



Anniversary Special ~ Improving Impact 1
Alyson Brody writes on processes of impact assessment through the internal learning system that are expected to build on Pradan's people-centric philosophy. Alyson is the Imp-Act Programme and Communications Co-ordinator and is based in IDS, Sussex, UK.

Lead Story ~ Lord of the Forests 7
Soumik Banerji contends that access to and use of forests by local communities is by the good graces of the state rather than flowing from the recognition of latent community rights. Soumik is based in Sundarpahari block of Godda district in Jharkhand.

Tool Kit ~ Promoting Goat Rearing 12
Sanjeev Kumar describes rearing of goats with an improved package of practices that could provide additional income to poor families. Sanjeev is based in Dausa district of Rajasthan.

Concept Note ~ Consolidating through Clusters 18
Sukanta Sarkar envisages cluster associations of 10-12 adjoining self-help groups that could serve important functions not possible by individual groups. Sukanta is based in Jhumri Telaiya in Koderma district of Jharkhand.

NewsReach

The Inhouse Journal of PRADAN
November 2003
Volume 3 / Number 11

Improving Impact

Processes of impact assessment through the internal learning system are expected to build on Pradan's people-centric philosophy

Alyson Brody

It is now more than 2 years since Pradan began its fruitful partnership with Imp-Act, the UK-based action research programme. Imp-Act offered a means for Pradan to plan, develop and begin to implement the systems that would enable the impact of the organisation's microfinance to be more consistently tracked and recorded. The last 2 years have been productive, with some inspiring results in piloted impact assessment (IA) processes. There are very positive signs that, not only will findings on Pradan's impact enable the organisation to refine and improve its approaches, but that the IA processes in themselves support Pradan's central goals of empowerment and sustainability.

Pradan's Impact Assessment

This article considers Pradan's impact assessment story, examining choices and progress made, and considering the future of IA within the organisation. It links Pradan's work to the broader goals of Imp-Act, showing how the organisation's experiences illustrate some of the Imp-Act programme's key messages, while also highlighting particular organisational and research questions around impact assessment.

Pradan is an NGO working in 7 Indian states with the goal of generating sustainable livelihoods for the rural poor. Pradan's

approach is to enable development and growth rather than impose systems or ideas. Towards this end, the organisation aims to be truly participatory, ensuring that its strategies centre around the diversity of people's real lives and needs and that those people primarily define the solutions and priorities. Pradan offers professional assistance in developing environmentally sustainable agricultural activities as well as non-farm-based individual and group enterprises.

Microfinance, as an invaluable vehicle for creating sustainable livelihoods, is an integral aspect of Pradan's vision. Rather than acting as a loan-giving centre, Pradan promotes small informal associations organised around the activity of savings and credit, known as self-help groups (SHGs). The SHGs comprise the female members of target families, given that women constitute the majority of the poorest sector of society and are often excluded from access to credit.

Pradan's rationale is that participation in SHGs gives the women increased access and control over economic resources and enhances their status in their families and communities. The aim is to facilitate linkages between the SHGs and mainstream financial institutions and to assist with

sustainable livelihood generation through developing skills and providing advice on investment in income generating activities.

Until recently, however, despite the apparent benefits of the microfinance programme, there was no systematic way to measure its impact on poverty, on individuals and on communities. For this reason, when Pradan received an invitation to join Imp-Act, the opportunity was taken up.

Imp-Act is a UK-based 3-year action research programme designed to improve the quality of microfinance services and their impact on poverty. The programme has 3 main objectives: to develop credible and useful impact assessment systems based on the priorities of microfinance organisations (MFOs); to broaden the scope of impact assessment to include wider poverty impacts; and to influence thinking and practice relating to the role of microfinance in poverty reduction.

D Narendranath, based at Pradan's Delhi office, saw participation in the programme as a way to better understand the impact of Pradan's work on the poor. This would provide an opportunity to validate existing approaches and strategies for reaching out to and having an impact on the poorest, while addressing any potential problems in the services provided, so that improvements could be made.

It was also hoped that understanding more about the impact of Pradan's services on clients would give staff a more comprehensive picture of the people they worked with and enable them to be able to work more effectively. Finally, a need was identified to provide rigorous data for external stakeholders that would demonstrate Pradan's positive impact. As

Naren explained, "There were 2 main concerns - we wanted to assess our level of impact, but we had no systematic way of doing this; and we wanted to prove to donors and our board that 15 years of work in the field had led to some positive change. The Imp-Act programme suited our organisation because of its focus on reaching the very poor and on taking wider impacts into consideration."

Human Face of Microfinance

Impact assessment at Pradan has mainly taken the form of a system known as the Internal Learning System (ILS). The system, which is currently at the pilot stage, relies on knowledge generated by clients and field staff. This information is incorporated into diaries over which clients are encouraged to have complete ownership.

The diaries are divided into 4 main modules: the first is concerned with well-being, such as household assets and access to education; the second module deals with finances, tracking levels of vulnerability and insurance against risk; the third is about livelihoods, considering employment, agricultural land held etc.; and the last module is concerned with empowerment.

A key aim of the diaries is to develop better understanding of the livelihoods base of participants by examining the total asset 'availabilities' such as forest, livestock, land and labour, and enable clients to make better decisions about microfinance use for improving their livelihoods, while also helping field staff to identify appropriate livelihood strategies.

Dimensions of these generic categories are assessed through indicators. The clients, the vast majority of whom are poor women, are expected to mark

changes in these indicators. They are involved in developing through participative methods, such as the '3 faces exercise' whereby the women are asked to comment on pictures of a sad-faced, neutral faced and happy-faced woman, and are asked what has caused her unhappiness and what has led to improvements in her life. The same indicators can often be used across diverse cultural and linguistic groups, although there is always scope to address issues of specific local relevance.

Field professionals also capture their understanding of the ILS process and results in their own diaries. Apart from providing a record of their own experiences, the diaries can be used in crosschecking the information collected through the participants' diaries. When ILS has been fully incorporated into Pradan's organisational approach, the crosschecking procedures will be comprehensive, entailing semi-structured interviews of randomly selected participants. Information in the diaries will be checked by field staff against a more rigorous, complex format with more detailed criteria and precise variable definitions.

At a more strategic level, this qualitative data will be fed into data analysis systems and finally into a computerised management information system (MIS). This will give a broader picture of how the poor women's situation is changing over time.

Reflecting on Impacts

Another important aspect of ILS is the emphasis on recording and reflecting on the processes that have led to certain impacts. Field professionals attend an annual retreat, where they compare groups who are doing well with those that are lag-

ging, and build up a picture of factors that might be affecting performance. Reasons for poor performance might be environmental - failure in monsoon rains, for example; or they may be demographic - due to a woman's marital or familial status.

Alternatively, performance may be affected by organisational factors, such as a change in staff. It is hoped that the learning from these retreats can eventually be incorporated into a guide for best practice for Pradan and other organisations.

Although ILS is a key element of Pradan's IA process, it is not the only IA activity. Pradan have conducted a study using the C-GAP poverty assessment tools (PAT) and have also developed a more traditional quantitative impact survey in cooperation with Dr Naila Kabeer, who is involved in the implementation of Imp-Act.

These additional assessment methods provide a useful way to triangulate information, identify patterns and crosscheck the qualitative material in the diaries. The plan is to incorporate information on surveys and other forms of assessment into resource documents that can be shared with smaller NGOs who do not have well-developed research facilities or trained research staff.

This emphasis on developing IA systems that are participatory, context-based and rigorous, is a central concern communicated by Imp-Act. An important message is that organisations need to move away from 'narrow, donor-focused impact assessment events, towards more practitioner-focused processes' (Simanowitz 2003: 3) that respond to the organisational mission, needs of clients and available resources.

Empowering through Diaries

It is not only the ends of impact assessment through ILS that are important; the means or processes by which the ILS operates are also integral to achieving the central goals of SHGs: empowerment. It is notable that many of the needs identified by the ILS are not predetermined, but have been highlighted through ILS.

A particular case in point is the disempowerment that comes from illiteracy. Usually, the very poor women who comprise the majority of Pradan's clients are illiterate. As Helzi Noponen, the consultant who pioneered ILS and works closely with Pradan, told me, "We do not know what it's like when you don't know how to read what's around you; it's a real handicap in this world. You do not know what's being written about you. You do not know what the signs say or what this document says, even though these things will affect your life."

Because the ILS diaries are pictorial, the women are able to 'read' and 'write' in them. This has been one of the most empowering aspects of the system. "When we were field testing (the diaries), the women filled in a form about basic assets, and one woman was then asked to read what she had put down. So she stood up and 'read' the diary. Afterwards I said to her: 'do you realise you were reading?' and her face just lit up - an electric smile came over her face. Another woman was saying: 'read it again'. They were overjoyed they could read something," Helzi recounted.

Apart from offering a chance to own the diaries by reading and writing in them, many of the women found the process of recording their lives empowering in itself. Helzi explained, "They all say the same thing: '(the diary) has everything in my

life.' What I get from this is that illiterate women have never been asked to do something like this and never had their lives reflected back to them or been asked to reflect and think on their lives. (With ILS) They are recording their situations and seeing if they get better or not, and thinking about why."

Into the Public Realm

Yet, the area of the women's lives that ILS has affected most profoundly is the taboo subject of domestic abuse. Although many women had experienced domestic violence, it had not been a topic for open discussion. The fact that it was incorporated into the ILS module encouraged the women to begin talking about and sharing their experiences, thus bringing a private matter into the public realm.

There is evidence that this has led indirectly to a reduction in violence against women because of the men's awareness that their behaviour is being tracked and brought into the open. Women from one group started going to talk to men on behalf of the women they were abusing and, according to Helzi, "The rate of domestic violence started to reduce. The quantitative data shows a period-by-period steady reduction in domestic violence, and the same thing has happened in other organisations and groups."

On a more practical level, women in one organisation have begun taking their diaries to meetings with governmental officials as a way to verify their low status, and being granted assets such as houses and looms as a result. Because of this, their male partners have been forced to realise the value of the diaries and are prevented from simply destroying them.

Pradan's work under Imp-Act exemplifies the programme's concern with reflecting the 'human face' of microfinance and impact assessment, promoting IA as a process that actively involves and empowers people and is a means to positively affect their lives through the improvement of practice. Now in its third year, Imp-Act is entering its dissemination phase. The aim of this phase is to communicate what has been learned through the programme, in different regions and organisations.

A major aim is to convey to various audiences how improved, targeted impact assessment is affecting and will affect the lives of the people: clients, their families and communities and the staff of MFOs themselves. The programme recognises that the impacts of microfinance go beyond the narrow focus of the individual receiving a loan; there are wider social and economic impacts on the family and the community, such as increased social awareness and knowledge, increased participation of women in decision-making, better access to education for children and improved labour opportunities.

Enhancing Staff-Client Relations

The clients are not the only group benefiting from ILS. Field professionals have found that the module-based learning system has enabled them to maximise the limited time they can spend with SHGs. The group sessions have become more focused, and staff can be more confident that clients are leaving the sessions with new knowledge about themselves and about aspects such as livelihoods and welfare.

The work around the modules also enables field professionals to gain important insights into their clients about their needs and goals, making it meaningful

processes for them. As Naren pointed out, "Before, when I met with the SHGs, I would just have superficial discussions about taking a loan, etc. Now, in those 2 hours, I have a more concrete reason for being there - there's a curriculum and they learn something from it. This makes the use of my time more efficient and gives the women the chance to discuss a wide variety of things." This more productive relationship with the groups leads to stronger, more autonomous SHGs, which is a central goal for Pradan.

These experiences reflect another of the key messages that Imp-Act wishes to promote, both in the microfinance industry and in the wider development arena that the benefits of incorporating IA into organisations quickly begin to outweigh the time and costs involved. Indeed, institutionalising carefully designed and piloted IA processes can ultimately provide a very cost-effective means to improve social and financial performance, provided that there are adequate mechanisms for ensuring that the information is responded to appropriately.

Challenges for ILS and Pradan

It is taking some time to institutionalise ILS into Pradan's infrastructure, mainly because at present it is seen as an add-on by the staff. As ILS is integrated into normal working practice of Pradan and used from the start with newly formed SHGs, the process of institutionalisation should be accelerated. As this happens, issues identified through the diaries will lead to better organisational assessment and eventual refinement of services, as information is fed back systematically from field staff up to board members.

A major challenge for Pradan will be to

ensure that the professionals receives adequate training to be able to implement the ILS in an effective way. This is partly a question of teaching data collection and analysis skills and facilitating these processes for field staff. For example, the type of information being collected must be clarified and understood, which means carefully defining variables and indicators. Interview skills can also be refined through 'hands-on' training exercises.

However, there are aspects of the ILS process that are harder to teach: the generation of good, detailed information is ultimately reliant on the sensitivity of field staff to their clients and on their ability to really understand and form relationships with the people they are working with. As Naren noted, "Staff need to be able to listen and empathise with clients. It's more than just a set of tools. It is the processes that are important. If staff do not care about that, the information they derive from an ILS or any other system will be worthless."

Institutionalising ILS also means taking decisions about what aspects of ILS should be used. Organisations who wish to adapt ILS to their own purposes need to think about what data they wish to collect and how it should be used at different levels; what time and financial costs are involved; and what elements of ILS are most suited to their specific needs and goals.

The Future of ILS for Pradan

Although it is still in its pilot stage, the early results from ILS are promising. Helzi reports that reflecting on the information recorded in their diaries and workbooks has motivated participants and SHGs to change elements of their behaviour. Some examples are increased political participa-

tion; more productive use of loans, such as deciding to invest a larger percentage of their loans for business; and improved health practices. However, before the institutional-wide effects can be seen and the data can be fed into organisational improvements, more extensive sampling, data collection and quantitative analysis will need to be conducted.

As Naren's comments imply, the process of institutionalisation is not immediate. However, there is confidence that ILS will eventually be accepted as an integral part of Pradan's approach to microfinance, and that the majority of staff will be comfortable with the new system. It is perhaps too early to say how the findings from IA will lead to improved practice within the organisation, but - as the evidence presented above suggests - the IA processes respond to the organisation's people-centred philosophy, enabling them to analyse their own situations and make decisions about solutions to improve their lives.

References

Simanowitz, A. March 2003. Designing Impact Assessment Systems to Improve Understanding and Impact. Imp-Act working paper, available at www.imp-act.org.

Noponen, H. October 2003 Assessing the impact of Pradan's microfinance and livelihoods interventions: the role of the ILS. In *The IDS Bulletin*, U.K: Institute of Development Studies (forthcoming).

Kabeer, N. October 2003. Assessing the 'wider' social impacts of microfinance services: concepts, methods, findings, In *The IDS Bulletin*, U.K: Institute of Development Studies (forthcoming).



Lord of the Forests

Access to and use of forests by local communities is by the good graces of the state rather than flowing from the recognition of latent community rights

Soumik Banerji

"I am the lord of the forest," thunders the forest ranger at Mangal, a tasar rearer of Domdih village in Sundarpahari block of Godda district in Jharkhand. "You will be in jail for all this!" The ranger continues to fume. Mangal replies, "We have been rearing tasar in these forests since the time you and your department did not even exist. Who are you to stop us?"

It is morning and Nijri Paharin of Cheo village in Sundarpahari brings a headload of twigs for cooking while Kailash Paharia rearranges his ker grass (*Imperata aurundinacea*) thatch. He says, "Last year I brought the grass from the forest. It will still last another year." Chandmuni is boiling nappu (wild tubers, *Discorea spp*) for breakfast. Jaleshwar is busy chewing a makke (sal, *shorea robusta*) stick that is the local completely biodegradable use and throw toothbrush. Bamri offers us boiled salted kursa (mucuna beans) in sal patri (plate) while Jomi comes smoking her telo cigar (kendu, *Diospyros melanoxylon*). Lokhni is flattening the floor of her house with kiro leaves (bhelwa, *Semacarpus anacardium*) and Devi is enjoying eating jackfruit and guavas.

Chatni's Rambaba is concerned about an injury in my leg and quickly prepares a

poja (*Litsea polyaltha*) bark concoction to apply in the wounded area. In about 2 hours I am able to walk. Laxman prepares a mixture of aro (*Casaria tomentosa*) fruit with bajra flour as a fish-paralysing agent to catch fish in the pond.

Kalara Kisku attaches a leaf of agar (*Dillenia petrgyna*) on her umbrella while going to the rice fields. She says the leaf will divert lightning away from her. She also applies a layer of mahua (*Madhuca latifolia*) seed oil on her feet as a moisturiser so that the water does not spoil her feet. Laxmi Soren is shampooing her hair with sabun hasa (Fuller's Earth) she has collected from the forest.

Santhal apologises to us because he is now in a different world after consuming tala botol (mahua liquor). Babloo makes a cut in a Palmyra palm with a cutting sickle to tap its juice. Shivilal, the local veterinarian, tells me there are 32 different kinds of fodder available in the area.

Integrated with Forests

This list of forest produce is incomplete at best since forests are so integrated with the lives of the people living in and around them. One crude estimate provides a figure of Rs 42,600 worth of economic goods that

each tribal family obtains from the forest in a year almost free of cost. This is besides the other ecological, cultural and aesthetic values of this resource.

Contrary Views

Despite hugely integrated systems of the tribal and forests, forest laws take a completely contrary view. We need to delve into history to find out the reasons for this. It is estimated that 85% of the Indian sub-continent was covered with forest about 2,000 years ago. There are not many written records detailing human-forest interactions. Fire, cultivation and plantations of useful trees shaped the forests to respond to human needs.

The rights and rules of access evolved over time into forest management systems. Kautilya of the Mauryan period wrote a treatise on forest regulations. Early rulers who were interested in securing timber and controlling large areas of forests usually met with guerrilla resistance from forest dwellers and rarely found the worth of pursuing such policies. Thus, most forest dwellers were left in peace with rulers concentrating on their political aspirations in the plains and in more populated areas.

With the advent of the East India Company and the European tenure systems, the concepts of forests began to change. Forests were held to be crown land stemming from the Regalian Doctrine. From 1770 to 1860, forests were increasingly viewed as a state asset with great commercial potential.

By around 1860 Britain had emerged as the world leader in deforestation, devastating its own woods and forests and the forests of Ireland, South Africa and northeastern United States to draw timber for shipbuilding, iron smelting and farming. They often

used to symbolise forest destruction as a symbol of political victory.

The early treatment of India's forests also reinforces their destructive energy. Until the later decades of the 19th century, the Raj carried out a fierce onslaught on the subcontinent's forests. With extinguishing stocks of British oak, attention turned towards Indian teak for the Royal Navy. Teak became the most durable ship building timber and saved England during the Napoleonic wars.

Revenue Orientation

The revenue orientation of the colonial land policy also worked towards denuding the forests. As disappearing forests added the class of land assessed for revenue, forests were considered an obstruction to agriculture and consequently a bar to the prosperity of the British Empire.

The process greatly intensified with the building of the Indian Railways in 1853. Huge chunks of forests were cut to meet the demand of railway sleepers. The pace of railway expansion from 1,349 km of track in 1860 to 51,658 km in 1910 and the trail of destruction it left brought home forcefully the fact that India's forests were not inexhaustible.

An example of staggering destruction can be realised by one of the records that each kilometre of railway construction required 538 sleepers (equivalent to 5 trees) with each sleeper lasting 12 years. Thus between 1860 and 1910, about 12 lakh sal trees were utilised in the railways alone.

Dubbing forest administration a total failure upto 1857, the then Governor General, Lord Dalhousie decided to establish a department that could ensure the sustained

availability of the enormous requirements of the railways. The Imperial Forest Department was established in 1864.

The Government Forest Act of 1865 was passed to facilitate the acquisition of those forest areas that were earmarked for railway supplies. It merely sought to establish the claims of the state forests it immediately required, subject to the proviso that existing rights not be abridged.

Schism within Foresters

However, colonial foresters were dissatisfied with the Act of 1865 due to its restrictions in dealing with communities and their practices. The Act of 1865 clearly stated that the law should not abridge or affect any existing rights of individuals or communities to forestlands.

A heated debate ensued between Dietrich Brandis, the then Inspector General of Forests, and B H Baden-Powell, a senior civil servant, over the role of the state in forest management and the rights of forest communities.

Brandis represented the populist camp that contended that forests should be left under the management of communities both for reasons of social justice and management. Baden-Powell held the 'annexionists' view regarding forests as open access resources with communities having neither the rights nor the capacity to manage them.

Brandis' views are immediately distinguishable from those of his epigones who have headed the Indian forest establishment. He shared a larger professional faith in the scientific status of sustained yield forestry and the inevitability of state control. His divergence arose from his col-

league's scepticism of the knowledge base of rural communities. Although faced with a barrage of criticisms, Brandis maintained that the so-called intervention was actually over an already existing local system of use and control.

Departmental Control

Ultimately, Baden-Powell's views prevailed and the 1878 Indian Forest Act justified the territorial control of over 23% India's landmass on the grounds that the Department of Forests possessed the technical and administrative skill to manage India's forests.

Based on Baden-Powell's distinction between rights and privileges, the Act was a comprehensive piece of legislation, which by one stroke of the executive pen attempted to obliterate centuries of customary use by rural populations all over India.

The 1878 Act provided for 3 classes of forests: Reserved Forests (RFs) consisting of compact and valuable areas with total state control that either extinguished private rights or transferred elsewhere; Protected Forests (PFs) that were also controlled by the state, rights were recorded but not settled; and Village Forests.

Control was firmly established by outlining detailed provisions for reserving trees as and when they became commercially valuable and for closing forests whenever required to grazing and fuel wood collection. Given increased commercial demand, PFs were gradually converted into RFs. Thus 36,000 sq km of state forests in 1878 became 143,000 sq km of PFs by 1890 that became about 208,384 sq km by 1900.

The 1927 Act also provided for village forests but was similarly draconian. Section

28 of the Indian Forest Act of 1927 stated, "The Provincial Government may assign to any village community the rights of the government over any land which has been constituted a reserved forest that may cancel such assignments. All forests so assigned shall be called village forests." But the government conveniently avoided exercising the option.

Thus, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the forests of rural communities were continuously reserved and nationalised while the rights of the villagers eroded through a series of legal actions.

Jaundiced View

Even after independence, the government perceived users of community forests as the driving force behind deforestation. Ancestral rights and usufructs (the right to use or enjoy something) granted under earlier colonial agreements and settlement arrangements were viewed as overly generous concessions and privileges. According to the 1952 National Forest Policy, "The accident of a village being situated close to a forest does not prejudice the right of the country as a whole to receive the benefits of a national asset."

The disapproval of the concessions to local forest users reverberates through numerous government reports in the 1970s and 1980s, each of which insists that a tightening of the usufructory rights is essential to save the forests for national interests. By 1980 nearly 23% of India's land area was under state management while the rights and the management roles of an estimated 300 million rural resource users had become increasingly vague.

Although nearly a quarter of India's land

mass was designated as forests, only half had reasonably good forest cover. In 1980 the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) was passed to emphasise the social and ecological importance of these critical resources. The 1980 Act placed controls on logging while also recognising community needs. But that was just lip service.

In fact environmental concerns often imposed further limitations on community rights. As government agencies exerted more and more control over forests communities, who had used these lands to meet basic needs of food, fuel, building materials, fibre and medicine, increasingly lost access. As rights eroded, conflicts grew and disagreements over management aspects led to unsustainable patterns of forest exploitation and gradual degradation. By 1990 only about 9% of India had good forest cover.

People's Participation

Hope came when the 1988 Indian National Forest Policy and the 1990 Joint Forest Management (JFM) Resolution combined with some 16 state-level resolutions and government orders began reshaping the policy environment, acknowledging the need to give greater rights and authority to community groups.

The national guideline to support JFM begins by stating, "The National Forest Policy 1988 envisages people's involvement in the development and protection of forests. The requirements of fuelwood, fodder and small timber for house building material of the tribals and other villages living in and near the forests are to be treated as first charge on forest produce. The policy document envisages it as one of the essentials of Forest Management that the forest communities should be motivat-

ed to identify with the development and protection of forests from which they derive benefits."

However the legal modesty of the wording of the resolution and the reluctance of the forest department to grant greater rights to forest protection groups has ensured that forests remain under the proprietorship of the state. Access to and use of forests by local communities is by the good graces of the state rather than flowing from the recognition of latent community rights.

The national and state notifications share some common points that include the following:

- All resolutions provide user groups with usufruct rights only
- Tenurial period of usufruct is not mentioned
- Forests are not leased or allocated
- Village level committees to operate under supervision of the forest department
- Limited community management and benefits to degraded lands

Ground Realities

Despite all the provisions of JFM and all the hue and cry of participatory decision-making, nothing of all this actually happened as is clear from the statement of the forest ranger to Mangal, with which we started this article. Foresters continue to nurture imperial and colonial views and consider communities as vermin who do not understand anything of forests. They feel that it is the whole and sole duty of the forest department to protect forests. I have witnessed truckloads of good quality timber leaving from weekly *haats* (markets) aided and abetted by the very same officials.

Some of our interventions like *tasar* sericulture are not new in forests but practiced for centuries. Of course Pradan has facilitated the modification in traditional technology that has resulted in the intensification of the activity. We now need to scientifically examine the sustainability of this activity.

Section 1.5 of the Applications of Forest Conservation Act of 1980 clearly endorses *tasar* activities inside forests. It states, "Tasar cultivation in forest areas by the tribals as means of livelihood without undertaking monocultural *asan* or *arjun* plantations shall be treated as forestry activity. No prior approval of the central government under the Act is necessary."

Unfortunately, not much has changed from the colonial view of conservation that forests could only be saved through the authoritarian manner of foresters. They also believed that nature left to itself degenerates. Human beings who lived close to nature were seen as a threat. Forest officers believed that they had to police the forest to protect it from the 'primitives' who lived there.

Their relationship has always been of antagonism rather than cooperation. This attitude prevented them from learning to work together towards protecting forests. This view continues to hold good despite a number of resolutions at the higher echelons of forest departments. In the forest, the ranger still proclaims himself as the lord and master!



Promoting Goat Rearing

Rearing goats with an improved package of practices could provide additional income to poor families

Sanjeev Kumar

Rearing goats (*Capra hiscus*) has helped the poor in their struggle for survival throughout India. This is especially true in semi arid regions like Rajasthan. The fact that poorer sections of people in villages and small towns rear goats makes its contribution more significant.

The goat is often called the poor man's cow because it can adapt to marginal resource conditions. Goats survive efficiently on available shrubs and trees in adverse environments and in low fertility areas where few crops can grow. It is also called a 'poor man's bank' or 'insurance' as it provides a source of ready cash to the family in times of need.

Underestimated Contribution

The goat's contribution to rural and national economy tends to be underestimated because goat products seldom enter a formal marketing system. Further, goats are kept by poorer people and are tended by women. Both these sections of the population seldom have a voice in national forums.

Goat rearing continues with old, primitive and low technology. Popular biases and apathy has led to a general feeling against the rearing of goats. It has been wrongly accused of destroying

the environment and prejudices have been built against them. Promoting goat rearing as a livelihood activity, however, has both advantages and disadvantages (See Box 1).

Present Scenario

According to a survey we carried out in 20 villages in Dausa in Rajasthan, goats are reared by 2 sets of people in 2 different ways (See Box 2 on page 14). Around 70% of the people rear 1-7 goats. The rest maintain more than 10 goats. The herd size might even go up to 100 in some cases.

In case of people who maintain a few goats it is mostly the women and children who take care of the animals. Those who rear 10 or more goats allocate one person in the family entirely to the activity. This person, usually a man, also migrates seasonally to hilly areas to graze the herd. The concentration of goats is always high in hilly areas. Goats in the mountains are also of good quality due to the ample feed available. The second set of rearers usually builds an enclosure for the goats and a small goat shed.

Both sets of rearers resort to free grazing to feed their goats. The only difference is the distance of grazing places from the house and the person responsible for

grazing the goats. People who rear 1-2 goats take the animals to their own field or nearby areas beside roads and village paths. Those with more than 2 goats to graze go to village common lands or open fields at a distance from home.

In these cases we see that school-going children herd the goats to a nearby field once they return from school in the evening. The children play and keep an eye on the goats. In such cases, a family and the children in particular, develop an emotional bonding with the goats. They generally feed the animal supplementary concentrates to maintain quality. Family members consume the milk and male kids are sold. In families with more than 2 goats, women take the animals to grazing areas in the morning and evening.

Constraints of Open Grazing

The present trend of unplanned grazing of goats on shrinking grazing lands has reached a scale where further load of grazing animals cannot meet feed requirements. Since grazing lands are increasingly encroached and degradation is on the rise, the problem of grazing is becoming intense. Most of the families Pradan wishes to work with rear 1-7 goats. If these families have to graze their animals away from their homestead lands, it would add to the burden and drudgery of the women, thus threatening an assured livelihood source for the poor.

Besides, grazing on barren lands with very little vegetation cover leads to under nourishment of the goats, delaying conception, reducing milk yield and produc-

Box 1: Advantages and disadvantages of promoting goat rearing as a livelihood activity

Advantages

- The initial investment requirement is low (fixed cost remains low).
- Docility of animals reduces management problem and general fear of hurting in case of changed ownership and transport.
- Goats are prolific breeders and inter-kidding period and gestation period is low so flocks build up quickly.
- Risk remains quite low in comparison to bigger livestock in drought prone areas. Risk is spread since the number of units is more.
- Both male and female kids have equal value in contrast to cows and buffaloes.
- Goats can live on a wide variety of thorny bushes and fibrous feeds.
- Goat milk has therapeutic values, has smaller fat globules, has anti allergic value and has proved effective in curing gastrointestinal problems in children. Its marketability needs to be promoted.
- Goat rearing is suitable to small or marginal

landholders with low fertility lands.

- Every part of goat is marketed and scope of cottage industries based on meat and processed milk (cheese) is ample.

Disadvantages

- Susceptibility to broncho-pneumonia and internal parasites leading to high mortality.
- Susceptibility to predators.
- Small value makes formal credit system disinterested.
- Small value makes insurance system difficult to administer.
- Appropriate technologies for field needs to be developed.
- Supporting sectors of input supply (pelleted feed, quality animals, healthcare) and marketing parameters are least developed.
- Goat milk as a product has remained unacceptable to city dwellers and many preconceived notions are prevailing.

Box 2: Comparative study of present system of goat rearing in Dausa

Parameters	System I	System II
Herd Size	1 to 7.	10 to 100.
Family Profile	Poorest set of families with women and children engaged in goat rearing (mostly SCs).	Gujjars with agriculture background.
Purpose of rearing	Household milk consumption and partial employment.	Full employment of a person in a combined family.
Feeding System	Nearby grazing and concentrate feeding.	Seasonal migration to hilly areas or relatives in such areas, little or no concentrate feeding.
Breeding System	Do not keep buck, Either underage male kids born of goats are used or services are taken of buck of a large herd keeper.	Keeps one or two bucks along with the herd.
Healthcare	Traditional medicines, sometimes call herdsman for consultation and medicine.	Keeps 2-3 medicines - Dewormer (albendazole, neilworm), Oxytetracyclin, Himalay battisa, syringe.
Quality of Animals	Focus on milk yield (1-2 Goats), so quality is good.	Mixed quality of good and below quality animals.
Marketing	Grownup kids of 6-12 months are sold.	Generally younger kids are sold at one go in a year. Seasonal milk selling to dairy cooperative milk collection centres.

tive performance. This leads to a vicious cycle of reduced investment and reduced returns in the activity.

There are other disadvantages of open grazing. For one, it leads to endoparasitic infestation and mortality. As the animals graze on the same land every day, infestation of ecto and endoparasites from grazing lands becomes uncontrollable. The infection of diseases from other ill managed animals of the village spreads to all animals.

To avoid this, even sick or ill animals have to walk long distances that increases stress. Secondly, such a system encourages lackadaisical management practices. Proper feed intake and problem diagnosis

goes unheeded in such a system. Even breeding cannot be controlled in such a system and inferior bucks to serve goats reduce herd quality.

We have seen from our survey that goat rearing has been a traditional activity by our target families but the scale has been quite low. The open grazing system has restricted women-led families (where males migrate to nearby cities for wage labour) to take up goat rearing as a business venture.

For the women, the greatest difficulty is in terms of fulfilling household responsibilities and taking the goats to distant areas for grazing. Their quality of life has been adversely affected

in the process. Also, undernourished goats have a poor milk yield and reduced reproductive performance. This leads to cyclic rotation of low investment in feeding of goats. Besides, milk production is not considered a good venture since opportunities to sell milk are limited.

Proposed Goat Rearing Model

Considering these factors, we have conceived a modified way of rearing quality goats under stall-fed conditions and setting up a cooperative institution to support input and output linkages to generate better and sustainable profitability in the activity (See Box 3 on page 16). We plan to provide 5-10 quality goats of Sirohi, Jakhrana or Barbari breeds to selected poor families. Quality is defined as an animal yielding at least 1.5 litres of milk per day. The details of the intervention are described below.

Housing Goats

Based on field observations and discussion with experts, we have designed a shed for goats that costs around Rs 7,500. The design of the shed ensures cross ventilation. A fenced area outside the covered shed would help free movement of the animals. We have designed a wooden feeding turf for feeding concentrate and dry fodder. A plastic pot containing fresh water is kept at a suitable height inside the shed so that the animals have easy access to water.

Feeding

Goats require dry matter that is 3% of their body weight. Urea treated straw moistened with molasses has been selected as one regular ingredient to be fed to adult animals. We have formulated

our own concentrate and results have been good. We are in the process of negotiating with a pelleted feed making company to prepare feed for goats. On an average, 0.3 to 0.5 kg of pelleted feed will be given to lactating mothers and goats in advance pregnancy.

We also plan to cultivate green fodder with landholding farmers. The traditional Rabi fodder is ranjaka and kasani (legumes), which has high protein value good for goats. We plan to promote extensive dhaincha (legume) cultivation in the Kharif season next year.

Besides these, tree leaves (neem and desi babool) are good fodder. We also plan to promote seasonal grazing in the farmer's fields. Our goat rearing groups will take up plantation on private and common lands as a long-term strategy. We have also envisaged planned grazing on plot-wise developed pastureland as a model of grazing land management.

Breeding

We expect that stall-feeding will reduce the chance of goats being bred by indiscriminate and unwanted bucks. We have envisaged a community (of goat rearers) owned system of breeding in our model where one buck will be purchased and reared for every 50 does of reproductive age (10 rearers in general). The buck will be maintained on a cooperative basis and services will be available on a charge through paid coupons.

The sudden introduction of a buck in a herd would lead to a 'buck effect' (problem in synchronising reproductive heats in does) during the kidding season. Since it is uneconomical to keep bucks

Box 3: Package of practices for proposed model of stall-feeding

Practice	Recommended Description	Service Delivery Mechanism
Breed	Barbary, Sirohi or mixed with at least 1 litre milk yield and giving twins.	Bank loan with unit rate of Rs 2,000 per doe.
Number of Animals	5 to 10 does with 7 to 8 kids.	Quality animal purchase from nearby area, group visit and purchase through contact person.
Housing and Sanitation	Designed house with enough ventilation and covered space.	Bank loan for goat house construction on priority basis.
Feeding	Designed wooden feeding turf, drinking water on high platform, pelleted concentrate feeds, urea treated straw feeding and green fodder and tree leaves, cut and carry process.	Bank loan for feeding turf, bulk procurement of pelleted concentrate feeds, storage of treated straw, inter farmer growing and selling of green fodder and trees, tree plantation on private wasteland.
Health Management	Routine preventive practices of vaccination, de-worming, castration, dipping. Regular observation of ectoparasites and faecal report for endoparasites.	Medicine kit to paravet for general treatment and routine healthcare. Centralised diagnostic lab facility.
Breeding	Procurement of quality proven buck from institutions and kept by selected individual, parallel AI system for meat goat production.	Services will be paid through coupons.
Insurance	Group insurance with waiving of post mortem report in death cases for forfeiting claim.	Trained paravet to get the claim.
Marketing	On live body weight of male kids, value addition in goat milk.	Block level goat rearers cooperative.

for individual does, we want to ensure the development of quality genotype by introducing a parallel artificial insemination system. This will be developed as an alternative with special focus for producing animals for mutton.

Health and Insurance

We have ensured that there is one trained paravet in every village or villages with over 50 goat rearers (average 250 adult goats). The paravet is trained to look after routine healthcare and maintain records. They are expected to make daily visits to the goat rearers' home in the morning and evening to

observe hygiene and health of animals and record milk production.

We have established a centralised veterinary support with testing laboratory facility at Dausa. The veterinarian is supposed visit every village fortnightly with a paravet. A medicine kit has been provided (containing 18 medicines) to every paravet so that he is able to give first aid treatment in the village. Additionally, every group of goat rearers has taken a group insurance policy. The insurance company has waived the condition of post mortem report in settling death claims.

Marketing

Although the market for goat meat is increasing and demand outstrips supply, mechanisms to determine prices and rates have not yet been standardised. But it is a fact that goats can always be sold. The nearby goat markets at Balaheri and Jaipur have the capacity of selling over 2,000 male kids every week. Besides, Delhi has a huge market.

We had envisaged selling male kids on live bodyweight. The price may be determined on the quality of male kids (graded in 3 categories) and body weight. The off-season (summer and monsoons) and peak season prices may be determined based on market meat rate.

Based on field observations, we have concluded that half the existing retail price is a good rate for live body weight of male kids. During Id and the winter season rates increase by 10-20%. We have also thought of a cooperative owned meat shop at Dausa and Jaipur in the long term.

Similarly, we plan to sell goat milk to dairy cooperatives on a fat content basis. But since goat milk is not acceptable by definition, we had conceived an idea of producing and selling cheese made from goat milk. We are exploring a collaboration with the National Dairy Research Institute for training on cheese making and are also exploring linkages for cheese marketing.

Goat Rearers' Cooperative

To promote all the above-mentioned linkages and to work on wider issues in the interest of goat rearers, we plan to promote a goat rearers' cooperative at Dausa. The cooperative will be a block level institution with membership to all common interest groups (CIGs) and self-help groups

(SHGs) having certain specified characteristics of group and business parameters.

The goat rearers' cooperative will take care of procuring inputs in bulk and supplying these to the CIGs and SHGs to supply to their members. The cooperative will promote and brand goat milk in small pouches, procure and make cheese and develop linkages with the market.

The cooperative will purchase male kids (on live body weight basis) and sell these in bulk at competitive rates, thus providing an assured market to producers. The cooperative will also keep records of saleable milking does with its members and pass such information to purchasers, who could either be members or outsiders, on a fixed charge. It will hold annual goat and kid competitions to select quality goats and promote better rearing practices. It will also act as training agency for new members.

Write in NewsReach

Confused?
Caught in a dilemma?
Want to share your questions?
Done something differently?
Write in NewsReach.
Did an article strike a chord within you?
Do you disagree with something you have read?
Would you like to share your experiences with the writer?
Or ask her or him a question or two?
Send your responses to articles in this issue to promote the exchange of views at pradhanho@ndb.vsnl.net.in

Consolidating through Clusters

Cluster associations of 10-12 adjoining self-help groups could serve important functions that are not possible by individual groups

Sukanta Sarkar

The creation of people's institutions at different levels is crucial to address issues of powerlessness and isolation. It is widely acknowledged that if people from similar socio-economic strata and involved in similar kind of activities come together, they can be of use to each other. The seeds of the concept of cluster association-level institutions for self-help groups (SHGs) originate from this understanding.

Experiences in the field have also led us to think on similar lines. Often while interacting with SHGs we come across women talking of similar issues that groups are unable to address individually. We also come across problems that groups could help each other to solve.

These observations have led us to promote a forum where members of different groups interact with each other and share resources. Such a forum additionally provides women a feeling of being part of a larger whole, a collective of SHGs. This boosts their confidence, creates a platform to face and deal with the world and broadens their horizon.

Forum for Mutual Support

SHGs face different operational problems in their day-to-day functioning. They tend to depend on the promoting institu-

tion for the resolution of such problems. Left unresolved, these might even affect the growth of the SHGs. Sometimes it hampers regular functioning and increases tension in the group. Such problems at the initial stages of formation may even may lead to breakdown of members' faith in the SHG.

More mature SHGs, who have a system of regularly interacting with newer groups, could help them learn to solve problems while gaining hands-on experience. For instance, groups in Mathadih village had a problem with their accountant. The women felt the accountant was taking advantage of his situation (he was the only literate person in the village) and asking for unduly high payments. Group members from the neighbouring Jaungi village came forward and arranged for their accountant to work for more moderate remuneration.

In situations where group members are unable to resolve a dispute between themselves, they have no mechanism on which they can bank upon. It is often difficult for the promoting institution to get the message and address it timely. Providing such support continually is also not our mandate. Groups need to function autonomously. This becomes more difficult as the groups grow in number. Here group members from neighbouring

villages could be of great help.

Members of the same community are often in an advantageous position to resolve some disputes, as villagers are more comfortable sharing their problems with other village women rather than in front of a promoting institution like Pradan. For example, the cashier of a group tried to grab group money by spreading a rumour that the money was stolen at night. It was however not the case. But the group was unable to do anything. So they took the matter up in the cluster association association. Cluster association members took initiative and created pressure on that cashier and it worked.

Cluster associations also play an important role in linking with external agencies. This is particularly true in the case of opening bank accounts. The cluster association meeting is one place where members come to know of groups willing to open bank accounts. Accordingly, groups who already have some rapport in a bank help newer groups open their accounts. The rules and regulations of opening of bank accounts are discussed in the meeting. Groups do not have to depend on the promoting institution, and are able to deal with the process themselves.

Similarly, liaisoning with external agencies is another area where newer groups are often hesitant. This is where the help of mature SHGs counts. For example, some groups have developed good rapport with their local bank branches because of their sound financial discipline. So the bank manager does not hesitate to open accounts for other groups on their recommendation. In case of credit linkages, managers sometimes seek information from good groups.

Forum for Mutual Learning

The SHG cluster association acts as an important forum for learning. It regularly helps a group to learn new things and implement it. For example, initially the idea of rotating responsibilities (group tasks such as who will keep the cash box, the books of accounts and the key to the cash box) each week was not acceptable to the groups. It seemed complicated. A few older groups then shared their positive experiences that helped others to adopt it. Listening to such analysis and critique of systems from an older member helps new members develop confidence and accept new practices.

Similarly, groups are initially hesitant to accept weekly interest payments, or to link with banks. They are apprehensive of the repayment process and its implications. Learning about the experiences of mature groups also helps the newer groups reach out to various other programmes. For instance, when members share experiences of other livelihood - related programmes such as paddy and vaccination of cattle, members from nearby groups came forward to take it up and further spread the message.

Forum for Interface

This forum also acts as an interface between external agencies and SHGs. It provides large numbers of poor women access to external agencies such as banks and government offices. We have found that these officials often take this opportunity to make the groups aware of the different schemes, at the same time taking help of these women to implement their schemes successfully.

For example, we have observed bank branches that have successfully imple-

mented the SHG-Bank linkage programme with regular help from cluster association, either to increase the number of linkages or to ensure repayment. Similarly, cluster associations help block officials implement their programmes such as pulse polio, mid-day meal schemes, etc.

One example is the branch manager of Dadpur branch from Bank of India, who attended a cluster association meeting at Bedna in order to motivate more groups to borrow from the banks. At the same time he informed the cluster association about some groups whose repayment was not satisfactory. In the Rasoiya Dhamna cluster association meeting, members asked the chairman of Hazaribag Kshetriya Gramin Bank to reduce the interest rate and to allow some gestation period before repayment.

Forum for Solidarity

A cluster association also acts as a forum for inter-SHG solidarity. When members of 10-15 SHGs share a common forum regularly, it creates a bond. They start sharing interests and feelings with each other, building trust and confidence in each other.

At this stage, members start acting in unison. They start using this forum to influence the external world to turn it to their favour. Members start participating in panchayats and other decision-making meetings in villages. Sometimes they challenge the authority against injustice.

For example, women SHG members from the Chandwara cluster association discussed in a cluster association meeting that work in the newly formed block at Chandwara had come to a grinding halt. They decided to petition the block development officer. They also decided to involve other cluster associations of the

same block. They informed the local MLA. This joint initiative worked to a certain extent. We can therefore see that the concept of cluster associations could be introduced to sustain the growth of SHGs and to achieve significance in the area.

Definitions and Principles

A cluster association is an association of 10-12 SHGs situated within a radius of 2 km. Each group sends 3 members to cluster association meetings. A cluster association meets once in a month.

There are certain principles recommended while forming cluster associations of SHGs. The number of SHGs has been kept to 10-12 in order to make a group of 30-35 members (10-12 groups x 3 members per group) where members get enough time to discuss various topics. The size of 30-35 members is suitable so that the women listen to each other.

The SHG members of a cluster association should be close enough to meet regularly. The meeting place should be convenient where members from each group can walk to in a reasonable time. Sometimes members from other groups visit a particular village to address issues. This will be difficult if the groups are distant from each other. Another important reason for being geographically close is to arrange meetings within short notice in case of emergencies. Such proximity also helps them to share common resources such as service providers or bankers.

The '3-member' principle is to see that every SHG is represented strongly. It ensures that at least 2 are able to attend at any point of time. Groups change their representatives every year. This is to provide growth opportunities to all members in a

group. It does not burden any member for a long time. A group then does not become dependent on a few members only.

Functions and Stages

With increased understanding of cluster associations, we have envisaged certain activities that it should perform independently to function as a viable forum. The activities include:

- Regular meetings
- Setting and enforcing norms
- Reporting SHG performance in cluster association meetings
- Plans to help various groups
- Discussion and help on bank linkage
- Addressing social issues
- Organising cluster association *adhivesan* and participating in annual *mahadhivesan*

A sequence of steps is required to form and stabilise cluster associations (See Box 1 on page 22). These are discussed below.

Pre-formation: This involves discussing the idea of forming a cluster association with probable SHGs, stressing the importance of meeting together and giving the example of a nearby cluster association (if any).

Member interaction: Some women from each member SHG interact with each other. They discuss various topics and come to know that they have common experiences and concerns.

Formation: The same members meet regularly and develop group feeling. They decide who the member groups are. There are discussions around when and where to meet, how many members, etc. They gradually establish a structure for interactions. During this initial stage, members from dif-

ferent villages build rapport with each other, feel at ease to share various issues with each other.

Setting norms: Norms are set for systematic functioning of the forum. These include systems for meetings, procedures, timings, rules to control aberrant behaviour, membership fees, etc.

Stabilisation: Groups start learning from each other and cluster association members take initiatives to solve the problems of different groups

Growth: This is the time when a cluster association becomes able to perform some higher order activities like negotiation with banks for opening bank accounts or for credit linkage or address social issues and other village level developmental issues. The cluster association becomes sustainable at this stage.

The financial role of a cluster association has not yet been visualised since it may hamper its role of addressing other developmental issues. Channelising money through cluster associations has critical implications on accounts. This might be difficult for cluster association members to control, given the existing literacy level. Also, creating an interface between financial institutions and the groups to avail money may encourage vested interests among the cluster association members, which in turn may effect the solidarity among members. We should continue to promote SHGs as independent financial institutions. The groups may take the advice of a cluster association if they face any problem.

We have found that promoting a forum in a reasonable vicinity of 10-12 SHGs

Box1: Different Stages of a Cluster

Stage	Time	Role of Professional	Tools / Methods
Pre-formation	2 meetings per group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give the idea of cluster ● Help the members to visualise the importance of cluster of SHGs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selected group members visit 'good' or 'mature' cluster
Member interaction	4-6 meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Help them to see the opportunity to learn from each other ● Help the members to realise their common agendas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participatory discussion
Formation	3-4 meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct meeting regularly ● Help the members to know each other ● Help them to develop as a group ● Create environment where members feel free to discuss everything 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Games on strength of a group ● Exercises on group tasks
Setting norms	2 -4 meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Help the members set norms for effective functioning of the forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take help from mature clusters
Stabilisation	8-10 meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Structure the discussion ● Help members to discuss and solve problems ● Motivate members to act on problems shared by others ● Find out common agendas and prepare action plan ● Highlight & analyse successes and failures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exposure to mature clusters ● Invite experienced cluster leader in cluster meetings
Growth	10-12 meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase the knowledge base of the members ● Technical know-how ● Legalities of different steps etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exposure to successful initiatives ● Trainings on bank linkages, Panchayati Raj, different welfare programmes of government ● Information on women's rights and laws

enables all the groups to help each other. Besides the cluster association, group members are also meeting otherwise in the weekly bazaar and in other places. So once they start acting together as a group, they interact on those issues at other places also. Proximity of groups helps people to

relate with each other. This generally helps them in making decisions judiciously. As the decisions become sound, the probability of success and viability of the forum also increases.



UPDATES

Imp-Act Survey Completed

Pradan has taken up an impact assessment study under the Imp-Act Project. Dr Naila Kabeer of IDS, Sussex and Dr Helzi Noponen have helped in designing, structuring and executing this study. It quantitatively assesses the impact of Pradan's self-help group (SHG) programme on members.

The survey of a randomly selected sample of 500 respondents was completed on October 23, 2003 in Jharkhand and Bihar. The survey team covered the Katoria and Bounsi blocks of Banka district in Bihar and Sariyahat, Poriyahat and Sundarpahari blocks of Godda district in Jharkhand.

Four hundred of the respondents were woman members of Pradan-promoted SHGs. The remaining 100 were non-members - women neither covered under any Pradan programme nor aware of Pradan's intervention.

The survey team consisted of Neelam Maheshwari and Sumita Kasana from Pradan, and Suparna Bhattacharjee, currently pursuing her PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. They were assisted by 12 local field investigators. The team was field-trained by Dr Noponen for 6 days (August 23-28). The survey was conducted between September 6 and October 23. The final report, to be prepared after the survey data is analysed by Dr Kabeer and Dr Noponen, is expected to be ready by February 2004.

CIDA to withdraw from India

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will withdraw its aid programme from India. This was announced by the Canadian International Co-operation Minister, Susan Whelan in Ottawa on October 17, 2003, according to a report published in the Globe and Mail. Ms Whelan has decided to remove India from the list of countries that receive what is known as bilateral foreign aid from Canada. About \$28-million will be cut from Canadian aid to India, which currently runs at \$61-million a year. A slew of social and environmental projects will be phased out. The effect will be to sharply curtail an aid relationship that is more than 50 years old and which at one time symbolised the desire of Canadians to help the world's poor.

Projects funded by CIDA will not be replaced when they are finished and the \$28-million a year currently spent on them will be reallocated. The only Canada to India aid left will be money provided through global institutions such as the World Bank (\$18-million a year) and matching grants for projects initiated by private agencies and institutions (\$15 million).



PEOPLE, NEWS AND EVENTS

- Pradan has been awarded a certificate of appreciation from the Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA). The award is for commendable work in the area of soybean development. The annual award function was held on November 8, 2003 at Indore. Ashok Kumar received the award on behalf of Pradan. Congratulations to the Vidisha team.

- Smita Mohanty participated in the first 'Beyond Business' Round Table on the subject of recruitment on September 27, 2003. The forum intends to provide a platform for select corporates and non-profit organisations to share their current practices through structured discussion. Participants were from Hughes India Ltd, Convergys, Snehi, CARE, Udyan Care, Pradan and Beyond Business. Beyond Business is an initiative of the Delhi Chapter of the National HRD Network.

- Manas Satpathy attended the review meeting of the Central India Initiative of the IWMI TATA programme on September 26, 2003 in New Delhi.

- Sixteen Pradan professionals with 7 or more years of experience attended the first phase of the 'Gender and Sustainable Development' programme at Kesla from October 8-11, 2003. Abha Bhaiya and Kalyani Menon-Sen, both well-known gender trainers, facilitated the programme.

- Thirteen participants attended the first

phase of a 3-phase Field Guides' Development Programme held in New Delhi between October 31 and November 1, 2003. Deepankar Roy and Ramesh Gahloda facilitated the programme.

- Kuntalika and Avijit, based in Balarampur in Purulia, had a baby boy on September 17. Nirmal and Prativa, based at Palkot in Gumla, had a baby girl on October 19. Congratulations to the new parents.

- Rajeev Baranwal resigned from Pradan in October 2003 to join NABARD. He was based at Dholpur in Rajasthan and had been on long leave for 6 months. We wish him success.

- We welcome Sunil Sakure, Executive (Projects) at Kesla, in Madhya Pradesh.

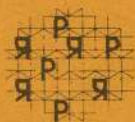
- Binod Dahal, based at Godda in Jharkhand, and Alok Gupta, based in Kesla, Madhya Pradesh, have gone on long leave to prepare for higher studies.

- Pradan's Executive Committee met in New Delhi from October 13-16, 2003.

- Pradan's consultative forum met at Kesla, Madhya Pradesh from October 28-31, 2003. The group reviewed projects and programmes mid-term and set plans for the next 6 months.



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.



PRADAN [Professional Assistance for Development Action]
3 CSC, Niti Bagh, New Delhi 110 049, India
Tel/fax: 011 2651 8619/2651 4682
email: pradhanho@vsnl.com