

The Apprenticeship Programme for Rural Development

OVERVIEW

Established in 1983, PRADAN works with over 76,000 thousand poor rural families with the mission of enabling them to live a life of dignity. The focus of its work is to promote and strengthen livelihoods. This involves organising them, enhancing their capabilities and introducing ways to improve their incomes, by linking them to banks, markets and other economic services and opportunities.

PRADAN owes its genesis to a strong belief in a simple idea - that caring and capable people rather than material resources are crucial to accelerate the process of social development in our country. PRADAN takes on board young people with varied educational backgrounds, motivated to use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the rural poor. A 12-month long field-based apprenticeship, formally introduced in 1990, systematically prepares young people for work in the villages.

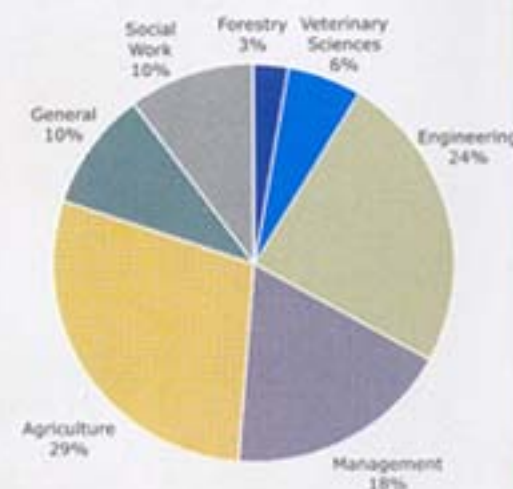
Today, over 200 PRADAN professionals are spread out in small field-based teams across 2,000 villages in remote and poor pockets of Bihar, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal, pursuing a full-time career in rural development. We expect 65 - 70 people to graduate from the apprenticeship programme, and join PRADAN each year.



PRADAN

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DISCIPLINE-WISE COMPOSITION OF PRADAN STAFF



OBJECTIVES OF APPRENTICESHIP

By the end of 12 months each apprentice would have

- explored her/his interest in and suitability to grassroots work.
- learned to perform a set of tasks, which together produce a developmental outcome within the framework of a PRADAN livelihoods promotion project.



1. Binju Abraham, Mechanical Engineer and Apprentice 1998, demonstrates preparations to hatch brood lac. Ranchi District, Jharkhand
2. Pramod K. Sahu, Masters in Agriculture and Apprentice 1998, discusses quality considerations in leaf - plate making with women producers. Kandhamal District, Orissa
3. Tamali Kundu, Biophysicist and Apprentice 1999, demonstrates how to examine moisture content in maize. West Singhbhum District, Jharkhand

WHY APPRENTICESHIP ?

Rural community development is a complex process involving the interplay of social, political and economic forces. Capable and caring people can accelerate this process, and make it more humane, especially for the poor, by working among them in villages in a sustained way. Everyone is not cut out to be a "helping person", which is what grassroots community work requires. Such work also requires youngsters to swim against the social current, and bear with unfamiliar and difficult conditions of work and life by choice. The apprenticeship programme therefore provides an opportunity to assess the pluses and minuses of a life in grassroots work. It also gives time to reflect upon alternative career choices, to think about responsibilities towards and expectations of family and friends, and to experience the living conditions and broad content and pace of work in villages.

University education is also inadequate preparation for grassroots work. It does not provide the concepts, knowledge, orientation and skills needed to work with the disadvantaged as catalysts and enablers of change. It gives students no exposure to the problems and potential of working among the disadvantaged. At best, it helps them to solve "technical problems" or prepare "situational analyses". Most newcomers to this field have thus not had an opportunity to pick up practical

skills, and to develop the breadth of perspective needed by effective development workers. The apprenticeship programme is designed to provide the fledgling development worker just this opportunity, to learn through guided practice at the grassroots.

STRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS

Each apprentice works with a PRADAN field team, guided by an experienced professional, trained and designated as field guide (FG). The apprenticeship programme has two phases.

- Phase 1:** The apprentice spends the first 2 months exploring a career in development in the villages. It helps each person decide, early on, whether or not this is the kind of life and work s/he looking for.
- Phase 2:** The apprentice spends 10 months in the field, learning by doing. S/he learns the nitty-gritty of promoting livelihoods in a village through guided practice. This phase is structured to help each person develop basic competencies as a development professional, and to set clear career goals.

In addition to this apprentices participate in central events organized by the HRD unit. This includes a joint organizational orientation, introduction to gender and

social analysis, a village study exercise, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), a three-phased process awareness and sensitivity module and specific sectoral training viz., promoting livelihoods based on self help groups, agriculture, and poultry, etc.

Apprentices also write periodic reports outlining their learning and read material relevant to grassroots work. They participate in quarterly exercises for reflection and feedback, meant to provide data for personal awareness, impetus for personal growth and development, and inputs to organizational decision-making.

EMOLUMENTS

As Apprentices: -A fixed monthly stipend of Rs 8,000 pm (1st & 2nd month) And Rs 9,000 pm (3rd to 12th month). They are covered under PRADAN's general accident insurance policy and medical expenses are reimbursed up to a predetermined limit.

An executive in PRADAN receives minimum gross monthly emoluments of Rs 1,95,000 PA, including house rent allowance, conveyance allowance, contribution to provident fund and gratuity. Each employee is also covered under a general accident insurance policy, and medical policy as a member of PRADAN's contributory welfare fund.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY ?

Those with a minimum of 16 years of educational qualifications and any of the following :

- A bachelor's degree in a professional / technical discipline, e.g., engineering, agriculture, veterinary sciences, etc.
- A master's degree in science, the social sciences, humanities, a technical discipline, management or social work.
- Less than three years of work experience who meet either of the above criteria.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Recruiters from PRADAN visit select educational institutes / campuses across the country. They identify young people interested in exploring life and work in the villages. Applications are also invited online in www.pradan.net, and through newspaper advertisements.

Applicants are put through a carefully designed multi-tier selection process, through campus placement and direct recruitment camps organized by PRADAN from time to time.



Anil K Verma, Masters in Agriculture, Apprentice 1996. Now a field guide, he demonstrates agricultural practices to apprentices

Graduates Speak

" Looking back on activities and experiences during the last one year I feel delighted because I gained so many varied experiences helping me to mature as a person. I have grown in confidence to face difficult situations and at the same time developed the ability to internalize the virtue of patience. My experience has also helped me in gaining confidence in people's institutions. "

— K Hariharan, PGDRM, IRMA, Anand

" The significance of PRADAN's apprenticeship programme can be discerned from the fact that my vocabulary has today changed from iron, steel, copper, silver, gold, platinum, minerals, ores, furnaces to ... poor, Self-Help Groups, Clusters, Villages, Dairy Cooperatives, District Poverty Initiatives Project.. "

To become an engineer I invested four years... whereas just one year in PRADAN has made me a development worker. "

— Tosh Baghela, Metallurgical Engineer, MNIT, Jaipur

" It is very clear that my academic background has nothing to do with my work. After three months of joining PRADAN when I got a clearer picture of its developmental work profile, I was given enough time to think whether to continue with this kind of work. But believe me, not for a fraction of a second did I think of otherwise. Rather, I planned concretely to continue further within PRADAN. "

— Monisha Mukherjee, Chemical Engineer, NIT, Durgapur

" Looking back down the road I have traveled, I find myself asking the question- 'What have I done ? ' I had no prior reference point in the development sector, but it now dawns on me that we often find our beginnings ... in the end.

Today, once again I find myself asking the question, what is it that I am doing ... what do I want to do ...? But as June, 2004 culminates in my apprenticeship, I see myself stepping into a new phase. All of a sudden my horizon has widened. My world seems to be opening up and asking me to boldly go where I have not been before. "

— Meitreyi Shanker, Masters in Social Work, TISS, Mumbai

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