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Dinabandhu Karmakar believes that it is our mission as development professionals to identify ourselves with the people we work with so that we may facilitate better and more efficient use of their resources. Dinabandhu is based in Purulia, West Bengal.

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Letters to the Editor

Mainstream Institutions Endorse Endosulfan

This is in response to Soumik Banerji's letter, *Obnoxious Recommendation* (NewsReach November 2002) on my article, *Profits from Pigeon Pea* (NewsReach September 2002). It appears very sound to use neem seed kernel powder, neem oil, etc. for protection from termites, aphids and pod borers. But the efficacy of insecticides and pesticides against insects and pests and their cost-effectiveness and availability in the market play a vital role in their selection, especially when we are working for the livelihoods of poor people.

In Kasargod district of Kerala, Endosulfan was sprayed aerially and frequently, of course, not only on cashew plantations, since it was sprayed aerially. Can this be compared with the dose of 0.66 litres per acre in 6-8 months only on pigeon pea crops? Moreover, the findings are yet to come as this case is pending with the central government and it is too early to comment on it.

The Pesticide Manufacturers and Formulators Association of India (PMFAI) advocates the use of Endosulfan. Endosulfan is a popular insecticide registered for use in over 70 countries. Worldwide, it is the most favoured insecticide for an IPM (Integrated Pest Management) programme because of its unique mode of action and safety to many beneficial insects including honeybees.

In India, the Directorate of Plant Protection, Union ministry of agriculture in its IPM module recommends exclusive use of Endosulfan during the early stages of crop growth. The World Health Organisation considers Endosulfan to be non-carcinogenic (not cancer causing), non-mutagenic (not causing genetic damage) and non-teratogenic (not causing birth defects).

The package referred to in my article was developed in consultation with practitioners such as scientists of KVK Sujani, Deoghar and Agriculture College, Bolpur, Shantiniketan. No one felt any need to resist Endosulfan.

Under such circumstances, when the big players are using Endosulfan for profit maximisation, we have no right to deprive the poor farmer from using it. Whether the use of such small doses is hazardous or not needs to be understood properly.

Yoganand Mishra, Dumka, Jharkhand

We urge all readers to freely share thoughts and responses to articles in NewsReach. Email your letters to pradhanho@ndb.vsnl.net.in or post them to Pradan, 3 CSC, Niti Bagh, New Delhi 110 049.

Updates

Tasar Reeling Started in Raigarh

Recently our team in Raigarh has started promoting tasar reeling activity. Raigarh is one of the largest tasar cocoon producing districts in Chattisgarh. The team selected 69 women from existing SHGs in 4 contiguous villages in Urdana block of Raigarh district. The women have procured reeling-cum-twisting machines from the state Department of Sericulture. The team organised a month-long training programme for all the selected women in December 2002 with support from the Central Silk Board, Bilaspur and our Godda project.

The women have started commercial productions of reeled yarn. They are procuring cocoons from SERIFED. The productivity and quality of yarn conforms to market standards. The team envisages enabling the reelers to earn a minimum of Rs 1,000 per month. Most of the women belong to landless families and the alternative sources of earning (in stone quarries or brick kilns) fetch meagre returns. The team expects to run the activity for at least 300 days in a year.

Furthering Empowerment

Pradan has facilitated the publication of the book, *Sustainable Learning for Women's Empowerment: Ways Forward in Microfinance*, edited by Linda Mayoux. This book is based on papers in a workshop organised by Pradan in September 2001. It brings together papers by activists and academics involved in innovation in impact assessment and grassroots learning methodologies. It proposes a framework for sustainable learning that will in itself be empowering and discusses the continuing challenges which will inevitably have to be faced.

Micro-finance programmes targeting women became a major plank of donor poverty alleviation strategies in the 1990s. Funding is set to further increase in this century under initiatives by CGAP and member donor agencies.

Literature prepared for the Microcredit Summit in Washington in February 1997, many donor statements on credit and NGO funding proposals present an extremely attractive vision of increasing numbers of expanding, financially self-sustainable micro-finance programmes reaching large numbers of women borrowers. Through their contribution to women's ability to earn an income, these programmes are assumed to initiate a series of 'virtuous spirals' of economic empowerment, increased well-being for women and their families and wider social and political empowerment.

However parallel to, but to a large extent marginalised by, the enthusiasm of donors and many MFIs and NGOs, some researchers have questioned the degree to which micro-finance services benefit women. There are now beginning signs of a change in thinking. On the one hand donors are beginning to be more sceptical of the achievements and potential of micro-finance on its own and also more interested in self-managed programmes. On the other, there is rapid innovation at programme levels and an increasing focus on participation. These trends are combined with a growing recognition of the need to address macro-level constraints. The solutions proposed have been varied and are far from presenting a coherent strategy for poverty elimination and empowerment. There are nevertheless spaces for introducing policy changes that may increase the contribution of micro-finance to both these development aims.

Sustainable Learning for Women's Empowerment: Ways Forward in Microfinance

Edited by Linda Mayoux

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Making 'Their' Plans Our Own

It is our mission as development professionals to identify ourselves with the people we work with so that we may facilitate better and more efficient use of their resources

Dinabandhu Karmakar

This is in response to Dhrubaa's letter (*People's Plan, Not Ours*, NewsReach June 2002). She was responding to my letter (*Interviewing for Quality Data*, NewsReach February 2002). The discussion was based on my article, *Formatting Livelihood Analysis* (NewsReach October 2001).

Let me clarify that I did not mean to say that replace PRA tools with interviews, as reflected in Dhrubaa's letter. On the contrary, I shared my apprehension that some standard PRA tools are proposed to replace the interviews (qualified further in second paragraph of the same letter as a *series of interviews*). My intention was to understand the people and their livelihood base and not only their income or expenditure.

The focus of my letter (and the original article) was more on training our senses to make the required observations and truly understanding links between different factors of productions in the context of livelihoods. I also tried to point out that we need good communication skills to use PRA tools. If we try to use PRA tools without at least some understanding at the back of our minds, we will be led completely by the tools and may not be in a position to judge whether the generated data is of the required quality.

Building Adequate Capacity

I also stressed upon the necessity of building adequate capacity to explore the potential of resources and the capacity to visualise the desired changed scenario. These 2 are very important to a develop-

ment worker and are complementary to each other, like 2 sides of the same coin.

Absence of these capacities would limit our observations and data generation processes. No tool would be of any help in that case. We may stumble upon some chanced incomplete discoveries but those can never be adequate and reliable to initiate any systematic change process.

Let me once again state that the training module I proposed was primarily designed to enhance the understanding of the development professional and not designed per se to come up with livelihood plans. The outputs of the process is consolidated as livelihood plans to show how understanding of factors of livelihood generation or lack of understanding affects the development worker's ability (along with the concerned family) to come up with livelihood intervention plans.

The format for planning in my training module is a mechanism to test the learning. It helps to understand the multiple linkages of livelihood plans. If the professional's understanding increases, she would be in a better position to help people plan more effective livelihood interventions.

But there are still some unresolved issues in the context of Dhrubaa's statement that PRA tools should be used to overcome the

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A PRA exercise demands practitioners to have

As a process facilitator:

- Mastery in verbal communication.
- Ability to pick up and design the appropriate tools when verbal communication fails to help people comprehend what is being said.
- Ability to read non-verbal messages.
- Ability to validate information.
- Ability to challenge people if required.
- Ability to generate high degree of peoples' participation, dialogue, confrontation and multidirectional exchange of information and understanding among the community and with the experts.
- Ability to help the people to capture data and to crosscheck and confirm.
- Ability to identify the gaps, anomalies and inconsistencies in data generated to draw attention of the community and to get better quality data.

The facilitation skills need to be backed up by deeper thematic (relevant subject bases) understanding and a comprehensive understanding about how to look at 4 sets of relationships that operate in any community. These relationships are:

- People - People (relative space people enjoy in the community)
- People - Resource (access and control over resources and its distribution among the members of the community)
- Resource - Resource (are they positively or negatively linked - building each other or eroding each other, are they at all linked or are in isolation)
- Institutional Relationships (these are mechanism that links individuals with the rest of the world. It may either encourage people to think beyond the individual or may discourage people to express themselves.)

limitations of verbal interview. I have no quarrel with the statement as such. But my apprehension is that we may run into problems if we accept this without getting into the details of the potential pitfalls in this proposition. I think our concerns need to be much deeper.

We need to look beyond the issue of how to generate and collect data. We need to concentrate on what to look at and how to look at people, their lives and livelihoods. Let us identify and develop a shared understanding on the contents first. We would then be in better position to find suitable processes. The efficacy of the process should be judged with reference to the contents it addresses. If we have differences on the contents, it hardly matters (and seems meaningless) how we differ in the processes.

Anchoring Tool

I feel that verbal communication anchors the tools and the entire process. Let us see how PRA functions (*see box*). This partially answers Dhrubaa's question on our role. I would come back to it later in the article. It is however clear that limited understanding about various subjects relevant to rural areas would certainly affect quality. We, along with the villagers, will be misled and will fail to come up with any sensible intervention plan.

The point I am trying to make here is that 'verbal communication' is not built in thin air and certainly not only on the skills of communication. The rich experience of experts is communicated to the community on an ongoing basis at any relevant context that may arise any moment during the course of interactions. How can we overcome any limitation there with tools?

PRA is a process that unleashes a chain of community-based interactions where people jointly and individually take stock of themselves and their resources and linkages with external facilitation. This requires a high level of community mobilisation. It should generate enough community energy to ensure involvement. In doing so, each component plays its own role. There should be an optimal use of those elements. It is better not to unnecessarily replace one with the other. Verbal communication acts like the thread of a garland to integrate the entire process. If we identify any limitation there, our effort should be to improve our knowledge and skills. Use of certain standard isolated tools would akin to the elephant and the blind men story.

Stimulating Minds

What happens when we reflect on our thoughts and experiences through systematic documentation? It sharpens our thinking and helps us to find gaps. The quality of the document depends on the objectivity and authenticity of the data. Any compromise at that level might mislead. We ourselves might discover a scope for improvement in it, but inputs from others could help us to improve our thoughts.

Who can help us better in developing our thoughts and the document? Obviously, those who can ask appropriate questions on our thoughts that are reflected on the document. Who can play this role better? She would be a person who understands the context and who has a broad perspective in the matter.

The same internal processes happen to villagers who are taken through PRA exercises. It helps them to reflect systematically.

And it is verbal communication that actually unravels the thinking processes. If the facilitator fails to initiate the thought processes, tools could still be used by the respondent but at a very superficial level. It can take the nature of interrogation where responses are coming from under the skins in terms of placing some 'seeds or stones'. These may come faster than verbal responses because it is easier to place some 'seeds'. This might make us happy that we could generate 'so much data with so little time'.

If we categorise the tools and techniques of PRA, we may find 3 broad groups. The first set is tasks to be performed to make physical observations. The second set is used to generate and quantify different data. A third set is mapping the peoples' mind (I am not aware if there are any simpler tools).

Who can make good observations? I have the same old answer: A person who has the capacity and attitude to explore potentials (of resources) and the capacity to visualise desired changed scenarios. Otherwise, observations would remain limited to 'objects creating inverted image in the retina of our eyes'. Walking through *nullas* and lands, visits to homesteads, etc. belongs to this category.

Quantifying income, expenditure, rainfall, seasonality, lands and other resource dis-

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It can take the nature of interrogation where responses are coming from under the skins in terms of placing some 'seeds or stones'.

Who can help the people to map the mind and its perceptions? She would be a sensitive human being, who has the capacity to get into the respondents' frame of reference and motivate them (with active listening, walking one step behind, re-stating what the respondent says, etc.).

the capacity to get into the respondents' frame of reference and motivate them (with active listening, walking one step behind, re-stating what the respondent says, etc.). Active listening is the key. I do not know if there are other effective tools to capture elements like motivations and inspirations.

Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator needs to introduce herself to the respondent and then explain the purpose of the exercise. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to help the respondent

feel comfortable and relaxed to take part in the exercise. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to involve the respondent. Verbal communication plays a major role here. Any inability to communicate verbally affects the entire process.

Once the respondents are involved and have realised the purpose broadly, they would take the initiative to make us understand what

they know. In most cases, they try to do that in their own language. They may make scratches on the floor or pick up a few pieces of stones to express themselves. The facilitators' role is to wait and receive what is being shared. The quality of data primarily depends on this introduction and ones' ability to help the person feel at home and ability to help them comprehend what we expect from them.

If we think that our limitation to communicate could be overcome by using tools, I see a potential danger. For example, we want to understand the pattern of monthly income flow over the year from 3 different sources. The respondent may take time to understand the issue and find suitable language to express their opinion. That much time should be allowed. Instead of that let us say that we use our tool of say 3 different kinds of seeds. We may pick up these seeds and demonstrate how to distribute the seeds representing monthly income from different sources.

This might have several implications simply depending on the time of introducing the tool. If it is done before the respondent could comprehend the issue and have completed their thinking process, the demonstration may influence the quality of data. The degree of influence would also vary depending on how a congenial environment (seriousness) could be built through interaction by then.

A simple belief that the tool would help us to overcome our limitations in verbal communication in interviews does not always holds well. The tool may actually become a way out to relief from rigorous thinking by somehow dropping the seeds somewhere. Thus the skill and knowledge to analyse the

A simple belief that the tool would help us to overcome our limitations in verbal communication in interviews does not always holds well. The tool may actually become a way out to relief from rigorous thinking by somehow dropping the seeds somewhere.

behaviour of the respondent become critical in the introduction of the tool. Only then a tool would be effective. That is why I placed the need for learning interviewing skills above the 'tools'.

Looking at Livelihood Resources

There is another dimension to this issue. In my proposed training module, visiting livelihood resources is an indispensable part of the process. This provides the base to the interactions that follow. The professionals get to know of either their ignorance about what a livelihood resource means to the family (and just learn as students) or they may actually analyse the potential of the resources and can objectively assess the income from that resource (as development professionals).

Here is a higher possibility of data based interaction between a family and a professional that would lead to better understanding. Depending upon the situation, we may either refrain from raising the issue of income because we know that it would not be possible for them to judge the validity of the data. We may take extra care in interpreting data generated through interactions. This process has the potential to overcome the limitation of interviews (sitting and talking) as well as that of the 'tools'.

Professionals would be more effective tool designers and implementers if they first learn (at least once in the life) 'how to look at livelihood resources'. In my article I spent significant time in elaborating how to look at resources. I think the problem is much deeper. We need to look beyond the issue of how to generate or collect data. We need to concentrate on what to look at and how to look at people, their life and livelihoods.

The most interesting issue Dhruvaa raised when she said that the plan should be people's livelihood plan. I have already mentioned the role of professionals in the context of PRA. I would like to add something to that. There is no doubt that ultimately it has to be the people's plan (like the house I stay now is mine and forget that each and every part of it belonged to someone else 2 years ago) but that does not relieve us from our responsibilities as active livelihood promoters. By active I mean that it has to be as much my plan as it is for the people.

How can we help others to generate options when we do not see the options ourselves? How can we see the options if we do not own the problems and potentials that exist there? How do we prioritise if we do not create several alternate scenarios?

Sense of Ownership

To begin with, our ownership has to be higher over the desired changes that we would like to see in the community. I do not believe that Satya's sense of ownership over each cocoon produced by the Santhals at Sundarpahari is any less than its producers or Anish's unhappiness on bad FCR (Feed Conversion Ratio) is less than that of the poultry rearers. It is Satya who fights to stabilise cocoon prices and it is Anish who fights in the market. Civilisation would not have reached this stage had there been no professionals

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If peoples' livelihood plans are not my plans, why should Pradan pay me?

There is no barrier to stop me thinking that I belong to them and their problems are my problems and I will identify solutions to those problems. That is the beginning.

scratching their heads to influence and convince common people.

When we promote a self-help group, we convince people with our ideas. We motivate them to take loan from banks. If peoples' livelihood plans are not my plans, why should Pradan pay me? Ideally I would feel great if I could belong to each family we work with and could

demonstrate that it is possible to manage a better living being there with whatever they have and find an honest and sustainable growth path. There is no barrier to stop me thinking that I belong to them and their problems are my problems and I will identify solutions to those problems. That is the beginning.

The second phase is how do I replicate myself. That is the job of the salesperson. How do we sell our ideas? A coach plays with the players to induce the fighting spirit in the players and demonstrate his ideas as co-player. Similarly, our basic role should be to ignite the aspiration of our people to live a better life and demonstrate what can actually be done to achieve that.

Our identity should be that of a collaborator with the people as joint stakeholders. Through this process we would understand the strengths and weakness of our partners and enable them to overcome the weaknesses.

But all these are internal preparation. All these would sound hollow if we have nothing concrete to deliver.

The most important task is our mastery over the technology that would bring changes to the life of so many people. As somebody said, if living is easy today, it is only because of technological

innovations and their extensions. But all technologies do not match every situation. There are more innovations for the better-off sections of the society than the poorer ones. I should also add that extension and development of more pro-poor technologies (for livelihood production) is also our responsibility.

To complete the cycle let me say that our identity should be that of a collaborator with the people as joint stakeholders. Through this process we would understand the strengths and weakness of our partners and enable them to overcome the weaknesses by transferring at least our knowledge and skills, linking them to various public support systems that people like us rely upon for survival and growth.

Out of Madhya Pradesh

A field professional reflects on the role and purposes of common interest groups formed under the Madhya Pradesh District Poverty Initiatives Project

Ashok Kumar

The District Poverty Initiatives Project (DPIP) is a rural development project that some state governments have undertaken with support from the World Bank. Besides Madhya Pradesh (MP), it covers Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. The government of MP has selected over 2,000 villages in 14 non-tribal districts under this project, with a total budget of Rs 600 crore.

The poorer pockets in these districts were chosen on the basis of a social assessment. A number of organisations including Sanket, ORG and Triratna were involved in the social assessment process. The poorer families in these villages are supposed to form groups around various activities. These groups, formed mostly around various income generating activities and activities related to village infrastructure, would themselves implement the projects under DPIP.

The state government asked Pradan to be associated with this project, either to support grassroots action or to support teams formed around the activities. We accordingly started exploring the selected areas. A team of senior Pradanites visited Narsinghpur, Raisen and Vidisha districts and finally selected Sironj tehsil of Vidisha to start its work. We also opted for direct action rather than providing a supporting role.

We then formed a team in Sironj, which was given the role of a Project Facilitation Team (PFT) by a memorandum of understanding with MP-DPIP. A few other NGOs are also PFTs in other districts but most are govern-

ment teams, where officials from a variety of departments are on deputation, working as GO (government organisation) PFTs. All government personnel who join these GO PFTs pass through a selection process. The NGOs too are selected after a DPIP team visits an already existing project area of the identified NGO, the Kesla project in our case.

Work Format

PFTs are responsible for a cluster (20-25) of villages. They are responsible for facilitating gram sabhas to do wealth ranking, helping selected families to form groups and then helping the groups to take up selected tasks. As villages have already been identified, the process starts with village entry and wealth ranking. Once the poorer families are identified, common interest groups (CIGs) are formed around various activities. These CIGs, responsible for implementing the tasks, would have at least 5 members. Project proposals are prepared with support from the PFT and administrative sanction is obtained from the gram sabha. The District Support Unit then approves the proposal. In actual practice, the final approval comes from the state unit.

Once the poorer families are identified, common interest groups are formed around various activities. These CIGs, responsible for implementing the tasks, would have at least 5 members.

This article attempts to understand the role and purposes of CIGs. I have observed a lot of difference in the understanding about CIGs among the project's stakeholders. The

Mean 'Fund civil'
→ Mortgage of land → interest free or at low rate
→ However if interest is high they will not be able to get land back

Purpose of article
① To understand the role & purpose of CIGs - allocation of funds by govt - major problem land mortgage
② To understand the importance of planning at the group & village level

I want to highlight the importance of planning at the group as well as at the village level. Since this project is demand based, it is important to work out a plan in order to make it sustainable.

second issue I want to highlight is the importance of planning at the group as well as at the village level. Since this project is demand based, it is important to work out a plan in order to make it sustainable. As I am the PFT coordinator in Sironj, I have firsthand experience of working with MP-DPIP. During this association I have also had opportunity to see the work being done at other places under the project. The issues I want to highlight have emerged from these observations.

Let me start with the allocation of funds for a village under DPIP. A nuclear family has an entitlement of Rs 20,000. Seventy percent of the total number of households in a village can benefit from this project. There is an additional provision of 30% of the total household level entitlement for creation of village infrastructure. Thus in a village comprising 100 households, the household entitlement will be Rs 14 (20,000 x 70) lakh and the infrastructure entitlement will be Rs 4.2 (30% of Rs 14 lakh) lakh. The total entitlement of the village would thus be Rs 18.2 (14 + 4.2) lakh.

Substantial Funds

Let us compare this with the funds available to one village together at the district and Gram Panchayat levels, which are typically one lakh a year. The loan budget of the District Central Co-operative Bank and ARDB (Agriculture and Rural Development Bank, earlier Land Development Bank) together also comes to around another lakh a year for each village. The total

bank finances from scheduled commercial banks and regional rural banks in our project area (minus tractor finance) come to about Rs 2 lakh per village. Seen in this light, the funds available under DPIP are substantial and should be used judiciously.

Let us now take a look at the status of poor families in Madhya Pradesh. Most rural poor families in the state fall under the category of small and marginal farmers, with land holdings between 0.5-1.5 hectares (ha). These families do not have farm work round the year since there is very little irrigation. They therefore work as agricultural labourers to supplement their incomes, migrating to far off places during the harvesting seasons.

In distress situations they mortgage their land to big farmers or to moneylenders. A quick survey conducted by our team revealed that 30% to 70% of the lands of these poor families are mortgaged in one form or the other. So when they dream of better times, the dream invariably takes the form of a tube or dug well in their own land so that they are able to cultivate more than one crop. They would be able to utilise family labour in well-based agriculture. They would even be able to pay back their mortgages from the additional income.

When the poor dream of better times, the dream invariably takes the form of a tube or dug well in their own land so that they are able to cultivate more than one crop.

When a programme like DPIP comes their way, it is hardly surprising that these families opt for well-based irrigation. But I have a fear in such a scenario. We know very well that irrigated agriculture needs much more financial investment (preferably mainstream finance from banks) and support from extension services in order to increase production on a sustained basis. It would be extremely difficult for these

families to come out of the poverty trap in absence of loans and extension services. They would rather lose their assets more quickly due to borrowings at high rates of interest and poor quality output.

Recently the state government has distributed half a hectare of land each to a large number of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe families. These families need special attention in order to develop their land. What I have said before applies to these families too. There are still some more landless families, mostly nomadic communities like the Banjaras or displaced tribes like the Shaharias. They have settled down in the past decade as encroachers on revenue or forestland.

These asset-less families, who are struggling to get ration cards etc., have very limited choices. They either want opportunities for wage employment or to rear goats. Those who are yet to cultivate their recently acquired lands have similar demands: wage opportunity, rearing goats or small trading (hawking, vending, etc.).

Sensible Facilitation

I would like to cite a few examples of how these demands emerge and how we need to facilitate the groups in order to achieve the desired outcomes. To meet the above demands, the PFTs form groups of 5 families who take up digging a well as an activity. It is here that I would like to share approach-related differences while implementing the DPIP project.

Under normal circumstances, the area under control of such a group is 5 ha (assuming each family owns one ha). A well here generally irrigates one ha of land. How does

the group then share the water, especially during peak seasons?

This means that the group will share water for lifesaving irrigation during the Rabi (Rabi is the main crop) season. During the rest of the time, they would be able to cultivate 0.25 ha of vegetables. This is the minimum area under vegetable cultivation required to fulfil the cash requirements of a maximum of 2 families only. Generally, one well is also sufficient to irrigate 1-2 families' wheat crops. I therefore fail to understand how 5 families will get sufficient water and therefore how the group will function.

On the other hand, I have observed that out of these 5 families, we can find 2-3 dug wells (mostly unlined, sometimes half dug), which the poorer families might have tried to dig through their own labour. It therefore seems more reasonable to deepen and line these existing wells instead of going for one well per group. This alternative way would enable the group of 5 to comfortably go for large size homestead development at 2-3 places. So, a group around well construction (or for that matter, infrastructure creation) will convert into a homestead development group where the role of group will be procuring inputs, managing credit inflow from banks, managing own savings and marketing the produce.

Different stakeholders in DPIP have understood the concept of groups in different ways. Take the example of landless families. Generally these nomadic, scheduled caste and worker communities rear goats. For

Those who are yet to cultivate their recently acquired lands have similar demands: wage opportunity, rearing goats or small trading (hawking, vending, etc.).

Water is a link → need more wells.

× Funds Not a Problem / Entitlement should be adequate

× Mortgaging LAND

× People can finance land if production / output goes

× This can be up if water is adequate & wells are deep

× Business Plan approval is critical otherwise this will fail

Under DPIP, family level business plans are not considered while forming groups. The DPIP prescription is that the group has to build a common shed and rear the animals collectively.

some of these families, rearing goats is an alternate livelihood option like Deepchand of Madagan village in Sironj.

Deepchand and his wife Meera Bai rear 20 adult goats. It is their main source of income for the past 5 years. Deepchand is a

Banjara and knows how to get veterinary care. So when his neighbours heard of DPIP, they obviously wanted their activity built around goat rearing. But their plans are for their families only. "I want to buy 5 goats from the DPIP funds, raise the number up to say 15-20 and build a room to keep goats separately. For all these, I am also willing to take a bank loan." If this is the plan Sita Bai has in mind, how is DPIP going to support her? Here lies the difference.

DPIP Prescription

Under DPIP, family level business plans are not considered while forming groups. The DPIP prescription is that the group has to build a common shed and rear the animals collectively. In my opinion, if we are promoting goat-rearing activity, we need to help the families to draw up their business plans (how many they are going to procure with DPIP funds and how long will it take them to reach the number of 20-25 animals).

Rearing goats at the family level will not hamper group spirit. The group needs to be seen in terms of certain tasks that a single family cannot perform efficiently on its own.

In addition to this, the common agenda of all such families would include enhancing breed quality (by introducing better quality male goats), procuring feed, vaccination, insurance, selling goats dur-

ing festivals in the markets, etc. The group would function for all these common activities. The group can also apply for bank loans.

What I am saying is that rearing goats at the family level will not hamper group spirit. The group needs to be seen in terms of certain tasks that a single family cannot perform efficiently on its own. On the other hand, purchasing goats collectively and rearing them in one place does not guarantee a functional group.

Similarly, we can take examples from trading related activities. Building and renting tent houses at the village level is a family-level seasonal enterprise. I fail to understand the purpose of forming groups around this activity. I found a group in Gaurtala village of Narsinghpur district that is engaged in this activity. When I asked the group about their business plan, they failed to say anything. While sitting with group I calculated the potential revenues and found that the possible increase of family-level incomes was negligible. Thus I suspect that in due course this group activity will shrink to be the activity of a single enterprising family.

If we are promoting such activities to promote entrepreneurship among the rural youth, we need to develop a package that would include a business plan, training, exposure etc. Say a group of 10 families want to take up a trading related activity. The first task of a facilitator like me is to demonstrate the market potential of the activity. The products they can sell, mode of selling (hawking, stationary shop, rural markets), management of working capital, all those would form part of the business plan. A few tasks would

*Goats - Why do we need common housing? Other things can do
- Business plans are more important*

certainly be group related. Therefore, a group should be seen in terms of tasks, purposes and functions.

Effective Entitlements

Let us come back to the example of constructing wells. Can one or 2 families afford to pay for the construction of a well, pump and pipes out of the entitlement of Rs 20,000? If that is the main issue, we have to approach it differently. Suppose a village has 50 poor cultivators who have 10 ha of area under irrigation (out of a total of 50 ha). If there is a demand to irrigate most of the land, we need to chalk out a participatory plan.

This plan may include lift irrigation (to tap surface water) and wells based on groundwater and surface water availability in the village. We then need to form a water user's association (WUA). In this case, the total entitlement of 50 cultivators would be Rs 10 lakh. The lifting devices such as pumps, motors and pipes can be arranged by taking a loan from ARDB or other banks. Pipes could be kept collectively. Pumping charge can be worked out within the group.

If there is a shortfall in funds, portable pumps could be procured in order to cover more than one well (because one well yields water for 1-4 hours a day only).

All the 50 families could form 3 self-help groups (SHGs). After they create the infrastructure, crop input costs could be met through bank finance. They could also utilise joint credit cards to take seasonal crop loans. Crop plans for at least 2 seasons would be a part of the plan. These plans would include improved package of practices for crops in order to increase productivity.

On the ground, however, I have seen that

in Jhukarjogi village of Lateri *tehsil*, a group of 5 (4 brothers and their father) received the entitlement of Rs 1 lakh and spent the entire amount in digging a well and purchasing a pump. The group is cultivating wheat and gram this season (same old seeds, same old practices). The only dimension added to the families' lives is 1-2 lifesaving irrigation on their part of the wheat crop. I fear such groups, unless linked with banks for credit, may again fall into the debt trap because now the families need higher volumes of credit (since they are practicing irrigated agriculture).

Participatory Hypotheses

What I suggest is that in a small village 3 SHGs and 2-3 WUAs or vegetable and grain growers groups would meet the entire need of implementation, sharing, producing, marketing and arranging the working capital. In Sironj, I have tested some of these hypotheses. But a lot more needs to be done.

In Tarwaria village, a vegetable grower's group has received a grant from DPIIP. They have been revolving this as working capital for the past 4 seasons. They have started procuring hybrid and foundation seed from places like Bhopal and Vidisha. The group has its own saving activity and members share their cultivation business among themselves. Their wives are members of a SHG and save on a weekly basis. The SHG has taken bank loans twice and has repaid it successfully. Now they have applied for bank loans to start dairies and to construct houses.

Similarly, Sahankhedi village has 40 house-

What I suggest is that in a small village 3 SHGs and 2-3 WUAs or vegetable and grain growers groups would meet the entire need of implementation, sharing, producing, marketing and arranging the working capital.

holds. There are 2 groups formed around crop and vegetable cultivation and one group around livestock. We are going to form SHGs in the entire village. The groups

There is much more scope to help a family using DPIP funds. Otherwise

investments made will not yield desired results. What

I want to say is that a family should not see its entitlement in isolation.

are going to keep the entire stock of pipelines at one place. They are planning to share water more judiciously.

Although these are scattered examples, I would like to say that there is much more scope to help a family using DPIP funds. Otherwise investments made will not yield desired results. What I want

to say is that a family should not see its entitlement in isolation. It is a good opportunity if a family starts planning with the support of a facilitator. It can prepare its livelihood enhancement plan, which should include investment, credit and saving, utilising manpower, creating assets and upgrading skills.

The families can then form groups around various activities based on this foundation. Such activities would really be need-based in that case. In order to achieve this the PFT will have to have a pro-poor orientation, skills related with conducting planning exercises, skills to help the groups to start the savings and credit activity and finally to strengthen or create livelihoods for its members.

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Participatory Impact Monitoring in Action

Delineating participatory impact monitoring of a MYRADA-managed rural development programme in Holalkere *taluk*, Karnataka

Anke Schürmann and Vidya Ramachandran

Despite the proliferation and increasing sophistication of management tools and methodologies, monitoring the impacts of development efforts continues to remain a complex task. Management focus up to now has been significantly skewed in favour of planning. Results are usually measured in terms of outputs, sometimes, in terms of outcomes, almost never in terms of impact.

Impacts are often difficult to measure as they are usually only assumptions at the time of planning, and thereafter, they have to be discerned and causally linked to the project activities. They are also often difficult to quantify, and therefore, to document credibly and comprehensively. Further, since there is a dearth of effective, timely and practical methodologies to monitor impacts, it adds to the difficulty of assessing them.

On the other hand, funds for development assistance have to be allocated between multiple claims and development agencies world-wide are expected to justify how and to what extent expenditures have benefited the intended populations and to what degree their efforts have affected development processes. In this context, Participatory Impact Monitoring (PIM) is emerging as a useful methodology not only to estimate impacts but also to assess them on an ongoing basis and to do so with the self-responsible involvement of all the actors concerned.

This paper presents both the general methodology of PIM and its practical appli-

cation in an assessment of selected impacts of the self-help group (SHG) approach on an NGO-managed programme in rural south India. It therefore dwells more on SHGs than on other programme components where PIM can also be used to good effect.

Holalkere Project

The MYRADA Holalkere Integrated Rural Development Project (Holalkere *taluk*, Chitradurga district, Karnataka) is a concrete expression of collaboration between MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency), an Indian NGO with rich experience in rural development and Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (DWHH), a well-respected development support organisation headquartered in Bonn, Germany. The project is focused on promoting the well being of socio-economically vulnerable rural families through their self-help and participation in planning, implementation and management of development initiatives.

Access to credit and management of natural resources are the 2 core livelihood-related programme areas that have been taken up here. Management of natural resources is encouraged on the lines of watershed development. In credit management, the SHG approach is adopted, pioneered by MYRADA initially to enable people to manage savings and credit, but increasingly fulfilling the objective of

Impacts are often difficult to measure as they are usually only assumptions at the time of planning, and thereafter, they have to be discerned and causally linked to the project activities.

empowering people not only through their independent control of a pool of funds but more so through the process of building and managing their own institutions.

The introduction of PIM in MYRADA was made possible when DWHH facilitated a PIM Team from CATAD, Humbolt University, Germany to explore its applications in Holalkere, with success. MYRADA projects usually follow a comprehensive reporting system to monitor project progress and the

The introduction of PIM in MYRADA was made possible when DWHH facilitated a PIM Team from CATAD, Humbolt University, Germany to explore its applications in Holalkere, with success.

utilisation of funds. At the SHG level, the members themselves maintain books on membership details, minutes of meetings, savings, loans, repayments, etc.

At MYRADA's level, the SHGs are monitored on the books they are keeping, the training programmes they have undergone and other aspects of their growth and progress, in addition to monitoring the progress of other project activities and the utilisation of funds from the partner organisations.

However, as far as the monitoring of project impact is concerned, what has been lacking up to now is observing, documenting and critically reflecting on the nature of the impacts themselves, as against outputs and outcomes. It may even be necessary to admit that impacts have never systematically been considered as an aspect to be regularly defined and monitored.

A few case studies written from time to time have illustrated impacts more as an ad hoc output than as a systemic need. In particular, MYRADA has not so far reflected on the need to develop indicators, which

allow a well-founded assessment of the project impact followed by plan adjustments and, possibly, the redefinition of project strategies.

The integration of PIM in the existing monitoring systems of the project aimed at enabling the project staff to overcome some of the above-mentioned deficiencies and do so in a cost-effective and participatory manner on an ongoing basis. Apart from its direct use for project management, a second objective was for PIM to serve as a tool for learning and even to form the basis to justify continued project investments in certain strategies and activities. Hence, PIM has relevance to a wide range of implementing, financing and supporting organisations as well as to interested public.

Why is Impact Assessment Difficult?

In the context of development projects, impacts are generally understood as effects or changes caused by project interventions. They can be intended (planned, positive) or unintended (unplanned but imaginable, positive or negative), or they may even be unexpected (positive or negative but hitherto not imagined as a likely fallout of the project's interventions by any of the actors involved).

Some impacts - even of a single intervention - can occur fairly soon after the intervention is made, whereas other impacts may take much longer to manifest. For example, the intervention of providing a loan to a poor family to increase income may result quite quickly in an increased workload for some of the family members. In the medium term, it may result in increased income for the family. A few

years later, the family may actually achieve more social and political power in the community as a result of sustained growth of economic power.

Further, impacts may occur in several spheres and at several levels. For example, increase in income may be a 'hard' (tangible) impact whereas increase in social status may be a 'soft' (intangible) impact. The advantage of PIM is that it has the flexibility to allow the inclusion of any change that is considered important enough, even if not positive, even if not anticipated at the planning stage and even if not precisely quantifiable.

The challenges to monitoring impact are mainly 3: the highly aggregated level on which many impacts occur, the time lag between project measures and perception of impacts and the extent to which impacts can correctly be attributed to project interventions. While these 3 areas continue to remain challenges, the PIM methodology is pragmatic enough to permit the exploration of alternate strategies to reduce attribution doubts and establish reasonably definitive cause-and-effect relationships between project activities and impacts.

The 2 remaining words that make up PIM are: Participatory, which has been defined for operational purposes as a process in which directly involved actors monitor project impacts self-responsibly and exchange their results in a regular dialogue, and Monitoring, which, for lack of a more comprehensive definition, is understood here to mean a continuous and systematic process of observation, documentation and critical reflection.

The methodological guidelines for PIM can

be categorised into 5 phases and 20 steps (see table). The practical application of PIM in Holalkere also gave rise to the need to break each step into the following structural elements to ensure that the applied process was correct and complete. The phases and steps in PIM are detailed after that.

- *Rationale*: Why the step is necessary.
- *Outputs*: What is the result of conducting the step (these outputs form the basis for going on to the next step)?
- *Actors involved*: Who should be involved in conducting the step and more importantly, who should not be left out in conducting the step.
- *Procedure*: What is the best possible way of conducting the step so that the desired outputs are achieved.
- *Checking questions*: Questions whose answers can confirm that the outputs of the step have been achieved and that the process can now move to the next step.

The Preparation Phase

This phase has 4 steps to it, at the end of which the expected output is a meaningful and manageable set of impacts to be monitored, decided upon by all the actors involved. As explained earlier, these impacts could be what were originally intended, as well as what were unintended but could be reasonably predicted as a likely consequence of the project activities.

Intended (wished for) impacts are always favourable to the project partners, including the communities in whose interests the project is working.

The challenges to monitoring impact are mainly 3: the highly aggregated level on which many impacts occur, the time lag between project measures and perception of impacts and the extent to which impacts can correctly be attributed to project interventions.

In the indicator development phase, the most challenging phase of PIM, appropriate, acceptable and manageable indicators are developed that deliver detailed descriptions of the impacts in order to assess them.

Unintended impacts could be either favourable or not. It is useful to reflect upon and monitor at least a few unintended impacts: if they continue to remain unfavourable in the long run, or if the negative impact outweighs the positive impacts, it reveals the need to rethink on project programmes and strategies (e.g. if a loan programme encourages a family to acquire a flock of sheep, the intended impact is increase in income (favourable) but the unintended impact could be that one child is removed from school to graze the flock (negative).

A second and equally important output from this phase is a common understanding of the meanings of the impacts to all the actors involved in PIM. The 4 steps in this phase, therefore, are:

- Deciding on the programmes to be monitored.
- Identifying impacts of the programmes.
- Clarifying key terms and agreeing on the meanings of the impacts.
- Deciding on impacts to be monitored.

The Reflection Phase

In this phase the actors examine the background of the impacts selected for monitoring in terms of establishing causal relationships between the impacts and the project activities, and the likely contribution of external factors to the achievement of these impacts. A review of existing M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation) systems of the project is also undertaken in order to see how they can feed into PIM instead of being reinvented or duplicated. The steps in this phase can, therefore, be stated as:

- Investigating the relations between project activities and the selected impacts.
- Investigating the relations between other (external) factors and the selected impacts.
- Examining the existing M&E activities concerning the impacts.

The Indicator Development Phase

In this core and most challenging phase of PIM, appropriate, acceptable and manageable indicators are developed that deliver detailed descriptions of the impacts in order to assess them. All actors are involved in this phase, and particularly the people on whom the project activities are expected to have an impact, in order that there is agreement that the selected indicators do, in fact, confirm the occurrence of the impact.

There has to be a focus on some degree of exactness in this phase: E.g. Level 1: How do you notice that the income of an SHG member has increased? Level 2: You say that a farmer would buy more livestock if her income increased. How much more and what kind of livestock would she buy?

Level 3: Can you say that an SHG member's livestock only increases if her income has increased? Level 4: Why do you think that livestock is a good indicator of income? How can we convince others that this is a good indicator?

At this time, it is also necessary to see the achievement targets that the project had earlier set for itself, in order that the PIM is not more ambitious than the project's expectations. Consequent to the development of indicators, this is also the phase in which survey units and sampling proce-

dures are decided. Appropriate to each selected indicator, data collection tools and methods are elaborated as well as pre-tested to confirm if they are appropriate for use or have to be modified or refined. The steps in this phase, therefore, include:

- Drafting indicators.
- Consulting all actors as well as other resource persons (if required) on indicator development.
- Selecting the most appropriate indicators.
- Defining survey units and deciding on sampling procedures.
- Elaborating data collection tools.
- Elaborating data processing systems.
- Pre-testing the indicators, methods and data analysis systems.
- Determining thresholds and targeted achievements.

The Measurement Phase

This is the 'practical' phase of PIM and comprises the actual collection and processing of data. The 2 steps in this phase are:

- Ensuring the logistical arrangements for data collection.
- Collection and processing of data.

The Analysis Phase

This is the most demanding task in PIM not only because it has to ensure the correct interpretation of data but also because it has to enable recommendations and suitable corrective actions where required. The recommendations and corrective actions may be as much for the PIM process itself as for the project's future activities and strategies. The steps, therefore, include:

- Analysing and interpreting the results.
- Drawing conclusions.
- Elaborating recommendations for future

programming as well as monitoring.

Applying PIM at Holalkere

MYRADA's first exposure to PIM was experimental and, therefore, limited to the SHG programme. Ideally, PIM is an ongoing process that is best institutionalised in the project's monitoring systems. This enables the longitudinal monitoring of impacts. However, since this had not been done, and since the PIM team from CATAD could only spend 5 months to practically introduce the process to MYRADA, it became necessary to find alternate strategies to overcome some of the earlier mentioned challenges to impact assessment. It must also be mentioned here that the involvement of SHG members was not to the full extent in several of the PIM steps.

Self-help groups as defined and promoted by MYRADA are small groups (less than 20 members) of poor women who meet every week on a fixed day and time, save money, take loans from their pooled funds and strengthen their individual and collective status within their communities through a process of acquiring economic strengths, knowledge and awareness of life skills, management capabilities and linkages with other institutions.

MYRADA enables this process by encouraging women to organise, conducting regular training programmes for them on a variety of practical topics and influencing the creation of enabling conditions in the environment for SHGs to be respected and involved in the process of development.

At the time of introducing PIM in Holalkere (1998),

The analysis phase is the most demanding task in PIM not only because it has to ensure the correct interpretation of data but also because it has to enable recommendations and suitable corrective actions where required.

there were 261 SHGs formed and functioning. They ranged from less than 6 months old to more than 5 years old. In order to incorporate a longitudinal dimension to the assessment and also in order to lessen the attribution gaps and enable more conclusive assessments, 64 SHGs (25% of all SHGs) were selected through stratified random sampling in 3 age categories:

- 1-year-old groups (between 6 and 15 months old),
- 3-year-old groups (between 33 and 39 months old), and
- 5-year-old groups (at least 60 months old).

In view of the time and person-power resources available, interviews had to be restricted to:

- A minimum of 60 randomly selected respondents (20 from each subgroup, and not more than 4 persons from any single SHG) for individual interviews,
- A minimum of 60 randomly selected SHGs (20 from each subgroup) for brief group interviews, and
- A minimum of 15 randomly selected SHGs (5 from each subgroup) for lengthy group interviews.

For the same reasons of time and person power, a control group of non-SHG members could not be included in the exercise.

Through an intense process of discussions, 6 impacts were selected for measurement that was compatible with the SHG programme goals, as well as practical and manageable.

Through an intense process of discussions, 6 impacts were selected for measurement that was compatible with the SHG programme goals, as well as practical and manageable. One unintended impact was also selected. Thus, there were a total of 7 impacts, which included:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of SHG members.
- Development of individual skills of SHG members and members of their families.
- Increased income and savings of SHG members.
- Increased workload of SHG members (unintended impact).
- Increased decision-making power of SHG members in their families.
- Development of networks between SHGs and other institutions.
- Increased influential power of SHGs on community village affairs.

For the purposes of this paper, only the last impact is being elaborated in some detail as an illustration of the PIM process.

The following definitions were accepted: Influential power = the strength to affect the way something functions or develops (mainly by gaining respect). Community = a group of people living together in a common geographic area. Village = cluster of communities in a geographic area. Affairs = activities.

Four indicators were elaborated to testify to the above impact. The indicators, compatible with the project's earlier set goals as well as with the SHG members' aspirations, included:

- The involvement of SHGs in initiating, planning and implementing development programmes.
- The involvement of SHGs in maintaining village infrastructure.
- SHGs being approached to solve social problems in the community and village.
- The representation of SHG members in local (elected) bodies.

Individual and group interviews using

semi-structured guidelines, and interviews with non-SHG members to confirm or dispute the veracity of claims were the main means of collecting data. The results were discussed and accepted by all actors.

Indicator 1: The results could not be quantified since the SHGs varied widely in their involvement with regard to this indicator, with no discernible trends in relation to the age categories of the SHGs. Accounts ranged from one village where 4 SHGs had together involved in only 2 out of 9 programmes initiated in the previous year to another where 3 SHGs had implemented 10 out of 13 programmes.

The extent of participation also showed wide variations. There were instances of SHGs proactively calling for village meetings to initiate discussions on certain village problems and find solutions, to SHGs getting involved in mobilising people to make a success of certain government initiated programmes (e.g. polio vaccinations), to villages where the SHGs became active only in response to encouragement from MYRADA. In several cases, the involvement of SHGs had been only to the extent of contributing money to some development activities and not in planning or implementing them.

Indicator 2: The results showed a sharp increase in the involvement of SHGs on this indicator as they progressed in age and maturity. Since the indicator was further elaborated as 'percentage of SHGs being in charge of maintaining at least 2 village infrastructure measures (facilities)', the figures that emerged were 30% SHGs in the 1-year category, 65% SHGs in the 3-year category and 90% SHGs in the 5-year category.

Similar trends were shown in the number of such facilities maintained, with the average ranging from one infrastructure measure in the case of 1-year-old SHGs to 3 infrastructure measures in the case of 5-year-old groups. The types of infrastructure included drinking water bore wells, community centres, school and community plantations, drainage systems, etc. In some cases the SHGs had themselves taken the initiative to mobilise and maintain the programmes. In others, the programmes had been supported from MYRADA in the expectation that the SHGs would maintain them.

Indicator 3: This indicator was further elaborated as 'percentage of SHGs who have been approached at least once by other groups in the village to help solve socially related problems'. The results showed that 25% of the SHGs had been approached in the 1-year category and 50% each in the 3-year and 5-year categories.

They had been approached spontaneously for problems ranging from alcoholism, lack of dowry, and wife beating to village drainage problems, the lack of teaching materials in schools, etc.

Indicator 4: In its more detailed form this indicator was expressed as 'percentage of SHGs who have elected members in one or more local bodies'. The results showed that 10% of the SHGs in the 1-year category had members who had been elected to other bodies. This increased to 25% of the SHGs in the 3-year category and 55% of the SHGs in the 5-year category. There was also an

The extent of participation also showed wide variations. There were instances of SHGs proactively calling for village meetings to initiate discussions on certain village problems and find solutions.

increasing representation in the more important local bodies: in the 1-year and 3-year categories, approximately 40% of those elected were in Gram Panchayats, Co-operative Societies, School Betterment Committees, etc., whereas in the 5-year category groups this had increased to 60%.

Conclusion: The indicator measurements on this impact revealed that though some of the targeted achievements earlier set by the project had not been achieved to the extent desired, the SHGs did show a clear trend towards having an influence on vil-

The indicator measurements on the impact revealed that though some of the targeted achievements earlier set by the project had not been achieved to the extent desired, the SHGs did show a clear trend towards having an influence on village and community affairs that increased with their age and maturity.

lage and community affairs that increased with their age and maturity. On the other hand, organic links between indicators one and 2 could not be clearly established, which could mean that at least in the achievement of indicator 2, the influence of MYRADA was still quite strong.

The performance on indicators 3 and 4 could be taken as a positive feedback on MYRADA's capacity building inputs into SHGs: members were gradually acquiring a stature in their communities where they were being consulted even by non-SHG members on social problems and they were also acquiring the confidence and other required capabilities to contest elections and represent their communities on local bodies.

It is not the intention of this paper to comment on the SHG Programme but to comment on the usefulness of PIM itself. The advantages of the approach are several. It

embeds critical thinking on impact. While it includes the assessment of all intended impacts, it also allows for the basket of impacts to be periodically reviewed and revised and enables reflection on hitherto unforeseen impacts that only begin to be perceived in the process of implementing the project activities.

It enables both impacts and their indicators to be defined in terms that hold precise and shared meanings for all the actors. It enables 'beneficiary' communities to be proactively involved in the process of estimating impacts. While most management tools do contribute to improving project steering, PIM does so through the consciously added dimensions of improving interactions between all actors, promoting learning processes and promoting capacity building.

Nevertheless, these features do not make PIM the perfect answer to a difficult area of work. Impacts are not always easy to forecast and define; indicators are even less so. Where impacts and indicators are defined, there still remains the problem of designing the tools to collect data. To quote an example from Holalkere, one of the selected impacts was 'increased decision-making power of women SHG members in their households'.

This raised the question: What kinds of decisions? The decisions were then broken down into (a) decisions on the purposes for which loans are taken from SHGs, (b) decisions on the adoption of household infrastructure programmes (bathrooms, toilets, smokeless hearths, etc), and (c) decisions on the purchase of household articles.

This then led to the issue of developing tools to collect data on the basis of which

it could be gauged if women had really acquired the power to influence decisions. The final choice was a set of PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) type of tools. At the time of analysis, the fact that the different age-wise subgroups of SHGs - though coming from the same cultural milieu - had responded differently and in a clearly discernible pattern to the data collection questions had to be taken as a proxy indicator that the data collection tools had worked sufficiently well.

Results can therefore, at times, remain a speculative confirmation of the achievement (or non-achievement) of an impact. However, these are impediments that can be overcome with practice, experience and sensitivity. In any case, it is not expected of PIM that it produces precise results but that it predicts correct trends in the direction of impacts.

For PIM to be used at its best, there has to be a realisation that it is not simply a methodology but even more, a philosophy. It cannot remain a one-off exercise but has to become a systemic feature of the organisation wishing to use it. This demands certain pre-requisites, the main ones being:

- A stable administrative environment on the project.
- Good communication dynamics between the various actors.
- The willingness to invest in the monitoring of impacts.
- Commitment to the PIM process on a sustained basis by all actors (time, money, materials, etc.) as well as by the senior administrators who may not be directly involved but who have an influence on the working of the organisation.
- The building of experienced in-house facilitators.

The acceptance of PIM as a philosophy implies a respect for all inputs that can contribute to the understanding and monitoring of impacts and a commitment to enable the methodology to grow and remain dynamic.

Reference

Christian Berg, Kirsten Bredenbeck, Anke Schürmann, Julia Stanzick, Christiane Vanecker (1998): *NGO-Based Participatory Impact Monitoring of an Integrated Rural Development Project in Holalkere Taluk, Karnataka State, India*: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

People, News and Events

- The SHG roadmap consultation for the teams of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhatisgarh and Balliguda took place in Kesla on December 27-28, 2002. A few team members from Godda also participated. This was third in a series of consultation meetings that are being conducted to evolve an organisational consensus on the SHG programme roadmap. Earlier consultations were held in Ranchi and Deoghar in November.

- Nine participants attended the third 'Life Planning' phase of the Process Sensitivity and Awareness Module for Apprentices from December 23-27, 2002.

- Pradan's Governing Board met in New Delhi on December 21, 2002.

- The ILS (Internal Learning System) retreat, aimed at collating feedback on the ILS after its being piloted in 7 field locations was organised at Delhi on December 18-20, 2002. Even though sparsely attended (only about 50% of the originally expected participants turned up), the workshop generated a lot of important and useful directions to the ILS design team in redesigning the systems and firming up accompanying processes. The refined version of the ILS workbooks along with the process manuals will be ready by end-January to be tested by the piloting teams.

- The Malcolm Adiseshiah Award 2002 for distinguished contributions to development studies was presented to Dr Bina Agarwal on November 21, 2002 at a ceremony held at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai. Dr Agarwal, Professor of Economics at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, also delivered the Adiseshiah Memorial Lecture on the occasion entitled Gender Inequalities: Neglected Dimensions and

Hidden Facets. The award comprised a citation and Rs 1 lakh. Dr Agarwal had earlier also received several international awards in the USA and UK for her book: *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. She is a member of Pradan's Governing Board.

- D Narendranath attended the Sa-Dhan board meeting held on December 21, 2002 at Delhi.

- Mahua Choudhury, based at Gumla, has been transferred to Khunti.

- Bhagirathi Iyer of the 25th batch and Rana Barai, Yumnam Dependrajit and Nirmal Dubey of the 26th batch of apprenticeship have dropped out of the programme. We wish them luck in their future endeavours.

- Visit Pradan's Tasar website at www.tasarbypradan.com.

In Memoriam

Rakesh Kaushik passed away on January 13, 2003. Readers may recall that Dr Kaushik, a former Pradanite, met with a serious accident last year. We pray that his wife and 2 young children have the strength to bear the loss. Condolences can be sent to:

Mrs Vijay Kaushik
C/o Magabyte Business &
Communication Centre
SCO-333-34, Sector 35B
Chandigarh - 160 034.



PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action) is a voluntary organisation registered under the Societies' Registration Act in Delhi. We work in selected villages in 7 states through small teams based in the field. The focus of our work is to promote and strengthen livelihoods for the rural poor. It involves organising them, enhancing their capabilities, introducing ways to improve their incomes and linking them to banks, markets and other economic services. PRADAN comprises professionally trained people motivated to use their knowledge and skills to remove poverty by working directly with the poor. Engrossed in action, we often feel the need to reach out to each other in PRADAN as well as those in the wider development fraternity. NewsReach is one of the ways we seek to address this need. It is our forum for sharing thoughts and a platform to build solidarity and unity of purpose.



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