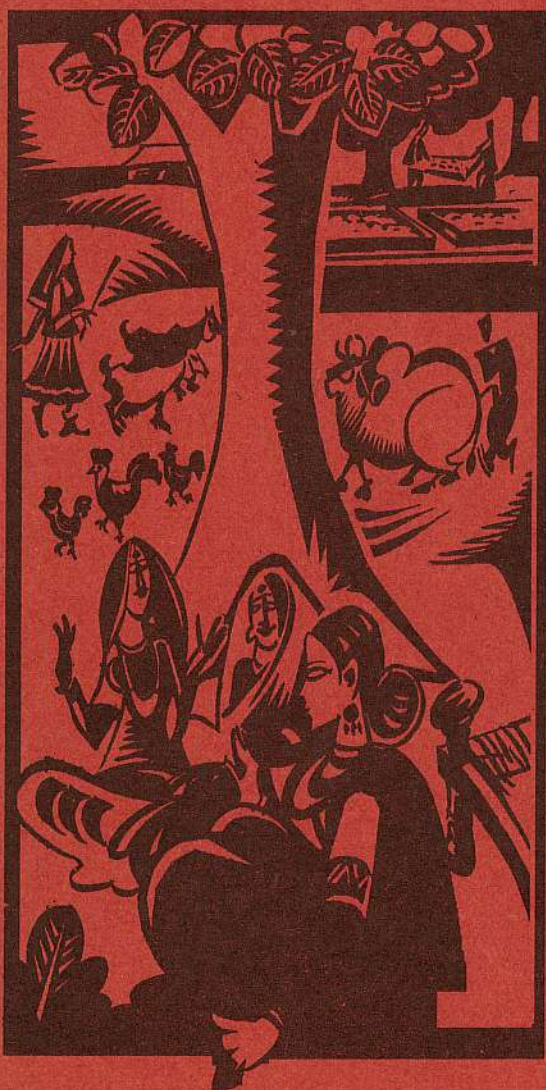


# News Reach

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**Forum: Learning at What Cost?** 1

*Yatesh Yadav* reflects on poverty alleviation through District Poverty Initiatives Project in Rajasthan. Yatesh is based in Dausa in Rajasthan.

**Lead Article: Micro Irrigation, Major Benefits** 8

*Murari M Choudhury* describes how community managed micro-irrigation systems can substantially raise the level of food security of poverty stricken tribal households in Santhal Parganas region of Jharkhand. Murari is executive director of NEEDS (Network for Enterprise Enhancement and Development Support) and is based in Deoghar in Jharkhand.

**Article: Working Beyond Boundaries** 13

*Rajnikant* posits that Pradan, with its expertise on community mobilisation and livelihood promotion, needs to expand its activities beyond the borders of India. Rajnikant is on leave from Pradan and is pursuing his studies at Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad.

**Case Study: Tomatoes Bring Smiles for Puspa Tigga** 16

*Ashish Anand* tells the tale of how the determination of Puspa Tigga, a marginalized tribal farmer, enabled her to reap handsome profits by cultivating tomatoes during the monsoons. Ashish is based in Khunti in Jharkhand.

**Case Study: Cluster Facilitators to the Fore** 18

*Mousumi Sarkar* reports that grooming cluster facilitators in Raigarh have regularised cluster meetings, enabling the women to raise their voices as a collective and find solutions to various problems and issues. Mousumi is based in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh.



## Learning at What Cost?

A reflection on poverty alleviation through District Poverty Initiatives Project in Rajasthan

Yatesh Yadav

The Rajasthan District Poverty Initiatives Project (DPIP) is an initiative by the World Bank to address poverty in a targeted manner in select districts in select states. The objectives of DPIP were as follows:

- Mobilise the poor and help them develop strong grassroots organisations that enable them to access and participate more fully in democratic and development processes;
- Support small-scale sub-projects that are chosen, planned and implemented by the poor;
- Expand the involvement of the poor in economic activities by improving their organisation skills, access to social and economic infrastructure and services, and employment opportunities, and
- Improve the abilities of non-government, government and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to function in a more inclusive and participatory manner.

The project was supposed to organise and empower the poor, build their capacities, and improve their access to infrastructure, services and resources that address their priority social and economic needs.

The main approaches of DPIP, to be adopted by the NGOs, were to generate awareness in the target villages, form CIGs of poor people in the selected villages, build their capacities and help them to decide, formulate and implement sub-projects aimed at alleviating their poverty. Each of the agencies hired by the DPIP had to form on an average 4 CIGs in each of the project villages assigned to them. Each CIG would have a project that will be implemented through active involvement of the CIG in

one year. Every CIG would have different types of activities categorised under the 4 broad categories: Land based activities; micro enterprises and income generating activities; common infrastructure, and social activities.

DPIP hired a number of NGOs in different phases (92 NGOs and 26 project facilitation teams (PFTs) that included largely PFTs of Rajasthan Cooperative Dairy Federation (RCDF).

Originally Rajasthan was not one of the states. However, some senior officials played a special role in negotiating with the World Bank to bring the programme to Rajasthan. Due to this the initial movement in Rajasthan was maximum when compared to other states.

The government of Rajasthan launched DPIP in July 2000 in 7 districts in order to support 3.5 lakh poor families (below the poverty line), covering 7,039 villages with a total outlay of around Rs 623 crore (80% World Bank soft loan, 15% government contribution and 5% contribution from beneficiaries). It had a specific development objective to 'improve the living standards and the social and economic status of the poor in selected villages of these districts'. The government closely monitored the NGOs, who were the execution agencies.

### Teething Troubles

Although the project is well conceived, there are some details that are not fleshed out, which cause difficulties for imple-



menting agencies in the field. For instance, the DPIP has conceptualised the community organisation as Common Interest Groups (CIGs) whereas we at Pradan are more comfortable with a self-help group (SHG) format. In a SHG we utilise homogeneity and existing familiarity of members to each other as the membership criteria whereas in CIGs, the interest to undertake a common activity together forms the binding force. This was in addition to the government's insistence that the members needed to have BPL (below poverty line) listings.

Additionally, we found that the time allowed to NGOs to move in, identify target families, form groups, identify livelihood activities, train the women and implement the activities, was not adequate. An NGO was provided 9 to 12 months to complete all these tasks. In addition to working in the villages with the CIGs, there was also a lot of paper work to be completed in order to comply with project requirements. These tasks were to be done for each individual CIG and its sub-project. Each NGO had to work with a large number of such CIGs, with 5 to 10 families in one CIG.

Based on this plan, DPIP entered into agreements with NGOs with contract periods ranging between 9 months to one year, and started the project implementation. The villages in a district were divided into clusters of 30 to 50. In Dholpur district, for example, the plan of action was to intervene in villages of the first cluster of Bari and Baseri blocks in the first year, villages of the second and third clusters of the same blocks in the second year, villages of the fourth and fifth clusters in the third year, villages of Dholpur block in the fourth year and all villages of Rajakhara block in the fifth year.

These were challenging targets to be achieved within the given time frames. The implementing agencies (NGOs) faced problems in competing the tasks on time. The agreements had to be extended and a lot of changes incorporated in the plan.

There are important lessons to be learnt from the DPIP experience. Many of the NGOs and officials involved had been those who had considerable experience in designing and implementing development projects. Yet somehow the collective experience was not tapped adequately to evolve a project design that would have been effective.

It has to be kept in mind that DPIP was not the first large-scale development initiative implemented in the state. The various state departments also implement programmes such as IRDP, SGSY, watershed development, etc. There are enough lessons to be learnt in the way these programmes were implemented. There is also a rich bank of experiences of government and NGO collaboration. All these experiences were not adequately drawn into this project.

### Pradan's Experience

Pradan entered into a MoU with DPIP Rajasthan in April 2002 in Dholpur and in July 2003 in Dausa. Presently Pradan is implementing the DPIP supported programme in 126 villages in Dholpur, Bari and Baseri blocks of Dholpur. In Dausa Pradan is implementing the programme in 78 villages of Dausa block. Pradan's achievement in the past 2 years in the Dausa project is given in table 1. It is clear from the table that there were huge gaps in achievement that led to low outputs.

Despite large resources at the disposal of

**Table 1: Pradan's Achievements in Dausa, Rajasthan under DPIP**

Item	Plan as per potential	Achieved till 09/05	Balance as per potential	Plan for FY 05-06 remaining period
Villages	67	65	2	57
CIG formed @ 4 CIG / village	268	150	118	33
<b>CIG approved</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>50</b>
Sub-projects sanctioned by DPMU	268	57	211	65
<b>CIGs received funds</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>56</b>
Sub-projects under implementation	268	50	218	39
Dairy CIGs inducted 1st animal	107	31	76	10
Dairy CIGs inducted 2nd animal	107	0	107	15
CIGs inducted goats	55	16	39	15
Sub-projects implemented	268	10	268	44
CIGs submitted Utilisation Certificate (UC)	268	4	264	46
CIGs UCs adjusted	268	0	268	46
Completion Certificate (CC) of Sub-projects submitted	268	2	266	11
<b>Completion Certificate (CC) of Sub-projects issued by DPIP</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Sustenance of CIGs</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>5</b>

*Note: The bold rows indicate achievement of stages of task completion for claiming the NGO's cost*

the programme, the DPIP did not move at the pace it was expected at the start. Since the project is a window for large-scale funds for livelihoods of the poor, Pradan has constantly invested time and effort in

DPIP to ease procedures and facilitate faster implementation. We, along with other NGOs in the programme, have to some extent been able to slightly improve certain aspects. But there are still a num-



ber of changes that are possible in order to make it more effective on the ground. The experiences of the teams during this period of association are detailed below.

There are a number of procedural complexities in the project, and that is the major cause for concern. I feel that such initiatives to support the poor on a large scale requires poor friendly systems and procedures that take the people along and can match with their pace of working.

### Gradual Realisation

Initially allocations of project villages to the NGOs were made on one-year contracts, which were not sufficient. Also, changing project villages was a tedious process. Gradually the understanding dawned that 'livelihood promotion' was a longer-term venture than DPIIP has originally allowed for. Thus, the contracts were then made for the entire project duration.

Initially there were no family or project based ceiling. This led to disparities in project financing among districts, families and activities. Now DPIIP has understood this issue and gone for more logical allocation along with some ceilings for various activities.

In the field intervention model conceived by DPIIP, the implementation is through community facilitators (CF). Usually, a CF is a local unemployed youth. A CF is responsible to facilitate group promotion and groom and implement livelihood activities.

Pradan believed that university educated, capable and caring people were required at the cutting edge of development, who can interact with the poor and can facilitate their development. We put forward our

views and said that we would have problems in taking up the project unless this was amended in our case. It took a year to DPIIP to allow us to take project without the CFs. Although separate guidelines for this model have not yet been issued but in subsequent years Pradan in Dausa and some other agencies were allowed to place professionals in grassroots action.

### Scope for Value Addition

There is no set model of sustainable livelihoods. Things start coming together when the implementation process is underway. If one requires value-added intervention in an ongoing activity of a CIG, the subprojects have to be revised and accordingly sanctioned. Or, it might be necessary to form another CIG for that activity even though the intervention may require little financial assistance. But NGOs are not able to do rethink and reflect as they are extremely tied up meeting compliances and getting approvals.

The current emphasis of DPIIP is on developing individual and small group assets and skill training to the participating families. It is assumed the other issues like support services including backward-forward linkages, attitudinal changes in people's mindsets, etc. would be taken care of automatically.

To expand and sustain large-scale activity for the poor in areas where the economy has not developed requires investment in the creation of (or linkage with) common physical infrastructure that are suited to the context. It also requires institutional mechanisms to run them and development of manpower that is competent to provide support services on a sustainable basis.

However in DPIIP very little resource has

been allocated for this purpose. It requires availability of some flexible funds that could both be used for demonstration and to plug gaps in the overall intervention. There are no such provisions under the DPIIP.

One of objectives of DPIIP is to improve the abilities of non-government, government and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to function in a more inclusive and participatory manner. But various systems, procedures and hindering blocks resulted in low achievement of tasks performed by the NGOs.

The hindrances in the process had led to lower achievement of tasks, which in turn has resulted in small amounts that could be claimed against expenditures made as per the agreements. However, expenditure on salaries, overheads etc. continue and are increasing as additional tasks are added. This has pushed NGOs into a financial problem.

### Stumbling Blocks

There have been many issues that slowed down the speed of project and led to low task completion. This in turn results in very little financial support to executing agencies (NGOs).

Three elections in the contract period withheld work for 6 months due to the 'model code of conduct'. This resulted in further delays in task completion, which was compounded by delays due to seasonal variations, and issue of various circulars.

Circulars are issued frequently in DPIIP. On one hand it shows openness for accepting and allowing changes in the project. On the other, it also means frequent changes

in the project. Repetition of circulars resulted in multiple interpretations at various levels. Also, understanding about the project varied from SPMU to the DPMU. It also varied among various individuals. This different understanding at different level causes avoidable delays.

The multiplicity of approvals required also hinders creativity and viability of various interventions. Everything that a CIG does has to be approved and sanctioned by DPIIP. Even minor issues like a member dropping out or a new member being inducted had to be approved and sanctioned. This takes up a lot of time.

### Experts for Integrated Projects

There are also appraisals issues in integrated activities that some CIGs have taken up. There are no experts for integrated projects. In land based CIGs, subprojects include land levelling, field embankments, paals (earthen dams), bore wells, lift irrigation, agriculture, horticulture and vegetable cultivation. In these cases there is no clarity on who is the final appraiser.

Initially there were no ceilings on the numbers of CIGs in a particular village. Later DPIIP put a limitation of one dairy and one goat CIG in a village. This has also led to problems in the field, as successful interventions in a village are apt to be followed by other poor villagers.

Membership of women in income generating activities is also a contentious issue. Initially, 50% women from non-BPL (below the poverty line) families could be members of a CIG. This was later changed to include more of them through approval from ward *sabha* and *gram sabha* (village council). It was again limited to 20%.



These frequent changes adversely affect the participation of non-BPL but still poor women.

Initially CIGs could be formed with a minimum membership of 5. This was subsequently changed to 10. It took lot of time to add members in CIGs whose membership was between 5-9.

In livestock CIGs, members have to contribute 20% upfront of their share before funds are transferred from DPIP. The poor takes time to arrange for this amount. In most cases CIG members managed to deposit this by borrowing from moneylenders on high interest rates.

### Unavailable Veterinary Doctors

Although a large number of CIGs are based on livestock, non-availability of a veterinary doctor during the procurement of goats and milch animals has created a lot of problems. For example, Pradan's Dausa team planned to procure cows for dairy CIGs in July 2005. This was inordinately delayed because a veterinary doctor of the Rajasthan Dairy Cooperative Federation (RCDF) was not available. Involving the line department doctor is equally difficult.

The community also takes its own time to complete their tasks like construction of sheds, field embankments, land levelling, constructing spillways, etc. For instance, Jambai Mata CIG of Khohra Kalan spent more than 2 months to purchase materials to construct goat sheds.

Some CIGs also change their minds on the kind of activity it wants to pursue. This invariably leads to procedural delays. For instance, Vidhi SRS of Khuri Kalan opted for goat rearing and but later wanted to

engage in dairy. As a result, subproject preparation and submission was significantly delayed.

Similarly, Kaila Mata Mahila Vikas Samiti of Hansai in Dholpur, formed in July 2002 and sanctioned in June 2003 for rearing goats, also wanted to change its activity to dairy. This took a lot of time. First, its sanctioned goat subproject had to be cancelled in the DPCC (District Project Coordination Committee) and process of approval and sanctions for dairy had to begin afresh. Its subproject for dairy was finally sanctioned in September 2004.

In projects like dairy, which are seasonal in nature and divided in phases like induction of first animal, utilisation certificate (UC) and then inducing a second animal, etc. takes 2-3 years to implement. This has not been accounted for in DPIP plans.

Partner NGOs are also often burdened with various additional tasks for which they receive no compensation. For example, they have to participate in campaigns to discourage drinking habits, facilitate insurance of poor families and even sometimes distribute radios. These and a plethora of additional tasks defuse programme focus and interrupts progress of the project.

### Alternatives for Improvement

There is need to focus on the ultimate objective of the project. We also need to share responsibility, trust and a spirit of working together. DPIP also needs to enable partner NGOs overcome huge financial losses by designing appropriate agreements. These agreements can incorporate qualitative tasks in the existing scheme with a corresponding ease in financial payments.

There have been lots of experiences of execution in dairy and goat sectors. The experience should be consolidated and a model subproject should be reviewed and developed. These subprojects need not go for further technical sanctioning to experts. These projects can easily be appraised by DPMU since they have a copy of model subprojects. It will reduce unnecessary time and money consumed in getting technical approvals.

NGOs need to be enabled to promote activity clusters on a sectoral basis through developing separate guidelines. DPIP could also allow them to promote CIGs around that activity, and provide financial support to promote activity federation to develop backward and forward linkages. Separate proposals can be sought for this.

DPIP could facilitate NGOs to promote service CIGs through providing space to accommodate such CIGs. For instance CIGs of paravets for veterinary and artificial insemination services; promoting entrepreneurs around feed and fodder for dairy and goat rearing, and promoting CIGs of fodder development (fodder trees and grasses on private and community land).

DPIP could also allow experts of competent NGOs to act as experts to appraise subprojects and issue technical expertise on UCs and CCs. Most importantly, there is need for the DPMU to focus more on facilitation, in addition to monitoring.

There should also be allocation of flexible funds for innovations in ongoing activities or testing of new activities. There should be further allocation of funds for exposure visits and training (like post-induction in livestock) of CIGs.



## Micro Irrigation, Major Benefits

Community managed micro-irrigation systems can substantially raise the level of food security of poverty stricken tribal households in Santhal Parganas region of Jharkhand

Murari M Choudhury

The economy of the Santhal Parganas in Jharkhand is based primarily on rain-fed agriculture. More than 92% of the population is directly dependant on agriculture for a living. However, the per capita food grain production in the region is only 92 kg. The value of output of major crops per hectare is Rs 3,016 and the per capita value of output of major crops is only Rs 278.

The low productivity and consequent escalating food insecurity can be understood as an impact of poor natural resource management. Farmers in the region have poor exposure and access to technologies that are suitable to their needs and environment. In a desperate bid to increase incomes, there is competition in the villages to enrol names in the BPL (below poverty level) list, the only means of survival they know. Over 76% tribal children suffer from protein malnutrition, causing vulnerability to diseases like tuberculosis. It has to be kept in mind in this regard that indirect malnutrition deaths are not recorded as hunger deaths.

One way to increase productivity is to bring

more arable areas under irrigation. However, major state interventions in irrigation projects have not benefited the very poor because these projects have brought the benefits to those who have higher landholdings.

### Common Belief

It is a common belief that the remedy of the ills of low productivity and abject poverty lies in integrated natural resource management through the participation of the concerned communities. The irrigation projects that NEEDS (Network for Enterprise Enhancement and Development Support) have taken up therefore are sensitive to equity issues (See box 1). Our basic principle in these water management projects is lower the landholding, higher the water share.

However, our experience in this field shows that in small irrigation interventions, the government emphasis is on increasing food production and not on ensuring its accessibility by resource-poor households. It needs to be understood that increasing food production does not automatically

### Box 1: NEEDS Focuses on Capacity Building

The Network for Enterprise Enhancement and Development Support (NEEDS) believes that the focus of development interventions should not be on poverty but on capacity. Poor people are poor because they neither have access to information and technologies nor the capacity to use these information and technologies. The importance therefore lies in capacity building of individuals and communities. Appropriate information and technical capacity has power, and one needs to exploit it for success. The tribal community NEEDS works with, who were once afraid of lift irrigation, are now demanding and taking local initiative for irrigation as a livelihood enhancement tool. This is a result of technology transfer in an adaptable profile.

ensure food security to landless and marginally employed households. In fact, it is difficult, if not impossible, to ensure household food security among the poor through merely land and water based interventions aimed at increasing productivity and production.

The problem arises largely due to discrepancies in the landholding pattern. It is often found that 80% of the land is owned by merely 20% of the households, while the rest of the families hold 20% of the land! It is obvious therefore that land and water based interventions will benefit those few households with large holdings. For the resource-poor households (with merely 0.5 to 2 acres of land), these interventions do little to ensure household food security. What is required therefore is a more comprehensive programme approach, which includes, along with agriculture and land based interventions, livelihood enhancement opportunities for resource-poor families.

NEEDS has facilitated the construction of 4 irrigation systems in last 3 years with the help of KFO Austria (Katholische Frauenbewegung Österreichs or Catholic Women's Movement of Austria). Two of these are small lift irrigation systems and the remaining two are gravity flow systems (by constructing small cross check dams). These schemes are owned by tribal, dalit and backward communities. All the schemes are running successfully. They are exclusively managed by the concerned communities.

NEEDS has 3 irrigation models implemented in last 3 years. They are:

- Lift irrigation system with 8 HP (horsepower) pumps with diesel engine base

linked to perennial water source with RPVC (reinforced PVC) pipeline;

- Mobile irrigation system with 5 HP pumps with HDP pipeline facilities. These sets are used in various pockets of water availability (dug well, perennial water sources, etc.), and

- Check dam through gravity irrigation flow.

The check dam model has been well received by the community. We have also found that the mobile model is capable of reaching the largest number of poor farmers.

### Need Assessment Survey

Before actually intervening in promoting micro-irrigation, NEEDS conducted a need assessment survey to formulate a holistic development plan for the Sarwan block Deoghar district of Jharkhand. It also undertook an action research project on water distribution systems for small irrigation schemes to explore possibilities to enhance access to water by the resource poor in an equitable manner in Devipur block in Deoghar district. Through these we identified potential villages of our intended population groups.

The target area comprises wide and barren plateau lands that used to be covered with thick forests once upon a time. Some remnants of the forests are still there, mainly Sal (*Shorea robusta*). These forests have been depleted in the last century. As a direct result of the deforestation, there is evidence of massive soil erosion due to high runoff. Barren fields account for more than 40% of the studied blocks. The studies also found that the traditional water harvesting structures were mostly filled up with silt.



Based on the studies NEEDS intervened by promoting micro-irrigation schemes. We promoted three irrigation units exclusively for the Santhal tribe and one for the OBC (other backward castes) community. These have benefited 136 poor households (see box 2).

All these families are homogeneous economically. They are small and marginal farmers in terms of landholding. None of the target families had practiced irrigated cultivation before our interventions. They practiced subsistence farming and were completely dependent on the vagaries of the monsoon.

A majority of the families harvest grains that meet their food requirement for barely four to six months. For the rest of the time, they work as wage labourers, not earning more than Rs 30 a day when they do actually manage to find work. The miserable state of the households can be imagined from the fact that a few OBC families earned a living by manually crushing stone

chips. The tribal households mainly relied on wage earnings for a livelihood.

The irrigation units implemented by NEEDS have a winter crop irrigation command area of 120 acre and also are able to protect over 160 acre of monsoon crop from short spells of drought. But the gravity flow irrigation was used at its optimum levels to irrigate paddy during the water shortage last monsoon. However, most of the target communities could not break the habit of an un-irrigated monsoon crop and hardly used the systems despite utter need of water they faced last monsoon. Only 3 acres of land was irrigated for one time to save a maize crop during the period. This clearly indicates that marginal groups do not want to increase cost of production for the monsoon crop because of the low margins.

### Reaching the Unreached

Farmers of each irrigation unit have taken up the issue of ensuring benefits to the landless (and to the farmers with poor

### Box 2: Successful Lift Irrigation in Khijurbona

Lift irrigation (LI) in Khijurbona village of Sarwan block in Deoghar district is one of the most successful community managed irrigation project. The key to its success was the involvement of both the community and the engineer in determining the site of the LI system. The low maintenance cost and cost of irrigation motivated the farmers, as most do not risk investment in a system they have not tried before or had poor experiences. Our engineer and social scientist played very sensitive roles in facilitating the establishment of the system. They restricted to their role to providing technical advice to the farmers by pointing out the factors that required to be considered.

Armed with the various technological options, farmers modified on their traditional wisdom and practices and took a collective decision after much discussion. They finally developed way to coordinate pre-project activities and maintain post-installation operations. This resulted in high community ownership of the system. Khijurbona has emerged as a driving force for other tribal villages demanding irrigation systems. This is a breakthrough in tribal attitude towards power-driven irrigation systems.

### Box 3: Water distribution strategies to ensure share of the resource poor

- Ownership of mobile LIs are entrusted to landless or resource poor group. The entire revenue generated from irrigation on per hour cost is a direct earning of the LI group
- Cost of irrigation per hour increases by land size: free up to 0.50 acre, Rs 35+ fuel to irrigate 0.5-1 acre, Rs 45+ fuel and so on. Higher the land irrigated, higher the irrigation charges is a way to equity. This additional revenue is shared among the poorest identified by the community
- Sharecropping ratio in the irrigation command areas changed from 60:40 to 80:20 after installing the system. This means more landless farmers are willing to lease land for irrigated agriculture.
- The tendency of giving land out for sharecropping has improved because of the staggered payments, thus benefiting the poorer farmers.

landholding uneconomical for irrigated crop), to ensure 'right to water' by providing share of water in terms of value. This initiative in Paisarpur village has started taking shape where 5 families shared the water allotted by the community.

NEEDS is promoting local initiatives to provide direct benefits to the landless poor families through a share of the water. Initiatives has been taken to develop strategies of equity in a manner of water distribution based on lower the landholding, higher the share of water (see box 3).

These strategies have been developed in a year's action research and intense interaction with the people. These strategies are now shared in place where other irrigation systems are being set up, as an education package during the planning phase. Various local modifications have been made at community levels. However, this process is still to be finalized as a standard practice. The important issue here is the acceptance of farmers of water rights and their readiness to share benefits with the marginalized.

Initially we found that non-tribal farmers

were more interested than the tribal farmers. Also, till the first harvest through every irrigation system, irrespective of tribal or non-tribal households, it was only 25% of the farmers who took the initiative to show the path to others. The others first chose to observe whether water would reach to their land from such a distance and also whether the water will be available the entire season to meet the needs of irrigation.

After the success of the first irrigated harvest, the demand for irrigation facilities has increased substantially. We have started getting lot of requests from small and marginal farmers of nearby tribal villages to promote irrigation infrastructure.

### Encouraging Results

The results of our interventions in irrigation have been encouraging so far. Tribal communities in the respective villages held internal meetings and have decided that the entire command area would be cultivated round the year to prevent grazing if only a few farmers show sufficient interest. The communities are also discussing way to regulate free grazing. Some families are starting horticulture, another first in these villages.



The impact of the irrigation systems is being felt in nearby villages, too. Some villages are digging intake wells on their own in the hope that we might set up an irrigation facility. This includes villages that had refused us when we had approached them earlier.

### Water Equity

The most encouraging fact is that water equity is now an issue for discussion in every village where irrigation facilities have been installed. As a result of this, landless and marginal farmers are also taking interest in the irrigation management units. Every village where we have implemented irrigation units now want an extension of the pipelines and are trying to augment existing water bodies for higher coverage.

During the first year of installation of any irrigation scheme farmers spend some time on observation and potential crop planning. Therefore the actual impact on living standards is difficult to gauge at this early stage. However, increasing demand for irrigation is an indicator of improved incomes of the farmers.

There have been some other effects of the intervention. For instance, in Singhni village farmers have started 'Operation Rice Bowl', a community nutrition programme for children under five years, to eliminate malnutrition from the village. More than 43% of the children under the age of five years were malnourished in Singhni. The mothers now monitor their children's growth. They are also negotiating with the local primary health centre for health checkups. This is a unique change in the community.

Villagers of Modidih have also started 'Operation Rice Bowl' to control malnutrition. They might have thought that taking such an initiative will attract us to help them in establishing a lift irrigation system for them too. Modidih is also a resource-poor tribal village, which was averse to power lifted irrigation system.

Three of the nine groups managing the irrigation systems have also started grain banks. These grain banks have already proved effective in controlling distress sales and have also improved the groups' incomes through bulk grain transactions. These beneficial impacts are already visible. To observe further impact we need to wait for another two years to see whether the positive changes are sustained.

Interestingly, more water to irrigate does not mean using more chemical fertilisers in these villages. The farmers extensively combined vermicompost with irrigation. The perennial food crises in these villages might be a thing of the past. Already farm productivity in the command areas have gone up by 32% in these villages.

## Working Beyond Boundaries

**Pradan, with its expertise on community mobilisation and livelihood promotion, needs to expand its activities beyond the borders of India**

**Rajnikant**

This article provides an overview of the global food security scenario, a brief description of various voluntary and social sector organisations (especially in microfinance and livelihood) working at the global level with a motive to alleviate global poverty, and finally urges Pradan to devise ways and means to play a role in alleviating global poverty.

### Global Food Scarcity

It is unfortunate to observe that even in the era of the technological revolution, nearly one third of the global population is still caught in the hunger trap, which spreads its tentacles in more than 78 countries (out of 177), mainly located in Asia Pacific, Eastern Europe, and South and West Africa regions.

In 2003 alone, 36 countries faced serious food emergencies, which is continuing till date. Although the main causes of the food shortages are varied and complex, the main causes are physical and biological factors, social and cultural issues, and political and economic factors. This acute food scarcity can be judged from the following facts.

More than 300 million of the world's hungry live in South Asia, more than the populations of Australia and USA. Poor families spend over 70% of their income on food. In comparison, an average American family spends around 10%. One of the United Nations' eight millennium goals is halving the proportion of the world's hungry population. Drought is the main cause of food shortages in poor countries. The world produces

### Box 1: Bottom Ten Countries

Human Development Index Rank	Country
168	Mozambique
169	Burundi
170	Ethiopia
171	Central African Republic
172	Guinea-Bissau
173	Chad
174	Mali
175	Burkina Faso
176	Sierra Leone
177	Niger

Source: HDI Report 2004

enough food for everyone. But over 800 million people remain chronically hungry. Given this backdrop, it is useful to look at the work of some international organisations.

### International Organisations

#### CHF International

CHF International started working in 1952 as a foundation for cooperative housing in low and middle-income families in rural America. In 1960 it started focusing on international issues. It then realised that addressing one linear area of development alone would not bring about sustainable development in the long term. Therefore they started promoting income-generating activities. In addition to housing and



microfinance, they started addressing environment management, infrastructure rehabilitation, economic development, and civil society development. In 1998 they started marketing themselves as CHF International.

#### **FINCA**

FINCA started its work in 1985 in El Salvador, focussing on providing credit to women involved in commerce and petty trading. FINCA's largest surge came in 1989, when it established new village banking programmes in Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and Haiti. FINCA expanded to Africa in 1992 in an effort to bring its programme to the continent most affected by severe poverty. FINCA Uganda started operations in 1992 and since then it has started working in Malawi, Tanzania, South Africa, Zambia and Congo. It also started work in Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. By the end of fiscal 2004, FINCA has reached out to more than 62,000 active clients.

#### **ACCION International**

ACCION International began as a student-run volunteer effort in the shantytowns of Caracas in 1961 to address desperate poverty in Latin America. Today ACCION is one of the premier microfinance organisations in the world. With lending partners in Latin America, the United States and Africa, ACCION has built a tradition of developing innovative solutions to poverty. In October 2000, it began working in partnership with micro-lending organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa, its first initiative outside the Americas. In 2005, ACCION entered India in alliance with Unitus.

#### **SEWA**

SEWA started in 1972 as a registered trade

union in India. It has now spread its movement to South Africa, Turkey and Yemen. In 1994, with the help of SEWA, The Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU), a 7,000 strong union of vendors and home-based workers, has started in South Africa.

#### **Trickle Up**

Trickle Up started working in 1979 in Dominica, one of Caribbean's poorest countries. Its mission is to help the lowest income people worldwide by providing conditional seed capital and business training essential to the launch of a small business. Presently, it is working in more than 120 countries and has supported more than 135,000 micro-enterprises. It is presently focusing its efforts in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Mali, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Uganda and the United States.

#### **The Case for Pradan**

Pradan, an NGO established in 1983, is about to celebrate its silver jubilee in 2008. However, it has limited its operations only to certain parts of India. Given the above global scenario, a strong case can be made in favour of Pradan expanding its operation beyond the boundaries of India. Pradan, with its expertise in promoting livelihoods can contribute in the global scenario as an implementing organisation, by providing consultancy services and by establishing a central training institution.

As an implementing organisation, PRADAN might consider following its prevalent models through projects in different countries by mobilising resources from local and international agencies. Presently Pradan is full of experienced people with a fair

amount of expertise in community mobilisation and livelihood promotion. These professionals might act as a think tank and provide help in designing and implementation programmes in various countries. Also, as Pradan is also known to be strong in developing human resources, it could set up a training institute, which would create more numbers of development professionals, especially nurtured and developed in a way that they can work in a wide spectrum of cultures and environments of different countries.

#### **Pradan Beyond Frontiers**

The question therefore is whether Pradan has sufficient resources (both human and capital) to extend its area of operation? Currently, Pradan is not finding it easy to identify qualified professionals with a will to work for the uplift of the poor in large numbers. So this is an important area to address. How to generate more numbers of professionals that suits the Pradan framework is a challenging job. With respect to capital resources, Pradan has the capacity to generate funds from local administrations. With regards to technology, Pradan has expertise in many areas and have tested models that are awaiting replication at a global level.

Currently Pradan is working in seven of the poorest states in India. Even in these states, the hilly areas, for instance in Jharkhand, are relatively untouched, although there are severe cases of poverty in these areas. The cooperatives promoted by Pradan are still in the nascent stage, which will take time to become sustainable people's livelihood institutions. We also need to promote more need-based cooperatives that will help the community to sustain their livelihoods. Along with liveli-

hood, we also need to do act in the fields of health and education.

By extending its service beyond frontiers, Pradan will have an opportunity to deliver its time-tested models to more diverse populations, facilitating exchange of ideas and thereby gaining a global reputation. This in turn would result in larger inflows of funds from various international agencies. It would also be then able to create a competitive environment in those countries so that more organisations work for the welfare of the poor.

#### **Present a New Idea for Peer Review**

Pradan has always been in the forefront in innovating on new ideas that could be implemented at the grassroots. **Concept Papers** in NewsReach are a way to share and air new untested ideas to solicit peer feedback. If you have a new idea you would like to test before implementing, send us a 2,000 word **Concept Paper**. If you have experience or views on any **Concept Paper** that would help the author, email us at [newsreach@pradan.net](mailto:newsreach@pradan.net).



# Tomatoes Bring Smiles for Puspa Tigga

The determination of Puspa Tigga, a marginalized tribal farmer, enabled her to reap handsome profits by cultivating tomatoes during the monsoons

Ashish Anand

Fortune favours the brave. The story Puspa Tigga, a marginalized tribal farmer, is a case in point. In May we were promoting better agricultural practices and sharing various concepts of Kharif cultivation among the members of Pradan-promoted self-help groups (SHGs).

It was a Thursday on May 12 when Pradan professionals attended a meeting of Milan Mahila Mandal in Deogaon village in Khunti block of Ranchi district in Jharkhand. We had gone there to share the concept of cultivating rain-fed tomatoes through an improved process.

Cultivating tomato during the monsoons was not a new idea among the members. What surprised them was the process we were promoting that enables a single plant of tomato to yield five kilograms of fruit. The women listened patiently and promised to get back to us after consulting with their spouses.

Josephine Linda, the lady service provider of Deogaon, informed us the next day that only a single member had agreed to cultivate tomatoes. She said that the husbands of other members were not convinced by the package of practices. They wanted to observe observing the results in the fields of Birang Runda, the only farmer who came forward, before cultivating tomatoes the next year.

We were a little upset at the outcome and called for another meeting on May 14, where we requested both the spouses to be present. In the meeting we again shared the concept of cultivating improved tomato. The meeting lasted for more than two hours, during which we tried to convince the farmers that culti-

vating tomatoes would be more profitable than cultivating paddy, the traditional option. This time we were successful in convincing three other marginalized farmers.

## The Never Say Die Lady

The Milan Mahila Mandal is two and a half years old and has a membership of 18 women. Puspa Tigga was one of them. She is a marginalized farmer owning less than an acre of land out of which only 30 decimals was lowland. She was able to generate only six months of food from her land. Her husband Sukhram Tigga worked mostly as an agricultural labourer. They had two small kids studying in a local school. Both husband and wife had to work as agricultural labourers to meet their annual food requirements. Sukhram also ran a seasonal shop in the village.

Puspa told us that she and Sukhram were willing to cultivate tomato but were apprehensive as the quality of their land was quite low and was full of pebbles. She also said that they were planning to lease in a piece of land to cultivate tomato but were unable to make up their minds. They were unsure of the output. We therefore sat down personally with them, convincing them about the package of practices and trying to build up their confidence. Puspa and Sukhram finally decided to cultivate tomatoes.

Puspa was registered as a member with the Pradan-promoted Torpa Agri-Horticultural Co-operative Society Ltd. The initial inputs were provided to her from the co-operative's stock centre. She took 20 gm of seed (Namdhari Suraksha) and raised a nursery.

## Initial Setback

After 21 days, the saplings were transplanted on 0.40 acres of land with an initial dose of fertilizer. Unfortunately, all the transplanted saplings died after 4 days. It was a setback for Puspa, as well as for the tomato programme. This was despite the fact that while transplanting Puspa had first mixed DAP with vermicompost and then applied it.

To our surprise Sukhram came up with an excellent suggestion the very next day. The fertilisers were still in the field and will be wasted if something was not done immediately. He said that half the saplings in the nursery were unused and he planned to transplant for a second time. This he did after seven days and the second transplantation was quite successful.

Puspa was full of joy. Days passed with regular spraying of insecticides and pesticides. Soon the time of flowering and fruiting came. It was delightful to see the whole plot full of

beautiful flowers and the green-red fruit of tomato. But soon the happiness started fading. Before ripening, the bottom of the tomatoes started turning black. The spraying of chemicals was to no avail. All the SHG shared the anxiety of Puspa and Sukhram, as their success was important to everybody.

Then our agriculture service provider suggested that we approach the Horticulture and Agro-Forestry Research Programme (HARP) in nearby Palandu with a sample of the afflicted tomato. A HARP scientist diagnosed calcium deficiency and prescribed the application of lime.

Although the blackening of the fruit was taken care of, another problem loomed large. The tomatoes started spouting punctures. Puspa became chronically worried. She faced a mountain of a problem: credit from the co-operative and no crop on the field. Sukhram however brought some medicine from Dharti Dhan, a retail outlet in Ranchi and sprayed it at regular intervals. The situation started improving and Puspa's worries started receding.

## No Looking Back

On the first day of harvest, Puspa plucked 80 kg of tomato and sold it at Rs 18 a kg. She did not look back after that. Soon the news of a good production of tomato in Deogaon spread since six farmers were cultivating it successfully. As Deogaon is near Ranchi, wholesalers started frequenting the village every alternate day to buy the tomato.

Puspa was ultimately able to sell Rs 50,000 worth of tomatoes cultivated in just 40 decimals of land (see table 1). Since her input cost was around Rs 10,000, she booked a net profit of around Rs 40,000. Nowadays Puspa cannot stop smiling.

Table 1: Puspa's Tomato Balance Sheet

Input Cost	Rs
Land lease cost	1,200
Seed 20 gm @ Rs 180 per 10 gm	360
Urea 81 kg @ Rs 5.5	446
DAP 81 kg @ Rs 11	446
Potash 45 kg @ Rs 7	315
Insecticide and Pesticide	1,514
Going to HARP, lime, staking, labour and other costs	5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,280</b>
Output 40 quintals at an average of 1.5 kg of fruit per plant	
Income	50,100
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>40,820</b>



## Cluster Facilitators to the Fore

**Grooming cluster facilitators in Raigarh have regularised cluster meetings, enabling the women to raise their voices as a collective and find solutions to various larger problems and issues**

Mousumi Sarkar

Pradan's Raigarh project in Chhattisgarh started working in 1998. In the first eight months we explored the area, met officials of the district administration, and surveyed villages. We looked at the different types of relationships among the villagers, the available credit opportunities, resources available in the villages, livelihood opportunities of the poor, etc. This helped us to find out more about our target community and delineate the work area, which we based on our organisational approach of area saturation.

The team started forming self-help groups (SHGs) in 1999 in two blocks of Raigarh district. Since then we have helped form 539 SHGs covering about 6,500 families. The number of SHGs in a particular village varies from two to 13. The SHGs are further grouped into 45 clusters.

In the past three years there has been four to five Pradan professionals working in the project on an average. Each professional looks after 80 to 100 groups, thus catering to the needs of about 1,000 to 1,300 poor households. It is pertinent to mention here that the age of the groups vary and they are at different stages of maturity.

### Nurturing Groups

While nurturing the SHGs we found that there were some important areas where most our efforts and time went. We found that sharing the idea of a savings and credit group, seeding the concept of SHGs,

transforming values and setting group norms were crucial tasks that needed quality time from the professionals.

It took us some initial efforts to stabilise the accounts of the groups. We then had to facilitate the opening of bank accounts of the SHGs. At the same time we had to spend time to sensitise the bank managers, who were frequently transferred. The paper-work involved in opening of bank accounts and while availing loans was also not inconsiderable.

The professionals also had to attend to the SHGs regularly to ensure regular distribution of dividends and to energise the groups. We also conducted regular training of SHG members to develop their capacity to run the groups.

Further, we needed to understand the credit needs of the members and generate credit demand. This was in addition to counselling dropouts. We found that sometimes 1-2 members wanted to leave the groups or the group did not want them. Most often, the dropouts were the poorest among the members.

### Livelihood Activities

Once the groups had stabilised, we initiated discussions with the members so that they could choose from the sectoral activities we were taking up in the project area. Once the activities were chosen, we had to arrange for the required training. We also

had to devote considerable time to develop systems to run these activities efficiently, which included selection and capacity building of managers, supervisors, graders, forming a committee of the activity group, attending regular meetings with the committees, and strengthening market linkages (procurement inputs and selling outputs).

Time was also needed to strengthen the co-operatives on one hand and strengthening the collaboration with different government and non-government agencies. This was in addition to attending cluster meetings to address different issues of the group level, village level or issues related to gender.

We felt that all these are the very important areas to strengthen the SHGs, to build the capacity of members and to address their livelihood activities.

### Sources of Discomfort

We have seen that the poorer members sometimes drop out of a group because they are not able to repay a loan or are unable to find time to attend the meeting. Professionals often do not have enough time to attend and respond to these members.

We have also noticed that sometimes at the time of payment, men of the members' families come to collect the money. We sometimes lack the time to assess what is happening with the money. We have to keep in mind that women do most of the work we promote such as running the tasar machine, procuring cocoons, bringing water to the chickens, giving feed, cleaning the utensils and the shade, etc. Do they have control over the money they earn?

It is pertinent to note here that although

we are able to promote livelihood activities with some members, a large number of families are still left out.

Sometimes groups take large amounts of loan. Sometimes it is difficult to have an idea about the utilization of the credit. There are no tools to assess it. There is lack of time to identify 'honeybee' and 'hybrid' activities of the members. 'Honeybee' activity is defined as a large number of low investment low return activities undertaken by very poor families to earn their livelihoods. When a large number of families engage in the same 'honeybee' activity, say mahua collection, there is an opportunity to collectivize their marketing. Collective mahua trading for instance will be called a 'hybrid' activity.

Sometimes there is lack of time to talk with the members who are resigned or at an idea generation stage. It therefore becomes more difficult to sustain their interest or involvement in a particular programme. We also lack time to monitor the utilisation of the incomes or to address the role of the women in it even if she is a member of the SHG for a long time.

Finally, we have found that it is extremely difficult to run the cluster meetings in a regular manner. This is given the fact that discontinuity of cluster meetings loosens the interest of the cluster members to attend the forum.

### Need to Address

I feel there is a need to address the above issues. We have learnt a lot of tools and techniques in different training programmes, which may be helpful to deal with these, such as attending and responding, motivation and achievement dialogue,



identification of hybrid and honeybee activities, risk assessment, addressing gender issues, and ILS, etc. But all this is difficult to apply in our work context in a systematic way due to mainly lack of time.

It has been often felt in the teams that the groups we promote are of different ages and stages. They need time from a facilitator for different purposes. The purposes include:

- Performing some routine tasks like-accounts checking, bank documentation, accounts opening, dividend distribution, credit demand generation, bank linkage, etc.
- Arranging trainings for skill development (accounts training, leadership training) and motivational trainings (membership training, livelihood visioning, SHG concept through ILS, etc.).
- To solve conflicts that arises in SHGs.
- To arrange for exposure visits of members for livelihood activities.

In such a scenario it is pertinent to think of some capable individuals who are able to support and take over some of our roles in the community. But there are several questions attached to this. Who would be these persons? What would be their role and what would be the role of Pradan professionals? Who will pay them? Where will the revenue come from?

### Careful Selecting and Grooming

We felt that it was crucial to carefully select and groom these people, which would be supplemented with regular meetings and trainings. It would be crucial to transfer the proper values and norms.

We can then introduce them as facilitators in the community, group, cluster or pan-

chayat meetings in a regular and proper manner. The grooming will have to be in a way the community would accept them in place of Pradan professionals. This means that this person would not be an active problem solver but be instead an active listener of the needs of the community before addressing them.

In the past two years we have been trying to arrange the cluster meetings regularly. But it had become difficult for the professionals to conduct them in a regular way after managing the individual groups, and their other occupations.

However, group members are willing to attend cluster meetings. According to them, it is the only platform where they get an opportunity to meet other groups and know about them. It strengthens their identity in the village and area they belong to.

### Alternative Systems

The number of groups and clusters per professional leads us to think for alternative systems that may help the professional to give proper time to individual groups and to deal other group related issues (dropout and left out members, utilisation of the bank credit, etc.), and other activities.

Due to the various automated systems such as the MacFinancier we have better tools to assess our groups. The regular inflow and outflow of the RMTSs helped to understand the weaknesses of the accountants in a better way. We felt the need for more accountant trainings and audit of the group accounts. Now the accounts part is taken care of by the computer munshi, accountant trainer and auditor. We have

also groomed these persons and some others to fill the documents for bank linkages. They go to the groups and fill the forms (name of the members and their husbands, their age, name of the bank representatives, etc.), take the signatures in the papers necessary, take the print out of the latest financial position and attach it with the documents, etc.

### Grooming Cluster Facilitators

In the same vein we approached grooming of some persons as cluster facilitators (CF), who would ensure that cluster meetings are held regularly and attend to their needs in various ways. The selection criterions for such persons are given in box 1.

In Raigarh team we approached it from our impression about individual members on the basis of our interaction with them during the past 2-6 years. We identified 13 members but selected eight after training. Each facilitator would be responsible for four to eight clusters. Different professionals in the team identified potential members. The training was, however, conducted centrally.

After the selection we tried to find out whether they are ready to accept their role as a facilitator. All of them were ready but were not confident enough to go alone the first time. Therefore, professionals were present as a participant and observer in the initial cluster meetings conducted by them. During the past six months we have tried to groom them through different trainings.

### Initial Handholding

Initially, the CFs attended the cluster meetings with Pradan professionals. They were introduced to the cluster by her name, village, group she belonged to, since when

#### Box 1: Cluster Facilitators

- Good SHG member (regular in savings and attendance, regular in loan and interest repayment, do not try to dominate others, can articulate the purpose and the concept of SHG clearly)
- Can write in Hindi (We have enough people who have read up to 4th to 10th standard)
- Can move around at need
- Has a clear idea about the purpose of the cluster
- Sensitive to others (listening attitude, not interrupting, etc.)

she is the member of the SHG, how regularly she attended the meetings, her savings and how much time her group has been linked to the bank and how timely she has repaid her loans.

If the facilitator was not the member of a SHG then we have described elaborately how she is related to SHGs and Pradan. Introduction of the facilitator to the cluster members is very important. We did it elaborately as much as we could.

We then discussed with cluster members as well as with individual SHGs that this person will be with them in each cluster meeting to facilitate their discussions and to prepare the action plan for the issues or problems raised during the meeting. This way we tried to introduce the person to the community so that they accept the person easily.

We next arranged a 2-day residential training for all cluster facilitators in our field office. We wanted to train the CFs so they



knew what a cluster was and what it meant, why is the cluster necessary, the structure of the cluster and meaning and purpose of facilitation.

We used various methods such as participatory discussion, lecture and demonstration, etc. We explained how to form subgroups, different methods of introduction like matching pair, relay repetition, simple introduction by saying name, village, SHG, etc., and how to involve all the participants. We also discussed how the pictorial books of ILS are helpful to conduct the meetings.

On the second day of the training all the participants demonstrated what they had learnt the previous day. This made them more confident of their potentials as cluster facilitators.

We then discussed the process of communication between the CF and Pradan professional. It was decided that we would meet in the first week of every month and the cluster meetings would take place on the third and fourth weeks of every month. We also decided that a Pradan professional would attend every third cluster meeting.

### Monthly Meetings with CFs

Till now we have held six monthly meetings with the CFs. We hold this centrally. All facilitators gather in one same place. These monthly meetings are basically used as a training-cum-sharing forum. It is used to groom the facilitators in a regular manner. We have fixed the date of the meeting on the seventh of each month.

In the monthly meeting the facilitator individually share their experiences of the last cluster meeting. It mainly concerns the

number of groups and participants attending the meeting, the agendas and discussions, who addressed these agendas (which groups or facilitator), the tools and games used during the meeting, the demands of individual groups, problems that needed to be addressed by professionals and the action plans made in the cluster meetings to address some issues.

The professional responsible for the training takes stock and provides information to the professionals responsible for a particular cluster. We have also developed a reporting format that the cluster facilitator fills after each cluster meeting and carry with them to the monthly meeting in our office. It helps to develop a plan for the next cluster meeting.

At every CF meeting we have been training them on one particular tool so that they can be better facilitators. For instance we have taught them to deal with the issue of value in responsibility sharing, paying the computer *munshi*, ability to discuss the different realms of the SHG, evaluate the groups' performance, etc. We also taught them a number of songs in Hindi and Chhattisgarhi, which they can sing with the cluster members, etc. We also emphasise on the fact that it is not necessary that the facilitator will use every tool they learn during the monthly meetings.

### Early Outcomes

Out of 13 members we selected, 8 are confident enough to continue. During the last 6 months each and every cluster meeting (45 x 6) took place with sufficient numbers of participants. The cluster members seem to have accepted these facilitators

Cluster meeting discussion on portfolio

analysis motivated the groups to prepare action plans for repayment. This is reflected in our accounting reports. Discussions on the different realms of SHGs (through the ILS books and role play) created a very good impact on the groups. New groups were able to learn the purposes of the SHG clearly.

In most of the cluster meetings, three types of agendas stood out: Some issues are addressed by the cluster members themselves, some issues are addressed by the cluster members with the help of the facilitator and some are there which require the help of the professional.

One major observation is that when professionals used to conduct the meetings, discussions were mostly on a focused point. Now they discuss a wider number of issues related to their family, village, PDS, Panchayat, etc. Many a time they have made the action plan to deal with an issue and have got a result. If we leave the forum to the community, they can deal a number of issues on their own.

The dates of the cluster meetings are now been fixed for every cluster. For some, the venue is also fixed. Some clusters meet in different villages in rotation. It is clear that regular cluster meetings are helping the SHGs to run in a better way, following the norms and the rules properly.

### Visible Impacts

The cluster meetings have made some visible impacts that have taken place without much intervention from Pradan professionals. In Dhimrapur village of Parmeswar cluster, a hand pump was not working properly for a long period. Villagers tried to run it in vain. SHG members of that village

raised the issue in a cluster meeting. On the next cluster meeting all members went to the collector to register their problem. The very next day an officer with 2 workers came and repaired the pump.

In Rampur village of Parmeswar cluster, there was no electricity connection in a hamlet. The SHG members raised the issue in a cluster meeting, where it was suggested they visit the electricity office with an application, accompanied by as many as members as possible. They accordingly went and registered their problems collectively. Within a few days they got a connection. These incidents have given the women a separate identity in the respective villages.

In Bhagwanpur village of Ujala cluster (one village, one cluster) members decided in the cluster meeting that they will act against the *daru bhattis* (alcohol vendors). They decided they would take stock of the number of *daru bhattis* around their village. Accordingly they shared the responsibility.

In the next cluster meeting they decided to give the information they could gather to the police station. And a number of excise officials arrived to enquire about the *daru bhattis* and gave them notice. This created a great impact in the village.

In Bhagwanpur village again, an individual ran the public distribution system. Distribution was very irregular. When the government decided to give the responsibility to a SHG, one of the SHGs came forward. But the panchayat was not ready to transfer it. So in a cluster meeting the women decided to go to the panchayat meeting and raised their voice. All members of 14 SHGs went and made a demand. After



a long debate they managed to get the responsibility. They are now running it successfully.

### **Taking Collective Action**

In Saraiapali village, a person used to sell liquor. SHG members, encouraged by discussions in the cluster, went to the liquor seller and asked him to stop selling. they threatened to go to the police station. The person told them that he had given credit to a number of villagers so he could not just leave. He also threatened to leave his wife, who was a daughter of Saraiapali. The women took up the responsibility of collecting the money from the concerned villagers. Within three days they collected Rs 12,000 and returned it to the vendor. He is now thinking of alternatives.

These are issues that we did not deal with in our interactions with the community. Now with these other focused agendas, members are coming forward to deal with their problems. It was a need-based initiative in our project area but now we are confident that many other roles can be transferred to the community and the CFs. What we need to do is to spend time and effort to groom them.

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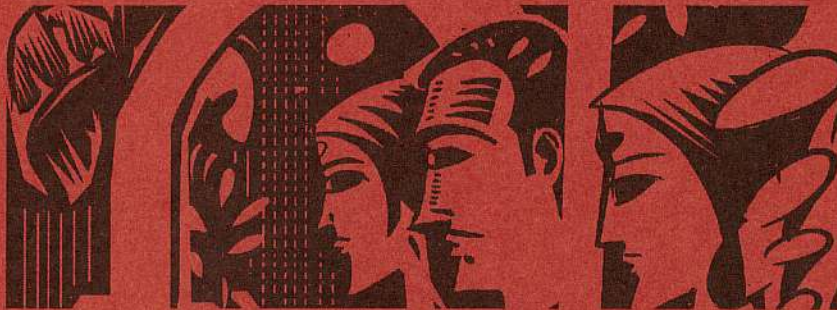
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PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action) is a voluntary organisation registered under the Societies' Registration Act in Delhi. We work in selected villages in 7 states through small teams based in the field. The focus of our work is 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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