

4. Article 46: 'The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation' (Government of India 2008).

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## MALANADU: EFFORTS IN SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Malanadu is a combined venture of four development organisations viz. the Malanadu Development Society, the Malanadu Milk Producers' Society, the Malanadu Farmers' Society and the Malanadu Tea Farmers' Society. All of them are registered as social service societies under the Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act, 1955. All of them share the same vision and mission and are engaged in sustainable development of rural community. But they have their specific objectives, areas of operation and activities in pursuit of their objectives.

### MALANADU DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

Malanadu Development Society (MDS) is the first development organisation which was registered as a social service society under the Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act, 1955 in the year 1977 (Registration No. K 201/1977). The society has been working for the integral development of the poor and marginalized people in the civil districts of Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Idukki in the state of Kerala, India. It is one of the social work organisations working under the diocese of Kanjirapally, Kerala. For the last 31 years, the MDS has offered itself in organising the rural poor to work for sustainable development of the entire community. It has devoted quite a good time to learn the development needs, problems and opportunities of the target community. The programmes of the organisation are mainly focused on the remote, underdeveloped villages in the above said districts. The interventions of the organisation in various realms of the poor inhabitants in the operational area have a well defined and articulated purpose to help them achieve a pattern of development, which is sustainable and self-contained. All the interventions of the MDS are

designed to meet the multi-dimensional requirements of the lower strata of the community.

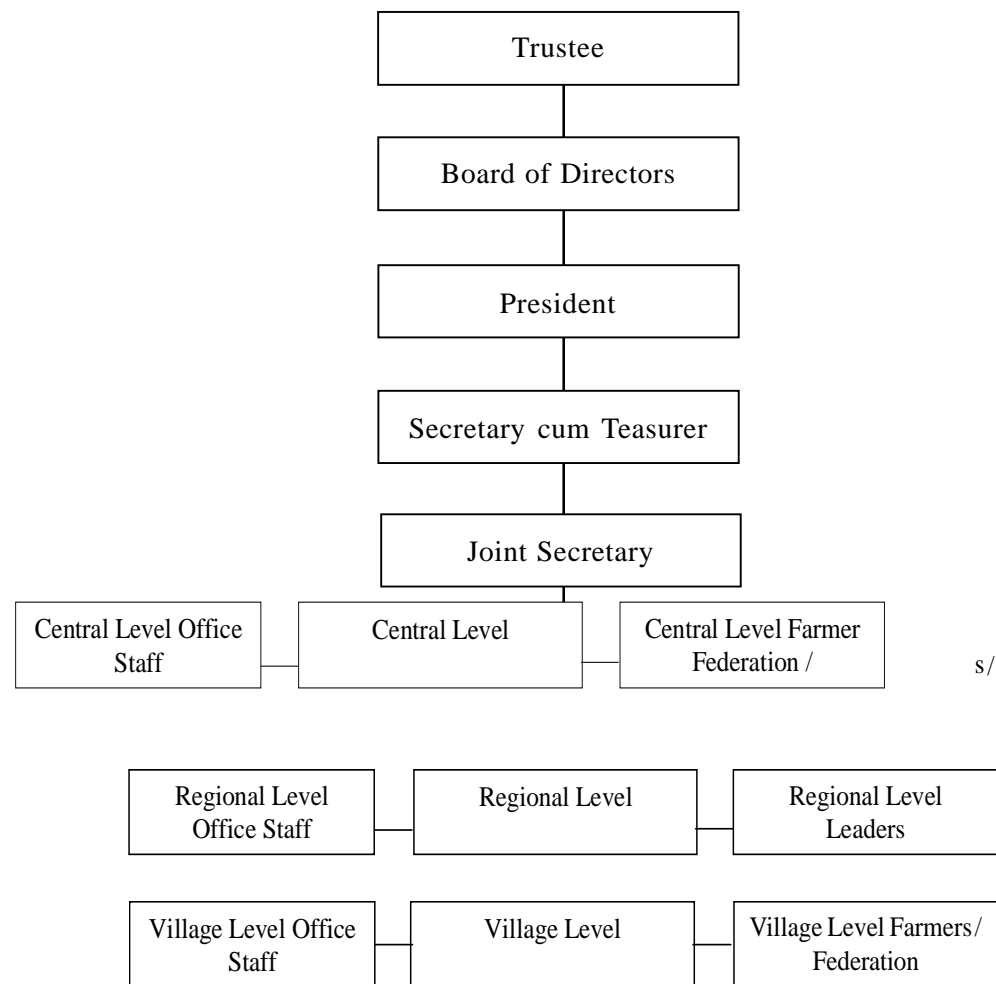
**Vision, Mission and Objectives**

The organisational vision of the MDS is creation of a just society ensuring dignity and sustainability of life. The mission of the organisation is to enhance the quality of life of farmers, women, children and other marginalized groups through decentralised institution building, participatory development processes and application of sustainable technologies respecting our environment, culture and heritage.

The objectives of the MDS are:

- To initiate participatory development process, which is people centred, self-supported and self-managed for sustainable prosperity of life;
- To take leading role in organising farmers and farmers’ institutions;
- To support decentralisation and institution building processes for the emergence of people’s institutions and structures, which are capable to address the felt needs and problems of the community at the grassroots level;
- To promote people’s ability to maximise their own capabilities and life options, including participation in education, training, employment and social activities;
- To take leadership in undertaking various development activities at the local level for the promotion of alternative energy sources;
- To promote soil and water conservation practices for the sustainable management and protection of natural resources;
- To capacitate women of the rural communities through social orientation and capacity building programmes;
- To organise training and capacity building programmes for the small and marginal farmers in the rural areas; and
- To promote pre-school education for improved physical and mental health of the children by providing all children with a joyful and creative atmosphere that incorporates education and skills relevant to a meaningful and dignified existence.

**Organisational Structure: Organogram**



The MDS aims at socially, economically and ecologically sustainable community development. The strategies adopted for realising sustainable community development are learning, analysing and empowering through meetings, trainings and participatory research programmes. The community development interventions of the society are mainly focused on the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, natural resource management, non-conventional energy promotion, housing and sanitation, health, early education, child development and women empowerment. From its inception, the society

has been constantly supporting the farmers of the target area by procuring their agricultural produces directly from the farms. The society procures milk, honey, tea, coffee, spices, maize, ragi, jowar, millets etc. from farmers and offers them the most competitive price for their produces. The society has also established micro-enterprise units, such as the ghee unit, curd unit, bread and confectionery unit, with the objective of providing quality products to the consumers and generating employment opportunities for the rural poor, especially women. The society is providing regular employment to 139 women in its different micro-enterprise units and is supporting 176 working personnel in its various development units and programmes.

## **Development Interventions**

The major development interventions of the MDS include agricultural activities, bee keeping, animal husbandry and dairying, natural resource management, housing and sanitation, educational programmes, medical insurance scheme, micro enterprises, research and training, and documentation

### **1. Agricultural Activities**

The target community of the MDS mainly depends on agriculture and livestock for their livelihood means. With the mission to support the small and marginal farmers to address the agricultural and livestock related problems, the society has been providing technical training and skill up-gradation programmes. A number of development activities have been initiated in order to improve the agriculture sector as well as the quality of life of the farmers.

#### ***Promoting value addition of primary products***

The society has been procuring agricultural produces from the small and marginal farmers of the local societies and marketing the products after necessary value addition process. Agricultural commodities like coffee, spices, honey etc. are procured from the farmers and processed in the processing units of the society. The society has its own direct marketing network which ensures that the products from all the units are delivered to various parts of the state. Through this effort, the society can provide farmers with a reasonably good price round the year and thereby insulate the farmers from the impact of price fluctuations.

### ***Propagating organic farming***

The MDS has taken efforts to promote viable and socially acceptable technology pattern of agriculture with due focus on organic farming principles. High priority is accorded to evolve new locally specific, crop specific, viable and farmer centred technologies in agriculture sector. Emphasis is given on reinforcing the traditional and indigenous knowledge of the farmers in controlling pests and crop diseases. It has resulted in sustainable use of land, water and energy leading to sustainable livelihood and sound ecological balance.

### ***Agriculture nursery and seed bank***

An agriculture nursery has been set up at Parathode (Kottayam district) to ensure supply of quality seeds, seedlings and other planting materials for farmers. Seeds, seedlings and planting materials have been provided for fruit crops, ornamental trees, medicinal plants, tuber crops, protective grasses and plantation crops.

### ***Soil and water analysing laboratory***

The MDS has been offering extension and research services to rural farmers through the quality control laboratory situated at Parathode. The laboratory has facilities to carry out soil and leaf tests in order to determine the composition and contents of soil, so as to take appropriate remedial action to improve the soil fertility of the land. Students from various educational institutions are provided training in soil, leaf, and water analysis at the laboratory. Certificates are issued to them after successful completion of the training.

### ***Bio-control and research laboratory***

A bio-control laboratory has been set up with the objective of providing quality bio-control agents and bio-fertilisers to farmers. The laboratory supports rural farmers in assessing the quality of bio-controls and bio-fertilisers, and guides them in applying it scientifically on the farm. The laboratory is conducting field extension support to farmers for analysing the soil fertility and educating farmers in the areas of crop productivity and sustainable agriculture.

***Mushroom culture laboratory***

The MDS has a mushroom cultivation unit at the training centre, Parathode. Training programmes have been organised for self-help groups (SHGs) and farmer groups in mushroom cultivation. Quality mushroom spawn is developed and made available at the bio-control and research laboratory. The MDS is also planning to produce and market good quality mushroom commercially.

***Farmer's training and extension programme***

Training and capacity building of rural farmers is one of the important thrust areas of the MDS. Skill development and educational programmes are organised on apiculture, vermi-compost preparation, sustainable agriculture, organic farming, livestock rearing, fodder cultivation etc. on a regular basis. These interventions have helped farmers address their problems in the farming sector and enhance the quality of their life.

**2. Bee Keeping**

The MDS is one of the promoting agencies of apiculture in the state of Kerala. It is supported and recognised by the Khadi Board, and Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Government of India. The society has taken the initiative to form the Beekeepers' Association in the year 1978 with the objective of supporting and coordinating beekeeping and honey production activities in the target districts. The society is maintaining a bee nursery for conducting practical trainings and providing quality bee colonies to the farmers. The equipments and accessories for bee farming are also provided by the society. Practical orientation and skill development training are regularly organised by the society for the beekeepers for imparting technical knowledge on apiculture.

The MDS also provides technical support and extension services to the farmers in apiculture, as part of the follow-up and monitoring systems. The society is conducting research and developmental activities in apiculture for the farmers to get better results in honey production. Operational manuals and documents related to apiculture have been published by the society for technical guidance and technology transfer at a larger level. The society provides procurement support to the beekeepers for selling their products

and to ensure better price for them. The society has established in its premises a quality control laboratory in order to ensure quality of honey. The laboratory is certified by the Agricultural Products' Grading and Marketing (AGMARK), Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.

**3. Animal Husbandry and Dairying**

The MDS has established a breeding farm for the promotion of good livestock breeds. This breeding unit is also providing good and high breed piglets and goats for the rural farmers according to their need. A large number of farm families have benefited from the promotion of these income generation activities.

**4. Natural Resource Management**

The MDS has taken the initiative to preserve bio-diversity as well as to educate the people about eco-friendly life styles and practices. Some of the programmes undertaken by the MDS in this area of operation are rain water harvesting, promotion of non-conventional sources of energy like biogas plant, and watershed and water resource management.

***Rain water harvesting***

The MDS is a pioneering agency to propagate the Ferro-cement technology as cost effective in rain water harvesting. The society has facilitated the construction of Ferro-cement water tanks in order to ensure availability of drinking water throughout the year in the water scare areas.

**Promotion of non-conventional energy**

Biogas plants have been constructed as part of the non-conventional energy promotion activity. Consultancy services to the needy farmers have also been provided by the society as part of the promotional and technical support. This activity has contributed to considerable reduction in cutting of trees and deforestation for firewood. So far the MDS has constructed approximately 22000 biogas plants in its target area. Regular training programmes are also organised for masons and supervisors in biogas plant construction. The MDS introduced the Ferro-cement technology in biogas plant construction and has been supporting farmers in its construction in rural areas.

### ***Watershed and water resource management***

Watershed management is one of the major thrust areas of the MDS. Several watershed and sustainable drinking water projects have already been implemented by the MDS in its target area in collaboration with the panchayati raj institutions, and national and international agencies. During the last 10 years the MDS has been functioning as the nodal agency for the watershed management programme of various sponsoring agencies (both government and non-government).

### **5. Housing and Sanitation**

Promotion of cost effective housing programme is one of the important social service activities of the MDS. So far the society has constructed more than 12000 houses for the poor and needy people with the assistance of government and various other development agencies. The society has adopted the Ferro-cement technology in housing and sanitation, which in turn reduces the construction cost considerably.

### **6. Educational Programmes**

The main educational programmes undertaken by the MDS are scholarship and pre-school education.

#### ***Educational scholarship***

The MDS has been supporting and encouraging the students from the poor families through its educational scholarship programme. Educational loans are provided by the society to students of professional courses. The society has been supporting 175 students of various professional degree courses such as Engineering, Chartered Accountancy, Hotel Management, General Nursing, B.Sc. Nursing and Computer Science, and diploma courses in Mechanical, Electrical and Automobile Engineering. Interest free loans are provided by the society to these students for pursuing the different professional courses. The students are to pay back the loan after obtaining a job.

#### ***Pre-school education***

Pre-school education programme of the MDS is implemented with the objective of improving the physical and mental health of the children. All

the children are provided with a joyful and creative atmosphere that incorporates knowledge and skills relevant to a meaningful and dignified existence. Now there are 68 nursery schools functioning under this educational programme.

The specific activities undertaken by the MDS in the programme of pre-school education every year include distribution of learning materials and toys, medical check-up for children, training of teachers in the new syllabus, awareness programmes for parents, study tours and dance classes, milk and honey distribution for children, and *Rareerolsav* (children's fest).

### **7. Medical Insurance Scheme**

The MDS in collaboration with the United India Assurance Company has been providing medical insurance coverage to all members of the local societies and SHGs. Farmers can avail of the medical support of an amount up to Rs.5000 through this medical insurance scheme. This specific support has enabled the farmers to meet the expenses on unexpected diseases and medical needs in getting better and timely medical treatments and services.

### **8. Micro Enterprises**

Development of micro enterprises is one of the major thrust areas of the MDS. With the objective of using local resources and generating employment for the rural people, the society has initiated several micro enterprise units. The micro-enterprise units started by the society include those of bee keeping, honey processing, coffee powder, village oil, bread and confectionary, candle making, soap and soap powder making, black smithy and carpentry, woodcraft training and masonry, building material, and silk reeling and khadi. The khadi unit of the MDS is recognised by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Government of India.

### **9. Research and Training**

The MDS has established a training and documentation centre at Parathode with the objective of providing programmes in training and skill up-gradation for small farmers, graduate and post-graduate students in various disciplines such as food technology, bio-technology, bio-chemistry, microbiology, agriculture and vocational courses. The topics of research conducted

at the centre include organisational study, customer satisfaction, quality analysis of food products, water analysis and soil analysis.

The centre is offering residential training programmes for farmers, members of local institutions such as milk cooperatives, women groups and youth wing. The training and skill development programmes conducted at the centre include on the job training in agriculture (one month), training on NGO accounting (10 days), eco-tourism and eco- friendly farming (10 days), and on the job training in agriculture and sustainable livelihood practices.

## 10. Documentation

Another activity of the MDS has been in documentation. It has brought out publications in both English and Malayalam, the local language. The publications of the MDS include “Springs of Water Abundance – Experience in Sustainable Drinking Water” (English), “Rainwater – Drinking Water” (Operational Manual for Ferro-Cement Water Tanks in Malayalam), Brochures on Sustainable Drinking Water Programme (5 Numbers, English), “Harvesting the Blessed Showers” (Compact Disc in English), “Springs of Water Prosperity” (Compact Disc in English and Malayalam), “Rain Water Harvesting” (Compact Disc in English and Malayalam), and “Theen Nukaram – Panam Needam” (Book on Honey Processing in Malayalam).

## MALANADU MILK PRODUCERS’ SOCIETY

With the vision of developing socio-economic well-being of milk farmers the MDS undertook a project initiative named ‘Malanadu Milk Project’ in the year 1994. The society could organise 14000 milk farmers in the target area with the objective of coordinating milk production in the villages and strengthening dairy development activities. In the process 136 milk cooperative societies were formed in these villages. A milk pasteurisation unit was started in the year 1994 for processing of milk collected from the farmers. This development initiative was given legal and independent organisational status as the Malanadu Milk Producers’ Society (MMPS) in the year 2003. The MMPS is registered as a social service society under the Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act, 1955 (Registration No. K-365/2003). The operational areas of the MMPS are the districts of Kottayam, Idukki and Pathanamthitta in Kerala.

The main objective of the MMPS is to work for the welfare of the milk farmers by helping them procure reasonable price for their products through value addition and marketing. Strengthening the farmers’ organisations by providing skill up-gradation and capacity building training programmes is a major thrust of the MMPS. The specific objectives of the MMPS are:

- To organise milk farmers into small groups for better participation and community development;
- To undertake and initiate dairy development activities;
- To provide training and help to the farmers to procure, process, and market milk and milk products;
- To promote cattle rearing among small and marginal farmers for the social, economic and environmental development of the farm community;
- To ensure sustainable price for milk to the milk farmers throughout the year through marketing and value addition;
- To promote biogas energy among the farmers as an alternative to firewood for cooking and thereby prevent cutting of trees and deforestation;
- To provide training and capacity building programmes for farmers to enhance milk producers’ participation in all aspects of dairying for the improvement of milk collection, processing and marketing;
- To establish a research and development centre for preserving and promoting different breeds of cattle;
- To conduct training and other activities for generating awareness among farmers about various techniques in scientific methods of cattle and calf rearing;
- To coordinate the delivery of veterinary services including artificial insemination, cattle insurance etc. to the farmers at the local level;
- To organise training of people in various home based rural employment programmes;
- To promote values of equality, fraternity and mutual sharing of natural resources for sustainable development of all;
- To encourage farmers in participatory technological development in the field of agriculture and dairying.

## **Activities of MMPS**

Several activities are undertaken by the MMPS in the pursuit of improving the situation of milk farmers. They include milk collection, organisation of committee meeting, awareness programme, special incentive, medical insurance coverage, cow loan, educational support, subsidised cattle feed, grass cultivation, welfare activities and quality up-gradation.

### ***1. Milk collection***

The MMPS is collecting 40,000 litres of milk from the local milk cooperative societies on a daily basis. Milk collected from the farmers is weighed and checked in the local milk society twice a day. The quality controller/tester checks the quality and weighs the milk from the farmers and the quality details are documented in the report book. The secretary consolidates the reports and accounts of the milk collection. The milk collected at these centres is transported to the chilling plant at Anakara in Idukki district. The milk is then chilled and transported to the dairy plant at Parathode for processing, packing and marketing. Payments to the farmers are disbursed on weekly basis through the local milk cooperatives.

### ***2. Organisation of committee meeting***

Meeting of the committee of the local level cooperative societies is organised every month in the respective local milk society in order to evaluate the activities of the society. The local level committee consists of nine elected members, three of whom are women. The committee considers in detail the financial accounts, milk collection, quality parameters of milk collected etc. during these meetings. It also discusses local issues in the dairy and agricultural sector prevailing in the area in order to provide necessary support facilities for the farmers in the locality. These development interventions have helped the development of leadership skills in the local committee members, especially the women members.

### ***3. Awareness programme***

As part of capacity building and skill up-gradation of the milk farmers, awareness and training programmes have been organised at the local milk societies on topics such as animal husbandry and fodder cultivation.

Interaction seminars with milk farmers are also organised at zonal and central level to discuss the agricultural issues prevailing in the respective areas. The MMPS has been conducting various awareness programmes for the farmers on the various topics such as health and hygiene, sustainable livestock rearing, quality control in milk, fodder cultivation, sustainable agricultural practices etc. Through this development initiative, the society has been creating local leadership in each village by organising decentralised training programmes and meetings for the milk farmers.

### ***4. Special incentive***

The farmer members are supported with a special incentive by providing them with a higher price for the milk collected during the lean season. This special assistance is implemented with the objective of supporting the milk farmers to help them overcome financial burden incurred due to lower milk production in the lean season caused by decreased availability of feeds and fodder from the farm.

### ***5. Medical insurance coverage***

The MMPS in collaboration with the United India Assurance Company has provided medical insurance coverage to all the milk farmers of the milk cooperative societies. The farmers could avail of medical support for an amount of up to Rs.5000 per year through this medical insurance scheme. This specific support enables the farmers to meet the expenses on unexpected diseases and medical complaints with better medical treatment and services in good time.

### ***6. Cow loan***

The MMPS has been providing credit facility to the milk farmers to purchase cross-breed cows so as to enhance the quality of milk production and support the farmers to attain economic sustainability through cattle rearing. The selection of the beneficiaries for this programme is done by the local societies and loans are sanctioned by the central office. Proper utilisation of the fund has been monitored by the local society and report is sent to the central office for evaluation and follow-up action.

### **7. Educational support**

Educational support in the form of grants and interest free loans are provided to the needy children of the milk farmers with the objective of helping the farmers send their children for higher education. A monitoring committee has been constituted for identifying the right candidates and supervising the implementation of the scheme.

### **8. Subsidised cattle feed**

The MMPS is providing cattle feed at subsidised rates to the members of the local milk societies for improving the quality of milk production in the rural areas. A farmer gets 3 kg. of cattle feed at the subsidised rate for 1 kg of total solids in milk. The tester and the secretary of the local milk society measures the total solids in milk of each member and accordingly the farmer gets the cattle feed at the subsidised rate. This criterion is introduced by the society in order to motivate milk farmers to concentrate on quality milk production by systematic rearing of their cattle.

### **9. Grass cultivation**

A project to promote cultivation of hybrid grass for cattle feed has been implemented for the dairy farmers. Subsidy of 50 per cent is provided to the farmers who are willing to cultivate hybrid grass in their own field. The project is designed in such a way that the farmer is given the responsibility to select and procure healthy hybrid grass cuttings from an authentic farm. After planting the grass cuttings, the cultivation is inspected by the extension staff and the cost of the grass cuttings disbursed to the farmer by the society.

### **10. Welfare activities**

Apart from its regular development activities, the MMPS is providing housing, medical and marriage assistance to the poor and needy people in the rural areas. The society has a reserve fund for conducting welfare services and natural disaster management operations every year.

### **11. Quality up-gradation**

With the objective of capacitating the local society personnel in office management and monitoring quality of milk, intensive training programmes

are organised for the president, secretary and tester of the society. Practical training and theory sessions are given for their skill up-gradation and capacity building.

## **MALANADU FARMERS' SOCIETY**

Malanadu Farmers' Society (MFS) is another development initiative of the MDS and was established in the year 2000. Legally the MFS is a social service organisation registered under Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act, 1955 (Registration No. K-631/2000). The specific operational area of the MFS covers the districts of Theni and Madurai in Tamilnadu. The major target group of the activities of the MFS is that of the milk farmers. In that respect the MFS forms the Tamilnadu counterpart of the MMPS functioning in Kerala.

The vision of the MFS is enabling farmers to attain prosperity, ensuring universal fraternity with nature and humanity. Its mission is to help the farmers get a reasonable return for their efforts in the soil by making them aware of various advanced techniques and methods of cultivation without harming the fundamental being of nature and its resources, and thereby ensure a decent living and safe habitat for present and future generations.

The specific objectives of the MFS are:

- To take leading role in organising farmers and farmers' movements;
- To make farmers aware of various techniques in scientific methods of cattle and calf rearing through training and other activities;
- To help farmers produce agricultural value added products especially from milk;
- To make arrangements for processing and marketing of milk and milk products;
- To organise various welfare programmes for cattle farmers;
- To procure, process and arrange marketing of agricultural products for economically supporting small and marginal farmers;
- To take leadership in various regional development activities through biogas plant construction, extraction of honey and sustainable energy development programme;



- To establish research and development centre for preserving and promoting indigenous breed of cattle;
- To organise training for the people in various home based rural employment programmes;
- To generate awareness among the people about the dangers of using harmful pesticides and chemical fertilizers and encourage them to adopt organic farming.

### **Activities of the MFS**

The MFS has taken the initiative to form and strengthen milk farmers into smaller groups for facilitating the collection of milk and other agricultural products in the states of Tamilnadu. The MFS has established a milk chilling plant at Vayalpetti, Theni, Tamilnadu with the objective of organising and supporting milk farmers in the district of Theni. By this development initiative, the milk producers in the villages are assured of the best price for the milk produced by them. It is helping the society cater to the needs of the consumers by supplying quality milk to the scarcity areas. The MFS is also engaged in educating farmers on the need of rearing healthy livestock breeds, sustainable animal husbandry, fodder cultivation, biogas energy, rain water harvesting etc.

The major activities of the MFS include organising milk farmers and forming milk procurement societies, research and development of agriculture and dairy activities, propagating organic farming, awareness building and training of farmers on scientific cattle rearing, promotion of high breeds of cattle, promotion of biogas plants and vermi-compost, housing assistance to farmers, marriage assistance for the children of farmers, educational help for the children of farmers, milk processing and marketing, and supply of quality milk to customers.

#### ***1. Milk collection from local societies***

The MFS is collecting about 45000 litres of fresh milk directly from 9000 farmers who are the members of the local milk societies. The MFS has organised 282 milk societies in Theni and Madurai districts of Tamilnadu. Milk collected from the milk farmers is weighed and checked in the local milk society twice a day. About 15000 litres of milk is processed at the dairy

plant at Theni and is packed in milk pouches for marketing in urban areas of Theni and Madurai districts. The MFS is marketing both pasteurised and homogenised milk under the brand name of 'Vaigai Milk' in Tamilnadu. The MFS regularly supplies 30000 litres of chilled milk to the MMPS for strengthening the marketing activities in Kerala.

#### ***2. Agriculture and animal husbandry***

The MFS is providing technical support and skill orientation to farmers on sustainable animal husbandry and agriculture. It has set up a dairy farm named "Model Cattle Farm" at Vayalpetti, Theni district of Tamilnadu with the objective of educating farmers on scientific ways of cattle rearing. Sensitisation programmes are organised for educating farmers on the need of rearing healthy cattle, providing nutritious cattle feed, maintaining hygiene and sanitation in different stages of milk collection etc. A fodder farm is also maintained by the MFS at Vayalpetti and most of the hybrid varieties of fodder grass are cultivated in the farm. This farm provides quality materials to the farmers for planting fodder grass. The MFS conducts training of the farmers with the objective of creating awareness on the aspects of sustainable agriculture and integrated pest and disease management.

#### ***3. Dry season incentive to farmers***

Like the MMPS the MFS too is providing special incentive price to the farmers for their milk during the dry season in order to reduce their financial burden, caused by low milk production in dry season. Under this scheme farmers are given a higher price for the milk collected during the lean period from January to May.

#### ***4. Procurement of agricultural produces***

The MFS is procuring agricultural produces such as maize, ragi and millets directly from the local milk farmer/milk societies. This specific intervention is helping milk farmers earn a better price for their produces, eliminating the role of middlemen.

#### ***5. Welfare programmes***

The MFS is providing financial assistance in the form of grants, scholarships or interest free loans for the children of poor small farmers for

enabling them to study professional and technical courses. The MFS is also extending its support to the children of farmers for their marriage on need basis. Another welfare programme is provision of financial assistance to the poor for house construction.

### **6. Rural employment opportunities**

The MFS has generated several employment opportunities in its operational area. It provides employment to more than 300 persons through its various production units. In addition, the MFS is offering assistance to rural women for income generation programmes.

### **MALANADU TEA FARMERS' SOCIETY**

Another venture of the MDS in rural development is with the small tea farmers. The initiative of the MDS in the development of the tea farmers led to the formation of the Malanadu Tea Farmers' Society (MTFS) in 2000. Legally the MTFS is a social service organisation registered under the Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act, 1955 (Registration No. K-664/2000). The special operational area of the MTFS is the district of Idukki in Kerala.

The objectives of the MTFS are:

- To take leading role in organising tea farmers and tea farmers' movement;
- To organise farmers' groups in order to strengthen co-operation among tea farmers;
- To provide training and other activities to make the tea farmers aware of various techniques in scientific methods of tea cultivation;
- To help the tea farmers produce agricultural value added products from tea;
- To procure, process and arrange marketing of tea products to help the small and marginal tea farmers;
- To organise awareness programmes for capacity building of small tea growers;

- To generate awareness among the tea farmers about the dangers of using harmful pesticides and chemical fertilizers, and encourage them to adopt organic farming.

The MTFS has taken serious efforts to intervene in the pathetic situation of small and marginal tea growers in the Idukki district since the year 2000. It has realised that the problems and interests of the small tea farmers were never taken care of seriously and there has been no effective platform for them to share their issues and interests. The vast majority of the small and marginal tea farmers live in remote parts of the district and did not have a place for selling their tea. In the flush crop season, they had to sell tea at very cheap rates to the tea brokers or leaf agents. The MTFS took the challenge of organising the small tea growers in the district and providing procurement support for the tea produced by them. An important step towards this objective was the establishment of a factory at Wallardie, Idukki in order to process tea leaves collected from small farmers. Presently, the MTFS is actively engaged in various socio-economic development activities like networking of small tea growers, training and capacity building of the rural farmers, leaf procurement, and processing and marketing of tea. Following are the main activities of the organisation.

#### **1. Tea Leaf Procurement**

The MTFS is procuring tea leaves from about 300 small and marginal tea growers of Idukki district. The farmers are given the best competitive price for their produce, which ensures sustainable income for them throughout the year. The society also conducts capacity building programmes for the small farmers in order to improve the standard of plucking and pruning for ensuring leaf quality on a regular basis.

#### **2. Incentives to Farmers**

The farmer members are given support in terms of a special incentive for the tea leaves during the lean cropping season in order to help them continue their field operations, particularly manure application and other practices of tea plant care. This special intervention has also supported the small tea farmers to overcome their financial burden, caused by low crop yields in lean season.

### 3. Marketing of Tea

The MTFS is marketing black tea with the support of its marketing network spread over all the districts of Kerala. Tea is distributed in attractive packs in various forms like the “form fill seal” (FFS), pet bottles, jute bags etc. The MTFS is a member of the Tea Trade Association of Kochi and is participating in tea auctions.

### 4. Educational Support to Children

Educational support in the form of grants is provided to the children of the poor tea farmers with the objective of helping them send their children for higher education. Many of the farmers’ children, who were supported in this manner, are now employed in good positions that provide their family economic security.

### CONCLUSION

During the last three decades the four organisations under the Malanadu have been active in rural development. Their mission of improving the lot of the marginalized and poor farmers has found realisation in the various programmes and activities undertaken in the selected rural areas of Kerala and Tamilnadu. The intervention of Malanadu for rural development has been characterised by sustainability and environmentalism. Malanadu has spread its wings in several spheres of the socio-economic life of the rural community. Its strategy of organising the relatively deprived rural population and the programme of capacity building for self-help have helped hundreds of poor and small farmers in improving their socio-economic situation. Innovation in the traditional rural economic pursuits of agriculture and animal husbandry has been the secret of the success of Malanadu in its venture of rural development. The organisations of milk and tea farmers that emerged under the parentage of the MDS reflect not only the mission of Malanadu but also its special strategy of empowering the poor and small farmers through the decentralised organisational structure.

## STUDENT INTERVENTION IN HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM: THE FREE DRUG CELL

Lizy Shaji and Varsha Sivadas

### Student Initiative

The Free Drug Cell (FDC) is the project that emerged as a service initiative of the students of social work at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kerala. The FDC was started in 1994 by SWARAJ (Social Work Students’ Association of Rajagiri College of Social Sciences) as a student venture in social service managed by the students.

As part of the professional training in social work, the students are placed in real life situations for practical training. Hospital is one such placement setting for the practical training of students. Field experience in the hospital situation provided the students the inspiration to undertake the project of the FDC. In the course of the field work in hospitals the students met many a patient who lacked the financial resources to purchase the medicines they needed. They also found that there were unused samples of medicines available with doctors, medical representatives and pharmaceutical agencies.

### Free Medicine for the Poor

The initial effort of the students has been to make the unused medicines available to the poor patients of the government general hospital at Ernakulam, Kerala free of cost. This required building up a service delivery system that would complement the work of the medical professionals and

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