"Youth for rural reconstruction" has been one of the powerful themes in the recent times. Each NSS unit is required to adopt a nearby village or slum for its all-round development. The students are required to learn or get education through the service. While rendering the service in the villages several projects are expected to be undertaken. The NSS guidelines do not cover the various aspects of the total development of the village. It is up to the NSS programme officer to undertake need-based programmes. The guidance and supervision will be provided by the university coordinator from time to time.

The Assistant Programme Adviser, NSS, government of India, occupies the key position in the implementation of the NSS. The leadership of the Assistant Programme Adviser has been of paramount importance at all levels of the NSS programmes. Mr. V. N. Bhide, the Assistant Programme Adviser, has suggested
The KSS girls planting and watering saplings at Devar Nimtargi (Bijapur district) during the university-level NSS camp for girls.
several novel programmes to the university NSS units. Among these several projects, Micro Area Integrated Development occupies a pride of place.

Mr. Bhide, while speaking to the NSS volunteers of the Inter-collegiate Women's Camp, put forward this idea before the villagers. The programme coordinator was also present. It was felt that this pilot project will be liked by the people and the community at large will benefit. A detailed discussion was requested after the function. Mr. L.M. Bhusanurmath and Mr. Mulla Ibrahim accepted the challenge of the programme.

It was proposed that Mr. Bhide should send the blue-print of the programme immediately and accordingly he issued a circular letter to all the programme coordinators of the universities of the Karnataka state on 11 April 1983. He emphasised that the MAID project could be undertaken in the villages adopted by NSS units. The programme officer should have a direct rapport with the villagers. Against this background the Devar Nimbargi village was found to be the most suitable place where such an experiment could be undertaken. The following were the grounds on which the decision was made.
1. The college principal and the programme officers had a fairly strong influence on the people of the village.

2. The potential beneficiaries took interest in the discussion and raised genuine questions.

3. The government officers of the revenue department took a keen interest in the project. The interest of Mr. S.B. Tirlapur, Assistant Commissioner, was most encouraging. He agreed to provide the infrastructure, guidance and supervision.

4. The programme could be undertaken with respect to dry land farming so that the project and the community could receive additional financial assistance for the implementation.

The circular letter spelt out the methodology of implementation. It envisaged the sequence of action to be initiated in this regard.

Firstly, bringing an awareness to the target groups about the practicability of the project and the need to merge their identities into a single whole for the purpose of
intellectual, educational, social and economic development were a very important stage.

Secondly, there was a need for the consolidation of the land available and utilising the agricultural expertise available in the Department of Agriculture, Horticulture and Agricultural University's research stations.

Thirdly, there was the urgency of conducting soil testing and deciding on the farm practices.

Fourthly, construction of a community hall, a farm house and a well in a central place for community farming were necessary. Further, installation of a pumpset, an overhead tank, irrigation channels, purchase of progressive farm equipments were equally essential.

Fifthly, a pre-primary school, and religious, cultural and sports activities had to be organised.

Sixthly, the next steps were the building up of a library, organising adult education centres, health and hygiene programmes, mother and child care education and so on.
The target group to be enlisted in the programme could be as under:

The target group would be 8 to 10 families having small and fairly close or adjacent farm holdings. This would ensure that about 50 to 75 people in the different age groups of children, young men and women, and old people, would be available for the project.

It was indicated that there was no time limit for the completion of the project. However the NSS unit could lead the project until the beneficiaries themselves took over the day-to-day activities. The moment the target group developed self-reliance, confidence and necessary skills, the NSS unit would withdraw.

The role of the NSS in this project was clarified. It was also stressed that no cash transaction should be undertaken by the NSS unit directly. The profits or losses would have to be shared by the families on the basis of their land holdings and the number of the persons working on the farm.

An advisory body or consultative body was suggested to iron out the differences, if any, in course of the implementation.
of the programme. This body should include the following categories of members:

a. Heads of the families.
b. Principal of the college.
c. Programme Officer.
d. Programme coordinator.
e. One or two government officials.

The scheme advocated by Mr. V. N. Bhide provided for a review at the end of six months so that the scheme could receive the feedback and appropriate changes could be effected.

Dr. Madhuri Shah, the then Chairman of the University Grants Commission, recorded her appreciation of the proposal. She opined that this scheme would be a good piece of extension work and educate the NSS volunteers in running community projects smoothly.

However the people posed several questions about the project. The following are some of the important ones:

1. What should be the minimum and maximum holding of land by each family?
2. How many persons from a family should work on the farm?

3. How should the inputs like agricultural implements, bullocks, fertilisers etc. be employed?

4. What should be the criteria to determine the share of each family's yield? If the quality of land differs, how is the share to be decided?

5. If a loan etc. sanctioned by the government or a bank is not repaid, who should be held responsible?

These questions were sent to Mr. V. N. Bhide and he provided satisfactory answers.

A meeting was convened to discuss these matters in detail with the beneficiaries and the government officials in the chamber of the Assistant Commissioner, on 31 January 1984 and the following resolutions were passed:

1. The MAID project on pilot basis would be launched in Devar Nimargi, the adopted village of the SS
College, Chadachan. This programme would be something like a cooperative to ensure development of the beneficiaries in terms of health, education, economic progress and so on.

2. The involvement of the NSS will be restricted to:

a. the identification of beneficiaries for the project;

b. the formation of a cooperative society and its registration etc.;

c. a past unemployed NSS volunteer would be appointed as community development supervisor whose salary would be met from the society funds;

d. identification of the financiers such as IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme), banks etc.

The Assistant Commissioner, Indi, District Bijapur, kindly agreed to be the chairman of the MAID Advisory Committee and provide all necessary facilities to launch the programme.
He suggested that the following members should be included in the Advisory Committee:

1. Mr. V.N. Bhide.
2. Principal G.B. Sajjan.
3. Mr. Sundar Naik, Assistant Project Director, DPAR, Bijapur.
4. Mr. Mallikarjun Maski, Manager, Syndicate Bank, Chadachan.
5. Mr. Vankudre, Ex-Chairman, Devar Nimbargi.
6. Professor L.M. Bhusur, Advocate.
7. Mr. Hashimpew Mulla, Devar Nimbargi.
8. Mr. R.S. Biradar, Devar Nimbargi.
9. Professor M.S. Achagaon, SS College, Chadachan.
10. Dr. Kattimani, Medical Officer, Chadachan.
11. The Assistant Director of Agriculture, Indi.
12. The Range Forest Officer, Indi.
14. The Director of Horticulture Project, UAS (University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad).
15. The Programme Coordinator, NSS (Member Secretary).

The entire programme got acclamation from all quarters.
Several other people came forward to include their names in the group. Three groups of the same village came forward to enrol
their names for the project. But the APA (Assistant Programme Adviser) was keen to take up the programme with the only one group on pilot basis.

The programme officer found it very difficult to convince the people of Devar Nimargi that they should wait for some time to see the progress of the project.

In the wake of these developments, a meeting was convened on 13 June 1984 at 5.30 pm in the Balbheem temple of Devar Nimargi. The items discussed in the meeting were as under:

a. Identification of the beneficiaries,
b. Preparation of bye-laws, registration of society,
c. Preparation of the layout of the MAID,
d. Agricultural operations and finances,
e. Enlightenment and contact programmes,
f. Organisation of a 10-day NSS camp for supporting the agricultural operations, and
g. Functioning of "Think Tank" at the college level.
A meeting of the Think Tank was convened to finalise the theoretical position on the project.

It was a pleasant surprise for the Assistant Programme Adviser when he found that 32 members attended the meeting of the Think Tank convened at the SS College, Chadachan, under the chairmanship of the Assistant Commissioner, Indi, on 19 June at 11.30 am. Those who attended were the NSS field functionaries, government personnel, academicians, economists, social workers, beneficiaries and student leaders. It was a good gathering.

It was resolved that about 126 acres of land be taken over for community farming (MAID). Nine families were involved. Monthly meetings were to be convened at Devar Nimbargi.

The Assistant Commissioner assured that he would sanction the construction of the community hall in the MAID project under the Integrated Rural Development Programme.

The Department of Agriculture promised to undertake the soil testing programme immediately. The programme coordinator of the NSS assured cooperation from his side for the success of the project.
The Think Tank further decided to meet in the subdivisional headquarters at Indi to explore the departmental commitment. A series of discussions were held at all levels and in all places. The first meeting took place in Devar Nimbargi, the next one in the Assistant Commissioner's chamber and the next one in the Principal's chamber. The meeting places were changed according to the requirements. Whenever it was found that the beneficiaries had to be consulted, the meeting took place in the village.

If the college authorities and academicians were to be consulted, the revenue authorities and villagers came to the college. The Assistant Commissioner and the Principal of the college and the state level adviser did not mind going over to any place for consultation and discussion. This constant shifting of the place of the meeting helped the college NSS unit to expedite the developmental work and effect attitudinal changes in the villagers and students. The meeting notices were sent by the Assistant Commissioner for sometime, then the programme coordinator took over. The Principal of the college also took a sustained interest in the project implementation.

Mr. V. N. Bhide expressed his gratitude and much appreciation for the work of the (Karnatak) University
authorities and the NSS coordinator who spear-headed the fast
development of the project after the idea was first mooted at
Devar Nimbargi.

The Think Tank proposed to reconstitute the Advisory
Committee by including the Tahashildar as a vice-chairman.
The Assistant Commissioner would continue as its chairman.
There would be the executive committee under the chairmanship of
the Principal of the SS College, Chadachan, Mr. V.N. Bhide would
be associated with all the bodies in an advisory capacity.
All the members were to attend the meeting without claiming any
TA and DA (travelling allowance and daily allowance). The Think
Tank would continue to work as the idea bank.

Several meetings were conducted to elicit loud thinking
and views on the subject. Since the whole concept was new a
series of informal discussions were held. These were aimed at
making the beneficiaries understand and participate. The impact
was considerable. They were ready to participate.

An NSS programme in the form of intensive camping was
arranged to activise the concept and implement the decisions of
committees. The construction of the community hall was the main
Devar Nimbargi camp near Bijapur in Karnataka: Cultural exchange: Girl students staying in the village houses and wearing the sarees of village folk.
task of the camping programme. About 100 girls representing 40 colleges affiliated to the Karnatak University attended the camping programme. The concept of the MAID project was propagated all over the camp. Several skits, songs and other cultural activities were organised to communicate the concept. Mr.V.N.Bhide stayed in the camp all days to see for himself the impact being made on the participants.

The villagers were becoming active. In the meantime Mr.V.N.Bhide retired from his service. It was apprehended that immediately after his retirement the project might receive a cold shoulder. The programme coordinator and the college authorities pledged to carry the message even after the retirement of the Assistant Programme Adviser.

Happily, Mr.V.N.Bhide got another assignment at the Indian Institute of Management at Bangalore as an NSS Training Coordinator. Therefore he continued to monitor, supervise and guide the programme.

Mr.Bhide's letter to Dr.J.N.Chaubay, IAS (Indian Administrative Service), Deputy Commissioner, Bijapur, gave a boost to the project. Mr.Bhide indicated several areas and
A Deva Nimbargi camp near Bijapur in Karnataka: Cocoanut saplings being distributed to the villagers.
Devar Nimbargi in Bijapur District of Karnataka: Girl volunteers performing their morning exercises.
openings in the MAID farm. The Deputy Commissioner, a trained economist, expressed his willingness to help the project and gave necessary instructions to the Assistant Commissioner for the proper implementation.

However the project began to decline after the transfer of the Assistant Commissioner, change in the office of the Programme Coordinator, Karnatak University, Dharwad, and the retirement of Mr. V. N. Bhide from the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, added to the woes of the project. The gradual disinterest among the college NSS officers and among the beneficiaries further aggravated the situation.

Elsewhere in this work we have presented several success stories and analyses of NSS projects. We have found that most of these projects have been by and large successful although there were various difficulties and obstacles in formulating the projects as well as implementing them. This project however has suffered a distinct decline when the key personnel have been away from the scene for various reasons. Actually, the micro area integrated development projects can be very useful to the villagers for a variety of purposes. The villagers can acquire land, they can carry out bunding operations
on the land, grow crops and make arrangements for supply of water to the crops. The projects under this scheme are very flexible but the potential beneficiaries must acquire sufficient knowledge about these projects and, having got the projects sanctioned, must work hard to see that the projects work to the benefit of the concerned families. It appears that the potential beneficiaries are not able to muster enough strength and initiative to complete these projects. In this particular case the project at Devar Nimbargi which started with a great deal of initiative and enthusiasm should have continued and benefited the target families. However when the Assistant Commissioner was transferred, when Mr. V.N. Dhide retired, and the programme coordinator of the Karnatak University ceased to hold the post, the project lost its momentum. As a matter of fact, during this initial period of the working of the project, some substitute arrangements should have been made. The local leaders (who ultimately stand to gain or lose) should have seen to it that the government support to the project is secured from the next Assistant Commissioner. Some help could have been secured from the NSS coordinator of the nearby college. Unfortunately, in the Indian context, it so happens that the government officials who are posted in such areas may not be able to extend uniformly strong support for the project either
because they may lack the necessary motivation or they may be preoccupied with their own office work or emergency administrative business etc. This is why the main potential beneficiaries, the local leaders and the NSS coordinators of the nearby colleges should take continuous interest and see that, although some of the key personnel get transferred or go away from the scene, the work does not stop half-way. In fact every effort should be made by these parties to revive the project in case there is a slow-down or disruption and see that the various key personnel or their successors or substitutes extend the necessary guidance, cooperation and support for the completion of the project. The parties must remember that if the project suffers, the people suffer and the cause of development suffers.