

PRADAN

Annual Report 2008 -09

OVERVIEW

2008-09 was the second year of implementation of the PRADAN 2012 perspective plan prepared in consonance with the PRADAN 2017 Vision. PRADAN reached out to more than 180,000 families. We worked in 3,429 villages spread across 41 districts.

We have significantly increased our outreach during the year. Forty thousand new families participated in our development interventions, out of which about 26,000 joined new SHGs. Nearly 2,500 new SHGs were formed. One hundred thousand families participated in livelihood programmes.

Community Taking Charge as an approach received a lot of attention. PRADAN's grass root engagement methodology was rearticulated and elaborated with this perspective. Each team worked out strategies to speed up the process of handing over charge to the community and reduce their dependence on PRADAN. A large number of community service providers (CSP) who in the medium term would be fully paid for by the community were groomed. Attention was focused on creating mechanisms for programme sustainability such as strengthening producers' organisations and SHG based collectives like cluster associations and federations. Many of the community service providers would be housed in these collectives. Large scale training and exposure programmes were conducted for both the community members as well as the CSPs.

Family based livelihood planning for integrated natural resource management (INRM) is being adopted in almost all our field locations. The planning process is carried out at the SHG or the hamlet with participation from both male and female members of the family. These plans are then consolidated at the village or hamlet level. The plans offer ample scope for converging various resources from different sources at the village level. With such a planning process, more and more families are participating in multiple livelihood interventions. This reflects the reality that rural poor households have multiple resources and promoting livelihoods for them is not a single-sector intervention.

Following from the above, the activity that gained the maximum spread last year was farm based interventions, especially on paddy and vegetables. More than 80% of the family level interventions were around farm based livelihoods or to improve land and water assets. The SRI technology of paddy cultivation has become very popular with about 21,000 participants. Vegetable cultivation in small parcels of land is also becoming a successful activity with over 40,000 family interventions in kharif, rabi and summer. Major success was achieved in Gaya project when the team applied the SRI principles to wheat cultivation and achieved breakthrough results. Directorate of Rice Development, Government of India has certified productivity of 7.96 ton/ha in a farm, which is high even by the standards of best farms in places like the Punjab.

Tasar sericulture broke new ground with the teams successfully preparing foundation seeds in the project villages and breaking the myth that these could be prepared only in

farms run by Central Silk Board under direct supervision of scientists. The MASUTA producer company of tasar reelers also reached new heights by leveraging large credit from a wide variety of financial institutions right from private charities to public and private sector banks. The activity of small-holder broiler poultry farming continued to register impressive growth. There were 5,320 producers, all of them women, with nearly 95% of them from Schedule Tribe, *Dalit* and OBC families. The members were organized in 16 primary co-operative societies which had a combined annual turnover of INR¹ 603 million. Two state level federations in Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh also expanded their activities.

The value of associative tiers of SHGs (cluster associations and federations) in social mobilisation has always been appreciated in the teams. More number of teams moved towards strengthening existing federations and promoting new federations. Members of these organisations displayed their leadership and spearheaded SHG formation in adjoining areas. The organisations also challenged various social norms and barriers.

NREGA drew significant attention during the last year. PRADAN took part in a number of field implementation projects that mobilised NREGA funds and demonstrated how sustainable livelihood assets can be created. In Bankura district PRADAN worked with the Panchayati Raj Institutions and made landmark progress in the implementation of NREGA projects in two blocks. This has been well appreciated by the State Government and there are invitations to extend the same processes to other districts as well. Under the aegis of the National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods hosted by PRADAN, a policy dialoguing process has been initiated.

We deployed new ways for scaling up. The direct sectoral approach in which PRADAN would put up a lean team to intervene in a single livelihood sector and impact large number of livelihoods, gained strength with the success of the team at Gaya. It reached out to more than five thousand families promoting paddy cultivation through SRI ensuring high quality. The partnership approach (with NGOs and other grassroots implementers) was the other approach tried out, debated quite extensively and experiences consolidated. While in both these approaches the breadth of intervention that PRADAN applies in its direct approaches may not happen, significant income enhancement of the families would be the minimum expectation.

There were a number of initiatives this year to initiate dialogue at the policy level on a variety of issues. The initiative around re-looking at the provisions of the Producer Company legislation continued this year too as the Working Group set up for the purpose finalized its report. PRADAN took up a pilot project in Orissa to work with the Mission Shakti programme to demonstrate an appropriate way of promoting SHGs with a focus on livelihoods of the very poor communities. In Jharkhand PRADAN worked very closely with the State Government especially with its Tribal Welfare Department in programme design and prototype development.

¹ INR = Indian Rupees, also mentioned as Rs. The average conversion rate between US\$ and INR in the year 2008-09 was 1US\$ = 50 INR.

In addition to our regular initiatives of human resource development, several new ideas were explored. A new programme, Facilitating Change through Training was highly appreciated and found to be of high value for direct application in the field. Active negotiations happened between PRADAN and a number of academic institutions in India and abroad for converting our Development Apprenticeship Programme into a proper academic course combining academic rigour and field experience.

A major highlight of the year was the finalising of the new PRADAN structure, one of the areas we had worked on as part of the Vision 2017 process. A unique feature of the new structure has been in the formalisation of the role of PRADAN professionals in its institution building. Two new Councils were formed with PRADAN professionals as members. The General Council has all the PRADAN Executives having more than 4 years experience as voluntary members. It upholds the non-negotiables in PRADAN, preserves the institutional culture, reinforces the sense of ownership and influence of the collective in its development task. Another council named the Stewardship Council (SC) has members selected through a sociometric process by the members of the GC. The SC is entrusted with the responsibility of guiding movement towards PRADAN's mission and is a recommendatory body to the PRADAN Governing Board. The Councils are in the way of experimentation as of now, since such organisational innovations have not been tried out elsewhere and thus there are no existing experiences to learn from.

OUTREACH

In the last year PRADAN worked with over 180,000 families in 3,429 villages in 104 blocks spread over 41 districts across the States of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal. 70% of the families belong to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities whereas 27% belong to the Other Backward Castes (OBCs). We began work in 3 new districts – Bongaigaon in Assam, Sirohi (Abu Road) in South Rajasthan and Mandla in MP.

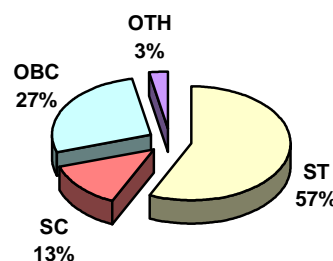
An experienced PRADAN professional is setting up a new initiative in Bongaigaon district of Assam, one of the poorer areas of the State. This is presently in the form of a PRADAN project there to assist NGO partners in extending the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). A new NGO under his leadership will be incubated there for a period of three years with guidance from a Programme Director. 400 farmers took up SRI paddy in the last Kharif season with assistance from the project.

A new PRADAN team has been initiated in the drought prone Sirohi district in tribal populated South Rajasthan. One experienced professional has set up office in Sirohi to start operations there. The initial reconnaissance and rapport building phase are completed and the team has started forming Self Help Groups in selected villages.

The team at Dindori in MP expanded its operations to the adjoining district of Mandla. The team is implementing the IFAD funded Tejeswini project. The operations in Mandla will take shape of a full-fledged team in the coming financial year.

Table: PRADAN outreach and client social composition in 2008-09

	March 2007	March 2008	March 2009
Villages /Hamlets	3,044	3,408	5,155* 3,429
Blocks	89	97	104
Districts	27	38	41
Households	112,900	142,620	181,400



* For 2007 and 2008, villages and hamlets were not separated. This year we are reporting number of hamlets separately as a result of automation of our MIS system

The SHG Programme

A Self Help Group is an informal association of women, built around microfinance, and acts as a support group to enhance the sense of 'being' of the members. The SHG carries out microfinance through savings and credit supplemented by bank loans, which help reduce financial vulnerability and also provide funds for enhancing livelihoods. The group facilitates the members to develop a vision, explore and analyze their existential realities and extend mutual help in issues concerning their lives and livelihoods.

Last year we promoted 2,450 more Self Help Groups and added 26,210 new women as members. As on March 31, 2009 there were 11,433 SHGs with whom PRADAN professionals were actively engaged. There were 620 Clusters, an increase of 94 Clusters from the earlier year. The SHGs' own fund increased by more than INR 150 million. 423 new bank linkages were established last year and an amount of more than INR 80 million were mobilised. Another INR 240 million were generated as loans from the groups' own funds.

Particulars	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07
Outreach (31st March)			
Number of SHGs	11,406	8,983	7,512
Number of members (all women)	150,349	122,845	106,090
Cluster associations	620	526	494
Financials (INR, in Million)			
Net owned funds (Cumulative)	458.8	302.6	245.4
Net own funds (Additional during the period)	89.0	57.2	72.7
Internal credit disbursed	179.0	130.6	113.1
Number of bank linkages	417.2	306.0	227.6
Bank credit mobilised	86.1	53.2	79.4

Community taking charge is the desired end-state that PRADAN envisions. This requires sustainable local institutions of the target community to carry on the livelihoods and well-being agenda forward. Substantive internal deliberations were held in the last year for refining the role of the SHG in the livelihood programmes and various other wellbeing issues. We realised that the enormous opportunity SHGs offer in the form of robust solidarity organisations of poor women has not yet been fully utilised in the projects to facilitate the processes of empowerment. Through the processes of regular meetings and interactions, these groups have emerged as effective support groups for the members through thick and thin. The group helped the individual member in the process of self-evaluation and development leading to enhancement in her sense of being. This is an important developmental outcome that can be further harnessed. This for PRADAN can become the basic foundation to build on and assist her in her movement towards sustainable livelihoods and well-being in a way that she takes charge of her own development.

We have always argued that unlike SHGs, SHG federations are not very suitable to take up a financial role. Being large organisations, they do not have the advantage of a closely

knit group like the SHG. Mutual support between individual members and peer review that remove the necessity of financial collateral and facilitate effective credit utilisation are not available in a federation. Federations however are better equipped to handle social empowerment roles by virtue of numerical strength of members, common objectives and similarity of issues affecting all members. Actions which were initiated as a result of Vision 2017 process gained momentum in several locations during the last year.

SHGs AND SOCIAL MOBILISATION

PRADAN's grassroots methodology emphasises on facilitating processes for the community, especially the women, to take charge of their lives to attain an enhanced sense of well-being (i.e. to ensure a better quality of life with individual dignity and self esteem). The approach was re-articulated in 2008 on the basis of our core beliefs as under:

- People have potential to change their own life and influence change in lives of others²
- It is possible to facilitate the realization of this potential³
- This realization requires expressing/asserting one's self-view which needs to be supported by positive change in the immediate micro-environment.

The interventions PRADAN does on other fronts such as livelihoods, credit mobilisation, building knowledge and linkages around sectoral interventions contribute as the supporting conditions to be created so that the primary objective of helping communities take charge can be achieved.

In alignment with this approach PRADAN supports the community to organize itself into groups which would be self-managed. These groups provide an environment to its members to develop and grow. The groups facilitate enhancement of the members' sense of agency. Groups also help build a critical mass (numbers / scale) to influence the environment around. They provide an opportunity for the disadvantaged communities to link with each other, help each other and build on each one-another's capabilities. PRADAN envisages multiples institutions to emerge in the village as part of the interventions to carry out various roles as required. Predominantly three kinds of institutions are visualised – SHGs and associated tiers like cluster associations and SHG federations; area based institutions such as watershed committees and producer collectives around sectoral interventions.

SHGs, their cluster associations and federations are an essential part of all our social mobilisation initiatives. They form the foundation for PRADAN's engagement with the community, especially the women. PRADAN field teams engage with the SHGs to set in motion processes in them, which would lead to creating climate for collective self-expression, reflection, learning from successes or failures and taking initiatives.

² 'People have it in them'

³ 'It can be done'

PRADAN envisages that group leaders and community resource persons selected by community would play major role in spearheading these processes and values thus paving way for a greater impact.

SHG-Cluster-Federations are emerging as an integrated model, where the primary groups are at the hamlet level, the intermediary federation (called cluster association) is at the village level or in a set of contiguous villages and the apex federation is at the Block level. Cluster associations have been involved in peer review of member SHGs, resolving conflicts in groups and acting collectively at the local level to address issues affecting the SHGs and their members. Federations on the other hand are providing an “identity” to the mass of SHGs and their members. Solidarity and collective action at the meso level for rights and entitlements; taking up issues related to position of women in society, influencing wider environment are one set of roles for the federations. In the other, the federations set standards of performance of the cluster associations and provide SHG support services like accounting, auditing and MIS.

The SHGs at the hamlet level have had quite a salutary effect on the families. “Now we have a source dignified credit, we do not have to supplicate to a loan-shark in time of emergencies,” is the steady refrain one hears from the women across the projects. The SHG members do not tire of describing the various benefits they have drawn from the SHGs. The SHGs have created a platform in the village where the women from the very poor families collect together, setting aside differences and deliberate on matters close to their lives and plan for development. The basic values of collaboration, trust and mutual help and the management skills they have been inculcated with in the SHG stand them in good stead as they push frontiers and shoulder responsibilities that challenge the gender barriers.

The operative part of the Cluster is the monthly meeting of all the Cluster representatives (two to three from each SHG) in a central place which is normally within walking distance of each SHG. The Cluster over a period of time has emerged as an important business forum with its own agenda and processes. The performance of the SHGs under its catchment in the previous month is reviewed regularly in the Cluster meeting, and areas of improvement and support are identified. The support is drawn from amongst themselves, with the PRADAN professional pitching in if needed.

Cluster settling family disputes

Girija Devi, 30 years, lives in village Haramba in Hazaribagh district. Her husband married thrice, she being the first wife. Girija and his husband did not have a child; so he married again and as the second wife died, he married for the third time. His husband and her new wife started abusing Girija. The situation worsened in August 2008. Her food was stopped. Girija's sister-in-law, Rukmini Devi, became aware of what was going on. While Girija did not belong to any SHG, Rukmini was a member of Santoshi Mahila Mandal which operated in the neighbouring hamlet. Whenever Rukmini asked Girija to bring her case to the SHG, she would say that it was her fate and there was nothing anybody could do. Rukmini persisted. On 5 January 2009, Girija was thrown out of her house. She went to Rukmini who took her to her SHG. The SHG members, thirteen of them, went to the husband the next day and tried to talk to him but he did not listen. The women then took Girija to the Cluster meeting on 19 January. Till that time Girija stayed with Rukmini. Girija's case was discussed in the Gayatri Cluster meeting on 19 January in village Champadih. The very next day, 25 Cluster members went to Haramba and met her husband. There were members in this Cluster who also had attended the legal literacy training by PRADAN, the year before. The legal knowledge they had gained supplemented their collective negotiation power. They cautioned him that having a second wife, when his first wife was alive and not supporting the first wife, was reason enough for filing a case against him in the police station, which they would do if necessary. Girija's husband decided to relent. He took back Girija with immediate effect. Girija is now staying with her husband and his second wife. He takes care of her, gives money and food and does not torture her anymore.

The Clusters are also solidarity forums in the local area. The wisdom and the resourcefulness the women leaders have displayed in dealing with and solving many local problems have been remarkable. Women, who themselves are struggling to eke out their two-square-meals-a-day have taken keen interest in bettering the lives of others and have faced many odds and challenges just because they all belong to the SHG alliance. The Cluster meetings are held very regularly and the issues that are brought up are addressed with a keen sense of urgency which has also given them credibility and acceptance. The types of issues addressed by the Clusters are of a wide variety. Demonstrating against alcoholism among their men folk and disrupting sale of liquor in the villages are observed across locations. Family issues such as second marriage, dispute over property, desertion of wife, violence against wife, and so on are another set of issues commonly heard from different projects. There have been many cases in which the Cluster as a solidarity forum has agitated against the improper delivery of services from the Panchayat and the Block. They have even taken up cudgels against the powerful people in the villages when they thought that justice was being denied. In resolving even tricky issues when it relates to caste sentiments or intra-family relationships, the women have maintained their objectivity and not allowed themselves to be prejudiced by the status or situation of the actors involved.

Justice to Rambai

Rambai from Village Dhansai has been a member of the Laxmi Mahila Samiti for over 6 years. Her SHG is also a member of the Narmada Mahila Sangh, the Federation promoted by PRADAN in Bhoura, in Betul District. Her daughter Lata studied in Class VIII and used to go to a school in a distant village as there were no school in her village. One evening in December 2007, as she was returning from school as usual, a few known deviants of the area spotted her in an isolated area, raped and killed her.

The next day her body was discovered in a spot near the village fields. The parents with the help of other villagers and SHG members managed to go to the Police Station at Chopna and registered a complaint against the culprits. But the police dragged their feet by saying that there was no evidence. They refused to even question the suspects. The villagers gradually lost interest after a couple of months of following up but the SHG members carried on their efforts.

They raised the issue at the monthly Federation meeting, that the police were being inactive in spite of circumstantial evidence. The Federation assured Rambai of proper action and deputed a few members to visit every person in authority in the area along with the mother and represent her case. They visited the Police Station, the District Magistrate, the Superintendent of Police, the Block Development Officer, the politicians and anyone else who they thought could help. They persisted with these visits and gave them their written application and got signed receipts from all of them. Meanwhile the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Mr Shivraj Singh Chouhan came to Betul. The federation members along with Rambai went and met him, and gave him their application.

In the annual congregation of Narmada Mahila Sangh in March 2008, where about 7,000 SHG members attended, this issue raised a lot of passion and the collective anger was visible. The women threatened to take up a mass movement against the administration if they delayed justice. This resolution was taken when the District administrative authorities were sitting on the dais.

After 6 months of the incident, in May 2008, senior police officers from the District including the Superintendent of Police came to the village for investigation. They arrested one boy from the same village who gave the names of two of his associates in the crime. The two were arrested later, one from the same village and other from the nearby village. An Anganwadi worker, who was a witness, and had not testified earlier out of fear of the criminals, also gave her statement. The three were sentenced to imprisonment by the district court soon after and the process of getting justice is on.

SHG Federations

Promotion of apex level Federations of SHGs, was debated quite extensively in the organisation in the last few years. Efforts were made in many locations to promote and give shape to robust apex level federations that could emerge as the poor peoples' own institutions that would give the women an identity different from her gender, caste and occupation; an identity shared by all the poor women in the area. In the last year the three older Federations, Narmada Mahila Sangh in Madhya Pradesh, Damodar Mahila Mandal in Jharkhand, and Sampurnna in Mayurbhanj, further consolidated their work and also chartered fresh ground, while in 8 other locations the initiative of setting up new federations gradually gained momentum. In three other locations, the initial meetings of women representatives from Clusters began to be organised towards laying foundation for Federations.

The Federations in the older locations also took a number of initiatives building on the solidarity of the collective and contributing to the broader well being of the members. The activities of the Federations also added to the visibility and acceptance of these collectives as an organisation that could bargain on behalf of the poor people.

Overview of two Federations as on March 31, 2009

SI No	Particulars	Details	
		Narmada Mahila Sangh	Sampurnna
1	No of members	7,858	5,604
2	No of SHGs	578	407
3	No of villages covered	158	133
4	No of districts	2 (Hoshangabad, Betul)	1 (Mayurbhanj)

The Narmada Mahila Sangh (NMS)

The Narmada Mahila Sangh (NMS) in Sukhtawa came into existence in 2002 after a mass meeting of about 1,000 women belonging to about 125 SHGs was organised by PRADAN in order to initiate processes of cross-learning and strengthen solidarity among the SHGs. The women quite appreciated this idea of coming together and set up the forum of SHG representatives from all Clusters/villages coming together once in a month to deliberate on issues that are affecting the poor people in the local area, especially women, and on how to overcome these by putting in their collective resources. The Federation over the period of the past 7 years has concretised the agenda of the Federation as follows:

1. Facilitating Access to financial services
 - a. Bank linkage: NMS plays a significant role in liaising with the banks to push for the case of member SHGs when there is any delay in loan sanction and release. On the other hand the federation is also very particular in educating members on repayment discipline, and also exercising influence in the Federation meetings
 - b. Insurance: NMS has facilitated linkage with external service providers. Currently there are more than 2,000 members who are linked with the Birla Sun Life insurance. The drive to include the others is on.
2. Providing SHG support services such as accounts, auditing and MIS of groups
3. Access to rights and entitlements
 - a. *Enrolment in Below Poverty Line list*: NMS has identified that a large number of members are left out of the BPL list in spite of being very poor. Currently there is a list of about 450 women which the Federation has forwarded to the District administrations in Hoshangabad out of which about 100 families have been re-surveyed and included in the BPL list
 - b. *NREGA*: NMS is involved in raising awareness of the constituent SHGs and their members on the entitlements under the Act. NMS also encourages the SHG members to get their job cards and facilitates the process. In Betul, PRADAN has been involved in NREGA planning and implementation by the District. NMS is working with PRADAN in ensuring that the village level shelf of projects are planned as per the requirement of the SHG families.
 - c. *Land rights*: NMS is actively involved in raising awareness and knowledge of the members especially the ones staying in the forest fringe area about their right to acquiring government land.

- d. *Welfare*: NMS is in the process of identifying old and disabled people in the NMS villages who are not receiving State assistance. These names are forwarded to the District Administration and negotiations follow.
4. *Women's Issues*: for the past many years NMS is trying to raise awareness of the members through Federation level discussions, Cluster meetings and mass meetings, on women's issues such as violence and discrimination. NMS has also taken up group action such as conducting "*Panchayat*" and imposing social strictures such as fines, in many cases. In cases where the perpetrators have not been contained by these actions, NMS has moved the administration and the politicians for justice. This has in a way established the credibility of the solidarity union and many new cases which may otherwise have been ignored are being raised by the women. Women from outside the NMS network are also approaching the Federation nowadays seeking help.

The Sampurnna Federation, Mayurbhanj

Sampurnna was formed in 2005 as the SHG Federation in Mayurbhanj, and as on march 31, 2009 consisted of 407 SHGs with 5,604 members. The major objectives the Federation has articulated for itself are:

1. To weave the members together on a common identity of Sampurnna
2. To provide a platform for collective engagement, working on various issues of development and well being
3. To enhance mutual support and set off the processes of peer learning
4. Providing SHG support services such as accounts, auditing and MIS
5. To develop linkages as well as influence external environment to access rights and entitlements

The achievements of the Federation till now have been:

1. Streamlining and computerising the accounts of all SHGs and bringing the whole set under the Computer Munshi system which is running independent of PRADAN with contribution from members,
2. Deployment of a strong cadre of community service providers hosted in the federation who provide a variety of support to the SHGs:
 - a. streamlining accounts and meeting processes of SHGs
 - b. assist SHGs in preparing livelihood plans for members
3. Linking around 1,600 SHG members to Birla Sunlife Life Insurance
4. Helping SHGs to mobilise over INR 9 million from banks in the last 12 months
5. Intervening in social issues such as witch craft, dowry, domestic violence, and alcoholism
6. Undertaking a campaign to sensitise the SHG members on the entitlements under NREGA
7. Facilitating many SHG members to participate in health and education as *ASHA Karmi* in National Rural Health Mission and as participants in school committees.

LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMMES

More than 99,000 families took part in various PRADAN promoted livelihood programmes in the last year. The number of families participating in PRADAN's livelihood interventions has gone up significantly as shown in table below.

Progress of PRADAN's livelihood outreach over the years

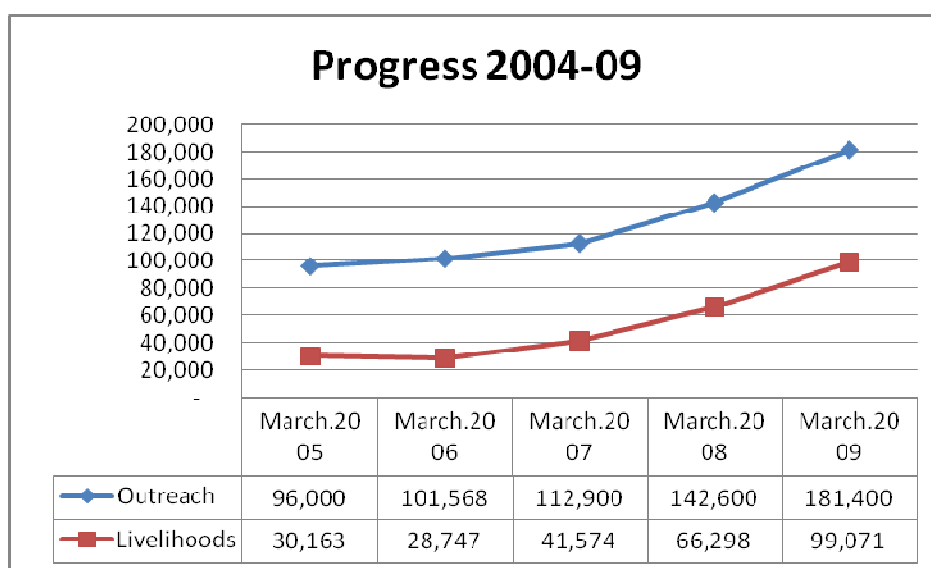


Table: No families participating in different livelihood activities in 2008-09:

Sl No	Programme	Participating Families*
1	Agriculture	87,895
2	Horticulture	5,532
3	Tree and Forest Based activities	6,995
4	Land and water development	7,249
5	Livestock	3,316
6	Micro-enterprises	9,811
	<i>Gross number of interventions at the family level</i>	120,798
	Net no of families participating in these interventions	99,071

*Families overlap across activities

Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM)

The Agro-Ecological Zone VII (AEZ VII) encompasses the plains and the undulating and hilly (UH) regions of eastern India. The UH regions in AEZ VII comprise the southwestern districts of West Bengal, entire Jharkhand, non-coastal Orissa, Chhattisgarh

and a few districts each in eastern M. P. and eastern Maharashtra. PRADAN decided to concentrate on this area for action, based on poverty considerations.

There is no reason for anyone to go hungry in the UH regions of AE Zone VII given the endowment and distribution of natural resources. Indeed, high rainfall and a complex ecology make these regions potential engines of future growth as a wide variety of trees and crops can be grown and complex farming systems are feasible. Yet, these regions are almost uniformly poor and among the most food-insecure in the country. Two-thirds of the population in some of the districts is officially classified as being below the poverty line (BPL) and almost no district has less than 40% BPL population.

Between 75 to 90 percent of the population in these parts is rural. Scheduled Tribes comprise 20 to 35% of the rural population in most districts, and in many blocks they are the majority. Most people own land and landlessness is significant only among the Scheduled Castes. Agriculture is a key source of livelihoods, supplemented by gathering from forests and wage earnings from seasonal migration.

This region receives 1100 to 1600 mm rain on an average every year, about 80% of it during June to September. The combination of an undulating and hilly terrain and high rainfall produces high micro-ecological variability in the region due to the drainage and accumulation of rainwater. One encounters diverse conditions with regard to soils, slope, water availability, soil depths, et al within the boundaries of even the smallest village. Though there are variations across upper-, middle- and lower watersheds, the overall pattern repeats itself in micro-watershed after micro-watershed, village after village – *dry uplands with shallow soils, dry upper midlands with deeper soils, seasonally wet lower midlands with deep soils and wet lowlands or valleys with deep soils*. In such a context, the importance of appropriate management of natural resources for livelihood improvement can not be overemphasized.

PRADAN has adopted Integrated Natural Resource Management as a key strategy for poverty alleviation in the region. Strengthening farming systems of the family through a household level integrated approach considering the family's needs and aspirations, resource endowment of the area and the potential economic sub sectors is core to PRADAN's INRM approach which also envisages the following changes in thinking, policy and action:

- from self-sufficiency in aggregate food production to **household food security**
- from resource conservation to sustainable livelihood security and decentralized growth
- from uniform strategies and investments to situation specific plans and investments

The process adopted by PRADAN for initiating INRM based livelihood promotion in any given area is given below even though they are not always sequential:

1. Mobilization of the community by forming Self Help Groups, hamlet level associations (HLA), village level implementation committees like VDCs (village development committee) or the PEC (Program Executive Committees)
2. Exposure visits of villagers to locations where there are working demonstrations of INRM projects to build perspective and framework to plan for their own resources.
3. Visioning exercise with every household to visualise the “end state/desired state” of the families for themselves, the common property resources in the village and around. This is done collectively in every hamlet.
4. Micro level planning with households and village collectives for the hamlet/village. It is here that options are generated with the villagers as to what measures are to be taken for harnessing the potential of the natural resources in their area.
5. Selection of community resource persons (CRPs) who would assist the villagers in planning, and implementation of their plans.
6. Starting at the household level, plans are made for each land holding, which is then collated at a patch level to come up with the patch level plans. These patch level plans are further summated to form the hamlet plans and then the village level plans. The larger perspective plan for the village is superimposed at the village level to produce the final village plan.

Methodologies for livelihoods planning under the INRM approach are being applied in various teams. The INRM thematic unit in PRADAN is in the process of evolving a common approach and strategy in the organisation. The Unit is also developing a user manual complete with planning and reporting modules.

Land and Water Resource Development

During the year in-situ soil moisture conservation, water harvesting, land levelling and bunding and other land husbandry measures were taken up on about 1,000 Hectares of private land belonging to 4,400 families following INRM approach. Flow and lift irrigation systems were installed in about 450 hectares of land belonging to about 2,800 farmers. Apart for these families PRADAN continued to work with families whose land and water resources had undergone improvement in the past. The engagement is in the nature of helping them change and improve the cropping system after the land and water resources have been improved. It may be mentioned that over the past decade PRADAN has promoted over 1,200 small irrigation systems creating around 15,000 hectare of net irrigated land

Land and Water Resource Development		
	Families	Area in hectares
In-situ Soil and water conservation measures	4,449	937
Irrigation Structure	2,800	439

Majority of PRADAN’s interventions during the last year was around improving farm-based livelihood. There was significant expansion of interventions related to improved agriculture. Number of families in these activities increased from about 42,000 to about 86,000. A lot of focus was on helping families take up multiple crops aimed at ensuring 12-month food sufficiency and INR 7,000 to 8,000 as cash income.

Table: Agriculture intervention

	Families	Ha	Trainee days	No. of CSP	
				M	F
Improved Agriculture:					
<i>Food Crop</i>	34,995	4,654	21,570	860	165
<i>Cash Crop</i>	34,725	2,767	25,318	918	188
Plantation	5,939	1,038	4,027	54	15
Land and Water Resource Development	7,249	1,376	12,315	1,67	408
Sub-Total	N/a ⁴	9,835	63,230	1,999	776

Improved Agriculture

PRADAN teams encouraged families to take up vegetables on the homestead in addition to food crops. Over 40,000 family level interventions were around vegetable production. In most of the teams vegetables on small parcels of land was a big success. The most common vegetable grown was tomato, and there are hundreds of families who have earned over INR 20,000 net, for vegetables in a single season. This trend was most visible in the eastern states of West Bengal, Jharkhand and Orissa.

Following table provides details of the various agricultural activities promoted by PRADAN in 2008-09:

Agriculture intervention		
<i>Improved Agriculture Food Crops</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Area in hectares</i>
System of Rice Intensification	11,682	1,434
Paddy (improved practice)	20,720	4,470
Millets (improved practice)	1,119	186
Maize (as food crop)	2,893	487
Wheat (improved practice)	3,273	497
<i>sub-total</i>	<i>39,687</i>	<i>7,074</i>
<i>Improved Agriculture Cash Crop</i>		
Pulses	2451	352
Oilseeds	3324	804
Vegetables (Kharif)	18,300	1,342
Vegetables (Winter)	18,684	1,357
Vegetables (summer)	4,633	200
Other crops	816	158
<i>sub-total</i>	<i>48,208</i>	<i>4,212</i>
Total	87,895	11,286

PRADAN over decades has worked on issues of food security from own cultivation. Improved paddy cultivation has remained a major activity over the years. During the last few years the System for Rice Intensification (SRI) has come as a boon to our families struggling to enhance productivity. This innovative practice is attracting more and more families. A large number of other families have adopted this technique by learning from farmers trained and supported by PRADAN. In most locations SRI is covering an ever-

⁴ Not totaled as families overlap across activities

increasing number of families. The techniques have been extended to finger millets and wheat on trial basis. The SRI yield enhancement has also been fairly standardised across teams now. In most of the locations the results show that more than 80% of the farmers record yield above 5 tons per hectare where the normal yield had been 2 tons per hectare. In the Gaya project the results have been exceptional this kharif (Details later). The following table shows the growth in number of families who are directly linked to PRADAN for learning SRI practices.

Year (Kharif)	No of teams involved	Families	Area (ha)
2003	1	4	0.2
2004	3	150	64
2005	7	2,000	210
2006	11	6,200	632
2007	16	10,400	1,098
2008	20	20,920	1,434

SRI cultivation: A model worth emulating

Breaking traditions is always difficult, more so in a village especially if it relates to paddy cultivation. Surendra Pahan in Gageya Chapar Toli village, in Senha block, Lohardaga district took a lot of risk to adopt a new practice learnt from PRADAN. He had to go against his village and even fought with his father. All this to experiment with the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method of paddy cultivation, only on 0.4 acre of land out of 6 acres his family own.

PRADAN had been working in Gageya Chapar Toli for eight years. Bindu Devi, wife of Surendra is the accountant of Jai Sarna, one of the two SHGs running there. Thus Surendra had a fair idea about the working pattern of these SHGs and initiatives taken by PRADAN.

In April 2008 PRADAN arranged for training of the SHGs in Gageya, where a detailed presentation on SRI was done. However the farmers did not receive it enthusiastically. This was primarily because of the magnitude of cost reduction (one-fourth) proposed by the method and the promise made in terms of yield (thrice), sounded too good to be true. Farmers could not accept that 2 kg seed requirement per hectare of land vis-à-vis the 80 kg they were used in the traditional method will work. There were also other new aspects like doubling the distance between two plants, transplanting in the main field within 7 to 12 days after sowing, and planting a single seedling in one hill. They sounded, on a milder note, foolish. PRADAN subsequently arranged for a direct exposure for the cultivators in Khunti district, which had already adopted SRI cultivation. Surendra went there and was convinced enough to try this method on a little piece of his land. As Surendra recalls, “earlier we had a total production of only 60 quintals from our entire land. Although this took care of our food requirements for the entire year, it was hard to meet other essentials like cloth, medicine etc.” He decided to put 0.40 acre of his land under SRI.

Back home everybody warned him against such misdeed. Surendra says laughing, “Everybody found the proposal unviable and cautioned me of a sure crop failure. Further, despite the limited use of fertilisers already demonstrated, they argued that the proposed yield could be achieved only through application of enormous quantities of fertiliser, which would in turn permanently damage the soil. My father was terrified. But I had faith in PRADAN; its earlier track record said that they did not mean ill.”

PRADAN did not ask for a shift to High Yielding Variety seeds. Farmers could continue with their traditional variety but only the method would be different. PRADAN also asked the farmers to test the new technique only on a small plot of land, to increase acceptance. Surendra remembers, “Even at the time of first weeding 15-20 days after transplanting people were sceptical and predicted a wasted initiative. It is only after 35 days when 25-40 tillers came out from a single hill, they were convinced. But then it was too late for them to emulate”.

The results have been astonishing. In the 0.4 acre of land where Surendra experimented with SRI, the production was 14.8 quintals, (equivalent of 9 t/ha) 10 quintals up the usual 4.8 quintals (3 t/ha). Considering the market price of paddy at Rs 7 per Kg, it was a straight gain of Rs 7,000 only from this output increase, and if he added the reduction in input costs, the total profit was Rs 7,530. All this from just 0.4 acres!

When asked whether he will try this out at a larger scale and about others’ attitude, Surendra replies, “ next time I will do it in 1 - 1.5 acres, it would have been higher but transplantation has to happen in 12 days. Unfortunately I have only one bullock and the entire chunk of land cannot be prepared within this short span.”

He says he plans to buy a tractor in future so that he can prepare the entire field in a limited time. He also wants to repair and extend his house. With the return from the sale of surplus grain this year he is running a court case regarding some land disputes and eating better food too.

In addition to SRI paddy, improved paddy using better quality seeds and modern practices has been another important intervention in our food security interventions. In kharif paddy the average yield has ranged from 3 to 5 tons per hectare. Improved wheat cultivation was another important intervention in rabi cereals. An average yield of about 4 t/ha has been achieved.

34,725 families were involved in cash crops, mainly vegetables. Vegetables were cultivated in kharif, rabi and in summer. Green chillies, tomato, brinjal, okra, potato and an assorted variety of other vegetables were cultivated. An income INR 2,500 – 3,000 from a patch of 0.05 acres was common.

“Laxmi” Tomatoes

Mangli Bai, an *agaria* tribal woman, is a member of the Sharda Mahila Samiti, formed in July 2005. In 2007 she got involved in SRI and pigeon pea cultivation instead of the traditional broadcasted paddy-wheat in lowland and *niger/kodo/kutki* on rotation basis on upland.

In May 08, PRADAN organized an exposure visit of farmers of Samnapur block (Madhya Pradesh) to its project location at Chaibasa in Jharkhand. Mangal Singh was one of the participants. He interacted with one of the farmers where he stayed and discovered that the host had earned more than a hundred thousand rupees from vegetable cultivation and had recently purchased a motor cycle. Mangal Singh was very impressed to know this. When he came back he shared his plans with his wife and with technical support from PRADAN the family tried out tomato cultivation on 9 cents in kharif 2008. Hybrid variety 'F1 Laxmi' was chosen, which was to be planted in homestead land with the *bharra* soil. Previously, *maize* (in kharif) and *rye* used to be taken on this piece of land.

Rain-fed vegetable (tomato) cultivation was a new idea for them as well as other farmers in the village. They decided to reduce the row-to-row and plant-to-plant distance and followed the ridge and furrow system for transplanting of saplings. He also applied insecticides and pesticides as prescribed. The family earned more than INR 22,000 from 9 cents on a piece of land without any irrigation cover. The SRI adoption had yielded about 15.5 qtl (worth about INR10,000) of paddy, which is more than double of what the traditional paddy cultivation practices would have produced. The family has also earned additional INR.5,000 from pigeon pea.

Fruit trees, tasar, mulberry host and timber plantation:

Over the last few years we are finding an increasing interest in taking up fruit tree plantation in less productive uplands. In most village level events for planning around natural resources fruit tree plantation is coming up as an important component. Plantations have been raised in Bankura, Purulia, West Singhbhum, Lohardaga, Gumla, Kesla, Deoghar, Sidhi, Dhamtari, Dumka and Godda. Some plantations in Purulia, Bankura and Gumla have started fruiting. With the completion of the SGSY special project the pace of expansion of plantations has reduced and more focus is being given to maintain the quality of existing plantations which is in excess of 1,500 Hectares. In some teams like Dumka support has been provided to tasar rearers under the NREGA to raise more host plantations on private land. In Kesla, Dindori, Vidisha and Siddhi mulberry plantation is being taken up as an activity with support from the Department of Sericulture, Government of MP.

Plantation		
Activity	Families	Area in hectares
Tasar host tree plantation	384	160
Mulberry Plantation Establishment	323	22
Mango Cultivation	4,604	797
Farm Forestry	221	148
Total Outreach	5,532	1,127

Community Service providers

Efforts were intensified across teams in training the farmers as well as creating community service providers (CSP) from among the members of the community. There are 2,775 CSPs now trained and equipped to provide training and handholding support to the community in aspects related to improved farming. Currently there is very less number of service providers whose costs are actually being met out of community contributions. On the other hand, paying for technical services is the norm in the micro-enterprise based livelihoods where there are producers' institutions promoted by PRADAN. In the realm of agro-horticulture and natural resource management the model is still not established. Efforts were made during the year to introduce systems so that farmers who are already into improved farming can bear the cost of technical services to them by the CSPs.

FOREST BASED ACTIVITIES

The major forest based livelihoods were around the Tasar Silk rearing and Lac cultivation. Following table lists the number of families engaged in the different activities.

Forest based livelihoods	Families
Lac Cultivation	889
Tasar seed crop rearing	446
Tasar Commercial Crop Rearing	5,414
Tasar Basic Seed Rearing	246
Sub-Total	6,995

Tasar Rearing

Elements of the Tasar Cocoon rearing value chain	
Basic Seed	
Nucleus seed rearing (DFLs)	54,705
Total Investment (million INR.)	0.3
Seed crop rearing	
Seed crop rearing (DFL)	168,946
Total Investment (million INR)	1
Seed cocoon produced (million)	5.8
Value of seed cocoons (million INR)	4.6
Grainage	
Grainage conducted	243
Investment in Grainage (million INR)	4.2
DFLs produced (million)	1.1
Value of dfls sold (million INR)	4.5
Commercial crop	
Commercial cocoons produced (million)	30.6
Investment in Commercial crop (million INR)	16.9
Value of commercial cocoons (million INR.)	29.1

A major highlight of the year has been the production of basic seed in our own project area, as against the precedence that only the Central Silk Board produced basic seeds. PRADAN had been trying out in the last couple of years so that basic seeds were produced in the villages by Tasar grainage entrepreneurs. In the last year it was scaled up. A total of 900,000 cocoons were deployed for basic seed production and 170,000 basic seed DFLs were produced. The quality standards in fact matched those of the CSB even though the production was done in villages. The main challenge was the preservation of the cocoons for a period of more than six months beginning December to July when emergence of moth begins. The cocoons have to be kept live during this period including in the summer months. PRADAN and CSB officials closely supervised the grainages where this was done. The mortality rate was just about 1.6% percent as against the permitted 3%.

The basic seed production was sufficient to take care of the entire requirement of seed cocoons for commercial crop in the last year.

Lac rearing⁵

Lac is one of the traditional sources of income for thousands of poor and isolated families in tribal areas of central India. It accounts for as high as 50% of the income basket to some forest fringe tribal households. PRADAN has been helping more than 3,000 families in stabilizing production through improved technology and input services. The recent dip in raw lac prices and local variation in external factors of production has significantly reduced the number of families engaged in the activity. During the year, alternate production systems were piloted, using different host plants and different variety of the lac insects. Trials are on to understand reasons for unexplained mortality in the post winter season. One of the exciting areas emerging during the year is the excellent results by use of *Kusmi* variety on *Ber* trees. It may be mentioned that *Kusmi* is a superior variety of lac which however grows on *Kusum* trees. Following table summarizes progress made in this activity.

Lac cultivation	
No. Families participating	889
Tons of Brood Lac inoculated by families	3.17
Value of Brood inoculated (million INR)	0.13
Tons of Raw lac produced	7.47
Value of Raw lac produced (million INR)	0.6

Livestock

PRADAN's engagement with the livestock sub-sector is around dairy and goat rearing.

Our work on dairy started a few years ago in two different contexts. In one area viz. Eastern Rajasthan, dairying as a livelihood subsector is already established and some input-output linkages were already in place. The other viz. Jharkhand was an area where modern dairy was a totally new activity. During the past two years, in Rajasthan, we worked with mainstream agencies like the Mother Dairy, NDDDB and the Rajasthan Cooperative Dairy Federation for more remunerative price realisation by the farmers. Our intervention of persuading Mother Dairy to set up procurement operations in Dholpur two years back has resulted in the milk prices going up from INR 8-9 per litre to a price band of INR 13-15 per litre. All local players have also increased their prices and the community is today getting a fair deal. Simultaneously, we focused on training of the community for improving rearing practices. With time we realised that a large scale training intervention alone is not having the desired change in practices and the overall herd average productivity. Thus during the year the team at Dholpur intensified their action with a smaller number of families, and started setting up systems for tracking the practices and productivity parameters at the family level. The data is discussed by the

⁵ Female lac bug secretes a resin called **Shellac** to form a cocoon, on specific host trees in the forests. It is processed and sold as dry flakes which are dissolved in denatured alcohol to make liquid shellac. Shellac has multiple uses like brush-on colorant, food glaze, wood finish etc and has large export market.

community in SHG meetings and peer review and support are used to help families adopt more remunerative practices.

In Jharkhand, PRADAN is supporting development of dairy as a new source of livelihoods in Lohardaga, Godda and Dumka districts. The major interventions are around induction of quality cattle, training and capacity building of woman rearers, preventive and curative veterinary care, supply of balanced feed and marketing support. The women producers have organized themselves into self-supporting co-operatives.

Livestock Development	
Dairy	2,269
Goat rearing	1,047

Our work on goat rearing is aimed at helping very poor families create a buffer income source. The intervention helps develop a system for providing a wide range of improved husbandry practices. The services include weekly health check-ups, awareness building, medicine supply at the door step, routine vaccination of PPR and enterotoxaemia and deworming. All these services are run and managed by the community. In different project locations the community has come up with informal producer bodies to deal with the system for delivery of these services. Apart from the number of families currently participating in the program there are other families who have started this activity with initial support from PRADAN and are continuing the same without any further assistance.

Micro-enterprises

Following table depicts the distribution of participants in the different micro enterprises:

Micro Enterprises	
Broiler Farming	5,320
Tasar reeling and spinning	2,468
Fishery	641
Vermi-composting	529
Siali leaf plate making	688
Others	165
	9,811

The major micro-enterprises promoted by PRADAN are smallholder poultry and Tasar yarn making. (*See elsewhere for report on these activities*). Another promising micro-enterprise being piloted is Siali leaf plate making. This livelihood activity uses the leaf of the Siali creeper, abundant and available throughout the year in some forests of Orissa. PRADAN works in Kandhamal district where over seventy per cent tribal women are engaged in this activity. PRADAN trains producers to stitch plates of finer quality and produce a wider range of products either manually or machinery aided. This is aimed at helping women increase incomes by around INR 6,000 per year. In the last year the producers organised themselves into a co-operative. The co-operative provides for aggregation of produce and marketing to distant markets. It had a turnover of INR 3 million in 2008-09. The growth of the activity across the years is presented below. Growth in the last year would have been much more but for communal riots in

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Kandhamal which resulted in disturbances and dislocations for a prolonged period of time.

Year	Families	Turn over (million INR)
2005-06	70	0.50
2006-07	300	1.75
2007-08	400	2.85
2008-09	688	3.00

The PRADAN promoted tasar yarn producers are organised as a producer company called MASUTA Ltd. The company procures required inputs like cocoons, production chemicals, etc. and makes it available at competitive rates to the producers. Once the tasar silk yarn is produced the company markets the yarn in distant markets. The company has recently promoted a joint venture company to expand its market by converting yarn into fabric. The total number of producers engaged in the activity was 2,468. Of these 660 joined during the second half of the year. During the year the total production was 12,572 Kg of yarn valued INR 21.12 million. In 2008-09, out of total yarn sales of 9,798 Kg, 65% of the yarns are sold directly in the market compared to 61% last year. The sale-price of yarn increased by 11% during the year.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Continuing with our past strategy of resource mobilization from mainstream agencies for livelihood investment PRADAN mobilised significant financial resources to enable poor people create or acquire livelihood assets and sustain production. PRADAN helped community organizations access government grants and subsidies from various mainline poverty alleviation programmes. This was the most major source of livelihood finance, which was followed by investments from people's own resources (including credit from SHGs) and credit from banks. Credit from own savings in SHGs contributed significantly, especially towards on-going livelihood activities and to meet contingencies.

27% of investments in the villages came from Government sources, 17% from the banks and 52% was communities' own contribution. Only 3% of livelihood investments came from private foundations and charities. PRADAN facilitated mobilisation of INR 494.9 million in the reporting year from various sources as against INR 433.5 million in the previous year. The Special SGSY project in West Bengal, Integrated Tribal Development Programme in Jharkhand, IFAD supported Rural Livelihoods Project in Jharkhand, Orissa and M. P. and wages under NREGA in various districts in West Bengal, MP, Jharkhand and Orissa were major sources of funds. NABARD supported a number of projects around land and water development and specifically orchards promotion in number of district in Orissa, Chattisgarh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Jharkhand. Funds were also accessed from district allocations of programmes like NREGS, SGSY, etc. Support from corporate bodies is emerging as a new window for poor people. The Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) is supporting projects in three districts of Jharkhand and one district in West Bengal. The ACC Ltd. is providing support in one district in Jharkhand. The Rabo Bank Foundation is providing support to scale up the poultry programme across MP, Jharkhand and Orissa. During the year one major milestone was sanction of 5 SGSY special projects for 5 districts in Jharkhand having a total outlay of over INR 600 million

Programme funds mobilised by teams during FY: 2008-09						
Programme	Funds Mobilised, Source-wise (INR in Millions)					
	Total Apr-March '09		Banks	Government Subsidies	Donors	People's Own Resources (including SHG credit)
Agriculture	99.1	20.0%	13.56	8.0	1.22	76.28
Horticulture	32.39	6.5%	-	28.78	-	3.61
Forest-based	13.12	2.7%	0.17	7.00	-	5.94
Irrigation Infrastructure	29.86	6.0%	-	26.94	1.30	1.62
Livestock	22.54	4.6%	3.20	7.75	2.89	8.69
Micro-enterprises	54.93	11.1%	18.15	17.71	3.62	15.45
Improvement of land and water resources	45.69	9.2%	-	34.73	7.68	3.28
Livelihood investment	2,97.64	60.1%	35.09	1,30.94	16.72	1,14.88
On going activities by SHG members	1,95.58	39.5%	51.01	-	-	1,44.58

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Basic Services (Drinking Water)	1.89	0.4%	-	1.89	-	-
Total	4,95.11		86.10	1,32.83	16.72	2,59.46
			17%	27%	3%	52%

Programme investment during FY: 2008-09				
Programme	Funds Mobilised, Deployment-wise (INR in Millions)			
	Total Apr-March '09	Pvt. Capital Assets	Community Assets	Working Capital
Agriculture	81.02	.77	.07	80.18
Horticulture	40.81	37.88	1.63	1.30
Forest-based	10.68	4.91	-	5.77
Irrigation Infrastructure	30.99	28.74	2.24	-
Livestock	21.76	14.21	10.20	65.40
Micro-enterprises	677.38	141.47	6.29	47.30
Improvement of land and water resources	45.11	39.47	4.36	1.28
Livelihood investment	2,98.11	1,40.13	15.62	1,42.37
On going subsistence activities by SHG members	1,95.58	39.12	-	1,56.46
Basic Services (Drinking Water)	1.24	-	1.24	-
Total	4,94.94	1,79.25	16.86	2,98.83

COMMUNITY RESOURCE PERSONS

A large number of SHG federation members have been trained on social mobilisation including SHG promotion and subjects such as working of the political and administrative system, the various laws and statues meant for the poor, gender issues, legal rights of women and health. These women have in turn become community resource persons (CRPs) and are involved in generating discussion around these issues and conducting training for SHGs and cluster associations.

The core elements of PRADAN's grassroots engagement are that the community of poor people have the inherent capability to take charge and influence the course of their own lives and it is possible through concerted efforts to help them realise this capability. This would require a change in the community's own self view. They need to start thinking and believing that they have the capability and display appropriate behaviour. Normally PRADAN has played the role of the external facilitator who can trigger this thinking in their minds. Over a period of time, experience has been that members from the community who have had the "lived" experience of coming out of poverty, are effective resource persons to produce changes in beliefs and attitudes.

With this realisation PRADAN has encouraged desiring women from the SHGs to move to other villages, old and new, to spread the message of solidarity and motivate the women to form their own groups and take steps to improve their lives as they themselves had done. While a considerable number of SHG members were already doing this in their limited confines, as SHG leaders or Cluster or Federation representatives, many of them have started moving to new villages on PRADAN's request, as community resource persons

Deployment of Community Resource Persons has been a strategy PRADAN used extensively in the past year for scaling up. The role they would play is more in creating a favourable environment rather than providing a technical service to the community. Thus a CRP who has positive experience of participating in her own SHG would go to a new village and create awareness and motivation in the community there on forming new SHGs. A CRP who has been an efficient producer can be an ideal motivator to those who are hesitant about taking a new initiative.

Community Resource Persons – main features

Who are they?	They are people who have “lived” experience of transformation in a PRADAN intervention
PRADAN’s purpose in engaging them	Scaling up processes of stimulating change in the community.
Primary Focus	Stimulating a need for change in the community, as they have demonstrated
Primary ‘Client’	PRADAN
Nature of engagement of the CRP with community	Influencing, focused on the person rather than the activity per se
Nature of grooming to be provided to CRP	Crystallising experiential learning, enhancing skills and competencies to influence others
Identity (long-term) in Society	Experienced Citizens (villagers) wanting to extend themselves for the benefit of others
Relationship with PRADAN	PRADAN draws on the experienced members for fulfilment of PRADAN’s developmental task

Savitri (38 years) from Polapathar, Betul district, a mother of three daughters and having an alcoholic husband, used to work as a daily wage labourer to make ends meet. She came in contact with PRADAN in 1998 and soon became a member of the Durga Samiti in her village, a group of 18 women whom she herself mobilised. Even after facing resistance from her husband Savitri went ahead and set up a poultry farm with support from PRADAN as an option for a more reliable and dignified source of livelihood. Savitri has travelled far and wide to other blocks like Chicholi, Shahpur and Ghodadongri and has promoted more than 70 SHGs. She also mobilised the women to take action against selling of liquor in their village. She is also a Federation representative of the Narmada Mahila Sangh and urges her fellow women to stand up against injustice and violence. She has now filed for divorce and wishes to provide good education to her three daughters.

Married at the age of 18, **Saraswati** (40 years) from Gowari, Betul district was physically abused by her in-laws and husband for not bringing enough dowries. Due to lack of nutrition during pregnancy, she had a still birth. When she was 6 months pregnant and expecting the second time, her in-laws and her husband attempted to kill her by setting her to fire while she was asleep. Not too long after she fled to her maternal house to escape from further abuse, her husband remarried and she has since never heard of him. Amongst the 12 members of the Belakali Samiti started in 2001, Saraswati actively involves herself in promoting SHGs in other blocks like Chicholi, Shahpur and Ghodadongri. During January 2007 when she learnt about the NREGA in one of the cluster meetings, she pro-actively mobilised the women to attend the Gram Sabha where they together questioned the Panchayat on fund allocations. Saraswati has now filed for a divorce. She says, with pride, that these trainings and other exposures she has received DAN has awakened her confidence and courage.

Saiwati (45) from Dandiwada, Betul district has been a member of the Malan Baba Mahila Mandal since 2003. Four years back she married off her daughter with hopes for a prosperous life for her. She was taken aback when she found out that her daughter lived a life of abuse in the hands of her husband and in-laws who constantly harassing her for dowry. She received help from members of her SHG and federation who went and spoke to her daughter’s in-laws and husband explaining them the implications of harassing a woman for dowry. With the support received from her fellow-women and the trainings from PRADAN, Saiwati is now fighting for the rights of poor families in her village. The *mahua* forest near their village had been a source of income for many poor families in their village for a long time. But over the past couple of years, new settlers and more affluent families have started making boundaries alongside the trees, prohibiting the local villagers from collecting the *mahua* and forcing them to look for livelihood in far off places to work as wage labourers. Saiwati made a complaint with CO, DFO, Collector as well as the Tahsildar and the SDO. They assured that all villagers were allowed to collect *mahua* and firewood from the forest. For Saiwati’s work on the issue, she incurred the ire of the influential villagers who were laying exclusive claim to the forest-land. But Saiwati is determined not to give up her fight for justice.

WELLBEING INITIATIVES

PRADAN's experience of working with communities on issues of savings and credit, livelihoods generation over the years has led to an understanding that while livelihoods interventions are necessary, additional initiatives by the mobilised community has great potential to bring about changes in the lives of the poor faster. Well-being issues like education of the children, health, gender issues etc. which need to be addressed if we are to make any sizeable difference in the lives of the poor.

Many of PRADAN's field teams have made efforts in the last year to address issues in addition to livelihoods in the community. These efforts have been made in partnership with other civil society organisations and government agencies.

Education Initiative in Purulia

Our team in Purulia has looked into the problem of education of the children from the tribal households in two remote blocks of the District. This was in partnership with the block authorities and UNICEF. Multi activity centres (MACs) in various villages were set up to help drop-out children and school going ones in their educational pursuits. The major thrust of the MAC was to help the children enjoy while they study. The instructors in the Centre were trained to teach the students with innovative methods so that they can get an opportunity for all round development. Along with classes on various subjects the children were taught songs and musical instruments. The Centres were also a place where the nutritional and other health aspects were taken care of with regular check ups by a mobile dispensary twice a month. The medicines and doctors as well as paramedics for this venture were supplied by the local Primary Health Centre.

Under the project 56 MACs were set up in 38 hamlets in two blocks with about 2,000 children in the age group 6 to 15. The children consisted of in-school, not-in-school and drop out's. Each MAC had a Management Committee. The Management Committee or the MC comprised of the guardians/parents of the students in the MAC. All important decisions concerning the Center are taken by this Committee. They kept tabs on those children who are irregular to the Centre; they have also started conducting surprise visits to the Centres to check on the regularity and the efficiency of the teachers. Due to the efforts of the MCs 285 children went back to school, and another 180 were retained in 2008.

Funding from UNICEF was over in December 2008, but 20 MACS continue to operate with about 800 children purely with community contribution.

Legal awareness among SHG members

Our teams in West Singhbhum, Godda and Hazaribag districts of Jharkhand, with expert help from MARG (Multiple Action Research Group) an NGO working on legal empowerment undertook an initiative in legal literacy. 30 members from the community associated with SHGs were trained by MARG on legal issues. The training program was

conducted in three phases. The trainees were supplied legal books, written in simple Hindi with examples that relate to their own life.

Discussions around various legal Acts and provisions are regular in selected SHG, Cluster and Federation meetings where these trained persons help. It has given confidence to the women to raise issues of discrimination at the PDS, NREGA and many other government schemes. Damodar, the SHG Federation at Hazaribagh has decided that they would raise issues such as NREGA, Dowry; child marriage, domestic violence and SC/ ST atrocities at the village level and with the administration. The first step the federation plans to take up is to go on a awareness generation drive among the SHGs about legal rights and entitlements of women.

Legal literacy trainings for community leaders were also organized in Hoshangabad and Betul Districts. The Kesla team was able to forge partnerships with Vanangana, an NGO from Chitrakoot and a professional theatre group from Pune to enhance the theatrical skills of community leaders and SHG federation functionaries. The trainees have since begun scripting their own street plays on various issues such as alcoholism, domestic violence etc.

LIVELIHOOD COLLECTIVES

PRADAN's livelihood initiatives are built around the Family-Sector-Area *context-triad* of opportunities and constraints. In its full form, it requires a four stage engagement process even though it may not be necessary that all stages have to be crossed for the poor to negotiate with the market. The *first stage* is mobilizing and supporting families who are marginalized in the existing production systems. The key focus of PRADAN's engagement in this phase is the family's transition from a subsistence producer / non-producer to an economically active producer. The *second stage* is about configuring the family level production system with its intrinsic idiosyncrasies for creation of marketable surplus, linkages with input-output markets and detailing of social-technical-institutional model. PRADAN's focus in this stage is on business development. The aim is to help insulate the participant families from day-to-day price fluctuations and supply uncertainties of the market, while strengthening the production system through improved market access, better capital management, high quality production services and technical handholding. The *third stage* is one of developing institutional mechanisms for facilitating growth and sustenance, including promotion of producer collectives, market exchanges and service entrepreneurs. PRADAN's focus is essentially on institution building in this stage centering on membership and governance of these institutions. In the *fourth stage* producer collectives focus on the sector imperatives by associating with other collectives for opening space for small-holders and developing backward and forward integration to exercise increased control on the sub-sector linkages in favour of poor. In this phase producer groups have graduated to a stage where they are able to drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing assets, and thereby responding to and creating local economic opportunities. In this stage PRADAN's involvement becomes minimal in the existing areas.

As of March 2009, over 23,000 producers were organized into formal and informal collectives, organized around a specific commodity or sub-sector like tasar silk, dairy, agriculture & horticulture, poultry, lac and sal/siali leaf-plate. These collectives focus on enhancement of production & productivity, aggregating fragmented production and help member-producers in better price realisation. The focus remains facilitating members to take charge of these organizations.

Table: Status of producer collectives in PRADAN as on March 31, 2009

Sectors	Informal Groups	Incorporated Organizations	Member	Revenue (<i>in m INR Millions.</i>)
Poultry	-	21	5,300	603.0
Dairy	2	2	840	79.3
Agro-horticulture	4	4	10,294	220.5
Tasar Processing	-	66	2,500	451.0
Tasar Rearing	2	1	3,614	21.6
Leaf Plate Making	-	1	832	28.2
TOTAL	6	96	23,380	1403.6

The table provides a brief summary of the producer collectives across the sub-sectors. The legal forms of incorporation include Cooperatives (under the Mutually Aided or Self-Supporting Acts), Producer Companies, Mutual Benefit Trusts and Societies.

The collectives are in different stages of growth depending on their inception and PRADAN's engagement in the sector. The Tasar Silk Processing and Poultry collectives are now in the third to fourth stage - the production system and the primary collectivization model having been worked out. In both these sectors the collectives are industry leaders in their operating domain and have started generating significant revenues for their members. In both tasar silk and poultry apex federate structures are evolving allowing them to venture into up-stream and down-stream activities. For example the hatchery in Jharkhand, feed unit in Madhya Pradesh for poultry and fabric/merchandise retailing in tasar silk have resulted in further stabilization of the production system and increased income to the producers. The institutional prototype in dairy, agriculture, leaf-plate is in the early stages. The producer collectives have been effective in addressing identified gaps in the production system which require economies of scale like quality and timely procurement of inputs in agriculture and sale of milk in dairying. The revenue model is being examined to make it robust and available for replication in other locations.

The collectives facilitated by PRADAN are distinctive from other similar efforts; for example, membership is exclusive to poor women, collectives operate in new (*hitherto non-existent*) production systems, the leadership is group based rather than individual inspired. These characteristics create uniquely different set of challenges for the constituent systems - membership, governance and operations in the collective. In the last one year PRADAN's engagement with community livelihood collectives intensified with specific focus on building membership, governance and business systems. Training events to strengthen member control were conducted in tasar, poultry and agro-horticulture cooperatives. Experience of these events is being consolidated to create standardized modules and build internal capacities in the producer organisations to train all the members. The other important focus has been to standardize the operating procedures across the collectives. In poultry a detailed Poultry Management System based on "Quality Assurance Systems approach"⁶ has been created. A major highlight of last year has been increased recognition of the stakeholders of PRADAN's effort to promote successful producer organizations – MASUTA, the tasar silk processors' company was able to raise significant credit for its operations, was also able to independently raise resources for training of its members.

As the *community livelihood collectives* emerge as instruments for enhancing livelihoods of marginalised rural and tribal communities, it offers possibilities for in-situ scaling up and making impact in the local economy. In the next year we are planning to capture our learning to build an institution development framework for member controlled poor exclusive livelihood organizations and a guide for basic institutional processes for membership organizations.

⁶ This includes systems and procedures for business decisions, compliance and monitoring

As written before, the two advanced cases of PRADAN in the realm of promoting successful producer collectives have been in tasar yarn processing and small-holder poultry. Brief case studies of both these experiences are detailed below.

MASUTA Producers' Company Limited – the Tasar silk processors' collective

Overview

MASUTA Producers' Company Limited was registered on 26th December 2005 as a Producers' Company (*S 581c (5) of Part IX A of the Companies Act 1956*). MASUTA is a women tasar yarn producers' collective promoted by PRADAN

MASUTA PCL emerged out of the tasar yarn production based enterprise that PRADAN promoted among the women SHG members in its operational area. The producers are organized into a two-tiered structure. The primary group, that is village based, comprises of 20-30 women of the same hamlet or nearby hamlets drawn from one or more SHGs. This is registered as a Mutual Benefiting Trust or MBT. Each of the MBTs elects their representative to represent them in the Producer Company MASUTA.

With the inclusion of 500 new members in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, the number of member-producers touched almost 2,500 by the end of last year. The members are now spread over 120 villages, from 5 districts in Jharkhand and one district each from Chhattisgarh and Bihar. MASUTA focuses on serving existing and new members by pooling, aggregation, segregation and distribution of materials and services, development of new yarn types, making the producers aware of the market, and membership development.

Bulk of the business of MASUTA is yarn production and sale. The yarn produced by the members are pooled, sorted, graded and packed by MASUTA for its marketing. There are two different marketing channels for MASUTA – selling yarn directly in the market and converting part of it as fabric through Eco-Tasar Pvt Ltd (a joint venture company with MASUTA having 76% stake and a private entrepreneur holding the rest 24%).

MASUTA opened retail counters both at Bhagalpur as well as Raigarh to cater to the requirements of weavers of these clusters. Besides this, yarn is sold to institutional buyers. Two buyer seller meets were organised last year to bring together weavers, traders and government officials.

Operations

MASUTA's debt comes from the private sector banks like ICICI bank, Development Credit Bank, HDFC bank and AXIS Bank, Manaveeya and IFMR Trust to the tune of INR 84 million through microfinance as well as direct lending route. Moreover, NABARD under its UPNRM (Umbrella Programme on Natural Resources Management) scheme lent MASUTA INR 10 million last year at a low rate of interest for the producers of Bihar. In addition to it MASUTA secured INR 10 million as cash credit from Indian Bank. These inflows helped purchase about 50 million pieces of cocoons and ensured timely lifting and payment to the producers. MASUTA, in its short spell of operation

could establish good relationship with its lenders. As a result, in addition to the existing banks, Public Sector banks like PNB are showing keen interest in lending in large volume.

In spite of some low cost loans such as from NABARD, last year the overall cost of capital remained at about 16%, i.e. INR 7.5 million, which meant that each producer of MASUTA paid about INR 3,000 as interest.

MASUTA purchases cocoons and sells them at cost price to its member MBTs, purchases yarn from them for marketing. In all such transactions, only yarn sale brings in any revenue to MASUTA. Thus in case of MASUTA the transactional turnover and sales are actually much higher compared to the revenue.

In the FY 2008-09, the transactional turnover was INR 179.5 million. The gross sales turnover was INR 87.8 million out of which yarn sales turnover was INR 45.1 million that generated revenue of INR 14.9 million. About 50% of the revenue was spent on interest payment and the Profit before Tax was INR 2.1 million. MASUTA's own fund has increased to a little over INR 10 million and the loan outstanding was INR 76.5 million at the end of the year.

Benefit to the members

In spite of high cost of capital, MASUTA producers have already received INR 450 per Kg of yarn net of cocoon cost. In addition to it another INR 100 - 150 per Kg is expected to go to the producers as Withheld Price, Patronage Bonus, and Dividend.

Each producer, her spouse and two children are covered by a cashless health insurance policy. The premium for such insurance has been paid by MASUTA out of its surplus.

Last year producers such as Joba Das of Gandharakpur village in Jharkhand, Usha Devi of Rajdah and Lukri Devi of Teliadih in Bihar supplied more than 35 Kg of yarn and earned more than INR 20,000 each. Such inflow of income has increased their family income by over 30%.

Development of new machines

MASUTA invested considerable amount of time last year in developing more efficient designs of a reeling machine and a spinning machine. The new reeling machine which is at its final stage of launching is capable of producing three times more yarn than that of the existing machine, with better yarn quality and thus the income per unit time invested by the producers. It is run by a low 20 watt motor. The new spinning machine, which is run by a 10-watt motor, has doubled the production and hence the income.

Small-holder poultry

Overview

The activity of stallholder poultry touched new highs in the last year. It continued to register impressive growth. The activity spreads in 4 states namely, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Chhatisgarh over 14 districts. There were 5,320 producers, all of them women, with nearly 95% of them from Schedule Tribe, *Dalit* and OBC categories. The members were organized in 16 primary co-operative societies. Two state level federations in Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh are functional with the primary co-operative societies as their members.

Status:

In Jharkhand, 8 primary societies (7 co-operative societies and 1 Producer Company) with collective membership of 3,235 are functional. In M.P. 6 such primary co-operatives are in operation with collective membership of 1,866. The following table shows status in the financial year 2008-09:

	Co-operatives	Producers	Sales (metric tonnes)	Sales (million INR)
Jharkhand	8	3235	4905.55	269.00
Madhya Pradesh	6	1866	5003.96	322.60
Other States	2	219	223.30	11.52
Total	16	5320	10132.00	603.12

Operation Highlights:

During the financial year 2008-09, the members have been able to maintain the industry production efficiency and in spite of recurrent bird flu scare in the states of West Bengal and Assam, 10,132 metric ton of live birds have been sold worth 603.12 million INR. In the states of Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, the co-operatives together are the biggest broiler producing units. The operations in Orissa and Chhattisgarh are gradually taking shape. The year over year (YoY) growth for two years can be seen from the following table:

	FY 2007-08	FY 2008-09	% growth
Cooperatives	16	16	-
Members	4389	5320	21%
Revenue (in million INR)	296	603	104%
Poultry Sales (tonnes of live birds)	6094	10133	66%
Producer Margin (in million INR)	22	55	153%
Cooperative Margin (in million INR)	1.17	18	1428%

Human Resource:

All the 16 co-operatives are equipped with qualified veterinary doctors who take care of the overall production and management. Most of them have recently gone through a 7 days Management Development Program (MDP) at IRMA. They are being supported by local village level supervisors who were trained to take care of the activity under their

domain. All the societies have qualified accountants. From time to time the staff of the societies are provided with training as per the need.

MIS & system Design:

A standard system for production management procedure has been designed which is to be implemented in all the co-operatives in this financial year. Tailor-made software for accounting as well as MIS is functional in all cooperatives which gets updated from time to time.

Benefit to the members:

During the financial year 2008-09, an amount of INR 55 million has been distributed to the members against Rupees 21.71 million distributed during the financial year 2007-08 as grower margin. On an average, the members have been able to earn @ INR 5/kg of live birds produced which is much more than what the private market-integrators offers (@ INR 2.5-3 per kg). The co-operative societies have also generated surplus at their level. All the members have shown their interest in increasing the capacity of the sheds and many of them have done so by investing the money earned from the activity. Apart from this, almost all the co-operatives have generated sufficient surplus to meet any unforeseen situation like bird flu scare.

Engagement of local youths:

As many as 300 local educated youths have been engaged as supervisors, feed mill workers, warehouse in charge, and hatchery workers. They also earn an average of INR 40,000 per annum.

Sustainability of the societies:

The administrative, overheads and operational costs including the cost of Chief executive officers and veterinary doctors are totally born by the concern co-operatives. On an average each member in the financial year 2008-09 has contributed around INR 1,500 towards the production support cost, administrative overheads and management of the society.

The federation at the state level has ensured the quality and timely supply of raw materials, ensured marketing of birds, co-ordination and integration among the member co-operatives as well as timely statutory compliance.

Focus on backward integration was made for making the activity more vibrant. Feed pre-mix unit in Bhopal (managed by Madhya Pradesh. Federation) supplies to all the co-operative societies of Madhya Pradesh. The unit had a sales turn-over of more than INR 80 million. Apart from supplying quality feed pre-mix to its member co-operatives, it has also generated surplus worth INR 4.6 million. One more unit has been planned in Jharkhand.

Hatchery in Lohardaga managed by Jharkhand federation supplies quality chicks at cheaper price to its member co-operatives. It had a sells turnover of INR 15.7 million. Two more such units, one in Jharkhand and one in M.P. will be coming up next year.

Collaboration with other agencies:

During the year, new collaborations were initiated. Rabo India Finance released Rupees 42 million as grant for increasing the shed capacity of the members, margin money to leverage mainstream credit, training and MIS and for construction of hatchery.

National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC) along with the Department of co-operation, Government of Jharkhand has recognised Jharkhand Poultry Federation for expansion and strengthening of the activity in the state. An amount of INR 86.4 million has been sanctioned for the same. In Jharkhand another national level agency, National Schedule Tribe Finance & Development Corporation has released an amount of INR 9.2 million to Jharkhand State Tribal Co-operative Development Corporation (JSTCDC) its chanalizing agency for supporting two co-operative societies for their working capital need.

In M.P. a strong collaboration has been established with DPIIP for expansion and strengthening of the activity.

DIRECT SECTORAL APPROACH IN BIHAR

In the year 2007 – 08 PRADAN initiated action in a few new locations in Bihar under a new approach which we have subsequently termed as “direct-sectoral” as explained in the earlier paragraphs. PRADAN has been receiving invitations from various quarters to assist in the promotion of a specific sector in which PRADAN had demonstrated success. In 2007 Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (BRLPs) wanted PRADAN to participate in Jeevika (Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project) to promote SRI (system for rice intensification) in its project villages. In the initial phase of the collaboration, PRADAN worked with 150 farmers in training them and assisting them in adopting SRI in their fields.

In the year 2008-09 the approach of working solely with one activity among large number of farmers crystallized further in which PRADAN also developed robust extension methodologies using Community Service Providers. In collaboration with the PRADAN RRC (Research and Resource centre) the Gaya team developed appropriate training and communication tools that helped in fast expansion of the programme. The team reached out of 5,146 farmers in Gaya and Nalanda. A total of 545 hectares of land was brought under SRI in the direct-sectoral approach

In addition to these BRLPS farmers, PRADAN also collaborated with local NGOs in different districts a few informal groups in Aurangabad and Siwan. All these constituted an additional 960 families and 288 hectares of SRI paddy.

Yield

Data of 4,164 farmers was collected. About 90% of the farmers reported yield increase above 5 tons per hectare. 16% of farmers were in the range of 10 to 20 t/ha. 42 farmers reported yield of above 15 tons per hectare, which is extraordinary by any standards.

SRI Results from Gaya – Nalanda (Kharif 2008)

Location	No of farmers	Data collected (families)	15- 20 ton	10 - 15 ton	7 to 10 ton	5 to 7 ton	<5 ton
Gaya	4381	3558	42	636	1816	662	402
Nalanda	765	606	0	19	403	165	19
TOTAL	5146	4164	42	655	2219	827	421
			1%	16%	53%	20%	10%

The highest yield was 19.1 t/ha in Gaya and 14.2t /ha in Nalanda and the average yield was 8.2 t/ha in Gaya and 7.6 t/ha in Nalanda

Increase in Paddy production and impact on food security

The increase in yields is doubly significant because both Gaya and Nalanda suffered weather stress during the cropping period. Gaya had a drought and Nalanda had floods. In both conditions SRI was able to enhance productivity. The additional yield in paddy under the project was 3,601 tons. The average increase in food grain availability per

family under SRI was 865 Kg, which is sufficient to provide additional food grain security for almost 9 months for a 5-member rural family. The project this year provided food grains equivalent to INR 32.4 million. The families in rural areas in general and poor people in particular in project operational area are deficient in food security. With increase in additional food grain for 6 - 9 months, the concerned families are in a position to think of other broader issues. The increase in paddy straw is also significant and these poor families today have a better support to take up livestock as an additional occupation.

System of Wheat Intensification (SWI)

System of Wheat Intensification was also introduced in Gaya district after learning from People's Science Institute, Dehradun. This is an improved methodology for cultivation of wheat in line with the SRI technology being practiced in paddy.

The salient features of SWI as compared to the traditional method of wheat cultivation (as practiced in Gaya and Nalanda districts in Bihar) are as under:

S.No	Parameters	Traditional method in project area	System of Wheat Intensification
1	Seeds required	54 – 81 Kg/acre	8 - 13 Kg/acre
2	Seed treatment	Not done	Done with hot water, cow urine, vermicompost, jaggery along with Bavistin
3	Methods of sowing	Broadcasting	Dibbling (with seed drill)
4	Spacing	No proper spacing	20 cm – row to row and 20 cm plant to plant
5	Hoeing/weeding	Not done	1 st weeding at 20 Days after sowing and 2 nd weeding after 30 days after sowing
6	Length of panicle	10 -11 cm	15 cm
7	No of grains per panicle	18 -50 grains	60 -120 grains
8	No of panicles per hill	Mostly1-2, good stand 2-4	20 - 45
9	Germination of seeds in field	After a week of sowing	Within 2 - 3 days after sowing
10	Leaves	Thin, low leaf area index	Broad leaf area index
11	Stems	Thin	Thick
12	Roots	shallow	Deep (up to 8-10 inches) and luxurious growth of weeds
13	Irrigation	2-4	4-5
14	Yields	0.66 – 2 ton/ha	4 – 8 ton/ha

PRADAN piloted SWI with 278 farmers in the recently concluded Rabi season. The highest yield has been 7.96 ton/ha, which is very high by any standard. Yield increases of 2 to 3 times has been commonly reported.

Yield varied widely depending upon the quality of land and irrigation. However, under all conditions the SWI did well. Farmers and officials are quite excited about the methodology. This is a new learning for PRADAN and the farmers also. The success this year has generated a lot of expectations from the stakeholders such as the Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society who is supporting the project.

PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

PRADAN has outlined a “partnership approach” to achieve the Vision 2017 goals. It has been envisioned as a means of grassroots action when PRADAN is partnering with an organization or a group of organizations working directly with community and the grassroots spearheading role is being played by partner/s instead of PRADAN. Partner organizations may include NGOs, CBOs, *Panchayati raj institutions*, etc. Depending on circumstances grassroots involvement of PRADAN in a partnership approach will vary. While in some cases intense grassroots involvement of PRADAN will be called for, in some others the need for such engagement will be limited.

PRADAN will aspire for ensuring “agency enhancement of community groups and individuals” as the end-goal in partnership approach like we aspire in our direct action. However, as a minimum goal any tangible output in terms of livelihood enhancement will be sufficient. This means that PRADAN will at least ensure income enhancement at family level. Creating impact at the community level will be the aim of partnership and not organizational development of the partner. It is however expected that an unreserved exchange of knowledge and know-how between the partner and PRADAN would enrich PRADAN as well as the partner. As a result both will be able to handle issues of livelihood promotion and other poverty related issues in a more effective way.

Possible areas and contexts for partnership approach are:

- Areas around PRADAN teams that have made significant demonstrations of livelihood projects.
- Areas where PRADAN may not have immediate plans to set up direct action projects but where NGOs are already working
- Sectoral livelihood interventions of PRADAN that have potential to spread beyond direct action areas in collaboration with partners.
- As resource NGO helping in conceptualizing, designing and implementing livelihood programmes being financed by a government or private donor allowing PRADAN to partner with civil society organizations.

Partnership with Tejaswini

PRADAN started working with the Madhya Pradesh Mahila Vitta evam Vikas Nigam (MPMVVN) in 2007, under the IFAD assisted 8-year project Tejaswini as a Resource Agency. Under the project, PRADAN will work in 3 districts in the eastern tribal area, consisting of Mandla, Dindori and Balaghat. During this 8-year period, PRADAN would form and strengthen 1,000 SHGs, facilitate access to micro-finance to the members, create new livelihood demand-based opportunities, and facilitate formation of SHG apex institutions that would work on issues of wider well being. In addition to such direct demonstration PRADAN also will work with 12 facilitating NGOs (FNGOs) in training and provision of knowledge resources such as tools and methodologies and handholding support in the field. In these 3 districts, PRADAN directly runs 5 location offices and

supports 25 location centers that are managed by other FNGOs. PRADAN will support to these FNGOs to form, groom and nurture 5,000 SHGs benefiting 75,000 target families.

In the past year, PRADAN has been involved intensively as the supporting resource agency in the field, as well as at the state level, providing inputs to the SPMU (State Project Management Unit).

During the year around 130 groups have been formed in each of the location centres; making a total of around 3,161 groups in 1,076 villages in these 3 districts under Tejaswini programme.

This kind of a formal institutionalized space for working with other NGOs within the context of a project has been of good learning as well as contribution for PRADAN. MVVN as well as the FNGOs have greatly appreciated PRADAN's inputs to them.

Vikas Bazar.Net

PRADAN promoted a network of 16 NGOs in Jharkhand. The network is named Vikas bazaar.net (VBN). It is a forum created to initiate joint and coordinated effort of like-minded organizations to facilitate the participation of marginal and small producers in the market. VBN itself will not become a market player but will facilitate linkages and strengthen the partners to work with small producers participate in market led growth processes.

The effort is supported by ICCO, the Netherlands. Presently PRADAN holds the secretariat to the network. Senior representatives from the individual organizations meet once in every quarter to strengthen the process of mutual learning, sharing and decide on the plan of action which provides scope for participation of all partners in the activities of VBN.

The major activities of the VBN are:

- Organising training and exposure programmes, cross visits and other learning events for member NGOs on market led development
- Distilling knowledge about best practices and facilitating adoption of best practices by partner organizations.
- Assisting members to initiate pilot initiatives on activities, hitherto not established in their areas. Besides training support, VBN also bears partial cost of hiring expert, and working capital support to producers to adopt technology and good practices

While VBN focuses on promoting market led development, it also recognizes that in a State like Jharkhand, linkages with government programmes to create basic infrastructure is also crucially important. So VBN is also involved in collating information on Government programmes and facilitating linkages with Government and other agencies. Recently, 7 out of 16 members were short listed as project implementing agencies in a State Government supported poverty alleviation programme.

Some activities of the network in the past one year are:

- Conducted training events for members on Local Area Economy Analysis, SRI, Livelihood Promotion – concepts, Value Chain Development and small holder poultry
- Organised exposure visit for members on SRI intervention in Bihar and to local market development initiatives in Kyrgyzstan
- Documentation of a case study on marketing of Tamarind (experience of member NGO AROUSE)
- Identification of livelihood opportunities in 2 blocks of Hazaribag and Ramgarh
- Mobilising small grant support for experimentation and piloting to two members
- Involvement of members in district planning under BRGF
- Value chain analysis of Tomato in Deoghar and East Singhbhum
- Formation of a working group around poultry and tomato
- Ensuring regular quarterly meetings, sharing and cross visits

Apart from these activities carried out in the last year, the unseen achievement has been the tremendous energy and experience the members brought into the forum from different parts of the State. Regular meetings hosted by different partners, a healthy sharing and the values of confrontation and mutual help have helped strengthen the forum.

One-to-one partnership between VBN members and PRADAN may follow the next year for implementing livelihood projects.

POLICY INFLUENCING

Introduction

PRADAN worked systematically to raise relevant policy issues at various levels. There were a number of initiatives this year to initiate dialogue at the policy level on a variety of issues. The initiative around re-looking at the provisions of the Producer Company legislation continued this year too as the Working Group set up for the purpose finalized its report. There was yet another initiative on NREGA that was taken up in order to generate awareness and discussion on the potential of NREGA for promoting livelihoods. PRADAN also took up a pilot project in Orissa to work with the Mission Shakti programme to demonstrate an appropriate way of promoting SHGs with a focus on livelihoods of the very poor communities. In Jharkhand PRADAN worked very closely with the State Government especially with its Tribal Welfare Department in programme design and prototype development. In Bankura district PRADAN worked with the Panchayati Raj Institutions and made landmark progress in the implementation of NREGA projects in two blocks.

Working Group on Producer Companies

In December 2007 PRADAN had organised a workshop on the theme “Producer Companies – linking small producers to markets”. This was organised under the aegis of the National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods in PRADAN. The workshop was an opportunity to deliberate on the effectiveness of Producer Companies as a market vehicle for poor producers. The workshop was attended by Prof. Y. K. Alagh and many other eminent people drawn from a wide spectrum, ranging from practitioners to academics as well as donors.

Producer company law provides an appropriate legal framework to organize the small rural producers for sharing services and absorbing price risks along with facilitating capital and knowledge infusion from outside. Being embedded in the Company Law, this new amendment offers a way forward for poor producers to establish themselves as market entities, operating on social principles without compromising business credibility. But several lacunae were noticed in the actual working of the provision primarily related to capital mobilization and institutional design. The consensus from the workshop was that a civil society initiative be started in order to impress upon the policy makers the need for retaining the amendment, and also to make the necessary changes to make the Law more effective in enabling poor rural producers to link with markets.

In April 2008, PRADAN organized an independent group to undertake this exercise. The National Resource Centre hosted the Working Group on Producer Companies consisting of selected representatives from different stakeholders. It comprised of practitioners and thinkers on the subject such as Dr N. V. Belavadi from the National Dairy Development Board; Professor Arvind Gupta of Institute of Rural Management, Anand, Ms Anjana Batra of FabIndia, Mr Madhabananda Ray from Masuta Producers’ Company, Mr V. Nagarajan, Chartered Accountant, Mr Trideep Pais, Lawyer, and Mr Anish Kumar from PRADAN. The working group was chaired by Mr Nitin Desai, ex-Chief Economic

Advisor, Government of India. The Working Group meetings were also attended by special invitees, who provided very important inputs. They included representatives from Reliance Retail, Tata Chemicals, Vanilco (Vanilla India Producer Company Limited), Aavishkar Micro Venture Capital Fund and NABARD.

The report of the working group has been finalized. The amendments/improvements proposed by the Working Group mainly deal with issues such as accessing financial capital, capital structure, membership, voting rights, elections and distribution of surplus. In addition to rectifying the issues, a few new sections are also proposed for incorporation in the Producer Company legislation which includes easy exit of non-active members, creating space for participation in governance for financing agency without compromising the producers' control, raising external funds through preference shares, bonds, debentures and mobilisation of additional equity capital.

The Report has been submitted to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on behalf of the Working Group in January 2009 for their valuable feedback and comments. We hope that in the coming year we will initiate appropriate action to enact the desired amendments which can make the Producer Company law a powerful tool to organise the small producers to negotiate with the market.

Workshop on NREGA

The National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods, hosted in PRADAN, held a one-day experience-sharing workshop on 'NREGA: Beyond Wages to Sustainable Livelihoods' on the 21st of November, 2008 in Delhi to deliberate on the different issues that have been raised regarding NREGA and examined ways forward to use NREGA to promote sustainable livelihoods. The event saw wide ranging participation from various stakeholders. Representatives from MoRD, Government of India, senior state government officials from Rajasthan and MP, resource persons from the field of livelihood promotion, participants from practitioner NGOs working in 11 States, representatives of bilateral and multilateral organisations attended.

A vast set of issues were raised by participants at the workshop, in addition to a number of suggestions. The experience from Madhya Pradesh where the administration took steps to graduate families from wage employment to creation of sustainable livelihood assets by designing specific sub-schemes under the aegis of NREGA was received very well. The presentation from Andhra Pradesh where innovative ideas of generating wage employment has been tried out was another interesting experience. The presentation from West Bengal focused on capacity building of PRIs by creating trained community service providers and large area planning based on watershed principles, thereby increasing productivity of the whole area and creating long term assets. The resource persons highlighted the need for the NGOs to mobilise the workers so that they are able to effectively demand their right and access entitlements.

Development of SHG Federations: Mission Shakti Project, Rayagada, Orissa

Government of Orissa under the Department of Women and Child Development launched *Mission Shakti* in 2001, an umbrella programme for empowerment of women through formation and strengthening of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The total number of SHGs in Orissa is estimated to be around 300,000 with reported savings of INR 1,605 million (as per SLBC, Sept 2007).

While a large number of SHGs were promoted, quality of the groups and the services available through them have not been up to expectations. At one level there is urgent need to strengthen the SHGs; there is also scope to help the SHG members identify and undertake appropriate livelihood activities. In addition, SHGs require help to form Federations which can strengthen solidarity and provide a platform for cross learning.

PRADAN was selected as resource organization to work with the SHGs in the district of Rayagada, having 6,500 SHGs in 11 blocks. Our objective of the pilot is to create a demonstration for policy change. In addition, experiences of NGOs such as PRADAN and others can add a lot of value to the government programmes. The pilot in Rayagada is aimed at that.

Influencing NREGA in West Bengal

Molian Gram Panchayat (GP) in Bankura district in West Bengal spent INR 0.3 million under NREGA in the first 6 months of the financial year 2008-09. In the latter half of the financial year the Gram Panchayat was able to spend INR 8.2 million on a wide range of activities such as in-situ soil moisture conservation, water harvesting, agro-horticulture on fallow uplands and similar works contributing to creation of long term livelihood assets. This happened as a result of intervention by PRADAN in capacity building of the GPs to conceptualize, plan and implement NREGA works with peoples' participation.

PRADAN has been working at different levels in Bankura district as well as the State to mainstream the idea of taking up works under the integrated natural resource management concept. The PRADAN team met with officials ranging from the Secretary Rural Development to the local Panchayat leadership. PRADAN's work on INRM was visited by a number of senior officials in the State and the district. As a result the administration in one block in Bankura decided to collaborate with PRADAN on revamping NREGA implementation. From one block initially, the collaboration has been extended to 5 blocks. In these blocks PRADAN and the Panchayati raj institutions have developed a model of planning and implementing NREGA schemes through women's SHGs, who are assisted by community service providers trained by PRADAN. In the three blocks, works worth more than INR 20 million were implemented in the past 6 months.

INNOVATIVE PROJECT WITH DIGITAL GREEN

Digital Green

Digital Green is a Microsoft Research India project that seeks to disseminate targeted agricultural information to small and marginal farmers in India through digital video. It uses participatory videos to promote sustainable agricultural practices in small and marginal farming communities. Last year PRADAN initiated an innovative project with Digital Green in West Singhbhum where local community resource persons were trained in conceptualizing, planning, preparing story boards, shooting, editing and dissemination.

“Nen filim do aleya japa hatu ria mena, agar Kalicharan do nen leka paity daiye to aleyo daiye”. (This village is just next to us, if Kalicharan can do these practices so efficiently, we can also do the things in this way). An old farmer of Sardiya shared this when he saw the plant protection practice of Maize in a short video produced through the project.

The Digital Green System

Video content

- made in local language
- address grassroots level practicalities,
- not intended for only literate people
- conforms farmer's reliance on auditory and visual senses
- less expensive than other types of media

Content production

- systematic and comprehensive format for sharing information
- Pre-production (topic identification and storyboarding)
- Production (camera and microphone handling, direction and focus)
- Post-production (quality checking, editing, storing video)

Content Dissemination

- Villages are provided a TV and DVD player operated by CRP
- Villages/SHGs dedicate 1 hour/week (30 minutes of video screening and 30 minutes of discussion)
- Professional and CRPs analyze feedback from community to address interests and questions expressed

The project aims to create a mechanism in which people from the community are trained to develop relevant local videos. These videos are for regular dissemination by CRPs and PRADAN staff in the community. It was visualized that the community resource persons would help to effectively reach out to a large number of families with a uniform practice. At the same time the model would ensure systematic adoption of recommended practices.

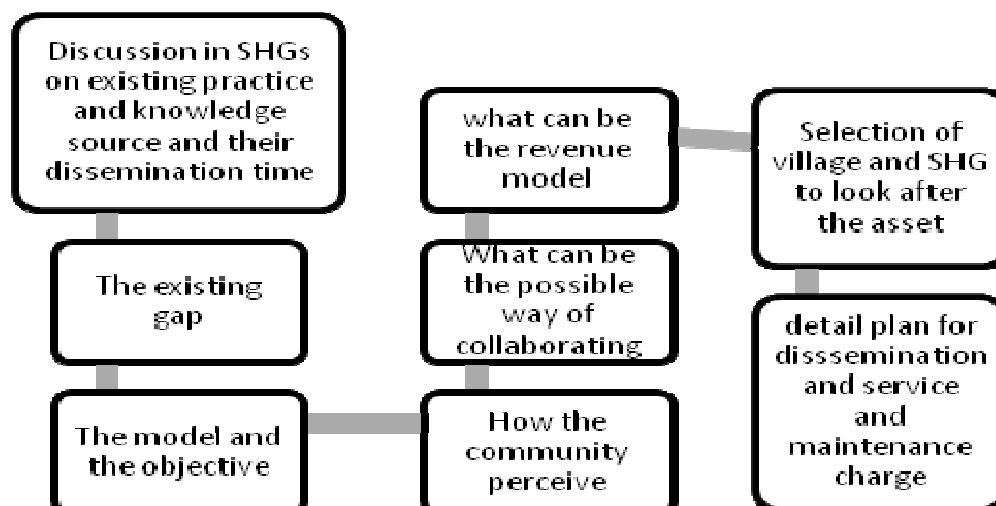
During the initial phase of the project the major focus was on preparing the local resource persons for content production. From the beginning emphasis was given on transferring

the responsibilities such as identifying topics, storyboard preparation, camera handling, interviewing and reviewing the final product to the CRPs.

Till now a total of 6 resource persons have produced 28 videos. They are:

- 8 agriculture demonstration videos (e.g., Nursery bed preparation, seed treatment, seed selection, line sowing etc.)
- 12 videos on impact of adopting new practice
- 2 on indigenous techniques
- 6 other success stories

The process followed for dissemination



HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

PRADAN believes that removing poverty is a transformative process that begins with triggering or catalysing change in poor people's own belief systems – developing what Amartya Sen calls the “being” dimension of human capability. This requires empathetic engagement with poor people over a significant period of time. Simultaneously, one needs to enhance their knowledge and skills, the “doing” dimension of human capability, to help them build assets, sustainably enhance productivity of their assets, gain access to entitlements and effectively negotiate mainstream socio-economic processes with dignity. Bringing in and equipping suitable people to do such work in villages has been almost at the level of organisational mission in PRADAN. Unfortunately, choosing to work in villages, among the disadvantaged, after a good university education runs counter to existing social norms about a desirable career, a good life. Further, there is no worthwhile educational program that equips people with skills, knowledge and perspective needed for transformative grassroots work. PRADAN therefore has to invest significant organisational energy to find and induct well-educated youth and to equip them with the skills, knowledge and perspective necessary to become effective grassroots workers.

In its early years, PRADAN drew personnel through word of mouth and gave them brief exposure to grassroots work through visits to other NGOs and PRADAN projects. Those who chose to stay would be placed in grassroots projects, to learn on the job. However, by 1994, as the organization began to take shape and needed to add 10 to 12 new people yearly in an assured way, a separate Human Resources Development (HRD) Unit was set up and HRD processes and programs were developed systematically. The HRD Unit initially focused on recruitment, induction and early training of young educated⁷ people at the entry level. With time the focus of the HRD unit broadened to building capacities of staff -- equipping them to play current roles more effectively, and to make transitions to newer roles.

PRADAN today brings in some 150 Development Apprentices a year, and some 60-70 of them graduate as Executives. It is quite systematic now, with a large pool of staff, trained as recruiters, visiting campuses according to a plan. A pool of trained and appropriately oriented Field Guides mentor apprentices joining PRADAN and help them to make an informed choice early on whether to continue. That all this happens in a highly decentralized way shows that the processes have been institutionalised – fully integrated into the working of PRADAN. The efficacy of the program may be seen from the following:

- Some 1,231 university graduates joined the apprenticeship during the past 15+ years, √ of these 530 joined during 2004-2009.
- 424 apprentices graduated as Executives in the past 15+ years, √ of these 239 graduated during 2004-2009. 52% of the graduating Executives between April, 2000 and March 2009 continue in PRADAN

⁷ Those with a baccalaureate in technical disciplines and a master's in others, amounting to 16 years' education.

- Some 81 PRADAN professionals have over 6 years' experience, and form its leadership pool. This was 60 in 2006, 25 in 2000, and the growth is entirely attributable to the Apprenticeship program. In fact, all but a handful are products of the Apprenticeship program.

During this year, too, PRADAN continued in its endeavor to bring in well educated people to live and work for rural poor, in the past year too. Our major thrusts were, increasing number of Development Apprentices recruited, increasing the joining ratio and identifying ways meet the growing requirement of human resources. The ongoing staff development programmes continued to focus on enhancing on the job performance of PRADAN Executives through introducing mechanisms to help professionals make role transitions while in PRADAN and to enable them to acquire necessary capabilities to play current roles more effectively..

Described below are the broad areas of work and a brief review of activities during the reporting year.

'Identity and Role as a Development Professional'

Reflections from Apprentices, just before their graduation in December 2008.

“To my knowledge and to my personal experience and large number of people hardly think of their self identity. Frankly speaking I may not have spent even one day time to think over it till joining PRADAN. After joining PRADAN even I got an opportunity to know my self-identity but still by one or other reason I could not do it. But it is necessary that if I being a development professional I should have clear understanding of my existence, identity, responsibility etc. Now being a development professional I have to observe things in such perspective. Each and every sphere of life has scope of development in itself. Until now if working to execute the jobs like a follower but now there should be a logic and sustainability of the job. It is because if one is unable to find himself in the job cannot achieve the long term goal. While talking about our SHG member (rural poor women) we discuss a lot of their identity. But how much we realize the same in our life is unknown to we people. To my experience I am unable to realize or internalize my identity I cannot become a true development professional. So there is much more area of scope and improvement to transform myself in an “agent of change”. This personal, social and mental development will then helpful to make me understand what role I have and what responsibility I bear.

If talking about role in community after realizing my identity, there will be definitely change in my way of behavior, way of taking, dealing cases, executing projects etc. It is because a developmental perspective will help me to deal differently. Observing, experiencing the people, resource needs, aspiration, capabilities etc. altogether will be different. There will be development in my moral senses also; it is because if one has to leave an example in the society he should be socially, morally accepted. In many areas I ignore faults, my habit but have job to improve them with time. Also mobilizing, activating, motivating community should be an easy task for me. I should know all approaches with benefits and difficulties while dealing with community. All statement should be clear and transparent throughout the community, society and organization.

Organization learning and actions should be logical and purposeful. Keeping in mind the vision and mission of organization I will perform like that. It may possible that I have to exert beyond my limit but it will help in increasing stamina, building confidence in me. Action will be without any gap in communication. Transparency in all respects is essential. Fortunately a lot of fruitful changes have occurred in me during this an apprentice programme but there are still areas to improve which I think will improve sooner.”

(41st batch; location: Jharkhand)

“After completing a year in PRADAN when I look back I joined PRADAN in search of new venture and continue because nobody tried to impose his or her idea on me. I always have the dream to do something for my country in my own way and understanding. My understanding about poverty is limited to direct help with money because I often see people struggling to get two time food for their family and other necessary things. The way I have learned sustainability in PRADAN has long impact.

While working with people I have tried to identify my role, scope of work and understood its difficulties. It affects me as well as people I am working with. I am working with human being who is capable as I am and can talk about life and take decision about their life and rights.

Now I think that my role as a development professional would be decided by both i.e. me and community. But it will be a new challenge for lessen the difference between “us and them” and to make an understanding of my role and its effects on their life.

The process of facilitation – I understand facilitation as a way to make people see implication of different things. The facilitation can be done by being non-judgmental and with continuous observation of its effects. PRADAN is an idea of professionals working with it. And I would try to be honest.”

(41st Batch; Location: Madhya Pradesh)

Overview of Human Resources Development

From April 2007 onwards PRADAN has been working towards doubling outreach of poor families every three years. In this effort, the last year shows a growth of 30 % in outreach, and plans for the coming year are also of the same order. This has also been fuelled by a growth in human resources.

As on March 31, 2009, the staff strength of PRADAN was 477. Of these 226 were executives, and 82 assistants. Another 169 staff were on short-term contracts providing task-based or technical support to PRADAN's teams. Additionally there were 76 Development Apprentices on board. The attrition rate of Executives was 17% which was less by 2% compared to the previous year

Table 1: Human Resources in PRADAN

Particulars	31-Mar-08			31-Mar-09		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Executives	175	143	32	226	181	45
Assistants	83	69	14	82	65	17
Contract Staff	123	113	10	169	146	23
Total	381	325	56	477	392	85
Apprentices	83	66	17	76	57	19
Grand Total	464	391	73	553	449	104

Recruiting Apprentices

With the challenge of eliminating the gap between supply and demand, increasing diversity and maintaining high standards in recruitment 341 offers were made in 2008-09. Another 243 offers were made for FY 2009-10. All this happened through strengthened relationships with campuses, and efforts of 49 recruiters visiting 40 campuses and conducting 11 special recruitment camps. A pilot was introduced to enhance conversion from offers to joining, and through an online discussion forum called "The Students Commune" including quizzes, and an e-newsletter called Campus Reach. We introduced a new concept of Young Alumni, where PRADAN Executives visited their Alma Mater to give a talk and interact with the students.

Development Apprenticeship

A young university graduate joins as apprentice through systematic recruitment and selection. The year long apprenticeship programme which has been revised during the last year has 9 months field work interspersed with 2 central learning events called Foundation course I and II, one project visit to another team and a visit to another NGO which has a different approach to development. The development apprentice (DA) explores and learns under the guidance of an experienced development professional who has been systematically oriented to play this role of Field Guide (FG).

The year began with 83 Development Apprentices on board. Another 147 Apprentices joined during the year, 89 left the programme mid-way and 65 graduated as Executives. In this way there were 76 Apprentices on board by March 31, 2009. The focus of the

HRD Unit during the year was to strengthen the curriculum and deepen immersion in field work. Areas requiring attention in the coming year are to increase guidance capacity, strengthen the learning climate in the teams, and strengthen the faculty and curriculum of the Foundation Courses. All this in addition to ensuring that all the mandated training inputs are delivered to the Apprentices and the learning is applied in the field.

PRADAN's Development Apprenticeship Program

The 12-month program helps young people to explore life and work at the grassroots as a career choice. It also provides opportunity to pick up the basic skills, knowledge and know-how for effective grassroots work.

Two broad considerations underlie the objectives and design of the program. For one, a vocation or career in the grassroots, in the social sector, is an unconventional one for young, educated Indians. It requires them to swim against the social current, and invokes resistance and opposition from the family. Also, everyone is not cut out to be a "helping person", which is what grassroots community work requires. It is only when they are immersed in the situation that they can assess their own motivation, and their ability and readiness to cope with the unfamiliar and difficult conditions of life and work. There are very few opportunities available to young Indians to explore the pluses and minuses of such a career and life. So, the first objective of apprenticeship is to provide them the opportunity to make such an informed choice.

Also required is a systematic and rigorous way to prepare such youngsters for work in the grassroots. University education continues to be inadequate preparation for such 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 "standard technical problems", prepare "situational analyses" or initiate processes that are "reparative" in nature. Most newcomers to this field have thus had no opportunity to pick up practical skills, and to develop the breadth of perspective and theoretical grounding needed by effective development workers.

Outline of the Program

A new Apprentice is provided opportunity for a 'reality check' by spending a week in a PRADAN project. Those who stay on then immerse themselves into the arena of work for a development professional, namely, understanding the existential context of a set of poor families, the geographical area, PRADAN's work in mobilising and organising poor people and a selected livelihood sector. The learning process is supported by a centrally designed field-based curriculum, which includes living with a poor family, village studies and other structured assignments.

At the end of the third month PRADAN pays for each Apprentice who has chosen to stay on to go home, to discuss the pros and cons of such a career choice with their near and dear ones. Those who choose to stay on then return to join a four week intense classroom-based curriculum – Foundation Course I – designed to help them reflect on this choice of profession, learn from their experience and link it with theories and concepts.

This is followed by another 4 months of Field Work, under the guidance of a Field Guide in one of PRADAN's field teams. These months of fieldwork simulate the life and work of an Executive in PRADAN. The Apprentice takes on an area and a set of tasks and plans within the Field Guide's domain. "Reflection, learning and doing" then go hand in hand. A systematic process of quarterly reviews helps each Apprentice reflect on grassroots work as a suitable career choice, and to review progress towards learning goals. Another month-long classroom based curriculum – Foundation Course II – helps the Apprentice reflect on this experience and enhance their knowledge, skills and tools to work with poor families in a particular area, in one of PRADAN's projects.

During the year, Apprentices also visit another PRADAN team, and another NGO with an approach different from PRADAN's. This helps to enhance their perspective of approaches to development, within PRADAN and in the sector at large. Finally, Apprentices reflect on their experiences and their new role, and plan for the next 2-3 years as Executive.

Ongoing Professional Development

The ongoing staff development programme is designed to enhance on the job performance, to help Executives make role transitions while in PRADAN. We aim to achieve this by

- Designing and introducing systems and development programmes for staff
- Building a pool of internal and external faculty
- Setting systems for use of the learning for enhanced performance

During the year, 5 Executive Development Programmes (EDP) and 3 Leadership Development Programmes (LDP) were conducted covering 131 participants.

Challenges

The unprecedented growth of the Indian economy is creating huge shortages of human resources at all levels. Well-educated people are in great demand. Costs are rising rapidly, material aspirations are growing and choices before a young university graduate are becoming starker as development organizations like PRADAN cannot ever match the pay packets on offer in the market. There is thus a growing gap between supply and demand for professionals in the field. As we move ahead it is imperative to innovate. One of the possibilities we are exploring is to develop career trajectories for young people so that their grassroots experience is valued in the “mainstream” and mechanisms are created for them to re-join, if they wish, the mainstream after 3-5 years of grassroots work.

In the longer term the challenge is to position public service in the civil society space. Presently public service outside the government sector does not have any legitimacy, there is little mobility across sectors, especially from the civil society, and the formal education system continues to bypass the social sector. Required clearly are programs to launch social development/ public service as a mainstream profession, to legitimise it in society, thereby increasing the supply of well trained and socially concerned young people to work in the social sector.

RESEARCH AND RESOURCE CENTRE

The PRADAN Research and Resource Centre or RRC was set up to meet the knowledge need of professionals, both in terms of facilitating reflection as well as bridging knowledge gaps; and in utilising this knowledge to inform external stakeholders. The RRC aims at enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of practice, developing methodologies for scaling up and setting systematic processes for policy advocacy. The RRC has been supported in the past by the Ford Foundation and the UNDP. In the last year Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, and Sir Ratan Tata Trust, FUCID and the Aga Khan Foundation supported the RRC. The partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation was initiated in 2007 to help the RRC to set up a National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods under the SCALE outreach programme. This initiative seeks to enrich the resource for livelihood related knowledge and create a forum for knowledge exchange between practitioners.

Documentation

NewsReach continued even though more work is needed to regularize it. Manuals on Poultry and Tasar activities were produced as part of Livelihood Resource Book series by RRC. These resource books are an attempt to put together knowledge developed at the grassroots into an easy-to-use-format around specific livelihood interventions.

Documentation of Lac activity in Jharkhand and Siali leaf plate activity of Orissa has also been done. These documents will highlight the potential of these forest based livelihood activities in tribal regions of India among relevant stakeholders and describe perspectives, value chains and scope for scaling up in similar areas. We also documented the experience of implementing the Pilot Project on NREGA that was carried out in 5 districts in 3 States.

Research

RRC undertook 2 research studies on Poultry and SRI, which will respectively capture the qualitative impact of poultry in the oldest poultry project in Madhya Pradesh and SRI intervention across states and generate a document for general dissemination to the relevant stakeholders for its replication and policy influencing. The studies are over and the final report is under preparation.

Two major research studies, the SHG Longitudinal Impact Study and the SHG Performance Study came to a close with the last rounds of field surveys successfully completed. The data is being cleaned to be handed over to the Researchers from University of Namur and Delhi School of Economics for final analysis and reporting.

Communication

Two films in Hindi and English, on the Tasar and Lac programs in Jharkhand were completed this year. Besides strengthening the web site, an Intranet has also been at the final stages of completion to have an in house network for sharing and accessing information within organization.

GOVERNANCE

A major highlight of the year was the finalising of the new PRADAN structure, one of the areas we had worked on as part of the Vision 2017 process. A unique feature of the new structure has been in the formalisation of the role of PRADAN professionals in its institution building. Two new Councils were formed with PRADAN professionals as members. The General Council has all the PRADAN Executives having more than 4 years experience as voluntary members. It upholds the non-negotiables in PRADAN, preserves the institutional culture, reinforces the sense of ownership and influence of the collective in its development task. Another council named the Stewardship Council (SC) has members selected through a sociometric process by the members of the GC. The SC is entrusted with the responsibility of guiding movement towards PRADAN's mission and is a recommendatory body to the PRADAN Governing Board. The Councils are in the way of experimentation as of now, since such organisational innovations have not been tried out elsewhere and thus there are no existing experiences to learn from.

The Governing Board of PRADAN met thrice during the year and the General Body had one meeting. We introduced half-yearly external audit from this year, in addition to our statutory annual audit, to strengthen our systems and emphasize our accountability to external stake-holders.