff, all the trainee BDOs unanimously choosing 6 to 10 days as the minimum duration of the training programme. The majority of the assessing respondents chose 6 to 10 days as the optimum duration, but the majority of the study area BDOs and the GRI training staff favoured only 1 to 5 days as the optimum duration. The majority of the assessing respondents favoured 6 to 10 days as the maximum duration, and this majority comprised mostly of the study area BDOs and the GRI training staff. In general, the trainee BDOs were enthusiastic about prolonging the duration of the training, whereas the experienced study area BDOs and the GRI training staff were more conservative.

The majority of the assessing respondents favoured 5 to 6 hours of training per day, while only a small number favoured 3 to 4 hours and 7 to 8 hours. The assessing respondents were predominantly in favour of 9.30 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. as the starting time for the classroom work. All the assessing respondents unanimously favoured 1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m. for
lunch. The majority favoured 4.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. as the closing time. The majority favoured three training sessions per day. The assessing respondents were divided in their opinion of the desirable duration of each session, 75 minutes having a slight edge over 90 minutes as their choice. The majority of the Gill training staff, who were teachers by profession, favoured 75 minutes only.

The majority of the assessing respondents favoured allocation of 60 to 120 minutes per day for listening activities, particularly the majority of the GRI training staff. The assessing respondents were divided in their opinion of the desirable allocation of time for discussion, 60 minutes having a slight edge over 90 minutes as their choice, and the majority of the GRI training staff favoured this choice. The majority of the assessing respondents favoured allocation of up to 60 minutes for group work. All the assessing respondents unanimously favoured allotting time for field work after class hours, allotting 15 minutes for tea break and 60 minutes for lunch.

Opinion was divided on the suitable months for conducting the training, the most favoured months being April-May, September-October and the lean season months for the trainees and the least favoured months being November-December and January-February. The majority of the assessing respondents did not favour holidays during the training programme.

Periodical evaluation and guidance, improving in the light of feedback and refresher course(s) were the follow-up activities most favoured by the assessing respondents, while impact assessment and frequent contact through letters were least favoured.

Some of the important suggestions put forth by the assessing respondents were: a model plan should be actually prepared; Sundays and
festival days should be avoided while planning the training programme; warm-up sessions should be conducted to release built-up tension; homework should be given to induce the trainees to think independently and provision should be made for sharing expectations. The GRI training staff were the most enthusiastic in offering suggestions, followed by the study area BDOs and the trainee BDOs in that order.

8.4 TENTATIVE TRAINING PLAN

Taking into consideration the socio-economic profile of the 279 VPPs who responded to the first questionnaire, the training needs identified by the 153 selected respondents, the training climate recommended by the 45 assessing respondents, and the opinions of experts from organisations like NIRD, ISEC, KILA, RETC, GRI and SIRD and NGOs in the field, the researcher decided to design a training programme for 4 days. It was to consist of three days of classwork in the form of lecture-cum-discussion, sharing of experience and discussion, and one day of field work in the form of practical learning by doing. However, during his personal meetings with the 26 VPPs who agreed to participate in the training, the researcher was persuaded to consider their prior commitments, particularly the pressure they were being subjected to from the government to speed up the ongoing projects in their panchayats and to restrict the duration of the training programme to the first 3 days. To make up for the loss of practical learning, it was decided that the trainers would make their lectures as experiential and practical as possible.

8.5 CONTENT AND PROCESS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

The 3-day training programme was conducted during 19-21 December 1997 as planned. On the inaugural day of the training programme, of the 26 VPPs who had agreed to participate in the training programme, only
25 turned up. Of them, 6 VPPs who were suffering from a contagious eye infection were persuaded by their fellow-trainees to withdraw from the training programme lest the others contact the infection. So, ultimately, only 19 VPPs participated fully in the training programme.

Slight alterations were made in the tentatively planned time schedule to accommodate the convenience and the interests of the trainees. At the request of the trainees, the planned discussion on planning for monitoring and evaluation was dropped and the time allotted for it was used for a lecture-cum-discussion on NCiOs.

In the case of topics familiar to them, the trainees actively and enthusiastically participated in the discussion and sharing of experience, whereas in the case of topics not so familiar to them, they generally tended to limit themselves to asking questions to clarify their doubts. Since such discussions were short, the time remaining out of the original planned slot was used for screening useful demonstration video films relevant to village panchayats.

8.6 EVALUATING THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

The response from the VPPs invited to the training programme was fairly good. The pre-training assessment of the expectations of the trainees revealed that male VPPs were more eager than their female counterparts to participate in the training programme and that the female VPPs who responded positively were committed to keeping their word.

The majority of the VPPs felt very happy to have been invited to the training programme, and felt that the training programme would help them to learn new things and that a felt need would be fulfilled. The female VPPs,
much more than their male counterparts, regarded the invitation to the training programme as a matter of personal recognition.

Before the commencement of the training programme the trainees expected to learn in detail about the 73rd Constitutional (Amendment) Act of 1992, to understand their role and rights in planning, to become skilled in preparing the village panchayat plan, to identify the various programmes suitable for their village panchayats and to clarify some doubts regarding implementation; no male trainee expected to learn the ways to mobilise more funds and no female trainee expected to improve her own efficiency at work or to understand the difference between the old and the new PR systems; and, the trainees took their office as VPPs quite seriously and were earnest in their desire to acquire specific practical skills rather than learn theoretical generalisations.

In the post-training evaluation, the majority of the trainees favoured making the training compulsory. The majority, particularly the female trainees, reported that they enthusiastically participated in training activities other than listening.

All the trainees reported that, during the training programme, the trainer-trainee relationship, the trainers' adjustability and the overall performance of the trainers were good, thereby indicating that a congenial learning atmosphere prevailed throughout the training programme; that the pre-training reading material provided to the trainees in advance, the printed synopsis of the topic handed out at the beginning of each session, and the other reading material handed out during the training programme were very useful, thereby indicating that the supplementary audio-visual teaching aids provided to reinforce learning were quite efficacies and that the communication during the training programme was effective.
The majority of the trainees reported that the overall quality of instruction during the training programme was good; that the illustrations provided to support the teaching were relevant; that the teaching methods employed and the teaching aids used were effective; and that the physical facilities provided were adequate.

All the trainees reported that the subject content of the training programme was predominantly theoretical; that all the subjects covered were given optimum emphasis; that they received an integrated picture of the topics covered; and, that the training sessions and the various components of the training programme were satisfactory, indicating that the training was quite effective.

The majority of the trainees felt that the total duration of the training programme was optimal, while a minority suggested that it could have been extended. The majority felt that the number of training sessions, viz., 4 per day, and the duration of the individual training sessions were optimal. The female trainees were slightly less capable of sustained attention than their male counterparts.

The majority of the trainees felt that the process of conducting the training programme was good, while a minority, particularly female trainees, felt that it was only fair, indicating that the female trainees were more critical than their male counterparts.

All the trainees reported good understanding of project identification and selection, resource planning, and, final appraisal. The majority reported good understanding of an overview of MLP in village panchayats, the planning process, the 73rd Constitution^ Amendment) Act of 1992, the 29 items of work allotted to panchayats, setting goals and objectives, technical
and economic analysis, preparation of work plan, financial planning, planning for monitoring and evaluation, triangular appraisal, preparation of draft panchayat plan, the content and format of the draft panchayat plan and the use of charts and tables in the presentation of the draft panchayat plan. None of the trainees reported poor understanding of any of the above training inputs, while a small minority reported only a fair understanding of some of them. It was evident that the training inputs reached the trainees nearly as planned and that the female trainees were more discriminating than their male counterparts in their assessment of the process of the training.

In the opinion of the trainees, the hospitality extended during the training programme, adjusting the duration and the timings of the training programme according to the convenience of the trainees, the screening of demonstration video films on some useful projects relevant to village panchayats, the use of several reinforcing methods to facilitate easy understanding of the subjects, the use of able trainers, the trainers' using colloquial language and simple methods of teaching, the informal atmosphere maintained, and, teaching with practical illustrations were the most gratifying features of the training programme.

At the end of the training programme, all the trainees perceived positive changes in themselves and felt confident of formulating viable development projects and plans in the village panchayats. They felt that the training imparted would be useful to a large extent in equipping them to formulate micro level plans in their village panchayats. They reported that they had acquired greater understanding of the planning process and of their own role and responsibility in planning. The majority reported that they had gained relevant new knowledge, acquired new skills relevant to planning, and understood the role and responsibilities of others in planning, indicating that
the inputs of the training programme had been conducive to the achievement
of the desired goals and objectives of a training programme of this kind.

The majority of the trainees judged the training programme as having
been good, while a minority, exclusively male trainees, judged it as
having been only (air. The female trainees, who were more critical than their
male counterparts in assessing the process of the training programme, became
more generous in their judgement of its overall impact. All the trainees
reported that the training programme fulfilled their expectations, indicating
that the researcher's objective of equipping the VPPs to discharge then-
planning function and allied duties effectively had been achieved by the
training programme.

The trainees' suggestions for improving the training programme
were: such training should be given to the salaried panchayat functionaries
also; visiting some successful projects would reinforce the training; practically
preparing a model plan would be rewarding; the trainers should include
government officials and bank officials; one day might be set aside for field
visit(s); dividing the trainees into small groups and making them think
collectively would enhance the usefulness of the training programme; easily
accessible villages might be a more convenient venue; and, including minor
games to refresh the mind after lengthy sessions would be useful. These
suggestions indicated that the training programme could be improved by
including some more training components and by incorporating some minor
modifications.

In the SWOT analysis made by the trainees for operationalising
the learning acquired during the training programme, the strengths and
opportunities identified by the trainees were: the VPPs had people's support
and goodwill; the VPPs had powers to make demands on the government
through resolutions; ward members and gram sabha would strengthen the hands of the VPPs; the VPPs were confident of winning support and guidance from most of the officials; locally available resources and skills would reinforce the efforts of the VPPs; there was scope for raising additional funds through taxes; the VPPs could get support from local organisations, banks, NGOs and others; and, there was scope for the VPPs to take up some non-policy projects directly.

The weaknesses and the threats identified by the trainees were; delay in sanctioning funds; inadequate financial allocation; illiteracy and lack of awareness among people; inadequate powers to the VPPs; too much of control and too many directions from the block and the district panchayats; rigid rules and formalities and cumbersome procedures; political interference; lack of proper recognition for the VPPs in general; underestimating by some officials of the ability of elected people's leaders; and, lack of proper training to officials and elected people's leaders.

It was clear that the training programme had sharpened the minds of the VPPs, awakened them to a proper perception of their duties and rights in the formulation of village development plans, and, kindled in them a zeal to serve the village community effectively.