

Case Study from Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The Kanita (Women and Children) Project on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia has one feature in common with the Nirmal Project in Maharashtra. Both involve university students in activities concerned with rural women's development. In the Nirmal Project the students, at least initially, were reluctant to participate in grass-roots living. But the Malaysia study emphasises that the students became highly involved and matured greatly as a result of the experience.

The Kanita Project's philosophy and methodology is described in great detail. Suffice it to say here that it was organised for the University of Penang and grew around the idea of participating research. Such research involved students living in the villages where their target groups were and it involved the targeted women in identifying their own needs and means of meeting them.

As is emphasised in almost all the case studies in this handbook, one of the most desirable outcomes of development activities for and with poor and disadvantaged women is a change in attitude, a gathering of confidence and self-esteem, and the growth of leadership qualities amongst the women themselves. The Kanita Project claims to have seen these changes take place amongst some of the poorest women in Malaysia today.