



## workshop on communities of practice

### Presentation of CoPs

The presentations were made in the following order:

Sl. No.	Name of the NGO	Name of the CoP
1	Prakruti	Nyaya Panchayati Samiti
2	Prawarda	Grama Gnana Kendra
3	Vikasana	Federation of Cluster Level Associations
4	Myrada	VDS and SAGs
5	Rural Welfare Trust	NRM Committee
6	PSMU	Luncheon Meet
7	Jane Carter	Collaborative Forest Management

The details of all the presentations are given as below:

#### 1. Nyaya Panchayati Samiti (*This CoP is informal*)

**Presented by: Mr. P. Narayanappa**

##### What did you bring in?

- Analyze the conflict situations in the village – small disputes, internal rivalry (land, family, caste)
- Proportionate (caste, class, female ratio, political affiliations) representation and formation of the Samiti
- Inculcated collective decision making
- Delink of outsiders influence (politicians, lawyers, police, community caste people)
- Constant follow up
- Identified vulnerable issues and support to overcome (money lenders and other dominant people)

##### What have been specific uses / benefits of CoP?

- Created harmony in the village and families
- Collective leadership emerged
- This becomes a tradition for solving problems by themselves

- Saved a lot of money
- Avoided going to the police station and courts for settling the conflicts/cases. More than 58 cases settled in 3 years time and prevented conflicts
- Political solidarity at village levels. Selected GP members not through election, but unanimous selection. Gives opportunity for representations by all castes group.
- It leads to total development of the villages

### **Facilitating / hindering factors**

- Difficult to follow up constantly by us - up to certain time
- Instead of facilitators we become part of them – we may become problem
- Decision makers get blame by the guilty people and others support to this and this will not be sustained
- External influence destroys the system
- Internal guilty people also destroy
- Village situations are changing day by day but CoP strategies may not be there accordingly.

### **What did you take out?**

- Took this module and replicated in 10 villages
- Training to expand more villages and strengthen PRIs
- This helps political empowerment and integrated development.

### **Discussions were around some of the following questions as raised by SDC**

#### **Where is NPS located in the PRI structure? Is it stand alone**

- The Grama Panchayat themselves want the activities to be given to a separate body since the Secretary and Engineer are all powerful.

#### **How can NPS get legitimacy as part of PRI?**

Unless constant effort to strengthen Grama Panchayat is done, it is not possible. The Grama Panchayat themselves are not aware of their power to influence change.

**What factors, inspite of problems, made you want NPS?**

- There is a percolation of stranglehold of power structure. To loosen this hold, NPS was thought to be a good way.

**Was this a collective desire of the local people to solve their own problems at the local level for this CoP? Is it volunteerism?**

- In NPS, compromise mechanism is worked out solve rivalries instead of legalizing the problem. Many cases referred to Police are sent to NPS. If it is not solved even here, it has to be solved legally.

**This sort of system will rob many advocates of their jobs!**

**How far does volunteerism work?**

It works only by seeing the example of NPS working in other villages. Modalities of conducting NPS are worked out right from the seating arrangement to what to talk and what not to talk. It is a social laboratory.

**Is it confined to civil or criminal cases?**

All cases are handled. No dominant groupism works.

**How does District Magistrate / Tahsildar look at this?**

It is highly appreciated.

**Where do you see Prakruti vis-à-vis the structure?**

- One formula cannot work. There can be no post reference.

**With what confidence you can say it continues?**

- It is as old as civilization itself.

***Maybe a desire to ensure that conflict situation is not allowed to linger!***

**Who are the members?**

- There are 170 families divided into 6 areas. All groups are represented. The convenors are chosen from those who have pro-poor inclinations.

**Are there Dalit convenors?**

- Yes, they are accepted after convincing

***Our traditional systems of Sarpanch will continue. The masculinity of society will continue***

**Where do you see solidarity amongst SHGs and NPS**

- It is there.

**Each caste group has their own panchayat. How does representation work?**

- It works both ways.

***Major crimes being committed at a certain time in the evening of the day was found in the villages. In Delhi, it was reported that maximum traffic-related accidents occur between the period 12.00 noon to 2.00 p.m - interesting examples!!***

### **Grama Gnana Kendra**

**Presented by: Mr. B.G. Jawali**

#### **Background**

- Every village has some resource persons on different fields, i.e., expertise, knowledge, skill on agriculture, soil and water conservation, livestock and human health, etc.
- These village resource persons identified and brought to common platform, to share their CoP called GGK.

#### **What did you bring in?**

- Identified resource persons
- Common platform created
- Made them to share their CoP to benefit the wider community
- Facilitated to capacitate and enrich their knowledge with resource persons / institutions
- Helped to conserve CoP, which are disappearing.

#### **What did you take out?**

- Learnt different CoP which are sustainable, cost effective and area specific
- Documented some of the CoP
- Shared the knowledge with other villages / communities (experience sharing)
- Easy to work, expand more with less resources

### **What has been specific uses / benefits?**

- Timely, appropriate knowledge shared and used to benefit of wider community. E.g., agricultural practices, human and animal health practices
- Locally and easily available CoP
- Helped to reduce high cost and external inorganic practices
- Brings some earnings to CoP members

### **Facilitating / Hindering Factors**

#### **Facilitating Factors**

- Recognized by local community
- Proud to share knowledge and expertise by CoP members

#### **Hindering factors**

- Preferences changed according to changed environment
- External alternatives are heavily affecting CoPs.

E.g., Ready availability, less laborious, etc.

### **Discussions:**

**Prawarda facilitated the emergence of this CoP. What is the interest of the resource persons?**

- Interest to learn and share with other locals and also outsiders was the driving force. They feel pride in the fact that others' respect their knowledge. Age old, relevant practices have been brought into use again.

**Are all CoPs brought under this umbrella CoP?**

- Yes.

**What is the frequency?**

- Bimonthly.

**What is the central force working in GGK to keep it going?**

- Initially, village elders were the moving force. Later, followers of these came up with their knowledge. Some of these we have already documented.

***It is important for CoPs to thrive and survive. For that, resources, though minimal, are important.***

### **3. Federation of Cluster Level Associations**

**Presented by: Mr. Verghese Cleatas, VIKASANA**

#### **What did you bring in?**

- Initiated SHG for women empowerment. Developed confidence and leadership qualities in women
- Women on the need, importance and value of education of their children and bad effects of indulging their in children in child labour practices
- Women groups are more actively involved in the all-round development of villages, viz., school betterment committees, anganawadi centers, public health hygiene, protection of CPR, strengthening of PRIs
- Influencing Government policies

#### **What did you take out?**

- Women groups have taken up more developmental activities
- Ensured that all children between 6 to 14 years are back in school
- Ensured smooth functioning of anganawadi centers and its activities
- Ensured focus on child labour free villages
- We are working to ensure sustainability of SHG by giving independent management / responsibilities to the groups.

#### **Uses / benefits of CoP**

- The community has been sensitized on the bad effects of child labour practices
- They have also been made aware on child rights and child education
- Women are socially and economically strengthened through initiation of various activities
- SDMC are actively functioning
- Basic amenities and facilities are being provided in the school

### **Facilitating factors**

- We have good support in terms of policies and programmes of the Government
- Good community support and rapport
- Support from the Federation / Network
- Committed staff / CBO members

### **Hindering factors**

- Political pressures
- Vested interests / protest from the landlords
- Migration
- No support from the Government officials
- Family background, poverty.

### **Discussions**

It makes it easier for Vikasana to work out on any issue through cluster level federation

#### **If some groups are not interested, can they walk out?**

- Initially, they left. But after interventions, they came back. It is a yo-yo effect.

**If you say issue-based, why do you call it a CoP? Why not a network? Where do you think the knowledge management occurs?**

#### **Without providing livelihood security, how can you ensure non-dropouts?**

- Change of attitude is the key here.

#### **Is there choice / support available for sending children to school?**

- If you need benefit from federation, rule has been made that children in their families are sent to school.

***Economic improvement through solidarity groups has helped in change.***

#### 4. VDS and SAGs

**Presented by: Mr. Kalyanashetti**

##### **Village Development Society**

##### **What did we take out?**

- Information flow
- Involvement of all the stakeholders
- Identification of community resource persons
- Strengthening of Grama Sabha
- Formation of PIRC and WMC
- Common platform created

##### **What did we bring in?**

- Transparency
- Knowledge sharing
- Decentralized approach
- Issues discussed for village development
- Formation of sub-committee

##### **Specific use**

- Sustaining the institution
- Linkages with the other Departments and Institutions
- Capacity at the community enhanced
- Opportunity and skill development

### **Facilitation**

- Become easier
- Sharing of responsibility and quality at work improved.

### **Constraint**

- Time management
- Time consuming

### **Self Affinity Groups (SAGs)**

#### **What did we bring in?**

- Management of micro finance
- Financial discipline
- Regular saving
- Linkages, women empowerment
- Access to micro credit, good management of best practices
- Formation of community managed resource center (CMRC) through SAG network

#### **What did we take out?**

- It is becoming a National Programme
- Spread effect, empowerment of women in social and economic interventions
- One of the best suited grass root level institution
- Best leadership developed and identified
- Women became good finance manager
- Link them to political PRI
- Formation of Community Managed Resource Center
- SAG's responsible for strengthening at VDS and GS

### **Specific use**

- Access to credit
- Develop a common language
- Access to other development

### **Facilitation**

- Common platform
- Easier

### **Constraints**

- Time consuming
- Follow up

### **Organisational Level**

#### **What did we bring in?**

- Experiences at MYRADA in different projects
- Knowledge sharing, innovative ideas, skill development
- Recognition

#### **What did we take out?**

- Appreciating the good work. System changed among the project
- Bring out manual on organization's experiences
- Regular RMS paper based on organizations' experience
- Outsourcing
- Developing the staff to other countries based on their experience and knowledge
- New innovation
- Promotion encouraged

### **Facilitation**

- Opportunity provided
- Skill identified
- Exposure
- Motivation
- Commitment

### **Constraint**

- Time
- Language
- Documentation

### **Discussions**

- VDS is looked at as a CoP since there is knowledge management
- Informal groups remain irrespective of whether we are there or not. Outside of village, it is not attractive.
- An informal behavior in a formal organization can be counted as a CoP. Forget about structure. When you look at functioning, learning and knowledge sharing takes place. Passion brings them together at the functioning level – not at the structural level.
- Informal structure is very important in CoP. At what level it is defined, as a CoP is the issue.
- More or less, formal CoPs fit the bill. Social interactions can be informal CoPs
- Even in informal CoPs, there is some element of formality, an unwritten rule.
- CoP by design has some negotiable or non-negotiable in it.
- Lot of things have come through tradition in a CoP
- CoPs are as old as civilization. Threshold of stimulus for interesting things keeps increasing. So, new jargon keeps coming up. But, the same thing changes colour, form, etc.
- But, the underlying principle is learning.

## 5. NRM Committee

**Presented by: Mr. Anand Lobo**

The specialty of this is that there is only one community – Bedar. This committee has been formed by RWT.

- Sustainability is a question mark. Committee will continue in an informal way, post-NGO. Though homogenous committee was there, informality did not work. For their progress, formal committee has helped.

**What keeps them together?**

- Same committee also functions as SDM Committee. It more or less functions as a village development committee.

**Why is there a question of sustainability?**

- They have discovered unity helps progress.

## 6. Luncheon Meet – PSMU

**Presented by: Mr. Devanshu Chakravarty**

**What did we bring in?**

- Bringing out problems in our environment
- Bangalore traffic, political situation, events around individuals
- Sharing on religious / cultural events and its features
- Sharing of concerns on individual problems / issues
- Sharing on institutional memories: organizational – past – present
- Discourses on Sri Sri Ravishankar and its influence on young people / individuals
- Humour / happiness, relaxing mood

**What did we take out**

- Knowledge / experience of others
- Personal satisfaction
- Moral support
- Team spirit / sense of belongingness / bondage
- New ideas
- Positive energy buildup

## Uses

- Releasing tension
- Respect for each other
- Common platform to share / express

## Hindering factors

- Cultural diversity
- Individual withdrawal
- External disturbances
- Communication – language, contextual understanding
- Members absence, outstation travel

## Facilitating factors

- Volunteer to share
- Encourage to share / express
- Non-hierarchical
- Openness / informal

## Discussions

- Community is clearly defined. Members can also become lurkers
- Entry and exit value are important.
- **Lot of characteristics of CoP**
  - Flat structure
  - Non-hierarchical
  - Passion to share knowledge over food
  - Regular, live, vibrant
  - Universal domain of issues is a subject of my mind
- Passion for getting to know each other, food, and handholding is the reason for the existence of this CoP.

## **7. Collaborative Forest Management**

**Presented by: Dr. Jane Carter**

- Stimulus for a CoP was a mandate to write a review
- With a new project in Kyrgyzstan

### **Input**

- Overview – as a result of time to collate experience
- Variety of contacts (Swiss, Francophone, UK, OZ, etc).

### **Output**

- Review document (still in progress.....)
- Better field practice (hopefully) – Kyrgyzstan
- Sharing of ideas – enrichment

### **Uses**

- Deepened awareness of experiences elsewhere
- Enthusiasm, excitement, sense of shared purpose

### **Facilitating**

- Email exchange
- Face to face meetings (important – not often enough)
- Friendship, social contact (double edged potentially)

### **Limiting**

- External perspective

## **Discussions**

- Close relationship with a number of people in the world, interaction though not formal, does take place
- Social contact is also very important in this sort of thing. It can also be tricky, if friends happen to go out of sync in social thinking / professional attitudes.
- A community of 5 – 7 members of different nationalities. CoP brings them together.

### **Are all of them social anthropologists?**

Two are Social anthropologists

Field is focused on Collaborative Forest Management

### **What were the specific rules / restrictions?**

- By those standards, it is a poorly defined CoP.

## **CALPI as a CoP**

### **Presented by Mr. Viswanathan**

Individual CoPs reflected a body of knowledge. Speaking of CoPs at the SDC level, the facilitators said that they viewed as a learning event reflecting individual experiences. An introduction to CALPI as a CoP was given:

- An SDC supported project which is 1 ½ years old
- It is part of the New Country Programme since 2003
- Only specific foci areas were decided upon
- Issue was how to capitalize and for what
- Experiences are capitalized and utilized for promoting certain changes
- Initially CALPI was not born out CoP
- Later on its functionality, it appeared to be a CoP

This was born out SDC's long involvement in the sector. A shift from purely technical to techno-social approach was made. A CAPEX (Capitalization of Livestock Programme Experiences) document to document, disseminate experiences was brought out.

**Application:**

- Capitalization of livestock Programme Experiences
- Influencing policies so that they are pro-poor
- Promotion of changes at all level
- Strengthening alliances – commitment

**What is CALPI?**

At concept, only broad outlines were drawn. The aim was to capitalize on experiences to influence changes. The guiding principles were pro-poor policies, fighting discrimination, gender, sustainability, etc. Functioning in a flexible setup, the emphasis was on process orientation.

Within the broad CoP of CALPI, groups can come and go to discuss issues and learn together. It has permeable boundaries and is constantly evolving. They steer to work around a common issue (pastoralists). It is also a forum to facilitate and nurture CoPs. There is communication and dissemination of information. People learn together while promoting the practices of learning by doing. There is also good participation of the Government.

CALPI is presently based in Delhi, but working across the country.

**AGUASAN as a CoP****Presentation by Mr. N.R. Jagannath**

Agua is water in Spanish and san is Sanitation. Professionals started it together with a focus on issues related to Water and Sanitation. It began in 1980 as a small, informal CoP of people with a community spirit where the discussions were a sounding board for a broader understanding of the focus area. They shared a common passion to learn while innovating and sustaining interest in the core area. There was a good balance of give and take. An annual workshop was conducted where the group met for discussions. This represents a good example of the invisible benefits of a visible community. (The presentation by Jagannath on AGUASAN is in the attachment – Annexure 3)

**Discussions****Was the focus only on developing countries?**

The focus was more on sharing.

### **Did the group influence policy changes?**

Probably yes.

### **With how many members did Aguasan start? What is the prerequisite to be a member of the group?**

Anyone who has a passion and a desire to contribute can be a member. JAN further shared his experience on Rural Livelihood Forum currently functioning in Hyderabad an example of CoP

### **What are the binding linkages?**

- Issue of livelihoods
- Commitment and conviction in the subject

*Similarly, a network was tried to form of all ISPWDK partners in Phase-I. After 10 meetings, there were a lot of misunderstandings amongst the groups. Hence, the network was abandoned*

At this point in time Jagannath shared his experiences of supporting networks in Andhra Pradesh-including network functioning-structure and problems associated with it. He made a reference to a professional study on Network by GRID located in Bangalore. He exercised caution while funding the networks.

### **Does finance spoil a CoP?**

No, not all CoPs are like that. Finance is not the only means. Underlying strength should be a deep commitment.

*Swiss professionals who come to work in Third World countries meet occasionally to exchange ideas. They meet each other and keep in touch.*

*One can quote the example of Satsang as a type of CoP.*

### **Group work (participant-wise)**

The participants were formed into three groups with each being given a specific task for discussion and presentation as below:

**Group 1:** Lessons drawn from the presentation

**Group 2:** Exchange Forum as a CoP

**Group 3:** Critical issues / experiences

**The group discussions focused on:**

- Identifying critical issues
- Lessons learnt
- Issues that could be taken up effectively
- Drawing up an Action Plan

**Group 1: Lessons drawn from the presentation**

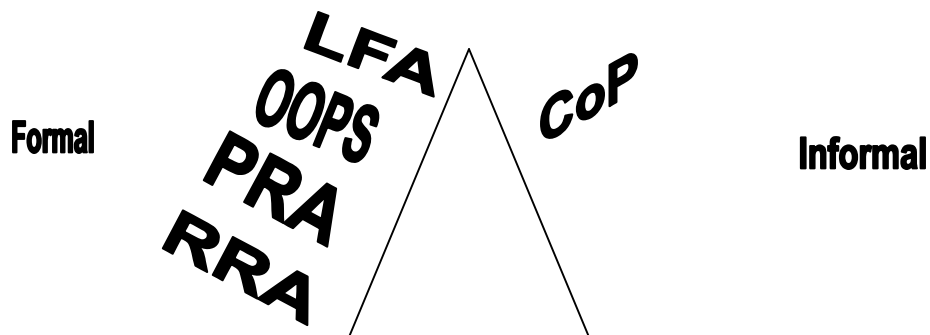
**Members present:** Mr. B.G. Jawali, Mr. Devanshu Chakravarti, Mr. P. Narayanappa, Ms. Malini, Ms. Aparna Chintamani

**Lessons learnt**

- Commitment and compassion
- Functioning is more important than structure
- External interventions in the beginning and gradual transformation
- Local resource persons

**Critical issues**

- Sustainability of CoP
- Binding forces
- Defining the domain of the theme
- Tangible results



**Discussions**

**How do say that you are not going to get tangible results?**

If compassion, commitment is there, formal structure also works

## **Group 2: Exchange Forum as a CoP**

**Members present:** J. Jangal, Premkumar, Anand Lobo, Verghese Cleatas

### **Topics covered under Exchange Forum in ISPWDK were:**

1. CPR Development and Management
2. Equity and Gender
3. Local contribution

### **Members of Exchange Forum**

- Community representatives
- Partner NGOs (ISPWDK, ICNGOKTN)
- Staff who are involved in the specific programme
- SDC/IC
- PSMU
- Other institutions / NGOs / Representatives.

### **Methodology**

- Field visit before to get insights in the field
- Sharing experiences, critical issues
- Resource persons / members input
- Identification of action points

### **Lessons learnt**

- Common issues affecting the stakeholders
- Ownership with stakeholders
- Finding solutions that are actionable
- Field visit contextualise issues, problems / solutions
- Community concerns were addressed.
- Equal participation
- Open house for lurkers

- Actions planned and initiated to address

### **Critical Aspects**

- Learning in circular and linear ways
- Lack of / absence of participation of decision makers of the organization
- Sustaining the interest
- No recapitulation of previous Exchange Forum.

### **Discussions**

- It is enriching to all the participants
- Learning for all
- Based on the experience of participation in the Exchange Forum, smaller Exchange Fora were conducted at the NGO level
- Circular learning is important

A CoP can sustain only when the people involved address a live issue that is felt by all to be apt for discussion.

### **Since it is a common CoP for all, are there any supplements?**

- Since it is also part of the project mandate, it is more of a formal CoP. Based on the three live issues covered, 3 CoPs should already have been in place. Here, ownership is the critical aspect.
- What happens beyond the project period? That is the crux of the issue. All are beyond the project mode.
- What has become important is sustainability. When it is internalized, it can become sustainable.
- Actors for sustenance need to be identified
- The issue here is how far members can internalize since it is external.

### **Group 3: Critical issues / experiences**

**Members: Jane, Nelson, Basavaraj, Raghavappa**

#### **Critical issues**

- When is a CoP not 'a CoP'?
  - Informal vs. formal
- What interests the CoP members to come together (knowledge, passion to share, resources [sometimes], contacts, potential prestige)
- Who and what define 'membership vs. lurkership'?
- How CoP contributes to learning for the outside world?

### **Lessons learnt**

- Informal behavior in a formal structure / institution
- More examples of CoP in one's social life than in professional life
- CoPs are more likely to sustain and flourish in a 'resource rich' environment
- Replication of ideas possible through CoP
- It is nothing new – there are already traditional CoPs

### **Issues that can be dealt effectively**

- Specialized, clearly defined topics
  - Eg: IPM, organic farming, climate change, dairy small ruminants, local seeds bank, etc.
- Tools and techniques like PRA, moderation, RLS, etc...
- Lobbying and advocacy like WSF, campaigns for HIV/AIDS; women and child rights, etc...

### **How do we proceed?**

- Share with the staff and community and 'like minded' professionals
- Use KM exercise to identify the people with shared interests
- Identify and prioritize on themes and topics
- Create a platform for sharing like 'organic farming forum'.

### **Discussions**

- How CoP contributes for learning to the outside world has an answer inbuilt in the presentation.
- CoPs cannot be globalized. Only multiple CoPs.
- CoP of individuals can be sustained while CoP of organizations is more difficult to sustain.
- Individual and organizational CoPs, in comparison, need not be looked at exclusively.
- In Aguasan, though the participation was in their individual capacity, the participants also brought in the interests of the organization, without saying so.