

Annual Report 2006



SCRATCH NOTE...

The Year as it was

1. **Taking You Through**
2. **What are we trying to do**
 - a. Revival of Traditional Agriculture Ensuring Food Security
 - b. Introducing Training in Beekeeping and Improved Honeyhunting
 - c. Bee Museum
 - d. Non Timber Forest Produce
 - e. Working Through Local Communities
3. **Familiar Music Beginnings Afresh**
4. **Winter - January to March**
 - a. New Developments
 - b. Shrikant and Keystone
 - c. People at Keystone in 2006
5. **Summer - April to June**
 - a. South Asian Network for Food, Ecology & Culture
 - b. Keep in Touch
 - c. Beekeeping Project
 - d. IUCN Publication
 - e. Bees, Biodiversity and Forest Livelihoods in the NBR
6. **Before the Rains - July to September**
 - a. Enterprise Development
 - b. Sigur Water
 - c. West NBR
 - d. Institutional Development and Local Governance
 - e. Participatory Guarantee System
7. **Rains in the Nilgiris - October to December**
 - a. Exchange of Ideas and Expertise
 - b. Non Timber Forest Produce & Indigenous People in the Nilgiris
 - c. Wetlands
 - d. Administration & Accounts
 - e. Calendar of Events





Shrikant came in contact with us when Keystone was just an idea in late 1993. We still remember the evening when we returned from Dhaka after our first “big assignment”, he made a cake and a “K” was iced over it... And in his typical farsighted way he said that one day this is going to be something... Today, we hope we can rise up to his high standards in years to come. Shrikant came to Keystone several times and became a part of the team. It is as though he never really left. Work on vermiculture, digging farm ponds for water conservation, analyzing seed data and food security issues, going for field work in remote locations he was always there - inspiring in his own subtle ways.

Shrikant Joshi, our friend is the observer, the *sutradhar* or the *katteyakaran*. Shrikant- the story teller, goes through the 12 months observing the four seasons of a year in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

The Four Seasons are a journey of life, work, experiences, failures, some success, insights, learnings, possibilities of reorientation, strategic reviews, capacity building and new beginnings... This annual report is a combined effort of the entire team of Keystone. We attempt to speak on the past year through the simple eyes of the people and tried to speak in a language that they understand. This is to enable people to relate to what we are doing and trying to achieve in this mountain side. We look forward to your feedback. Adieu 2006!

Keystone Team
Kotagiri

March 2007,



SHRIKANT was born and lived his early years in the pristine town of Almora in Kumaon (then in north-western UP, now in Uttarakhand). After completing his high school, he came to Delhi University (Hansraj College, north campus) to pursue his B. Sc. (1976) and then M.Sc in Zoology (1978). His early exposure to life in the hills, and training in Zoology (entomology being a special interest), was to catapult him to a life of search, to do things, and help and inspire others to make human conditions better. That was to set him to a life of traveling and work, across different parts of India (Japan, Africa and UK too figured in these travels) not just different parts but deep into the lives of people in remote areas where governments would not tread, only NGOs reached out.



He stayed and left like a migratory bird which comes back to its spawning and nesting site year

His vast experience and network in the Development field since 1970s has been a nursery ground for us to imbibe, learn and draw inspiration from. He was a rare resource person in this field, a great colleague for us and a friend in

He chose to work in the areas of land and water management, mountain environments, tribal areas, forest issues, environmental education, mining, agriculture, vermiculture, eco-friendly livelihoods income generation and traditional health-care... an endless list. Trained as a professional, he believed that working with people required human values, not a professional tool-kit only; and thus he was to work on building capacities to document, to train, to research, to network and create linkages, to market and get people to make significant things happen, while being there



Glimpses of Him as a Person

His association with TARU over a long period saw him take up the role of a promoter/shareholder and he served as director in the NRM and Community Development area since 1996 until 2005. His work included helping develop and assess water and sanitation, forestry and watershed and livelihoods programs in Gangtok, Madhya Pradesh, HP, Rajasthan and Uttaranchal, while providing crucial back-up in human management, training and organizational development support. At Keystone Foundation, he was almost an honorary founder member in 1993, and thereafter he was a source of continuing support - a frequent visitor (shifted base once there too for a few months), while helping nurturing flowers, fruits and worms; crafting water and land management strategies; rolling up sleeves to do projects, training and building staff capacity, and being ... there.

A rare meshwork that his life was, weaved by the finest of tastes, humblest of virtues, deepest of human concerns, and tallest of principles inspires to imbue our work and life endeavours with his humane and people-centric spirit. A life so pristine that some fondly called him Shola-ji after Shola, the pristine natural mixed forests of South India, no less after the Shola Fellowship (a network group) of which he was one of the pillars.

One more thing and many faulted him for this: speak not loud, hurt no one, smile and infect others with a playful glee in your eyes.

Shrikant Joshi
(Mar 24, 1953 - May 03, 2006)

I recall his smile very knowing and mysterious. Full spirited as we know he always was a lovely person, simple in his ways and completely unpretentious to the world. Mostly quiet but forceful in

*Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle August rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am that swift enlightening rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there. I did not die.*

Taking You Through....

The Annual Report for the year 2006 is based on an atypical format that speaks the language of the staff and villagers who are most attached to Keystone's work in the hills. Donors, individuals, trustees, well wishers and partners wish to be constantly be aware of our progress in projects and our achievements. Questions like how much we have moved ahead on the road to sustainable livelihoods, conservation and local enterprise are asked. We try to answer these questions throughout the book. For clear expression, we have divided the year into four seasons. From an ecology, development perspective, the four seasons of work, joy, challenges and outputs in the Nilgiris are:

Winter - A time of the year in the hills when the sky is a bright blue and without the cover of clouds. Frost begins to settle in. Evenings get cold and day temperatures are high as the sun makes its presence felt. Grasses get burnt by the low temperatures of the night. Barking deer and jungle fowl are seen on the campus. The air is pregnant with the sound of festivals. Planning time for projects for the whole year commences.

Summer - The tourist season picks up. There are people everywhere in the hill district. Honey flow season starts. There is a good summer shower which triggers blooms in valleys and mountain sides. Activities pick up. New deals are struck and new alliances made. The year reaches its half way mark in action, research and implementation.

Before The Rains - Clouds reappear as if from a break taking over landscapes and climate systems. Bees migrate to lower slopes in search for secure nesting sites and forage. Work and meetings continue, sometimes without any outcome as if to remind us that the process is as important as the result. Field work reaches its peak. Soils are made ready. Winds go crazy. Forests are explored again by communities.

The Rains - Rains, mist, clouds and cold mesh together as they descend on the hills with passion and sometimes fury. Indoor work of documentation, meetings, project and performance reviews happen. Earth takes in all the water and one wonders how much more moisture can be absorbed. Springs, streams over flow droughts and water shortages seem to be hypothetical. People are few on roads, days become shorter.

From a natural systems perspective, the above trend would go on year after year. Biologically, processes would undergo change, ageing would invariably happen. What then makes 2006 as a year. Looking back, we are amazed at how life, events and time have meandered as a spring which finds cracks, smooth surfaces and rough terrains and fills up, gains speeds and again joins larger bodies and loses itself. As an ecologist, as an observer of everything around and being conscious of each moment, one realises that each hour is different, each day is new and each year is a fresh start with infinite progress being carried over from the previous year. 2006 was special.

What are we trying to do?

A group of students asked us what are we trying to do.

This was a simple question. Yet never easy to explain in a few simple words.



“ Our Mission is to enhance the Quality of Life and the Environment with Indigenous Communities using Eco-Development Approaches ”

And the GOAL of Keystone Foundation

To work on issues of Natural Resources and Rural Development with Indigenous People in mountainous and adjoining regions, addressing the challenges of conservation, livelihoods and enterprise development, through appropriate knowledge & action,



Since February 1995, we have been in the Nilgiris working with indigenous people. What have been our achievements? The basic contribution of Keystone, is probably in unraveling the story, truths and myths about the remote, shy, and almost invisible people - who are almost like a tribe within a tribe. The world of traditional honey collectors and beekeepers. Working with them, we traveled far and were deeply involved in more projects, all of which have far reaching consequences.

Revival of traditional agriculture ensuring food security for at least 6 months in a year. We faced many challenges and learnt several facets about development. Several adivasi villages are located in the eastern slopes of the Nilgiris, which are steep, often fallow and traditionally slash and burn areas. But with reduction of foraging areas and government laws, the shifting mode of



cultivation stopped, leading to considerable changes in lifestyle. The SDC-IC supported project for many years and the SANFEC project in 2006, helped bring about a small revolution in these slopes changing landscapes and lives to a great extent. Communities began growing food on these slopes. Data revealed that nutrition, health status and food supplies improved; family sizes increased ushering in a sense of well being that was significantly noticeable.

!Over the years the trend of increased cultivation again took a turn. After a few years, some cultivators changed the land use from agriculture to more permanent crops like coffee and tea. Millet cultivation slowly started to fade away. Data analysis of six years of this project showed a complete turn around in diet, preferences and changing habits - more on 'English' vegetables and less on traditional revival of crops which were relevant to them. However, the story does not end here and there may be another trend in a few years time. Adivasi approaches and actions are diverse in nature; the plantation sector which is the back bone of the local economy is infact divergent of this land use system which requires continuous maintenance and lots of manual labour, it will be interesting to witness more changes in local trends over the next few years.

Introducing beekeeping and processing of hive products. The wood workshop at Keystone has been working overtime, often on Sundays, manufacturing bee boxes for our project in the villages. The apiculture project has thrived over so many years and has received recognition from the district administration through the horticulture mission. Training has been given to many villagers and also to non tribals. Interest in this interesting livelihood option is increasing and it is likely to grow further in future.

The honey and Bee museum is an interesting new development. All that we know about wild bees, domesticated bee and indigenous people, who are intimately connected to honey and cliffs, is now, for people to see and learn about them. Through pictures, traditional gear such as ropes, baskets, pegs and demonstration hives, log and Newton hives and audio visual presentations, we have displayed this local knowledge.

Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) has become a buzzword today. Work has shown that you can change lives, engage with Forest Departments, develop enterprises, explore traditional governance systems, design ecological monitoring methods and approaches which are linked to community ancestral domains and formulate rights-based strategies, all of these while continuing preserving valuable natural resources. NTFP's have a prominent place in future management of forests and the movement is developing into a huge network of groups and communities in India and South & South-East Asia.

Working through Communities through the Institutional Development and Local Governance (IDLG) group. Currently, we concentrate more on the institutional part in the villages, local governance is something that is expected to evolve in time. The Adivasi team within Keystone has done remarkable progress over a short period of time. Adivasi societies have their traditional organizations which are changing or in a defunct state. There is an urgent desire within the community to revive cultural practices. If development initiatives have to have a lasting impact and be internalized within the community, then the projects that we do, should be implemented through their priorities, plans and skills.

This year, the core team of adivasis within the organization, have organized several meetings in the areas of Coonoor and Kotagiri. How did we go about it? One of the first things that galvanized the communities to a certain extent was their falling population. A 100 % census was conducted in the Kurumba villages and discussions held with people who work in these regions.



Familiar Music - Beginnings Afre

January to March was a busy time with the Shola Fellowship, an annual New Year pilgrimage of fun and knowledge gathering delving on “How Societies Change”. We explored the divergence in societies in the city of Hyderabad. On one side was the old city, the smell of *biryani*, the hustle & bustle of people, the mosques. Traveling through the city, leaving the dust and history and smells, we entered into a larger space of glass, concrete and black topped roads and fountains. This was Cyber City or Cyberabad. International offices with large parking and swanky cars and tight security. You could be in New York. The distance that we had traveled from the old city to this one would be less than 15 kms or not more than 1 hour but one had orbited into another space of ethics, attitudes and approaches to profits and off shore business and BPOs. We came back trying to understand what makes societies change.

Meanwhile, the wetland teams were ready with lists, maps and boots. Wetland surveys in Gudalur area began, with large surprises in store while walking through springs that existed almost everywhere including in tea, banana, paddy and plantation areas. There was a social dimension to the wetlands as the Chettis had been raising issues of land and resettlement in these rich habitats. Migrants had also come in large numbers with new land use that was choking wetland habitats.

February and March was an active time for the Sigur Water Project with Ashok Kumar, a hydro geologist exploring the rocks, landscapes and natural water holding capacity of soils. He also looked at wells and suggested measures for water conservation.

March was the time for our first expanded Board of Trustees meeting. Formal handing over took place. Mathew and Sneh, as trustees, resigned; Pratim had resigned long ago and the formal institutionalisation of a new system with the executive and owners of the trust being constituted as separate entities. Lot of thought went into this, for years and it felt good that day; as if you had given up your baby, to a competent and an experienced set of trustees who will guide the foundation in the years to come.

March was also the season for veritable inflow of news. Keystone won the prestigious Darwin Initiative Project of the Government of UK. It is a worldwide global competition which is held in 3 stages and together with our partners University of East Anglia (Janet & Paul) and Bees for



The trustees are

Mr. Somnath Sen, Delhi,

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Development, Community
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NTFPs

Ms. Rita Bannerji, Delhi,

Wildlife Filming,
Indigenous People

Ms. Anju Sharma, Oxford, UK,

Development
& Environment,
Documentation

Development (Nicola) from UK, we received the award. The project is on Bees, Biodiversity and Forests Livelihoods in the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve.

However, during this phase Chinna Raman passed away, in spite of numerous attempts. We had taken him to Coimbatore after doctors in Kotagiri gave up, where he recovered and came back to the village. However, after a few days, he passed away. He was one of the most promising young upcoming leaders of the Kurumba community whom we had known since 1995, son of Andi.

Pages of history turned that day. Returning from his funeral, we heard about a young friend in Pondicherry, Parul, who died after delivering a young baby boy. In a way, March was the forerunner of ominous signals that the Keystone family had to prepare for the rest of the year, professionally and on a personal front.

A Question of Land

Keystone needs a new extended campus considering the real estate boom in the Nilgiris (combination of more money with urbanites such as IT sector and the attraction to live in the mountains). The organisation has to raise resources to purchase adjacent lands to safeguard our campus. With a donation from a well wisher (Suzanne, Pondicherry) and our own resources, Keystone has purchased some land. More resources are needed to complete the land project which foresees purchase of about 3 acres more.



When Work takes over and the Forests are in Bloom April to June

March, being the end of the financial year was a hectic phase for the accounts unit. Easwar was busy with statements and finalizing his brief for the auditors. Mandakal (administration unit) was a buzz of activity. As March came to an end, there was the bubble of new work and a concern of lives not so secure. The spring season was a time of great work and of immense tragedy. This month, is the time heat pervades the human body and then in May, the Nilgiri Biosphere is awash in a mix of hot sun and cool evenings. Almost as if to counter the effect of heat, the upper plateau spreads its cool winds and gentle weather, welcoming hundreds of thousands of visitors from the sweltering plains into the cool climes of the Nilgiris.

Keystone came to know of the illness of Shrikant. This was the season when most organisms end their hibernation and plants magically come to life. It was in this season that his journey into another life began.

The spring and subsequent summer saw major activities that were interspersed with our concerns and efforts in coping with his illness. The honey hunting manual was reaching a concluding phase, wetlands groups were working on the analysis of the mid term findings, beekeeping found a new donor in the form of the Charities Advisory Trust, several plots were laid for the NTFP project and the project itself crossed the midterm mark, it was a season of work and Shrikant, in spite of his illness encouraged all to keep on working.

The mid term evaluation of the Water Project was completed with Joakim from the Swallows conducting the exercise along with Senthil. The Darwin project brought with itself large doses of planning for implementation and management of the project. Job requirements were being sent out, interviews began to be conducted. April, May and June was a significant period for the project as major management decisions were taken.

By the first week of May, our efforts with Shrikant came to an abrupt end. Sneha and Mathew had reluctantly boarded the flight to attend a conference in Bosnia on Certification of Wild Produce. Kunal and Samita had driven to Shimoga in the northern part of Karnataka to search for a renowned medical practitioner who was considered to be an expert in colon cancer. These trips were cut short when Shrikant passed away on the morning of 3rd May. Passing away peacefully, he died an elegant death, teaching us amongst so many other things, the art of dying respectfully.

Watching from the skies, Shrikant would recall our shock when he broke the news of his cancer to us. He came visiting us one last time in his eventful life and stayed on till his very end. He saw us worried during those times, he saw us rushing to Chennai for his operation, he insisted on staying at Kotagiri for the remaining period of his valuable life with the Keystone family. It was a heart

Though Mathew and Sneh had to come back, the work has progressed and a process of certification of wild foods is likely in the coming months.

The first week of May passed and Shrikantji was given a fitting farewell. Soon after, Dr. Noble who is a renowned geographer and an expert of the Nilgiri adivasis visited and spoke on the changing environment of the Nilgiris. It helped dispel many doubts but also raised more questions on the cultural geography and changing adivasi forest relationships.

Soon thereafter, a major activity in the form of the new *Thumithakadu* shop was opened in Hasanur village, on the national highway that moves on to Bangalore. This shop was an initiative to encourage more benefit for adivasis who live in the Hasanur Plateau region.

Dr. Sudhendar Sharma from Delhi spoke about issues facing The Nilgiris and Western Ghats, today. On the World Environment Day, after detailed planning, a wetland walk through Happy Valley was organized; trees were planted to rejuvenate Shola forests in the wetland area, with school children and citizens of Kotagiri. This walk was a major exercise to promote ecological consciousness amongst the people of Kotagiri. The walk took us through the fields and wetlands of the town and we were accompanied by scores of enthusiastic children, some of whom could well be the budding enviro-citizens of Kotagiri in the coming years.

With rains ruling the skies, Sneh left for Manila for an NTFP EP Board meeting and Nicola, Paul and Simon came for the initiation meeting of the Darwin Initiative from UK. With field visits and in house discussions, a detailed plan of activities was charted, for next year.

Seasons in Kotagiri are highly deceptive, for when the rest of the nation perspires, the denizens of the hills enjoy the cool weather. There is in fact no fixed delineation of seasons in the hills, some may say, that there are no seasons at all; there is just the cold, or the dry and the rainy. But a hill man realizes the importance of these minute differences and makes best use of them. Planting crops at the right time, harvesting them too, drying his clothes and putting fresh thatch, all is planned according to the weather. The conventional summer of the plains was special this year for good weather followed bad and windy weather followed warm sun in rapid succession. Three months passed with us

South Asian Network for Food, Ecology and Culture (SANFEC)



Work concluded in the project - South Asian Network for Food, Ecology and Culture (SANFEC) had initiated a study on mixed agriculture, to establish if it is an economically viable and ecologically sound option. The study was supported by IDRC, Canada. It was challenging for us to be part of a national study, spearheaded by Academy of Development Sciences in Karjat and partnering with 8 other NGOs. Keystone designed the study to follow through a year with 16 farmers who had differing land uses and record the social, ecological and economic costs, record the yields, market surplus and profits a farmer makes. The study covered 4 farmers each growing mixed coffee plantations, tea, millet and mixed vegetable cultivation. These are typical agriculture practices followed by adivasi farmers here. The project also had some components of training on organic methods, vermicompost preparation, etc. Shrikant's final contribution was here as he thought this was a project he could contribute to and he was in Kotagiri soon, building places for earthworms, conducting trainings, designing the questionnaire, training Leo, Sivaraj and Chandran on how to collect data and feed into a template form, conducting field transects and observing diverse aspects of earth, water, plants and insects. Keystone decided to pay emphasis on the ecological aspects and conducted

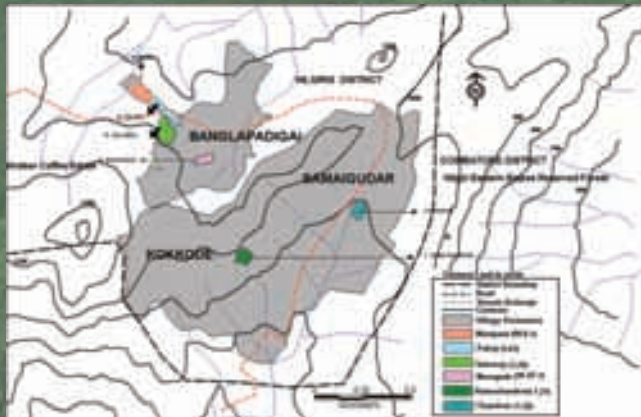
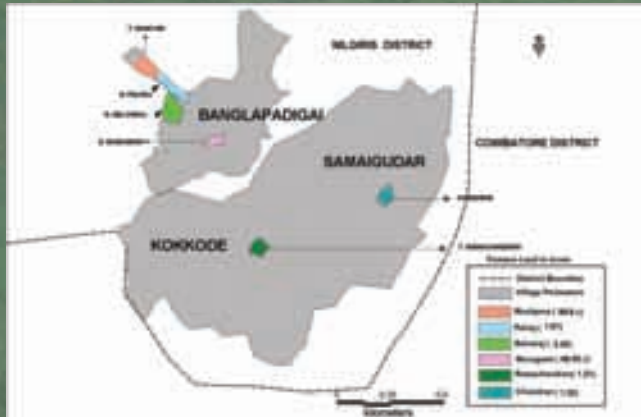
detailed studies of crop diversity, weeds and other biomass, soil tests, etc.

The data was collected for a year and those 16 farmers became our close friends. We also asked about their spending and were amazed to see the results of not only the farms, but also the peoples' changing life. Sneh was left with the unenviable task of analyzing the data and writing the findings. Rajeev and Sneh both upset with the circumstances that Shrikant was no more in the middle of this work. Sneh, brushing away her tears as she stared at the screen - full of data often amused and exasperated by his way of organizing information. Rajeev, very silent, unable to communicate much. Despite all this, the findings of the study were interesting....





The farms were selected scientifically, geographically positioning them on a contour as shown



The socio-economic aspects including income, expenditure and indebtedness was studied in detail. The social indicators were measured in terms of labour utilization and the following results emerged:

Table I - On-farm Employment Generation

	Total Labour Days	HH Labour days Generated (Male)	HH Labour days Generated (Female)	Hired Labour Days generated (Male)	Hired Labour Days generated (Female)
Tea	695	225	312	51	111
Coffee	744	221	135	32	30
Millet	856	312	335	126	144
Vegetables	1003	428	239	185	172

Table II - Off-farm Employment Generation

Land Use	Total Labour Days Generated in Post harvest Operations	Labour Days Generated in Post harvest Operations (Male)	Labour Days Generated in Post harvest Operations (Female)	Labour Days Generated in Community through demand and services (Male)	Labour Days Generated in Community through demand and services (Female)
Tea	19	5	14	4	3
Coffee	29	10	19	2	0
Millet	161	75	86	333	6
Vegetables	95	73	22	388	23

In the ecological aspects covered, soil tests revealed that the soil under coffee plantations was good for plant growth. These soils also showed high biomass and mulched material. Other soils were acidic and needed treatment for better plant health. Moisture was the lowest in the vegetable fields, this could be because of the lack of shade plants and excessive evaporation.

Crop diversity is the most on coffee lands providing a good mix of food and market items. Maximum food grains and vegetables are obtained from millet fields and the most market oriented land use is that of tea. Vegetable growing also provides a lot of vegetables for the household.

In an ecological analysis, the land use of coffee would be rated the best as it has many tiers, using vertical space efficiently, has the most diverse mix of trees and shrubs. This is also the closest to analog forestry (i.e. it imitates the forest) providing easy movement of wild life, especially of small mammals and birds. The bird diversity on coffee lands was also observed to be high throughout the year. Biomass availability, pollination and seed dispersal was also studied in the farms and the details of that are available in the larger report for readers to access.

A food intake and nutrition analysis was also done for these 16 families to understand as farmers what they eat from their own land and if they have money what do they prefer to buy.

Table III -Final Rating Analysis

Aspects/Landuse	Social	Economic	Ecological	Nutrition	Score
Tea	4	4	4	4	12
Mixed Coffee	3	1	1	3	8
Vegetables	1	3	3	2	9
Mixed Millet	2	2	2	1	7

The study went to prove the benefits of mixed cultivation vis-à-vis monoculture tea land, which not only destroyed the soil but also the nutritional level of the family members. Though millet cultivation scored high it often suffered due to unpredictable rains and attack by wild animals. This better understanding was shared with a large forum of farmers and a debate generated amongst them. Many times they smiled as if they knew the results but had made a choice due to their circumstances!

Government programmes and other land related schemes are promoting tea cultivation. This is because it is tied up to a chain of agents and agencies which would benefit both by backward and forward linkages. However, of late the low price of tea in the market is distressing small growers and often it is not economically feasible to even pluck leaves and transport it to factories. There is some trend towards organic tea fields, which will be an ecologically sound option. The marketing of this tea to provide further incentive and support to these small farmers may also be a good option.

Given the above facts, the following options emerged for the future:

1. Design an ecologically sound and diverse tea field, which takes into account aspects diversity, soil erosion and soil health.
2. Provide organic pest control measures for coffee growers and have a credit system which groups of farmers can access for buying post harvest. This was addressed in the earlier land development programme, which provided for these machines and started revolving funds among these farmers
3. Millet cultivation is faced with issues of crop raiding, uncertain rainfall, cultivation on steep slopes and burning of biomass. These aspects should be addressed by adequate soil and moisture conservation related interventions and improving soil nutrients, so that land can be cultivated over several years.

4. Vegetable cultivation is a difficult land use as it needs a lot of regular input in all aspects; on farm and in the market. Input in local marketing will be helpful for these farmers.
5. Information and awareness on organic/ecological cultivation in the district is necessary, which has one of the highest consumptions of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, in the state.
6. It is essential to promote the use and availability of millets for the people. These can be promoted through the Public Distribution System (PDS) system and appropriate machinery installed for easy de-husking.
7. The use of multi cropping for nutrition and food security needs to be emphasized, and steps taken to reduce the high labour costs involved in its cultivation.



Keep in Touch (KIT)

The Keep in Touch phase was a documentation of experiences of the SDC-IC NRM NGO Programme that had run for more than six years. This documentation project was designed to analyze and put together experiences from different NGO groups, involved in projects with SDC-IC in the past. The NGOs which work with Indigenous people were -

1. CCD, Ganjam, Orissa
2. Jana Jagaran, Belgaum, Karnataka
3. Seva Mandir, Rajasthan
4. Keystone Foundation, Tamil Nadu

This was a diverse group with different interventions with adivasi groups. There were several commonalities which were discussed, which could lead to common issue based, documentation. These were

Land

which covered issues related to ownership, use, access and governance of public lands, private lands that were mainly used for subsistence agriculture and common lands such as forests and grazing areas. There were similarities in issues of common lands in the work areas of Jana Jagaran and Seva Mandir relating to livestock rearing and access to grazing lands. Common themes on agriculture land was observed in Ganjam and the Nilgiris, where CCD and Keystone work with indigenous communities. The booklet would speak on the experiences and efforts of the NGOs in their area. This component was addressed by Seva Mandir and results put together as case studies from each area.

Livelihood

It covered aspects of income opportunities of adivasi communities. The role of NTFPs and conservation aspects were to be discussed as case studies by CCD and Jana Jagaran. The interventions with small ruminants would be documented. Keystone and CCD would highlight their ongoing work on NTFPs. Both aspects will highlight the use of appropriate technology and indigenous knowledge systems for successful initiatives.



Community Institutions

Development programmes often create activity based institutions, which are often not successful with communities. Sustainability of institutions (eg. SHGs and VFCs) is also under threat, given the low income levels, risk taking abilities and entrepreneurial skills. These issues needed a forum for discussion with the communities concerned and get cross-learnings from other areas, where such institutions are made. Keystone took up this aspect in the Nilgiris, resulting in a series of meetings with adivasi people, networking to develop community leadership. Keystone and CCD also gathered experience from Seva Mandir and Jana Jagaran through discussions and cross-learning visits. The documentation was completed in February 2007.



Apiculture

The project focuses on training and capacity building, institutional building and establishing apiaries with indigenous communities. Justin and Chandran were involved in training village coordinators as well as conducting monthly workshops.

Hive making

Rajendran, Selvan, Sivan and Suresh, adivasi youth have been trained to be skilful carpenters, specialising on hive making.

The brood chambers carry top bar frames while the super chamber carries full frames. The combs are recycled after extraction; and the top bar in the brood chamber facilitates colony inspection and management.

The principle of bee space and a high quality box to withstand the weather were the main concerns in hive making which was well understood by these adivasi youth.

Village Beekeeping Extension

Regular beekeepers met each month to share their learning, difficulties and experience. Justin and Chandran utilized this opportunity to train the beekeepers in new skills, issuing tools and teaching practical techniques.

Networking with Various Agencies

Agencies such as URUVU in Wynad, Thulir in Chitilingi, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in Thonimali, Palni Hills and Valikatti Don Bosco in Kadambur and Thimbam Hills have expressed interest in promoting beekeeping in their respective areas. Our team was invited as trainers to train villagers in beekeeping skills. This support was provided on a quarterly basis. Two trainings were conducted for an Organic Farmer's group in Meekeri village, Nilgiris district. Two day training was provided to Assistant Agriculture officers in Rose Garden, Ooty. Three colonies and hives were supplied to Earth Trust for pollination experiments.

The Departments of Horticulture from Udhagamandalam, Dindigul and Coimbatore

districts invited us to train farmers and supply beehives; this was an excellent opportunity to revive *Apis cerana* beekeeping in these areas.

As part of National Horticulture Mission project, Keystone was appointed as Training and Technical requirement agency. We had preliminary meetings in Kokode region for Kotagiri taluk and Chemmanatham village in Sigur region. 50 bee hives have been made for each region to supply to the adivasi farmers.

Village youth as trainees and future field assistants

Suresh and Krishnan, two Irula youth, were trained in Pillur, Sigur, and Dhimbam for a period of two months. They were supported with stipend, and are soon expected to start new initiatives in Kotagiri, especially in the Kakkodu region.

Agriculture linkages

The tribal villages in Kotagiri and Coonoor taluks are surrounded by diverse vegetation with adjacent forest patches. The support for farmer's agriculture input yielded good results as groups were strengthened, workshops were conducted regularly, apiaries were supplied with colonies and a lot of individual extraction happened.

Good year for Pillur region

The Pillur office is pivotal for everybody to assemble for the monthly workshop with an apiary of 5-6 working colonies at any given time. Vellayan, Mahesh and Veluswamy are village coordinators who have sufficient learning on colony multiplication as well as conducting meetings for beekeepers. Fifty kilos of honey were extracted from hives by them. The initiative to promote hive beekeeping in Velamarathur has proven to be encouraging given the colony sizes and availability in the region

Beekeeping in Dhimbam hills

Ayyaswamy, Thangavelu and Rangaswamy are the team that coordinated beekeeping activities in the



region. There are 97 seven colonies presently working in eight villages. It was a challenge to reorganize the village co-ordination team. Rengan of Bejelhati was coordinating last year but had to be dropped because of irregular village visits and lack of colony maintenance. Similarly, Govindan and Rengasamy became more engrossed in political activities with less time for project activities, they were subsequently dropped.

Set backs in Establishing Apiaries

Two larger level apiaries were planned to multiply colonies in Ramranai and in Geddesal. These two sites were exclusively selected to promote

In Geddesal, which is one of the largest settlements in the region, people collect numerous NTFPs from the forest besides being engaged in traditional rain fed agriculture. It is a common practice that entire populations of men and woman migrate to Nilgiris, Gudalur and adjoining Kerala for seeking wage labour. Though the efforts are continuing to develop the apiaries, fresh initiatives were taken in Thadasalhati and Ittarai to establish apiaries to meet the colony demand.

A Year of Learning

A year filled with events has taught a lot for the team. We learnt that

- There are skilful beekeepers, who are genuinely interested in beekeeping activities.
- There is growing demand for colonies by villagers, non tribal farmers and for pollination requirement, including government agencies.
- The highlight on organic agriculture produce has opened the window for overall awareness on beekeeping.
- Keystone beehives are being recognized by the National Horticulture Mission and are in greater demand today, though we traditionally made it for the requirements of indigenous people.
- Revival of *Apis cerana* beekeeping has begun after a decade and we play a crucial role.

In spite of severe setbacks over the decade, we persisted with the indigenous strain of bees and the future looks better.

• The beekeeping staff was appreciated by many agencies and individuals for their knowledge and sharing/training.

• Local skill is immense and there are presently 14 tribal youth, as field assistants, village coordinators and carpenters, proudly part of the initiative.

Issues faced during the year by the Sigur team

Inadequate shade lead to higher absconding
Low maintenance by bee keepers
Limited field visits lead to insufficient follow up on colony management
TSBV was an issue in Anaikatti apiary

Positive aspects too

The beekeepers group become regular in contact with team

income generation, crop pollination and to supply selective colonies to other sites. Efforts were taken to organize the site, fence the vicinity, engage villagers to bring up the apiary but we met with limited success. The key issue in Ramaranai was that most men migrated to earn wage, apart from rain fed agriculture. Being a remote region, if the beekeeping efforts become a successful stage, it could be an option for women folk in the future and also restrict outward migration.

Bees, Biodiversity and Forest Livelihoods in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

The Bees, Biodiversity and Forest Livelihoods in the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve of Southern India is a project that seeks to understand the inter linkages and dynamics between forest ecosystems indigenous peoples' livelihoods through bees be it for economic, social or ecological services and aspects.

The indigenous bees of the mountainous NBR are known to play an important role in local livelihoods, yet they have not been scientifically identified or classified, their populations and distributions are unknown, and their vital role in pollination and the maintenance of forest biodiversity has not been studied.

This unique project will endeavour to combine scientific data about the status of these indigenous bees and their ecology, with a participatory livelihoods analysis. This will be achieved by strengthening the research capacity of Keystone, working in partnership with two UK institutions, and with local indigenous communities and Forest Department staff.

There are 5 research sites and each site is composed of 3-4 separate plots which capture the dominant vegetation types found within the sites. Within each plot, a study area of 1 hectare (100 x 100 m) was selected as being highly typical of the local habitats. This is a first attempt to quantify and qualitatively describes each of these habitats in relation to bee ecology, livelihood profiles and vegetation. Each of these sites are important biodiversity zones that will unravel information and knowledge on pollination, foraging ecology, pollen and nectar plants distribution and peoples'

livelihood dependency pattern on these natural resources. Through this fieldwork there is an ongoing interaction and dialogue with the Forest Departments of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka where these sites are located. This interaction will help in identifying new arrangements and field level interventions towards conservation, documentation something that has not been done before. Interaction is also taking place with villagers and other stakeholders who appreciate this effort and gradually understand the reason to investigate biodiversity quality through bees and their livelihoods.

- Site 1: Mudumalai, Sigur,
- Site 2: Kotagiri, Nilgiris,
- Site 3: Coonoor, Nilgiris,
- Site 4: Nilambur, Kerala,
- Site 5: Dimbam, Chamrajnagar, Karnataka

The proposed work plan for the first year includes pan-trapping to collect bees, Focal observations to record flower visitation behaviour of bees, Collection of pollen samples from bees and recording of floral phenology. In addition, livelihoods related work is being conducted in 16 villages adjacent to the plots.

Since June 2006 work on the Darwin Project picked up in terms of advertisement for posts, screening applications and interviews. As usual lots of applications poured in and finally after days and days of interviews, discussions, agreements and disagreements we arrived at candidates whom we thought could fit the roles that the project demanded. Eswaran, Sumin, Priya and Murugesh were selected. They bring to the project a background of entomology, ecology and research and field skills. Some of them are familiar with the area and ecological issues pertaining to

bees, butterflies and to some extent, indigenous people

The Honey & Bee Museum at Ooty is a major achievement of the Darwin Initiative Project in the first year. Part funding from DI has enabled the Indigenous Bee & Biodiversity Resource Unit (IBBRU) to come up in the district headquarters. The space was an old building which has been reconstructed and renovated to house Keystone's knowledge and practical experience of 12 years working in the field of bees, biodiversity and forest livelihoods. The museum houses information posters on the biology of bees, ecology and tools and gear used by traditional indigenous people who harvest these species. Practical log hives, wall hives and basket hives to show how local communities use appropriate technology to rear them is displayed in live colonies. Bee trees to show cavity beekeeping and habitats of *Apis cerana* are also shown, products out of honey and bees wax is there, information on bee landscapes and scientific knowledge on different bee species are available in large size posters in the main hall upstairs. A Resource unit

with books, information, literature and audio-visual presentations of beekeeping, honey hunting and ecology of bees and people runs in regular intervals for visitors. A bee's wax unit for children to work with is functional. This space has become learning and experience centre about bees and their ecology and linkages to human environment.

Another achievement is the launch of the National Honey Tribal Network on 7th October 2007 at the Bee Museum in Ooty by Ms. Meena Gupta, IAS Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India, New Delhi. The Network is to identify sources of different kinds of honey and the different indigenous communities who harvest these species. The network through local contacts will unearth information on bee populations, honey quantum, current practices, economy and scale. The Network has had two meetings in Delhi where we have shared the Darwin Initiative Project with other organizations and Ministry officials.

Publication of the Book 'Honey Trails in the Blue Mountains'

Keystone had undertaken a programme to work with conservation and development concerns of honeyhunters in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR). The programme was supported by the Netherlands Committee of IUCN. This report summarizes the survey findings and efforts undertaken in the area besides detailing information about the forests, people, the methods of honey collection, and the markets they get to

access for the produce. The report throws open several discussions/issues related to protected areas, adivasi rights and forest conservation. The project has also enabled Keystone to map these aspects with GIS and analyze the information to demarcate important zones for conservation & eco-restoration.


This report is being transformed into a book as the information contained will be useful for dissemination to a larger audience, comprising other conservation groups, donors, and researchers, interested members of the citizenry and advocacy/policy workers. This book is nearing

completion and is expected to be a major source of information for the Nilgiris region.

The book consolidates experiences and primary information collected



 Sneh: Breaking Year...	 Shiny: Confidence through exploring life, field work and botany	 Samita: From wetlands to Livelihoods, Walk on	 Moorthy: Showing the way in Sathyamangalam	 Poorni: Green Shop Kotagiri to Ooty Bee Museum forward movement	Vinod: Too many issues...	
 Miller: Going along...	 M. Chandran: Keeping the Pillur Initiative Alive	 Justin: Father & beekeeper	 Leo: Motorcycle, Honey Trails and a passion for work	 P. Chandran: Has kept a low profile	 Susheela: Local Leader	
 Suganthi: Reorganising the Hive with confidence and efficiency	 Anita: Cycads & Hawaii making conservation work	 Mathew: Local Roots Global Reach	 A. Muruges: Silently working...	 Subramani: Humor and wit keep him in demand	 Priya: Mathematics to Ecology on the Coonor slopes	
The year in the life of Keystoners in the Nilgiris			 Sivaraj: Encouraging Land development follow-ups	 R. Eshwaran: Students and Research keep him busy	 Richard: Learning to cope to become a worthy role player	 Vasu: Serve All, Love All...
 Hari Bahadur: Always there...	 Sumin: Music, films and fieldwork	 Pratim: Losses and Gains...	 Rajendran: More vocal and forthright	 Sara: In flow... work through levels	 Chabbilal: More than a watchman	
 Senthil: GIS Mapper, expert on implementation	 K. Muruges: A new start in Kotagiri Taluk	 Malathi: Statistician who became a good saleswoman	 Mahadesh: Young boy from Chamrajnagar, handling our new forays into Karnataka	 Jaya Chitra: Our face at Green Shop Ooty	 Selvi: Starting a small revolution in her community	
 Arhadkuttan: Toda Field Guide our man from the upper Nilgiris	 Sam: Combining imagination and grit with implementation.	 Eshwar: Keeping a tab on money flow with poise and fun.	 Saneesh: Photographer, ecologist and young adventurer in Nilambur	 Kunal: Play Ground of Ideas many beginnings.		




A Time for Leeches & Field Work across 5520 sq km of the Hills July to September

The Wetland project steamed ahead, we selected five representative areas which encompassed features of the Nilgiris, for making local management plans with stakeholders. One interesting aspect was that of the “Buffalo Dip” which crucial land marks which signify a Toda habitation are. According to Sincer Kuttan (pers. comm. 11th July, 2006) in Tarnadmund, a Toda *mund* has shola, grasslands and wetlands. Without these three natural ecosystems, a *mund* is not complete. The wetlands project came to an end, with discussions on the conservation action plan. The focus shifted to organizing the workshop on Wetlands Management with local stakeholders, whom to call and finalizing arrangements that go with a workshop of this scale. There was a field trip to Tirsigadi to see wetlands and Kota adivasis and how massive landuse had negatively changed the wetland areas (considered waste lands). This has a bearing for the artisanal community of the Kotas as the clay for their traditional pottery comes from wetland areas. It is another matter that Kota pottery is no longer in vogue and vegetable and tea cultivation has taken over many areas including wetlands.

July brought in some rains and also saw the beginning of the seed that would result in the unique Bee Museum of Ooty, more than 6 months later. The discussions began with a modest beginning in the lawn but gradually became a thriving hub of information that it is today. An old ramshackle building was taken over, stripped of all its design and given a makeover

that has made it a point of animated discussion in Ooty today. The present museum also includes a Green shop and has an interpretation centre for tourists, school children and locals, alike.

Preparation for the bee museum gained speed. A core team was formed to go through to plan layout, design the spaces, check on the internet for other museums and renting a suitable space. Construction activity including carpentry, wooden flooring, masonry and all the lightings nothing seemed to come to an end. Work just carried on and deadlines ceased to be dead lines any more. The credit to this entire project goes to several people, who through sheer hard work, imaginative innovations and learning to work as a team in difficult circumstances, made this dream possible. All this has helped to create what is Shola Ridge today.



Sam : Overall supervision and execution of the project building, carpentry, renovation up to the details of shelf designs and spaces.

Anita : Information collation, processing and designing the outputs on frames and texts.

Leo : Contributing for bee related information and practical demonstration units of hives, ladders.

August was fast paced as usual. Tamara came in from University of Hawaii and we finalized the budget and proposal for Ecological Monitoring and Anita's maiden trip to Hawaii (forests, not beach...). Then things moved Pratim had a two hour meeting with the President of India at Rashtrapathi Bhavan on 15th August and then to Lucknow where Sneh's mother was battling for her life.

From mid August to mid September 2006 Sneh & Pratim lost some of their close friends and relatives. Time, friends and family helped to a great extent, but somethings don't change and one has to accept a result irrespective of all the explanations and spiritual-religious spins that one has or can get access to... One interesting incident was to meet Gopi and his band. They landed on a windy and slightly misty morning to shoot pastoral areas, our villages with tremendous energy. An amazing group of young and old, who are living with nomads... a filming team who travel with the pastoral community and learn about their life.



Enterprise Development (ED)

ED started the calendar year with some apprehension of moving out of the Keystone fold to be spun off as a separate entity. The strategic alliance with network partners for marketing products from the indigenous communities, value adding Non Timber Forest Produces (at village level), organic food products and fairly traded natural products, products which symbolize conservation principles and speak for conservation issues a lot of scope but a tight rope walk has shown results in higher turnover, better range of products to choose for the consumer and better margins to cover overheads to the extent possible, ED has blossomed with its active presence in the local as well as organic market place. Bigger turnovers do not necessarily mean bigger profits but a bigger market infrastructure to service, which is fraught with the danger of working to keep the structure alive. With yet another bad year of honey flow and teething problems continuing in the village value addition centers, outsourcing of products have overtaken Keystone products in the Green Shops. However, the following figures will throw some light on the real situation.

Honey ranks high on a single product basis and all the three Green Shops earn 50% of their turnover from Keystone products. Outsourced products literally outstripped all other financials in comparison. This is basically due to further expansion of Green Shop Coonoor and the spacious Green Shop Ooty. The following are the figures for the calendar year 2006

Period
Total Sales : Rs. 37,01,602.00
Turnover of Honey : Rs. 13,27,927.00

36%
Green Shops Turnover : Rs. 15,903,48.00
 43%

Total Value of
Outsourced Goods : Rs. 10,46,658.00
Outsourced Honey : Rs. 2,56,669.00

Of the remaining Rs. 7.5 lakhs, garments comprised 80%, handicrafts 10% and food and tea products constituted the balance amount. The untapped and miniscule percentage of organic food items does provide a big opportunity but a cause for worry also is the pace with which this segment is growing. The Organic Bazaar provides some insights into this end of organic marketing and organic consumer behaviour.

With the addition of Shola Ridge in Ooty, which houses the Bee Museum and Green Shop, it has given us an opportunity to concentrate on retail selling. With Hive, Green Shop Coonoor and Green Shop Kotagiri, the addition of Green Shop Ooty has given us the fourth leg to find our stability. Though, there are differences in scale of operations and space versus sales differentials, we hope this combination can take ED warhorse on full gallop.

The commitment to the village level value addition centers who are trying to balance between growing demand and diminishing quantities of natural products through well thought out value addition

strategies, in turn trying to provide a full fledged livelihood option to the people who work in the centers are reflected in the following figures which are their sale of goods to ED.

All the centers are not running to full capacity and year around work is still a long way to go (which is not desired because of the village atmosphere and the lifestyle change that may happen due to this).

ED is trying to increase the purchases from the village centers to at least 50% of the total ED turnover in the next couple of years. ED is currently providing working capital support to the centers and makes available packing materials and costly inputs in production processes.

ED has taken the role of torch bearer for NTFP marketing for our network partners in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa and Andhra, a project which gives us opportunities to dabble in wholesale sectors of NTFP marketing. Keystone is actively involved in exploring the possibilities of uniform policies for NTFP collections in the southern districts (see NTFP-EP India for more details).

Semmanarai Center :
 Rs. 3,46,903.00
Banglapadi Center :

Rs. 2,85,992.00
Kurumbadi Center :
 Rs. 1,39,225.00
Melsemai Center :
 Rs. 1,93,453.00
Total : Rs. 9,65,573.00 -
 31% of Total ED Sales (with margin)

Efforts are on to make all the operations of village centers and Hive cost effective and slick, with minimum wastage of valuables and efficient work and time management. ED has seen in the past year a good amount of employee turnover - people



Organic Market study

Keystone's experience from the past years points out that the efforts of marketing organic homestead produces and forest products, grown and collected by indigenous communities, needs to be expanded. It is important for the expansion and sustainability of the marketing effort to develop local marketing concepts. A step in this direction was to study the demand side- the customer profile, their needs and requirements with reference to organic products, especially from the Nilgiris. Such information was sought to help Keystone in product development, alternate marketing avenues, improving in packaging and increasing the range of produce. Efforts are also to bring the consumer and producer closer and help bring change in the Nilgiris, increasing the preference for organically grown products.

The study on organic market produce for the Nilgiris was undertaken from July 2005 to May 2006. The research study was conducted with the objective of understanding the demand, acceptability and interest regarding organically grown and value added products.

The Study was conducted in the 4 townships in the Nilgiris namely Ooty, Coonoor, Gudalur and Kotagiri and in select 'Hattis' of the District. Towns as well as Hattis were included to bring out consumer preferences, awareness and attitude towards organic and forest based produce in both Urban as well as the rural areas in Nilgiris. Visiting tourists to the Nilgiris, renowned residential schools also participated in the survey.



Organic Bazaar

Keystone in partnership with Institute for Integrated Rural Development IIRD Aurangabad has started conducting an Organic Bazaar in Coonoor every Saturday of the week from 03.06.2006 and is continuing to happen every week. Initially, there was good response from customers as we have struck a partnership with Earth Trust, another NGO, working in the organic farming sector in Ooty area, which provided a variety of vegetables. Year 2006 being unique in the weather pattern with rains lashing the Coonoor slopes washing away the roads and the prolonged and severe frost conditions resulted in very less farming activity and few products for the bazaar. By the end of the year, we could hardly find vegetables and had to scout for organic vegetables all around with little success. Notwithstanding the current scenario, we are looking at opportunities in our indigenous community villages to get organic fruits and vegetables and are working with the Land Development team to grow and bring products to the Organic Bazaar. Partial success with wheat has encouraged us to take more risk in promoting different vegetables and millets in the villages. Plans are on the anvil to open another Organic Bazaar at Ooty just before March 2007 to tap the new season.

Shola Ridge, as the name suggests, of ecological importance, was inaugurated by a Giant Rock Bee colony nestling in front of the main entrance forcing us to change the entry point eastwards, started with an eventful and well attended opening ceremony. Green Shop at Ooty gave us an opportunity to create a spacious place with ample display space and shelf capacity. Sales is yet to take off at breakeven level. Ooty being a tourist attraction and the tourism season towards May is yet to show a pattern to follow and respond to high influx of tourists.

As the eventful 2006 comes to a close, ED is looking forward to another busy year with focus on consolidation of Green Shops and Hive and find the optimum operating scale. Statutory obligation of VAT is starting with the New Year; there are a few grey areas which require attention. All the Green Shop have been installed with Path Finder billing software which works at the front end currently with the back end at HIVE waiting for the implementation of VAT.

Unfinished businesses of Trade Mark Registration and FPO acquire importance as turnovers go up and brand visibility increases.

ED looks forward to 2007 to chart a new course in the field of natural products marketing with fair-trade and organic principles with the primary aim of improving the quality of life in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

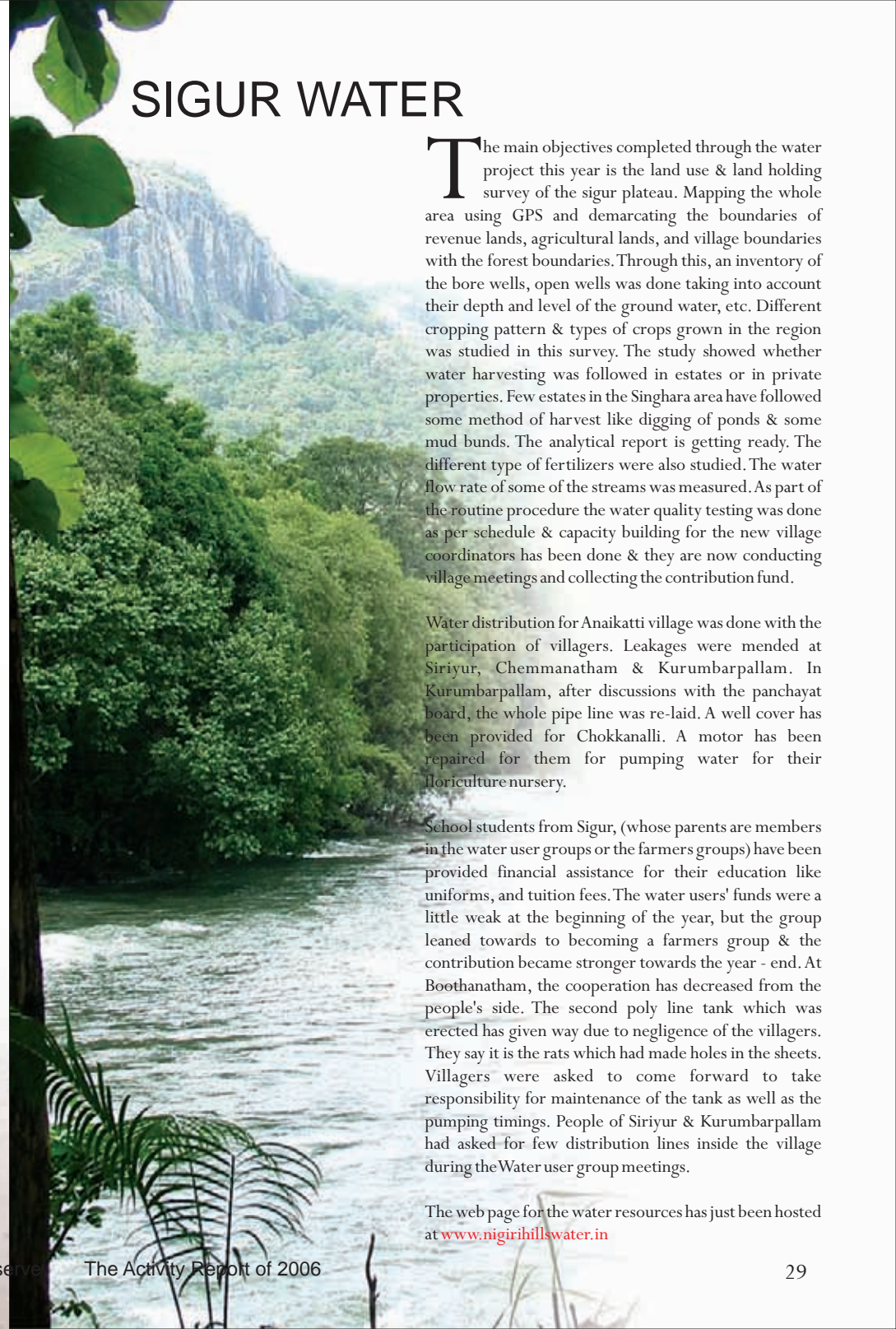
SIGUR WATER

The main objectives completed through the water project this year is the land use & land holding survey of the sigur plateau. Mapping the whole area using GPS and demarcating the boundaries of revenue lands, agricultural lands, and village boundaries with the forest boundaries. Through this, an inventory of the bore wells, open wells was done taking into account their depth and level of the ground water, etc. Different cropping pattern & types of crops grown in the region was studied in this survey. The study showed whether water harvesting was followed in estates or in private properties. Few estates in the Singhara area have followed some method of harvest like digging of ponds & some mud bunds. The analytical report is getting ready. The different type of fertilizers were also studied. The water flow rate of some of the streams was measured. As part of the routine procedure the water quality testing was done as per schedule & capacity building for the new village coordinators has been done & they are now conducting village meetings and collecting the contribution fund.

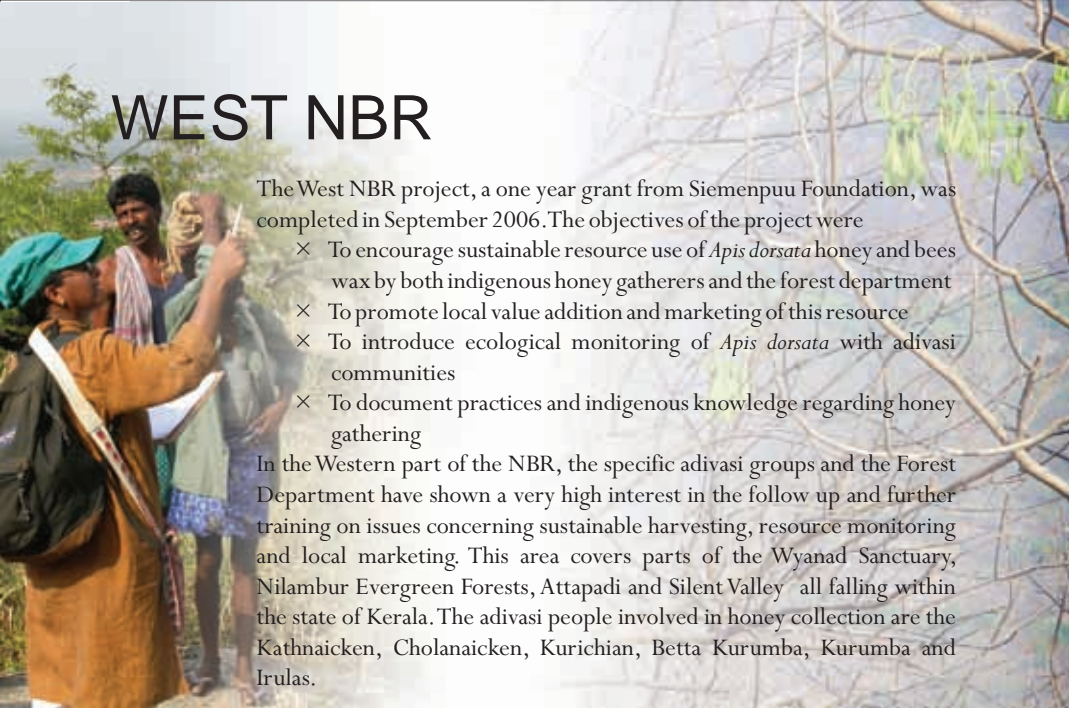
Water distribution for Anaikatti village was done with the participation of villagers. Leakages were mended at Sิริyur, Chemmanatham & Kurumbarpallam. In Kurumbarpallam, after discussions with the panchayat board, the whole pipe line was re-laid. A well cover has been provided for Chokkanalli. A motor has been repaired for them for pumping water for their floriculture nursery.

School students from Sigur, (whose parents are members in the water user groups or the farmers groups) have been provided financial assistance for their education like uniforms, and tuition fees. The water users' funds were a little weak at the beginning of the year, but the group leaned towards to becoming a farmers group & the contribution became stronger towards the year - end. At Boothanatham, the cooperation has decreased from the people's side. The second poly line tank which was erected has given way due to negligence of the villagers. They say it is the rats which had made holes in the sheets. Villagers were asked to come forward to take responsibility for maintenance of the tank as well as the pumping timings. People of Sิริyur & Kurumbarpallam had asked for few distribution lines inside the village during the Water user group meetings.

The web page for the water resources has just been hosted at www.nigirihillswater.in



WEST NBR



The West NBR project, a one year grant from Siemenpuu Foundation, was completed in September 2006. The objectives of the project were

- × To encourage sustainable resource use of *Apis dorsata* honey and bees wax by both indigenous honey gatherers and the forest department
- × To promote local value addition and marketing of this resource
- × To introduce ecological monitoring of *Apis dorsata* with adivasi communities
- × To document practices and indigenous knowledge regarding honey gathering

In the Western part of the NBR, the specific adivasi groups and the Forest Department have shown a very high interest in the follow up and further training on issues concerning sustainable harvesting, resource monitoring and local marketing. This area covers parts of the Wyanad Sanctuary, Nilambur Evergreen Forests, Attapadi and Silent Valley all falling within the state of Kerala. The adivasi people involved in honey collection are the Kathnaicken, Cholanaicken, Kurichian, Betta Kurumba, Kurumba and Irulas.

Project Plan & Achievements

Plan	Achievements	Discussion/Remarks
Train 10 Village Forest Councils. Minimum of 300 people will be trained	10 VSS groups were trained. The number of people trained was 186, of which 67 were women.	Though many people do wild honey collection, not all are interested in the processing aspects
Build up and train forest department personnel on honey related expertise	1 meeting with state officials; 1 exposure visit for the DFOs; 2 trainings of Range Officers and Forest Guards	This aspect of the work was very effective and our interventions should soon lead to some policy level changes
Franchise the processing. 5 franchisee groups are expected to be set up.	Training was held for several groups of which 3 set up franchised units - 1 in Wynad and 2 in Nilambur. As a mark of participation, many costs were paid by their VSS funds	The response in Nilambur is better than in Wynaad, where the FD is not taking enough interest & dominating people based initiatives
Document the different traditional practices and indigenous knowledge regarding honey gathering	All communities and their practices were studied in detail. Raw footage of some honey hunting methods and a manual was made	Documentation of honey harvest can be done over 2-3 seasons only. The manual was well received by the people of the area
Undertake detailed resource assessment studies in the forests specified above for honey bees along with the honey collectors.	These studies were done and preliminary data gathered.	More effort will be required with the community to ensure resource sustainability in the long run

In an overall analysis, the project established the intricate link between nature and indigenous communities. It was to improve collection systems and returns in favour of the communities concerned and also dialogue with forest department and co-operative societies to change the policies in favour of the people. Through the trainings provided in the project quality of honey has also improved and local marketing has been initiated. This was also an effort to work in collaboration with the government and with state promoted institutions the VSS.

The short period when honey is harvested, made it imperative for us to undertake quite a lot of work in a quick span. The poor honey season, was a dampener, but is something that can be recovered next season. In Kerala, the challenge for us was mainly in how do we engage with indigenous communities who have been taken quite far from their gathering lifestyle to a labour economy? They find easy money in working as loading workers, rubber tappers, farm labour, etc. The wages are also very high in the area. So when we talk of honey processing and sustainability, just in terms of economics, it makes no sense to the people of the area. What lies as a big challenge for us, in Kerala, will be to intervene to make honey and other forest produce, a livelihood option which is linked to their tradition and provides a sustainable income. In the process they become more active in the protection of their forest areas.

Keystone established its field station in Nilambur in August 2006 and will have a constant presence in the area. Through further training and constant follow up, it hopes to undertake this work in other areas also and continue to discuss with the VSS and Forest Department, to smoothen out the procedures, cash flow and profits which will favour the community. We will also talk about the communities' active participation in conservation and protection of the few remaining pockets of evergreen forests. Talks regarding this are ongoing and a new system will soon be in place.

The new field centre will undertake ecological research and studies in greater depth in the area and also reach out to community members and children with special programmes on livelihood and environment education. It will have concerted research on bees, pollination and biodiversity of the area. Efforts will be undertaken to document the indigenous knowledge of the people in greater depth and continue the work initiated through this project.

Recent discussions with the State Forest Department were very productive and long term collaboration will be possible with them soon to work with Van Samrakshana Samitis (VSS) across the state.

In an effort to document the honey hunters of Attapady, in Palghat District of the state of Kerala, a special team from Keystone with Samita, Shiny, P. Chandran and Senthil visited the area. A detailed report of the visit was prepared.



Institutional Development and local Governance



We undertook a survey of the sacred groves of the Nilgiris. The Kurumbas of Kotagiri and Coonoor have their sacred groves spread across the forests. These groves sometimes stand in isolated pockets surrounded by tea plantations as in Banagudi village. Or they are at the edges of forests and pressure from the nearby estates is very high on them as was the case in Kotada and Baviyur forests. We did an inventory of the species and also documented the socio cultural significance of these groves. A detailed report was prepared for the sacred groves. The ID group has since then been documenting the sacred groves to prepare an exhaustive document of the sacred groves of the Kurumbas. The work has generated a lot of interest in reviving the rituals and cleaning up the groves. The Banagudi and Baviyoor sacred groves were revived with village participation.

Keystone celebrated The Indigenous People's Day on August 9th 2006. The communities who participated were the Kurumbas, Irulas, Todas and Kotas. They shared about their traditional cultural linkages. This was a one day programme. The Kotas and Todas came in their traditional attire and brought their own instruments. The Kurumbas and Irulas also brought their own instruments to play, but were not wearing their traditional clothing, as they have lost the knowledge about it.

After the Kurumba census, we found out that the population of our fellow adivasis is very less. Other things we found out was that they are not practicing their traditional agriculture nor their traditional worship at their temples, for their own gods Gumba Devva and Govai mane. There is a big lapse in the traditional practices. These things we know but the village people also need to know this. So after the census we thought of holding area level meetings among the Kurumbas. One meeting was held in Kotagiri area, Baviyoor. People came and we spoke about our Kurumba census and we explained in great detail. People were very enthused. The next meeting was held in Coonoor Area, Pudukadu. People came and were very interested too, but there were no resolutions. They were concerned about not practicing traditional agriculture and that they didn't have a village level Muthali, Jathigara, Mannugara (local leadership). In total, only 300 people had come for both the meetings. After that, we decided to hold the meetings at a village level.

For 2007, we plan on making two separate Kurumba and Irula calendars - for major festivals and marriages. We also plan to keep a village register for every Kurumba village which will soon be handed to the village volunteers. Volunteer



Ajile Bottu,

The Kurumba indigenous art and culture group started the year well - winning the first Shrikant Joshi Endowment Fund to build and document traditional Bamboo Houses of Kurumbas. The group underwent Screen Printing training at Chennai conducted by CPR Foundation, which was necessitated by increased consumption of screen-printed labels at HIVE. This provides an opportunity to rope in youth to build up the membership of the group and provide an income generation opportunity to its members. The lack of will are changing slowly as the realization dawned on the need to do something immediately has spurred them to respond to changes which reflect in their declining population and deterioration of culture

Future Plan

- Kurumbas improvement in health conditions & a healthy population.
- Revival and practice of traditional agriculture to stay healthy.
- Our Cultural/traditional Shop (Ragi, Thenai, Samai, Keerai, Dhupa, Bamboo items etc...)
- Celebration of their own Gumba Devva and Govai mane festivals in all villages.
- Increase in the Village Volunteers group as they have to do more work in their own villages.
- Village leadership has to be developed (Muthali, Jathi, Mannukaran) which is weak in many places.
- Improve inter cultural linkages with other communities including the Badagas.
- The Ajile Bottu team has to increase so that they can do more paintings and bamboo items.
- Build a bamboo house to display Ajile Bottu products with the traditional & cultural items.



Participatory Guarantee Systems



In an attempt to reduce the inequality of the trend where large agribusinesses take advantage of traditional systems, a number of alternative methods to guarantee the organic integrity of products have been developed for small domestic producers, and they are growing rapidly. In 2004, a conference sponsored by MAELA and IFOAM was held in Brazil. Representatives from over 20 countries presented on the “alternative” certification systems that have been developed. Thousands of small-scale producers now associate themselves with these alternatives programs, which are now collectively referred to as Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS).

The PGSTask Force

To provide continuity to the discussions and activities of the aforementioned workshop in Brazil, a working group (now the IFOAM Task Force on Participatory Guarantee Systems) was elected from the workshop participants, with the goal to “develop, facilitate and encourage PGS around the world”. The PGS Task Force defines and systematizes PGS concepts and provides appropriate tools for the facilitation and promotion of PGS.

Since the workshop, there have been many steps forward. In subsequent meetings, the group has put together the above mentioned key elements and characteristics, which define these systems. Among many others, presentations have been made at BioFach (2005), the Organic World Congress (2005), and the International Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture (ITF) meeting (2006). Early this year, four case studies of operating PGS in Brazil, US, New Zealand and India, were developed and are available for circulation. Posters and other information material are also helping to build awareness and generate discussion among different stakeholders.

Recent Developments

The past year has been eventful - it has led to the PGS being seen as an important cog in the wheel of Organic Agriculture. There are attempts being made to develop PGS in various countries like Peru, South Africa, Bolivia, Kenya, Costa Rica, Uruguay, India and the Philippines. Additionally, there are some efforts to open regulations so that they accept approaches like PGS in Organic Agriculture.

PGS has found recognition at the governmental and supra-governmental levels. Most recently, both FAO-India and the Indian Ministry of Agriculture have come to appreciate the importance of an alternative to Third-Party Certification systems for small farmers selling domestically in India. The demand for products that have gone through an organic guarantee in India is very high, but availability is minimal. Most of the agricultural products that are certified organic are for export markets. One of the important components of this program is to explore and develop Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) as a means of an alternative non-third party/ISO-type certified organic verification for products produced and consumed within India.

Major Challenges

PGS does not have a solution for each and every situation. In many contexts where it has been working, there has been strong underlying support by either NGOs or community based organisations, which have provided the base from

which innovative approaches could develop. Such local development has been based on the local context and culture. Low direct costs and less bureaucracy are integral in such situations; however, such situations also require a high degree of commitment from stakeholders and can be a long term process.

Opportunities

PGS and Third Party Certification are not parallel, but complimentary systems of certification. The use of both will bring the most farmers into a system of committed organic production.

PGS programs adhere to the strictest organic standards, but the compliance mechanisms used are specific to small diversified farms selling into local and domestic markets. Certification schemes based on paperwork and isolated inspections do not provide a credible guarantee for tight-knit groups of often illiterate smallholder farmers selling to diversified local markets (where record keeping and receipts are rarely used). As such, Participatory Guarantee Systems offer a needed and complementary system of organic guarantee that builds the organic movement, educates farmers and consumers and provides domestic and local market access to organic products.

PGS today provides a platform for many smallholder farmers around the world to not only access the organic marketplace but also to build a strong linkage to the consumers, based on an open, transparent and credible system.

Rains, Cold and Plenty of Reporting October to December

The last three months, the final season of the year. The abstract dream of a bee museum came through and a strikingly unique establishment came up in the town of Ooty, an institution that seeks to generate enthusiasm of the living memory of the Nilgiris through the eyes of numerous bees. The museum saw immense changes in design, faced insurmountable delays and inclement weather that threatened to blow away the newly laid roof.

For months, there was a tussle to find an appropriate name for the place that should not be called a museum, a living place that it was meant to be. From bee nest to forest home and so on, we finally decided upon Shola Ridge, an ode to the forests of the Nilgiris that are home to bees of varying shapes. Shola Ridge, a place for bees and a Green Shop that completed a small but significant journey of linking up the three urban centres of the Nilgiris in the quest for more effective local marketing rather than a smattering of outlets all over the state and country.

The Darwin project was starting and readying the team members for concerted work in the coming times. The din of hiring new staff, conducting preliminary site selection visits and an essential training on laying pan traps, counting bees and conducting the components of the study with expertise was over. Stuart and Nicola from University of Reading and Bees for Development, respectively, had visited and imparted training. Janet, the Team Leader from the University of East Anglia organized a small training on the components of the livelihood aspects, the study would be consisting of. The Darwin team conducted more intense trainings on the scientific bit and by the end of the last month of the year, the methodology was understood well by the team. Janet visited Keystone again in December to finalize the methodology for the livelihood aspect and by the last day of the year, the team was equipped to conduct the research in the right scientific spirit.

NTFP Exchange Programme The Exchange of Ideas and Expertise

The NTFP Exchange Programme South and South-East Asia continued to be an interesting network with its ever - growing initiatives, hands on training and exchanges. Leo visited honey

conducted in the Hive at Kotagiri covering aspects of sustainable harvesting and quality control, hygiene and so on.

However, the biggest event of this year was the launch of the NTFP-EP-India programme. A number of NGOs who work in forests, with NTFPs and adivasi issues and were in touch through common work and other networks, came together to form a group and start a common programme for the Eastern and Western Ghats. The NGOs are Prakruthi/Appiko from Sirsi in Karnataka; Legal and Environment Action Forum (LEAF) from Bastar, Chattisgarh; Regional Centre for Development Co-operation, Orissa; Gram Swarajya from Mayurbhanj in Orissa; Econet with all their partners in Maharashtra and Keystone. The partners came together in April 2006 and the NTFP-India Programme was formally started in partnership with Cordaid. Work has progressed over the last year in different modules with differential speeds. The co-operation amongst the partners is at an initial stage, with some visits being made to each others' project areas and much information being



hunters in Sulawesi in Indonesia for training, aiding to build the honey hunters network there, which is spearheaded by Riak Bumi. The other exchanges related to the Telepak film makers, Nanang and Putra who visited Keystone to film NTFP collection and issues related to it. The second section of the shooting, covering other NTFPs in Karnataka, Orissa, Chattisgarh and Maharashtra will be prepared by an Indian film team called Dusty Foot.

The NTFP-EP also organized a workshop in Nilgiris on Ecological Monitoring. This was conducted by Dr. Mary Stockdale from Canada, who took sessions on both qualitative and quantitative methods of monitoring. There were several working sessions, which helped bring out the issues in each of the areas from where the participants came. The proceedings of the workshop are available on www.keystone-foundation.org

Another exchange involved training of groups from Maharashtra and Orissa on honey filtration, bottling and packaging at Keystone. This training for honey hunters and NGO representatives was



exchanged on technical issues. Information was also received from laboratories regarding

analysis and formulation of product processing. Field surveys and documentation was also undertaken, which helped provide experience and information to organizations on how to proceed further. Work with policy related information, markets and advocacy issues was ongoing and need to be built up in the future.

Currently, there are pilot programmes that relate to augmenting the resource base. A study on resources to gauge their populations, what are the pressures they face and in some cases start nurseries to augment the plant resources in select areas. The main plants worked on this were Mango, Tamarind, Mahua (*Madhuca indica*) and *Carissa* spp.

The experience of growing forest species in nurseries and planting is also being documented by LEAF, from the work of PHCC in the Palani Hills. In Keystone and LEAF, work related to sacred groves made headway.

There are several small trials and test initiatives in the project which relate to product development.

Soaps and shampoos from natural saponin like *Sapindus emarginata* and *Acacia concinna* have been tried by Keystone, with technical guidance from Martha Thilar, a laboratory in Indonesia. Besides, other work has related to *Andrographis paniculata*, *Woodfordia fruticosa* and *Terminalia chebula*, medicinal plants in Orissa by RCDC; gums and resins focused in Karnataka, but also being worked upon by Keystone, especially for propagation. Documenting the present harvesting system, understand impact of harvest, processing and value addition if any and assess the market channel of gums/resins is ongoing. A one-day workshop with experts, harvesters and forest department officials was held. Econet worked on initiating the honey survey, collection and marketing, off the ground in Maharashtra.

Addressing the overarching issues of policies and enterprise development has also made head way with a detailed study being undertaken by RCDC on the policies of 5 states where the partners are based. The results of this will be shared in a workshop in March 2007.



Non Timber Forest Produce & Indigenous People in the Nilgiris



In 2006, the programme was established in 3 new geographical areas within the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. viz. the southern hills of Pillur in Coimbatore District, Sathyamangalam Hills in Erode district (bordering the B.R. Hills, Kollegal and Chamrajnagar forests of Karnataka) and the northern plateau of Sigur. The NTFP interventions had originally begun in Coonoor and Kotagiri slopes in the Nilgiris District. The major features in the 3 new areas can be described as follows

Resource Assessment was undertaken in three areas with several reconnaissance and transect surveys. This was done to identify NTFP rich areas, study the flora diversity and identify threats to the habitat. The people from the area, mainly the collectors of NTFP were involved in making PRA maps of their collection zones. NTFP collection in Sigur area is not permitted and the resource assessment here has been a good control plot to compare with other areas where the collection is high. As always the resource assessment tried to find species in the areas which were not commercial but have a high use for the people and therefore is under pressure. In the Pillur area while *Cycas circinalis* is of high use, in Sigur it is *Boswellia serrata* (resin for prayer rituals) and in Sathy it is a *Shorea* sp. (resin harvest).

The Value Addition Centres were set up in all areas, except Sigur. These revolved around a group of people, mainly women who came together to start processing forest produce and homestead products like fruits. The year saw many new products being developed and tested in the market. These include mango pickles from Pillur, jams and marmalades from Coonoor, and Amla products from all the centres. Lip balms, bees wax soaps and shampoo extracts from shikakai and poochakai have also been put in the market. The latter two products are yet on an experimental scale and will reach the market soon. All the Centres have their own separate accounts and the profits from the sales are being accumulated for building a revolving fund. Training was conducted for these groups and many more adivasis for processing techniques, accounts and management of stocks. Renovation of a village house was done in Coonoor and Banglapadigai has a brand new resource centre of its own. Sathy has always moved faster and the resource center is under construction. Appropriate techniques for drying were developed in the villages. The Sathy center also has a loom set up and have been weaving the Eecham leaves into mats. The mats have a good potential and we are working on developing finished products with the mats.

Meetings and discussions took place in all the resource centres for a sustainable village institution and management system in the future.

This was to build a larger stake in the activities and internalize the conservation message. Profit sharing mechanisms and membership were some of the aspects discussed and these will be formalized in the coming year.

Three new local sales outlets are in place and flourishing in Kurumbadi, Bannari and Hasanur. These have had their share of hiccups initially but are steadily picking up. Kurumbadi has a roadside cart which has average monthly sales of Rs. 7000.00. The Bannari shop on the road side again in a cart is just in front of the temple and does an average of Rs. 12000 sales. The Hasanur shop which is in a rented space has average sales of Rs. 7000.

On the indigenous knowledge and information front work is ongoing in the new centres to develop the knowledge on flora. The first volume of the Nilgiris Plants is out in publication and is also on sale through the Green Shops. Basic area information posters were developed for Sigur & Pillur. A poster on the wild foods of Sigur area is in the press. The seed collections at Sigur, Pillur and Nilambur are growing at 180, 50 and 60 respectively.

The plant nurseries in Kotagiri & Coonoor continue. The exceptionally good rains this year have helped the growth of the already planted forest species. The growth rate of forest species when planted in the farmlands is very high. Nurseries are been developed in Kil Pillur, Puchamarathur, Situkunni, Boothanatham, Anaikatti & Siriyur. The challenge has been to raise forest species in the areas of Pillur, Sigur and Dhimbham. People are ready to plant a few Amla trees but totally reject any other forest species.

A centre wise analysis of the processing related work undertaken at the village units. This is being done to evaluate the shortcomings in these units, specifically looking at stock keeping, losses, wastage, social profile, work sharing, maintenance of quality, etc. The 1 year analysis will help us to identify what are the further needs of capacity building within these groups.

An exercise was also undertaken to analyse the 10 year data of honey collection and monitoring. A report on which is available with us.

During this year, major problems related to policies of the Forest Department and NTFP collection access. In Sigur and Pillur these issues occur, making activities difficult and irregular. This has resulted in changed strategy for Keystone. Again in Kotagiri and Coonoor area the NTFP collection goes unattended.

One of the older centres, Semmenarai faced problems of leadership and steps are ongoing to enable the people in the village to play a larger role and be members of the centre.

The Sathy area remains an interesting region with excellent forests and a high degree of dependence for NTFPs. The Forest Department and the members of the Village Forest Councils in Sathy are dynamic and work with Keystone for training in value addition to prevent raw material from leaving the area before it is processed. The negotiations between Keystone, Forest Department and the VFC started in October 2006 with the DFO, Mr. Subramanian, an approachable and positive officer and Keystone team having intense discussions. We too have gone ahead and the VFC members have seen for themselves the difference between last year and this year. Large amount of the harvest leaves the checkpost unaccounted and therefore profits don't show up in the VFC accounts. This year, even before Pongal (that signals mid harvest season), VFC members had profits in their accounts which they had not achieved even at the end of the harvest in



Case Studies

There has been a growing demand from NTFP harvesters and managers to develop a protocol that would help decision making for sustainable harvest limits. Keystone and People and Plants International met in late November 2005 for a workshop on ecological monitoring. The workshop brought harvesters, traders, biologists and managers together. This has always been a Keystone strength that we look at the forest produce through many channels. In this we found People and Plants partners, Tamara Ticktin and Tony Cunningham thinking along the same lines.

With funding by IDRC, the methods suggested by the protocols were tested during 2006 in South Africa and India on three species; *Merwillia plumbea* ((formerly *Scilla natalensis*) bulb harvests in South Africa), *Canarium strictum* (resin harvest in South India) and *Cycas circinalis* (fruit, leaf, pith harvest in South India).

We went to four Badaga villages of Kotagiri to assess the local demand for the resin of *Canarium strictum*. We also went to all the harvester villages located close to the sample plots in Kerala and Tamil Nadu to do a survey on the indigenous uses of the plant. With a willing Samraj and a reluctant Moorthy, we set off to see the markets at Viruddhanagar. A long dusty journey, dusty town, dinghy offices and volume of trade. The phone rings constantly at trader Mr. Villianathan's office making long conversations impossible. Just overhearing his phone talk gave us a good enough picture of the trade. Everything goes only in tonnes. Amritsar is only a few days away. Moorthy looks at me and says "you make such a noise about one cut Cycad tree what will you do when this man is willing to sell you 50 tonnes of cycas pith?" I leave the office humbly offering that if Mr. Villianathan wants to do a nursery of Cycas I can help him!!!

The report is out and much more questions stare us in the face. We have a strong case to advocate for harvesting methods for the resin of *Canarium strictum* using fire to be banned in Kerala. For the Cycads we need to work on issues regarding its conservation and involving communities to protect the Cycads. One respondent in Kerala told us that as a child they practiced hacking with a knife on the Cycad tree since it was soft, easy to cut and useless. So much for respecting plants which evolved in the Triassic period of the Mesozoic era, plants that saw the dinosaurs come and go, the mammals and primates evolve...

When we are chasing honey and amla, we listened to the small voice of the Kurumbas who cling loudly to the Cycas and the *Canarium*, as well. These two species were brought to our notice by the Kurumbas. They are not on the official NTFP list. But they are both rare and endangered and harvested to some extent in various ways. Both seem rare not because of over harvests and indiscriminate felling but also because the ecosystem is changing and these species being vulnerable have succumbed faster. The Cycad population is threatened because of over leaf harvest and illegal pith harvests. The *Canarium* trees need gaps in the canopy, birds to carry their fruits away from the mother tree and pollinators of whom we know little about. *Canarium* and Cycas are like ecosystem health indicators that we monitor to get to the health status of the ecosystem.



The Wetlands Initiative

The wetlands project provided us with a valuable opportunity to understand more on the use and abuse of these small beautiful and important water bodies in the Nilgiris. If the organic food project offered an opportunity to understand the people and their choices, the wetlands projects opened up the beauty and fragility of the environment here.

The 11 month wetland project was divided into two phases. In the first phase the four teams with three members each and a common botanist surveyed the wetlands and in the second phase, four members re-surveyed five wetlands and prepared a wetland management plan for each of these.

The first stage of the project was concerned with collection of data on wetlands from prominent wetlands of the Nilgiris. An attempt was made to cover as many wetlands as possible and from as many representative areas in the Nilgiris. However, the more we studied about wetlands, we realized

that we have barely managed to touch the most outer surface of wetlands in the Nilgiris. For, not only were there innumerable wetlands, but each was distinct in its own way. We surveyed more than 40 wetlands and comprehensively covered about 38 of them. Along the way, we found innumerable wetlands in the Nilgiris and learnt about the amazing importance wetlands have for man and wildlife. The wetlands acting as source for drinking water were tested for quality. Towards the end of the first phase of the project, we compiled all knowledge which included information on physical parameters, biological characteristics including an inventory of wetland plants and anthropogenic parameters on these wetlands in the form of simple report. We made posters and organised walks in the town promoting wetland awareness and protection in vulnerable urban areas. A wetland nursery has been raised. These were planted by the school children and residents on the day of the walk.

The second stage started with supplementary awareness campaigns that included making posters on various issues regarding wetlands - wetlands biodiversity, wetland birds, wetlands and people and the wetland plants of Nilgiris.

In view of the time constraints for further extensive research and scientific validation of numerous findings, the team focused on particular regions and prepared local management plans for some. The plans for five surveyed wetlands have been prepared in collaboration with multi-stakeholders in the particular regions. A set of criteria was developed after thoroughly analyzing the data and applicability; the wetlands were then classified on that basis. Management plans have been outlined based on these criteria.

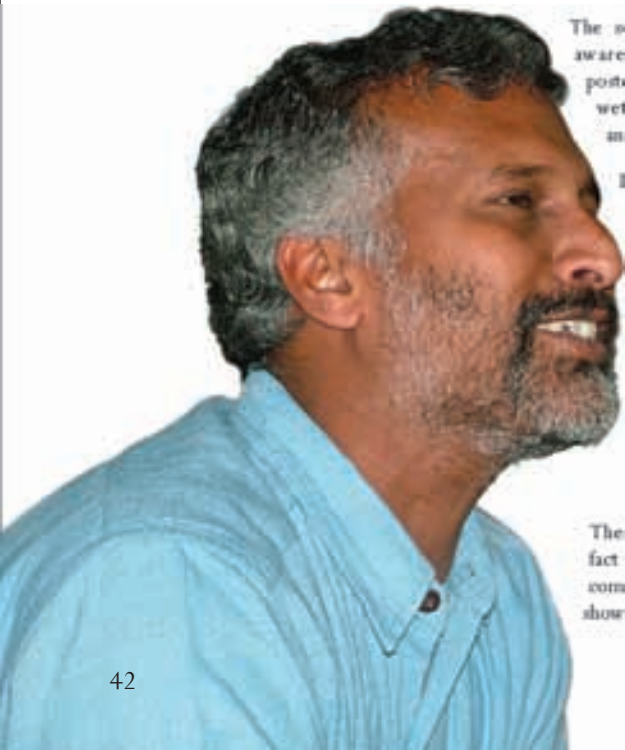
These wetlands were selected considering the fact that they represented different ownerships, communities and usage. The data analysed showed these wetlands as having high socio-



economic dependence as well as high ecological threat. Therefore, these wetlands required immediate attention and immediate implementation of the management plans.

A workshop cum brainstorm was organized to share our findings and cross learnings. The workshop brought together numerous stakeholders- representatives from the government department-TWAD board, tourism, researchers from IIFM, SACON, NGO representatives as well as indigenous people (Todas, Kotas, and Badagas), Potato growers' organization. Discussions and experience sharings lead to recommendations on hill wetlands conservation strategy and action plan to be adopted for further work.

The wetlands project gave an opportunity to understand the use and abuse of these small beautiful and important water bodies in the Nilgiris. If the organic project offered an opportunity to understand the people and their choices the wetlands projects opened up the beauty



Conservation Initiative

The NTFP project gave us an opportunity to look at Enterprise and Conservation with equal focus. While there was emphasis on procuring raw material and building production units in the villages, work was also carried out to study population dynamics of amla and the status of the forests where these harvests happened. The ecological work was built on a foundation of Indigenous Knowledge.

Conservation is a focus area and every project has a conservation driven approach. We are now working towards a larger landscape level with a need for the conservation initiative to grow. In the past five years, one student per year have completed their MS dissertation through us on subjects that we have suggested. These studies aided us in building vital information on the biodiversity of the region. Many ask us "You have been working on these products to monitor them, do harvests affect populations?" What we know for a fact is that 'harvest' is not the only parameter. Weather conditions, Soil textures, Geographical locations, Institutional mechanisms, Water quality - all have a role to play in the status of a produce like amla or resin of canarium or honey.

Conservation Initiative is an organisational input that seeks to establish Keystone area centers as monitoring outposts for biodiversity conservation. These area centers are hubs where communities take part in monitoring the quality of their ecosystems and monitor changes.

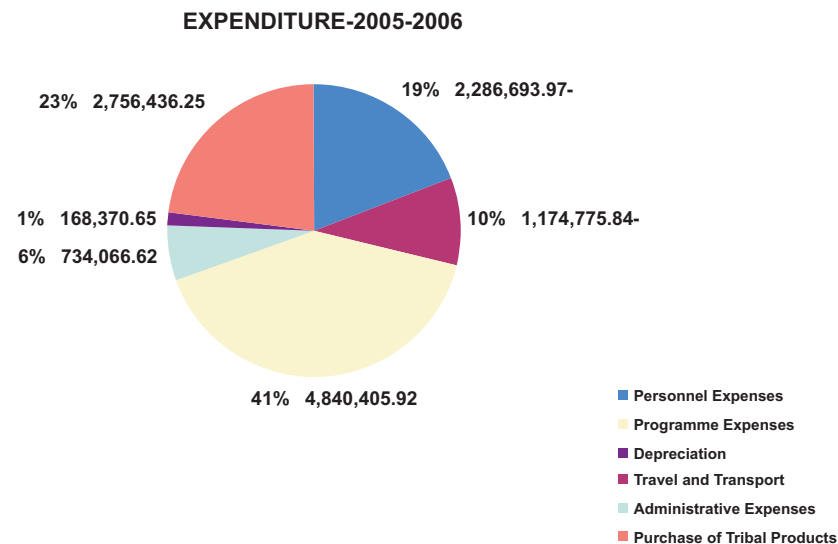
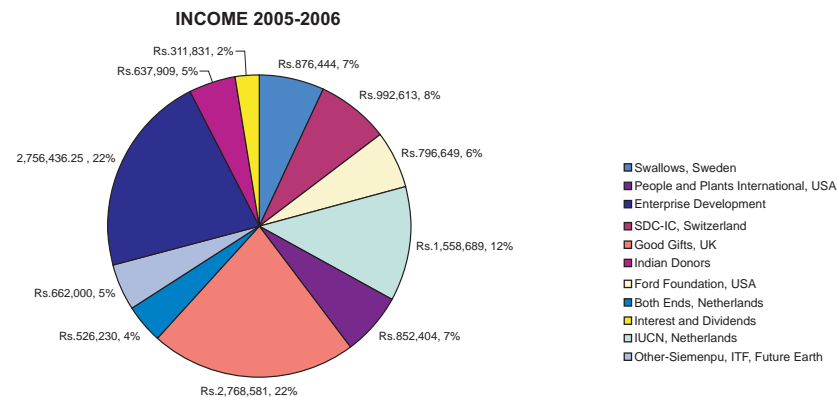
The various modules within the CI are:

- Implementing Monitoring Protocols
- Starting a field course that will cater to many levels from harvesters to managers to students to teach methods of monitoring.
- Environmental education programme that addresses the children of the indigenous communities around our area resource centers.
- Biodiversity studies through student research fellowships.
- Multi use forest species nurseries which are both commercial and village based.
- Build knowledge networks from across the world to exchange expertise in the field of sustainable harvest methods.

CI is more than an idea and is being looked at as a project. Many of us who work in different projects are all part of the CI work and we meet to plan and review our work so that we can see over a time period what effect this is having for Conservation within Keystone.

Administration and Accounts

This journey would not be complete without touching upon the bulwarks on which the organization relies. A team that has smiles on their faces and an eagerness to support, whenever a helping hand is required. They've learnt to provide the crucial link and support the project team requires.



LIABILITIES

AS ON MARCH 31,2006

31-Mar-05 Rs in Million	PARTICULARS	31-Mar-06 Rs in Million
11.58	Capital Fund	13.19
0.13	Loans and Advances	0.033
0.21	Current Liabilities	0.46
11.92		13.683

ASSETS

AS ON MARCH 31,2006

31-Mar-05 Rs in Million	PARTICULARS	31-Mar-06 Rs in Million
5.93	Fixed Assets	5.41
2.82	Deposits	0.074
0.64	Loans and Advances	0.589
0.73	Current Assets	1.22
0.55	Investment	2.97
1.25	Cash and bank Balances	3.42
11.92		13.683



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan 2006

- × Shola Fellowship at Hyderabad "How Societies Change" seeing the Cyber City and also the old Hyderabad NGO working with riot victims and rehabilitation. Two worlds into one.
- × Follow-up with FDs of Kerala, TN and Karnataka for letters of support for the Darwin Initiative
- × Pratim to Trivandrum to meet Secretary Forests, Mr. Radhakrishnan, IAS for letter of support Darwin Project
- × Shomet Francis a Maasai from Tanzania to share his experiences on "Pastoralism & Conservation" with us at Keystone
- × Wetlands Survey
- × Work on Ecological Monitoring Proceedings

Feb 2006

- × Coimbatore Green Shop Project financial projections and possible staff holdings ideas for the future
- × Wetlands exploration continues
- × New Renovated Kotagiri Green Shop opening by Rev. P.K Mulley
- × Agnetha Hyjl from Swallows, Sweden on the "Volunteers Assignment"
- × Ashok Kumar on the Sigur Water Resources Project
- × Kurumba Population study seminar
- × S.J Chiru, IAS Additional Collector, Project Director, HADP at Keystone for the seminar and shares his perspectives on upcoming changes in HADP

Mar 2006

- × Board of Trustees Meeting
- × Pandurang Hegde gives a talk on "Environmentalism Today"
- × Wetlands in Gudalur area field work continues
- × SN & AV to West NBR on the Wildlife Trust of India corridor project and rehabilitation issues
- × Chinna Raman passes away

× Won Darwin

- × Anita, Leo & Senthil to Trivandrum for the presentation of Keystone's work to the Kerala Forest Department
- × Suganthi, Selvi & M. Chandran leave for World Social Forum, Karachi via Dubai
- × Village Shop at Barliyar run by women from Kurumbadi
- × Ashok Kumar for Sigur Water Project on Hydrogeology

Apr 2006

- × At Chennai to look after Shrikant
- × Mid term evaluation of water project
- × Planning for Darwin Project recruitment, advertising, possible project sites
- × Shrikant comes to Kotagiri after operation
- × Sneh to Vishakapatnam for NTFP National Workshop
- × Sneh & Mathew leave for Bosnia on IFOAM meeting "Wild Products Certification"
- × Supriya Sahu IAS, Project Director TN Health Systems with World Bank team at Keystone

May 2006

- × Shrikant passes away at "Orion", Keystone Centre, Kotagiri
- × Talk by Dr. William Noble on "Nilgiri Environment"
- × Hasanur Shop opens selling value added NTFP and Natural Products
- × Discussions on Bee Museum
- × Justice Alok Mukherjee from Calcutta High Court to see Keystone and its activities with his family
- × Shrikant Joshi Shola Fellowship Support Programme launched with contributions from his friends to support local development / environment initiatives

June 2006

- × Dr. Surdhinder Sharma, Environmental Consultant from Delhi talks about Issues facing Nilgiris & Western Ghats today
- × Planting of trees to rejuvenate Shola in wetland area with school children and citizens of Kotagiri (Happy Valley)
- × Sneh leaves for Manila for NTFP EP Board Meeting
- × Nicola, Paul, Simon and Janet for the Darwin Initiative Mission from UK

July 2006

- × Partha & colleagues from Bangladesh Research Institute for Indigenous Knowledge Systems

August 2006

- × Development From The Inside, UK students at Keystone
- × World Indigenous Day Celebrations
- × Dr. Tamara Ticktin from University of Hawaii at Keystone to discuss mutual collaborations in the Ecological Monitoring field
- × Pratim's meeting with President of India, A.P.J Abdul Kalam at Rashtrapathi Bhavan along with a core group of National NGOs
- × Staff Meeting at Nilambur centre
- × Gopi and team from "Jan Jagran", Belgaum area on a nomads film
- × Kunal & Samita to Orissa on assignment
- × Sneh's mom passes away 19th August 2006

Sept 2006

- × Mathew to Bangkok for Fair Trade meeting
- × Stuart Roberts from University of Reading to train Darwin team on insect collections and practical training
- × Sherpa Pratim & Sneh's dog passes away 21st September 2006
- × Pratim's Dad passes away on 26th September 2006
- × Sneh to Nagapattinam on Tsunami assignment

Oct 2006

- × Bee Museum in Ooty is opened by Meena Gupta, IAS Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India
- × Green Shop inaugurated by Collector, Nilgiris Santosh K Misra, IAS \
- × Brainstorm on a National Tribal Honey Network

- × Group of Ladakh NGOs LEHO, SECMOL, Women's Alliance part of the Future Earth Network
- × Mr. Ouseph, IFS Chief Conservator of Forests Eco Development at Keystone for a brainstorm on work in Kerala through VSS and FD

×

Nov 2006

- × Workshop in Ooty on "Restoring Natural Capital"
- × Tree planting on Happy Valley Wetlands
- × Collector of Nilgiris, Santosh K Misra, IAS at Keystone Centre
- × Leo to Sulawesi, Indonesia as a resource person in Honey systems by traditional communities
- × Anita to Hawaii for a 2 weeks teaching course on Ecological Monitoring
- × Mathew in Rome for IFOAM meeting
- × Sam to Delhi for FAO meeting on Organic Honey
- × Pratim to Delhi for a meeting on the National Tribal Honey Network
- × UK students from Unlimited at Keystone for lecture, demonstration and discussion on Development & Environment
- × NTFP Workshop at Sigur groups from Orissa, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, Karnataka and resource persons from Canada and Manila
- × Annual Staff picnic to Kanyakumari, Allepey and Cochin

Dec 2006

- × Talking about the Keystone Spirit with staff in a free-wheeling discussion, questions, introspection where are we going and how are we doing?
- × Bhoomi puja of Sathy Hills Resource Centre
- × Indonesian film team from Telepak and Rita from Dusty Foot to shoot a film on Voices from the Forests
- × Janet & Adam from UK for Darwin Initiative Project Livelihoods, Research and Analysis methods
- × Additional Coordinators appointed Selvi, Suganthi, Moorthy, Senthil and Kunal
- × Anita & Senthil to Orissa for training RCDC field staff and villagers in KBK region regarding NTFP monitoring methods
- × Mathew, Sneh & Pratim depart for Delhi on way to Annual Shola Fellowship Meet