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NewsReach

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The Early Days of Pradan

Since its founding days the Pradan experience has enlarged the scope and potential of the NGO sector

T K Mathew

In the late 70s, when I was working with ASSEFA (Association for Sarva Seva Farms), my office of executive coordinators in Delhi was at the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. The office was initially in one of the garages. On a heavily raining day, Ms Kamala Chowdhary visited me in my garage office.

As it was raining, I remember she virtually jumped out of her chair for the fear of a rat which came in from outside into the garage. We coexisted with wildlife and nature. After all, the programme was based on *bhoodan* and *gramdan* and the poor and illiterate landless, who survived in adverse conditions and deprivation.

Kamala Chowdhary was then an advisor to the Ford Foundation and was briefed by Dr M S Swaminathan about land under *bhoodan*. The purpose of her visit was to assess the potential of using *bhoodan* lands and *gramdan* villages in India in which ASSEFA was working in cooperation with Bhoodan Boards for the greening of India with support from the Ford Foundation.

This visit connected ASSEFA to the Ford Foundation and through Kamala Chowdhary to Deep Joshi. We also learnt that Vijay Mahajan, an IIT and IIM graduate, was getting disillusioned with the

corporate sector after a commercial stint with Philips and felt an urge to do something different not only to bring about personal satisfaction but also to legitimise the spending on him by the state in his profession of technology and management. He felt the poor of India had a stake in the state's investment in qualifying him as a technologist and manager.

To Serve the Poor

At the very same time, Deep Joshi, who was then working at the Ford Foundation, had encountered the Sukhomajri project and was nursing a desire to engage himself in the larger interest of the poor of India, albeit in a professional environment. It appeared that Deep and Vijay had some similar thoughts and had met, discussed and probably planned a strategy to provide a platform to young professionals and managers on an alternate career path, which will not only give them job satisfaction but also trigger them to reach out and serve the needy and deserving poor of India. All this while saving these young professionals from the frustration and disillusionment of being in the corporate sector and not serving national interests adequately.

If I remember right, the first meeting took place between Vijay, Deep, S Loganathan and myself in the office of Mr N C B Nath

of the Foundation to Aid Industrial Recovery (FAIR). At this meeting we discussed the potential of ASSEFA as a host for young professionals to phase into the social sector, supported by the Ford Foundation as an innovative approach.

In principle it was acceptable to ASSEFA, as it had begun to grow beyond Tamil Nadu with support from the European Commission (EC). Professionalism was becoming a prerequisite to manage the EC-funded projects as also to plan the growth, development and diversification of ASSEFA. We were however undecided as to how young professionals with better remuneration packages and different styles of functioning were to be integrated into NGO structures, which are largely governed by a set of charismatic persons and on a totally different plane of ideology and approach.

While this issue needed resolving, a proposal was submitted to the Ford Foundation to engage young professionals for ASSEFA - a 3-year experiment to professionalise NGOs. ASSEFA was chosen as a pilot, both to create opportunity for young professionals to work in NGOs and for NGOs to understand their professional needs and to accommodate the young professionals.

Ford Foundation required a clearance from the substantive ministry to provide the grant. In this case it was the Union ministry of rural development. The ministry did not show great enthusiasm in clearing the proposal, as some of those under the investigation of the Kudal Commission enquiry were board members of ASSEFA. Hence, Ford Foundation diplomatically withdrew from the proposal to avoid possible

embarrassment, should the ministry not clear the proposal.

Since there was then a delay in implementing the proposed project, ASSEFA offered Vijay to join ASSEFA and work with it in north India along with me, the executive coordinator located at Delhi.

Pradan Established

Simultaneously, while Vijay was working at ASSEFA, the idea of a platform for young professionals in the social sector was continuously deliberated upon and it was formalised that Pradan (Professional Assistance for Development Action) be established and registered as a society under the Societies' Registration Act.

Since there were no resources to fall back on and the Ford Foundation grant was not forthcoming immediately, alternatives were thought of. I offered my residence as a registered address for Pradan in order to register it as a society. This I did in my personal capacity. I also drafted the initial bylaws, which were then improved upon and the application for registration of Pradan was submitted to the Registrar of Societies.

ASSEFA provided free accommodation to Pradan to establish itself in Delhi and also extended a loan of Rs 45,000 to meet the initial establishing expenses and other needs. This was returned later.

In the meantime, 3 more IIT-IIM graduates, M P Vasimalai, Achintya Ghosh and Ved Arya, showed their inclination to join the social sector under the flagship of Pradan. All 3 were absorbed in ASSEFA, in Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Rajasthan. Once the Pradan Society was registered, Ford Foundation was approached for support

for a similar project as was submitted earlier. This time the scope was expanded to include the concept of placing 'action consultants' in Mysore Rehabilitation and Development Association (MYRADA), Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA) and India Development Society (IDS).

As Pradan obtained the approval of the Ford Foundation, those who were working as ASSEFA staff continued to serve it for some more time on charge of Pradan. The founding members of Pradan were Aloysius Fernandes (chairman), S Loganathan (vice chairman), T K Mathew (Treasurer) and Col B L Verma, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Dr Ravi Zutshi and Professor Vatsala Nagarajan (members).

Over time, when the Ford Foundation extended support for another 3 years, Pradan extended its reach to other NGOs in Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Beyond Action Consultancy

Having provided a historical perspective of Pradan and its establishment, it is not out of place to trace the second phase of Pradan, to its becoming an independent operating organisation unlike the initial pursuit of working with NGOs as action consultants. In the first phase, Pradan action consultants were placed in various NGOs. Among them Ved Arya was with ASSEFA in Rajasthan; Teji Bhojal with Mahiti in Kutch, Gujarat; Chittaroopa Palit with Mahila Jagaran in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh; Raja Menon with CINI in West Bengal and Neelima Khetan with Anand Niketan (and later Seva Mandir) in Rajasthan.

The concept of Pradanites as action consultants in NGOs was catching up and Pradanites found the number of hosts

increasing. However, something was bugging them. Their dream or imagination about their profession was not becoming a reality. Professional space and recognition was not forthcoming since Pradanites were not structurally infused with the NGOs. They felt almost like aliens and it reflected when they met and discussed their career paths.

There was not much opportunity or freedom for innovation or experimentation. This was largely due to the make up of the NGOs, their charismatic leadership and maybe the conservative outlook of social service providers.

The professional growth of Pradanites and career path in an alien NGO became an issue of discussion and debate. The subservient role and the lack of opportunities to lead or to become the Executive Director or Head of a NGO as a natural course of growth was not always acceptable to the enthusiastic professionals. Moreover, except for 2-3 large NGOs, others who were hosts were small and of recent origin. The cultural background and the unipolar structures and single man led NGOs did not offer scope of professional growth for Pradanites.

Independent Operator

The issues related with Pradan's identity and with what Pradan was credited with was debated extensively. It was finally concluded that Pradan should establish itself as an independent operator for which there was plenty of scope, especially in the sphere of livelihood ventures.

NGOs considered Pradan as an agency supplying professionals and were happy with their role. Real professional integration did not take place. The vision of

Over the years, some Pradanites have moved on and are leading other well-known organisations. They include Vijay Mahajan (BASIX); M P Vasimalai (DHAN

During the third 5-year period, the women's empowerment programmes through self-help groups (SHGs), thrift and credit, micro-finance and micro enterprises were launched, to begin with in Tamil Nadu and later to all geographical areas in India. The village tank renovation and community mobilisation was also launched in southern India.



Pradanites found their vocation in serving the poor in their own habitats so that the latter are capable of decent living without being subservient to any NGO or corporate structure. The Pradan professionals could now opt for their own careers without frustration in the corporate sector, as well contribute to nation building, while returning to the nation in ample measure the investment made by the state on training of professionals.

Outcomes of the Pradan Experience

There were several outcomes of the Pradan experience. Initially, the NGO sector gave the much-needed anchor for Pradanites to launch themselves. Pradanites learnt about community mobilisation and project administration from the NGOs. At the same time, the NGOs got an opportunity to professionalise themselves. Interventions in the non-farm sector and collaborations with government and community based credit institutions enlarged the scope and potential of the NGO sector.

Foundation); Ved Arya (Srijan); Biswajit Sen (to a number of ventures in Lucknow); and Pramod Kulkarni (Prerana in Raichur).

Bengal.

Pradan's first project was Kesla. Then came leather tanning and tasar silkworm production, all under the livelihood or non-farm sector, a pet idea of Vijay Mahajan, who was leading Pradan as Executive Director. Working with the government and capacity building of panchayat officials was launched in Alwar in Rajasthan. Lift irrigation projects were introduced in Bihar and West Bengal.

At this stage, a policy decision was taken to launch an independent mode of functioning without severing connections with the NGOs, so as to test the waters and experience the changeover. This resulted in James (Jimmy) Mascarenhas, Neelima and Raja staying in MYRADA, Seva Mandir and CINI, respectively. Vijay Mahajan, Ved Arya, M P Vasimalai and Achintya Ghosh moved out to operate independently under the Pradan banner.

where Pradanites were recruited. Professionals from the same sources from

LEAD ARTICLE

Paddy Propulsion

Our intervention in Kharif paddy in eastern India in 2002 has yielded encouraging results despite delayed arrival of the monsoons

Dinabandhu Karmakar

With the redefined focus on livelihood promotion to achieve our mission, the consultative forum meeting (CFM) in April 2002 decided that agriculture would form an important component of our livelihood programmes, particularly in eastern India. This was but natural, given that over 80% of the poor population in these areas engage in agriculture, although at low levels of productivity. This is an important source of food, and livelihoods. Pradanites have always discussed agriculture but the task of effective intervention was left to the individual teams.

The past decade could be marked as a decade of infrastructure promotion. We created physical infrastructure under watershed development programmes or lift irrigation programmes. At the same time we have promoted a large number of women's self help groups (SHGs) as financial and social infrastructure. This does not mean that we did not work to enhance incomes. We have the experience of income generation of tribal families with broiler chicken, oyster mushrooms and tasar silk-worms. Apart from these, all the teams involved in irrigated agriculture had the experience of promoting winter crops including vegetables.

Acceptable Degree of Enhancement

These efforts were sporadic and successes patchy. Our teams at Lohardaga, Gumla, East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum and Hazaribagh in Jharkhand introduced intensive vegetable cultivation with selected families with professional support. There were often arguments on the acceptable definition of livelihood interventions. Whether it is vegetables or broilers or tasar, the acceptable degree of enhancement of income was to the tune of Rs 7,000 to Rs 12,000 per family per annum.

Over the years we standardised these activities. Today families involved in these activities earn between Rs 12,000 and Rs 7,000 a year with a fair degree of predictability. The problem however was with the scale of activity. We found it difficult to reach a large number of poor families, on a scale counted in thousands and not hundreds, with similar intensive packages. On the other hand, the acceptable range of income enhancement was too high to try calling more 'minimalist' interventions 'proper' livelihood interventions.

Changed Perspective

The April 2002 CFM looked at agriculture with a changed perspective and accepted an intervention in Kharif paddy as a potential activity to reach more poor fam-

of promoting paddy amongst the poor when it was not so profitable at prevailing market rates. We could instead promote intensive vegetable cultivation, they said.

Despite these considerations, there was a lot to be said about strengthening Kharif paddy cultivation. Most importantly, poor farmers would anyway cultivate paddy during the monsoons to meet their families' food requirement. Also, there is no other option as good as paddy cultivation that can be relied upon to generate mass employment in the eastern region.

We therefore decided to adopt a multipronged strategy to intervene. We could, for instance, minimise the risks of upland direct seeded paddy (cultivation without transplanting) by promoting inter-cropping paddy with pigeon pea. We could also tap seasonal water sources by using mobile pumps and delivery pipes. Most importantly, we could concentrate our intervention in the areas we have already promoted and implemented lift irrigation systems.

Our bottom line in this intervention was that farmers should on no account suffer losses by cultivating paddy. Productivity was to be managed in a way that it might fall in a bad year or double in a good year but would maintain a minimum consistency. Our collective understanding was we would develop a comprehensive business plan for the Kharif season for next 5 years. We also expected to come up with a viable mechanism suitable to address management issues of large-scale expansion.

Issue of Service Providers

The feasibility of reaching a large number of target families has been bothering every Pradan professional concerned with

illies even if it fell short of our income enhancement target of Rs 7,000-12,000 per annum. The broader understanding was that paddy alone may or may not generate so much additional income, but the increased confidence of having additional food security of a few more months would help families take the initiative to cultivate more intensive and high-risk crops. This CFM successfully drove home the point that additional food security of a large number of families is a successful livelihood intervention, equal to any other.

After the CFM we held a meeting at Ranchi that involved all anchorpersons from teams in Orissa, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and West Bengal. The programme was limited within the eastern region. The Ranchi meeting defined the package of practices and the mechanisms to be developed to address programme management issues.

Minimum Intervention Package

We decided upon a minimum intervention package. The package included ensuring supply of good quality of seeds in time; good quality nursery raising; timely transplantation; timely weeding; and hoeing; proper fertiliser and manure application; and management of water during critical growth phases.

We anticipated difficulties in ensuring timely inputs since rainfall was uncertain. We debated whether we could promote the improved package of practices without irrigation support. In cases where we made irrigation an integral part of the intervention package, we needed to explore the possibilities of mobilising financial resources for large-scale irrigation infrastructure development. Some professionals also questioned the wisdom

upscaling operations. The fear of dilution of quality professional inputs and values of grassroots action made us think several times before we invited any other actors between the community and Pradan. The strong urge to meaningfully reach many more target people the Gumla and Lohadaga teams came up with the idea of promoting service providers to address recurring community level support needs.

We met at Ranchi to evaluate the need to systematically nurture local cadres as village level resource persons to assist involved families. The Gumla team's experience in involving such people in vegetable cultivation helped a lot. The involvement of such service providers led to a redefining of the professional's role. It enriched the professional's responsibilities to groom local people to ensure sustainability of our efforts.

Continued Dissonance

Of the participating teams working in the eastern region, some did not include Kharif paddy in their programme interventions because of its low returns and inherent risks. Although other teams included Kharif paddy in their plans, they were only able to ensure the minimum package of practices since they were more focused on Kharif vegetable cultivation. Yet other teams decided to try the idea with a limited number of families (below 100).

Three of our teams, at Lohardaga, Purulia and Gumla, were deeply involved in the intervention and took a very high degree of risk. The Lohardaga team targeted 1,200 families, the Purulia team targeted 1,000 families and the Gumla team targeted 1,100 families. We procured about 70 tonnes of

seeds from different sources and distributed to them to the selected farmers in time.

Gumla and Lohardaga teams had prior experience of generating realistic demands. They distributed all the seeds they had procured, although some lots were bad, creating tension among the farmers. The Purulia team faced problems in distributing some seeds since some farmers refused to buy them. The problem was further complicated when the West Bengal government also started distributing mini-kits of paddy seeds at a subsidised rate.

In all these 3 locations, a group of community level service providers were trained and helped to ensure that farmers adopted a minimum package of practices. These people were carefully selected. Expert professionals systematically motivated them and trained them in skills and knowledge. These people were young, experienced and good farmers receptive to new ideas. They were all excited and carried out their duties enthusiastically throughout the year. They were paid for their services based on individual performance. We also spared no efforts to create forums of these service providers for regular interaction and programme monitoring.

Our professionals showed a very high degree of action orientation to ensure that each selected family raised a good quality nursery. Seedlings were in excess at most places. During this year's review with the farmers, our professionals decided to cut the seed rate by half (from 30 kg per acre to 15 kg per acre). We also succeeded in convincing a majority of the farmers that rearing good nurseries were vital for a good yield.

ratio of 1:10 (one unit nursery to transplant 10 units of main field). But later interactions with farmers revealed that more land was transplanted per unit nursery. Thus farmers learnt that they could cut down to a 50% lower seed rate. This would reduce the cost for seeds in subsequent years.

Different paddy varieties performed well in different areas. For example, at Purulia the Swarna Mansuri (MTU 7029) yield varied within the range of 5 to 8 tonnes per hectare (ha); Pankaj (IET 2684) between 5 to 7 tonnes per ha and CR 1010 around 8 tonnes per ha. In the Gumla and Lohardaga region, the yield of Lalat ranged between 3.4 and 7.5 tonnes per ha; Annada varied between 2.6 and 4.2 tonnes per ha and Surendra varied between 2 and 7.5 tonnes per ha.

The main reason for lower range yields was late transplanting. Location-wise data analysis from Purulia and Gumla shows that about 50% of the families we intervened with undertook the proposed package on only 0.1 to 0.25 ha of land. This means that 50% of the families used about 25% of their available paddy lands for recommended practices. Another 25-30% families utilised the recommended package in 0.25 to 0.5 ha of land.

On an average, this intervention helped the involved families to produce about 500 kg additional food grain. An overall utilisation of 50% of the potential would help us ensure that to double additional food grain availability per family. A favourable monsoon in subsequent years would bring more uniformity in these yields and higher average incomes to the families.



Acid Test

The intervention faced an acid test at the very onset. Nature decided to be merciless. It did not rain in time to raise nurseries. Then it rained so much that farmers were at a loss how to cultivate dry bed nurseries. When the monsoon did arrive, it was late by more than a month and half. Seedlings were over mature by this time, and unfit for transplanting. Although we deliberated over various options to cope with the crisis in follow-up meetings in August, little could be done to retrieve the situation.

The few farmers who had land in valleys tried to transplant in time but most of the others waited for the monsoons until late August. Many fed the nursery to their cattle. As a result, the number of families involved reduced drastically. The entire farming community along with the professionals were demoralised. Many of us decided not to talk about paddy any more.

The long dry spell sapped the energy of our professionals leading the programme in the field. No amount of consolation was adequate to get them back to the normal rhythm. For a while professionals stopped some teams data collection was disrupted. Only 20% of families transplanted seedlings of the right age. With the arrival of the monsoons, most farmers transplanted old seedlings. Although we lost hope and dissuaded the farmers from transplanting old seedlings to cut losses, they went ahead and tried to ensure the best care they could.

End Results

Data as on August 2002 revealed that we could ensure 1,826 families had reared quality nurseries, which would suffice for transplantation of about 1,191 acres of land. This calculation was based on the

OPINION

A Lesson not Learnt

India needs a policy for common lands so that these are seen as the base to rebuild rural economies

Sunita Narain

Five successive years of debilitating drought. It had rained for barely a few hours last year in the region of Rajasthan I was visiting. I expected wasted lands, desolation and nearly abandoned villages. Instead, I could see greenery, irrigated agriculture, people tending to vegetable crops and livestock.

The village dairy - a one-room stopshop with an electronic machine to detect fat content in the milk - was lined with people bringing their produce for sale. I found out that they had sold Rs 34 lakh worth of milk last year.

I asked about water and was told that there were 103 wells in the village. People could use the wells for 1 hour each day to irrigate fields. The water was visible to the naked eye - some 50 feet below ground level.

How could this be? I was asking this question in Laporiya village, located some 2 hours from Jaipur in Rajasthan. My hosts were the Gram Vikas Yuvak Mandal and its head Laxman Singh. He took me to a map displayed in the village centre.

The green painted area in the map was the village common land - grazing land under government control. This, explained Singh, was the land they had to fight to regain control over, as it was

encroached upon and degraded. On the map, squares had been painted. These denoted *chaukas* - a unique water harvesting system designed by Singh and his colleagues to retain every drop of rainwater and to recharge the aquifer. All over the common land, villagers had dug rectangular trenches less than 1 foot deep, so that rainwater would 'jump' across the land till it flowed into the village tanks.

Grand Water Collection Area

With this system in place, the village common land became a grand water collection area. Every drop was channelled and stored in the village's 3 connected tanks deepened by voluntary labour. Of the 1,000-odd hectares (ha) of agricultural land, roughly 600 ha were irrigated. There was a gleam in Singh's eyes as he told me about the years of good rain when tanks would overflow.

For the past few years the tanks had barely filled; today, they were bone dry. Still, the wells have water. Laporiya practices the conjunctive use of irrigation structures - surface and ground - that engineers love to boast about but have no clue how to build.

But what was clear - and this is the key policy message - is that it was the years of water harvesting (over 10 years in this case) that had built up groundwater reserves. Built it up so well that even repeated years

domestic livestock - less than the land reserved for wild animals in sanctuaries and national parks. But politicians miss the point. Sadly, this includes even the more water-sensitised ones like Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh. His government has been graciously donating these lands to the dalit populations in the state. How much this populism will benefit the poor, I don't know. But I do know that this will destroy the chance of the villagers to effectively manage their common lands and water systems.

The British weekly *The Economist* recently carried an article about the privatisation of land in Mongolia and how this has destroyed the livestock-based economy of that mountainous country. India is not listening. The fact is that India desperately needs a policy for common lands - forest or grazing lands - so that these are seen as the base to rebuild rural economies. These are the catchments for water, for food and for milk. Without the commons, little private wealth gets created.

Laportia knows that in the drought-prone region it belongs to, animal-based economies are far more durable than agriculture. It uses its water to irrigate its grazing lands first, so that even after sustained drought there is some fodder for animals to eat. The precious water in the wells is used to grow animal feed, so that there will be milk and wool to provide sustenance to people. But this is not a new lesson. It is simply one that we all forgot to learn. As always.

Courtesy: Centre for Science and Environment Feature Service



of drought and scarcity could be withstood. Rainwater harvesting is like putting hard-earned money in a bank account: we prudently and repeatedly replenish the aquifer, then live off the interest and not mine the capital of the groundwater reserves.

But this takes time. It takes people who care about their land, so that they care to harvest their water. This, unfortunately, is where policy goes horrendously wrong. Land is managed by a multitude of obdurate bureaucracies, water by another. By policy and in practice, we ensure that villagers are disenfranchised from the management of their resources.

Regaining Control

For Laportia and many other neighbouring villages, the most difficult struggle has been not to combat drought but to regain control over the village common lands. These are some of the most abused lands in the country. Grazing lands - village commons - are vested with the pan-state bureaucracies. Remember this is Rajasthan, where livestock-based practices form the base of the rural economy - for milk, meat and wool.

This is the economic wealth of the state. Roughly half the so-called common lands of the country are found in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan. But these are the first to be encroached by the powerful, and the powerless as well. The fights in the villages I visited are legendary: the local member of the state legislative assembly, the district official and the local goon had joined hands to protect the cause of the encroacher.

India has one of the highest densities of animal population in the world. But the smallest amount of land is reserved for

CASE STUDY

Soybean Symphony

A successful pilot programme to intervene in soybean cultivation in Sironj

Prashant Mishra

Pradan established a team in Sironj in the Vidisha district of Madhya Pradesh in 2001, to implement programmes under the Madhya Pradesh District Poverty Initiatives Project (MPDPIP). It was clear from the very beginning that we needed to intervene to improve the productivity of soybean cultivation, which is practised widely in the area.

Soybean is a major cash crop for farmers in central India. Although wheat ensures a measure of food sufficiency in most parts of Madhya Pradesh and some parts of Maharashtra and Rajasthan, it is soybean that takes care of the cash requirements of rural households throughout the year.

The marketing of soybean is not a problem since there is a large number of oil processing factories in these areas. However, in some aspects of soybean production, particularly the availability of quality seed, better practices and other inputs like credit, the small and marginal farmers lag far behind bigger farmers.

Deciding to Intervene

We decided that some intervention was necessary to improve the yields of soybeans among the small and marginal farmers with whom we are working with in the area. Since our team had serious plans for soybean cultivation, we scouted around for

an organisation that could assist by providing quality seeds and train farmers in modern cultivation techniques.

We were in touch with other organisations working towards similar objectives. It was MPLEAP in Bhopal that suggested in 2002 that we got in touch with Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA) in Indore. SOPA was looking for partners to assist farmers improve yields of soybean.

We contacted SOPA and sought assistance in ensuring the availability of the quality seeds and better cultivation practices. After discussions we reached an agreement with them to run a pilot programme in that season with 60 farmers in Sironj. We looked forward to scaling up the programme if the pilot was successful.

The 60 selected farmers were from the villages of Tarvariya, Bamori Hauz, Sahankhedhi, Madagan, Biseypur and Kathotia in Sironj. All of them were small farmers with landholdings less than 10 *bighas* (2.5 hectares). All the necessary inputs (implements, fertiliser, culture, etc.) required for the programme were mobilised by Pradan through an innovative project funded under MPDPIP.

Baseline Survey

In May 2002, a 3-member team from

ducted the training along with other specialists in entomology and seeds.

The training included briefings on improved varieties of soybean, the virtues of maintaining plant-to-plant and row-to-row spacing, use of different fertilisers and problems related with cultivation like pest attacks and disease. Farmers were surprised to learn many of the fundamentals of soybean cultivation.

SOPA agreed to provide 1.2 tonnes of soybean foundation seeds on a pro rata basis. It also agreed to depute Suresh Jai, one of their field assistants, to Sironj for 6 months in order to provide day-to-day assistance to the farmers.

Initialising Operations

The operations in soybean cultivation started with the procurement of 12 quintals of seed from SOPA. We also procured different fertilisers, pesticides and cultures. We then ensured that all the inputs reached the farmers in the villages in time. The sowing took place in the last week of June according to the guidelines provided by the specialists of NRCS and SOPA. Many agricultural practices being followed by the farmers of the area were deemed unscientific and were discontinued.

On the recommendation of the specialists, we asked the farmers to keep provision for 1-2 irrigation should the crop require it. After around 10 days of sowing, the farmers were asked to go for weeding operations since the problem of weeding is at its highest just after the rains. The spraying of pesticides to control the insect attack followed this. The common insects that damage the crop in this area included girdle beetle, blue beetle, green semi-looper and stem fly.

SOPA visited Sironj. They conducted a baseline survey in the area with the help of Pradan professionals. The tool used in this survey was a questionnaire devised jointly by SOPA and Pradan that gathered data regarding various aspects of the existing soybean cultivation in the area such as profile of the farmer involved in the cultivation, the size of the land, the cultivation practices being followed such as the application of fertilisers, the seed rate, the agricultural implements being used, the source of seed, the output per unit area, etc.

The findings of the survey suggested that there was a lot of scope for the improvement in local soybean cultivation practices. We found that the average productivity of soybean was less than 2 quintal per *bigha* ($1 \text{ bigha} = 0.25 \text{ hectare}$). The only fertiliser the farmers used was DAP (Diammonium Phosphate). The seed being used was in use since the past 5-6 years. It was neither tested nor graded.

The farmers sowed the seed mixed with the fertiliser, a practice that damages a considerable fraction of the seed without even farmer knowing about it. This coupled with the low germination rate (samples collected during the survey showed that the germination rate varied between 26-70%) lead the farmers sowing seeds very densely at more than 25 kg per *bigha* compared with the recommended rate of 18 kg per *bigha*.

Training at Indore

After the baseline survey we organised a 2-day classroom training programme in Indore in collaboration with SOPA for some of the selected farmers. Pradan professionals involved in the activity also attended the training programme. Dr P S Bhatnagar, former director of National Research Center on Soybean (NRCS), con-

We then organised a lecture for soybean farmers in the second week of August in collaboration with SOPA. The programme, attended by more than 400 farmers in the area, was presided over by Dr Bhatnagar. It was the first of its kind in the history of the area. Farmers were provided information on pest attacks and diseases and how to tackle them by applying proper doses of pesticides. They were also given a general overview of modern and better practices to cultivate soybean.

The selected farmers to whom we supplied quality seeds sowed at the rate of 20 kg per *bigha*. Suresh Jat and Pradan professionals constantly supported them. We ensured that the farmers followed all the guidelines suggested by the experts. We also ensured that the farmers were promptly informed of all necessary information such as outbreak of pests or disease in the crop and that they respond immediately and appropriately.

Outstanding Output

The harvest in October was outstanding amongst the selected farmers. While the yield before the intervention was abysmal (an average of 2 quintals per *bigha*), some farmers like Gangaram of Tarvariya village harvested a bumper crop of 6.35 quintals per *bigha*. On an average, the yield per farmer rose to 4-4.5 quintals per *bigha*. For many it was no less than a miracle. The effect of this demonstration was immense in the area. The farmers decided to store 2 tonnes of the produce and planned to use it as quality seed in the next season.

There were however some farmers who did not fare quite so well. Kallu Singh of Biseypur, for instance, could harvest only 1.05 quintal per *bigha* because a sudden

shower after a long dry spell burnt his crop. Similarly, Bhanwarlal of Tarvariya could harvest only 2 quintals because his land was not fertile enough and the germination was not adequate. The produce was sold at a rate of Rs 1,000-1,300 per quintal.

Our team was convinced after this pilot programme that there is a lot of scope to improve the livelihoods of small farmers by improving the yields of soybean. This could be ensured through inculcation of better cultivation practices and providing information about better seed, fertiliser doses, pesticides and general cultivation practice.

Enthused by the experience, we have decided to scale up the activity in Sironj in 2003. We have decided to expand it to include 400 farmers. SOPA has agreed to supply quality seeds. We also have trained 20 local youth to serve as service providers for the activity so that they can ensure that practices such as deep ploughing of the fields are ensured. At the time of writing, the first part of the training of these people by Dr Bhatnagar is over and field preparations are underway.

We expect to raise the yields of soybean to at least 4 quintals per *bigha* from the present average of 2 quintals per *bigha*. If our efforts are successful, it will go a long way to establish the superiority of scientific cultivation practices over traditional practices. It would significantly impact the lives of poor farmers in the area and pave the way to a better future.



Tools to Target Poverty

The Cashpor House Index and Asset Test could be useful and effective tools to target the poor

Neelam Maheshwari

The Microcredit Summit Campaign, coordinated from Washington, aims to reach 100 million poor people, especially women, with micro-financial services by 2005. They organised a training workshop on February 25-28, 2003 in Lucknow on 'Use of poverty targeting tools'. At the beginning of the workshop all the participants were asked to answer some questions.

To start with we were asked whom we targeted in our microfinance programme. For Pradan the answer had to be the very poor. We were also asked to offer a rationale for such targeting. Again, as far as Pradan is concerned, our mission is to impact livelihoods of the poor people in the rural areas in an enabling manner.

Working Directly with the Poor
Many people believe that were there overall development in infrastructure, services and markets would automatically benefit the poor. We do not subscribe to that idea. We believe that special and direct efforts are required to help the poor integrate with and participate in the economic mainstream.

This involves helping them vision an alternative future, set goals and plans, build their capabilities to achieve these, help them identify ways to meet their goals, etc. We further argue that even among the poor.

there are more disadvantaged sections such as women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who have been systematically excluded from mainstream social and economic processes. Their inclusion has to be a specially facilitated process. Clearly then, special efforts need to be made to reach out to the poor, otherwise there are strong chances that the real poor would continue to remain on the periphery. We therefore require well thought out, robust tools to identify the very poor. Participants were also asked whether poverty-targeting tools that their institutions used were accurate, reliable and cost-effective. We were also asked to reflect on the necessity of using such targeting tools in a systematic manner.

Rationale for Systematic Targeting
As I understand, targeting systematically does not just mean focusing on the poorest but defining objectively whom we are working with and recording that. This not only helps concisenise intervention strategies but also helps check 'mission drift' by making us more conscious of how and why some people 'dropout'.

During the workshop one of the participants expressed discomfort on the 'fuss' over systematic poverty targeting. He said, "We are already working with the poor in

one of the most backward states (Orissa). What is the need to do any further targeting or recording?" The trainers from the Summit and Cashpor (a network of micro-finance institutions that follow the Grameen model) asked in return, "Okay! If you work with the poor then prove it to us. What data do you have to support what are you saying? How is it different from other organisations that claim they are working with the poorest in other parts of the country?" They had a point.

We then discussed that poverty targeting and recording was not only about proving to the external world but also to ourselves about how much are we reaching the very poor. Systematic targeting is also about keeping a record of those who are slipping silently out of our programmes or who never came into our fold. We do realise that we may be forced to leave out a section of population due to a number of programme related or other relevant reasons.

The workshop highlighted that systematic and ongoing targeting is both possible and practicable. There are tools available and most established microfinance institutions (MFIs) and NGOs use them as an integral part of day-to-day functioning. One such tool is the Cashpor House Index (CHI), which was the subject of the training.

Box 1: Cashpor House Index

If there is a vehicle in the house or it is a big house with brick walls and RCC roofing, the form is not filled up

Size Of Building : Big (4); Medium (2); Small (0)

Height And Material Of Walls : >8 Feet & Brick (4), 4 To 8 Feet & Mud (2); <4 Feet & Mud (0).

Roof Material : RCC/New Tiles (2); Old Tile/GI Sheet (1); Thatch (0)

More Than 5 Points : Not Poor

4 To 5 Points : Moderately Poor

3 Points or Less : Very Poor: First Priority

Note: Adapted by Cashpor Financial and Technical Services, Mirzapur, India.

Cashpor House Index

Cashpor is primarily a network working with a number of MFIs in Asia. They realised that while institutions understand the importance of poverty targeting the perceived complexities of the process and high costs involved have scared them away from any systematic processes in the field. The CHI was developed as a simple tool that may be included in regular operations to help field practitioners systematically target poor people.

Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM), an MFI in Malaysia, developed it initially as a low-cost, first-step method of identifying potential clients. The house was chosen as the most powerful proxy for poverty because the Malays were observed to improve their houses as soon as they had surplus income. Subsequently, this has proved true for most rural households of Asia. Twenty-two Cashpor members in 8 countries are now using their own adaptations of the CHI to identify poor clients.

After indexing the house, field staff concentrate their efforts on those who 'pass' and look at their assets. This is called the 'Assets Test', which measures wealth rather than income because assets are visible and are usually easy to capture in a brief interview. Calculating a net annual figure for

Box 2: Cashpor Asset Test

Basic data of potential clients

Name:

Wife of:

House Index

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Household members	Age	Relationship	Marital status	Occupation	Education

1. Main source of income: Regular / Irregular

2. Caste Status: Specific General

3. Ownership of house plot:

4. Ownership and/or operation of irrigated agricultural land: bigha

5. Value of livestock: < Rs 2,000 <4,000 >8,000

6. Other major productive assets: current value

7. What is your food situation during most of the year?

Usually deficit Sometimes deficit Enough

8. Education:

a) Literacy in Hindi: Wife Husband

b) No of children of primary school age but not attending: Daughters Sons

(c) Distance to nearest government primary school km

9. Health:

a) Distance to nearest functioning community health clinic? km

b) How many times used by any member of the household since the last Diwali? times

10. Conclusion: Very poor Moderately poor Non-poor

11. Response: frightened/suspicious average positive not interested

12. Visit: 1st 2nd 3rd

Very poor: <2 in HI: 0 in 3; less than 2,000 in 4 or 5; or SC/ST and the wife does agricultural labour

Moderately poor: <4 in HI: < 1 bigha in 3; < 8,000 in 4 or 5

Not poor: >4 in HI: >2 bigha in 3; < 8,000 in 4 or 5; or 'service holder' with regular income

Note: Adapted by Cashpor Financial and Technical Services, Mirzapur, India.

Proxy Measurement

The CHI is a proxy measurement of poverty. In this method, predetermined points are allotted for the major components of the house i.e., size, materials of the roof, height and materials of the walls and structural strength of the house (See Box 1 on page 15). CHI examines the

rural incomes, which are irregular, seasonal and sometimes paid in kind and which derive from several sources, can be difficult and time-consuming. Calculating household food or calorie consumption is even more difficult. Thus the asset test can be an easy proxy to differentiate poor families from not so poor families.

basic condition of the house through visual inspection from outside.

Points are allocated according to the approximate amount of investment required to buy or build these particular components of the house. This means that the index is locally determined and is weighted towards the most expensive components of the house in the context. In CHI, those households that score below a lower cut-off point are marked 'very poor'. Those between this and the second cut-off point are marked as 'moderately poor'. Houses that score above the second cut-off point are not eligible to be in the programme.

Cashpor Asset Test

The second step is the Cashpor Asset Test (CAT). The administration of the asset test is an integral part of the introduction of the MFI to eligible households and it yields data of continuing use to the MFI in designing its products and ensuring that it meets the needs of all strata amongst its potential clients (See Box 2). However, as with the CHI, it is important to make the Asset Test as cost-effective as possible. The best asset test is one, which can distinguish between the very poor, the moderately poor and the non-poor with least with least number of questions, and with questions that are likely to yield reliable responses.

This tool serves several purposes besides checking the accuracy of targeting. It provides information about potential beneficiaries by measuring depth of poverty, occupations, land ownership, literacy and schooling children. This data is useful in designing loan products and savings services to suit the needs of people. Through this data, one can also know, for example, what proportion of the very poor are joining the programme and what kind of serv-

ices they use most often. This data can also be used as base-line data for later impact evaluation. It allows comparisons to be made between the situation of the beneficiary at entry and their asset ownership and occupations after several years of membership in the programme.

Relevance to PRADAN

Let us now recollect the issues I raised earlier in the article. Do we in Pradan have a well-defined strategy to target our programme participants? Do we know the proportion of our targeted households we are reaching? Do we track our programme dropouts? I think not.

Even while working in some of the very poor states, it is important to have a systematic understanding of whom we are reaching and who are getting left out or dropping out, because it is not very easy to reach the very poor and sustain their participation. This becomes all the more important when the pressure for growth builds up and we start expanding fast.

There may be many practical reasons to leave out some of the very poor households but not being aware of who they are cannot be one of them. Also, the entire programme design around the kind of livelihoods, the type of support to be offered and the time frame for different levels of results are all dependent upon the type of programme participants and their level of poverty.

With solicited inputs from D Narendranath. Those who are interested to obtain the Cashpor training manual may write in to Neelam at pradhanho@ndb.vsnl.net.in.



Journey to the Netherlands

An Indian village worker's personal voyage to a European seat of learning

Mohammad Shamsah Alam

During our annual retreat in 2002, Narendranath gave me some material regarding a training programme on leadership and adaptive management in forest environments in the Netherlands. I have spent 7 years at Pradan's project in Godda in Jharkhand and had very little exposure to the other projects of Pradan, let alone the world outside Pradan.

Although I initially thought that a technical programme such as this would not help me much at my fieldwork on tasar silkworms, my colleagues and Nivedita convinced me otherwise. I therefore filled up the relevant forms.

On September 11 I was informed that I was selected for the programme and I was to join as early as possible. Since September is a busy month for tasar rearing, I was reluctant to leave. But my programme director and team leader were convinced that the international exposure would do me good. My colleague Binod also assured me that he would manage the work in my absence.

After a hectic couple of weeks, I left for the Netherlands on September 30. I arrived at the institute after a long flight of more than 8 hours, took a bath and went to sleep. I overslept and missed

both breakfast and lunch. When I went to the reception and requested for lunch, the lady there informed me that lunch hours were over. She however requested the restaurant to rustle up something for me. All I got was bread and cheese and a valuable lesson on how the Dutch value punctuality. At night I missed dinner and went to bed hungry. I did not meet any other participant of the course since they were out of town on an excursion.

The next morning I went to the restaurant for breakfast and met many Indians, mainly from the government ministries, who were there to attend the short courses. They gave me some idea about the institute and its surroundings. During breakfast I also met some of my course mates.

I Go to Class

One of my Indonesian batch mates accompanied me to a classroom. I was nervous because this was the first time I was about to meet participants from different continents with varied cultures and languages. As soon as I entered the classroom, I was surprised to hear my course coordinator identify me by name. He welcomed me as though he had known me for a long time.

The classroom was well decorated with posters prepared by the participants. After the introductions my first task was to match the participants to the country of their origin. I could only identify the Indonesian and Nepalese people and those from Africa since they had more or less the same features. But I ended up mixing Indians with the Nepalese. The session on identification was very interesting and enjoyable.

In the evening the celebrator group organised a small party to welcome me as a new entrant. I found the ambience was that of a typical Indian extended family. In the 2 months I stayed there I found there were no cross-cultural conflicts nor did I see any groupings based on countries or continents. There were 22 participants from 10 countries including India, Nepal, Indonesia, the Philippines, Denmark, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ghana, Turkey and Cameroon. All participants were between 25 and 36 years of age except 4 who were above 40. It was like one family living under a common roof. Except for a person from Andhra Pradesh, the rest were from a forestry background.

Classroom Kaleidoscope

Our classes were held in a big classroom, which was well decorated with colourful pictures and posters. It was equipped with presentation equipment and material. The classes were held in an informal setting. We sat on chairs in a circle so that everybody could face each other. A big table was sometimes used for group discussion. The class was divided into 4 groups named journalist, celebrator, housekeeper and energiser.

The role of the journalist group was to

present the content and key learning points of the previous day before the start of class. Each presentation was 10 minutes long and 5 minutes was set aside for feedback. Participants gave feedback on the content, time allotted, way of standing, body language, use of presentation materials, eye contact with participants, etc.

The role of the celebrator group was to celebrate happy moments such as organising birthday parties of participants and IAC (International Agricultural Centre) staff associated directly with the course, welcoming new entrants, celebrating Independence Day, etc. The role of the housekeeper group was to keep the classroom in good shape before the start of class, arranging the chairs, keeping all waste paper and transparencies in the dustbin, keeping all presentation material in the right place and cleaning the room.

The role of energisers was to keep participants energetic and enthusiastic in the classroom. Sometimes after lunch, some participants started taking naps or in some of the classes because of the long lectures it was difficult to concentrate. In such a situation the energisers had to initiate some activity with the groups like some physical exercise, dance or some kind of play involving all the participants for 5 minutes only so that the participants became energetic again.

Presentations through Posters

Every participant of this course had to represent his or her area of work through a poster. I was not prepared because I was not adequately informed. Luckily I had taken some photographs in a CD, which was kindly copied for me by Alice

the broad heading of 'Leadership and Adaptive Management in Forest Environments'; This was divided into 6 2-week long smaller courses except 'Adaptive Management for Biodiversity Conservation', which was for a week. The smaller courses were 'Professional Qualities and Communication', 'Leadership, Organisational Change and Interactive Planning'; 'Design, Management and Evaluation of Collaborative Forestry Programme'; 'Adaptive Management for Biodiversity Conservation'; 'Forest Management Planning for Sustainability and Biodiversity Conservation'; and 'Integrated Land Use Planning and Environment Impact Assessment'.

Collaborative Adaptive Forest Management (CAFM) aims at achieving a balance between the conservation and utilisation of forest resources in the pursuit of rural development and sustainable livelihood. Foresters in CAFM need a balance of social and technical skills and insights. In response to these needs, the programme covered the following broad areas of interest: collaboration and decision-making between stakeholders, integrated land use, sustainable adaptive forest management, biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation, equity and empowerment.

The objective of the training was to equip staff of organisations involved in collaborative management of forest environments with the adequate insights, instruments, skills and motivations for their work. This will enable them to achieve effective collaboration in planning and decision-making and build inspiring and supportive leadership; develop adaptive forest management plans, based on an integrated

in our Delhi office. My presentation was on a Monday. Over the weekend, I went to Nelleke's house, where we found all the photos in the CD were on fashion design. It was very frustrating for me.

In the meantime I remembered that Margaret Smulders, a photographer who had put together the Out of the Cocoon exhibition, had lots of photographs on tasar. The next morning Margaret came to Nelleke's house as we were to visit some place together. I discussed my predicament with her and after lunch I went to her office and got very good photographs of the entire cycle of the tasar activity.

That evening I returned to the institute and prepared 3 big posters on a flip chart with the photographs. One was on the traditional practice; another one on the scientific practice and last was on the entire cycle of tasar starting from plantation to fabric production and marketing. The next morning I gave a 5-minute presentation, which was followed by a 5-minute discussion. Our course coordinator commended me on the presentation. Everybody liked the posters very much.

One of the posters was specially hung up in the classroom during the course of a 2-day international seminar on biodiversity conservation. I had also brought some postcards on tasar silkworms and gari-nages from Margriet, which I distributed to my classmates. I also showed them a tasar shawl (borrowed from Nelleke) so that everybody could appreciate the quality of our product.

The Course I Attended

The course I attended was grouped under

approach and accompanied by appropriate monitoring and evaluation; assess the adequacy of their own institutional and organisational environment and propose scenarios for change; acquire insights in to their own role in processes of change; and explore and enhance their qualities and skills to carry out their responsibilities.

The training was experienced based and task oriented, jointly developed by participants and resource persons. This implies intensive engagement, initiatives and self-responsibility. The training aimed at personal empowerment, not merely focussing on 'tools and techniques' but looking for confrontation with own practices. The basic approach was to explore critical, creative and constructive questions. It promoted different learning styles by mixing theory, reflection and practice. The method included lectures, workshops in small groups, case study, short technical excursions, role-plays, slide and video presentations as well as individual work session.

The programme of the course was arranged in such a way that we could apply learnings from the preceding course in subsequent courses. All the smaller courses were participatory. There were no long lectures. The process went somewhat like this. First the instructors presented a brief idea about the topic by showing some slides. They then gave us a group assignment. This was followed by a presentation by each group and discussion. Since the learning was in a forum, many ideas were generated. The entire cycle was repeated with different participants in such a way that we all got hands-on experience of the tools involved.

At the end of the second week, there was a group assignment to present the learning of the entire week followed by discussion. Then they distributed certificates for the particular course. At the end of a particular course, the course coordinator also gathered detailed feedback on the course content, facilitation skills, time allotted to topics, level of understanding, etc. I found that they took feedback very seriously.

Another way of teaching was to first gather information about the topic from the participants through brainstorming. They then elaborated upon it, converged it with the topic, presented their slides and gave group assignments. In the courses we spent most of the time in group assignments, presentations and role-plays. The process and tools used in group discussions were jointly developed by the participants and the facilitator. When a participant was not contributing anything, our co-facilitator used 2 words: popcorn and snakebite or heart attack. Popcorn indicated anyone could speak. If the facilitator suddenly indicated that you have to speak then it was snakebite or heart attack.

Seminar Games

During my stay an international 2-day seminar was organised titled "Adaptive Management on Biodiversity Conservation". There were 35 participants from 19 countries. Many papers were presented on biodiversity conservation during these 2 days. The seminar started off with an 'opening game'. All participants were given 2 words, one on a yellow card that represented an abstract concept (of which the picture and interpretation is different for everybody) and the second on a green card representing

(not get you anywhere or what you want). The first prizewinner was a classic that said that a forest user group is just like a bottle because we see a group of people who put their resources together for use and to protect it.

Weekend Excursions

We went on excursions every weekend. Two types of excursions were organised: social and technical. This provided us a very good opportunity to tour the Netherlands and observe their rural and urban life, varied cultures of the different parts of the country and their different occupations. The institute also organised a tour to Paris and Brussels to participants of the IAC courses on their personal expense. It was not too expensive. The institute provided us a guide. We also visited some important places at our own expenses. The only one thing I missed in the Netherlands is that I could not visit the ICCO office. On the last day I got an opportunity to go in an excursion with Nelleke to a National Park in Nijmegen. We walked for 2 hours in the park that was very tiring for me.

Bidding Farewell

The closing ceremony was wonderful and very interesting. I had never seen anything like it before. All participants, the director of IAC and our course coordinator and co-facilitator were present. First our course coordinator gave a presentation on the course and about the participation of individuals. He elaborated on what each participant focussed on and how he or she performed.

Their second presentation was through photographs of participants in different mood taken during group discussions. For example, in one photo I was laugh-

a concrete object (which you could touch or put in a wheelbarrow). The challenge was to combine the 2. The following sentence enabled to get that done: X (the concept) is just like Y (the object) because...

The human brain is created in such a way that a word immediately provokes a picture in the mind. Whether that happens consciously or unconsciously is not important. It is different for different people. The mind is ready to make an immediate association when confronted with words. Everybody creates his or her picture. When we combine words that apparently have no logic connection, the mind tries to make it fit anyway. It was a fascinating process and a good start of the seminar.

I did not find the seminar beneficial to me because there was only presentation of papers with very little discussion. But I liked the opening of the seminar with a beautiful game. The result is kept secret till the closing day of seminar. The result of the game on the opening day was flashed on the closing day.

The entries that won prizes were fascinating. The entry winning the third prize posited that cost-benefit analysis is like a candle because when it burns, the cost is little but the light it spreads into the darkness has a great impact, thus the benefit is enormous from the candle.

The second prizewinner said that local authority is like a map. If you know how to make use of it (i.e. have the overview and contacts), it will help you in getting where (what) you want. If you do not know how to use it, it will confuse and frustrate you and make you become lost

ing but my eyes were closed. He commented that Shamshad is sleeping with a smile. My next picture was speaking something angrily and he commented that now Shamshad is awake and fighting. He had some comment for each participant. It was a very interesting and enjoyable session.

After this the IAC director give a small speech and indicated that this forestry group is one of the best group in IAC at present and also said that this was one of the best among the past 4 years. The participants were very hard working, tolerant and created a family environment in these 2 months.

The last session of the closing ceremony was distribution of certificates. It was done in a very creative way. On the first day of our class every participant was told to sketch a self-portrait and hand it over to the course coordinator. Everybody had forgotten about it. At the time the certificates were distributed they showed us the sketches one by one on a flip chart instead of calling us by name.

Participants had to identify themselves and come forward for the certificates. Everybody had a good laugh if a participant could not identify himself. He or she was also awarded the certificate at the very end of the ceremony. More than 40% of the participants could not identify their self-portraits.

After identifying the portrait one had to go the desk to receive the certificate. Before the director handed over the certificate, the co-facilitator spoke a few words highlighting the particular participant's behaviour in class and some memorable moments. The course coor-

dinator then gave a small but humorous gift. For instance, if one was punctual, one got a plastic watch so that he or she could keep good time in the future. I got a plastic whistle with the comment that when I was concentrating on adaptive management and need to call a stakeholder, I could blow on the whistle.



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- We welcome new executives Suraj Sharma at Ramgarh, Sabita Parida and Alok Ranarahu at Barhi, Anand Srivastava at Keonjhar, Satya Siba Sundar Pradhan at Chaibasa, Pravas C Das at Dumka, Nisha Kumari and Pramod Kumar in Petabar and Prashant Mishra in Vidisha.
- Ashish Chakraborty has been transferred from Godda to West Singhbhum.
- We welcome Shubhanter Chatterji back to Pradan. He rejoined the Khunti team on June 15, 2003.
- 20 new apprentices joined PRADAN's April batch of Development Apprenticeship.
- Prita Das Gupta and Umesh Nayak of the 26th batch and Pradyot Baruah of the 27th batch dropped out the apprenticeship programme.
- We congratulate Jitendra Nayak, based at Balliguda, for being selected to IRMA's 2-year FRM programme. We also congratulate Arjit Mukherjee, based at Deoghar, for being selected to the PG Programme at IIM Ahmedabad. They have proceeded on study leave from June 2003.
- 19 apprentices participated in Phase II of the Process Awareness and Sensitivity module of apprenticeship during May 20-24.
- Vijay Mahajan, founder of Pradan and member of the Governing Board, gifted Pradan a website, www.pradan.net, to mark its 20th anniversary. Thank you Vijay!

- Yatesh Yadav and Ratan Singh from Dholpur, and Achintya Ghosh from New Delhi, attended a 1 day workshop on rain-water harvesting organised by Winrock International India.
- The IWMI Tata Water Policy Programme held an Experts Workshop on Irrigation Development in Tribal India at Anand on June 2, 2003. The second phase proposal of the Central India Initiative (CINI) was shared and discussed. Nivedita Narain from Pradan attended.
- Satyabrata Acharya, based at Deoghar, attended a meeting at Madhupur on May 13, 2003 with the Deputy Directors of the Basic Seed Multiplication and Training Centres (BSMETC). The focus was on the proposed BSMETCs in Jharkhand and Bihar and what Pradan's role could be in the context of the SGSY special project.
- Shamsad Alam, based at Deoghar, participated in the Annual Planning and Review meeting of the Central Silk Board on April 23, 2003.



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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