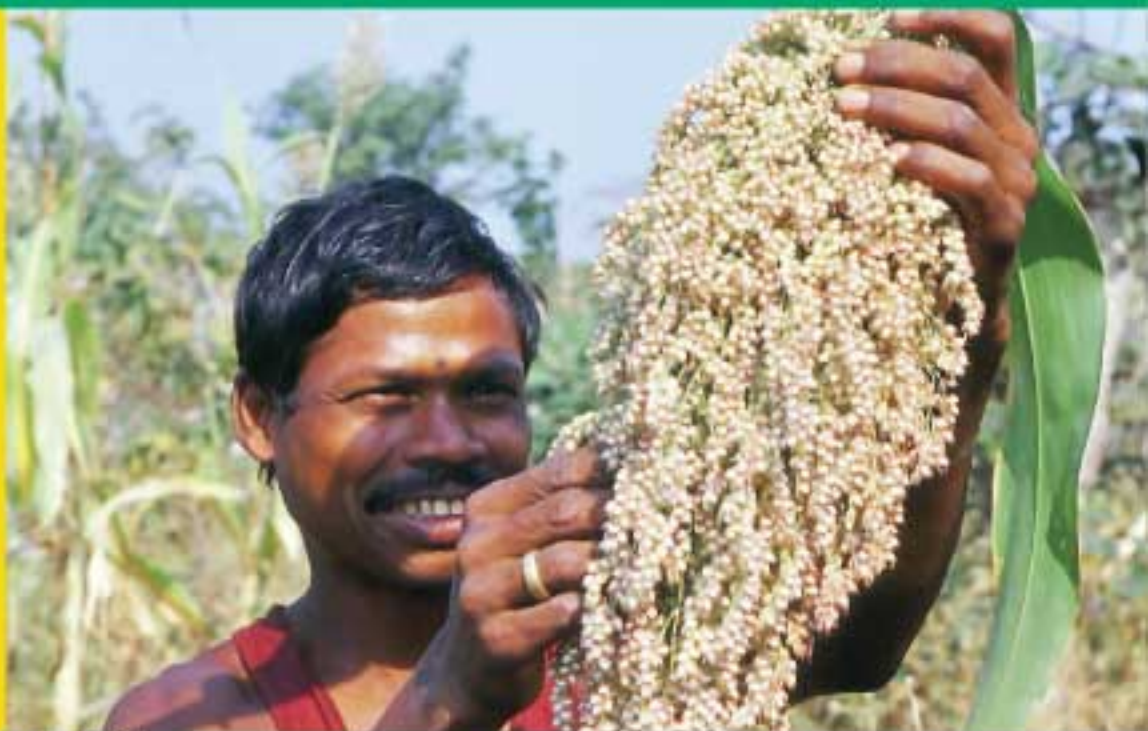




*enabling  
communities  
through  
livelihoods*

# IT ALL *began* WHEN...



In 1983, a few young professionals set up PRADAN, inspired by the belief that well-educated people with empathy towards the poor must work at the grassroots to remove mass poverty. They also believed that grassroots work in the spirit of *pradaan* – giving (back to society) for what one had received – can be a fulfilling and viable vocation for educated women and men.

Soon there were several score professionals in PRADAN, working in remote villages in many parts of the country, helping poor families enhance their livelihoods through concrete action programmes. With the idea well grounded in practice, PRADAN set out in 1994 to systematically induct and groom young professionals to expand its outreach. PRADAN now inducts 50 to 75 university-educated youth every year from more than 40 campuses across the country. They learn about grassroots work through guided practice in PRADAN projects for a year as apprentices before joining PRADAN's grassroots workforce.

*We now have 268 professionals who work with over 101,000 families in 2,620 villages spread across seven states (West Bengal, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar).*



*... in working with women from poor households since they are the most disadvantaged yet vital to fostering change in their families and communities.*

*... in livelihoods with dignity.*

## THE *communities* WE WORK WITH

# 1/3<sup>rd</sup>

Our project districts are among the poorest one third in the country.

# 2/3<sup>rd</sup>

Dalit (Scheduled Caste)/ adivasi (Scheduled Tribe) communities comprise two thirds of our outreach.

# 29%

Twenty nine per cent of the households we work with belong to other disadvantaged social groups.

# 10<sup>th</sup>

We make special efforts to reach out to the poorest tenth of the population in our project villages

## WE *believe...*

*... isolation and exclusion perpetuate poverty; low incomes, lack of assets and absence of beneficial relationships are its manifestations. In other words, poverty is about the human condition more than material resources and means.*

*... that caring and capable people rather than material resources are critical to bring about changes in the human condition.*

*... in mobilising and motivating isolated and excluded communities to build upon their skills, initiative, and resources.*

*... in building people's capabilities to solve their own problems and chart their own growth paths rather than dispensing services to them.*

*... in nurturing mutually beneficial relationships with a large number of stakeholders in society rather than ploughing a lone furrow.*

*... in scalable, sustainable programs that the rural poor own and can carry forward themselves.*

# THE *way we work*



We engage with poor people as one human being would with another, out of caring and interest in the wellbeing of the other. There is an open exchange of ideas, a creative dialogue, a sense of joint journey. The endeavour is to help people to advance the frontiers of their choices. Initial contact usually is with the woman of the household, and then extends to the family at large.

Our programmes endeavour to expand livelihood opportunities for poor people and to help them become enterprising and to take calculated risks. Our vision is to equip poor people with the skills to organise, negotiate and network, to become empowered citizens in the mainstream.

Our livelihood programmes have the following components:

- *Promoting and nurturing Self Help Groups (SHGs) of poor women.*
- *Livelihood planning with SHG members and their families to set medium term livelihood goals for themselves, identify gaps, chart out concrete livelihood plans and estimate credit and technical assistance needs.*
- *Assisting SHG member families, through various sectoral programmes, to take up one or several livelihood options chosen by them on the basis of their resources, skills, risk perception, etc.*

- *Leveraging finances to create and sustain livelihood programmes, to enhance the productivity and carrying capacity of resources and to build people's skills and capabilities.*
- *Building and nurturing necessary supply and service linkages so that the chosen livelihood activities remain viable.*
- *Building and nurturing appropriate mechanisms, including formal organisations of producers and setting up systems so that the livelihood activities are most profitable and sustainable over time.*
- *We promote a variety of family-owned enterprises in sectors with large and growing demand. Smallholder poultry and producing tasar silk yarn are examples.*

## women LEAD THE WAY



## revitalising LAND AND WATER



### **Self Help Groups (SHGs)**

A SHG is an informal association of 10 to 20 poor women from a single village with a similar socio-economic background who meet weekly, pool their small savings and make out small loans to members to meet small contingencies. With our guidance and members' own experience, the group gradually matures as a human formation and is able to leverage larger loans from banks to meet members' credit needs and for livelihood enterprises. A SHG can potentially play four roles through different stages of evolution – mutual help, financial intermediation, livelihood planning and social empowerment. SHGs in a contiguous set of villages are organised into clusters and federations for solidarity, mutual support and to realise scale economies in shared services.

The major programmes of PRADAN presently are:

- Promotion of women's Self Help Groups.
- Livelihood programmes based on improved management of land and water resources, improved farming of staple crops, commercial crops and fruit and timber trees.
- Livelihoods based on forest resources such as rearing tasar silk worms, making leaf plates, rearing shellac insects.
- Livelihoods around livestock, such as dairy, goat rearing, fisheries.
- Livelihoods from rural micro-enterprises, such as poultry farming, mushroom cultivation, mulberry silk rearing, tasar silk yarn production.

### **Integrated Natural Resource Management**

We promote more productive and sustainable strategies and systems for the use and management of natural resources because a vast majority of rural people continue to derive livelihoods from these. Programmes comprise of enhancing productivity of agriculture; diversifying into new crops; setting up irrigation systems; and instituting entirely new ways of managing the natural resource base with its attendant usage or production systems to enhance the present and future carrying capacity.

## vision INTO action

## *rearing*

NEW POSSIBILITIES



### ***Smallholder Poultry***

We have developed a smallholder model of modern broiler poultry farming and are promoting it among SHG members interested in this occupation. A woman rears 300-400 broilers in a modern poultry set constructed in her backyard five to seven times a year. Before setting out, each woman is given intensive hands-on training in modern poultry. About 300 to 500 such women in a cluster of villages form a cooperative that provides all the inputs and services and markets the bird. The cooperative also owns a feed plant and several such cooperatives together own a hatchery. The cooperative is a mechanism for sharing risks, absorbing price shocks; securing scale-economy in dealing with the markets and in sourcing services and for mutual support and learning. A woman on an average earns Rs 8,000 to 14,000 per annum from this part-time activity, depending on the number of batches reared and her proficiency. She can continue to participate in other family occupations, such as farming.

## *spinning*

A BRIGHT FUTURE



### ***Tasar Sericulture***

Women from SHGs interested in this occupation are trained to use reeling or spinning machines to produce yarn from tasar cocoons. Groups of up to 30 women form a Mutual Benefit Trust (MBT) to share common facilities, including a crèche for their children, sourcing inputs and various services. The MBTs have promoted a Producer Company incorporated under the Indian Companies Act for marketing yarn and procuring inputs, such as cocoons. A poor woman can earn Rs 8,000 to 15,000 a year. This is particularly useful for women from landless families and obviates the need for them to migrate in search of wage earning opportunities.



## *governance*

We have a 12 member Governing Board. Nine Invited Honorary Members with a distinguished record of public service in different arenas are the independent directors with no material interest in PRADAN. They nominate two senior staff persons to the Board. The Executive Director appointed by the Board as the chief executive is the member-secretary of the Board. The Board renews itself periodically as members can serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms. By convention, the Executive Director serves a fixed five-year term. All current Honorary Members are also members of the General Body besides others who joined the Society earlier.

Field-based teams, each led by a mid-career executive designated as Team Leader carry out operations. A senior executive designated as Programme Director supports several teams. Organization-wide functions are also headed by Programme Directors. All of the Programme Directors together with the Executive Director constitute the Executive Committee, responsible for strategic and operational integration and institutions development. The Team Leaders,

Programme Directors and the Executive Director constitute the Consultative Forum, which carries out twice yearly programme planning, budgeting and review. All professional staff meet once a year in a Retreat to exchange experience and broadly chart out the future direction.

## *finances*

As an operating principle, we leverage livelihood investments by linking poor people to government programmes and banks. This enhances people's capability to deal with resource institutions and reinforces our identity as enablers rather than financiers of development. We mobilize finances to meet the costs of personnel engaged in grassroots work, building people's capabilities, internal human resource development, research and organization management from private Foundations in India and abroad and from government agencies; the proportion of the latter has been steadily increasing. For every rupee we spend on ourselves, including towards building people's capability, we are able to leverage about five rupees towards livelihood investments. We are building an endowment, presently Rs 65 million, to generate a steady stream of finances to meet institutional development costs.

## *legal status*

PRADAN is incorporated as a Society under the Societies' Registration Act, 1860 at Delhi. It is a Charity under the Indian tax laws. It is also registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. Donations to PRADAN confer tax benefits under Section 80 (G) of the Indian Income Tax Act.



## *inspiring* YOUNG MINDS

Removing mass poverty is a transformative process – as much of helping people to change their self-perception, their sense of who they are and what they can do as of helping them to learn to do new things, different things. Sustainable changes in the lives of poor people cannot be brought about without affecting the being dimension. To do so requires empathy, caring. Therefore, we invest a great deal in finding and grooming people suitable to engage with poor people in such a transformative process.

We recruit university graduates through a stringent selection process. However, most are unfamiliar with the demands of grassroots work as there is no education programme that so trains them. We have developed a structured, year-long apprenticeship of learning-through-guided-practice to groom the new entrants and to help them make an informed choice about this vocation. Each apprentice is placed in a field project and is guided by an experienced PRADAN professional trained as a Field Guide. They explore themselves through human process labs,




learn about the contexts in which poor people live, experience the conditions in which they would work, experience the kind of changes they would be able to make and learn practical skills of grassroots work. Those who stay the course and found suitable, join one of our project teams as executives.



## FROM *stories* TO *theories*

Grassroots work is potentially a great learning laboratory. Capturing the tacit learning from everyday practice, converting it into knowledge and sharing it widely is our responsibility. We have set up an in-house Research and Resource Center to systematically capture the experiences from our grassroots projects. It captures best-practices from the field and develops various aides-to-practice; researches outcomes and impact of our work to draw lessons and feed those back into practice; and communicates our work to the world outside. It publishes a monthly journal, NewsReach, featuring stories from the field authored by colleagues engaged in grassroots action.



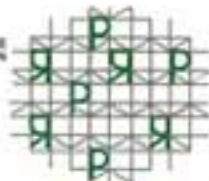


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प्रदान  
Pradan

PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE  
FOR DEVELOPMENT ACTION



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