REPORT OF THE EVALUATION OF
KEYSTONE FOUNDATION (1993 – 2003)
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A ROAD MAP FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

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14th –24th December 2003

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It is hard having two people with you, full time, for ten days doing an evaluation of your organisation. But all the staff of Keystone Foundation have willingly and cheerfully responded to our many questions and ensured that we had access to all the materials we asked for. We are particularly grateful to Sneh, Pratim and Mathew for their limitless good humour and endless enthusiasm. We also appreciate that they gave up so much of what should have been their free time to talk to us.

Thank you to Punit, who drove us from place to place and also accompanied us, and Keystone colleagues, on the community visits. We are indebted to Susai and Amla for taking such good care of us at the Sylvan Hall Guest House.

We are very grateful to everyone, villagers, Trustees, Advisers and Keystone's partners and donors, who we have spoken to or corresponded with over the email. Everyone has been extremely helpful. Thank you.

Janet and Bharat
Kotagiri
24th December 2003

Summary

i.   This evaluation of Keystone Foundation was organisational and strategic, providing an overall assessment of the work of the organisation and ideas for the future. It was not a technical evaluation of a single field or project.

ii.   It is clear from this evaluation that Keystone Foundation has a reputation for being a committed and competent organisation, which donors trust. Individually all projects are doing well and have built on past experience. An impressive array of project reports documents this progress.

iii.   But, project monitoring has focused largely on the activity level and it is difficult to judge to what extent the objectives of each project are being met. The lack of clarity on outcomes, present to some extent in each project, makes monitoring at the strategic level for Keystone staff (and others) difficult.

iv.   No explicit link is made between each project's objectives and activities and Keystone's overarching Mission statement. **We recommend that Keystone staff (as a whole) revisit the Mission statement and agree to four to six outcomes through which a purpose (and ultimately a goal) for the organisation may be achieved (para 2.10). We recommend that Keystone translate all material related to the Mission into Tamil (para 7.3).** A suggestion for a strategic framework built around the Keystone Mission is given on page 14.

v.   The approach taken is relevant and sensitive to environment and development needs in the Nilgiris, but it is questionable whether the approach is really effective in terms of impact and scale. If Keystone is to address its Mission statement, to enhance the quality of life and environment on a larger scale there is a need to engage with other development partners, including Government and village level institutions. **We recommend that Keystone seek opportunities in the local environment for convergence with other development initiatives, which could provide opportunities to address development issues that are not within Keystone's remit (para 2.8).**

vi.   Keystone has pursued an `economic' model, aiming to address needs through technical interventions, rather than looking more broadly at avenues for social change and the enhancement of rights. This area needs attention in the future. But this is not to say that much of the work that is being done is not of high quality. The work on bee-keeping and honey hunting, for example, is well regarded and has provided Keystone with a unique identity among Non-Governmental Organisations working in India. Keystone has been successful in establishing fruitful working relationships with international partners through networks (in bee-keeping/honey hunting and NTFPs) and through the sharing of information.

vii. Village level project staff have a good understanding of how the patchwork of project interventions fit together. The families and communities with whom they work hold Keystone in high esteem. The relationship between Keystone staff and the tribal community is strong, and based on respect.

viii. Keystone staff members have been sensitive to the `individualistic' nature of tribal society.  They are, with some justification, sceptical of the value of self-help group models and `Village Forest Councils' around which the families with whom they work might organise. But a benefit of (small) village institutions is to support the scaling up and replicating of project interventions. **We recommend that Keystone seek support to acquire skills in social mobilisation and institution building from the vast array of possible collaborators active in the field here in India (para 3.9).** The formation of village institutions that can access services and maintain some level of interest in new approaches is also important in allowing Keystone to gradually withdraw from villages where they have worked for some time. **We recommend that Keystone staff begin to devise an exit plan for at least some activities to reduce the risk of over-dependence on the organisation (para 3.10).** This should also mean that they have the resources to move support to other communities.

ix. There is a need to undertake a careful and systematic gender analysis of the communities in which Keystone works so that the impact of project interventions can be understood, and imbalances introduced (which might negatively affect men as well as women) rectified. Keystone is engaging with women in marketing as well as land development activities, but staff need to be fully aware of the impact of interventions on relations within the household. **We recommend that Keystone augment their skill base with expertise in social and gender analysis, including the use of a broader range of participatory methods (para 3.13).**

x. Keystone was compared favourably by various stakeholders with some NGOs who take up `any' programme just to get funding. However, there is a need for Keystone to actively explore funding sources in India and elsewhere to ensure the continuity of the work beyond 2005, when much of the current funding ends. While Keystone has been relatively successful in accessing funding for most of the planned initiatives, the danger exists that in the future a coherent and integrated programme may be unbalanced by the influence of one particular project or donor. An overall `strategic framework' for Keystone will help to guide fund applications to maintain the balance. While donors will continue to be approached to fund discrete areas, they should be able to see how their resources will be used to link into a higher level purpose and goal, and the synergies between their funding and that from other donors.

xi. Keystone's financial management systems are sound, and as an organisation they are known to be honest and wholly accountable. The financial management

system proposed by Keystone's new auditors is sensible and will satisfy the various requirements of Keystone's donors.

xii.   On staffing, Keystone is still coming to terms with the increase in staff size that has taken place in recent years and attention still needs to be paid to putting in place effective management systems.

xiii.   Keystone has established a working relationship with the Tamil Nadu Foresry Department. The Department finds the services that Keystone offers tribals useful. The relationship between the Forestry Department and Keystone is certainly good natured and respectful, but it is very dependent on particular individuals staying in post, and cannot be considered a partnership.

xiv.   Since the departure of the previous Collector, the Keystone Directors have had little or no contact with the Collectorate. We strongly support the establishment of a sustained relationship between Keystone and the Government of the Nilgiris. We recognise that this will take time to establish, and may not always be easy to maintain, but it is essential if innovative approaches are to be replicated and scaled up. **We recommend that Keystone Directors take time to apprise the Additional Collector of their programme and, as he has already requested, provide support to carry out a study on `tribal development' to inform his ongoing programme (para 4.9).**

xv.   One of the strengths of Keystone's organisational structure has been that far from being restrictive it is used as a flexible framework. At the community level the dividing lines between projects are not ritually adhered to – Bee Keeping, Land Development and NTFP people act as multi-craft teams to respond to the needs of the villagers and provide feedback to each other when any one member is not present.

xvi.   However, this flexibility has led to individuals, particularly the Directors, appearing at different levels in the structure. It is difficult to take a strategic perspective on projects if the Directors are engaged with projects on a day to day basis. We believe that the three Directors, while constituting a very coherent team at the top, need to segregate their own roles and responsibilities more clearly. A second level is required to share some of the project management load. In addition the current organisation structure does not adequately reflect the needs of managing an integrated set of projects at the community level. **We therefore recommend a new structure in which Keystone is organised along geographical lines (para 5.5.)**

xvii.   As regards the Board of Trustees **our recommendation is that this membership needs to be widened to include more outside participation. The increased membership should reflect a governance structure that is more challenging and questioning (para 6.2.).** For the Advisory board, given the complexity of the programmes and issues, **it is our recommendation that**

this Advisory Board needs to be comprised of more people who can technically and programmatically contribute on a more regular basis (para 6.4.).

xviii. The Directors are appreciated in the organisation for their openness and accessibility. But while the style is very open, it may not be challenging enough. Leaders should be able to set goals and objectives that make people stretch their capabilities. Perhaps once the new structure is in place, this would be easier to do, with a wider participation of all staff in planning and review of programmes.

xix. All our discussions with external stakeholders repeatedly underscored their perception of Keystone's set of values as one of commitment, passion, professionalism and integrity. This value set should be nurtured and maintained. **We recommend that Keystone should agree, through a participatory process involving all staff, a clear, simple statement of the organisation's values (para 7.3.)**

xx. Learning within Keystone happens largely through `on the job' experience. As regards organisational learning we suggest that more attention be paid to learning from others. While the development context in which Keystone operates is somewhat unique there are lessons to be learned from other organisations. We observed a reluctance to draw from such outside learning and to fall back on a (unstated, as it is) `reject if not invented here' syndrome.

xxi. **Project planning should, we recommend be done by the entire team, as a participative effort. In the initial days of the organisation, only the Directors were in a position to plan, with the "big picture" in mind. This however is no longer the case (para 9.2.1.).** This places team members in a better position to understand and appreciate how the overall project unfolds, how the goal and objectives can be achieved through well designed activities and tasks. There is a clearer link between their day to day activities and the achievement of longer term project goals and objectives. In addition **we recommend that the regular project reviews should also focus on the financial aspect in terms of project budget vs. expenditure, so that team members are aware of ground realities relating to funds availability and their proper utilisation (para 9.2.3.)**.

xxii. Community based monitoring systems would assist in ensuring ownership of the project by the communities. Developing and implementing such a system requires special skills but the results are well worth the effort. **We recommend that Keystone begins to introduce community based participatory monitoring (para 9.2.4.).** In keeping with an earlier recommendation that specific exit strategies need to be in place for each of the projects, the establishment of such a system becomes critical. Keystone cannot exit from a project/location without leaving behind a way of monitoring development which the community is comfortable with and can manage on its own.

xxiii. On the `Human Resource System' **we recommend that once a decision is taken regarding the new organisation structure role descriptions for all staff should be finalised (para 9.4.1.). Appointment letters must be finalised at the earliest, where they have not been issued so far (para. 9.4.2).** As regards staff appraisal **we recommend that a simple appraisal form can be devised to capture in writing the outcome of the appraisal (para 9.6.1.).** In addition, **we recommend that all appraisals are one to one (para 9.6.3). Based on performance and potential assessment, a personal development plan has to be evolved for each individual, in consultation with the person (para 9.8.).**

xxiv. Various gaps exist in the skill set of Keystone staff including: Rights based programming, Social mobilisation/analysis, Formal gender analysis, Water management, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Management/Leadership, Community based monitoring, Community level governance, Networking skills and Training of trainers. **We recommend that skills are acquired in these areas through training and support from appropriate Advisers, as well as in the future through the appointment of new staff (para 9.9).**

xxv. We have seen an impressive array of project documents; studies conducted and research carried out. But considering that at least half the staff of Keystone cannot read or understand English, **we recommend that all key documents (we say key because it may be cost-wise prohibitive to do all) should have a Tamil translation – at least of a summary/extract (para 10.1).** Documentation and proper dissemination is the only way to institutionalise such significant learning – otherwise it will be lost once the person concerned leaves the organisation.

xxvi. <u>Our collected recommendations, in particular the recommendations for a `strategic framework' and new organisational structure are the basis for our suggestions for Keystone's approach to the next ten years.</u>

We wait, eagerly, to hear of developments and sincerely hope that this report provides ideas that can take you forward into the future!

1. Background

1.1.   Keystone Foundation is a Registered Charitable Trust, founded by Mathew John, Snehlata Nath and Pratim Roy in November 1993. The organisation started work in the Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu in 1995, working with tribal communities. Today Keystone works in 35 villages in the Nilgiris and now has an annual turnover of INR 12 million. The total staff strength is 32 persons.

1.2.   The thematic areas of Keystone Foundation's current programme are:

- Apiculture (Bee-keeping and Honey Hunting)
- Marketing
- Non Timber Forest Produce
- Land Development of Tribal Communities

1.3.   The Mission statement and philosophy of Keystone is `to work in the areas of natural resources and rural development with a conscious goal to enhance the quality of life and the environment. It means, breaking new paths that are innovative yet relevant and dealing with diverse problems/issues in an integrated manner'.

1.4.   As stated in the Terms of Reference (Annex 1), this evaluation was intended to be organisational and strategic with a view to providing an overall assessment of the work of Keystone and ideas for the future, not a technical evaluation of a single field or project. Each of Keystone Foundation's donors receives regular reports on progress in their funded projects (see Annex 6) and in some cases undertake site visits and project reviews. We have not, therefore, undertaken a detailed project by project review during this evaluation.

1.5.   This report is divided into two parts. In the first we look at the present programme, and provide comments on the evolution of the approach adopted by Keystone over the last decade. In the second part we look forward to the next ten years and recommend changes that need to be made now and in the months ahead.

1.6.   We believe that this evaluation comes at a critical time for Keystone Foundation. The majority of the present funding that Keystone receives will end in 2005. This seeming threat is also an opportunity to reflect on the overall coherence of the programme of activities and decide how best Keystone might pursue its challenging Mission in the future.

The rest of this report broadly follows the Tasks (objectives) outlined in our Terms of Reference (Annex 1). Our itinerary is given in Annex 2.

Part 1: Looking Back

2. Task 1: To evaluate Keystone Foundation's activities in the last 10 years whether it has addressed its mission objectives, maintained its philosophy, been relevant to the needs of the Environment & Development aspects.

2.1.   Keystone Foundation, particularly the three Directors, are held in high regard by their Trustees, Advisers, donors and associates, including some Government contacts, for their honesty, integrity and total commitment to their work. We were told by many how refreshing it is to come across such an organisation whose staff are wholly committed to their work in eco-development and the empowerment of tribal communities. Thus Keystone Foundation has a reputation as a competent and committed organisation, which donors trust.

2.2.   The origins of Keystone's work in the Nilgiris, in the 1994 `Honey Hunters and Beekeeper's Survey in Tamil Nadu' is well rehearsed in many project documents, so we will not repeat the evolution of the organisation here. Suffice it to say that it is clear, when one reviews the last ten years that the team has taken a measured approach to their work with tribal communities gradually expanding their field of operations to the existing 35 villages, and building upon their original entry point activity, bee-keeping. Land development, the production and marketing of forest/homestead produce as well as the conservation of bio-diversity (particularly Non Timber Forest Products) have become integral parts of Keystone's portfolio of activities.

2.3.   Individually all projects are doing well and have built on past project experience. An impressive array of project reports, including annual activity reports, document this progress. During our field visits and in discussions with various stakeholders we found nothing to disagree with the generally favourable assessments that have been made of Keystone's work with tribal communities, both in our interviews with communities and other Keystone stakeholders and in the reports from donor evaluations (SDC-IC, for example).

2.4.   Keystone in common with many other NGOs is faced with the challenge of working with a range of donors with different objectives, reporting requirements and priorities (see Annex 9 for listing of the different project goals/ objectives/ activities). Each project has been allowed to grow organically and at its own pace. Monitoring and reporting has focused largely at the activity level, particularly in the bee-keeping project. While the progress reports submitted to donors link activities to objectives (the quarterly progress summary sent to SDC-IC provides a clear example of this), we find it difficult to judge as to what extent the objectives of each project are being met, largely because a number of items that are called `objectives' are actually `activities'.   This lack of clarity on outcomes, present to some extent in each project, makes monitoring at a strategic level by Keystone staff (and others) difficult.

2.5.   The presentations made to us during this evaluation on the projects gave a detailed overview on activities (see Annex 8). While these presentations were very useful in giving us an overview of Keystone's activities they did show very clearly Keystone's focus on detailed activity level monitoring (which is useful for understanding input : output linkages), with which everyone is involved at the expense of monitoring at a strategic level. Likewise Keystone Annual Report provides an overview on the progress on project activities. It does not, however, explain how each project's activities are achieving the project objectives.

2.6.   At the moment no explicit link is made between each project's objectives and activities and Keystone's overarching Mission statement. It is not clear how the separate project outputs contribute to the fulfilment of the elements contained in Keystone's Mission Statement.

2.7.   Keystone has deliberately kept the scale of its operations small. Indeed, the effort to ensure that a measured approach is taken to the work, to build a firm foundation with the tribal communities, is to be commended. However, working with families in 35 villages in the Nilgiris cannot be expected to have a larger and lasting impact on tribal livelihoods and the ecology of the Nilgiris. The approach taken is relevant and sensitive to environment and development needs of the Nilgiris, but the question is whether the approach is really effective in terms of impact and scale.

2.8.   There is no wish to greatly increase the staff size of Keystone, nor to greatly extend their present area of operation. But if Keystone is to address its Mission statement, to enhance the quality of life and environment, on a larger scale there is a need to engage with other development partners, including Government and village level institutions, to replicate the approach and influence the policy environment, which has such a profound influence on tribal livelihoods. This is an ambitious agenda, but one which Keystone is well placed to join others in addressing, given the credibility their approach has gained in the Nilgiris. **We recommend that Keystone seek opportunities in the local environment for convergence with other development initiatives, which could provide opportunities to address development issues that are not within Keystone's remit.**

2.9.   The Keystone Mission Statement is not widely known within the organisation. In our discussion with staff it was apparent that there is a good understanding of what Keystone stands for and the rationale behind the approach. The Mission Statement itself seems to be viewed by many staff as something for an external audience. Even the Tamil version of the Statement was unknown to the staff.

2.10. **We recommend that Keystone staff (as a whole) revisit the Mission statement and agree to four to six outcomes through which a purpose (and ultimately a goal) for the organisation may be achieved.** The framework

should include attention to gender and equity issues as well as concern for biodiversity and conservation. This framework can then be used to guide future project formulation as well as monitor overall progress to achieving the goal, which can be documented in the `Keystone Annual Report'. **A suggestion for a strategic framework is given in Figure 1 below:**

Figure 1. Suggested Strategic Framework for Keystone
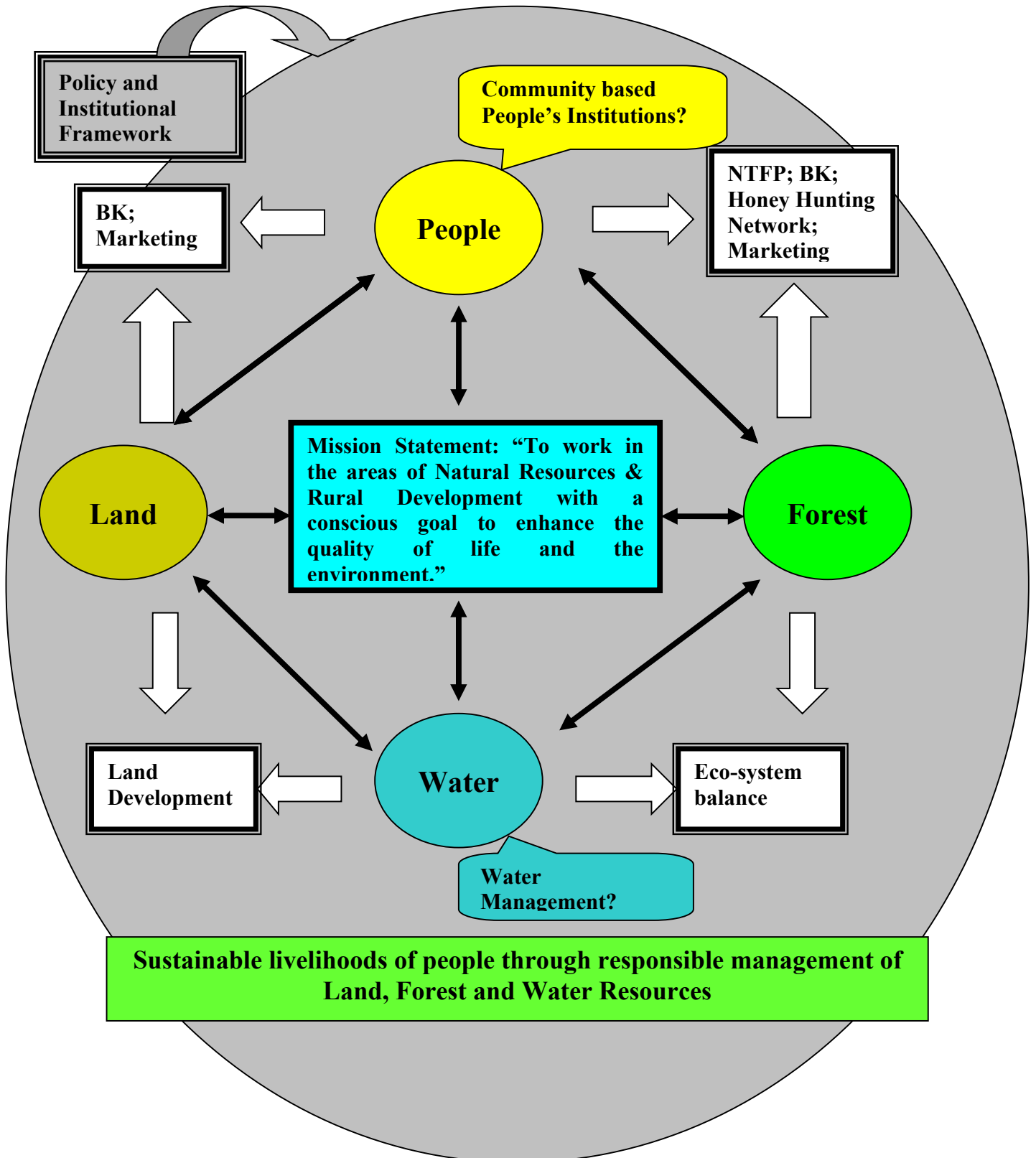
3. Task 2: To assess the effectiveness of project interventions.

3.1.   The observations in this section are based on the presentations made by the Project teams (summary of main points from the presentations given in Annex 8) and our discussions with them, and our reading of available documentation (list given in Annex 3). In addition we had the opportunity to visit three project sites that were selected in consultation with Keystone Directors (Annex 7 gives an overview of our observations from the site visits).

3.2   The Annual Report 1994-1995 clearly states that one of the three objectives of the bee-keeping project was `To use BK (bee-keeping) as an entry point into the village and to develop an understanding of the place, people and diversify into other areas'. Subsequent reports and discussions with stakeholders as well as our observations in the field endorse the value of bee-keeping, and work with honey hunters, as an entry point to work with tribal communities and on eco-development.

3.3.   The work on bee-keeping and honey hunting has provided Keystone with a unique identity among Non-Governmental Organisations working in India. This subject area has embraced the ecological and tribal community themes, which are Keystone's hallmark. However, as Keystone and donors have recognised, bee-keeping is not an end in itself, indeed it is for many people a small, although significant, part of the activities out of which tribal livelihoods are constructed.

3.3.   The need to address other aspects of the ecology of the Nilgiris and of tribal people's livelihoods has led Keystone into work on land development and Non Timber Forest Products. We were impressed that at the village level a considerable amount of synergy exists in the work of the different projects, which is not adequately reflected in the project by project reporting that Keystone has to undertake because of the different sources of project funding.   Village level project staff in the oldest village we visited (Semanarai), as well as community members, have a good understanding of how the patchwork of project interventions fit together.

3.4.   It was apparent during our field visits and from conversations with various stakeholders that the field staff of Keystone is clearly held in high esteem by the families and communities with whom they work. This was shown from the rapport they have built up and the ease with which they encouraged participation of community members during our visits. The overall relationship between Keystone and the families in the project can only be described as rich – something that has great potential for further work but it also poses a possible challenge in terms of expectations that may or may not be fulfilled.

3.5.   The communities/families whom we met were clearly disillusioned with the Government – and in that sense, Keystone has perhaps unwittingly replaced the Government as someone "from whom to expect more things". The basic needs

programme, which Keystone has been providing, giving concrete credence to this expectation.

3.6.   The families involved in the project have largely remained as recipients of "service delivery" from Keystone (a high class service no doubt) but with little community level capacity to seek their own rights from the Government as well as, perhaps, other services providers. Keystone has pursued an `economic' model, aiming to address needs through technical interventions, rather than looking more broadly at avenues for social change and the enhancement of rights.

3.7.   The process of capacity development has been consciously allowed to develop on its own by Keystone, which means that individuals may have formed groups to access particular services or organise the `revolving fund', but have not been actively supported by Keystone to look beyond that particular activity. .

3.8.   Keystone staff members have been sensitive to the `individualistic' nature of tribal society.  They are, with some justification, sceptical of the value of self-help group models and `Village Forest Councils' around which the families with whom they work might organise. This does not mean that village/community institutions are not possible – such structures may be made up of a few families or constructed around farmer or other production groups. Nor should we expect such institutional structures to be permanent, groups may form around a particular task or cause, and then dissipate or they might evolve into another structure. The fact is that two or three people or families joined together are often much more effective than one person alone in lobbying for rights and entitlements.

3.9.   A further benefit of village institutions is to support the scaling up of project interventions. A group of farmers supporting each other in innovating with new methods or crops will be more effective in demonstrating the value of new approaches than a single farmer who might be considered to be exceptional (either because of interest or access to resources). **We recommend that Keystone seek support to acquire skills in social mobilisation and institution building from the vast array of possible collaborators active in the field here in India.** Keystone may adapt approaches used by others to the situation here in the Nilgiris, but there is certainly a lot to be gained from formally engaging with, for example, NGOs working in this field.

3.10. The formation of village institutions that can access services and maintain some level of interest in new approaches is also important in allowing Keystone to gradually withdraw from villages where they have worked for some time. It is clear that a dependency on Keystone for inputs and support is already well established, and it will take time for Keystone to detach or at least distance themselves from day to day activities. This is not something we believe should happen instantly, but **we recommend that Keystone staff begin to devise an**

exit plan for at least some activities to reduce the risk of over-dependence on them. This should also mean that they have the resources to move support to other communities. Such an approach may involve members of communities in which they currently work being part of the new village support teams.

3.11. All projects, NTFP, bee-keeping and honey hunting, Land Development and Marketing include some mention of `building local capacity' among their objectives. This capacity, as in the case of the NTFP project for example, is linked to the NTFP management and augmentation. Building community capacity for advocacy with other stakeholders such as the Forestry Department, is also a part of this. Keystone can play a role in ensuring that tribal people (and their neighbours) are aware of their rights and the obligations of other stakeholders to them. But Keystone should also support such advocacy by encouraging the establishment of channels of communication of stakeholders including Government bodies, with rights holders. We look in more detail at external relations in the next section.

3.12. Tribal communities are often described as having equitable gender relations between women and men. This assertion should not mean that such equity be taken for granted. There are many examples of project interventions (as well as cultural and religious influences) that have disturbed the gender balance in communities. While women were vocal in meetings, we were struck by the fact that only male village co-ordinators and community members showed us their project activities in the villages we visited. Keystone is engaging with women in marketing as well as land development activities, but staff need to be aware of the impact of interventions on relations within the household. Women may be missed out, as was the case of one woman in Veerakombei, because they are unable to travel to Kotagiri or join village sessions because of, for example, child care needs.

3.13. There is a need to undertake a careful and systematic gender analysis of the communities in which Keystone works so that the impact of project interventions can be understood, and imbalances introduced (which might negatively affect men as well as women) rectified. **We recommend that Keystone augment their skill base with expertise in social and gender analysis, including the use of a broader range of participatory methods** (to include social and institutional mapping, for example) to begin to address this gap.

4. Task 3: To identify issues concerning – funds, personnel, co-ordination, relations with Government, International and National recognition and target groups (adivasis).

4.1.   <u>Funds</u> – From the beginnings with the bee-keeping project, Keystone has been relatively successful in accessing funding to provide for the gradual growth and diversification of the programme. Keystone has been extremely fortunate in finding support, and champions of their approach among various donor organisations. We were told by donor representatives (SIDBI and AusAID) as well as Government officers (the ex-Collector and current Additional Collector of Nilgiris District) how unusual Keystone is for not pursuing funding just for the sake of it!   Keystone was compared favourably with cash-strapped NGOs who take up `any' programme just to get funding. Keystone has been careful to maintain this reputation, but we believe that this may have been at the expense of establishing sharing/working relationships with, in particular, Government (which we detail further on in this section).

4.2.   While Keystone has been relatively successful in accessing funding for most of the planned initiatives, the danger exists that a coherent and integrated programme may be unbalanced by the influence of one particular project or donor influence. This is why we consider it an imperative for Keystone to arrive at a strategic framework for its mission, which will guide project planning. While donors will continue to be approached to fund discrete areas, they should be able to see how their resources will be used to link into a higher level purpose and goal, and the synergies between their funding and that from other donors.

4.3.   Our discussions with the Keystone Directors, as well as feedback from donors and a perusal of project documentation, indicated a judicious use of funds. Keystone values its funding and seeks to get the best use out of every rupee they have. The Keystone Directors rely heavily on staff commitment and a sense of collective responsibility to get the best use out of available funding, to maintain this ethos.

4.4.   Keystone's financial management systems are sound, and as an organisation they are known to be honest and wholly accountable. This reputation has been gained, in large part, because of the effort of one of the Directors, Mathew John, who ensures that good financial systems are in place and the accounts and financial statements are carefully checked.   The financial management system proposed by Keystone's new auditors is sensible and will satisfy the various requirements of Keystone's donors. However, **we strongly recommend that Keystone augment its skills in accounting and financing so that the system is less dependent on Mathew** (who has an array of other responsibilities), without sacrificing the hard won reputation for financial accountability. We return to the issue of staffing below.

4.5.   Personnel: we are impressed by the commitment of the Keystone team and the professional competence of many of the staff. We do not recommend a significant change in staff numbers – Keystone is still coming to terms with the increase in staff size that has taken place in recent years and attention still needs to be paid to putting in place effective management systems (detailed below, pp. 22 ff.). However, there are some notable gaps in Keystone's staff skills (see para 9.9, page 34) and these need to be filled either through training or through the recruitment of staff and through engaging with people who can advise in those fields and provide on-going, periodic, support.

4.6.   Relations with Government: Keystone has established a working relationship with the Tamil Nadu Foresry Department. This relationship is formalised within the NTFP project Steering Committee, on which representatives of the Forestry Department sit. The bee-keeping and Honey Hunting Network projects also bring Keystone into contact with the Forestry Department, with the Department seeking Keystone's help in providing training for tribals in bee keeping. The Department clearly finds the services that Keystone offers tribals useful. In addition, the Forestry Department is accessing training from Keystone on GIS and GPS, which will assist them in the demarcation of forest boundaries etc.

4.7.   The relationship between Keystone and the Forestry Department is one of service provider (contractee): contractor. Keystone is certainly supporting the Forestry Department in the settlement of tribal communities within designated areas in the wildlife sanctuary, by providing skills which one may assume may enable tribal families to secure a livelihood without resorting to hunting in the wild. We were surprised that the Forestry Department had not sought Keystone help with the establishment/capacity development of Village Forest Councils in communities such as Semanarai where Keystone has been working since 1995. The relationship between the Forestry Department and Keystone is certainly good natured and respectful, but it is very dependent on particular individuals staying in post, and cannot be considered a partnership.

4.8.   Keystone had established an excellent relationship with the previous Collector Ms Supriya Sahu (IAS). She had sought their help in studies (on Self-help Groups, for example) to inform her departments' work. She continues to hold Keystone in the highest regard. Again this is a relationship which is dependent on one particular individual, and since Ms Sahu's departure the Keystone Directors have had little or no contact with the Collectorate. This is partly because of their strong belief that they should not be seen to be chasing Government funds.

4.9.   During our visit we met, in the company of the three Keystone Directors, Mr. S.J. Chiru (IAS), the Additional Collector who is responsible for the Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) funds in the District. Keystone had been recommended to Mr Chiru by Ms Sahu as a reputable organisation and he welcomed the opportunity to meet and, in future, work with Keystone. We

strongly support the establishment of a sustained relationship between Keystone and the Government of the Nilgiris. We recognise that this will take time to establish, and may not always be easy to maintain, but if innovative approaches are to be replicated and scaled up, Keystone needs to liaise and work with (rather than for) the Government which is, after all, the main provider of services to the tribals with whom Keystone works. **We recommend that the Keystone Directors take time to apprise the Additional Collector of their programme and, as he has already requested, provide support to carry out a study on `tribal development' to inform his ongoing programme.** This will, we hope, provide a good foundation for future co-operation.

4.10. <u>International and National Recognition</u>: Keystone has been successful in establishing fruitful working relationships with international partners through networks (in bee-keeping/honey hunting and NTFPs) and through the sharing of information. The international profile and recognition of Keystone, in some sectors, in some ways belies the small scale of their operations in the Nilgiris. This is a tribute to the quality of work that Keystone has done and the effective sharing of publications.

4.11. The Keystone website is a useful means through which Keystone can share with a national and an international audience. It is important that this website is maintained and actively managed (perhaps through a consultancy, whereby the site is updated on a monthly basis). The consultancies undertaken by the Keystone Directors also serve to establish links for the organisation as a whole. Networking, sustaining relationships and gaining recognition takes time and energy and the present networking is due to the efforts of the Directors, particularly Pratim Roy.

4.12. The efforts to gain organic certification for one of the villages with whom Keystone works, as well as the relationship with an organic tea plantation, are to be applauded. Keystone faces a challenge to maintain the value addition and marketing of organically produced NTFP products in the face of a market competition. This initiative requires additional staff inputs, and we welcome the addition of Sarasmita to the marketing team. This work requires more dedicated time from a Director, and we recommend that a Director is more formally tasked with promoting marketing initiatives (see para. 5.4, page 23 below)**.**

4.13.   While Keystone acknowledges the other NGOs working in the Nilgiris, Keystone is not a part of an NGO network in the District. This is because, the Keystone Directors explained, the network is maintained to help NGOs in search of funds rather than for other sharing. While we understand Keystone's reluctance to engage with such Networks, we see other NGOs, both in the Nilgiris as well as elsewhere in South India as potential collaborators for the convergence of programmes for tribal communities as well as for learning and sharing opportunities. We recommend that a Director is more formally tasked with

maintaining local, national and international networks as well as establishing new relationships (see para. 5.4, page 23, below).

4.14. Target groups (adivasis): As noted above (para. 3.4) the relationship between Keystone staff and the tribal community with whom they work is strong, and one of respect. There is no doubt that Keystone staff are valued by the communities with whom they work and their commitment to engaging tribal men and women as staff members valued. During our meetings with staff members we were repeatedly told by tribal staff that they had joined Keystone in the hope of finding some productive activity, but had realised that Keystone offered them an opportunity to help their communities. Nagaraj, for example, told us that he wanted to attend as many training courses a possible to acquire knowledge to help his people.

Part II Looking ahead: innovations in management, approach and vision

In this section we have grouped together our response to the next two tasks in the ToR, since they are interdependent. As we stated in the introduction to this report, this is a critical and opportune time for Keystone Foundation. We believe that a new structure is required that allows Keystone to move forward to support an innovative programme in keeping with its Mission.

Task 4: To recommend an innovative management system for the future after assessing present systems.

Task 5: To give ideas for Keystone's future sustainability, professionalism, using best of science, technology and communication for Environment & Development work.

Organisational Characteristics

The characteristics of Keystone as an organisation have been captured and commented upon using the "framework for evaluation" presented in Annex 4. The first two elements of this structure are dealt with in Part 1 of this report, above. We now turn to the remaining elements of the framework: Organisation Structure, Leadership and Governance, Organisation Culture, Keystone as a Learning Organisation and Systems.

5. Organisation Structure

    Flat structure:

5.1.   The existing organisation structure of Keystone is given at Annex 5. Our principal observation on this is that it is a flat structure, with just three levels at most. Even within this structure there is evidence of a fairly flexible way of operating – people are asked to work on tasks in fields other than their own at times of need (e.g. water study, basic needs, honey hunting network, for which there was no separate team created but existing people were assigned temporary tasks). This has been one of the strengths of Keystone in as much as the formal structure, far from being restrictive, is used as a flexible framework.

    Multiple accountabilities of Directors:

5.2.   A matter of concern however is that the three Directors appear (explicitly) at three levels and implicitly at a fourth. They are represented in the Board of Trustees, the Board of directors and as heads of programmes. In reality they are also in the field, actively implementing the projects (the fourth level). This raises questions of accountability and who reviews what at which level. It is also difficult if not impossible to take a strategic perspective on projects if the Directors are engaged with them on a day to day basis.

Directors in the new Structure:

5.3.   We believe that the three Directors, while constituting a very coherent team at the top, need to segregate their own roles and responsibilities more clearly. For instance, Sneh and Mathew sit on the Board of Trustees and Pratim usually attends the Board meetings as an observer. These three make up the Board of Directors. They are also heads of the programmes (as can be seen from the organisation chart) and are in fact the operational heads too, since they take decisions on an almost day to day basis. Similarly, Mathew (in addition to being on the Board of Trustees and Board of Directors) is today the Head of Marketing, but takes micro decisions with respect to practically every aspect of the marketing enterprise. In accounts too he is required to take such micro decisions.

5.4.   We understand that these are largely due to the absence of a second level in the organisation who can take on these loads. The fact that such a second level has to be created is not in doubt (see below), but the larger question is how to do this. It is our view that the potential exists within the organisation to some extent and may have to be augmented through judicious recruitment in the near future. The Directors themselves can take different roles to give them a strategic perspective, leaving operational matters to the proposed second level as suggested below:

❑   Director Programmes – Sneh, heading all programmes
❑   Director Networking and Donor Relations – Pratim, looking at all external networking (government, institutions, state/national/international sources of expertise, other NGOs, fora where Keystone should be represented etc.) and all primary Donor interface (initial dialogue, proposals, other funding options, donor conferences etc.).
❑   Director Marketing and Administration – Mathew, with a strong second level support of an Office Manager to look after accounts and administration, would focus primarily on marketing and the organic certification – both of which could grow much faster with adequate attention.

5.5.   We also feel that the current organisation structure, while reflecting the different project streams, does not adequately reflect the needs of managing an integrated set of projects at the community level. If Bee Keeping, Land Development and NTFP are seen as components of a sustainable livelihood programme, then the structure too must reflect this fact. **We therefore recommend a structure in which the operational part of Keystone is organised along geographical lines, as indicated in Figure 2, below.**

Figure 2 Suggested Organisation Structure

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                          ┌─────────────────────┐
                          │  Board of Trustees  │
                          └─────────────────────┘
                                     ┆
   ┌──────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐
   │  Advisory Board  │┄┄┄┄┄┄│ Board of Directors  │
   └──────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘
```

Director Networking and Donor Relations

- **External networks with NGOs, Intts, Centers of Excellence**
- **Government – Advocacy at State and National levels**
- **Representation at National And International fora**
- **Donor interface & Funds mobilisation**
- **Consultancies and Research projects**

Director Programmes

Central Prog. Support

Regional Coordinator – Coonoor and ...

Project-wise Units

Regional Coordinator – Kotagiri and ...

Project-wise Units

Director Marketing and Administration

- **Marketing, Sales & Organic Certification**
- **HRD and Orgn. Devpt.**
- **Office Manager - Accounts & Admin.**

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5.6.   This structure, we feel would provide the necessary focus to each of the following:

➢   Programmes would be strategically planned and reviewed at the Director's level while giving operational accountability to the Regional co-ordinators.
➢   External networking would be strengthened, while drawing on the skills and operational domains of Advisors and external Trustees. A more focused relationship with government, stronger evidence based advocacy would be possible.
➢   Marketing would get a much-needed thrust.
➢   Internally, Organisation development and human resource development would also get the attention that they need.

5.7.   The Directors would continue to take collective decisions and support each other in their respective work. But now, there is a clearer focus on who is primarily accountable for what. There would also be a proper segregation of policy, strategy and operations in the organisation.

Team flexibility:

5.8.   Since the structure is in itself not a rigid one, it serves the function of being informal, giving it necessary flexibility. There are no formal committees other than the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors. The project teams define the structure of individual projects. However, it is gratifying to note that at the community level these lines are not ritually adhered to – Bee Keeping, Land Development and NTFP people act as multi-craft teams to respond to the needs of the villagers and provide feedback to each other when any one member is not present. The fact that almost the entire field staff is tribal, adds to this flexibility – bee keeping/honey harvesting and traditional farming are familiar to them and so is collecting NTFP. So with relatively small inputs from Keystone they are able to step into each other's roles for immediate purposes.

5.9.   The recommended structure would facilitate greater team efforts within a region and also provide inter-regional learning from practice on the ground.

Role clarity:

5.10.   In terms of role clarity, discussion with staff reveals that almost all of them are very clear about what they are expected to do. Although there are no written down role descriptions, people have had explained to them what it is they were being recruited for and that seems adequate for them. Two roles that need to be more clearly defined are that of the Senior Field Manager (Leo) and the Information and Training Officer (Mohanraj). Leo's role has got blurred because of his intimate knowledge of the Nilgiri area and the tribes/communities. He is therefore a resource person for anyone having any doubts – technical or otherwise. Hence, though he is formally part of the Bee Keeping team (even here, he is not formally the head, but is the first stop for any team member

wanting clarifications, validation of ideas etc.) and the Land Development team, he is also a resource person for all field activities. So one would be hard put to define what he is accountable for (undoubtedly he delivers a great deal, but in a variety of ways and places and projects).

5.11. Mohanraj on the other hand appears to be a common resource for all projects on a range of areas from computer hardware to GIS/GPS and mapping. His positioning in the bee-keeping team exclusively is therefore anomalous. Again it would be difficult to define his accountabilities in very clear terms.

5.12. Comments on these two positions are by no means a reflection on their value to the organisation, which is very significant – but there are repercussions on their future growth opportunities and their own "sense of utility".

6. Leadership and Governance

6.1. This needs to be dealt with at the following levels:

- ❏ Board of Trustees
- ❏ Board of Directors
- ❏ Strategic Programme leadership (choice of projects, project direction, adherence to project goals and objectives, donor accountability)
- ❏ Operational leadership (project management within strategic framework already defined)
- ❏ Tactical leadership (ground level implementation)

Board of Trustees:

6.2. This currently consists of two of the three Directors (with Pratim and Sneh alternating) and two outside members. **Our recommendation is that this membership needs to be widened to include more outside member participation. The increased membership should reflect a governance structure that is more challenging and questioning.** We see today's outside members as being (very competent) friends and well wishers who are perhaps not distanced enough to ask some tough questions or whose challenges are not taken to demand answers.

Board of Directors:

6.3. The three Directors bring to the organisation an enviable combination of qualifications, background, competence, passion and commitment. Any organisation would be proud of such leadership.

Advisory Board:

6.4.   The Advisory Board consists of four people today – Dr. CL Gupta, Mr. Ramaswamy, Rev Mulley and Mr. BJ Krishnan. All four have known Keystone and their Directors for at least a decade and are experts in their own fields and true well-wishers and admirers of the organisation. The frequency with which their advice is sought is once in two years on a formal basis. Otherwise it is sought on an "as and when" needed basis. **Given the complexity of the programmes and issues, it is our observation that this Advisory Board needs to be comprised of people who can technically and programmatically contribute on a more regular basis.** The future path that Keystone draws for itself should determine the number and nature of such advisors – and the frequency/formality of inputs from them. The current informal advisory network may not adequately serve the organisation in the next phase. This Board organisationally is placed well to challenge Keystone to rise to even higher levels of proficiency and effectiveness – the Board's constitution should reflect this immense potential for future performance.

Strategic Programme Leadership, Operational Leadership:

6.5.   These are commented upon collectively because the Directors are active players at both levels. This is a cause of concern not only to us but also to almost all the external stakeholders consulted – there is no "second level of leadership" in the organisation. It is difficult to gauge the real reasons for this – lack of competence at lower levels? Inadequate efforts to develop that level? Not enough time to mentor them? Whatever be the reason, this comes at the top of the list of concerns for all those whom we have met during the course of this study.

6.6.   We are confident that the recommended structure would clarify roles and accountabilities.

Tactical Leadership:

6.7.   This level is quite impressive. Most of them are young tribals who have been trained within Keystone initially and then learnt on the job. This level seems to be in safe hands. The staff seem to know their jobs well, when to consult their seniors and command respect from the communities with whom they work.

Leadership Style:

6.8.   The fact that people have no hesitation about approaching a Director for help, ideas or giving suggestions speaks volumes for a "comfort giving", open door style of the Directors. Discussions with staff reveal that the Directors are always

willing to help, advise and encourage. They respect ideas given by even the junior most or newly recruited staff. Not surprisingly, the Directors are perceived to be "very much above" the rest of the staff in terms of knowledge and competence.

6.9. A question that comes to mind is that while the style is very open, is it challenging enough? One of the hallmarks of great leaders is that they are able to set goals and objectives that make people stretch their capabilities. Perhaps once the new structure is in place, this would be easier to do, with a wider participation in planning and review of programmes. The Directors are also not in a position now to set such challenging goals, being themselves largely immersed in operational matters – their stepping back into a strategic position would facilitate a more challenging style.

7. Organisational Culture

Values:

7.1. All our discussions with external stakeholders repeatedly underscored their perception of Keystone's set of values as one of commitment, passion, professionalism and integrity. Discussions with the staff have only served to convince us that that these values are widely shared in the organisation, even though there is apparently no formal mechanism to do this. Donors in particular have commented on this aspect of the organisation, adding that it is indeed rare to see such a culture in an NGO.

A sense of Mission:

7.2. We have already commented that the Mission statement is available only in English and needs to be translated into Tamil so that all staff can actually read and internalise it. However, it must also be reiterated that in our discussions with the staff, they had a very good idea of what Keystone stood for and the purpose of creating the organisation was. We can only surmise that like the set of values which are so well shared, the Mission too has been understood essentially through their sustained demonstrations by the Directors and senior staff like Leo. Many of the tribal staff when asked as to why and how they had decided to join Keystone, replied that initially their motivation had been to learn something by which they could earn money (bee keeping, honey making). But, within the first few months of working, they understood what Keystone was trying to do and this in turn triggered their own passion to work within their communities for their development, while respecting, protecting the ecology within which they lived.

Internalisation of Mission:

7.3.   **Keystone not only needs to translate all material related to the Mission into Tamil, but more importantly, should expand the Mission into a strategic framework (such as one suggested by us in this report, see page 14) and agree, through a participatory process involving all staff, a clear, simple statement of the organisation's values.** Such a document can then be discussed and debated within the organisation firstly for proper internalisation and secondly to allow greater opportunity for the staff to participate in programme strategy, design, planning and review. To most staff, the linkage between the activities they carry out and the project objectives, goal and the Mission are not clear at all. This clarity is essential if Keystone is to tap the vast potential that exists in its people to contribute more significantly.

Gender:

7.4.   Gender equity is clearly seen in the organisation. There is no segregation of jobs based on gender, no deliberate stereotyping of roles. There is a visible respect for people, without any gender bias. However, this cannot be taken for granted and needs to be formalised through an appropriate inclusion in the staff policy.

Teams and Teamwork:

7.5.   The unit teams are coherent and committed to their work. They hold themselves accountable for the work given to them. It must be stated here that team members are given activities to be performed over a short period of time (2-3 months). With a greater understanding of the Mission, strategic framework, project goals and objectives, teams should be given greater space to plan for themselves. Such plans and performance against the plans should be the task of Programme heads.

8. Individual and Organisational Learning

Individual Learning:

8.1.   This seems to happen largely through "on the job" experience. While the capacity of the staff is impressive, relying only on this method is fraught with limitations:

   o   This does not take into consideration individual learning styles – some people learn better through practice while others prefer to get some conceptual input first, while some others prefer to jump into the "deep end" and learn.

   o There are chances of re-inventing the wheel through "learning by doing", as it does not allow for cumulative learning at the organisational level.

   o People tend to learn what they need immediately to complete the task, rather than taking an holistic view. So, we noticed that most of the learning that is taking place is "technical", and not much on social (including gender analysis) aspects and management.

   o In the absence of a "development plan" for each individual, it is difficult to visualise the sequence or combination of learning that would be required in the medium to long term.

8.2. We believe that staff have the capacity and will to learn – the organisation has to think about how best to ensure this.

Organisational Learning:

8.3. Learning organisations usually tend to display six characteristics (`Managing the Dream' by Charles Handy in the book *Learning Organisations* edited by Sarita Chawla and John Renesch):

  ♦ Competence – staff are basically competent to work in a position assigned to them – something that is ensured at the time of recruiting them.

  ♦ Curiosity – propensity to ask questions, challenge status quo, experiment

  ♦ Forgiveness – a culture that learning also means making mistakes and to forgive such genuine mistakes, in the larger interests of the organisation

  ♦ Togetherness – a sense of belonging to a team, enjoying working in teams

  ♦ Trust – mutual trust amongst members of the team, willing to depend on each other for greater effectiveness

  ♦ Humility – the ability to admit that "we don't have all the answers" and that there may be others who can help to provide those answers – reaching out to others learn and grow

8.4. Having discussed with a range of external stakeholders and each member of the Keystone family, we are convinced that the first five of the above six characteristics are visible and demonstrated in the organisation to varying degrees. Competence of staff can be improved a great deal through a planned training and development plan for each person, based on a proper appraisal system. Curiosity, forgiveness, togetherness and trust are part of Keystone's culture.

8.5. The last characteristic (Humility) is something that the organisation would do well to ponder upon, as it moves into the next phase of its life. There are not enough "antennae" for learning (as is evidenced by the very few networks and collaborative tie-ups that we have seen). Undoubtedly, the development context in which Keystone operates is somewhat unique. Nevertheless, there are lessons to be learned from other organisations, institutions. We have observed a

reluctance to draw from such outside learning and to fall back on a (unstated, as it is) "reject if not invented here" syndrome.

Institutionalising Individual and Organisational Learning:

8.6. Project documentation is of a very high quality. However, there is no evidence of individual or organisational learning being systematically documented. Learning/expertise in many areas is still at the individual level. For example, how to start a nursery – Rajendran's expertise lies solely with him. A simple four-five page guideline would help others to learn. "Entry dialogue" for a new village is something that people like Nagarajan and Chandran know well – yet it is not documented. Technical aspects of bee keeping are documented because the project is built around training villagers. Similarly, Leo went for a one month training in IRMA – organisational tradition should be that he shares this knowledge through a series of presentations to others in the organisation.

8.7. Similarly, project experiences between villages, areas are not consciously compared and documented. There do not appear to be formal exchanges on such subjects – informally it exists, but in such cases, opportunities for documentation and wide sharing of lessons, are limited.

9. Systems

Programme Management System:

9.1. There are two aspects to this system. On the one hand, Donor accountability has to be kept in focus, in terms of reporting on activities and the financial reporting. On both these counts, Keystone has a very good reputation, as per our discussions with Donor representatives. The frequency and nature of reports to different Donors is given in Annex 6. Even though requirements of Donors are very varied, the organisation has met the requirements and there are no voices of concern that we have heard on this subject.

9.2. The other aspect of this system is the way programmes/projects are reviewed internally, and how the monitoring is done. Donors' commission formal project Evaluation studies from time to time and hence satisfy themselves that their requirements are taken care of. On internal review and monitoring, we have the following comments:

9.2.1. Project planning (after project has been approved by the Donor) has been done so far by the concerned Director and then sets of activities/tasks assigned to concerned members of the team. **It is our conviction, after having met all the staff, that such project planning has to be done by the entire team, as a participative effort. In the initial days of the organisation, only the Directors were in a position to plan, with the "big picture" in mind. This however is no longer the case.** The other members of project teams have the

capacity and desire to participate in the initial planning process and can contribute richly to the quality of the plan. Such a participative process not only knits the team closer but also brings in ground realities, based on the experience of the full team. Team members are also in a better position to understand and appreciate how the overall project unfolds, how the goal and objectives can be achieved through well designed activities and tasks. There is a clearer link between their day to day activities and the achievement of longer term project goals and objectives.

9.2.2. If this mechanism is put in place, team members can be asked to prepare annual or at least six-monthly plans for their individual work, instead of being given detailed list of things to do and complete in the short term. These can form the basis of their performance appraisal and the internal project reviews.

9.2.3. The project reviews in such a case would become very different – greater inputs from and participation by all team members. A better understanding of the project, its intended impact, and more creativity in the way activities are planned and implemented. **We recommend that the reviews should also focus on the financial aspect in terms of project budget vs. expenditure, so that team members are aware of ground realities relating to funds availability and their proper utilisation**.

9.2.4. Community based monitoring systems would go a long way in ensuring ownership of the project by the communities. Developing and implementing such a system requires special skills but the results are well worth the effort. **We recommend that Keystone begins to introduce community based participatory monitoring.** In keeping with an earlier recommendation that specific exit strategies need to be in place for each of the projects, the establishment of such a system becomes critical. Keystone cannot exit from a project/location without leaving behind a way of monitoring development which the community is comfortable with and can manage on its own. Identification jointly with communities, indicators to be tracked and increasingly setting impact goals with their participation would be necessary pre-requisites for a community based monitoring system to take roots.

Human Resource System:

9.3. This is an area that has not received enough attention so far. When Keystone was a smaller organisation of around a dozen people, informal systems would have sufficed. Given the way the organisation's future is evolving, many of these areas need to be formalised and issues relating to compliance/legal requirements completed at an early date.

9.4. Our specific comments are as follows:

9.4.1. **Once a decision is taken regarding the new organisation (as recommended or as appropriately modified) role descriptions need to be finalised.** We use the phrase "role description" deliberately, as against "job description". The latter is a listing of tasks and duties, while the former relates to expected outputs and outcomes/deliverables, leaving the incumbent to innovatively perform the role. Again, we would recommend that this be done in consultation with the current incumbents, which also provides an opportunity for them to understand what is being expected of them. They have more "space" to formulate their annual/six-monthly plans for discussion at the time of performance appraisal.

9.4.2. **Appointment letters must be finalised at the earliest, where they have not been issued so far.** A copy of the letter must be signed by the incumbent and returned to the office as proof of acceptance of the terms and conditions. There should also be a formal record of the joining date of all staff, preferably through a "letter of joining".

Staff Performance Appraisal:

9.5. There is a performance system currently being followed. This consists of one appraisal at the end of an initial "probationary" period, followed by annual appraisals. All three Directors do these for each staff member and in some cases, Leo is also part of the appraisal team. From descriptions given by the staff, it appears that this is more of a conversation about performance, focusing on areas of strength, weaknesses, ideas for improvement, training needs etc. than a systematic appraisal. Appraisers and the appraisee take notes but there is no written record of what transpired nor for that matter of what were the final agreements regarding future performance expectations.

9.6. It is creditable that a system exists in such a small organisation. The fact that all Directors participate is a tribute to their concern for human resources. Further refinements to the system are probably needed now:

- **A simple appraisal form can be devised to capture in writing, the appraisal and the final agreements.**
- This session should focus on past performance, personal objectives and plans for the next one year. Discussions can then be around not just performance, but also personal development, potential for future growth etc.
- **We are of the opinion that all appraisals should be "one on one".** Three Directors (and possibly a fourth person in some cases) can be threatening for the person being appraised. The person also has no further avenues for redressal if she/he disagreed with the appraisal. The recommended organisation structure would facilitate such an improvement in the appraisal system.

9.6. The performance appraisal of Directors could be attempted through a 360° system – Trustees from above, a cross section of staff and a sample of external

stakeholders. This could provide valuable feedback to Directors, for their own development and improvement.

9.7.   Even though many of the staff are working on a contract basis, there is every possibility that their services would continue to be used beyond the contract period. Investing in their personal development is very much desirable. **Based on performance and potential assessment, a personal development plan has to be evolved for each individual, in consultation with the person.** This could include elements like training, negotiated "free time" to pursue "experiments" related to work etc.

9.8.   Keystone should also institute a mechanism by which "opportunistic" training is made possible, by which visitors to the organisation who are known to have experience/expertise in an area of interest, are asked to give a talk/conduct a brief workshop for "all those interested". Many other innovative ways of learning and development can be introduced – staff must know that Keystone is willing to invest in their future, but it is their initiative and effort that can make that investment worthwhile.

9.9.   In the course of our project site visits and discussions with Keystone staff, a few areas emerged where skills need to be developed quickly. We have not been able to identify such gaps at individual levels and so the following must be seen as gaps that the organisation needs to fill (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- Rights based programming
- Social mobilisation/analysis
- Formal gender analysis
- Water management
- PRA
- Management/Leadership
- Community based monitoring
- Community level governance
- Networking skills
- Training of trainers

We recommend that skills are acquired in these areas through training and support from appropriate Advisers, as well as in the future through the appointment of new staff.

9.10. While we realise that it would be difficult for an organisation like Keystone to allow for sabbaticals, study leave etc. an effort can be made to ensure certificates of training are issued even for in-house programmes. For example, a facilitator can be brought in to train all the staff who conduct training for community members – and issue a certificate to recognise the event. Training in outside institutions for short duration may not fetch a certificate automatically but

based on a letter from the institute that the person has attended the full course, Keystone could "certify" the participation.

10. Documentation Systems

10.1.   We have seen an impressive array of project documents; studies conducted and research carried out. The thoroughness of this documentation was also brought out by some of the Donors. It was suggested to us that Keystone might improve their documentation on the agro-diversity collection, identification and labelling. That said, our remaining comments on documentation are few.

10.2.   Considering that at least half the staff of Keystone cannot read or understand English, all key documents (we say key because it may be cost-wise prohibitive to do all) should have a Tamil translation – at least of a summary/extract.

10.3.   Staff should be encouraged to read these as part of their development and learning. Discussions on this could be held during performance appraisal and project planning/review meetings, so that staff understand their importance.

10.4.   As already mentioned in the section on Organisational Learning, there is no formal documentation of individual and organisational learning. Documentation and proper dissemination is the only way to institutionalise such significant learning – else it will be lost once the person concerned leaves the organisation. One way to encourage people to write up their experiences is to encourage them to write them as articles for journals/newspapers – with help from others, if required. The incentive of getting their name published can be a strong one and could also provide greater confidence to the person in her/his work.

11. Task 6: To help Keystone Foundation draw a road map for the next 10 years and its expansion / consolidation as an Effective Eco-Development NGO in the Western Ghats.

11.1.   Our collected recommendations, highlighted in **bold** in the main text of this report and in the Summary (page 5 ff.) are intended to help Keystone Foundation plan for the next 10 years, the `new season' as Pratim Roy has termed it. We wish to underline that the approach taken to date has delivered a high quality programme, but it is, we believe, inadequate to sustain the organisation in the years ahead. Our main recommendations are, therefore, the reorganisation of the management structure and the reformulation of Mission, around a strategic framework that embraces all elements of the Keystone approach.

11.2.   The first thing to do is to organise sessions with staff which arrive at a strategic framework for the organisation, with, perhaps, a redrafted Mission which is owned by all staff members.

Concluding remark

We join all Keystone's other well-wishers in hoping that the organisation does well in the years ahead. We wait, eagerly, to hear of developments and sincerely hope that this report provides ideas that can take you forward into the New Season!

Annex 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR EVALUATION OF 10 years of KEYSTONE FOUNDATION (1993 – 2003)

Background

2. <u>Keystone Foundation</u> is a Registered Charitable Trust under the Indian Trust Act 1881. It has been recognized by the Government of India under section 12 A & 80 G of the Income Tax Act and has obtained Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) number from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Its registered office is located at Pondicherry and Mathew John, Snehlata Nath & Pratim Roy, founded the Trust in November 1993.

3. <u>Mission statement and philosophy</u>**:** Keystone aims to work in the areas of Natural Resources & Rural Development with a conscious goal to enhance the quality of life and the environment. It means, breaking new paths that are innovative yet relevant and dealing with diverse problems/issues in an integrated manner.

4. <u>A Strategy for Change</u>: A deeper understanding of natural resources processes, local management methods, traditional knowledge and development trends required a presence, in the field. Thus, the **setting up of a base in Kotagiri** has allowed a dual opportunity - to be able to work in villages yet with communication facilities remain in touch and network with others so as to understand this local part better. It means, designing a strategy that takes into account the specifics and leads to the larger issues.

5. <u>A beginning was made</u> with a statewide survey of Tamil Nadu - trudging miles of mountain paths and dusty roads with backpacks. This field survey, in Tamil Nadu, during 1994, looked at tribal communities across several hill ranges. Exploring and addressing tribal issues of development and natural resources from a local perspective was the key to a different approach. Previous work in honey gathering and apiculture with Paliyan tribal in the Palni Hills during 1990-1993 showed that this traditional activity could be an effective entry point.

6. <u>The survey</u> which covered 15 hill ranges, documenting 11 distinct tribal communities, brought the group to the lower Nilgiris, where a number of hunter-gatherer communities practise honeyhunting & subsistence agriculture. A potential area for future work and learning materialised and Nilgiris, as a region, was chosen to begin work.

7. <u>Why Mountain Ecosystems</u> - "Niche" or Comparative Advantage: Natural Resources do not follow political boundaries. They manifest different forms depending on physical features and ecological opportunities, commonly termed as watersheds. Owing to their specific environmental and resource related features, mountains provide a niche for specific activities and products. At the operational level, mountains may have comparative advantages over the plains e.g. a specific valley serving as habitat for special medicinal plants, a source of unique products like flowers, fruits and honey or as a source of hydropower. In practice, however, the "niche" or comparative advantages may remain dormant unless circumstances are

created to utilize them. The transformation of natural resources in mountain areas becomes more interesting, mainly due to the following reasons:

* Biodiversity systems are complex
* Co-existence of tribal communities and natural systems
* Skewed socio-economy because markets and distribution systems are usually governed by outsiders
* Domestic ecology & economy govern natural resource management patterns. Issues such as encroachments, land use changes, drying watersheds, human-wildlife conflicts, passing traditions and knowledge become paramount to form better policies, programmes and field implementation projects.

- Existence of strong vested interests, like plantations and tourism that tend to overlook environmental concerns

8. Keystone has had <u>an evaluation by John Kurien</u> from Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum in 1997 and we had brought out a perspective plan for five years 1999 – 2003. (Both the documents will be available during the evaluation).

The Nilgiris Eco-Development Programme

The case of the Nilgiris gives an insight into some of the issues; the mountain system faces today.

9. Keystone has started work in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu since 1995; today it works in 15 villages. Thematic areas of work are:

- Apiculture (Beekeeping & Honey Hunting)
- Marketing
- Non Timber Forest Produce
- Land Development of Tribal Communities
- Water Resources
- Local Capacity Building
- Field Infrastructure for Training, Knowledge base and Application

The Evaluation

Objectives

- To evaluate Keystone Foundation's activities in the last 10 years whether it has addressed its mission objectives, maintained its philosophy, been relevant to the needs of the Environment & Development aspects.
- To assess the effectiveness of project interventions.
- To identify issues concerning – funds, personnel, coordination, relations with Government, International and National recognition and target groups (adivasis).

- To recommend an innovative management system for the future after assessing present systems.
- To give ideas for Keystone's future sustainability, professionalism, using best of science, technology and communication for Environment & Development work.
- To help Keystone Foundation draw a road map for the next 10 years and its expansion / consolidation as an Effective Eco-Development NGO in the Western Ghats.

Terms & Conditions

10. Keystone invites a 2 member evaluation team (man & woman) who are equipped with knowledge of Natural Resources Management, Conservation, Livelihood issues of indigenous communities, Accounts & Finances, Marketing and related green trends of organic certification. The team also should understand the linkages and overall aims and not be an "expert" in one field.

11. The evaluation has to be participatory – an NGO Development Specialist to work with us. Another who can facilitate participatory evaluation (with staff and villagers whom we work with). This is not a technical evaluation of a single field but an **organizational evaluation** where we would like to draw a road map for the next 10 years. The persons should have the ability to look forward and what to develop, how to grow and what is relevant today.

12. Knowledge of Tamil & English is essential. Preferably an International Consultant and an Indian counterpart with local knowledge of Tamil Nadu and its culture.

13. Keystone Foundation today has a turnover of INR 12 million with total staff strength of 35 persons.

14. The evaluation period is for 10 days including writing of the report based in Kotagiri, Nilgiris. We plan the evaluation to be held in the first fortnight of December 2003.

15. All documents – financial, technical, organizational, correspondences, certificates, etc will be available to the Evaluation team at Kotagiri during the evaluation period. Field visits to villages, talking to staff, meeting advisors, trustees and contacting donors will be made possible.

Annex 2: Evaluation Itinerary

Date	
28th November	Bharat meeting with Mr. Somnath Sen, Trustee
05th December	Bharat meeting with Ms. Nandini Kapoor-Dhingra, ex- AusAID
06th December	Bharat meeting with Mr. Shrikant Joshi, ex-staff of Keystone
08th December	Bharat meeting with Mr. Ramesh Dharmaji, SIDBI
08th December	Bharat meeting with Mr. Ramaswamy, Advisor
11th December	Janet and Bharat preliminary meeting in Delhi
14th December	Janet meeting with Dr Jane Carter, SDC-IC, Bangalore. Arrival in Kothagiri
15th December	Briefing with three Directors and Project presentations Discussion with Mr. Mogens Jenson, DBF
16th December	Visit to Coonoor Area – Nedugalkumbei and Veerakumbei, with Rev. Mulley, Pratim, Ms. Anita, Mr. Nagaraj and Mr. Chandran. Discussion with Rev. Mulley Sharing of preliminary ideas with the three Directors
17th December	Meetings with Addl. Collector (Mr. SJ Chiru, IAS), Mr. BJ Krishnan in the company of the three Directors and Mr. Ulaganathan, DFO, in the company of the three Directors and Leo.
18th December	Visit to Kotagiri Area – Semanarai in the company of Sneh, Messrs. Leo, Murthy, Nagarajan, Chandran, Sivarajan, Rajendran
19th December	Visit to Sigur – Vazhaithottam and Boothanatham in the company of Pratim, Mr. Leo, Ms. Mullai and Mr. Jaishankar
20th December	Telephonic discussions with Mrs. Supriya Sahu (IAS) (ex-Collector of Niligiri Distt.) and Mrs Shipra Gupta (Trustee). A brief telephonic discussion with Mr. Balachander Ganeshan (Ford Foundation). Meetings with Unit teams – Bee Keeping; NTFP; Marketing and Land Development.
21st December	Meeting with three Directors together to discuss evaluation findings and recommendations. Meeting with Mathew regarding administrative and financial issues and marketing.
22nd December	Meeting with Accounts and Administration team Report writing
23rd December	Email responses to team questions received from Dr. Doris Capistrano (formerly Ford Foundation) and Ms Nicola Bradbear (Bees for Development) Presentations – English version in the morning with some staff, two Advisers Rev. Mulley and Mr. B.J. Krishnan and Mr Prem Kumar (SDC-IC) and Mr Mogens Jenson (DBF) donor representatives. Tamil version in the afternoon with remaining staff. The Directors were present for both presentations.
24th December	Report finalisation Departure

Annex 3. Reports consulted

Sl. No.	Title of Report/Paper	Year
1.	Annual Report – Building a Niche in the Hills	1994-95
2.	Annual Report – Hands that Make	1998
3.	Annual report – Weaving the Web	2002
4.	Entering the New Millennium – 5 year Perspective Plan	1999-2003
5.	Hill Water and Livelihoods	June, 2002
6.	Honey Hunters and Bee Keepers in Tamil Nadu	2001
7.	Holistic Interventions in a Watershed	Aug. 2001
8.	Buzzing in the Blue Mountains – An Assessment of the Work Of Keystone, Kotagiri	July, 1999
9.	A tree Fall Gap – The Keystone Document	
10.	Keystone Bio-diversity Proposal (Ford Foundation)	2000
11.	Keystone Water Project Concept Note	Aug. 2003
12.	Sustainable Interventions for development with Indigenous Communities in the Nilgiris (Swallows)	Jan. 2002
13.	Conservation and Development with Indigenous Honey Collectors in the Nilgiris (IUCN)	2002-03
14.	Grant Agreement between SDC-IC and Keystone	June, 2003
15.	Review – Intercooperation NGO Programme – Karnataka and Tamil Nadu on Natural Resources Management (SDC-IC)	Sept-Oct, 2001
16.	Project Agreement – DBF	Oct. 2002
17.	Minutes of the Board of Trustees	!993-2003

Annex 4: Framework for the Evaluation

	Element / Component	Brief description
1.	**Environment**	• Relationship between Keystone and different elements of its environment - e.g. communities, government, other NGOs and donors.
2.	**Strategy**	• Key Elements of Keystone's Strategy • Mission to Strategy • Strategy to Process of Strategy Development
3.	**Organisation Structure**	• Formal / informal structure • Secondary structure - Committees and Teams • Roles of staff – clarity/ explicit/ implicit
4.	**Leadership and Governance**	• Levels of Leadership • Leadership Values and Style • The Directors as Leaders • Leadership Skills and Perpetuation
5.	**Organisational Culture**	• Values • A Sense of Mission • Teams and Teamwork • Organisational Culture
6.	**Organisational Learning**	• Learning Channels • Learning, Innovation and Risk • Keystone as a Learning Organisation
7.	**Systems**	• Financial systems • Programme management systems • Human Resource management systems • Documentation systems

Annex 5: Current Organisation Structure

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                              ┌──────────────────┐
                              │ Board of Trustees │
                              │ (Som, Shipra,     │
                              │ Sneh, Mathew)     │
                              └──────────────────┘
                                       ┊
┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────────┐          Accountant
│ Advisory Board│┈┈┈┈┈┈┈┈┈│ Board of Directors│          (Ameer)
└──────────────┘          │ (Sneh, Mathew,    │          Exec. Asst.
                          │ Pratim)           │          Sara
                          └──────────────────┘
                                    │        ┌──────────────────┐   Gardener
                                    │────────│ Administration   │   Watchman
                                    │        │ Head - Mathew    │
                                    │        └──────────────────┘
```

Board of Trustees (Som, Shipra, Sneh, Mathew)

Advisory Board

Board of Directors (Sneh, Mathew, Pratim)

Accountant (Ameer)
Exec. Asst. Sara
Gardener
Watchman

Administration Head - Mathew

Bee Keeping Head - Pratim	**NTFP Head - Sneh**	**Marketing Head - Mathew**	**Land Devpt. Head - Sneh**	**HHN Head - Sneh**
Sr. Field Mgr. (Leo)	Field Coord. (Anita)	Sr. Mktg. Asst. (Miller)	Sr. Field Mgr. (Leo)	**Basic Needs Head – Mathew & Leo**
Training (Mohanraj)	Field Sup. (Murthy, Senthil)	Mktg Asst. (Vinod)	Field Sup. (Nagaraj, Chandran)	**Water Head - Pratim**
Tech. Off. (Leo; Mullai)	Vill. Coord. (Rajendran, Amutha)	Saleswomen Greenshop (Helen, Sumathi)	Field Asst. (Sivaraj)	
Field Sup. (Tina, Shiny, Justin, Amutha)				
Vill. Coord. (Chandran, Mani, Murugesh, Jaishankar)				

Annex 6: Project review and financial accounting timings

PROJECT	PROGRESS REPORTING	FINANCIAL REPORTING
Bee-keeping (DBF/DANIDA)	Weekly activity summary (to Mogens Jenson) (donor set format) Annual reports to DBF, Denmark (donor set format)	Annual (2002-2003) Monthly or quarterly (to be advised) from beginning of 2004
Land development (SDC-IC)	Monthly physical and financial reporting (set format) Half yearly progress reports (donor set format) Mid term evaluation undertaken by SDC-IC	Monthly budget control statements and `financial highlights' statements
NTFP (Ford Foundation)	Annual reporting (Keystone format)	Annual financial statement (donor set format)
Marketing / Basic Needs / etc. (Swallows)	Annual reporting (Keystone's own format)	Annual financial statement
Honey hunters Network (IUCN)	Annual reporting (donor set format)	Every 10 months (donor set format)

Annex 7: Observations and Comments on Project Site Visits

The Evaluation team had the opportunity to visit three project sites that were selected in consultation with Keystone Directors, based on the following criteria:

➢ Different eco-geographical settings
➢ Sites spanning old, recent and new starts
➢ Sampling of the three main programme streams of Bee Keeping, Land development and NTFP (which also span different donors)
➢ Sites that were engaging with different tribes – primarily Irulas and Kurumbas
➢ Logistical limitations of being able to cover the sites as well as devoting enough time to external stakeholders and internal staff

Based on these criteria, three project sites were chosen:

❑ Coonoor Area covering two villages – Nedugalkumbei and Veerakumbei
❑ Semanarai village, including the resource center
❑ Sigur Area covering Vaazhaithottam (BK training center) and Boothanatham

Observations and comments on Coonoor Area: <mark>Nedugalkombei</mark> and Veerakombei

✓ Working with clusters of families and not with the entire community as a whole
✓ Harsh terrain, with difficulties exacerbated by the three consecutive years of poor rainfall
✓ Surrounded by "inhospitable" plantations, although these plantations do provide wage labour opportunities
✓ Small isolated settlements
✓ Very little activities in terms of NTFP collections
✓ Reluctance on the part of families to actually go out and collect NTFP – terrain and relative distance to forest may be the reasons
✓ Women of Nedugalkobmei stated that they were happy to have moved from the lower reaches to higher ones because this afforded them the opportunity to work in the plantations and add to family income

Observations and comments on Kotagiri area: Semanarai

- ✓ Rich bio-diversity
- ✓ Keystone Center is a major economic and social hub of the village
- ✓ Heartening gender balance amongst the village staff at the center
- ✓ Access to limited irrigation – making the land development effort that much more productive even in the face of rain-shortage
- ✓ Very active nursery and mixed agricultural practices
- ✓ Nursery had a couple of rare species to ensure bio-diversity and ecological preservation
- ✓ Farmers have taken initiatives beyond the project in terms of mixed cropping, getting own seeds etc. – no doubt inspired by the project
- ✓ Keystone staff were treated like an extended family of the village – easy, comfortable relationship
- ✓ The village workers in the center were proud of their skills (and very happy with their income from the center)
- ✓ Bee Keeping, farming and NTFP together appeared to ensure about 6-8 months of livelihood security – the rest being met by wage earning from nearby towns and cities
- ✓ Village Forest Committee (VFC) recently formed – two members from each of five villages. This has given them better access to the designated forest areas, with little or no harassment from the forest officials, and a reasonable income for their labour. However, the villagers had no idea about how the money earned by the VFC from their collections, would be used or whether they had any claims on it or not
- ✓ The forest department promised to put in an electrical fencing for their farms as protection from wild animals, started clearing areas for it and then stopped, professing lack of funds
- ✓ Heightened awareness for the need to educate their children and commitment demonstrated by their willingness to send children to school in Kotagiri at a considerable cost of about Rs. 5000 per year
- ✓ One person said, "I want my child to be educated so that he can stand up and talk in front of ten people and not just be on the receiving end"
- ✓ Most others said they were educating their children so that they could get a government job
- ✓ This village clearly demonstrated the merit of an integrated approach – BK, LD and NTFP; with wage labour also playing a crucial part.

Observations and comments on Sigur Area: Vaazhaithottam and Boothanatham

- ✓ Training center buzzing with activities – gender balance visible amongst the trainees
- ✓ Training timing and period seemed to fit people's other livelihood engagements
- ✓ The entire training is demand-driven; with people asking to be trained based on what they have heard from others
- ✓ The training package itself appeared comprehensive, covering not just the technical aspects of bee keeping and honey harvesting, but also issues like entomological aspects of bees, their ecological importance etc.
- ✓ Posters in the training hall were in local language (response to a donor observation?)
- ✓ Enthusiasm high amongst the trainees
- ✓ Expectations were also building up in terms of what else they wanted of Keystone – land development, seeds etc – triggered by their visit to other Keystone project sites (part of their training)
- ✓ Bio-mass much poorer at Boothanatham, as compared to other sites visited by the team
- ✓ Given the current reality of the nature of settlement of the people by the forest department, how much can (or should) Keystone do, beyond bee keeping?
- ✓ Rich farmers are exploiting the tribals by "leasing out" their land for Rs. 1500 per year and using "illegal" irrigation to grow a variety of crops, vegetables etc. The tribals remain "wage earners" on their own land
- ✓ Is Keystone getting cornered between the forest department (whose agenda in inviting Keystone is none too clear), rich exploitative farmers and the increasing expectations of the community?

Annex 8: Progress on Project Activities December 2003 (taken from the project presentations to the evaluation team on 15th December)

Bee-keeping

This three year project (October 2002 to June 2005) is funded by DANIDA through the Danish Beekeepers Federation. The project looks at all the honey bees – *Apis dorsata, Apis cerana*, *Apis florea* and the Dammer bee and the various tribal communities who undertake beekeeping and honey hunting as a part of their livelihoods. The project aims to establish four centres in different altitudinal and vegetation type zones in the area (Nilgiris and Coimbatore Districts) for action research and training. Thirteen staff are involved.

The project activity status (according to the team presentation) in December 2003 was:

- Three apiary hives established at Vazhaithottam Resource Centre
- In Anaikatti a place for an apiary has been selected, planting of bee flora around apiary is underway.
- Six apiary hives have been established four in Keel Pillur and two in Neeradi
- 200 top bar hives made in the Keystone workshop
- 150 Issued hives to villages
- During training courses villagers have made 60 basket hives
- Two wall hives were designed and installed for the Kattunayakan tribe in Mudumalai.

In old villages:
- Resource centers and apiaries have been established in Semanarai and Kilcoupe.
- These resource centre were used other projects also.
- Total of 77 hives working.
- Periodically training is conducted in specialised subjects of beekeeping.

In new villages:
- Resource centres have been established in two areas Pillur – Coimbatore District (Karamadai and Mettupalayam range) and Sigur Plateau – Nilgiris District (Singara, Sigur ranges and the Mudumalai Sanctuary)
- Continuing the bee-keeping activities in old sites of Coonoor and Kotagiri Taluk
- 17 week training in bee-keeping completed in Sigur and Pillur for a batch of 50 tribals from each site (50 women and 50 men).
- Floral survey for six villages done every 15 days for last 8 months.
- Floral inventory for all six villages done.
- The next batch of training has just commenced (in November) with 50 men and 50 women.
- Villagers have started bee-keeping in each site
- In Pillur : 38 Hives are working -- 31 male bee-keepers and seven female bee-keepers
- In Pillur: honey is extracted from two hives.

- In Sigur: 30 hives are working -- 26 male bee-keepers and four female bee-keepers
- Seven tribals are working as village co-ordinators (Pillur – three and Sigur - four).

In addition
- A Resource Book and Training Manual are currently under development.

NTFP

This three year project (January 2002 - December 2004 is funded by the Ford Foundation. The project looks at resource assessment, value addition and information gathering and analysis of non timber forest products (NTFPs). The project has six staff.

The project activities (according to the team presentation) up to December 2003 were:
        Resource Assessment Studies
Habitat - Mapping of Indigenous knowledge
Studies of density and distribution; harvesting techniques; Disturbance; animal dependence

- Area: Coonoor and Kotagiri slopes, Nilgiris
- Selected 11 key villages. PRA resource maps to indicate forest collection zones
- Reconnaissance surveys along these slopes.
- Selected sites for laying temporary one hectare plots. Total count of the plants, seedlings and GBH
- Species – *Phyllanthus emblica, Terminalia chebula, Canarium strictum, Phoenix humilis, Acacia concina*.

        Biodiversity
- Encourage plant diversity through a seed collection and nursery raising.
- 150 plates of botanical drawings ready with information indigenous and botanical.
- With help from Botanists have identified 120.
- In the process of preparing the manuscript for 50 plates for publishing.
- Plans to bring out posters on conservation concerns. First two are on *Cycas circinalis* and *Canarium strictum*.

        Value Addition Trials & Training
Honey, Nellikai, Shikakai, Poochakai, Bees wax products. Twenty five new products have been developed with four NTFPs.

Village institutions to manage micro-enterprise (Village units)
- Started with range of flavoured honey, bath powders.
- Importance of moving the enterprise to the village.
- Training of 12 youths from tribal villages for a month at Kotagiri.
- October 2002 first unit opened in Semenarai village.
        Employs six youths regularly
        Candle making, balm making, drying and packing NTFPs
        Processing organic farm produce, coffee, pepper, silk cotton, green pepper

- Bangalapadigai Village Unit - August 2003
    Employs 4 women regularly
    Drying and Packing NTFPs and organic farm produce.

The units are selling the produce to the KS marketing unit. The returns from sale are being put into a fund which can act as a revolving fund for the unit after project period.

Information & Awareness
- Displays & seed diversity collection
- Documentation of floral diversity & IK

Networking
- Exchange Programme – South East Asia
    - The network comprises of grassroots NGOs and community organisations, individuals from Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka
    - Aims to exchange information, expertise and knowledge - very practically
    - Keystone has been a member since 1998
    - In 2002, Keystone hosted the Regional Meeting of the Network

Involvement with Government
- Steering Committee

Land development

This is a two year project extension (April 2003- March 2005) funded by SDC-IC. The work started during 1998 with six families and today covers 250 tribal families in the taluks of Kotagiri and Coonoor covering 200 acres. The project has five staff.

The project activities (according to the team presentation) up to December 2003 were:

- Land cleaning
- Nursery raising
- Soil & Moisture Conservation
- Traditional Seed Bank
- Promoting organic agriculture
- Revolving Fund

Results

- Food grain stock is available for three to five months
- Nutritive Food
- Traditional land is retrieved
- Movement brings Govt- attention
- Long term crop assures stable income
- Soil erosion is reduced

- No.of springs run for longer period
- Chemical inputs are reduced
- Tree cover, biomass increased
- Enriches soil fertility, organisms

Honey hunters Project in Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

This is a 30 month project (September 2002 – March 2005) funded by the Netherlands Committee of IUCN. The project consists of training honey hunters in improved methods of harvesting, resource assessment of *Apis dorsata* within the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve and building the marketing and processing unit at Keystone Centre.

The project progress (according to the team presentation) up to December 2003 was:

- Areas and people identified in 8 places in the Western Ghats, mainly the NBR
- Initial survey and contact made
- 10 initial training held with indigenous people, mainly honey gatherers
- Training imparted to women Self Help Groups – Oonimoola, Anaikatty, Boluvampatty
- Design and Construction of the Training Resource Centre at Keystone - `The Hive'
- Maps, Satellite Images and information on the area and its people collected.

Marketing

This project, which is partially funded by Swallows (January 2002 to December 2004) is directly linked to all other Keystone activities. The Green Shops in Kotagiri and Coonoor have gained a reputation for marketing tribal products. Eight staff are involved in sales and marketing.

Status of marketing in December 2003 (according to the team presentation):

- Through the various KS projects land-development, NTFP, Bee-keeping we are able to get information and new products
- Interlinking with projects is a good thing and gives us a lot of support.
- Village units have been started and this is the best way to make the producer a part of the marketing.
- The centres are a good place for training and information sharing on market prices

Green Shops
- 1999 first shop in Kotagiri. To meet local demand. Many local people would come to the office to make inquiries.
- The shop has helped to spread information about the tribal people.
- The millets that we sell and other products find regular local buyers.
- We opened our Coonoor Green shop 2000.

- Marketing of chemical free farm produce and wild produce.
- Sending our products to other shops.
- Through projects we were able to make contacts with many government agencies.
- Tourist season marketing thro' mobile van
- Now we are invited by many local institutions, Taj, Hebron school, Hope, Dakshina Chithra - Madras

Annex 9: Keystone mission statement, different project objectives and activities

We used the following table, which sets each projects' objectives and activities out in a similar format to compare approaches and to explore commonalities and differences as a basis for placing projects within a possible overall strategic framework for Keystone.

Mission Statement
To work in the areas of natural resources and rural development with a conscious goal to enhance the quality of life and the environment. It means, breaking new paths that are innovative yet relevant and dealing with diverse problems/issues in an integrated manner
Project Objectives   **Bee keeping**   To reduce poverty by supporting capacity building and sustainable development among the indigenous people of the [Nilgiris] area through interventions in technical, socio-cultural, economic and ecological aspects of apiary, beekeeping/honey hunting   **Land development**   To increase food security and nutrition amongst tribal families and provide measures to rehabilitate their steep and marginal lands for a sustainable land use.   **Marketing**   To develop a good marketing network in the Nilgiris to promote organic and high quality products from indigenous people   **NTFPs**   To conserve natural resources, specifically NTFPs, and promote their sustainable use/value addition amongst indigenous communities in the Nilgiris   **Honey hunters network**   To ensure sustainable management of forest resources with conservation strategies and increased income benefits for indigenous people   **Water**   ???   **Basic Needs**   To address specific issues and activities which provide a good entry point as well as establish a healthy working relationship with tribal communities for the long term.

Activities for each project (some projects have different levels of activities – this is the `highest' level)

Bee keeping

1. To participate in capacity building for primary target group to ensure technical knowledge/ ability to further develop income generating activities related to honey hunting / bee keeping, as well as develop individual abilities to utilise existing legal rights to improve livelihood. Further to facilitate the individuals access to information regarding technical, social and society related issues, as well as facilitate and support networking for a free exchange of information and opinions
2. To participate in capacity building in the partner organisation to ensure technical knowledge/ability to further develop relevant appropriate technology, value addition of products, quality control and efficient marketing. To further develop capacity for necessary and reliable research regarding technical/ biological/ ecological aspects of bee keeping / honey hunting. To build capacity to enable design of efficient, relevant training modules for the primary target group.
3. To establish a centre for training, information and networking, to be used by the organisation as well as the primary target group. To use sale of training and the knowledge base to generate income/resources for future activities. To use the knowledge base in advocacy for the indigenous communities of the area.

Land development

1. To undertake select activities related to traditional agriculture revival to help sustain this practice in the future
2. To undertake activities related to sustainable use, management and conservation of water in the programme villages, with a focus on primary villages
3. To establish village institutions for sustaining this activity in the future through group nursery development, marking of village boundaries, maintaining and sustaining seed banks and initiating some off farm group activities
4. To train and expose the tribal farmers and staff to different activities being undertaken in this field for better knowledge and networking
5. To document experiences of the project and evaluate its impact on the well being of the tribal community

Marketing

1. To promote organic and high quality products from indigenous people
2. Provide a premium procurement price to producers
3. Follow a transparent fair trade marketing practice
4. Promote organic cultivation for premium sales
5. Provide information and build knowledge on products

NTFPs

1. Initiate relevant action-research in the ecological aspects of NTFPs in the Nilgiris
2. Augment NTFP resources by their propagation
3. Set-up value addition units locally
4. Set up village institutions to manage micro-enterprises and participate in conservation of NTFPs
5. Create awareness and information about the importance of NTFPs, especially medicinal plants as resources for local use
6. Create Resource Centres for information and participatory documentation of traditional knowledge vis a vis NTFPs

Honey hunters network

1. To survey and contact indigenous people organisations/NGOs and build a database of honey hunters in the Western Ghats (excluding Nilgiris – which already exists)
2. To map forest areas where honey collection is dominant (cliffs and high trees are the main habitat of *Apis dorsata*)
3. To create a procurement, processing and training facility at Kotagiri for indigenous communities
4. To train honey hunters in the methods of sustainable harvest, quality measures and resource monitoring
5. To co-ordinate procurement of honey and wax from different tribal hamlets/forest areas in the region
6. To train indigenous people, especially women, in processing, value addition and marketing
7. To document the project process and create awareness regarding sustainable resource use in a large forum (this will include advocacy with the Forest Department and public awareness)

Water Project (proposed)

1. To trace the history and use of water
2. To arrive at a water resources audit
3. To work at the grass roots level with community institutions and design interventions along with them
4. To establish how to ensure future needs and sustainability
5. To build a peoples' regional water management plan

Basic Needs

1. Housing – improvement of existing buildings/structures for shelter; revival of use of traditional, locally available material as much as possible; building with the participation of the concerned families; improving existing cooking conditions by using fuel efficient chulhas
2. Electrification – grid power supply connection to tribal huts; contribution towards cost of deposits; enthuse the younger generation towards literacy/economic activity
3. Drinking water supply – protection and enhancement of existing water sources; provision of clean and healthy drinking water; reduction in the number of water-related diseases