Chapter 7

Development Measures and its Functionings in Allappady
7.1. Development measures taken in Attappady

The uniqueness of Attappady lies in its geography, weather, habitat, agricultural practices, historical background, administration etc. Being Kerala’s largest Block (covering 745 sq.km), it is the only Integrated Tribal Development Block jointly run by Rural Development Department and Tribal Development Department. Banks of two eastward flowing rivers (Bhavani, Shiruvani), Kerala’s most important catchment area, with a difference in annual rainfall of 3600 mm to 800 mm etc make this area special.

Settlement of immigrants in Attappady started in 1930’s and it increased during 1940’s. Since 1960 there has been a heavy influx of settlers. Most of the migrant farmers arrived here after this. The population in Attappady during 1961 was 20,625 and of them 64 per cent belonged to Scheduled tribes. Today the population has increased three fold but the percentage of tribes has come down to 37 per cent.

Till recently the prime land in Attappady was rich in forests. Western part of Attappady has thick evergreen forests. As one proceeds eastwards thick evergreen forest and deciduous forests are seen. Coimbatore plateau has dry deciduous type forests. Between the Nilgiri and Shiruvani mountains, at an altitude of 1500 m, large pasturelands with step like reserve forests are also seen. Heavy wind affects the vegetative growth and habitat of this region.

Attappady had altogether 465 sq.km of forest area of which 293 sq.km is reserved forests and the rest protected forest. But unbridled felling of trees by encroachers resulted in depletion of the forest area. Attappady region has rich resource of minerals. Clay, graphite, tungsten, diamond etc are some of them. Very recently gold deposits have also been found here. However, the proximity of economic exploitation of these has not yet been studied.
Only 17.4% of the land area in Attappady is used for agriculture. Of which 10.42% belonged to cash crops. Land suitable for paddy cultivation is less. 64.60 sq. km of land lay barren. Erosion is the main reason that makes the soil barren. What makes the situation worse is the loss of vegetative cover followed by heavy inflow of water and heavy winds. The major cause for this situation is human interventions.

Government sponsored development in Attappady can be discussed under three periods (1) pre-1962 (2) 1962 to 1975 and (3) post 1975. In the pre 1962 days the government initiative in development was limited in the form of interventions in the area of health and education. In the 1950's the anti-Malaria programme was carried out successfully in Attappady under the National Malaria Eradication Programme. During this period, five welfare schools were started with the aim of attracting tribal children to schools. An office of the Deputy Thahasildhar was opened in Attappady to lend back up support to these Government programmes and also to sort out local disputes.

In 1962, Attappady was declared as a Tribal Development Block and a Senior Block Development Officer was posted. Infrastructure development was given prime importance. The arterial road of Thavalam-Mully, the important cross way across the Bhavani River at Pudhur and several schools and office buildings were all constructed in the first few years (KIRTADS 1982). Extension works were carried out to further education and importance was given to agriculture and animal husbandry. Special efforts were made to improve personal hygiene. In 1961, the process of recording of the land right of the tribals was taken up as part of the land reform measures. In 1966, the massive Kundha River Valley Project was introduced in Attappady to conserve soil and moisture to prevent siltation of the Kundha dam. This scheme is still in operation and more than Rs.12 crore was spent so far on it. In 1971, the private forests were nationalized.

In 1975, the Tribal Development Block was upgraded into Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) with much higher inflow of funds particularly for housing and economic development. Along with this Western Ghat Development Programme (WGDP) was introduced primarily in the form of two co-operative
farms covering an extent of about 2000 hectors intended to rehabilitate and settle landless tribal families. In the first seven years of this scheme about Rs.3 crore was spent.

In 1980s, the allotment of funds to ITDP under various rural development programmes started, increased significantly. IRDP, NREP, and RLEGP were started in 1985 and that marked another water shed in the development history of Attappady. Prime Minister Shri. Rjiv Gandhi visited this place in September 1985 and this was followed by a series of administrative measures to improve the condition of Attappady. For four years from March 1986 the project was put under the charge of 148 officers.

During 1980’s and 1990’s, there were phenomenal increases in expenditure on the construction of roads. Investments in tribal housing also increased. In 1989 NREP and RLEGP were converted in to JRY. In 1993, Attappady became one among the 20 Blocks in Kerala where Employment Assurance Scheme became operative, giving guaranteed employment of 100 days a year for two members from unemployed rural families falling under poverty line.

Attappady Wasteland Comprehensive Environmental Conservation Project was a scheme implemented with Japanese Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund. The project was aimed at restoring the environmental ambiance of Attappady. Financial agreement in this regard was signed on 25th January 1996. The project was conceptualized by Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM). Later, they were entrusted to carry out a detailed survey and make designs for the above project vide GO (Ms) NO: 14/96/RDD dated 8-8-96. The project was implemented by an autonomous organization viz, the Attappady Hill Area Development Society (AHADS).

Under the auspices of AHADS on 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th of May 1997 a seminar on ‘Environmental Restoration of Attappady’ was organized to review the development and progress of the project. Various departments and agencies that were entrusted with specific activities presented their development plans, achievements, budget etc. Various voluntary organizations, social activists, subject
experts, scientists and officials based at Attappady put forward their views and suggested solutions for various problems facing Attappady.

Against the backdrop of this seminar, it was recommended that a study be conducted to analyze the impact of earlier developmental programmes carried out in Attappady, their aims, mode of operation, financial outlay, project achievements or flaws, and most importantly suggestions for avoiding repetition of these from the forthcoming AHADS project. In this regard, the AHADS governing body met on 10-5-97 and decided to assign this study to Integrated Rural Technology Centre (IRTC), Mundoor, Palakkad. The following are the Terms of Reference decided under the Memorandum of Understanding between IRTC and AHADS.

7.2. Additional Measures taken for Tribal development

7.2.1. Agriculture

The functions of krishi Bhavan started in 1976. During the past 10 years, the Agriculture Department spent crores of rupees in Attappady. The main objective was to provide different types of facilities and assistance. But several complaints were raised with regard to the implementation of the programme. Some of the complaints are summarised below:

1. Most complaints pertain to the fact that farmers have not been benefited from Krishi Bhavans, although the documents say otherwise. This clearly indicates that there is not much publicity and transparency.

2. Certain lobbies through forged documents steal concerned benefits meant for farmers. People complain that most of the assistance offered by Krishi Bhavan did not reach the actual beneficiary.

3. Planting materials supplied were of doubtful quality. During distribution of planting materials it is doubtful whether facilities were available for planting. Irrigation facilities, actual interest, suitability of the land for cultivation of a particular crop etc should also be taken into consideration. The main cause of this mismanagement is the lack of clear vision for overall agricultural development in the region.
4. Each Krishi Bhavan should have a farmers register. The total land available with the farmers, land utilized for agriculture, basic infrastructural facilities available with the farmer and the new facilities being provided to them should all be documented in the register. This would ensure that only eligible farmers are given timely assistance. Each panchayath should include this information in their resource map.

5. The shortcomings in connection with granting pump sets are to be avoided. Pump sets were given to farmers who were not having electrical connection. Such farmers should have been provided with diesel engine pump set, or kerosene pump sets. Such defects can be avoided by compiling basic information of the farmers, the above details should also be included in the register.

6. Attappady’s weather and soil properties were not given any consideration, no concerted attempt is made to popularizing crops and agriculture practices. For example the most commonly found trees are coconut trees. Farmers opine that in other regions, coconut harvesting is done every 30-40 days, in Attappady this is done only after 60-70 days (this is why most of the trees are leased for toddy tapping). This phenomenon has not yet been noticed or studied by the Agriculture Department. Similarly, it has been suggested that apples, avocados, lemon, special types of mangoes etc grow well in Attappady. Sandalwood, rosewood etc also grow naturally in Attappady. Hence there is a need for projects with more ingenuity to economically exploit the available resources.

7. Decentralization of Agriculture development programmes is a must. If the developmental activities need to reach every part of the vast Attappady region this is very important.

8. The number of demonstrators in Krishi Bhavans needs to be increased. They should routinely visit the farm place and impart methods to help them. Also a vehicle should be provided at the field office for facilitating field work of the officers.
9. Farmers should be given timely information about each and every scheme and details regarding the submission of application. Many farmers reach the Krishi Bhavan after the last date for submission of application. This happens basically because of the lack of timely information. Assistants involved in fieldwork can inform the farmers of these schemes at the right time.

10. The files at the agricultural office are not properly maintained. This occurs due to shortage of staff. In order to rectify this, a clerk cum typist should be appointed in the Krishi Bhavan. At present the above duty is carried out by agriculture assistants, as a result they are not able to perform their assigned duties.

11. Much emphasis is not given to encourage bio-fertilizers, implement crop insurance, attain overall sustainable agriculture development etc. It’s also regretful to note that there isn’t any concerted attempt to link allied sectors such as land-water conservation, animal husbandry, irrigation, drinking water etc.

7.2.2. Soil protection schemes

This scheme started its functioning in 1973. The soil protection activities carried out in Attappady are extremely scientific and well planned. But there are certain defects in the execution of these activities. Many of the check dams are in a very pitiable condition. In places like Attappady where there are steep hill and valleys and heavy rainfall, trenches will get destroyed very soon, says expert.

7.2.3. Animal husbandry schemes

Numerous developmental measures were introduced in the field of animal husbandry in 1980. Many veterinary hospitals are also working in the area. But the activities and functions of these hospitals are not beneficial to the people. Preventive vaccines must be given to cattle. The calves and lambs distributed in the area must be developed in Attappady itself otherwise they will have no resistance. Farmers must be instructed to rear the cattle in a scientific manner.
7.2.4. Dairy Development Schemes

Dairy development activities are going smoothly because of the interest of the small farmer groups. Schemes were introduced in 1982. Cows given to the tribals are not living longer. The tribals are not familiar with protection of cattle. They don't treat cows at the time of illness. Most of the cows do not survive because they cannot adapt to the climate of Attappady.

7.2.5 Fish cultivation schemes

Functioning and implementation of fish cultivation schemes were introduced in 1986. Even though the climate and demographic features are not suitable to these practices, lot of money has been spent by this scheme. For example, Rs. 1000 has been provided for the growth of fish and Rs. 1.75 lakhs for the concreting the sides of the pond. But the entire money is not spent for the desired purpose. The entire money was not spent for the desired purpose. The agencies are acting without any connection to the practical purposes.

7.2.6 Sericulture

Seri fed has been functioning very well in Attappady since 1986. People of Attappady can very well engage themselves in this field and make profit from this. The climate and nature of the soil are suitable for these in Attappady. Schemes for promoting sericulture in Attappady are viable and practical and thereby solve the livelihood problem of the people.

7.2.7 Availability of Drinking water in Attappady

Non availability of drinking water is the main problem faced by the tribals in Attappady. Because of the hilly nature of Attappady it is not possible for digging wells in many of the places. Bore wells and hand pumps are the main alternatives for solving water problem. For rectifying small complaints of the bore wells and pumps the tribals have to approach the concerned agencies which are very often very difficult. On the other hand, if these schemes were introduced with the participation of people, these problems could be sorted out quickly and easily, as the tribals will be having the know how.
People depend on streams, rivers and bore wells for water needs. But these sources are highly polluted. Many of the bore wells are dry. This forces the tribal women to walk long distances to draw water. Policies and programmes with the participation of the tribals should be envisaged to solve this problem.

7.2.8 Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP)

The functions of ITDP are not satisfactory in Attappady. Lack of sensitivity and absence of effective participation of tribals can be seen in every action. ITDP started its function in Attappady in 1975. Reports of Madhava Menon Commission (1982) high lights that the short comings of the functions of the commissions. Main shortcomings are listed below:

Primary observations and recommendations

(1) Ignorance, Negligence and Malafides

The committee has found ample evidence of ignorance, negligence and malafides of the ITDP project staff about tribal realities and tribal interests in the conduct of official business.

(2) Lack of sensitivity to tribal interests

The project authorities were functioning without any supervision or monitoring or check by any official bodies since its inception. As early as 1977, the Government had ordered through a G.O to constitute an advisory committee consisting of ten representatives of tribals selected from the Mooppan’s council. Local panchayath presidents, M.L.As and M.P’s by some tricky interpretation of the wordings of the G.O, the district collectorate of Palakkad has never implemented the G.O. The Committee recommended that the G.O. should be implemented immediately.

(3) Lack of Tribal involvement

Lack of tribal involvement has been conspicuous and the committee emphasize that no programme for development serve any useful purpose without the active involvement and participation of the tribal groups. The committee,
therefore, recommended revitalization of Moopan’s council and constitution of strong and committed advisory committee for the project.

(4) Distance between the tribals and the development authorities

Perhaps the saddest part of the story is the distance maintained by the Collector and other authorities from the tribal people of Attappady. The Committee strongly urged that it should be obligatory on the part of every district officer, right from the collector downwards to spend at least three continuous days of duty in remote hamlets preferably on foot.

(5) Greater involvement of Forest Authorities

The immediate available local officers in Attappady other than project staff are forest officials who have been deliberately kept out of touch with the development activities. This has reduced the interest of the Forest Department to act as an enforcement agency in so far as tribal development is concerned. The link between the forest and tribals is very close and symbiotic. It would be very useful to involve forest authorities in many of the development activities including the construction of irrigation structure in the Attappady valley. This is vital in the case of primitive groups (eg: Kurumbas living in the forest area)

Government Intervention

7.2.9 Health Guide scheme

The scheme was initiated in 1988 to train selected tribal boys and girls who had studied up to standard X (SSLC) in preventive health care as well as simple first aid measures, so that they could function as barefoot paramedics. Departure was made from the earlier practice when political influence or official patronage used to be the decisive factor in the selection of tribals for various semi-official temporary posts like Anganvadi Workers, Functional Literacy Instructors etc. It was decided to make the selection process transparent and merit based. All tribal youth who had completed standard X, were called for a written examination and 39 persons including 18 girls, were selected on the basis of merit out of the 107 persons who appeared for the examination. Later it was found that this selection
method was praised as fair by tribal youth as it boosted their self esteem and added to their dedication and confidence in playing the key roles of agents of change.

A 45-day training programme was arranged, in which two types of classes were conducted. One was to teach factual and technical aspects of primary health care and the other to build up general awareness on the problems of tribals. Special care was taken to ensure that the classes were handled by the most competent individuals. After the training the health guides were assigned to different oorus.

They were given clear tasks to perform which were decided after a long dialogue between the officials and the trainees and they were entitled to a monthly honorarium of Rs.300. These tasks included specific activities like immunization, bringing sick people to the hospitals, follow up of treatment measures, looking after pregnant women, arranging applications to be given for various Government welfare pensions, filing applications for returning alienated tribal land, admitting students to schools and hostels preventing drop outs and the like. They were also expected to look after general activities to build up awareness among the tribals about the duties of officials with respect to various schemes, harmful effects of habits like drinking and the need to strengthen artistic talents and preserve cultural traditions.

The Health Guides achieved some degree of success in their activities. They formed 49 youth clubs in three months for awareness building and local actions. The affective strength in Attappady hostels went up from 590 to 1060 in mates and going by the estimate of ITDP authorities, 98% of children below the age group of nine were admitted to schools during the year 1988-89. A very significant achievement was the conduct of supplementary feeding programme for the tribals during the lean season in 1988. On such occasions in the past with the entire expenditure borne by the Government there were frequent instances of leakages. With the Health Guides leading the scheme Government expenditure was limited to transports of food grains up to the nearest lorry point of the ooru. Thereafter motivated by the health guides the ooru people transported it to their villages and arranged for its cooking and distribution. This resulted in enhanced satisfaction on the part of the ooru people and willing contribution as kind and
labour estimated at 20% of the total cost. It helped voluntary mobilization of tribals for a common activity.

Within the short span of six months the Health Guides could spread in major parts of Attappady and make them aware of not only about Government Programmes but also initiate a participatory debate on the problems faced by the tribals and the possible ameliorative measures. Both officials and tribals testified that the role of the middlemen had decreased and mis-information and corruption had come down sharply as a result of the activities of these social animators.

However, the successful operation of the Health Guides invited opposition from contractors and political leaders. The possibilities of keeping records and using lesser quantities of material and labour were reduced by direct supervision by the Health Guides along with the youth clubs. Similarly the political leaders found it difficult to draw out tribals for street demonstrations. There was also opposition from some officials because of the importance given to the health guides who kept the tribal population informed about various aspects of the schemes and gave regular feedback on the manner of implementation of the scheme. Naturally, in the context of such opposition the tribal Health Guides needed special support from at least the senior officers. They required sustained motivation to carry out the tasks assigned to them, in the face of obstacles. Also their activities needed to be stepped up and enlarged. But after about 18 months the officers who supported the experiment left Attappady on transfer. The scheme was not wound up, but it languished without direction and support. The Health Guides were no longer given specified tasks to perform. Their larger role of motivating the tribals and their effectiveness was reduced as their reports and requests were not followed up in the ITTP office. In spite of the ultimate collapse the experiment showed the possibilities of participatory action.

7.2.10 Girivikas Project

Education is one of the important strategies for the development of tribals in Kerala. It started its function in 1990. Attappady has 13 Primary Schools and four High Schools and 11 hostels. In addition to these facilities, lumpsum grants and stipends are given to tribal students to meet their cash requirements. Yet the
achievements are very low. The results of SSLC examination show that the pass percentage among tribals has been below 10 percent in all the years from 1985 onwards. The work of the Health Guides provided an impetus to educational activity in Attappady. The tribal youth became concerned with the quality of the education and this came through the youth clubs.

In 1993, the Nehru Yuva Kendra, a Government of India organization to which youth clubs were affiliated initiated a scheme for remedial coaching to tribal boys who had failed in SSLC examination. Later it was extended to girls in the next year. The scheme known as Girivikas was approved by the district administration.

The programme was extended not only to provide good quality education but also to boost the self-confidence of tribal youth and conscientize them on the problems and possibilities faced by the tribals of Attappady through learning motivation and discussion. Even while career opportunities were made known to them, their role as agents of change in their society was emphasized. Therefore enough time was set apart for awareness building classes by social workers and other persons of eminence. In the first year, applications for joining the special coaching classes were invited through a press release. The Nehru Yuva Kendra officials went to Attappady, called a meeting of all the tribals who had failed in SSLC during the previous year and finally 27 students joined the programme.

Instead of paid tutors, the services of volunteers were enlisted. In order, to get enough number of volunteers, the scheme was located at the district headquarters. The voluntary tutors were paid for their travel costs and miscellaneous expenses not exceeding Rs 500 per person per month. All the boarding, lodging and educational expenses of the tribal boys were met by the project. A kind of ‘Gurukulam’ approach was tried out. Health care including yoga and sports and games formed part of the co-curricular activities. Special efforts were made to foster self-confidence among the tribals through close interactions.

This compares well even with the general pass level of non-tribal students in the district and this was achieved at a cost of only Rs. 7.02 lakhs making it cost effective as well. During the field work in Attappady it was found that the ex-
participants of the Girivikas projects formed an active local group and maintained frequent interaction with Nehru Yuva Kendra through leadership classes and youth camps. They were found to be very perceptive. In their analysis of tribal problems, they were keen on serving as volunteers to initiate department programme. This caselet illustrates the possibilities of motivating tribal youth for publication even while giving them formal education. It underlines the necessity of a dedicated approach on the part of officials to achieve success in tribal department ventures.

7.2.11 Malliswara Project

The project which started in July 1993, envisages an expenditure of Rs. 348 lakhs spread over 12 years. This project was initiated to achieve Participatory Forest Management based on a model evolved by Prakriti Samrakshana samithi an NGO which did some work in Attappady in the second half and they alone have the right to vote. Initially the general body of all adults from the 14 oorus within the project area used to participate in the elections. But now the system has been changed and an Electoral College has been constituted with two representatives, a male or female from each ooru elected by the ooru people. The Electoral College elects the executive committe of the workers society. Now there is greater involvement by the people in the election than that in the earlier system. The ooru sabhas were constituted and weekly meetings are being held at fixed time on the fixed days, mostly in the evenings after the tribals returned from work. Though there was large enthusiasm in the beginning, participation is on the wane with the average attendance being 50 per cent in the last three months of 1995. This is because the forestry project cannot meet many of the local needs.

It is managed by a small group of specially selected forest department staff, one range officer, two foresters, four guards and one driver helped by 14 local volunteers, six boys and 8 girls all of them tribals, called Motivators. They acted as social animators interacting with the villagers and encouraging them to organize into local groups to express local needs, analyze problems and to take participatory decisions to sort them out. The Motivators are paid daily wages at the rate of Rs. 52.25 per day.
The main items of work are fire protection, seedling protection and digging of pits for soil and moisture conservation. About 10 per cent of the expenditure is on the Motivators. In the normal forest department procedure such works are done through conveners who are defacto contractors using the local tribals as labourers and these contractors make substantial profits. Since there is no tender in the process, influential persons are known as conveners. In the present project, paniyalar sanghan (workers society) has been registered. All the works are carried out by this society. It has officials as president and vice–presidents but the remaining seven members of the executive committee are non officials who are elected from the tribal oorus.

Another 15 per cent of the wages is kept in the bank accounts of the beneficiaries jointly with the vice president as a sort of thrift deposits. Analysis of a sample of pass book showed that withdrawals work more than 90% and frequent. From August 1995 an interesting experiment in informal banking has been started with a three tier organization. There is a primary group of five people separate for men and women. Eight such primary groups constitute a secondary group and normally there is one secondary group for each ooru. One male and one female representative from each secondary group constitute the project group and one leader is elected at the project level. Community interviews were conducted in four out of the 14 oorus under the projects to assess the impact of the project. Though it is too early to evaluate the thrift group experiment the initial responses are very encouraging.

However there is not much of participation in deciding works under the project and carrying them out. The selection of species for planting, selection of sites for development works, timing of the works and measuring the works are all done departmentally. The workers society opposed soil conservation department and succeeded in wresting work to be done by the society instead of middlemen. The society also succeeded in closing two liquor shops showing the possibilities of public action by a conscientized group. Still the Motivators and the local people felt that the intensity of participation would be greater if people are fully involved in all the activities from the pre-planning stage itself.
The success story again exemplifies the role of officials, local organization and intermediation by dedicated volunteers from the community and the need for a deliberate planned strategy but at the same time capable of being redefined to bring about participation. It also reveals the slow-rooting nature of genuine participation.

7.2.12 NGO Interventions

NGO actions are limited in Attappady. However, three interventions deserve mention “Sarang”, which is essentially an organization revolving around a teacher couple who have strong ideological faith in organic farming, succeeded in regenerating forest through local action primarily by protection against fire and by gap filling using local species identified by the tribals. A micro watershed covering about 100 hectare has been reforested and the dried up streams have been regenerated. All this was achieved at a very low cost. The critical factor for this success was the faith in traditional knowledge systems of the tribals.

The Prakriti Samrakshana Samithi took up afforestation in Bommiampady hamlet in 1985 through participative afforestation. The local people were motivated against sending their cattle for grazing to serve as a form of social fencing, seedling of local species were raised by the women of the ooru and planted by the ooru people. Campaigns were held against the evils of drinking. And within ten years, the forest regained its earlier density and three streams were rejuvenated. The ooru people still refrain from grazing their cattle in this area. Powerful messages about the appropriateness of local techniques of regeneration of vegetation delivered by the charismatic leader of the NGO brought forth popular support. The focus on women made the social fencing very effective.

The third intervention by an organization called “Nature” revolves around single dedicated individuals and is funded by both domestic and foreign sources. This NGO which began its activities in 1985 on community health care attempted a participative watershed management in 1988. Even four years of work did not enthuse the local people to accept such a project. Initially they worked only as laboures without any middlemen. Local species were planted and payments were made on the basis of survival rates. There was some local political objection, but it was patched up during 1995.
Participative venture picked up in 1994—six years after the initial attempts. Now four committees have been formed in each of the four tribal oorus, where the NGO is active, viz., housing committee, water supply committee, agricultural development committee and women’s committee. Interest free loans are given by the NGO through the agricultural committee for planting, fencing etc. The water supply committee is in charge of the operation and maintenance of two local water supply schemes which were funded by the NGO. The women’s committee is essentially a thrift group. It is given matching contribution by the NGO to the savings generated from among the members. The women’s committee is also running two retail shops selling essential commodities. Its fund is utilized for giving loans at interest rates decided by the group. Repayment has so far not been a problem.

Eight tribal animators are working for the NGO. They have been given proper training. The achievement of the NGO in ensuring participation was rendered easier by these motivators. This caselet also indicates the essentially slow process of scaling up of participatory activities and the need for community based organizations to nurture local involvement.

7.2.13 Employment Generation Programmes—Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) and Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)

The major employment generation programmes under implementation in Attappady are JRY and EAS implemented in 1993. The JRY has two main streams. About 80 percent of the funds are routed through the village Panchayaths for implementing schemes prepared by panchayaths themselves. The remaining funds are routed through ITDP for implementation. The main objective of the JRY is to provide wage employment to landless and other poor labour during the lean season and create durable rural assets which are continuing to benefit the rural poor. The EAS is similar to the JRY and the only difference is the guarantee element, i.e. the assurance of 100 days employment to two adults of the family.

The salient features

1) The choice of the scheme is to be based on local need as determined by the local people and brought to the attention of the panchayath. Even in the
case of ITDP schemes the panchayath can send proposals justifying the priority.

2) The contractors are banned from even indirect involvement in these schemes. The implementing agency is the beneficiary committee of the local people including panchayath president and members. Once a beneficiary committee is selected it has to identify a convenor nominee who would enter into an agreement with the ITDP/Panchayath for executing the scheme.

3) Under the schemes especially the EAS the local people have to be provided with work during the lean season.

4) JRY provides for social audit meaning that local people have the right of access to information on all aspects of the work.

7.3. Contract works in different villages

7.3.1. Hamlet Protection works in Dasannur

Hamlet protection work was taken up in Dasannur village of Attappady at a cost of Rs 4 lakhs in 1980. Dasannur hamlet has the largest number of educated tribals and many of the first generation educated people of Attappady are from this hamlet and a good number of the ooru people had land. They felt that they needed some schemes for land development and improved irrigation.

The hamlet came to know about the new EAS scheme through local tribal council. It was only after the sanction of funds for construction and the commencement of construction, the ooru people realized that it was going to be a three foot high compound wall enclosing the entire ooru. Though they did not like the idea of having a wall around their hamlet and they protested against it, they did not stop the work as they felt that being a free gift they should not discard it. It did not occur to them that they had the right to decide the kind of work which would benefit them. Thus Dasannur became the first tribal hamlet in the whole of Attappady, with a compound wall around it.
The local people could not supervise the work as the quantities involved, the specifications and the standards were not revealed to them. Local labour was used except for skilled works. At first the minimum wage was not paid. But due to the intervention of educated tribal youths the authorities were forced to pay the minimum wage. Other than receiving the wages the ooru people did not bother to check the quality of the work as they did not know any thing about the guidelines. The quality of work was found to be very poor.

7.3.2. Check –Dam in Sholayoor Hamlet

When the Employment Assurance Scheme was launched the prospective contractor along with the panchayath member came to the Sholayoor Hamlet of 120 families and suggested that check-dam would benefit the agricultural development of the hamlet. This contract work was started in 1994. This was accepted by the ooru people and they pointed out a suitable site for putting up a check dam which would give the maximum command area. The general body meeting of the ooru people was never called for selecting the beneficiary committee. A meeting of just 20 persons selected by the contractor met in the village extension office.

However, the quality of this work was the best among 27 works, as the contractor had personal stake in it as it benefited his land most. The ooru people made only muffled protests which were easily contained by the contractor. The role of ooru Moopan needs special mention. Since he had executed the formal agreement with the ITDP to do the work as the nominee of the beneficiary committee, he could easily have insisted on at least the location of check dam at a site beneficial to the ooru.

7.3.3. Side Protection works in Kulkkoor Hamlet side

The Kulkkoor hamlet lies at the borders of Attappady. A stream by name Kodungapallam flows along the edge of the hamlet. During the rainy season because of degraded hill slopes floods were common which used to eat away stream banks causing anxiety to the hamlet people and the banks of the stream needed to be protected. This idea was capitalised by the panchayath president to get a pucca side protection work sanctioned under EAS for Rs. 4 lakhs. The local
people confirmed that the bank could be protected properly using vegetative methods. Yet it was decided to go in for pucca side protection works using cement and rubbles. The general body of the ooru was called and a seven member beneficiary committee was selected.

A local tribal who had no experience in construction was choosen as the nominee but the Panchayath president actually executed the work. There is an active youth club in the hamlet. The club members wanted to undertake the work, but their request was turned down. Because of the interest shown by the youth club, some youngsters kept a tab on the work done. Going by their calculation, which mostly tallied with those of the tribal nominee, the actual investment in the work is only about 30 to 35 percent of the amount paid to the contractors by ITDP. This action was also an utter failure.

7.3.4. Road works in Vadkottathara

This hamlet is situated almost on the side of a black topped road. Fund was allotted for its functioning in 1994. Without the request of the local people, at the instance of the contractor who is now a member of block Panchayath, construction of a concrete road to the river was taken up. The ooru people were well organized and they wanted their agricultural land to be developed and when this was not sanctioned they boycotted the work. Five workers from the ooru participated in the construction activity but they too left in protest against the poor quality of the work. The road serves no useful purpose to the local people. Earlier there was a well-beaten track to the river and now the road, which stops abruptly, is causing more inconvenience. Before the start of the work, no beneficiary committee was convened, as it was known that the local villagers would oppose the road construction.

7.3.5. Land Development Work in Tachampady

This is an extreme case but a good illustration of the essentially non-participatory character of the selection and execution of local development works under Employment Generation schemes by elected Panchayaths in 1994. A relatively well off tribal family having about 10 acres of cotton cultivation was
approached by the Panchayath vice president to lease out land to him in his private capacity.

Just before the land was to be returned a scheme was approved under JRY by the local Panchayath in the guise of developing agricultural land of tribal beneficiaries. A sum of Rs. 60,000 was spent on this work. That was done by benami. There have been protests and complaints including press reports, but the work had been completed and the payment was made.

The above mentioned development activities show how political power could distort the development process itself overriding the participatory safeguards and exploit groups/individuals.

These five instances vividly illustrate dramatically the non-participatory and even anti-participatory character of the implementation of Employment Generation programmes in Attappady. The essence of tribal development strategy in Attappady has been development of infrastructure particularly road and housing. It is estimated by ITDP authorities that 70 per cent of the funds have been spent on these two items in the last 15 years. While the emphasis was on the creation of infrastructure, there was no attempt to ensure that the infrastructure would be used. A probable reason for the preference for road work is the scope for profit in road works due to the possibility of manipulating estimates related to earth work, transport of materials etc. And a poor quality road invites less criticism than a poor quality school building as the latter implies risk to life.

Employment generation opportunities thrown up by even the construction of unrequired roads were not properly used. The inappropriate development strategies are clearly evident in the agriculture and soil conservation schemes of Attappady. The tribals had an extensive knowledge of agriculture and produced a variety of crops both suited to the locality as well as sufficient to meet their nutritional needs. The tribals used to breed a variety of seeds of plants giving different kinds of food with different nutritional properties (e.g. millets, ragi, beans and dhal varieties etc.) maturing at different seasons having different root systems tapping, different soil zones and having different tolerance levels to draught, wind or rain. In short, they knew how to make practical, use of bio-diversities. Agriculture on the whole was
given low priority in the development strategy, even where it was supported, the
conventional cash crops, with requirement of pesticides, fertilizer and irrigation
were given importance imposing severe strain on the tribal farmers. But the
agriculture department has not done much to arrange input services or marketing.
Survey revealed that traditional crops still covered about 53 per cent of the area
cultivated by tribals. Yet no effort was made to improve the productivity of these
crops which in fact had declined over the years.

7.3.6. Soil Conservation scheme

As regards the soil conservation schemes the accent was on the construction
of bunds and not on agricultural development after the conservation of soil. Large
tracts of ‘bunded’ wastelands are visible in Attappady. The tribals have the right to
carry out the work on their own as stipulated in the Kerala Land Development Act.
But one of the few skills possessed by the Attappady tribals is the ability to
construct stone bunds. A 1988 report of ITDP showed that the rate for one meter
of stone pitched bund was Rs 7.50 of which the tribal got only an amount between
Rs 1.50 and Rs. 2.50 as wages the remaining amount was shared by the middle
men and officials. Fifty percent of the amount spent on soil conservation was
given as loan and this was hidden from the tribals who because of illiteracy and
lack of awareness did not understand the intricate documents they signed. The
extent of misuse can be learnt from the fact that from 1966 till 1995 a huge sum of
Rs 12 crore has been spent on this item of work. Direct observation in 23 hamlets
revealed that in all these places, the bunds stand on relatively barren land with no
attempt to develop agriculture in the concerned areas.

Similarly education and health schemes also focused on modern method and
ignored traditional systems. The Land Reform policy was implemented without
understanding the tribal land tenure system. Even though a proposal for legislation
to prevent alienation of tribal land was sent from the block office as early as in
1962, formal legislation was enacted only in 1975 and it was notified and brought
into force only in 1986 with retrospective effect from 1982. Though about 2500
applications have been filed for restoration of land, no land has been restored even
after 10 years. A policy decision has been announced by the Government to amend
the act to take away the retrospective effect which would mean that the tribal
would not get back any land.

The forest laws which don’t take cognizance of the traditional rights of
tribals have shut them off from a valuable buffer resource base which they could
tap in times of need. The Government decision to grant absolute titles to settler
who encroached upon forest land as on 1st January 1977 while ignoring the
centuries old rights of tribals over forest has caused resentment among the tribal
people.

7.4. Development measure of Attappady Eco-Restoration Project

Destruction of forest in India has many causes which may vary from state to
state. Destruction of forest is proceeding apace in Kerala due to competing and
conflicting pressures on limited land resources. The Government of Kerala has
responded through a new policy (participatory or joint forest management) in order
to halt the alarming rate of forest degradation and destruction. However, without
additional financial support from international funding agencies, this initiative
would not have the desired impact. The state of forest in Attappady is worse. The
challenging task to execute better forest protection and rehabilitate the degraded
areas can only be fulfilled through adequate funding of forest protection and
conservation measures tailored to the specific requirements prevailing in the
Attappady area. The loan provided by the Japanese OECF (Overseas Economic
Cooperation Fund), to be implemented by the Attappady Hills Area Development
Society (AHADS) as implementing Agency is expected to contribute to these
efforts to promote better forest conservation measures, and a more sustainable use
of forest resources through participating rural residents.

The Attappady Wasteland Comprehensive Environmental Conservation
Project (AWCECOP), in short, the Attappady Eco-Restoration Project, is a Rs.
219,321 crore (JY 6338 million) sustainable development project funded by the
Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and carried out with the objective
of restoring the ecosystem as well as the livelihood systems of the people of
Attappady, both of which had undergone severe degradation over the years due to
various reasons implemented in 1996.
Numerous climatic and anthropogenic factors have worked cumulatively to inflict severe damages to the ecology and the livelihood support systems of the people in Attappady. Apart from physical and climatic factors peculiar to the region, massive encroachments over forest and cultivated lands, introduction of unsustainable cropping systems, crops and grazing etc. had all contributed to inflicting heavy damage on the ecosystem. The severity of the damage had become all too evident in all components of the ecosystem – water, soil, plant communities in forest and agricultural lands and the dependent tribal communities etc.

As a the result of deforestation in the catchments and also due to the presence of several diversion schemes, water has become unavailable when and where it is needed, creating greater dependence on ground water sources. Most of the perennial springs that once dotted the hilltops of Attappady have disappeared. Water quality has worsened considerably and the polluted water used for drinking and cooking has become a cause for diseases and ill health of the people of Attappady, especially the tribal people, of which tribal women are suffering much.

The Prime Objective of the Project

Main objective of the project is “Economical restoration of degraded Wasteland in Attappady and development of replicable models of participative eco-restoration so as to prevent further degradation and promote a sustainable livelihood for the local people (with special emphasis on tribal population) and in harmony with the resources base”.

“The project, AWCECOP was formally inaugurated by the then Honourable Chief Minister of Kerala on February 11, 1996. But the project implementation was started only by April 2002 since AHADS had taken some grass root level preparatory works such as awareness campaign, formation of people’s bodies, capacity building of beneficiaries and planning activities etc. During this period another important milestone to be underscored in the history of AHADS was the inauguration of total hamlet development programmes for Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste by His Excellency the President of India on 17th November 2002.
The Vision of AHADS

The components of an ecosystem—soil, water and plant life are harmoniously related and holistically interlinked to one another as well as to the social and human systems. Utmost care should be maintained when development programmes are devised and implemented so that these links are not severed or damaged.

The present crisis of Attappady is manifested in denudation of hills, loss of forest cover, severe soil erosion, recurrent droughts and scarcity of water, frequent crop failures, changes in climate etc, and above all, the degradation of human life dependent on the ecosystem has its origin in the unmindful interventions on each of these components of the ecosystem.

Massive felling of trees, unscientific cultivation practices and grazing, inappropriate and short-sighted development interventions etc, have contributed to the wretchedness of the ecosystem as well as life in Attappady. The Adivasis, are the worst affected because of alienation from land and natural resources as well as a culture linked to nature amount in to destruction of their life line. In this context, the Attappady Eco-restoration Project has been envisioned as a comprehensive participatory project that aims at rebuilding the capacities of the people within the ecosystem for carrying out sustainable interventions for ecosystem and social system resuscitation.

A comprehensive ecosystem restoration project requires its own managerial and organizational structures. In tune with the imperative of restoring and augmenting the smallest natural and human resources and implementing the activities in a decentralized, democratic and transparent manner, the project has been designed in such a manner as to operate at the level of the smallest micro-watershed. Ecologically and socially sustainable development of any region or society requires wholehearted participation of each and every individual. Building up a solid base of information and awareness, as well as capabilities and enthusiasm among the participants and an appropriate institutional system for ensuring the sustainability of development is the key objective of the Attappady Eco-restoration Project.
The concept of watershed development recognizes water as the most fundamental, vital, natural unit of living systems on earth where its interaction with soil sustains life. Accordingly, the entire project area has been scientifically mapped out as 15 interlinked macro-watersheds with natural boundaries. Corresponding to the 15 watersheds, 15 Development Units (DUs) have been conceived as the middle level project management structure.

There are 146 micro water sheds which is demarcated from each water shed where User Associations (UAs) have been organized to coordinate the implementation of micro action plans. Altogether, 92 UAs have been formed to represent the 93 micro watersheds within the Charitable Societies Act, 1860. At each identified project implementation location, Local Action Groups (LAGs) have been organized as a participatory body of all the beneficiaries/users. In addition to that as part of sustainable livelihood options, Income Generation Activity Groups are also being constituted by User Associations and OoruVikasana Smithies.

Recognizing the uniqueness of tribal societies such as their traditional kinship and communities, exclusive Ooru Vikasana Samithis (OVS), (Hamlet Development Societies) have been formed in each tribal hamlet (‘Ooru’) within the project area. So far 160 OVS have been organized covering each and every one of the 189 tribal hamlets (in some cases, by combining closely situated hamlets. These packages provide for soil and water conservation activities, planting fruit trees, construction of pathways to the hamlets and common cattle sheds, nutritional food grain cultivation, propagation of smokeless chulahs and energy efficient hot boxes, establishment of biogas units and various income generation activities.

The project implementation structure has been further decentralized to meet functional and locational requirements. Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) have been formed to take up re-forestation and forest conservation activities in public and government owned wastelands. The members of the JFMCs are mostly adivasis living within or in the periphery of forestlands.

In addition to above root level organization a women organization called ‘Thaikulasangham’(TKS) was also evolved as part of eco-restoration project to resist social evils like illicit liquor, distillation and ganja etc. 110 such
organizations have been already formed at different tribal hamlets. With respect to promotion of sustainable income generation activities, neighbourhood groups called Income Generation Activity Groups (IGAs) are also being constituted by AHADS through User Associations and Ooru Vikasana Samithies. Main objectives of those groups are to promote saving habits and capacity building for commencing sustainable livelihood options.

Project planning

Three distinct but interlinked levels of project planning and management have been adopted for the implementation of the Attappady Eco-restoration Project:

1. Perspective planning at the Project level through AHADS
2. At the Watershed level through the Development Units (DUs)
3. At the level and micro-watershed through the User Associations (UAs)

The Micro watershed level project planning and implementation can be further differentiated into:

1. At the level of activity locations through Local Action Groups (LAGs)
2. At the Adivasi hamlets through Ooru Vikasan Samithis (OVSs)
3. Interventions for forest conservation and afforestation through JFMCS

Developmental Units (DUs)

At the Development Unit level, a Co-ordination Committee has been set up, consisting of the elected representatives and the department officials. The role of the DU level Co-ordination Committee is mainly advisory, but it is also meant to avoid duplication of works by various agencies working in the same area. The development Unit Co-ordinators (15 Nos) have been selected from amongst the volunteers

User Associations (UAs)

The UA is the field level planning and implementation unit of AWCECOP. It consists of nine executive members elected from the Local Action Groups at the
micro watershed level. A minimum of four out of the nine members of a UA should be women. It is also stipulated that either the secretary or the treasurer of the UA should belong to a tribal community.

**Major components of the project**

For the achievement of the objective of eco-system restoration and sustainable livelihood restoration through a comprehensive long term action programme, the project initially visualised activities in the following areas.

1. Soil and water conservation
2. Afforestation and forest conservation.
3. Agro forestry and agronomic activities.
4. Agriculture development in private lands.
5. Infrastructure development
6. Ecologically compatible Income Generating activities.

**Agronomy and Soil conservation**

The activities of the agronomy wing are oriented towards protection of private wastelands in Attappady against further degradation and modification and improvement of existing cultivation practices in order to make them ecologically compatible.

The activities carried out with these objectives include popularisation of several horticulture species and sericulture species etc, fodder and fuel wood crops. While distributing planting materials and recommending a crop mix, available data on slope of the land, characteristics of the soil, rainfall etc, is taken into consideration.

**Soil Conservation**

The Attappady region had once been biologically rich with dense forests and fertile soil. But the present Attappady is a heap of denuded and rocky hills. The water table in the soil has dipped down considerably. Recent studies show that in the hillocks of Attappady, where the slope is up to 30 degrees and the annual rainfall is around 1000-2000 mm, the rate of soil run-off is of the order of 130
tonnes per ha per year. The soil conservation measures carried out under the project aims at reducing this to 15 tonne/ha/year.

The strategy for soil and water conservation adopted by AHADS is based on the principle of watershed-based integrated land and water use management. The measures adopted include both structural as well as biological interventions. In the initial stages of project implementation, the activities of the Soil Conservation Division were concentrated on steep slopes where immediate interventions were required. The total area of private wastelands to be covered under the project is nearly 19,000 ha. This vast area is spread over 15 watersheds (or DUs) falling in three panchayaths in the Attappady Block.

Soil and water conservation works consist of a comprehensive package of practices including fully plugging, construction of contour bunds, terracing, digging pits and trenches and water harvesting through construction of check dams and vegetative riveting. Establishing contour channels and embankments, protected with vegetative structures, is adopted. Pitting and trenching are carried out. Brush wood check dams and Gabion structures are constructed.

**Forestry**

Forestry activities under the project are carried out in 270 sq. km. of degraded forest areas in Attappady. Though different wings of the Kerala Forest Department had undertaken afforestation works and biomass conservation programmes in the degraded areas in the last one or two decades, they had not made much positive impact. The forestry works are being implemented on the assumption that by intensive implementation of afforestation activities in 100 sq.km, of degraded areas, it will be possible to protect the whole of the identified 270 sq. km. The remaining degraded areas are mostly inaccessible hilltops, rocky patches and grasslands that cannot be easily destroyed. The forestry activities are being carried out in a participatory mode through the Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs), the USA and the OVSs. The JFMCs have been formed in accordance with the perspective of the Ministry of Environment and Forests in the Union Government. A total of 25 JFMCs have been formed so far under the project area.
Infrastructure Development.

Despite huge sums of money being spent on construction of roads, bridges, etc. in the developmental plans implemented by the Central, State and local self-government institutions, Attappady still lacks good roads connecting its far-flung tribal settlements with main centres of commerce and culture. The condition of pathways connecting the hamlets with each other is also quite deplorable. Under such a context, the civil engineering division of AHADS plays an important role in meeting the objective of the AWCECOP. All soil construction structures that require high levels of technical input and expertise are carried out by the division.

Water Resources Development

Development of water resources in Attappady is a key activity under the project. The activities carried out by the hydrology division of AHADS include introduction of lift irrigation and gravity irrigation systems, construction and renovation of wells, ponds, irrigation channels, subsurface dams and check-dams, digging of bore-wells where they are necessary, propagation of rainwater harvesting technologies etc. The division also plays an important role in investigation and surveys based on the Participatory Rural Appraisal reports.

Ecologically compatible Income Generation Activities

In the last 50 years several efforts at providing income-generating activities to the people had been taken up in Attappady. Establishing training centres, providing training and organising industrial co-operative societies had been the usual method adopted in Governmental plans in this direction. However, most of these efforts failed because of lack of continuity of management, failure to internalise the entrepreneurial skills required, poor management of working capital and inventories and failure in marketing. A few private entrepreneurial efforts, such as making of bricks, had met with some success but had been extremely harmful to the environment.

Out of a total population of about 62,033 people in Attappady, below poverty line (BPL) people constituted 61% of the population in 1991, which went up to 85% in 2001. When such large extent of marginal people exists in the project
area, it would be unrealistic to expect them to pay attention to long-term environmental conservation through an educational programme. IGA is one of the Project components for achieving the former purpose, and an Environmental Literacy Programme is going to be implemented for the latter.

**Project restructuring**

Environmental restoration is expected to bring about progressive change in the socio-economic life of the local people through the improvement of the biophysical resource base.

However, the socio-economic crisis, which is a cause and effect of the environmental degradation, largely remained unaddressed in a direct manner in the project. It became all the more obvious that the twin issues of environmental degradation and economic destitution cannot be solved without addressing the basic socio-economic maladies. For instance, the acutely felt need for adequate and good quality of drinking water, housing, healthcare systems, educational improvements, improving access, pathways to the tribal hamlets, energy supplies etc. are also immediate requirements. Many of these basic deficiencies hampered the life of the population of Attappady

Accordingly, this issue was brought to the notice of the High Power Committee. This issue was brought to the attention of the Chief-JBIC during review discussion with the Hon. Minister of Rural Development on 11th July 2001 and with the Hon. Chief Minister of Kerala on 12th July 2001. Subsequently, JBIC representative requested AHADS on July 24, 2001 to submit a proposal for restructuring the Project in order to include social development components.

In August 2001, AHADS submitted a proposal to JBIC on restructuring the project, expanding its scope to include, socio-economic improvement activities and additional environmental components. JBIC sought clarifications on a number of points which were provided and, subsequently, in December 2001, JBIC mission held discussions with AHADS on the proposals. On JBIC's request, detailed project proposals were submitted for each item.
In his follow up report dated 24th July, the Chief Representative of JBIC confirmed that such revisions including the social sectors in the Project had requested AHADS to submit a proposal for restructuring the Project. Accordingly the revised project was prepared and was approved by Government of Kerala, Government of India and JBIC. It was pointed out that programs for socioeconomic development of the local communities, the tribal population in particular, ought to be incorporated into the Project in order to make it truly comprehensive without requiring additional funding.

The new components added are grouped as follows:

1. **Hamlet-based development**
   - Housing and landscaping
   - Drinking water supply
   - Environmental hygiene and sanitation.
   - Development of non-conventional energy
   - Widening and repair of access paths
   - Anti-ganja programme.

2. **Social development of weaker sections**
   - Human Resources Development
   - Upgradation of schools
   - Additional facilities for lab, library and playgrounds.
   - Improving hostel facilities.
   - Scholarship and coaching programme
   - Environmental literacy programme
   - General educational measures.

**Women’s Development**

The severe ecological degradation and the resultant competition over resources have created and over the time aggravated various inequalities in the
social life in Attappady. As a result, the tribal communities on the whole have been greatly marginalized, women among them now bear the worst impacts of this process. The unequal gender division of labour and unequal access to resources, knowledge, and decision-making that have resulted from the depletion of natural resources had several adverse effects on the lives of women in Attappady.

The burdens they only bear such as procurement of water, fuel and fodder have become heavier. Income from collection of minor forest produce has dropped. Unpaid and invisible works have multiplied. Being forced to consume less nutritious food has adversely affected the well-being and health of women. The vulnerability of the social life of women is more manifest in the tribal areas with adverse female sex ratio. Low female literacy, greater seclusion of female and limited access to arable and fertile land is the main problems. Women's right violation and atrocities on women have increased. Social life in Attappady presents the archetypal linkage between nature and women, though, paradoxically as manifested in the linkage between exploitation of nature and exploitation of women. Recognising this link and acknowledging the imperative of conscious efforts will reverse the situation. AHADS had striven from the inception of the project to ensure women's participation in all activities.

The constitution of all grass root level organisations of the projects like UAs, LAGs and OVS, AHADS insists on at least fifty per cent participation of women. Since the appointment of a new Assistant Director in September 2001, the Women's Development Division has been able to plan and implement various activities addressed to the specific requirements of women involved in the project activities. Leadership training programmes have been conducted for women office bearers of UAs and OVSs. The division takes up training and awareness building activities at the village level. Awareness camps are being held on popularising thrift and credit operation among women and the need for fighting alcoholism and addition to ganja. The latter have become a major social evil in Attappady.

**Thaikula Sangham**

Thaikula Sangham as an institution for women development was launched to prevent alchaholism among the youth in the tribal hamlet. A total membership of
10 member women participation is included in it. It is not a registered body. The functions of Thaikula Sangham were started in 2001-02. Officially one leader is selected among the tribal women and her post is known as “Thalaivi”. Eminent personalities from AHADS will take classes for them once in every month. Following are the programmes conducted for the women development.

1. **Leadership Programmes:** Thaikula Sangham conducts a leadership programme for providing training. Fifty women from each hamlet will participate in the training programmes. They are the representative figures in the hamlet. Residential training of three days will be given. Trained extension officers will take classes for the tribal women. Basic motive of this training is to provide classes for tribal women to fight against the practice of alcohol consumption in the hamlet. Trained tribal women brawl strongly against the alcoholic trend in the society.

2. **Women Empowerment Programmes:** socio-economic problems in each tribal hamlet are serious obstacles to their development. Thaikula Sangham particularly works for the empowerment of tribal women. It means improvement of women’s capabilities, defence against discrimination and inequality at the individual and social levels. A fair access to resource is essential for empowering women without which the confidence in protecting against discrimination cannot be strengthened.

3. **Cluster Meeting:** every each month a cluster meeting will be conducted in one of he selected hamlets. The members present in the meeting are the Secretary of Ooru Vikasana Samithi, President of the User Associations and 10 members of the Thaikula Sangham. In this meeting the problems of tribal women in Attappady are taken in to consideration and the resolution will be sent to Women’s Commission. Women’s Commission takes necessary action against the charges.

4. **Anti Addiction Programmes:** Programmes for anti addiction camp is conducted in every hamlet. In addition to these, training for school children of classes 5-10 is to be given. Manava Samrakshana Abhaya will cluster with AHADS for providing training to the needy people. All these programmes are
intended for the upliftment of the tribal women and prevent the tendency of alcoholism among the tribals.

Thaikula Sangham is working for the prevention of production, sale and consumption of illicit liquor. They have succeeded in their venture to a greater extent within the hamlet. However the production and sale is rampant within the hamlets. Because of the geographical peculiarity of Attappady, it is difficult to trace the brewing centres and book the culprits. Thaikula Sangham is not getting the required support from the police and excise. Many times they are beaten up by the illicit liquor lobby and also they are facing severe threats from the lobby. No development activity will be beneficial to the population unless propagation of illicit liquor is controlled. In these circumstances Thaikula Sangham needs more support from the enforcement agencies for their mission.

Thaikula Sangham is fighting for the social cause even daring physical threats. At the same time the same illicit liquor lobby is very much active in connivance with some powerful sects of society. Even after the 10th year of prohibition the area has mass problems connected with production and consumption of illicit liquor, e.g. increased rate of crimes, suicides, dropouts, and domestic violence and health issues.