

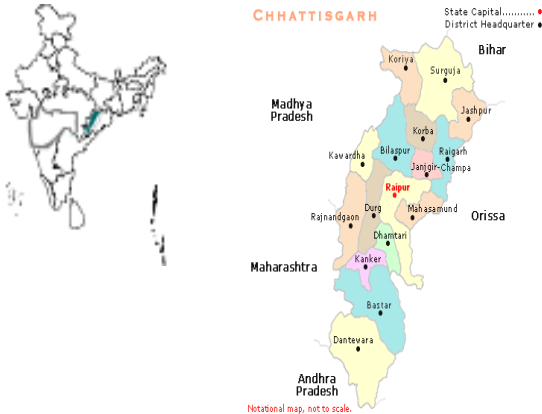
## Innovative and Proactive Initiative in Livelihood Creation

### *Convergence for livelihood creation of rural poor- PRADAN's Experience*

#### 1. The Context

##### 1.1. Area and People

The District of Dhamtari is situated in the plains of Chhattisgarh Region. There are four blocks (namely Dhamtari, Kurud, Magarlod and Nagri) and 333 *Gram Panchayats* and 629 villages in the district. Average annual rainfall in the district is about 1200 mm and 80% of rain falls during the month of June to September. Average temperature in the district varies from minimum of 12<sup>0</sup> Celsius to maximum of 40<sup>0</sup> Celsius. The district comes under 'white zone' which signifies the status of ground water of the region. Mahanadi and its tributaries constitute the major river system of the district. The main crop of the region is Paddy. There are about 106 rice mills in the district.



##### Demography

Total population of the district is about eight lakh among which 81% live in rural areas. The district has a population density of 236 persons per sq km. It shares about 2.5% area of the state and 3.13% population of the state. The decadal growth rate of the district is 13.11%. With a sex ratio of 1012, the district ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the state. Decreasing sex ratio (969 to 1000) in the age group of 0-6 years is a matter of concern for the district. A Contiguous patch comprising of the entire Nagari block and the forest fringe area of Magarlod block and Duban area of Dhamtari block is primarily tribal (about 62% of total population). "Gond" is the major tribe residing in the district. "Kamar" a PVTG (Primitive and vulnerable tribal group) comprising about 1% of the population resides in Magarlod and Nagari block. The District ranks second in the state with a literacy percentage of 78.95%. Among the rural population, female literacy is only 63%.

##### Rural Poverty and Vulnerabilities

Below Poverty Line (BPL) census 2002, states that 35% of rural households in the district come under the category. Majority of the migration in the district is of seasonal nature. People from backward areas, especially from Nagari block, migrate to the plains of Chhattisgarh for paddy harvesting. Traditional rain-fed farming results in a poor yield and consequently results in **insufficient food and capital for investment. This adversely affects household well being and hence, is a major reason of poverty in the district.** A sample survey in the tribal dominated region of the district shows that about 82% households are struggling to fulfill their basic necessities of life. **Food Insufficiency and alcoholism leading to poor health** are primary household level vulnerabilities. Good network coverage of the

Public Distribution System (PDS) in the district could provide support but is not sufficient to address the issue of food sufficiency in its entirety, especially among the poor. About 34% of the *Gram Panchayats* of the district are affected with flood, drought, left wing extremism (LWE), and poor connectivity; many areas are inaccessible because of a wild life sanctuary. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, PVTGs (*Kamar*), landless households (Nishad, Kumhar, Yadav) and women are among the vulnerable groups of the district.

### **Livelihood Context**

About 85% of main workers are primarily engaged in farming as cultivators and agricultural laborers. The *Kamar* tribes are still not into farming. They are dependent on minor forest produce collection, hunting and making bamboo baskets. As per the sample survey, the poor who get their livelihood by primarily selling their labour earn Rs 18000 per annum. For households' belonging to medium category in wealth ranking, main livelihood is selling their labour, collecting minor forest produce (MFP) and engaging in subsistence farming. Poor productivity in agriculture and allied sectors like animal husbandry, fisheries etc and the depleting natural resource base (land, water, forest) is a major developmental challenge in the district for sustainable livelihood at the household level. The non-farm sector is also severely underdeveloped in the district due to poor access to credit, proper training and marketing support.

### **1.2. PRADAN's Engagement**

The Dhamtari team of PRADAN<sup>1</sup> selected a contiguous patch of 323 villages covering Nagari block, the forest fringe area of Magarlod block and the Duban area of Dhamtari block in the Dhamtari district as well as the Narharpur block of Kanker district as its area of operation. There are approximately 37000 families residing in these villages among which 80% of the families are Schedule Tribes and 61% of the families are officially BPL.

The team started its operation in this area in the year 2007 with organizing the community especially the women, by forming SHGs (Self Help Groups).

### **Our Approach and Strategy**

1. Area saturation – working in contiguous patch and organizing about 70% households in a *Gram Panchayat* into SHGs
2. Group approach – working with a group rather than individual
3. Capacity building.
4. Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) based livelihood promotion.
5. Participatory approach- ensuring participation right from planning to implementation and monitoring

---

<sup>1</sup> Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) is a non- government organization (NGO) working with over 2 lakh families across 8 states. Description of PRADAN in brief is mentioned in Annexure 1

6. People to people extension.
7. Advocacy (influencing)
8. Focus on family rather than activity.
9. Organizing the community into SHGs
10. Basket of activities at households level- based on resources available with them
11. Awareness and helping community in planning for MGNREGS
12. Improved practices of production
13. Involving CRP and community representative
14. Convergence of different Programmes
15. Active engagement with Gram Panchayat and officials (both government employees as well as people's representatives) at Gram Panchayat, Block and District level.
16. Involving SHG in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
17. Demonstration then replication

Major developmental challenges of the area as identified by the team are:

1. Lack of food security from cultivation
  - a. Low production levels leading to less investment in husbandry of resources.
  - b. Limited Irrigation Infrastructure
2. Limited participation of women in mainstream
3. Underdeveloped market & services related to agriculture
4. Limited accessibility to government schemes
5. Dependency on eroding Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP).

At present, the team is working with approximately 4562 families organized into 350 SHGs spread over 82 villages in the selected project area.

The team is engaged in following major activities:

- **Development of land and water resources**
  - Plantation of fruit trees (mango and cashew) with 500 families in 188 hectares of upland.
  - Development of land and in-situ water harvesting structures in 621 hectares of land owned by 762 families.
- **Agriculture**
  - Last year (2010-11) the team worked with 919 families for extension of improved technology of production of paddy, millet, pulses and vegetable in 278 hectares of land.
    - About 35% of households got additional food sufficiency for more than three months from their own cultivation
    - About 57% of households earned an income of more than Rs 10000.

## 2. The Intervention- *Convergence for livelihood creation of rural poor*

### 2.1. The Background

The Dhamtari team of PRADAN initiated livelihood intervention in the selected villages of district with fruit crop plantation in upland in collaboration with NABARD in the year 2008. The fund available under the project for development of water resources was to support plantation and to facilitate intercropping and was insufficient. This created the need for building linkages with the department of agriculture and horticulture in order to mobilize resources for the development of water resources. Initially it was very tough for PRADAN as well as the community (the SHG members) to draw resources from the existing schemes of the department. However, after one year, when the effort of the community resulted in the crop of mango and cashew in the barren upland- it also attracted the field level officials of the department. They started believing in PRADAN professionals as well as the community. The PRADAN team got good support from these officials in linking the community with existing schemes of the department of agriculture and horticulture for creation of irrigation infrastructure like bore well, sprinkler pipe, irrigation pumps, construction of vermi-compost units and different inputs for cultivation of field crops and vegetables. Gradually, professionals of PRADAN moved out and an organic relationship was built between field level officials of the departments and the community SHGs. The officials scheduled their visit as per the meeting schedule of SHGs and started using the Community Service Providers<sup>2</sup> (CSPs) groomed by PRADAN to extend their programme to the community. The community also reciprocated in the same way by supporting and appreciating the effort made by these officials at different forums and occasions.

Gradually, discussion with the SHGs on development of other land, harvesting of rain water and MGNREGA stated. Initially it did not generate enough excitement and energy amongst the SHGs to engage with the *Gram Sabha* and influence them in planning and implementation of MGNREGA. In the beginning of 2010, PRADAN got a small grant from SDTT<sup>3</sup> to demonstrate land and water resource based development work in one village. Here the team demonstrated in-situ water harvesting and land development work in a contiguous patch of 17 hectares belonging to 32 families. It turned out well during monsoon. Where crops were struggling to survive in other patches of land in want of water, there was sufficient water in these farm ponds to save the crop. The team organized a large scale exposure visit to this village and the community consequently, was motivated enough

---

<sup>2</sup> Community Service Providers (CSPs) are local youth selected by SHGs and groomed by PRADAN to provide various kind of technical services to the SHG members.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, Mumbai

to make plan for development of land and water resources. The community engaged with the *Gram Sabha* to get their plan sanctioned under MGNREGA.

The Community developing linkages with field level officials of department of agriculture and horticulture and energized themselves enough to engage with the *Gram Sabha* for MGNREGA. It opened the door to land use based planning at household levels and for converging different schemes.

## 2.2. The Intervention

### 2.2.1. Central objective or theme of intervention

- To enhance productivity of resources (land and water) of community following Natural Resource Management (NRM) approach.
- Collaboration and convergence as a basic approach towards creating significant impact on livelihoods at the household level.
- Active participation of the community (SHG and *Gram Sabha*) in planning and in the implementation process.

With this objective, PRADAN demonstrated the entire process, beginning from planning to implementation and monitoring, initially, at one village. It helped in developing and standardizing formats, estimates and processes for further replication by PRADAN as well by the government functionaries.

The team has replicated this land use based planning at the household level and its implementation through convergence of various schemes at 14 villages of Dhamtari district and 10 villages of Kanker district.

### 2.2.2. Process Followed

#### A. Selection of Village

Based on our experience the team selects a village where about 60-70% of households are mobilized and organised into SHGs. This is because a significant critical mass is required to influence the *Gram Sabha* and the *Gram Panchayat* as per the need of the community, getting their plan approved and generating pressure on the officials at the block and district level. This critical mass is also required for checking irregularities and for proper implementation of work under MGNREGA as well as other programmes. This community which is organized now also supports and empowers the *Sarpanch* in dealing with the bureaucracy. Wherever the government functionaries (block level team of MGNREGA which includes Programme Officer and Technical Assistants under the guidance of Chief Executive Officer of block) are directly replicating the model under the guidance of MGNREGA cell at district level, they select the *Gram Panchayat* where the *Sarpanch* is proactive and development oriented.

## B. Planning

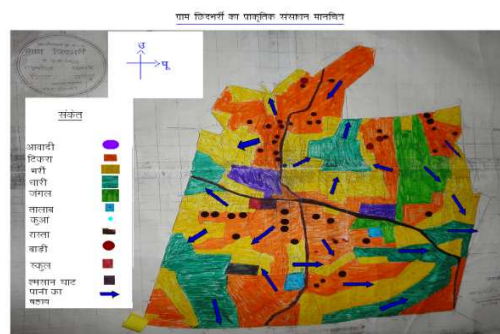
1. The Hamlet or Village is taken as the basic unit of planning.
2. Exposure visits are facilitated of SHGs and PRI members (Sarpanch, Panch etc.) to villages where the community has come forward to plan and implement land and water resource development activities for enhancing the productivity of their land.
3. Hamlet level meetings are organized after exposure visits in order to decide whether they are interested in such work and whether they can pursue their plan in the *Gram Sabha* and further with the administration.
4. The planning process is a three day exercise where the present status and use of resources, potential of using these resources alternatively, present status of existing schemes in the village etc. are discussed in detail. The plan is prepared and accordingly the task is divided amongst the PRADAN team, CSP and SHGs.
5. Active participation of SHGs and PRIs member based at the hamlet is ensured by the PRADAN team.
6. The planning process is facilitated by the PRADAN team.
7. Plan for only one year is prepared at a time because it fits easily with the requirement of the government departments, since they are aware about the available fund and they can implement the sanctioned work. Firsthand experience of work done in the first year helps the community in preparing a better plan for the next year.
8. Planning Process involves –



Typical Steps for plan preparation

Social Mapping- All the households of the hamlet and facilities available in the hamlet are depicted in the map. It helps in identifying the missing basic facilities like hand pump, *Anganwadi*, toilets etc. and planning for them.

**Resource Mapping-** Different types of land (upland, medium land, low land, homestead), available water bodies and vegetation are depicted on the revenue map of village. Present status of these resources, its use and return earned are discussed with the community. Here, the alternative and potential use of these resources and expected return from them is also discussed, which helps in developing a vision of the community. Based on considerations like patches on ridge, relative well being status of the family etc the community selects a patch for the annual plan.

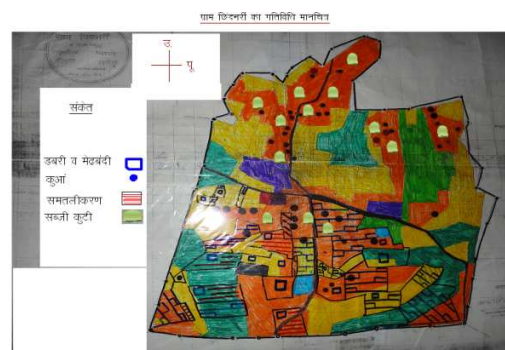


Resource Map

**Transect Visit-** Representative from all the households who own land in that patch, SHG members, PRI members, community service providers and members of the PRADAN team visit each plot of the patch. Here different land use options and work required to be done considering the location of land and other resources available is also discussed with the land owner.

**Finalization of plan and Activity Mapping-** After transect visit a meeting is organized at hamlet or village level to finalize the options discussed during transect visit. Community depicts the final plan on the revenue map of the village.

9. During the first planning exercise, different departments like the Agriculture, the horticulture and the Fisheries got involved to support the community in linking their plan for utilization of the assets planned to be created under MGNREGS. Later on, as the existing schemes of the district were mapped in the planning format, community make plan for that schemes also in the same way as they are planning for MGNREGA.



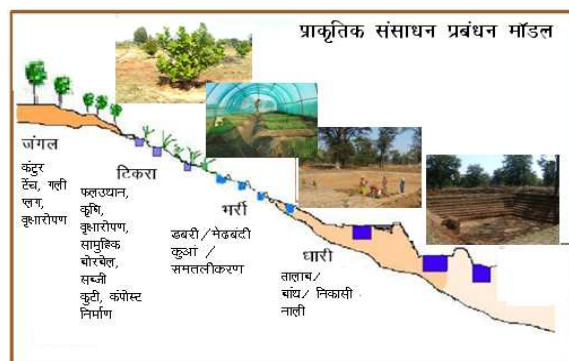
Activity Map

Innovative and Proactive Initiative in Livelihood Creation  
 Convergence for livelihood creation of rural poor- PRADAN's Experience

Planning Format where different schemes of agriculture, horticulture and fisheries Departments are mapped

10. Types of work commonly planned

- a. MGNREGA: Farm Pond, Dug Well, Field leveling & Bunding, CPT, Plantation
- b. MGNREGA and Horticulture: Orchard, Nursery shed for vegetable cultivation, Community Nursery for grafted fruit plant to SHG
- c. MGNREGA and TSC: Toilets
- d. Department of Agriculture / Horticulture: Bore well, Composting, Distribution of farm implements, sprinkler pipes and agricultural inputs
- e. Department of Fisheries: Distribution of inputs for fisheries, training etc
- f. CREDA: Biogas



11. Documentation:

Work planned under the MGNREGA: (Application, copy of job card, copy of land record). The team helps in computer related work and community deals with the *Patwari* for the land record. Generally, the *Patwari* is invited in the village on a scheduled date. PRADAN intervenes only when there is a problem. After documentation, the community submits the plan to the *Gram Sabha* and *Gram Panchayat*. The community takes receipts and submits a copy of the same to the block and district for sanctioning.



Work planned under other departments: The CSP helps the SHG members in filling relevant forms with required documents like copy of land record etc. The community then submits the application to relevant departments and submits a consolidated plan sheet to district. For the estimate preparation of work under MGNREGA, the PRADAN team helps the district and relevant departments in preparing 'model estimate' for the first time and later on all the work gets sanctioned as per the 'model estimate'.

### C. Implementation

#### Work planned under MGNREGA

1. After the sanction from district, a work order is released by block to the *Gram Panchayat* (GP) for work where the GP is the work agency and by district wherein the department is the work agency.
2. *Mates* (village level youth who monitors the work of MGNREGA at the work site) and *Rojgar Sahayak* (Gram Panchayat level staff of MGNREGA) are selected by community in the *Gram Sabha* and proposed for appointment.
3. PRADAN conducts training of *Mates*, *Rojgar Sahayak* and Technical assistants (engineers who look after the work of MGNREGA) of block before initiation of the said work.
4. *Mates* take daily measurements and attendance, which is signed by the worker. It ensures the work required to qualify as one working day.
5. The Community monitors the work for quality and to check irregularities (some places, SHG members are recognized as VMC- Village Monitoring committee member)
6. The muster roll is prepared by *Rojgar Sahayak* with help of *mates* and daily measurement is registered.
7. The measurement and evaluation of the work done is made by the technical assistant of block.
8. All the *Gram Panchayats* are organized into clusters and a roster (starting from day of work initiation to day of payment) is prepared for each cluster. It helps in making the community aware about the procedure before the payment after which they follow up each step with the *Rojgar Sahayak* for timely completion of different tasks.

#### Work planned under other department like Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries etc:

All work planned exclusively with other departments like agriculture,

horticulture, fisheries, department of forest, CREDA (Chhattisgarh Renewable Energy Development Agency) and not in convergence with MGNREGA is sanctioned by the concerned department and the field level officials of the department implement the plan in coordination with SHG and CSP. Field level functionaries of the department explain the provisions of different schemes in meeting with SHGs and give relevant application form to CSP. CSP fill the application and attach the relevant document like land records and submit it to the department. CSP help the field level functionaries of department also in preparing and collecting utilization certificate from the community.

#### D. Monitoring

1. A representative from each SHG at the hamlet or village level meets monthly to monitor the progress of the plan. They use monitoring sheets to help ascertain the status of each part of the plan.

Monitoring Sheet used by community

2. An action plan is prepared in the meeting for following up with the relevant departments, both at the block and district level. Roles and tasks are assigned amongst the member.
3. A follow up mechanism is in place for the Gram Sabha to follow as well.
4. The District Collector also monitors the progress of plan time to time during meetings with department heads.

#### 2.3. Efforts for replication

1. A workshop on NRM base planning and convergence was organized for block and Panchayat level functionaries and PRIs at Chhindbharri village to facilitate peer-to-peer learning.

2. The Chief Executive officer of block, Programme Officer of MGNREGA and technical assistants from all blocks, *Sarpanch, Sachiv and Rojgar Sahayak* from selected GP participated in the event.
3. The SHG has become a pioneer in spreading the message of INRM based participatory planning and successful experience of convergence.
4. Orientation and training of local youth (Community Service Providers/ Bharat Nirman Volunteers – a concept recognized by government of India and launched as a programme) is conducted to support the community in the planning and documentation process.
5. Training of technical assistant for preparing land use based village plan is also conducted.
6. Training of mates and technical assistants for implementation of plan is conducted as well.
7. The planning formats-which is circulated to all the GPs, for annual planning is also developed.
8. The village plan is accepted as a base for planning by other departments like agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, forest, CREDA etc.



**Orientation Workshop**



**Experience Sharing by SHG**

#### **2.4. The Output**

1. The planning process enhanced the self image and confidence of community as well as gave a proper perspective to the community towards planning.
2. The planning process produced a proper working plan for community, PRI as well as the government officials and brought the community together for natural resource management.
3. The planning process also brought the departments like MGNREGA (department of Rural Development), Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries etc together which led to an effective convergence among them. The convergence was of two types and was

demonstrated by:

- a. Different departments focusing on a single family
  - b. Different departments working for similar activities like *Sabji Kuti* (small scale Vegetable Nursery shed), community nursery etc.
4. The village development plan prepared for 56 villages spread amongst 3 blocks namely Nagari, Magrlod and Dhamtari. The plan aimed to directly affect the livelihood of 1009 rural households by developing their resource base. Most of the work planned for first year is completed. Plan for 2012-13 was approved by the Gram Sabha.
  5. Intervention from the agriculture and the horticultural department through ongoing programmes for irrigation support (bore well, pump, pipe), agricultural equipment (sprayer, weeder etc) and support for inputs like seed, bio fertilizer and bio pesticide is mobilized as per plan to facilitate utilization of the assets created.

### 3. The Outcome

#### A. Village Chhindbharri- a case

##### i. The Context

**Location:** Situated near Madamsilli dam at 30 km distance from district headquarter Dhamtari. It is 50 km away from block head quarter of Nagari.

**Demography:** Number of households: 75, Total Population: 415, Percentage of Schedule Tribes: 95%, BPL Households: 85%

##### Resources and Livelihoods:

- **Land Holdings:** Average Land Holding : 5 Acres , Marginal Farmer: 32% households, Small Farmer: 33% households
- **Land Type:** Upland: 52% land, Medium land: 29% land, Lowland: 19% land
- **Food Sufficiency from own cultivation:** 6 Month and less: 50% households  
6 months to 1 year: 38% households
- **Other sources of income :** Average Contribution to individual households income
- **Labour (Agriculture, MGNREGA, Migration) :** 55%, NTFP collection and trading: 24%, Other households activity (Fishing, Trading etc.) : 21%

##### ii. Work Done / Intervention

- There are five SHGs and one village level committee in the village promoted under various programme. Forty two families of the village were facilitated by the PRADAN team in the year 2009 to develop a orchard of Mango and Cashew in their 35 acres of marginally utilized upland with financial support from NABARD and the department of agriculture and horticulture.

**Innovative and Proactive Initiative in Livelihood Creation**  
*Convergence for livelihood creation of rural poor- PRADAN's Experience*

- Land and water resource development work under MGNREGA in 2010

Participatory plan prepared by SHG was presented to the *Gram Sabha* which got approval.

**Plan in brief:**

1. Number of family: 31
2. Area: 40 ha
3. Work: Land leveling: 8.2 acres, Small Farm Pond: 93, Pond: 2, Dug Well: 5, Sabji Kuti: 20, Community Nursery for growing grafted plants: 1
4. Plan also includes development of irrigation facility, composting, agriculture implements and other inputs in convergence with agriculture and horticulture department.
5. Work Completed: Small Farm Pond: 90 Number, Pond: 2 Number, Low Cost Sabji Kuti: 20 Number, Irrigation Bore well: 9 Number, Community Nursery: 1 Number (Low cost mist chamber and net house (Rs 2.39 lakh) constructed in convergence with RKVY and MGNREGS) to raise 1 lakh plants.
6. Composting unit: 30, Biogas with support from CREDA: 21 family

**Outcome:**

1. Soil erosion checked in 91 acres land of 31 families.
2. Infrastructure developed to harvest 56380 cum of rainwater in the field of 31 families.
3. Additional irrigation coverage of 40 acres.
4. Enhanced Income from agriculture of more than 60% households earning an income of Rs 15000 and above.



**Community Nursery  
(MGNREGA + RKVY)**



**Sabji Kuti (MGNREGA+ RKVY)**



**Farm Pond under MGNREGA &  
crop cultivation support from  
DoA**

## B. How it affected the life of individual household

### Sushila Bai/ Kisun Netam

Sushila Bai is a member of Bhumi Swa Sahayta Samuh of village Chhindbharri. She has 1.5 acres of land. Out of that, one acre is upland and rest is a paddy field. The return to farming was not sufficient to meet the basic requirements of the family. Her husband Kisun Netam was primarily an agricultural laborer. He used to migrate to the plains area of Chhattisgarh for 45- 60 days in a year for paddy harvesting. The Fruit plantation in the adjoining land and the development of irrigation infrastructure motivated Sushila Bai to go for fruit and vegetable cultivation in one acre of upland. She planted 25 Mango and 30 Cashew plants in her land in 2010 and did vegetable cultivation there.



She then developed the land and constructed a *sabji kuti* with the support of schemes under MGNREGA and got sprinkler pipe from department of horticulture fixed. She cultivated potato, brinjal, tomato, chili, bottle gourd and sponge gourd in her land. She earned Rs 33000 from the land whereas she was getting less than Rs 1000 a year by cultivating black gram earlier. Consequently, last year her husband did not need to migrate for paddy harvesting and stayed in the village and worked for 100 days under MGNREGA.

### Tularam Markam

Tularam Netam is a resident of Amlipara village of Nagari block in Dhamtari district. He owns about 4.5 ares of land. Out of this, about 3 acres is upland which is only marginally cultivated because of undulation, poor soil fertility and lack of irrigation support. The remaining three acres were used to cultivate short duration paddy. It contributes to about 6 months of food for his family. Wage labour is another source of income for his family. During the planning process at his village, Tularam planned to develop his upland as a fruit orchard and level the medium and low land. He also planned for two farm ponds.



Tularam got an orchard developed in his 2.5 acres of upland with support from NABARD and department of horticulture. He has planted mango and cashew plant in his land. MGNREGA helped him to do Cattle proof Trench (CPT) in the orchard, level the medium land and create farm pond in medium and low land for paddy cultivation. He also constructed a low cost nursery shed for vegetable cultivation in his orchard with the support from Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna (RKVY) and MGNREGA. Tularam completed 100 days of work under MGNREGA. This year Tularam cultivated chilli, groundnut, tomato, brinjal, and turmeric in the upland and paddy in medium and low land and earned an additional income of about Rs 25000. He was supported by the department of agriculture and horticulture for inputs like seed and implements and PRADAN provided training and technical support in implementing these activities to him.

#### 4. Learning

- A mobilized and organized community is critical for preparing a plan, following up with the *Gram Panchayat* and related departments for sanctioning the activity and for proper implementation.
- Presence of a facilitating agency (like PRADAN) is required for continuous coordinating with community and various departments.
- Exposure visits and capacity building activities for the community and various other stakeholders are critical.
- The administration, *Gram Panchayat* and the community are the three major stakeholders involved in the programme. Eventually all three need to be involved. One could begin with collaborating with any favorable one out of these. However, only one *stakeholder* alone is not enough. One has to rope in at least one key stakeholder before a major scale-up is possible.
- Government officials, especially those working at field level, struggle a lot to achieve their target and many a times adopt other means to do so. They generally do not get any support from community but mostly complain at different forum. Appreciating them for whatever little they do goes a long way and can help in orienting and influencing them to work towards the advantage of the community.
- PRI members (especially in tribal dominated area like Chhattisgarh) like *Sarpanch, Janpad Sadasya* (Member of block level panchayat) are mostly perceived wrong by both community as well as the officials. They need support from people to serve them better. An organized community (SHGs) with an orientation towards building linkages can empower these PRI members. This in turn would put pressure on the delivery mechanism of government.
- Support from higher officials at district level is always helpful and fastens the process as no one can deny the genuine demand by an organized community.
- Engagement with the *Gram Panchayat* and departments (like MGNREGA Cell, Horticulture etc) at the district level is required for technical support and to build a system and process that is favorable to the community.

#### **Factors that facilitated the convergence**

- Organised community (SHGs).
- Continuous engagement of a facilitating agency (PRADAN).
- Successful demonstration on ground (SHG, Orchard, land & water resource development work).
- Established linkages and trust amongst field level officials of departments and community.
- Support from higher officials at district level.

#### **Perceived Potential Threat**

- Lack of support from higher officials at district level might slow the pace.
- Change of officials at field level (which is not so frequent) may slow the process, till the time the new incumbents get oriented.
- Increasing LWE activities may dissuade the officials in engaging with community at field level.

## Evolution of PRADAN

PRADAN was founded in 1983<sup>4</sup> on the belief that individuals with knowledge resources and empathy towards the marginalized must work with poor people if mass poverty is to be removed proactively. Knowledge is needed to expand the pie, as it were – expand opportunities for poor people through innovation and by adapting and demystifying technology, building and nurturing fair service linkages and beneficial networks, fostering collaboration among poor people and between them and the rest of the world and helping poor people enhance their capabilities. Empathy is essential if one is to spawn, change in others' lives by stimulating the latter's resources. Development in that sense is a “helping occupation” where interest in and caring for the other are essential resources. This is particularly important when transactions are across inherently unequal players.

Broadly, these two themes – expanding livelihood opportunities for poor people and getting caring and capable people on board to do so – have guided PRADAN's institution development processes all along.

## Programs and Outreach

Following an area saturation approach, PRADAN currently (March 2012) works with about 280000 poor families<sup>5</sup> in 43 districts across eight States<sup>6</sup> in the poorest regions of the country. Women from about 90 percent of these families are organized into SHGs with an average membership of 14 each. Sectoral activities taken up to promote livelihoods include agriculture (cereals, vegetables and other cash crops, horticulture) supported by integrated development of land and water resources, livestock (dairy, goat rearing, fisheries), forest/ plantation-based activities (tasar and mulberry silk rearing, shellac rearing and leaf plate making), and rural enterprises (modern poultry, mushroom cultivation, tasar silk processing). These livelihood programs presently reach out to about half of the families. Typically, PRADAN has to extend support for three to five years, with declining intensity, before a poor family can carry forward the livelihood activity on its own. The extent and duration of support depends on how new the activity is to the people and the place, complexity of technology and linkages and the existential context of the household.

---

<sup>4</sup> As a Charity, incorporated in the then Union Territory of Delhi under the Societies Registration Act (Act XXI of 1860).

<sup>5</sup> The social composition is 57% tribal people, 15% *dalits*, 26% other “backward castes”, 2% other poor communities.

<sup>6</sup> Assam (1 district), Bihar (4 districts), Chhattisgarh (4), Jharkhand (13), M. P. (9), Orissa (7), Rajasthan (2) and West Bengal (3).