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NewsReach



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LEAD BUFFALO REARING AND DAIRY INTERVENTION IN DHOLPUR - I

Shouvik Mitra says that from bleak poverty to self sufficiency, Mamta's journey reflects the progress that many like her have made, backed by the power of the SHGs and the support of Pradan professionals. Shouvik is based in Dholpur.

CASE STUDY SRI IN RAIGARH

Subash Chandra Barik recalls that introducing SRI, as a way out of poverty and into self sufficiency, to the farmers in Raigarh, through SHGs and exposure visits, and by providing consistent support was a challenging task. Subash is based in Raigarh.

PROFILE NEW HOPES, NEW DREAMS

Sibabrata Mohanty says that having one robust SHG made all the difference to the villagers of Fakiri, helping them implement the lift irrigation scheme and cultivate off seasonal crops, and making them financially self-reliant. Sibabrata is based in Rayagada.

FIRST PERSON MY JOURNEY, MY GROWTH

Preeti Upadhyay, taking initial forays into the field, quickly understands the need to combine traditional wisdom with modern practices, acknowledging the wisdom of the farmers while introducing improved methods of cultivation. Preeti is based in Raigarh.

Buffalo Rearing and Dairy Intervention in Dholpur - I

SHOUVIK MITRA

From bleak poverty to self sufficiency, Mamta's journey reflects the progress that many like her have made, backed by the power of the SHGs and the support of Pradan professionals

Mamta was very, very worried!

This was the first impression I had of her in July 2005.

Mamta was a member of Kamal Mahila Samiti, an SHG in Biloni village, Dholpur district, Rajasthan. I had travelled to the villages to visit the newly formed SHGs under the DPIP (District Poverty Initiative Project) programme. Short, dark and frail, holding her fourth child—a three-month-old son—in her arms and standing by the side of the door of her house, Mamta, a little over 30 years of age, said, "Neither do the higher castes treat us with dignity nor does the government think we are poor. We are not living; we are just surviving."

Like most of the other families in the village, Mamta belongs to the Jaatav community (a Scheduled Caste, derogatively called *chamar* by the Thakurs). The entire village of 105 households belongs to the same community. Mamta's family, comprising herself, her husband Phoolchand and four children—three daughters and one son, has not been officially identified as a Below the Poverty Line (BPL) family unlike 34 families in the village, though Mamta's family is as poor and deprived as the others.

"This year the monsoon has failed. This means no fodder for the animals. This also means that irrigating wheat during the rabi season will be very difficult because the water table has gone down. Don't know how we will survive this year."

Mamta had one-and-a-half *beeghas* of land (1 ha = 4 *beeghas*). In one *beegha*, she grew *bajra* (pearl millet) during the kharif season and wheat during the rabi. The other half *beegha* was kept fallow in the kharif for mustard production during the rabi season. If she was lucky, she got to cultivate another *beegha* of wheat through share-cropping in the agricultural lands of the Thakurs. The lack of timely irrigation and quality fertilisers resulted in the low production, insufficient to feed the entire family through the year. She did not get straw to feed the buffalo and

heifer through the year. She did not have any source of irrigation and had to depend on water from the bore well of a Thakur family. Most of the time she irrigated her fields later than the optimum time and for much lesser time than was the optimum for a good crop.

Mamta's husband worked in a stone mine in Sarmathura and was mostly out of the village for 6 months in a year. He brings in about Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 per annum from this hazardous job. "I am very fearful. This mining business can only do harm. Last year, Nemichand, my brother-in-law died of TB. I repeatedly ask my husband to leave this job. But he says that he has no option, which I can understand." Both Mamta and Phoolchand know that long exposure to stone mines can destroy their family in the long run, because a miner has high chances of being affected by pulmonary tuberculosis or silicosis. The village has 10 such widows whose husbands were miners and have expired because of these diseases.

"I have no other option but to go to the *bohra* (the local moneylender) or to the *dudhiya* (the local milkman) for credit whenever there is a cash shortfall or a need, and the shortfalls are definite. Last year, I bought this buffalo for Rs 15,000, taking an advance from the *dudhiya*."

For any type of credit, be it health, purchase of food grains or fodder for animals, or building productive asset base, Mamta had to depend on the *bohra* from the neighbouring village or on the *dudhiya*. Though she did not have to put anything on collateral, the interest charged by the moneylender is as high as 36% per annum. The estimated outstanding credit was to the tune of Rs 40,000.

Pradan undertook studies to understand the poverty and deprivation dynamics of the poor in the district, the coping mechanisms, the livelihood portfolio and the bottlenecks in the sub sector, the local economy and the possible intervention areas.

"This buffalo is my lifeline. Not only do I get milk from it for my children, it is also a source of cash and credit for my family. It has really been a bad year for us. First, the female calf died within a month and the animal stopped giving milk. The local quack took Rs 300 and advised me to give it an injection every day before milking. I know this is not good but I am helpless. And now God is angry again. It's already July and the animal is not pregnant. I will have no other option but to sell it off to the butcher."

Mamta took an advance from the local *dudhiya* to buy this buffalo. She already had a heifer (3 years old) but it needed another two years to start conception. The advance from the *dudhiya* was on the condition that Mamta would supply the milk to him only and not to other *dudhiyas*. Mamta usually kept a very small portion (half a litre to one litre for family consumption and sold the remaining. The *dudhiya* gave her only Rs 9 per litre of milk. He gave Rs 10 per litre to other villagers who had not borrowed money from him. Mamta knew that the rate she was getting was abysmally low, but she had no option. Moreover, the animal was dry then and Mamta had no fodder to feed it. Last year, she purchased wheat-straw worth Rs 6,000. This time she would have to purchase more.

ABOUT DHOLPUR

The district of Dholpur is located on the Agra-Gwalior highway 60 km from Agra. The Aravalli ranges continue till Dholpur town. There are two main rivers, Chambal and Parvati, separated by the Aravalli hills. The Aravalli ranges affect the topography, demography, resources and livelihoods. The average rainfall is 500–650 mm, but very sporadic and area specific. The lowest is in Baseri (375–450 mm) and the highest in Rajakhera (600–750 mm).

The district is divided into four development blocks, namely, Dholpur, Bari, Baseri and Rajakhera. Pradan is operational in three blocks barring Rajakhera, where the incidence of poverty is relatively less. The total population of the district is 9.83 lakhs with 80% of it being rural, residing in 809 villages. The male-female ratio is low (1000:827), evident from the low status of women across class and caste lines.

The average landholding of the district is 1.57 ha. However, the land distribution pattern is very skewed with 25% of the big farmers owning 63% of the land and 53% of

households owning 16% of land. Though wage earning is the primary occupation of the poor in the district, the small holdings, the low quality of the soil and low agricultural productivity has led to the growth of a livestock-based economy. Almost all farmers rear buffaloes and goats and the average milk productivity of the district is 5 lakh litres per day with a marketable surplus of 3 lakh litres per day during the flush period.

The villages have a high population density and relatively better road and electricity connectivity. However, quality education and health services are totally absent. There is high demand for credit, mostly from the informal sources with varying rates of interest (24-60% per annum) and various terms and conditions. A huge expenditure is also made for health purposes. There are many families, who work as wage labourers in local sandstone quarries; most of the miners are highly susceptible to TB. Though government provides free treatment, the families often turn to quacks and have to incur a huge expenditure on treatment.

Just before leaving, I asked Mamta, how she thinks that things can improve. Cuddling the baby to make him stop crying, Mamta smiled sadly and said, "*Sab uparwale ke hath main hain, bhaisaab.*" (Everything is in God's hands.)

Mamta's story is not unusual. Many SHG members live similar lives. Mamta's name can be easily replaced with any other woman's such as Guddi, Munni, Ramkali or Radha.

PRADAN'S WORK

Pradan initiated its work in the district in 2000, with support from the district administration, by implementing three watersheds under the erstwhile Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS). While Pradan implemented projects, it also undertook studies to understand the poverty and deprivation dynamics of the poor in the district, the coping mechanisms, the livelihood portfolio and the bottlenecks in the

sub sector, the local economy and the possible intervention areas. Building on the experience and learning and with a detailed intervention plan, in 2002, Pradan went into an agreement with the state government to implement DPIP in 126 villages of 23 gram panchayats in Dholpur, Bari and Baseri development blocks.

The families we work with (in the dairy sub-sector) are mostly like Mamta's. They belong to the low and backward castes (SCs or OBCs). The average family has seven members. Each owns a small landholding, mostly levelled, sandy loam with good soil cover. The size of this land is usually 0.375 ha of which 0.125 may be irrigated, mostly not from its own sources. The villagers cultivate *bajra*, *arhar*, mustard and gram in rainfed areas whereas wheat, barley and potato are cultivated in irrigated areas. Productivity is low. Many positive practices are, however, being picked up by the community from the prosperous neighbourhood regions of western Uttar Pradesh. Livestock rearing is an essential component of the lifestyle of the community. Most families own 1 or 2 low yield milch buffaloes, 1 or 2 heifers and 2 to 5 goats. The animals are reared for regular cash income as well as for meeting the villagers' nutritional requirements through milk or ghee.

These families depend mostly on wage labour for cash. This includes mining in local sandstone quarries, working as skilled and unskilled labour in the building industry or migrating to nearby cities such as Agra, Gwalior, Delhi, etc. The average annual income of a family ranges from Rs 20,000 to Rs 35,000, in which wage-earning contributes to 50% to 70%, livestock rearing 20% to 25% and agriculture to the remaining 15-20%. The families have higher

expenses during social ceremonies such as marriages, death ceremonies, etc. Because of this, there is a high demand for credit. Savings made, if any, is used to pay off existing loans.

During the work in DPIP, Pradan mobilised the communities into SHGs, mapped out their existing resources, did a matrix ranking of their preferable livelihood options and intervened in the sub-sector, which has the highest ability to reach out to a maximum number of poor families. This intervention has had a considerable impact in the overall cash flow of the family economics.

After a detailed study and thorough interaction with the stakeholders such as the community, government, bankers and others, the intervention decided on was buffalo rearing and dairy activity in the plain region.

But the million-dollar question was how to do it? The DPIP was ready to support the community in building their asset base. But the programme had many function variables—animal quality and its productivity being one. In Dholpur, the activity was strongly embedded in the farming system of the community and there were other variables of livelihood services. The work, in this case, needed to be done across the vertical chain. So we decided to understand the construct. We divided the activity into three major parts—pre-production, production and post-production, gained an understanding of the existing scenario and intervened accordingly.

THE PRE-PRODUCTION SCENARIO

Families, such as Mamta's, usually take loans from the *dudhiya* to buy assets. Once a loan is taken from the *dudhiya*, the family is obliged to give milk to the *dudhiya* at a flat rate of Rs 9 to Rs 10 per litre, which is

one or two rupees less than what they would otherwise get, irrespective of the fat content of the milk. Moreover, the buffaloes in the region are with lesser milk yield per lactation and also higher inter-calving period.

Calculations showed that the hidden rate of interest charged by the *dudhiya* varies from 36% to 50% per annum. Credit from formal sources is non-existent; so the *dudhiya* is the only source of capital for asset building. Some farmers do rear heifers for the renewal of the old assets but the growth speed of the heifer hampers the cycle.

There is slackness in the pre-production capital inflow, hampering the large-scale building of quality animal assets. Also, because of the existing systems of high rate of interest, there is no incentive at the family level for productivity enhancement.

PRADAN'S INTERVENTION

The first essential step was to build a quality productive asset base of the family. Around 1,100 poor families (both BPL and non BPL poor) were mobilised into SHGs for linkages

with the DPIP. From the DPIP, Rs 2.72 crores were mobilised for the induction of quality murrah buffaloes from Haryana. Most of the buffaloes inducted were of 70% purity, at an average cost of Rs 18,500 per buffalo and an average on-site milk yield of 8 litres per day. Most of the animals inducted were of first or second parity to ensure that the families got a larger production cycle.

The first step—that of building an asset without any obligation—to 'freedom' from the *dudhiya* was taken. Some of the families were linked with banks as part of the SHG-bank linkage process and the members also mobilised around 0.72 crores from banks.

Looking at the success of the DPIP groups, 115 SHGs, with a membership base of 1,400, were formed in the same or adjoining villages. Because these SHGs had no grants flowing in, 469 members were linked with other financial institutions (at that time the bankers did not show interest in linking with the SHGs) mobilising Rs 0.51 crores for animal induction.

TABLE 1: COST SHARING

Particulars	Units	Total Amount (Rs)	DPIP Share (Rs)	Mobilised from Banks (Rs)	Mobilised from Other FIs (Rs)	Mobilised Community (Rs)
Animals inducted during 2005-2008	2,700	5.07 crores	2.72 crores	0.72 crores	0.51 crores	1.12 crores

To be continued...

SRI in Raigarh

SUBASH CHANDRA BARIK

Introducing SRI, as a way out of poverty and into self sufficiency, to the farmers in Raigarh, through SHGs and exposure visits, and by providing consistent support was a challenging task

SRI – A VIABLE OPTION

Pradan's Raigarh project in Chhattisgarh started in 1998, with the team promoting women's Self Help Groups (SHGs). At present there are 600 SHGs functioning, covering around 8,000 families. As for income generation activities, some families are engaged in broiler chicken farm business, some in the tasar programmes and some families enjoy the benefits of the watersheds—all initiated by Pradan. Since 2007, the team is also engaged in promoting irrigated agriculture and rabi crops, particularly vegetables (such as tomatoes and potatoes). Although productivity is low, over 75% of the poor population in two blocks in Raigarh and Tamnar, in Chhattisgarh, engages in agriculture particularly in kharif paddy. For those poor communities, agriculture is the most important source livelihood. The team, however, found that it was unable to scale up the number of families engaged in these activities, particularly in agriculture. Was it perhaps because the changes made were not visible to the community?

The team was familiar with the SRI method of paddy cultivation. During 2007, several options, strategies and approaches to start SRI with a few farmers were discussed within the team. Our aim was to develop additional food security and additional source of income. We spoke about the concept with a few SHG families. They were skeptical about adopting the practice. Most of the concepts were new to them, including the use of only 2 kg seeds compared to 45 kg being used traditionally and the practice of single transplantation. Initially, 15 farmers were willing to adopt the concept. However, finally, only two farmers decided to go ahead; the rest of the farmers backed out. The team decided to begin SRI with these two farmers. We adhered to the two rules of SRI technology, namely, transplanting the seedling in 8 to 12 days and transplanting single seedling on one hill. We also modified some of the rules of SRI, namely, maintaining space of up to 6 inches between rows of seedlings, weeding at regular intervals of 15 days and keeping less amount of water in the standing crops.

Of the two farmers, one followed all the rules. The results of following all those rules were visible within a month of the transplanting. There were at least 40 to

45 tillers for each and every single seeding after 30 days of transplanting. The farmer and the other villagers were surprised and excited to see such a different crop and how different the paddy field looked. Some of them described it as a 'miracle'. Earlier, till 2006, the farmer used to get 18 bags of paddy from one acre of land; after adopting SRI, he got a yield of 32 bags of paddy (each bag = 75 kg). This was much beyond what was imagined or seen earlier. That year, the team helped other farmers to collect improved varieties of paddy such as Swarna, 1001, 1010, 1R-36 and 1R-64 from the Government Seed Nigam in Raigarh. The price of 1 quintal of Swarna paddy seed was between Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,100.

INITIAL STEPS

In March 2008, the team decided to implement this technology in a larger area, involving more farmers. The main challenge was to convince and motivate the villagers about the new technology. We made a detailed plan of the activity, set strategies and deadlines as well.

An exposure visit was arranged in April to another of Pradan's field projects, Khunti, where some advanced agricultural practices were being adopted. We conducted a centralized meeting with 44 representatives from 24 villages to create awareness about the ideas and objectives of the visit to Khunti. Manas Satpathy, then Programme Director of Chhattisgarh, one of the team members and I accompanied the 44 villagers to Khunti for a three-day orientation. We visited Deogain, Hitutola and Saritkel villages, with two Local Resource Persons (LRPs) from Khunti and the CEO of their Agri-Horti cooperative, Mr. Brijesh Maharana. We saw a number of vegetable plots and some wheat plots. We visited their agricultural stock centre in

Although productivity is low, over 75% of the poor population in two blocks, Raigarh and Tamnar, in Chhattisgarh engages in agriculture particularly in kharif paddy. For those poor communities, agriculture is the most important source livelihood.

Hitutola village, where we saw the use of many agricultural implements such as the weeder, the sprayer, etc. They also maintained their records of the activity well, ensuring better management of their agricultural programme. We learned that all the systems of management and record-keeping were maintained by the LRPs themselves, with very little assistance from professionals like us.

The villagers interacted with farmers engaged in SRI paddy cultivation and learned that the activity was beneficial for them. This boosted the confidence of the villagers. That visit helped the participants understand the functioning of the Agri-Horti Cooperative in Khunti and its various systems. On their return, the participants shared their experiences with the other villagers in this meeting; all the participants decided to adapt the practice and encouraged the others to do so too.

In the team, we discussed the strategies and approaches to reach more people, more effectively. We planned to carry out the following:

- ♦ Select LRPs from the villages
- ♦ Organize meetings in the selected villages with the help of the LRPs
- ♦ Use the SRI kit with the farmers during trainings

- ♦ Introduce cono weeders and markers
- ♦ Build the capacity of the LRPs
- ♦ Conducting regular meetings with the LRPs

We started with a few villages so that the monitoring is more effective. Then we set the targets for the team and individual members.

They were eager to learn more about SRI and clarify their doubts on technical details such as seed requirement, transplantation, single transplant, spacing, use of the weeder every 15 days and water drainage facilities in the plot.

REACHING OUT

I took the responsibility of implementing the plan in six villages of Tamnar block, that is, Amlidhandha, Samkera, Mahloi, Deogaon, Tangarghat and Kesarchna. I organized a meeting with the SHG members and their families to discuss the plans for the coming kharif season. I spoke about the existing practices of agriculture before introducing the new concept of SRI. Some of the issues of their current agricultural practice that came up in the meeting were:

- ♦ Lack of supply of sufficient fertilizers in time
- ♦ Lack of supply of improved and better quality seed
- ♦ Lack of water for irrigation
- ♦ Lack of medicines
- ♦ Low production in the medium low lands and medium uplands
- ♦ Unavailability of labour and money

During the discussion about SRI and its benefits, I pointed out that SRI:

- ♦ requires lesser quantity of seeds
- ♦ requires less water
- ♦ requires less fertilizer
- ♦ requires less labour because of the use of some simple machines
- ♦ can easily be carried out in medium uplands and lowlands
- ♦ yields more than 150% of the traditional yield

When asked if they were interested in taking up the activity, almost all of them agreed. They were eager to learn more about SRI and clarify their doubts on technical details such as seed requirement, transplantation, single transplant, spacing, use of the weeder every 15 days and water drainage facilities in the plot. Clarifying these doubts would help in convincing them and increasing their confidence about adopting SRI. Villagers who visited Khunti continued to share their experiences. The working of some implements such as weeders and markers was demonstrated during the meeting.

The villagers were anxious to know about the cost of adopting SRI technology. I compared the cost difference between the traditional practice and SRI. There was a difference of around Rs 980 per acre in the investment. This seemed to convince them more than ever.

The next question was about the distribution of inputs, how the villagers would be trained, etc. I requested the SHG members as well as the villagers to identify a farmer who could help them after being trained. Of the 11 people who visited Khunti, the villagers identified four farmers capable of assisting

TABLE 1: COSTS INCURRED IN TRADITIONAL PRACTICE AND IN SRI

Cost incurred in traditional practice (as per the data given by the villagers for 1 acre land)

Materials	Quantity	Amount (Rs)
Seed	45 to 50 kg @ Rs 10/kg	500
Fertilizer	Urea 2 bags @ Rs 250/bag	500
	DAP 1 bag	500
Intercultural operations	15 labour @ Rs 50/labour	750
Medicines		500
Total		2750

Cost incurred in SRI (per 1 acre land)

Materials	Quantity	Amount (Rs)
Seed	2 kg@ Rs 10/kg	20
Inter-culture	Weeder	500
Fertilizer	Urea 30 kg@ 5/kg	450
	DAP 20 kg@ 10/kg	200
	Potash 20 kg@ 5/kg	100
Medicine		500
Total		1,770

the Pradan professional in implementing SRI in the villages. Similarly, 10 individuals were selected from across the block as Local Resource Persons (LRPs). We also included the existing facilitators, working at the nurturing and capacity building of groups and clusters. A two-day meeting was organized centrally, in which the 10 LRPs and 6 Cluster Facilitators (CF) discussed two matters. One was the capacity building of the LRPs and the second was to work with maximum accuracy, on time services, following the principles of SRI. In the same meeting, I explained the technology and systems involved in SRI through various audio-visual tools such as movies, posters and so on. The participants were quite inspired.

The deployment of the LRPs was not a part of the earlier plan. However, seeing the intensity of work and outreach, the team had to engage the LRPs. Finances became the

issue. Some of the LRPs said that since this was the first time they were engaging in such kind of work, they would not take any remuneration. We promised them that we would try to pay something, depending on the types of operations involved in the whole process beginning with the input procurement to the yield date collection.

During the meeting, the villagers participated and even made suggestions about the various ways and approaches to implement the plan. Some of the participants suggested reducing the input cost so that the demand could be increased. I took all their suggestions to the team. The team decided that we could provide a weeder and marker to five villagers so that a single family would have to pay only Rs 100 instead of Rs 500. One suggestion was also to provide better seed and quality input material to the villagers on time. The team decided to purchase good quality

material from one shop called Goyal Fertilizer. The owner agreed to provide the material by June. The money for the input would be collected from each family.

I met all the LRPs and discussed the action plans with them as a group and individually. We made further plans, depending on the availability of water. This was a major point. More meetings were organized in the six villages about SRI. Around 450 villagers agreed to adopt SRI.

We set forth to make available other requirements such as weeders. We had arranged two types of weeders, the cono weeder and the mandua weeder. We contacted the government agricultural department but in vain. Finally, we met a garage owner who dealt with scrap materials of iron, tin and other such metals. We instructed him to design and make some weeders for test purposes. After experimenting with these in the field, we asked him to make 100 weeders. This proved to be a key support in the implementation of SRI.

Suddenly, however, the number of farmers willing to try out SRI fell from 450 to 25. I was worried. We went ahead with the 25 farmers; of them, five farmers, who had land with irrigation facilities, were identified to prepare nurseries.

These farmers started with their land preparation. We provided the farmers with the markers and weeders. The marker was used in the levelled field. After 10 days, the nursery seedlings were shifted for transplanting into the leaf stage. Some of the farmers were excited at seeing the marker work inside the field after transplanting. Some elderly villagers ridiculed the entire

effort. Four of the farmers were really upset at seeing no results from their transplanted fields. I asked them to wait for two weeks at least. But two of them ploughed their fields again and sowed fresh seeds, not confident about the SRI methodology. At regular intervals, I conducted training to demonstrate the use of the markers and weeders. This was later taken forward by the LRPs in all the villages. After 6-7 days of the first weeding, the results started showing. A single seedling started to give more than 10 to 12 tillers. Suddenly the appearance of the field changed. When the villagers saw this, the demand for SRI increased five to six times in my area. We also adopted five centralized nurseries in five villages to provide seedlings. Around sixty-five families were benefited from those centralized nurseries.

Slowly, the process gained acceptance. Some problems that surfaced were connected with the protection of plants, particularly from blight, which was seen during the first month of transplanting. I taught the villagers, LRPs, CFs and my colleagues working in other areas about the remedial measures.

In September, we organised workshops to promote SRI, to which we invited political leaders, village heads, village panchayat members, families not engaged in SRI, the Rural Agriculture Extension Officer (RAEO), Senior Agricultural Development Officer (SADO) and officers of the agricultural

A single plant had up to 85 tillers and in some cases up to more than 100. People who visited the plots were amazed to see the crop because they too had a standing crop but with far fewer tillers.

DIFFERENT INTERVENTIONS IN KHARIF PADDY

During 2008, we also made some new interventions in kharif paddy. Traditionally, almost 90% of the farmers practice the broadcasting method of paddy cultivation. It was difficult to convince them to transplant in the field. In the broadcasting method, they ploughed the field after just 20 to 30 days of seed emergence with at least 5 to 8 inches of water in the field. Locally, this process is called *biasi*. In this process, the plant population is thinned and plant density reduced. In 2008, we discussed with the farmers a new practice. In *biasi*, the farmers used a narrow plough; we decided to use the cono weeder instead of the plough and maintain spacing. With suggestions from my team, I decided to do this in just one or two fields, with assistance from two LRPs. After one week of the operation, the paddy fields of the broadcasted seed showed results similar to that of SRI.

Another method we adopted was to sow the treated seed in line and with a spacing of 10 inch. We then covered the seeds with farmyard manure (FYM) and soil mixture. After 15 days,

we observed that the plot had better germination plants. In 10 to 15 days, we utilized the weeder for weeding the spaced area. We found more weeds in the hand sown fields compared to the transplanted fields. After weeding, the line-sown plants seemed healthier and provided more yield than the adjacent broadcasted paddy field. The difference came about because of line sowing, maintaining a proper spacing in which a weeder can run and weeding the plot at two-week intervals.

We also thinned the transplanted seeding. In two, 100-sq ft plots in Samkera village, during the traditional transplanting of 25 to 30 days seedling, some transplanted seedlings were uprooted maintaining a line spacing of 10 inches. After 10 days, the cono weeder was used in that area just once. The plants almost gave same results of that of a SRI plot. The farmer who owned the plot of land was very happy. Many farmers planned to practice it the following year.

departments. We also arranged exposure visits for SHG families to the fields of farmers, who had adopted SRI and had a standing crop, as an example of the successful implementation of the practice. A single plant had up to 85 tillers and in some cases up to more than 100. People who visited the plots were amazed to see the crop because they too had a standing crop but with far fewer tillers.

Towards the first and second week of November, when the grain is almost or fully mature, we conducted exercises to collect qualitative data. The exercise was to compare

the SRI paddy with the normal transplanted paddy and broadcasted paddy. Through random sampling, we selected an area of 1 square metre of each type of paddy field. We gathered data from 100 such patches. Our main emphasis was on certain aspects such as the number of tillers per square metre, number of grains per tiller, number of tillers per hill and, if possible, the number of plants per square metre. We collected these data from those fields that had the Swarna variety. The findings were:

1. The number of tillers was more, ranging between 40 to 50, in the SRI plots compared to the other plots.

Mandua Weeder	Cono Weeder
1. Costs Rs 650–700	1. Costs Rs 900–1100
2. Easy to handle design.	2. Not so easy to handle design
3. Less heavy	3. More heavy
4. Needs almost no repairs during the cropping season.	4. May need repair

The number of grains in one tiller was around 225 to 300 in the SRI crop as compared to between 105 and 230 in transplanted and between 85 and 200 in broadcasted.

2. The number of grains in one tiller was around 225 to 300 in the SRI crop as compared to between 105 and 230 in transplanted and between 85 and 200 in broadcasted.
3. The number of grains filling was more in the case of SRI plots (200 to 300) as compared to 110 to 150 other plots.

Another interesting observation was that the greenery of the SRI plots lasted at least a week, which is more than the normally transplanted paddy. The team hopes that the results of the efforts made this time will help in the promotion of SRI in the next summer and kharif and that more farmers will adopt the practice.

OBSERVATIONS

We had provided the Swarna variety (150 days), 1001 (130–135 days), 1010 (110–115 days) to the farmer. Swarna variety is usually suitable for lowlands. We got the best responses from these three varieties.

We used two types of weeders, the cono and the mandua. The mandua weeder was a

FUTURE SCOPE

- ♦ This year we want to introduce multiple row weeders to reduce labour charges and which can operate in three to four lines at a time. We are already working in this direction.
- ♦ We plan to replicate some indigenous varieties such as Jaiphool, Ganga safri, Annada, etc., through the SRI method. In order to reach more farmers, we plan to introduce a low-cost wooden weeder that can be prepared by the villagers.
- ♦ We plan to introduce some organic inputs with SRI such as Handi Khat and Jibamrut.

better option for our future operations because it has a single wheel with a strong support system, it is light and needs less draft power.

SRI requires less investment and the costs, for example, for the weeder could be shared by the farmers. Most of the farmers had invested

a maximum of Rs 200/acre for plant protection. The total costs for SRI is between Rs 700 and Rs 800 for 1 acre of land. In fact, the other investments for about 20 farmers, who used only 2 kg of seed, markers and weeders are almost zero. In some villages people also used handmade

wooden marker instead of the iron markers. The minimum investment in my working area for SRI was Rs 130, excluding farmyard manure. With this investment, four farmers reported an increased yield of paddy of about 40 quintals per acre of land.

New Hopes, New Dreams

SIBABRATA MOHANTY

Having one robust SHG made all the difference to the villagers of Fakiri, helping them implement the lift irrigation scheme and cultivate off seasonal crops, and making them financially self-reliant

A NEW UNION

Maybe the afternoon of 7 January 2009 was an ordinary day for the rest of the world. But it was a very special day for the villagers of Fakiri. The lift irrigation scheme was started in their village that day. Joy lit the face of each villager, especially the women members of the Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal, the SHG that had motivated the whole village to implement the scheme. The dream for water in their fields had come true; with it came hope of transformed lives. This was a big achievement for the village. The villagers had achieved much through their SHGs. Just one year back, the scenario was different.

Fakiri is a small Kandha tribal village under Suri gram panchayat in Kolnara block, Raygada district, Orissa. There are 36 households in this village. The villagers are mainly engaged in agriculture, wage labour and sale of non-timber forest products (NTFP). Around 40% of the families of this village are landless, with no *patta* lands. The villagers depend predominantly on agriculture for their livelihood, be it sharecropping, lease or shifting cultivation. Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal, comprising 16 members from 16 households of the village, was formed and promoted by Pradan on 15 January 2008.

When Pradan came to the village on 5 January 2008, the team found that there was a defunct group, Fakiri Mahila Mandal, which had been formed in October 1994. It was promoted by Ankuran, an NGO, and facilitated by Mr. Sarbeswar Mishra of village Manisingh, who was working as a Vikas Sathi under a government-aided project, to strengthen weak SHGs. They had opened a bank account on 6 July 1998, at Kolnara Panchwati Gramya Bank Kolnara (now known as Utkal Gramya Bank). Meetings were held once in a month and each member deposited Rs 5. There was a passbook for each member, in which the savings were entered; the group also had a meetings register. These documents were maintained by Mr. Mishra. However, these passbooks and meetings register were not maintained regularly, after the initial four to five months. Five members had lost their passbooks. Some members could not make any contribution to their savings after some months and thus the savings were not same for all the members. The

group could not say how much was saved by individual members. The bank gave details of their accounts (Table 1).

The members of Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal meet once a week (every Tuesday) at a specified time (5 p.m.), discuss the various

TABLE 1: OLD BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS

Total savings	Rs 1200
Grant amount	Rs 5,000 (source not known)
Interest on savings	Rs 2,155 (from bank)
Total	Rs 8,355 (as on 25 October 2008)

The members were asked by Pradan what they would like to do with the money in the account and the account itself. Initially, they could not decide how to divide this money. They also wanted to close their bank account. In January 2008, the villagers were taken on an exposure visit to the SHG in Dengasargi village, which functioned smoothly and successfully. They understood the norms and benefits of weekly SHG meetings, promoted by Pradan. Initially, 14 members had agreed to form a new SHG and name it Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal. After seeing the transparent systems, strong norms, good accounting systems and well functioning of the group at Dengasargi, two more members joined the group.

Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal wanted to open a savings bank account. However the problem was dual membership. There were six members in the new group, who were members of Fakiri Mahila Mandal, the defunct group. After much debate, the members of Fakiri Mahila Mandal agreed to close their old account and share the savings equally. They were excited about starting afresh with new aspirations and hope. They closed the old account, audited it and divided their share, with help from Pradan. Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal then opened a savings bank account in the same branch.

Joy lit the face of each villager, especially the women members of the Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal, the SHG that had motivated the whole village to implement the scheme.

issues of the village, save and take internal loans when needed. As none of the members was literate, they decided to make Apa Rao, an educated man from the village, the Accountant for their group. Pradan trained him to keep accounts and maintain the registers of the SHG. For his services, Apa Rao receives Re 1 per meeting from each member.

A FRUITFUL EXPERIENCE

Pradan and the SHG members identified that water for agriculture was a major problem for the village. On March 2008, the SHG approached Pradan to suggest a scheme for irrigation and domestic purposes. With the support from ITC and a fund of about Rs 1.25 lakhs, Pradan suggested a lift irrigation scheme, and a perennial stream near the village was identified for the purpose. The activity required the SHG to contribute at least 10% to 15% of the total project cost, which came to between Rs 15,000 and Rs 20,000. The SHG did not have so much

The SHG did not have so much cash and hence they called a village meeting to discuss if this contribution could be made in some other way. The villagers decided that they would contribute their labour for the construction and pipe digging work.

cash and hence they called a village meeting to discuss if this contribution could be made in some other way. The villagers decided that they would contribute their labour for the construction and pipe digging work. Gayatri Mahila Mandal was able to motivate and mobilize the whole village for the common cause.

Just after some initial work with the installment of the lift irrigation, the monsoons started. The villagers wanted to engage in the kharif crop with Pradan's facilitation. They decided to postpone the lift irrigation work because they would have to engage in agriculture full time. Moreover, the rains made it difficult to continue with the installation work.

Seven members were ready to start with kharif tomato in July. Some members were reluctant to join, not knowing what results it would yield. Tomato cultivation was not new

in the village because it was grown in October-November. The timing was the main reason for the SHG members' hesitation. They were sure that the crop could not be cultivated during kharif. The investment required—around Rs 800 for 10-15 decimal land—was also a deterrent. The members took a loan from their SHG for the input cost. It was decided that the other members would observe and learn the processes involved in cultivating tomato in kharif. If the seven members were successful, others would cultivate tomatoes the next time.

Pradan provided training to the members—both in the classroom and in the field—on tomato cultivation. Prashant, who belonged to Rodhangi village nearby, was trained to provide timely follow-up services to the members. The rainfall for the region that year was low. This resulted in low production of other crops but the environment was favourable for tomato cultivation. The average size of the land was 12 decimals, in which 500-600 plants were planted. It was easy for a member to look after such a small area. When Dipai Mandangi, one of the SHG members, prepared the nursery bed for seedlings, it was destroyed by cattle. The other members came forward to give her some seedlings from their nursery beds so that she could cultivate. With proper training, regular follow-ups and high motivation, six

TABLE 2: INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF MEMBERS

S. No.	Name	Expenditure (Rs)	Sale Value (Rs)	Profit (Rs)
1	Rupai Kilaka	1,030	11,300	10,270
2	War Kandagari	815	8,800	7,985
3	Danai Himirika	815	5,200	4,385
4	Sinalu Mandangi	880	6,500	5,620
5	Dipai Mandangi	880	1,200	320
6	Dipai Kilaka	815	3,800	2,985
7	Basanti Kandagari	880	4,400	3,520

members made profits. One member, who was unable to tend to her field because of ill-health, was at least able to recover her investment.

The production started from mid-September to mid-October. And during this time, there was a scarcity of tomato in the local market. Initially, the members took their produce to the local market in Kolnara. Later, the local traders started coming to their fields to buy their produce. The price offered ranged from Rs 18 to Rs 24 per kg.

Besides the cash profit they earned, the villagers used the produce for their own consumption. As per Table 2, the profit ranged from Rs 10,270 to Rs 320. The members understood the dos and don'ts of the practice. Rupai Kilaka's profit of Rs 10,270 set an example for other members, who became enthusiastic and excited. All the SHG members now plan to cultivate the crop. Members who have land are ready to lease land to landless members for cultivation.

The installation of the lift irrigation is now complete. Members want to use the water

for a summer crop. They are also planning to make a water tank and a bathroom at one of the outlets that can be used for domestic purposes. They have already collected the stones and the earth digging work for the foundation is complete. Members of this group are motivating other families to form groups. More women are coming forward to be part of SHGs. Women from Totaguda, Pongili and Sanagumuda villages visited Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal to learn how to run a successful SHG. The women then returned to form SHGs in their villages.

AN EXAMPLE OF SUCCESS

On 6 January 2009, Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal completed its 50th weekly SHG meeting. The group decided not to give any internal loan for the first three months and to concretize their norms during this period. Pradan professionals attended four meetings to help the SHGs form their norms (refer Box 1). On 15 April 2008 (in the 13th weekly meeting), the group gave its first internal loan of Rs 1,000 to Palai Huika for her daughter's marriage.

BOX 1: DISCUSSIONS IN THE SHG MEETING

- Meeting 1: In this meeting, the SHG discussed issues such as why have SHGs, group values (such as equity, trust and autonomy), timings of the meeting (day and time), quorum, discipline, participation in the discussion, venue of the meeting, penalty for being absent or late, shared responsibility, accountant selection, accountant salary, savings, etc.
- Meeting 3: Follow-up. Reminding the group of the norms they formed.
- Meeting 5: Norms formed regarding internal loan such as loan appraisal, interest rate, penal interest rate, profit distribution, eligibility for getting loan, etc. Process used: pictorial training materials and group discussion.
- Meeting 7: Follow-up. Reminding the group of the norms they formed. Discussion regarding banking rules. Selection of the office bearers to operate their bank account.

TABLE 3: DETAILS OF THE MAA GAYATRI MAHILA MANDAL (UP TO 06. 01. 2009)

Meeting regularity	100%
Member attendance	92%
Savings per member/week	more than Rs 27
Total no. of internal loans	25 (In 38 weeks)
No. of members availing internal loan	14 out of 16 (In 38 weeks)
Total amount of internal loan	Rs 19,600 (In 38 weeks)
Total amount of loan refunded	Rs 10,600 (In 38 weeks)
Savings in bank	Rs 13,000
Members engaged in	- 7 members engaged in agriculture
	- Members mobilized the village for installation of lift irrigation scheme
	- Members attend GPLF meetings regularly

TABLE 4: RECEIPT AND PAYMENT DETAILS (UP TO 06.01.2009)

Receipt		Payment	
Account head	Amount (Rs)	Account head	Amount (Rs)
Penalty earned	17	Loan distributed	19,600
Interest earned	1,745	Bank loan refunded	0
Loan refunded	10,500	Other loan/Grant refunded	0
Voluntary savings	21,180	Cash in bank	13,000
Bank loan	0	Cash in hand	1,763
Other income	3,718	Other expenses	2,797
Total	37,160	Total	37,160

TABLE 5: INTERNAL LOANS TAKEN AND THEIR PURPOSES

Till meeting no. 20 (> 5 months)

S. No	Loan Purpose	No. of Loans	Amount Disbursed (Rs)	Percentage of Loans Disbursed
1	Health and sanitation	2	800	15.09
2	Social occasions	2	1000	18.87
3	Household consumption	3	3500	66.04

Till meeting no. 50 (> 12 months)

S. No	Loan Purpose	No. of Loans	Amount Disbursed (Rs)	Percentage of Loans Disbursed
1	Health and sanitation	5	2700	13.78
2	Social occasions	6	4000	20.41
3	Household consumption	4	4500	22.96
4	Agriculture	10	8400	42.86

During the initial days, the members took loans mainly for personal consumption. Later, they took loans for other purposes such as agriculture (refer table 5). After 6 months, in August, when Pradan suggested that the group take a bank loan, the group refused stating that the savings they had were sufficient to meet their requirements. They said that when required, they would make a concrete plan and then approach the bank to finance their SHG.

Many members such as Rupai Kilaka and Basanti Kandagri share that they had dreams

of educating their children, building pucca houses and living more dignified lives. With the emergence of Maa Gayatri Mahila Mandal, the women are filled with hope and confidence. Their dreams are turning into reality. Basanti dreams of making more profit from agriculture by using lift irrigation in her field and to save more money in the SHG so that she can educate her daughter. Rupai is very happy with the success of her last kharif produce and is looking forward to the coming season with more confidence. All this was made possible through effective guidance and facilitation by Pradan.

My Journey, My Growth

PREETI UPADHYAY

Taking initial forays into the field, Preeti Upadhyay quickly understands the need to combine traditional wisdom with modern practices, acknowledging the wisdom of the farmers while introducing improved methods of cultivation

INITIAL EXPERIENCES

While pursuing my studies in B.Sc. Agriculture from Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Viswa Vidyalaya, Jabalpur, I had the opportunity to interact with some farmers from Chindwara district, Madhya Pradesh. This was part of the Rural Agriculture Work Experience (RAWEx) programme, in which I engaged in commercial farming with the farmers, using recent scientific ways, for a period of six months. I learned about various technical details such as the effect of seed quality, seed treatment, sowing processes, differences with the indigenous method, types of insects that attack crops, treatment of crops, etc. I worked with seven farmers, to whom I explained the benefits, including the increase in production and better incomes, of the new methods of crop cultivation. Building rapport with the community and convincing them to adopt the new technology was not very difficult. These farmers were well-off and literate and when they heard about improved seeds, medicines, production, etc., they calculated the profits and incomes easily. They planned the available resources and requirements for farming in advance. They realised that agriculture could prove to be a profitable business for them.

When I was in college, Pradan came for a campus recruitment process. I had very little knowledge about the organization then. I searched the Internet for more information on its work. I read that Pradan was engaged with the rural poor in promoting SHGs and enhancing their livelihoods and became aware of the tremendous contribution it made in transforming the lives of many rural poor families. I could relate well with the concepts of SHG and agriculture because these were part of my syllabus in college as well as part of my experience of working with the farmers in Chindwara. I applied for the job immediately and, fortunately, cleared all tests and was selected to join the Raigarh project of Pradan.

I joined as a Development Apprentice (DA) on 1 August 2007. A few days later, I went to Kolam some 20 km away from the Tamnar block for my 21-day Village Stay. There were around 130 households, of which 85 per cent belonged to SC and ST communities. Their staple food was rice, with the occasional consumption of pulses, chapatti and vegetables. I stayed with one of the villagers of Kolam,

Bhupdev and his family. Their routine was to get up early in the morning at 4 and go to the forest to collect wood for fuel, and mahua and tendu leaves in season. The leaves were sold in the local market. Agriculture was an important activity. Bhupdev owned around 3 acres of land. He grew paddy as the main crop in 2.5 acres and lentils such as *urad* and *moong* in 0.5 acres of land. Besides this the members of Bhupdev's family worked as wage labour in other people's fields. I observed that they had the skills, resources and the ability to work hard. They made plans before the crop such as seed preparation, etc., but were unaware about the diseases afflicting plants, the remedial measures and so on. This was so because of little interaction or exposure to the outer world, lack of awareness of newer methods and technologies and lack of financial assistance. If these aspects were made available to the people, I was sure that, with the hard work that they put in, things could be better.

With these thoughts in mind, I went for the Foundation Course I, in November 2007. The gender training sessions changed some of my earlier notions about the role of women in society and their ability to do many things that I thought only men could do. There were also sessions in which I learned of various aspects of a village, society and economy. There was an orientation about the organization where I learned about the structure of Pradan. The sessions on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) were interesting and provided me with some answers to my questions on integrating the skills and knowledge of the villagers and the professionals to reach better results. I learned that the participation and ownership of the people, with whom we set forth to work, of any activity is imperative for it to be successful.

I learned that the participation and ownership of the people, with whom we set forth to work, of any activity is imperative for it to be successful.

THE 'I' IN ME

So far, I learned through observation and reflection. After completing my first phase as a DA, it was now time for learning by 'doing'. I was given the responsibility of working with 65 SHGs (5 clusters) across 21 villages in Raigarh block by the team. I started with issues such as the regularity of meetings held, the attendance of members, loan repayment, etc. My idea was to nurture the groups well because these issues were pertinent to building a strong SHG that functions properly. The members of the SHGs were engaged in livelihood generating activities such as tasar, agriculture using traditional methods, collection of mahua from the forest, wage labour, etc.

During this time, I found that the food that most of these families produced was insufficient and lasted only for 6 to 8 months. This forced them to migrate to other places in search of a living, work as wage labourers in factories or other people's fields, collect mahua/tendu leaves from the forest to sell them in the market. Despite all this effort, they struggled to make ends meet.

The Pradan team decided to initiate improved paddy cultivation through the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) for food sufficiency as well as income enhancement of these families. Paddy was the main crop in the region. SRI was a livelihood generating option and would also provide for food sufficiency to some extent for these families. The team

I realised that whenever I went to the villages I was there as a 'teacher', seldom acknowledging the villagers' knowledge about growing crops.

wished to reach out to as many farmers as it could. The strategies and approaches to initiate the activity and reach out to farmers were discussed in the team meetings. I planned to reach out to 400 farmers. If I could motivate at least 20 families in each of the 21 villages I was responsible for, I could easily reach the target of 400. It was decided that each team member would intervene in 5 or 6 villages at a time so that monitoring would be effective. Intervention through SRI was being done for the first time; it would also help prepare demonstration plots for use in future. My initial target, therefore, was to reach out to 120 farmers.

I planned to orient the villagers on SRI and motivate them to adopt the practice. I attended SHG meetings and cluster meetings and also organised hamlet-wise meetings to discuss about SRI and its potential benefits. This was a new concept for the villagers and I wanted to do my best to 'educate' them about SRI so that they would come forward and engage in the activity. I emphasised the differences between SRI and traditional paddy cultivation. I pointed out that the cost of cultivation in SRI is less than traditional paddy as the seed requirement is less (3 kg per acre compared to 40-50 kg per acre); there is less use of urea, potash and DAP (30:20:20 compared to 150:0:50, with no use of potash). I also explained that the attack of insects in SRI is comparatively low due to proper aeration and spacing of plants. The production in SRI is also high—6 to 7 tonnes

per hectare compared to 2 to 3 tonnes through the traditional method.

Many were excited in the beginning and came forward to adopt the practice of SRI. In Biswanathpali village, I organised two meetings in two of its hamlets where I met with 25 and 27 families, respectively. By the end of the meetings I had a list of 50 names of the farmers who showed interest in SRI. In a few days time, I went back to Biswanathpali to meet the farmers and discuss SRI further. When I reached, the farmers said that they did not feel too confident about SRI and hence were dropping out. They mentioned that they had never done paddy in such a manner and hence were unsure of the results. Moreover the Gram Sevak from the panchayat office also dissuaded the villagers by saying that the region was not good for SRI and it would not yield good results. He also raised doubts in the minds of the villagers about whether the 'girl' who had come to preach about SRI had any field experience of doing SRI. All my plans seemed to have failed and I was not left with even one farmer who seemed convinced about adopting SRI.

I was confused, frustrated and very disappointed. I failed to understand why the farmers had backed out. Was it because I am a girl? This did not seem like the reason, because there were many women colleagues who had and were working there. I felt that there was definitely something lacking in me too.

CORE OF THE MATTER

I was disturbed. I thought that I had gone to the villages and clearly explained the concept in great detail. I had also convinced the villagers that the activity would be beneficial

to them. Yet they were not confident about adopting SRI. I shared this with my team members and in more detail with my field guide, Mousumi Sarkar. She asked me if I thought the villagers knew about agriculture or not. I said I was aware that they did. However, while speaking with Mousumi, I realised that whenever I went to the villages I was there as a 'teacher', seldom acknowledging the villagers' knowledge about growing crops. This must have been reflected in my behaviour as well. I realised that the main reason for the people not believing on this method was because in some way I had no belief in them. The villagers had been engaged with agriculture all their lives; my role as a facilitator was to introduce them to new technology only. I was there to integrate their hard-work and skills with new knowledge and technology. I needed to have belief in their understanding of agriculture before I tried to integrate it with the new technology of SRI to reap maximum benefit.

The discussion with Mousumi was very energising. With this new awareness, I decided to discuss the matter once again with the farmers. When I visited Biswanathpali, I asked them to talk about the traditional method of paddy cultivation first. When they explained their traditional method, I listened without interrupting them because they knew more than I did about these methods. I saw that the farmers were hesitant to transplant 1 acre of land with 2 kg of seed whereas the hybrid seed requirement was 6 kg per acre of land. They were also doubtful about using 8 to 12-day plants because they feared that the small plants would not survive in case of heavy rainfall. I had anticipated these questions and concerns and had prepared accordingly. I answered all their concerns and

I asked them to compare the two methods, telling them that since they were engaged in agriculture they would understand the differences better and could themselves make an informed choice.

explained about the use of small plants and how 2 kg of seeds were actually enough for an acre. This time I made deliberate efforts to facilitate the process rather than give lectures and 'teach' them what they should do. I presented the SRI method, mentioning its cost, production, technique, etc. I asked them to compare the two methods, telling them that since they were engaged in agriculture they would understand the differences better and could themselves make an informed choice. They discussed their findings and at the end of the meeting there were around 10 farmers who came forward to adopt SRI. I was relieved, excited and encouraged. There was some resistance from a few. For instance, in Chitakakani village Gandhrvi didi showed willingness to adopt SRI. But her husband threatened her that if she did so, he would divorce her. She however, went ahead; from 1 acre of land, she produced 23 quintals of paddy. Seeing this, her husband was thrilled and now supports her in all her decisions.

A RENEWED ENERGY

I worked with 45 families of 5 villages, helping them to adopt SRI. This yielded in double the production of their counterparts, who continued with their traditional method of farming. Small farmers with half to one acre of land were not ready to take any risk with this method initially. Some others cultivated paddy through the

broadcasting method and did not show any interest in SRI because it required transplanting. But after seeing the results of the farmers who adopted SRI, other villagers were motivated to engage in the activity.

When I reflected on the initial hesitation of the farmers, I understood that I had placed myself, my targets and my thoughts as my central focus and the community's needs and

views on the periphery. I had attempted to force them to accept something with a view that I knew what was good for them. I changed this approach and presented them with the facts and allowed them to decide what is right for them. And I reaped the results of such an approach. In the course of teaching others, I learned a great deal about myself, my attitude and my growth.



Although productivity is low, over 75% of the poor population in two blocks in Raigarh and Tamnar, in Chhattisgarh engages in agriculture particularly in kharif paddy. For those poor communities, agriculture is the most important source livelihood. During 2007, several options, strategies and approaches to start SRI with a few farmers were discussed within the team. The aim was to develop additional food security and additional source of income.

Extract from SRI in Raigarh. Page 6

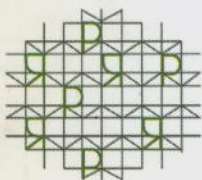


Pradan is a voluntary organization registered in Delhi under the Societies Registration Act. Pradan professionals work through small teams in selected villages across seven states.

The focus of Pradan's work is to promote and strengthen livelihoods of the rural poor so as to enhance their well being and sense of agency, especially the women. It involves organising them, enhancing capabilities, introducing ways to improve incomes and linking them to government programmes, banks, markets and other economic services. Pradan professionals use their knowledge and skills to help remove poverty by working directly with the poor. *NewsReach*, Pradan's monthly journal, is a forum for sharing thoughts and experiences of Pradanites working in remote and far-flung areas in the field. It fulfils the need of every Pradanite to reach out and connect with each other, the development fraternity and the outside world. *NewsReach* has been supported earlier by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and Ford Foundation.

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