CHAPTER IV

EMERGENCE OF VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION (V.R.O.)
The Village Reconstruction Organisation (V.R.O.) was found on June 6th 1969 in the wake of the disastrous cyclone in coastal Andhra. To start with it was a relief organisation which in the later year became a development oriented organisation. It is a secular non-profit voluntary organisation. It was registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 on 6th October 1971 at Guntur.¹

AREA OF OPERATION:

For the present its work is carried on in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Orissa with a scope for extension in other States.

PHILOSOPHY:

The Village Reconstruction Organisation's philosophy is closely allied to the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya and the Christian social philosophy. The value and dignity of the human individual, the possibility for the individual to develop within and through a community with a focus on peace, social justice and quality of life constitute the core.

¹. Compiled from the Records of Village Reconstruction Organisation, Pedda Kakani, Guntur District.
ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS:

THE GENERAL BODY:

It consists of enrolled members and patrons unless otherwise decided. It meets once every year to consider policies, plan of action, review of work and the budget. It elects executive committee.

LIAISON:

The Village Reconstruction Organisation maintains a liaison with the State Government and Central Government and other agencies. A number of organisations from India and abroad have joined hands in partnership with this Indian organisation over the years.

The following are some among them: Rotary International, SEVA, MCC, OXFAM, CIDA, IGSSS, AFPRO, APVHA, GLAXO Bhoodan Yagnas, Bharat Scouts and Guides, Central Social Welfare Board.

VOLUNTEERS:

There are as many as 300 volunteers working in the organisation at present from various States of India and a few foreign volunteers as well. Core volunteers are given additional training in India and
abroad. Mr. T. Nagender Swamy is at present undergoing advanced training in rural development work in U.S.A.

NEWS LETTER:

A bi-monthly newsletter "The New Community" is published for circulation among the agencies, friends and well wishers.

FUNDING:

The funding pattern is based on the assumption that the people, the Government and the Village Reconstruction Organisation are partners who pool their resources proportionately. The organisation is by and large dependent on funds received from donor agencies abroad. Raising local resources from friends, organisations and institutions will help build self-confidence in the organisation. A five-year programme to that effect has been started.

INCOME TAX EXEMPTION:

Donors are exempted from the levy of income tax under Section 80-'g'.

AIM OF THE VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION:

The Village Reconstruction Organisation mainly refers to the aim to equip the people with
necessary skills to fast up a process of ongoing change in favour of the rural poor process convey sustained by them through necessary skills, to organise and utilise the opportunities for their social and economic upliftment with the appropriate and innovative local level institutions rooted in traditional values of justice, equality and mutual support.

OBJECTIVES OF THE VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION:

The following are the objectives of the Village Reconstruction Organisation:

1. To undertake integrated village community development work and to help promote the living conditions of the rural poor.

2. To initiate and promote co-operation among the individuals, organisations and the government agencies striving to help the poor and the socially handicapped.

3. To affiliate with other organisations having similar object and to share a common task with them on such terms and conditions as the general body may decide upon.

4. To conduct research, collect exchange and disseminate information in the area of development work.
5. To conduct seminars, workshops, conferences and training camps.

6. To represent its views on development work by itself or in association with other to the government agencies other voluntary agencies, national or international and to seek their assistance in the common endeavour.

PHILOSOPHY OF VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION:

a) In the beginning of Village Reconstruction Organisation a structure was made of village poverty. The major initial challenge was seemingly inexplicable contradiction of village poverty. Gandhi already had commented on this "as villages ought not to be poor as they have within their reach the source of all human wealth - the soil, the sea, the rivers and the mountains, the forests and the fields". However the forces of nature violently interfere with their labour and lives just as the forces of power cruelly often divert their energy, and the upsurge of population upsets their production and consumption balance. But more than any single factor village poverty increasingly appeared to us as a "cumulative poverty" a poverty of despair and hopelessness caused the concurrence of many factors:
The poverty of insecure environment.
The poverty of unprotected health.
The poverty of knowledge-privation.
The poverty of social oppression.
The poverty of political neglect.
The poverty of religious or moral confusion.
The poverty of lack of legal recognition;
and
The poverty of alternative employment.

This led us to conclude that village development and survival had to have a complex and integrated character. Hence the programme design was conceived as a comprehensive attack on the various dimensions and roots of poverty.

b) To solve this problem it was necessary to formulate an appropriate development philosophy and all philosophies very much depend on their starting point. So the basic VRO principles were expressed in the form of a number of dynamic statements, which formulated for this purpose "a Saptashila" meaning "Seven Pillars" of development evaluation as stated below:

- that no development can take place without being no "community" development.
that no radical changes occur except under a condition of crisis.
- that no assistance could be effective without the challenge of a conditioning test.
- that no development could be other than indigenous comprehensive and yet gradual.
- that the essence of development is cultural (i.e., qualitative) rather than economic (quantitative).
- that no service can be effective without accuration, identification and presence basically this means companionship of volunteers and villagers.
- that the development is a continuous process not strictly measurable by clocks and targets.

c) A rural development psychology was developed side by side indicating the stages of expected realisation:

At the outset, Village Reconstruction Organisation planned creation of an "event" hard and great enough to shake off the people's and official possivity and to provide an anchor for the future of village mutual and self-confidence. This initial "Singn" was
to be the physical reconstruction of the (usually disturbed) village environment. The building of houses, the planning of trees, the digging of wells, each family contributes actually a total of 300-400 free labour (over 3-4 years) and family savings of 10 years (maximum 1% or 2% per year), new skills are developed. Under a volunteer expert-trainee relationship this mass building activity is an "event" that neighbours and children will not easily forget.

Following closely on the inauguration of the new village home comes series of programmes to improve their socio-economical environment. Here Village Reconstruction Organisation is concerned with the provision of basic social service (new village-oriented education, health, employment, introduction of agricultural and industrial a.o. co-operatives etc.) this inevitably is a drawn out process because the deeper roots of village life the values are coming into play.

The final step to self-reliance of the village (and to the withdrawal of the VRO) is assured by the formation of new village and youth councils and other forms of collective or federated activities and by the revalidation of norms, values and resources.
Throughout other aspects of development psychology were recognised the social action-rhythms and developmental fatigue the relevance of symbols for mental growth the impact of children on the behaviour of elders (and vice versa) the relationship of beauty and truth of joy and understanding.

d) For this purpose Village Reconstruction Organisation needed a motivational core of believers who would be do-ers. For this VRP appealed specially to the youth as catalysts of change. VRO counts at present around 500 volunteers (including 5 or 6 overseas volunteers) identifiable more as "learners and listeners" than as expects that more than half of these are woman is an exceptional and (we hope) a very promising dimension of village renewal and responsibility. The area activity similarly has tended to concentrate on 'micro-villages' rather than on the larger village-agglomerations 60% of the approximately 5,50,000 inhabited villages are very small (they represent a total population of about 300 million people in the country. These are mostly concentrated in tribal frontier areas or in the interior pioneering dry-land settlements or in scheduled castes hamlets.
The people here are working mostly as dependent labourers
a few as traditional artisan communities. It is of these villages particular that Gandhi was thinking when he spoke to emuirens and visitors. "You people are seeing Delhi - but is not India. Go to the villages there is India there lives the soul of India".

THE RELEVANCE OF BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT:

As Village Reconstruction Organisation is about to enter (10 years after the HABITAT Conference in Vancouver, 1976) the International Year of "Shelter for Homeless". It thought that it is relevant to concentrate its reflection on the meaning and conditions of development in the perspective of what Gandhi called "reconstruction". To some extent it may be necessary for VRO to turnfall circle from the beyond the national prestige and the idea of a "global village" to the rediscovering of the family fusion in a natural environment as the more natural and enduring home of man and the better source of self-renewal and progress, achievement.

Often, in the earlier decades of development building programmes, Village Reconstruction Organisation could not be considered as project priorities 'Shelter' came last in line after employment, education and health. But this very much depended on the understanding and the modality of building for the poor.
few things in our experience if insisted upon would all the difference:

1. First the "building" is to be conceived and executed as an actual schooling and learning experience more than as an asset-formation bricks can be alphabets. As in the past "building" can be the laboratory and epitiome of the various aspects of human knowledge and skills, arts and science. This can be done in the programme. A conscious and explicit precondition involving the community effort over months and year so that the know-how expertise leads to 'do-it-yourself' confidence.

2. Secondly, "building" should be an experience of sharing. True development it ultimately a matter of distribution and thus of justice. The right to a home and the right to land (individual and common) can be established and better safeguarded if done under the seal of community sharing. Every village ought to be some kind of condominium. The greatest single mistake that the British Administration ever made in India was to withdraw the village control over its territory and substitute it by individual property-rights (instead of moderating the community control).
The progress, across the world of co-operative building like (DESWOS) has shown "a progressive recognition of this intrinsic necessity of "sharing for growth".

3. Thirdly, building ought to be an expression of human dignity and freedom. It is difficult to conceive of authentic development without the presence, of alternatives without the increase of opportunity. Home building as it is with us is primarily seen as liberation from fear and insecurity from dependence and intervention. Hence the necessity to admit and promote diversity or style and form of location and expansion compatible with the needs of the family and the resources of the community. We are for that reason spending a substantial amount of community time on the selection and design of village settlements.

4. Fourthly, building ought to be at the same time an environmental activity. The urban-industrial character of building is dominated by the urgency of concentration around the mass employment centres in restricted areas. The village environment however requires a more direct and expansive access to wider surfaces of land and sea. The need for individual and community self-expression in the affirmation of their preferred home-life and life-style is to be
recognised not as a direction-less and an arbitrary activity but as a legitimate response to nature's appeal for a spontaneity and diversity.

5. This aspect of greater opportunity through the building process must also relate to the preparation of eventual greater employment opportunity. This can be done by utilising the new skills acquired by various members of the community in the process of village building. In every Village Reconstruction Organisation village at the moment of the village inauguration 20 to 25 per cent of people have gained new skills and are open to enter new village service professions.

If these conditions that are fulfilled only when building is not only a positive and basic step to development but also to what Gandhi called "truth" for him another word for 'peace'.

THE ACTIVITIES OF VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION:

Village Reconstruction Organisation has taken up various programmes in the field of Rural Development by introducing educational activities like formal and non-formal and adult education organising weaving complex opening carpentry centres, manufacturing masonry appliances,
providing drinking water and creating awareness in health, sanitation, dairy etc.

The important object of Village Reconstruction Organisation is to motivate rural people in first hand knowledge to acquire latest technology and to improve their standard of living by involving women participation in income-generating activities and the following are the important activities and programme of Village Reconstruction Organisation (V.R.O.).

A. LOW-COST HOUSING:

A low cost housing is an educational and innovative perspective building is considered as a partnership exercise with a community dimension and as a learning experience.

B. AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT:

It ranges from kitchen garden, horticulture, co-operative dairy farming, common land cultivation, pisciculture, poultry, social forestry and planting of trees in villages.

C. COMPREHENSIVE RURAL HEALTH SERVICE:

Health education, health care, nutrition, diet, family welfare maintenance of family health record etc.
D. FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION:

Running of elementary schools to impart formal education with rural basic centres for non-formal education and balwadis.

E. Training for Rural Industrial Employment running the basic productivity, training centres for the rural youth-boys and girls between age of 12 to 16 to teach trades like carpentry, blacksmithy, stone-carving, pottery, weaving, masonry and embroidery.

F. RURAL SANITATION:

Assistance to landless or insufficient marginal farmers combined with energy production. This also implies intensive efforts for providing alternative source of energy (water, gas, sunlight, animal traction) for drinking or supplementary water supply.

G. LEADERSHIP TRAINING:

Regular meeting of village leaders every saturday to have mutual discussion on village problems exchange of ideas and to arrive at supportive decisions.

H. CO-OPERATIVE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES:

Common prayer halls, common strategy community centres, youth centres, mahila centres etc.
I. VILLAGE SURVEYS:

Surveys are conducted to provide scientific and sociological basis for action.

AWARENESS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES:

AWARENESS PROGRAMME:

To start awareness among the people, number of awareness camps were organised in the areas of agriculture, drinking water, health, education, sanitation, horticulture, poultry, social forestry and planting of trees in the various villages with the kind help of fund from the congregation of the society of the Jesus Major Congregation in Roman Catholic Church (R.C.M.) to develop the rural areas.

Training classes in weaving, embroidery and tailoring centres were conducted in Parecherla village (Guntur Mandal), the Health Centre in Phirangipuram mandal, Service Centre in Pedda Kakani, Education centre in Santhipalem, Grama Bala Sevaka Centre in Kondramutla, carpentry centre, weaving centre and masonry centres in Parecherla.

In these training centres a number of professional experts were invited to educate the trainees in their fields. On the other hand various
programmes have been arranged for the exchange of their views and to acquire skilful knowledge in their constructive programmes.

ADULT EDUCATION:

Apart from formal education, the above mentioned centres have taken up various Adult Education programmes to improve the literacy among the rural people in the centres of the Guntur District. The Guntur district started 38 centres in 1977-78 with the financial aid of the society of Jesus and from other sources, successfully a post-literacy programme for one year during the year 1977-78 to appreciate the good work of the centres which offer in Guntur district is awarded encourageable gifts such as embroidery material, sewing machines, financial aid to poultry etc.

INTRODUCTION OF BALWADIS PROGRAMMES:

The spread of the Balwadis programme has taken place in the year 1979-80.

TRAINING SKILLS:

A unique training programmes were given under Basic Product Training Center(B.T.P.C.) for the rural youth boys and girls between the age of 12 to 16
to teach various trades like carpentry, weaving, masonry, blacksmithy, stone carving, pottery, knitting and embroidery.

TAILORING CENTRES:

The tailoring centre for women working in Village Reconstruction Organisation for the past 12 years and the management of Village Reconstruction Organisation. Mahila Mandal the training is given for the period of 6 months in tailoring and embroidery by an experienced instructors on the other hand they are taught to tailoring, garland, puppet making, and other works. The free distribution of sewing machines to the weaker sections identified by the Guntur District Rural Development Agencies and Scheduled Castes Corporation. The training is given to 500 beneficiaries and also the training is given to 30 beneficiaries with stipend in the year 1991-92 under TRYSEM programme.

SOCIAL FORESTRY:

To encourage tree planting a nursery has been maintained by Village Reconstruction Organisation and distribution of saplings to the various institutions farmer and other agencies.
HEALTH AND SANITATION:

The training, health and sanitation centres were started at its main branch at Village Reconstruction Organisation the Basic Product Training Centre (BTPC) branch has started in the year 1974. In this programme 750 people attended the camp.

DRINKING WATER:

Village Reconstruction Organisation has taken up a special programme to provide drinking water in the villages where there is acute scarcity of water. In the year 1988-89, 71 bore-wells were drilled and hand pumps were arranged. The maintenance of these bore-wells is being looked after by Village Reconstruction Organisation.

SANITATION:

Under this programme, 10 school latrines were constructed with the financial assistance of UNICEF and the organisation is also going to take up the construction of 50 individual latrines under this programme.

CO-OPERATIVE & COMMUNITY FACILITIES:

Village Reconstruction Organisation conducted the common prayer halls, common strategy, community centres and youth centres, mahila centres etc.
LEADERSHIP TRAINING CENTRES:

Village Reconstruction Organisation conducts the regular meetings of village leaders every Saturday to have mutual dialogue on village problems and to arrive at supportive decision.

ADMINISTRATIVE SET-UP:

Village Reconstruction Organisation is under overall control of a governing body consisting of fourteen Executive Members, Chairman, Executive Secretary, Operational Director, Treasurer, Administrator, and nine other members. The Executive Committee members consisting of experienced and social concerned leaders who have a commitment and for social work. The Executive Secretary is appointed by the governing body. He has been given whole power of the administration and implementation of the Village Reconstruction Organisation and its programmes. Operational Director also be nominated by the governing body. He will look after the operation of the organisation set up to assist the smooth functioning of the organisation. One Treasurer will be appointed by the governing body to look after the structural administration, one Administrator is appointed by the general body.
ADMINISTRATIVE SET-UP OF THE VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION

GOVERNING BODY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

OPERATIONAL DIRECTOR

PRESIDENT

TREASURER

CORRESPONDENT

PROGRAMME OFFICER

PROJECT OFFICER

Field Staff

Section Officers

Extension Officers

Extension Workers

Office Staff

Accountant

Assistant Accountant

Typist

Special Staff

Medical Officer

Veterinary Assistant

Animators

Management Groups
GENERAL BODY :

The general body consisting of enrolled members and patterns. Unless otherwise decided it meets once in a year to consider policies planned for actions review of work and the budget. It directs the Executive Committee.

PROJECT ADMINISTRATION :

Operational Director is assisted by the various sectoral administrative secretaries, Designed Officers, Personal Officers, Project Officers, Transport Officers and Accountant Officers.

FIELD ASSISTANT OFFICERS :

Among the field staff, the Regional Coordinator, and Regional Secretaries have undertaken the developmental programmes at the village level. Sectoral Officers supervise the developmental activities in grass-root level. They will be provided monthly stipend as remuneration. They also look after the rural artisan works like carpentry, weaving, leaf making, health. They also supervises the health, sanitation, nutrition, education etc.
OFFICE STAFF:
The office staff comprises Ledger Writer, Accountant, Assistant Accountant, Typist, Assistant, Transport Driver, Watchman etc.

SPECIALIST STAFF:
Persons who are in the specialist staff will be experienced in the artisan occupation like carpentry, pottery, tailoring, machinery, weaving, welding etc. Specialist will assist the Operational Director to run the project activities smoothly.

MEDICAL OFFICER:
The Medical Officer is a qualified doctor. He will look after the health centres at project office. He also visits the village health centres weekly once and provides medicine to the members and also gives proper training to the village health workers for emergency health care.

VETERINARY OFFICERS:
Veterinary Doctor is a qualified doctor. He looks after the milch animals, poultry farms, and animal husbandry. He also visits the villages weekly once and provides medicine to animals and poultry farms and gives proper training to animal
husbandry promoters to look after the animals and poultry farms.

AGRICULTURAL ASSISTANT:

The Agricultural Assistant is a one with adequate knowledge in the field of agriculture. He renders help in agricultural activities of the members in soil testing, supply of seeds, fertilizers. He also suggests to the members about cropping pattern in their fields. He also visits fields of the members in the villages.

ENGINEER:

The Engineer is one with adequate knowledge in the field of engineering activities of the project. In the construction of the artisan complexes, village colonies, permanent houses. He also frequently visits villages to check up the irrigation facilities from canal in village levels.

VILLAGE LEADERSHIP:

To conduct regular meetings of the members leadership trainings groups were formed in village level. These leaders hold regular meetings with members every saturday to have mutual discussions on village problems, exchange of ideas and to arrive at supportive decisions.