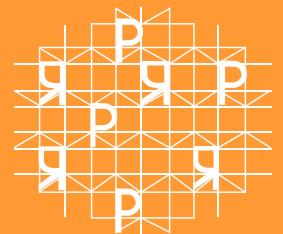
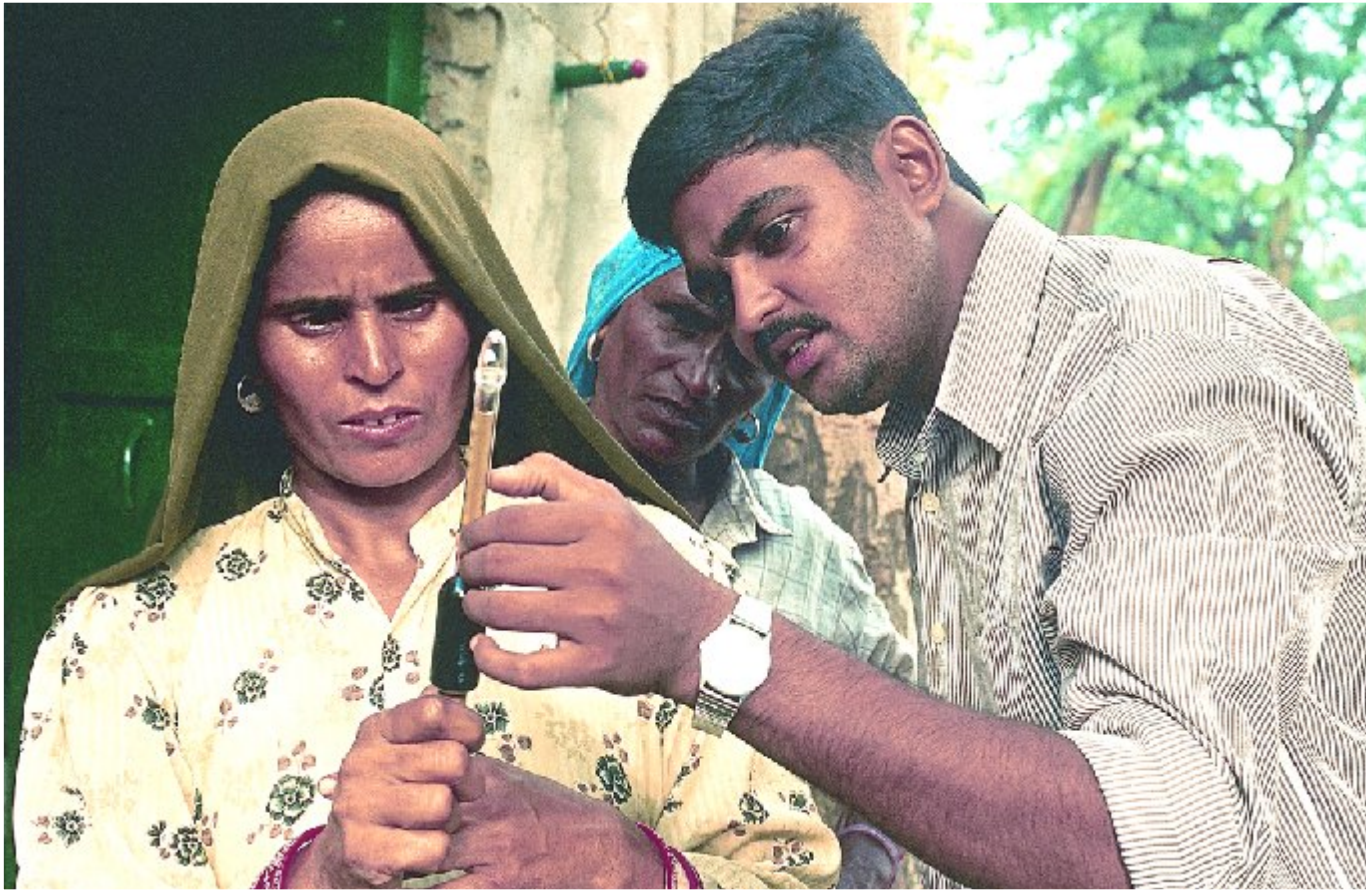


# Mapping the Journeys and Impact of the PRADAN Alumni

A Tracer Study (2011-12)





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# Acknowledgements and Foreword

We would like to express our gratitude to Nivedita Narain and Smita Mohanty for the invitation to design and conduct PRADAN's first 'alumni' tracer study. *For purposes of this report, we have defined 'alumni' as those individuals who joined PRADAN after completing its in-house one-year Development Apprenticeship programme, and who have now exited PRADAN after a period of engagement as development professionals with the organisation.*

The study grew into a one-year 'listening journey' during which Start Up! interviewed 46 alumni and conducted an online survey of an additional 117 alumni. We also held conversations with 8 team leaders and directors of PRADAN (whom we allude to as the 'constant gardeners' in this report) who have, on an average, spent 15+ years in the organisation and who have played a central role in sculpting its institutional trajectory.

The tracer study shed crucial insights on how talent from India's colleges and universities can be channeled in the important task of nation building; how technically-proficient youth can engage with, and imagine, concepts of citizenship, as they make their way through large zones of the country that are 'voiceless' on the one hand, and sites of intense ideological, economic, and political combat, on the other hand.

As we unpacked the above themes, our conversations opened up multiple windows on the emotional competencies that young professionals need to engage in social change and, as a natural progression, in their own personal transformation. The alumni articulated these competencies as empathy, resilience, interdependence, adaptability, and the ability to be constant learners. Structured academia had sent them out into the world with gifts of technical acumen and expertise. But it took an institution like PRADAN to provide them with the context, support, and the mentorship critical to honing in, and bringing forth, the emotional agency to engage and act with the rural poor.

For over 29 years, PRADAN has connected with young professionals and assisted them to create their own learning trajectories. Every alum has built her or his own skill sets through immersion and praxis—through the wisdom and largesse of rural communities; through everyday experiments and acts of problem solving; and through small wins and crushing setbacks. As also, by drawing from dialogic duels with peers, and through self-reflection on the interconnectedness of one's identity and that of the rural poor. This is the stuff of 'active' citizenship!





**Top:** Alumnus Nirmal Beura with horticulture farmers and a mango expert. **Above:** Alumnus Soumik Banerjee engaged in a discussion with the Paharia community.

PRADAN's trajectory and endurance in building strong talent pools has not been bereft of challenges, mistakes, and continuous iteration. Maintaining a tenuous balance between scale and task-orientation on the one hand, and with nurturance, training and people-orientation on the other hand, has been a non-negotiable for the PRADAN leadership. This, the leadership team admits, is akin to daily acts of tightrope walking.

For all these reasons, PRADAN stands tall as a veritable 'school' for emerging and growth-stage civil society organisations and social ventures that are working with the rural poor in far-flung areas of the country, and for whom, access and retention of talent is an intractable challenge.

The spirit and dynamism of this report came from the PRADAN alumni. All of them were generous with their time, despite their choc-a-bloc travel schedules. They welcomed the chance to participate in the project and brought large amounts of enthusiasm to it. At times, we struggled with issues of connectivity with the alumni, as several work in near-inaccessible areas of the country with unpredictable telephone connections.

We would especially like to thank all members of PRADAN's human relations team. The meticulous data entry support provided by Ramneek Panesar and Shweta Kanungo provided pace and energy to the project.

Our role in this research study was that of a listener and learner. We hope that we have been able to capture and do justice to the resilience, spirit, and ear-on-the-ground wisdom of PRADAN's alumni community. ■

**On Behalf of the Start Up! Team,**

**Manisha Gupta | Saloni Gupta | Swati Awasthy | Arundhati Ray | Kalpana Kaul**

**September 2012**

## Introduction

PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action) is a leading NGO<sup>1</sup> that partners with the rural poor to build the latter's access to sustainable income opportunities. To date, PRADAN has successfully reached out to over 300,000 families in 4,792 villages in the seven central and eastern Indian states in which it works.

PRADAN's programmatic strategies include:

- Promotion and nurturance of women's groups to enhance their capabilities and leverage institutional finances for members' livelihoods.
- Development and introduction of locally suitable economic activities to increase incomes.
- Mobilisation of finances for livelihood assets and infrastructure development.
- Setting up of mechanisms to sustain the livelihood gains made by communities.

PRADAN's pioneering approach to poverty reduction is driven by its unique idea of harnessing India's young talent for grassroots social change work. Since its very inception in 1983, the organisational mandate of involving Indian youth for nation building translated into the recruitment of committed and empathetic professionals and graduates/post-graduates, whom PRADAN trained as development professionals through guided practice. The evolution of these highly intense apprenticeships matched that of PRADAN's growth, and took on a more structured form in 1990, when it began to be rolled

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<sup>1</sup> Non-governmental organisation.

out as PRADAN's Development Apprenticeship Programme (or, DASHips). In its current avatar, the programme is a more structured and streamlined version of its previous, less formal formats.<sup>2</sup>

Up until 1986, PRADAN placed their in-house trained development professionals in various NGOs. From 1987, it focussed on recruiting a significant number of trainees into its own teams so as to optimise their potential.

PRADAN's repertoire of innovations in natural resource management, agriculture and non-agricultural enterprises is a culmination of the problem-solving brilliance of the organisation's development professionals. India's first Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and community-owned enterprises were sculpted by these very professionals within the dynamic rubric of PRADAN.

## Setting the Context for the Tracer Study

Every year, the DASHip programme casts its net across approximately 50 campuses in India to recruit its annual cohorts of Development Apprentices (DAs). Once the DAs complete the one-year course, they are offered jobs in PRADAN as Executives. Since 1990, PRADAN has identified, trained, and placed more than 1,400 development

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<sup>2</sup> From 1980-1990, PRADAN placed young students as development consultants in voluntary and semi-government organisations. The currency of DASHip, first articulated as 'Development Associates' and then as 'Development Apprentices', was coined in PRADAN in 1990. Between 1990 and 1997, PRADAN's DASHip programme was free flowing, with a focus on learning and experimentation. The period between 1998 and 2005 saw different degrees of structuring of the programme. From 2006, the DASHip initiative, drawing from its considerable learnings, evolved as a highly structured intervention.

## Executive Summary

professionals in the poorest flanks of the country, of which 564 joined PRADAN as Executives.

PRADAN professionals have moved the fields of livelihoods development and natural resource management, either as intrapreneurs (by innovating new methods of agency building within PRADAN), or as entrepreneurs (by going on to setting up field-shaping institutions of social change.

In the years since PRADAN began absorbing its DAs within the organisation, the low turnover rate (<18.5%) of DAs is indicative of the commitment of its professionals to long-term journeys of self growth within the PRADAN rubric.

This also seems to suggest that the organisation's development professionals recognise the value in PRADAN's rigorous on-site training and the opportunity that it accords them to practice their learnings in challenging environments.

In the spring of 2011, Start Up! was commissioned by PRADAN to conduct a tracer study (literally, a study that traces) to map the journeys of those development professionals who joined PRADAN after completing their DAs, and who *have now exited from PRADAN*.

By following their journeys post-PRADAN, the study aimed to correlate the influence of PRADAN's trainings and value systems on these individuals with the impact that they have gone on to create in their professions and organisations. Thus, the study sample was limited to PRADAN professionals who had left the organisation to chart their own paths; for purposes of this report, we will use the word 'alumni' to denote respondents.

The study sought answers to the following questions:

➤ What were the key influencers in PRADAN that shaped its alumni's perspective of poverty and social change?

➤ What were the factors that triggered the departure of professionals from PRADAN?

➤ What new paths did PRADAN's alumni chart as development professionals *after* their exit from the organisation? To what extent can their impact be related to their experiences and insights in PRADAN?

➤ What new modes of professional engagement can be forged between PRADAN and its alumni to foster mutual growth and cross-pollination of ideas and learnings?



Alumnus Nitish Patnaik training community service providers.



## Profile of Study Respondents

The participants of the tracer study well represented the overall profile of PRADAN's total alumni population.

Of the 220 alumni in PRADAN's database, 163 participated in this research. Of these, 46 underwent intensive one-on-one qualitative interviews, and 117 responded through an extensive online survey that was delivered via email.

## Entry Point into PRADAN

117 alumni (74% males; 26% females) participated in the online survey, of which 98% joined PRADAN as Development Apprentices (DAs), and 2%, as Executives.

Of the 46 alumni interviewed (78% males, 22% females), 76% joined PRADAN as DAs. The rest (24%) joined the organisation before PRADAN had scripted its formal DAs programme. Their learning journeys unfurled through different creative formats.

## Role in PRADAN at Time of Exit

Of the 117 alumni who responded to the online survey, 91% of those who had joined as DAs left the organisation as Executives; 4% of those who joined as DAs were working as Team Leaders in PRADAN at the time of their departure from the organisation; and of the 3 persons who had joined



A staff member of a producer collective examining mulberry yarn.

PRADAN as Executives, one was an Executive, the second, a Programme Director, and the third, a Team Leader, at the time of their exit from the organisation.

Across the alumni segment that engaged in the one-on-one interviews, 85% had left PRADAN as Executives.

## Average Duration of Stay of Alumni in PRADAN

Of the 117 online survey participants, 45% had worked in PRADAN for less than 3 years; 38% spent between 3-6 years; 12.8% between 6-10

years; and 4.2% had spent more than 10 years with the organisation.

Of the 46 alumni interviewees, 50% had been with PRADAN for less than 5 years; 28.26% between 5-10 years; 17% more than 10 years; and 4.74% spent over 15 years with the NGO.

## The Journey in PRADAN

### The First Point of Contact with Social Change Processes

Though each individual experienced PRADAN at different points of institutional inflexion and change, all participants of the tracer study unanimously reported that their first year in the organisation was a watershed, and the most positive phase of their personal and professional lives.

For a majority, PRADAN marked their debut in living and learning in rural India. Most had only nominal knowledge of the development sector at the time of joining the organisation. Some had already mapped out different career paths for themselves (in the government, business, or academic research sectors). What they all had in common was that they were attracted by PRADAN's promise of experimentation and of making a difference.

Moreover, there were always exit points available to them to return to their previous careers. This made it easy for the alumni to consider the PRADAN opportunity.

## **The Enablers (or Positive Influencers) in PRADAN**

The study participants prioritised three key clusters or groups of enablers/positive influences that propelled their growth and learning within PRADAN:

- 👉 Working with the community was the highest reported enabler for all participants of the tracer study.
- 👉 The second highest enabler was PRADAN's organisational environment and culture that ensured:
  - ✓ Space and learning for all, which included factors such as the freedom and flexibility to shape programmes and one's own learning.
  - ✓ Spaces for introspection and learning within PRADAN.
  - ✓ Team and peer-support.
  - ✓ Spaces and opportunities for owning the organisation.
  - ✓ Culture of democracy and inclusion.
- 👉 The third highest reported enabler was access to visionary mentors at PRADAN.

## **Challenges Faced by the Alumni PRADAN**

Despite the generational differences between the interviewees and the different lens through which they viewed PRADAN (i.e., their experience of PRADAN at different stages of the organisation's growth, the duration of their stay in the organisation, and the geographical location of their work in PRADAN), respondents of the tracer study were agreed in their identification and prioritisation of the challenges that they experienced during their time in PRADAN.

The highest reported challenges included:

### **Cluster 1**

- a) Limited growth opportunities.
- b) Isolation.

### **Cluster 2**

- a) Work pressures and monotony.
- b) Team and leadership issues.
- c) Limited understanding and support for women.
- d) Financial constraints.

## **Pradan's Impact on Alumni**

The study confirmed that a majority of the alumni today continue to walk on the path of the community-based social impact model that PRADAN had set them on. Consider the following data:

### **Domains of Work**

- 70% of the tracer study participants continue to be proactively engaged with issues of poverty alleviation in areas such as: livelihoods/employability and entrepreneurship development; agricultural innovations; developmental/rural



finance; natural resource management (NRM); and livestock development.

- 19% of the online survey respondents are working in broader domains of social change (i.e., sectors other than livelihoods development and allied areas), and are addressing issues of health, education, women's rights, children's rights, and IT (Information Technology) for development. Though they have branched out into other areas, the skills that they honed in PRADAN enabled them to make this sector shift.
- 12% of the study respondents have launched their own organisations. A majority of this group worked in PRADAN for 0-3 years; the entrepreneurs within PRADAN exited earlier, while the intrapreneurs stayed on to sculpt innovations within the organisation's framework.
- 11% of the online survey respondents are engaged in realms of work that are either unrelated to development or are pursuing higher education. The number of women in this segment is twice as that of men.

## Nature of Organisations

- The largest segment of the alumni who participated in the tracer study is today working in not-for-profit or civil society organisations, followed by the corporate sector. The third largest segment is pursuing higher education. Employment with the government comes in fourth.



Unpacking the intricacies of yarn production with tussar yarn producers.

- The organisations that currently engage the smallest slice of the alumni base are funding agencies (national and international), multilateral and bilateral organisations, and international financial institutions. This reinforces that the bulk of PRADAN's alumni are working close to the ground, with grassroots communities.

## Nature of Work

Regardless of the domain and the kind of organisations that they have chosen to work in, the alumni are engaged in the following work areas, in order of reporting:

- Consulting, organisation development, and training/capacity building in the development space. Clearly, PRADAN's facilitative approach towards team building, intensive HR and training processes, and systems for organisation-wide inclusion have given the alumni tools and how-tos that they have further adapted and polished while offering their services to other such organisations in the field.
- The largest segments of the alumni who are working to directly address issues of poverty, as well as those working in broader fields of development, are engaged in community-based project implementation (23%, and 25%, respectively). This, again, is a journey that they flagged off while at PRADAN.
- Research and writing.
- Policy design, research and advocacy.

### Geographies of Operation

A majority of those who identified geographical isolation as a significant reason for exiting PRADAN, moved to urban locations. However, it was found that their current place of domicile does not indicate their disengagement with grassroots rural communities. Rather, their chosen areas of residence today are primarily urban and peri-urban:

- 81% of the male respondents and 68% of the female respondents today reside in urban areas (Tier 1,2, and 3 cities).
- 6% of the male alumni live in peri-urban areas or *mofussils*<sup>3</sup> (Tier 4 cities).
- 3% of both male and female respondents continue to live in rural areas.

### The Impact of PRADAN on the Alumni

For all alumni, every experience in PRADAN led to indelible impressions and unforgettable lessons on how to engage with poverty and facilitate change—one family, and one village at a time. They reported that their years in PRADAN cemented the foundations of their professional journeys and paved the way for their second curve of work:

- ✓ 7.6% of the online survey respondents and 15.2% of the interviewees reported that PRADAN had fully prepared them for the work that they were currently engaged in and therefore, the changes that they are forging in the development sector.

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<sup>3</sup> Provincial, rural areas in India.

- ✓ 75% of the online survey respondents and 55% of those interviewed said that PRADAN had significantly prepared them for their current work and impact.

- ✓ 16% of the online survey participants and 10% of the interviewed alumni said that they had only been partially prepared/trained by PRADAN for the work that they are currently doing.

**PRADAN's most valuable gift to its alumni has been a set of social change principles. The principles are as follows:**

- ✓ The community is the centre of gravity of all developmental efforts.
- ✓ Change processes are impermanent if they do not build community agency.
- ✓ For change processes to be democratic, the change vehicles (whether individuals or organisations) need to be open, transparent and inclusive.
- ✓ The role of a development professional is to put communities in charge of their own social change processes.

Across the online survey and qualitative interviews, the alumni said that they diligently apply these principles in every aspect of their work, regardless of the sectors (including the corporate and government sectors) in which they are located.

**Net-net, a majority of the alumni recognized that while they had left PRADAN, the values and work culture of PRADAN had not left them.**

## The New Journey: How Different and Fulfilling?

We asked the alumni if they had succeeded in scripting *significant and more fulfilling* professional lives after leaving PRADAN. The answer was a definitive ‘yes’.

A majority of the respondents said that they had successfully created spaces of leadership for themselves and broadened the mandate of their work after leaving PRADAN. For these reasons, their triggers or motivations for leaving PRADAN had been completely met in their new work sites.

More specifically:

- 👍 18% of the online survey respondents said that their motivation/s for leaving PRADAN had been fully met in their current jobs/work engagement.
- 👍 50% of the respondents reported that their motivations for exiting the organisation had been mostly met in their current areas of work.
- 👎 24% reported that their current work only partially satisfied their motives for leaving PRADAN.
- 👎 8% of the respondents said that their reasons and motivation for quitting the organisation had not been met.

## The Impact of the Alumni on PRADAN

It is widely recognized that the PRADAN brand is highly valued both by the government and development sectors of the country. The stories and testimonies of the tracer study reinforce that the PRADAN alumni have had a significant role in building this brand.

With their high-impact work in the external world, deep community connect and strong ethical fibre, the alumni have

always been true brand ambassadors of PRADAN. Taken together, they have opened new windows for the business, government, and CSO sectors to experience and recognise PRADAN’s impact in creating development professionals for the country. Thus, every departure of a professional from PRADAN potentially opens up possibilities of impact in new locations and greater recognition for the organisation.

## Webs of Connection among PRADAN Alumni

The study revealed that the PRADAN alumni have created an informal—yet robust ecosystem—of support among themselves. Consider the range of associations that are forged among the alumni and between PRADAN and the alumni:

- Senior PRADAN personnel are on the governing or advisory boards of organisations established and/or led by the alumni.
- PRADAN provides alumni support that ranges from technical advice, to recommendations to funding agencies, connections to key officials in local and state governments, field visits for their teams, etc.
- Those alumni who are in funding agencies maintain a formal funding relationship with PRADAN.
- For several PRADAN alumni who have set up their own consulting ventures, PRADAN is a, if not *the*, key client.

However, all alumni said that accessing support from, and building relationships with, PRADAN invariably translated into connecting with an *individual* in the organisation. They did not approach PRADAN—the institution—for support since they were usually unsure of any response. The relationships that have thus far fuelled the alumni-PRADAN connect are personal, and not organisational.



## A Formal PRADAN Alumni Network

As many as 95% of the online survey respondents favoured the formation of a PRADAN alumni network. However, even though most were unsure of what to expect from a formal alumni initiative, they were able to table suggestions on how a formal alumni body could create value for PRADAN as well as the individual alumni. These included involving the alumni to:

- Map PRADAN's future direction.
- Play a role in building alliances between PRADAN and the outside world (in the development field and other sectors, especially the corporate world).
- Mentor new PRADAN development professionals.
- Function as a referral system for ex-PRADANites.

## Conclusion

In closing our conversations with the PRADAN alumni, we asked them to share their perspectives of PRADAN today. The majority said that they felt a combination of pride tinged with concern at PRADAN's growth. They were proud of how hard PRADAN continued to work to ensure security, dignity and livelihoods for the poorest of the country. The area of concern was the high-paced scaling of the organisation, which they felt had begun to chip at the spaces of learning and fun for development professionals. They felt that because spaces such as PRADAN are rare, this needed to be urgently protected. ■



*Top: Alumnus Arundathi Vishwanath sharing a light moment with women in the community. Above: Mulberry silk yarn being weighed.*

# Introduction: Seeding Catalysts of Change

In the spring of 2011, Start Up! was commissioned by PRADAN to conduct a tracer study (literally, a study that traces) to map the journeys of its development professionals *who have exited from PRADAN*. By following their journeys post-PRADAN, the study aimed to correlate the influence of PRADAN's trainings and value systems on these individuals with the impact that they have gone on to create in their professions and organisations. Thus, the study sample was limited to PRADAN professionals who had left the organisation to chart their own paths. For purposes of this report, we will use the word 'alumni' to denote our study respondents.

The specific objectives of the tracer study were to:

1. Analyse the key influencers that shaped the alumni's perspective of poverty and social change during their tenure in PRADAN.
2. Map the journeys of PRADAN's development professionals after they exited from PRADAN.
3. Identify the nature of impact that the alumni have achieved vis-à-vis: their workplace culture/workplace climate; organisational/field-level impact; and their own learning and growth as professionals.
4. Identify sectors across the country that place a premium on the PRADAN approach to development, and therefore on PRADAN alumni.
5. Evaluate the interest and will among the alumni for setting up a PRADAN alumni network, and to identify the potential in such a network.

## Methodology

The tracer study ran on four feet:

1. Secondary research on: PRADAN's internal systems; the DASHip programme; and human relations (HR) processes.
2. Interviews with the internal 'control' group (a sample of 8 current Team Leaders and Directors of PRADAN).
3. Qualitative interviews with 46 shortlisted alumni.
4. A widely circulated online survey to 220 alumni, of which 117 responded.

There were no overlaps between the alumni who participated in the online survey and those who were invited for one-on-one qualitative interviews.

## Data Sources

This project was not set up as an evaluation of PRADAN or its alumni. Rather, it was designed as a 'listening exercise' through which the research team collected and analysed the data from the three respondent groups. The content of this report has been drawn from primary research. The secondary data provided by PRADAN—reports, evaluations, proposals, exit interviews, etc.—provided the framework to collate and weave a cohesive story.

The study was conducted in four phases.

*Phase I* involved: a) Backroom research to study PRADAN's training processes, in-house leadership building systems and support systems; b) Study and organisation of PRADAN's alumni data; c) One-on-one conversations with the 'control group' to collate their insights; and d) An analysis of organisational insights that would feed into the tracer study. The output for this stage was: constructing the framework (co-created by Start Up! and senior PRADAN team members) for segmenting the PRADAN alumni.

# Introduction: Seeding Catalysts of Change

*Phase II* included: a) Designing, and finalisation of the one-on-one interview tools; b) Scheduling and conducting two-hour telephonic or in-person interviews with the 46 shortlisted alumni; c) Implementation and analysis of the online survey; d) Finalising interview transcripts of all 46 interviews; and e) Analysing and drawing out key patterns and trends from the interviews.

*Phase III* was concentrated on: a) Designing, and finalisation of the online survey tools, drawn in part from the interview insights; b) Implementing the online survey; and c) Analysis of the online survey.

*Phase IV* was focussed on: a) Compiling, cross referencing, and calibrating data from interviews and the online survey to arrive at the overall tracer study findings; and b) Report writing.

The tracer study process was an iterative one, and set up such that sections of the research findings were presented to key PRADAN team members in order to incorporate their inputs. The primary output is this report for PRADAN.

## The Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative character of these interviews has shaped this report into an analysis-cum-montage of alumni experiences and their testimonies of transformation.

Start Up! used a standardised questionnaire that was tweaked for focus, relevance, and connection with the journeys of interviewees, and was collated into a standardised analysis template. Ensuring that the interviewees were well represented—across geographical, sectoral, and life cycle locations—was important for this study.



**Alumnus Himanshu Das training farmers for the preparation of mango orchards.**

The full alumni list was clustered into seven segments, based on their current location of work: 1) Social/development entrepreneurs who have set up their own CSOs (or social enterprises) after leaving PRADAN; 2) Alumni who are currently heading CSOs; 3) Alumni in funding agencies; 4) Alumni employed by the government and allied systems; 5) Alumni in the corporate sector; 6) Alumni in bilateral organisations; and 7) High impact consultants, independent researchers, and community mobilisers.

Interviewees were spread across 12 states of India and one other country.<sup>1</sup> Interviews with the PRADAN

alumni generated information in five areas of enquiry:

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<sup>1</sup> The states are: Assam, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Delhi, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. One alumnus is based in Singapore, another is waiting for his IAS posting to be declared, and one is currently not working.



# Introduction: Seeding Catalysts of Change

- ✓ Alumni journeys within PRADAN.
- ✓ Challenges that accelerated their departure from PRADAN.
- ✓ The current work and impact of the alumni in their chosen domains of work.
- ✓ The tangible and intangible ways in which PRADAN and the alumni have influenced each other.
- ✓ Ideas for formal and informal channels of collaboration between PRADAN and the alumni.

## The Online Survey

The survey questionnaire went through three rounds of iteration and was reviewed by senior team members of PRADAN to weed out design errors. Participation of 220 PRADAN alumni was sought actively through repeated email blasts, telephonic requests where possible, assistance in questionnaire filling-up over the phone, and facilitation of peer reminders.

Strict quality control over the data source meant that each questionnaire was checked for accuracy; over 50% questionnaires required reworking by participants. The 117 completed and accurate forms that we received underwent three rounds of hygiene check before the collation began.

## Data Analysis Methodology

The methodology of weighted averages and scaled data was employed wherever possible, to weed out the variables in analysis and reporting. T-tests were run on every data set to arrive at the standard deviation in the different data groups and to then identify the most prioritised clusters of findings for PRADAN.

The data analysis went through three rounds of iteration and presentation to the PRADAN team, before the results of the online survey were finalized.

## Research Participants: A Profile

### Entry Point into PRADAN

117 alumni (74% males; 26% females) participated in the online survey, of which 98% joined PRADAN as Development Apprentices (DAs), and 2%, as Executives.

Of the 46 alumni interviewed (78% males, 22% females): 76% joined PRADAN as DAs. 24% joined the organisation before PRADAN had scripted its formal DAs hip programme. Their learning journeys unfurled through different creative formats.

### Location at the Time of Departure from PRADAN

Of the 117 respondents who participated in the online survey, 58% were located in east India, 20% in central India, 19% in north India and 3% in south India at the time of their departure from the organisation. We did not ask the alumni who were interviewed this question.

### Role in PRADAN at the Time of Exit

Of the 117 alumni who responded to the online survey, 91% of those who had joined as DAs left the organisation as Executives; 4% of those who joined as DAs were working as Team Leaders in PRADAN at the time of their departure from the organisation; and of the 3 persons who had joined PRADAN as Executives, one was an Executive, the second, a Programme Director, and the third, a Team Leader, at the time of their exit from the organisation.

Across the alumni segment that engaged in the one-on-one interviews, 85% had left PRADAN as Executives.

than 10 years; and 4.74% spent over 15 years with the NGO. The average duration of the tenure of the alumni whom we

interviewed was 5.5 years. The outliers lay in the range of 2 years (on the minimum time spent in PRADAN) and 19 years (on the maximum duration of tenure).

It may be concluded that while entry of the participants of the Tracer Study into PRADAN occurred at different times, a majority left the organisation in the early-to mid-2000s.

Perhaps the overlap in their timing of exit prompted the striking similarities in their

reporting of the reasons for their exit from PRADAN.

## Work Domains

The PRADAN alumni who participated in this research are today working in the following fields, with a majority concentration in the first four domains:

- Integrated livelihoods development.
- Agricultural innovations.
- Natural resource management.
- Development finance.

## ROLE OF THE ALUMNI AT THE TIME OF LEAVING

- 91% of those who joined as a DA left as an executive
- 4% of those who joined as a DA left as a Team Leader
- Another 2% of those who joined as a DA left in other roles (Data Manager/Program Executive, Subject matter specialist-Gender)
- 4% completed apprenticeship but did not opt for next role

3 persons joined as an Executive, of which one left as a team leader, one as a PD and one left an Executive



## Average Duration of Stay of Alumni in PRADAN

Of the 117 online survey participants, 45% had worked in PRADAN for less than 3 years; 38% spent between 3-6 years; 12.8% between 6-10 years; and 4.2% had spent more than 10 years with the organisation. A further break-up of those who worked in PRADAN for less than 3 years reveals that 62% were with PRADAN between 1.1 and 2 years, and 38% stayed in PRADAN for 2-3 years.

Of the 46 alumni interviewees, 50% had been with PRADAN for less than 5 years; 28.26% between 5-10 years; 17% more

# Introduction: Seeding Catalysts of Change

- Women and girl-child development.
- Health.
- IT (Information Technology) for development.
- Livestock management.

More than 70% of all participants are engaged in issues that address poverty.

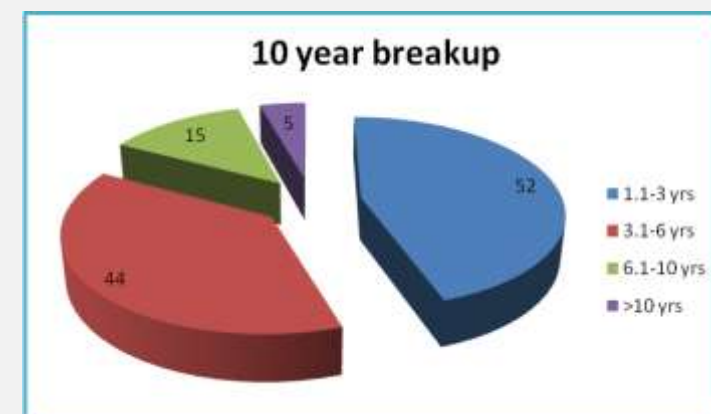
## Presentation of the Report

This report is divided into five sections:

- 1) *Introduction: Seeding Changemakers*, which details the scope, objectives, methodology and participant profiles.
- 2) *The Constant Gardeners*, which analyses the data from interviews with eight senior team members of PRADAN.
- 3) *Journeys of the PRADAN Alumni*, which maps the entry and growth of the organisation's development professionals.
- 4) *The Circle of Influence*, which identifies the impact that PRADAN and its alumni have had on each other.
- 5) *Conclusion: Webs of Impact*, which traces the informal ways in which the alumni relate to each other and to PRADAN today. It also explores the impact of a potential PRADAN alumni network. ■

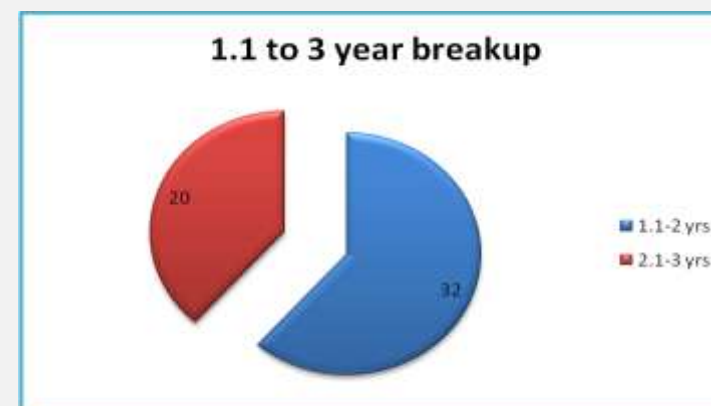
## AVERAGE DURATION OF STAY OF THE ALUMNI IN PRADAN

Average duration of stay (ADS) of 45% of the respondents was less than 3 years;  
ADS of 38% of the respondents was between 3 and 6 years,  
ADS of 17% was more than 6 years



Average duration of stay (ADS) 62% of the respondents was between 1.1 and 2 years, ADS of 38% was between 2 and 3 years

98% of respondents went through DA process and joined PRADAN  
2% of respondents joined directly as Executive





# The Constant Gardeners

The tracer study kicked off in February 2011 with interviews of eight PRADAN professionals who are in key leadership positions in the organisation.

## Profile of Interviewees

On an average, the interviewees in this segment had clocked 15+ years in PRADAN. They are the cartographers of PRADAN's scale and impact in India, with their professional journeys being deeply informed by the organisation's growth and lifecycle shifts. Each is a mini-repository of PRADAN's institutional history.

## Purpose of the Interviews

Interviews with PRADAN's senior leadership team (hereafter referred to as 'internal interviews') added value to this report by:

- Framing the study in the institutional history and idiom of PRADAN.
- Foregrounding PRADAN's scale story as a prominent theme in the study.
- Lending leadership insights.

We viewed this set of interviewees as a controlled respondent group. Their inputs gave the study its foundation, and also offered useful reinforcements and counterpoints to the perspectives of the PRADAN alumni.

The timing of the interviews was fortuitous. The research team spoke with Programme Directors and Team Leaders just when

they were stepping into an institutional process of mapping PRADAN's growth for the next five years. All interviewees were already in active reflection mode. They had begun to converse internally on issues of broader systemic impact; on sharpening processes for non-linear growth within teams; and on the options of scaling up the institution over incubating several fresh, independent ventures by entrepreneurial PRADANites.



PRADAN co-founder Deep Joshi and PRADANites on a field visit.

In the following sections, we present their cumulative perspectives on:

- a) Their personal growth in PRADAN and reasons for staying in the organisation.
- b) The growth of the organisation.
- c) Their understanding of why professionals depart from PRADAN.

As these factors are interrelated and interdependent, and the analysis weaves in and out through the different sections of

this chapter to create a tapestry of insights.

## Journey in PRADAN

### The Enablers

At the time of joining PRADAN, all interviewees had little understanding of the organisation's work and impact. 50% among them were ambiguous about the larger NGO or development sector. They had connected with PRADAN either

on the recommendation of friends and peers on campus, or by sheer serendipity.

The respondents came from such diverse fields as engineering (3 respondents), natural resource and business management (3 interviewees), and rural development (2 respondents).

However, their entry into PRADAN was propelled by a common set of factors—the spirit of discovery, the need to learn, and the will to engage with the large, invisible country that lived on the margins of India.

100% of the interviewees made a long-term commitment to PRADAN within 3-6 months of joining. Immersion in the community was reported by all as the bedrock of their personal transformation and cognitive understanding of social change processes.

However, all respondents stated that their ability to succeed with communities and endure in remote outposts of poverty would not have been realised without PRADAN's facilitation and belief in their potential.

Interviewees identified the following as the most outstanding factors of working in PRADAN (presented in order of the most-reported to the least-reported enablers):

*Being in charge of one's own learning, growth and community programmes within a very short period of joining PRADAN: All interviewees said that, at the time of their joining, PRADAN 'fearlessly' created spaces for young professionals to 'own and shape' the organisation. The confidence and trust that was invested in them, so early in their tenure in PRADAN, fuelled their journeys as young facilitators of social change.*

For all respondents, three themes of professional growth flowed from the above:

1) *The opportunities to be the 'voice' of PRADAN*, at a very young age and represent the organisation before district magistrates, collectors, *panchayat*<sup>2</sup> leaders, community elders, and local CSOs, firmly grounded the respondents in the very ethos and philosophy of PRADAN. It led to enduring alignments between personal identities and self-mission with PRADAN's vision.

2) *By putting young people in charge*, PRADAN sent out a powerful message that the seemingly daunting challenges of the country could well be addressed by young professionals themselves. All that was needed was for young people to make up their minds. PRADAN backed this message with mentorship, on-the-job technical guidance, and financial resources for young professionals to design and execute programmes in the remotest corners of the country. This demystification of complex change processes became the leitmotif of the work and impact of all interviewees in this segment.

3) *Most importantly, PRADAN privileged active experimentation, risk-taking, and introspection-based learning* for young professionals. Interviewees had full control over the design and construction of their learning journeys. This was reported by all, save one, as key to unleashing their problem-solving talent.

The flexible, learner-oriented work culture gave respondents a fresh set of wheels to build programmes and teams in ways that reflected their own learning styles. They moved with ease from one project to the other, from one level of problem

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<sup>2</sup> In India's system of governance, *panchayats* are local self-governing bodies in rural and peri-urban centres.

solving to the other, never feeling ‘boxed-in’ or ‘drained out by the monotony of work’.

This aspect of their experience in PRADAN quickly cast them in the mould of development intrapreneurs (individuals who develop and implement new ideas and ventures within an organisation), and this space went a long way in forging their stickiness to PRADAN.

Did this segment feel adequately recognised for their efforts at PRADAN? The response to this question was spontaneous and similar across all interviewees. They understood ‘recognition of work’ as being given even greater responsibility and flexibility to chart the course of their local programmes, and relationally, of PRADAN. This form of recognition was never late in coming.

Seven of the eight respondents indicated that PRADAN’s flexible learning environment was a function of less structured work regimes and less stringent task orientation when compared to what young Executives experience today.

**Access to visionary mentors:** For five of the interviewees, access to in-house field-shaping mentors was a course-altering experience, and one that led them to interpret the dynamics of poverty, shape clear roles for themselves, and negotiate through the black holes of their personal dilemmas.

For most respondents, their mentors were also, though not always, their Team Leaders. Where interviewees experienced meaningful coaching from them, their mentoring relationships did not close, or alter, after they moved to different geographies, teams, and projects.

Those respondents who did not receive adequate direction by their immediate supervisors, leveraged the open-access

culture of PRADAN to forge informal mentoring opportunities with technical experts from other teams. Retreats were often active grounds for mentor spotting. For all respondents, the informality of their mentoring experience was in itself, value-adding.

**Democracy and the culture of peerage:** Half the respondents stated that the open, collegial and democratic culture of PRADAN went a long way in cementing their relationship with the organisation. This was unpacked via two themes:

1. Respect, collegiality, inclusive decision-making and the lack of hierarchy made PRADAN an affirmative space for the respondents. It also led to every interviewee feeling valued in the organisation—an experience that none of them had had in their previous jobs.<sup>3</sup> Most had chosen this domain of work over career choices that promised higher remuneration and social capital. Though the opportunity costs were very high, PRADAN’s recognition of them was higher still. The biggest upside was that they could bring their voice into all aspects of decision-making.
2. The team support on-the-ground opened up channels for them to air their angst, share milestones and make sense of seemingly complex scenarios at work. Three of the eight respondents who had joined PRADAN as DAs said that the climate of peer support was *the* glue that held them in PRADAN teams were seen as space for intellection, friendships, and validation.

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<sup>3</sup> Five of the eight interviewees had worked in other organisations before joining PRADAN

The enablers reported above continue to drive interviewees' ownership of, and responsibility for, PRADAN today.

## Reasons for Professionals Leaving PRADAN

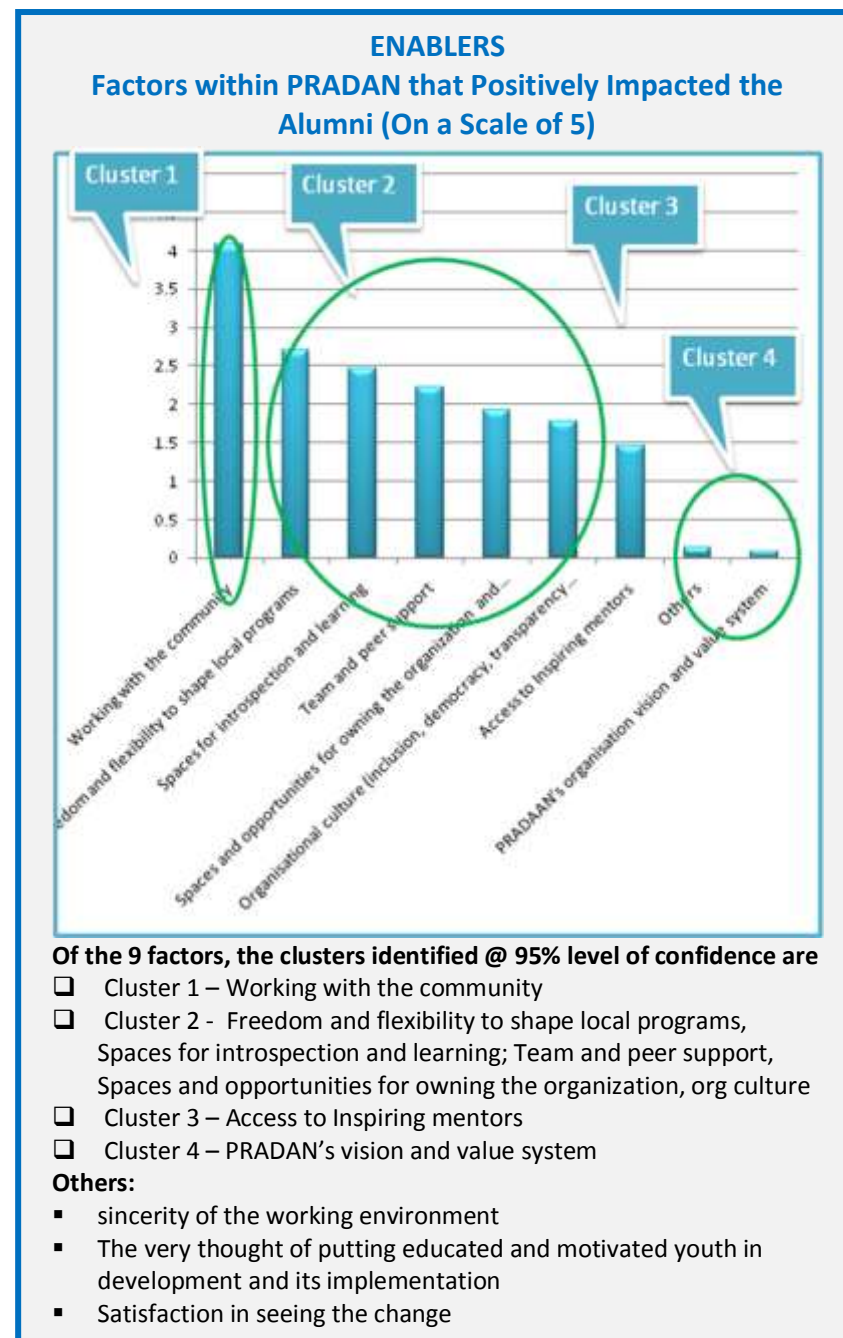
The senior leadership team zeroed in on a combination of four reasons for professionals leaving PRADAN, all of which overlapped with those reported by the alumni in interviews as well as the online survey. These are:

### Limited Growth for Professionals

Six of the eight respondents pointed out that PRADAN does not have an attractive enough model for professional growth for those who have spent more than four years in the organisation. According to them, PRADAN's flat structure and democratic policies for promotions did not respond quickly enough to the need for movement. The 'large and centralised pool' of senior professionals who were in PRADAN for 8+ years had further blocked spaces for younger staff to take on expanded roles.

Three respondents said that the opportunities that they had received to build 'reference identities' (expert identities) for themselves were fast disappearing. The absence of avenues of non-linear growth (as subject-matter experts) often led to monotony and stagnation in teams.

At the time of the tracer study interviews, PRADAN had opened up gender as an important area of expertise development for its professionals. Additionally, it was looking to identify more such multi-disciplinarian sites of learning and doing for its teams.





## Challenges in Scaling Up

Many participants noted that, as in any other organisation, PRADAN's dramatic scale and vertical growth (a path that was formally embraced in 2007) required constant streamlining of operational processes that would also ensure space for reflection, active experimentation, and individual tweaks on ongoing projects. All of them agreed that PRADAN's organic eco-system was an essential to hold on to, and that the mandate of delivering larger programmes had offset the balance between institutional growth and individual learning. They pointed out that if more professionals saw themselves as instruments (rather than catalysts) of change, an increase in departures was bound to be recorded.

## Task-Over-People Orientation

The senior leaders reported that with PRADAN being in expansion mode, they were finding it increasingly difficult to find the time and mind space to invest themselves in the growth of professionals. Thus, the touch points of inspiration and change-related counselling, which had sustained professionals in PRADAN, were now becoming fragile.

PRADAN's investment in developing Field Guides (mentors stationed in the field for fresh Executives) had created a pool of easy-to-access coaches. However, this was an "endangered and overworked pool" and the site of the highest attrition (i.e., professionals with 3-5 years of tenure in PRADAN).

## The Inverted Gender Lens

Three of the eight respondents felt that the departures of women professionals in PRADAN would decrease if field teams became more aware of their gender-specific constraints. Members of PRADAN's human resources department pointed

out that while male professionals had high levels of gender sensitivity towards community women, they exercised subtle, yet impractical expectations of absolute gender equality from their women co-workers. As a result, women took on the same tasks—with similar degrees of risk and labour, and in almost as remote locations—as their male counterparts. This aggravated the work-life pressures of women development professionals in ways that often went un-intercepted by others.

## Misalignments between Personal and Organisational Missions

Two respondents said that professionals who leave PRADAN in the 0-3 year period do so because their own paths of growth do not align with their understanding of PRADAN. None of the alumni, however, alluded to this as a reason for their departure.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that all internal interviewees agreed that growth is endemic to PRADAN. They also emphasized that every professional is a unit of impact for PRADAN. Thus, institutional scale would not sustain without a focus on learning, growth, and impact of all development professionals in the organisation. ■

# Journeys of the PRADAN Alumni

In this section, we unpack the range of cognitive and emotional transformations that the PRADAN alumni underwent after their decision to join the organisation. We also discuss the challenges that spurred their departure from PRADAN.

## Journey in PRADAN

Regardless of the manner in which they were oriented into PRADAN, for all alumni, the first year in the organisation gave them the springboard to act in, and with, communities.

Though each individual experienced PRADAN at different points of institutional inflexion and change, all participants of the tracer study unanimously reported that their first year in the organisation was a watershed, and the most positive phase of their personal and professional being.

### The First Point of Contact with Social Change Processes

For a majority, PRADAN marked their debut in living and learning in rural India. Most had only nominal knowledge of the development sector at the time of joining the organisation. Some had already mapped out different career paths for themselves (in the government, business, or academic research sectors). But they were attracted by PRADAN's promise of experimentation and of making a difference.

Moreover, there were always exit points available to them to return to their previous careers. This made it easy for the alumni to consider the PRADAN opportunity. It is a testament to PRADAN's training and the lure of the organisation that only 4% of those who engaged in the tracer study did not opt for a job with PRADAN after the completion of their DAsip.

## On Joining PRADAN

Soon after their acceptance into PRADAN, the alumni embarked upon multiple journeys across regions, mindsets, and relationships. The pace of the on-the-ground learning was frenetic, and encouraged action and reflection. While living in villages, they assimilated and processed invaluable slices of impressions and experiences, to break through their deeply held and limiting notions of 'self', 'community', and 'leadership.' For many, it was a journey that probed deep into their psyches.

For all alumni, the first year in PRADAN was the time of building their own theories of change, by first understanding and soaking in PRADAN's paradigm of development—a veritable 'mini-university experience'.<sup>1</sup>

## The Enablers and Positive Influencers within PRADAN

Participants of the tracer study prioritised three key clusters of enablers or positive influencers that propelled their growth and learning within PRADAN:

1. Working with communities.
  2. PRADAN's democratic organisational environment and culture.
  3. Access to visionary mentors.
1. **Working with communities**, which, for all alumni, was the cornerstone of their experience in PRADAN. Centralising community in all aspects of their work also served as their

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<sup>1</sup> A quote from an alumnus.

compass for assessing their own movement and impact as development professionals.

## 2. **PRADAN's democratic organisational environment and culture**, which accorded them:

a) *Immediate inclusion* as team members, a collegiality that engendered team spirit.

b) The *freedom and flexibility* to learn, build on technical and other skills, and to shape ongoing and their own programmes—to the extent of PRADAN almost morphing into a mini-incubator experience.

c) *Space for introspection and learning* within PRADAN, facilitated by a non-judgmental team (that served as the perfect sounding board) and the rural immersion which gave respondents uninterrupted time to soak in new cultures and be able to self critique.

## On Working with the Community

"What I respect the most about PRADAN is that professionals from different fields are thrown into direct community work from day one. My team members were from the local community, and I learnt all the time from them. They had very high organic intelligence, and saw every challenge from a very different angle because they were from the ground. I was literally living with the community every day, whether in office or in the field."

"They (the community) would lead me to answer my own questions about development. Talking to them always clarified my doubts (whenever they arose) about PRADAN's approach too."

"I understood that a development professional is a facilitator—one who connects impoverished rural communities with knowledge and technology that they can own and use. And that you can be successful at this if you really understand the psychology of the community that you're working in."

"You have to understand and support communities to develop solutions for themselves, not give them answers. This got ingrained in my life through the training I received in PRADAN. It has been the foundation of all the decisions that I have made in my professional life."

"I realised how insensitive I had become. With PRADAN in the villages, I actually became more humane... I started appreciating how complex the issue of poverty was in our country; and how critical yet tough it was to try and address it."

d) *Team and peer-support* from the "PRADAN family", that encouraged open debate and discussion.

e) *Opportunities for owning the organisation*, a sure-fire catalyst for growth within PRADAN.

In particular, some interviewees identified PRADAN's annual retreat as a positive influencer. For one, it reconnected field teams (most of which were working in geographically remote places and barely had the time to look beyond their plate of deliverables) with the larger organisational framework of PRADAN. And two, the cross-sectoral and cross-geographies mingling among team members acted as a rich source of exchange, and furthered one-on-one connections with other team members of the PRADAN family.

## Democracy at Its Best

### Inclusionary Spirit

“Within a few days of my joining PRADAN, I got the go-ahead to organise a day and night *mela*<sup>1</sup> with all the women SHGs in the area. It demonstrated that PRADAN valued newcomers and their initiatives.”

“I understood early on that funders did not drive this organisation. We could work on our plans as long as we took responsibility for delivery.”

“When I began work with the poorest indigenous tribals of the Keonjhar area, I expressed interest in developing new methods of collective farming in the large tracts of unused forest lands. PRADAN had, till then, not worked with these ultra-poor communities. It did not have the resources to launch a new project in Keonjhar. But it still went ahead and gave me funds from the corpus to enable me to experiment with my idea.”

“Whenever you plan something, you need to account for mistakes. My team would always ask, ‘what are your takeaways from the experience?’ They would not see mistakes as negatives.”

“PRADAN gives you a lot of independence; no one watches over your shoulder. But you have to show results and this is the challenge. You own your success and your failures. This increases your sense of ownership over your project—you speak of it as ‘my village’ because that’s how you come to view it. You realise

that you have the responsibility of implementing the project and the opportunity to improve livelihoods and, most importantly, lives of people.”

“The system of 360 degrees appraisal that even included my Programme Director is commendable.”

### PRADAN, the Incubator

“Working in PRADAN in an open, democratic environment gave me clarity. The team facilitated my construction of a development vision. From the very first day, I understood that PRADAN would encourage young persons to go out and set up their own organisations. This determined (the tenor of) my work. I was placed in a project in Tussar, and though I did not have much knowledge of the issues in that area, I was given the window to develop a new theme of work, using the community as my benchmark. Where else would a young person have had this space?”

“The PRADAN retreats shaped my character. These were events where you could meet many visionaries at one place. The sharing of experiences was common and deep. All this gave me the courage to set up my own venture on the lines of the PRADAN model. Even though I moved out of the PRADAN framework, I did not move out of the PRADAN value system.”



## Democracy at Its Best

### Spaces for Reflection

“In Kesla, when I joined, there were six DAs. We really gelled. After a hard day’s work, we would have long discussions on ‘what is development’. We were all so young, so confused, and those discussions fundamentally shaped our thinking. So many years later, we have moved out of PRADAN, but continue to work in the sector with the same rigour and the desire to make change. The foundation was laid in PRADAN, by the PRADAN team. Till date I go back to those discussions and thought processes to determine what I want—whether it’s with regard to jobs, values, whatever.”

“At the end of each day (in the community where we lived and worked), we would take our *khatiyas* (cots) outside and inevitably end up talking intensely with each other—discussing our day, the events that had unfolded, the problems we faced, the breakthroughs we had. So we were almost always talking about development and observing ourselves as development facilitators.”

### The PRADAN Team: A Family

“The whole experience of working as a team was outstanding. There was no hierarchy, and though in a team of about 11 members I was the most junior, no one tried to dictate to me. I was able to express myself freely. The team members were both colleagues and friends.”

“In PRADAN, you land up at your posting through a combination of choice and chance and you have no idea of what to expect, especially the physical exertion. And there is the pressure from your family who want you to come back and lead a ‘normal’ life. You need emotional support from your team and I got that always. There were never any barriers to asking someone for help. Your peers supported you holistically—on work issues and on the personal front.

“PRADAN has good people. It was a family. You were heard. Your problems were listened to. I will always remember the kind of time that was invested in our personal and professional development.”

**3. Access to visionary mentors and mentorship** was widely acknowledgment by all qualitative interview participants as a core value of PRADAN. For those who joined PRADAN in the pre-DA days, mentoring was perceived mainly as free-flowing conversations with persons with insights and experience in the organisation who provided coaching, handholding and interpretation of the complexities that they experienced around them. The other interviewees (a majority, i.e., 35 in number who had joined PRADAN as DAs) understood mentoring as the structured support that they received from their Team Leaders and Field Guides.

A majority stated they were satisfied by PRADAN's mentoring quality, and today, practice it in their current work domains. Over half the interviewees reinforced that PRADAN had an exceptional set of in-house mentors, right from the founders to the Programme Directors and Team Leaders. These individuals had encouraged them to develop original ideas foregrounded in their own voice—an invaluable life lesson.

## Learning from The Gurus of the Field: The Power of Mentoring

"In the social sector, people work under much pressure. Therefore the constant companionship and handholding (that I received by my mentors) can make a huge difference on the impact of your work on the ground."

"During my first year, I often thought of leaving PRADAN. I wanted to go back to research. My mentor helped me clear my doubts. He would ask me to think of what I wanted from life—of what and where I needed to go. To consider whether leaving PRADAN would serve me any concrete purpose, or help me get to what I wanted in life."

"My mentors contributed immeasurably to my understanding of the work, my role, and why I was doing this work. Even when I left PRADAN I knew that this first year was critical. The values you gather stay with you. This period impacts your working style throughout your life."

- c) Limited understanding and support for women.
- d) Financial constraints.

## Challenges of Working in PRADAN

As with any other organisation, PRADAN has seen its share of resignations. However, its attrition rate is low (<18.5%), clearly indicative that the organisation is on the right path when it comes to retaining staff.

Despite the generational differences between the interviewees and the different lens through which they viewed PRADAN (i.e., their experience of PRADAN at different stages of the organisation's growth, the duration of their stay in the organisation, and geographical location of their work in PRADAN), respondents were agreed in their identification (and prioritisation) of the key challenges that they experienced during their time in PRADAN. They identified and prioritised two clusters of challenges:

### Cluster 1

- a) Limited growth opportunities.
- b) Isolation.

### Cluster 2

- a) Work pressures and monotony.
- b) Team and leadership Issues.

## 1a) Limited Growth Opportunities

A major reason for leaving PRADAN was the limited growth potential. This was articulated as a combination of two factors: i) Restrictive linear growth—or slow vertical growth across levels of responsibility in the organisation; and ii) Insufficient non-linear growth—or no avenues for growth into new thematic areas of work or into domains outside the straight path of livelihoods.

According to them, PRADAN's flat, 3-tier structure—devised to democratise the organisation in the best way possible—also meant that one could be at the Executive and Team Leader levels for years. Moreover, the team-centric system of selecting candidates for promotions (when a post became available) while scrupulously democratic, further slowed down the pace of linear growth further. Most interviewees said they aspired for expanded responsibility and impact opportunities in PRADAN.

15 of the 46 respondents cited the absence of channels for growth into new domains and directions of work outside PRADAN's holy grail of livelihoods development as the core trigger for leaving.

To meet this need, in the last five years, PRADAN has begun encouraging its teams to participate in organised trainings for non-linear growth at different locations. In the typical democratic nature of PRADAN, it is the individual's choice to participate.

## 1b) Isolation

An expected consequence of the remote locations in which PRADAN places its professionals is a feeling of isolation that can set in after several years of work. Being based in the

interiors of the country also brings with it limited interaction with other (equally far-flung) teams, and the sheer distance can lead to intellectual isolation and the feeling of being cut-off from the 'outside' world.

Moreover, building and maintaining a robust peer-driven (over supervision-driven) work environment in these scenarios of isolation can cause high-levels of fatigue. Respondents articulated this as: not enough interaction with other teams within PRADAN; and isolation from the larger development community outside PRADAN as well as outside the livelihoods-domain.

## 2 a) Work Pressures and Monotony

Words such as stagnation, monotony and exhaustion featured frequently in our interviewees' description of the last leg of their term in PRADAN. For the respondents, these factors were all linked to Cluster 1, above. A quote by an alumnus captures the sense of repetitiveness well: "After 6 years, I found myself thinking only about either rice or maize!" Heavy task orientation, performance pressures, and the excessive structuring of programmes at all levels further exacerbated matters, leading to exhaustion at the high target-setting expectations and the frenetic pace of work that left little time for reflection, reading and process orientation.

## 2 b) Team and Leadership Issues

While the space for dialogue (and dissent) was appreciated by the alumni, non-stop debates tended to exhaust. The alumni recognised that their Team Leaders themselves were overwhelmed and fatigued in their pursuit of exponential growth for PRADAN. This sometimes created a gap between what the alumni could see in the field and what they were

able to comprehend, and sometimes found themselves shaky in developing their own ideas. Some respondents mentioned that they felt guilty about tabling issues with their Team Leaders whose schedules were so tight.

## **2 c) Limited Understanding and Support for Women.**

## **2 d) Financial Constraints.**

Cumulatively, though the two factors above ('c' and 'd') fall in the second cluster, their reporting was not as high as the other factors in the clusters that have been detailed above. Additionally their raison d'être flows from all the other challenges that have already been presented.

We close this section with a small note on the financial

constraints reported by the alumni. Less than 2% of the individuals interviewed said that they had openly brought up the issue of higher salaries and designations in team meetings, while others preferred to not voice them at all. The reason

cited for this was discourse and focus on the collective that deterred individuals from articulating their personal ambitions and growth aspirations in a guilt-free manner in teams. ■



**Alumnus Neelam Maheshwari introducing SHG members to the Integrated Learning System (ILS).**



# The Circle of Influence

This section explores how PRADAN and its alumni are influencing each other. It also documents the new orbits of social change that the alumni have claimed for themselves.

## The Impact of PRADAN on its Alumni

The tracer study confirmed that the majority of our respondents continue to walk on the same trajectory of enquiry and impact that PRADAN had set them up on. Consider the following data:

### Nature of Organisations

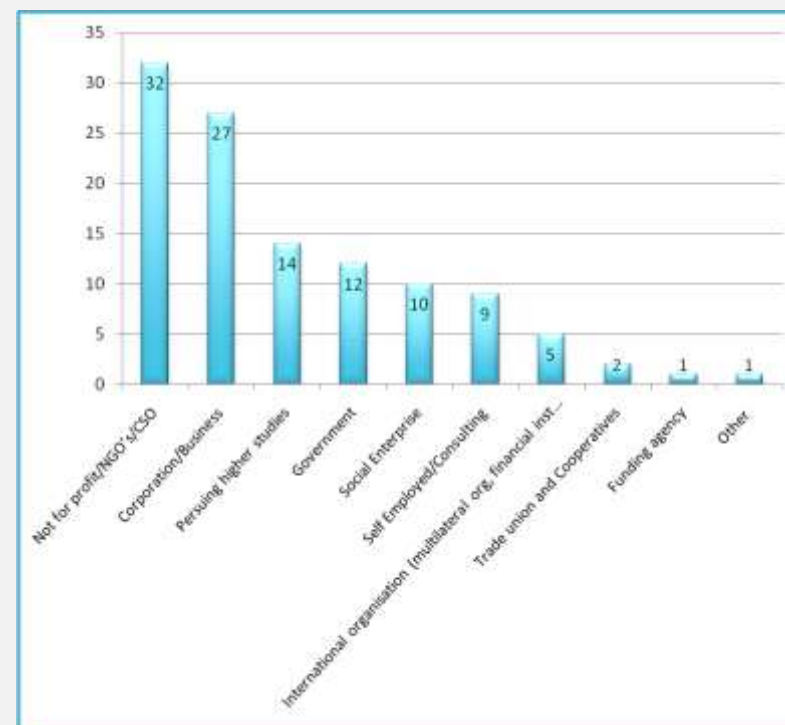
The study found that the kind of organisations that participants are most engaged with include (in order of reporting): NGOs/CSOs; businesses; and government and allied systems.

- The largest segment of the alumni who participated in the tracer study is today working in not-for-profit or civil society organisations, followed by the corporate sector. The third largest segment is pursuing higher education. Employment with the government comes in fourth.
- The organisations that currently engage the smallest slice of the alumni base are funding agencies (national and international), multilateral and bilateral organisations, and international financial institutions. This reinforces that the bulk of PRADAN's alumni are working close to the ground, with grassroots communities.

### Domains of Work

- 70% of the online survey respondents, true to their PRADAN training, continue to be proactively engaged with issues of poverty alleviation and social development. They are

## Current Organization Types that Engage the Alumni



Top 3 organization types that the alumni are in

1. Not for profit/NGO's/CSO (29%)
2. Corporation/Business (25%)
3. Pursuing higher studies(15%)

Others

Industry and financial institution

\* (%) indicates the share of that factor

# The Circle of Influence

engaged in such areas as livelihoods/employability and entrepreneurship development; agricultural innovations; development/rural finance; natural resource management (NRM); and livestock development. The number of women alumni engaged in agricultural innovations, development/rural finance, and NRM are a third of the number of male alumni.

- 19% of the study respondents are working in broader domains of social change (i.e., sectors other than livelihoods development and allied areas, and are addressing issues of health, education, women and child rights, and Information Technology for development. Their training in livelihoods and market-based approaches to agency building gave them a

sharper searchlight to navigate through the challenges of their fields.

- 12% of the two segments mentioned above have gone on to launch their own organisations. A majority of this group worked in PRADAN for 0-3 years—indicative that the entrepreneurs within PRADAN exited earlier, while the intrapreneurs stayed on to sculpt innovations within the organisation's framework.
- 11% of the respondents are engaged in realms of work that are either unrelated to development or are pursuing higher education. The number of women in this segment is twice that of men.

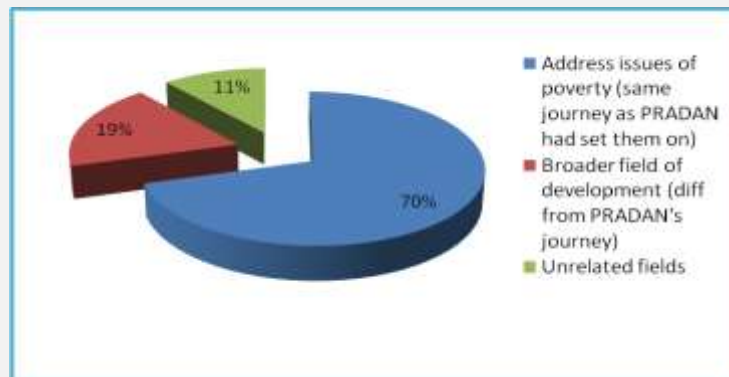
## Current Domain of Work of Alumni

### Out of the 117 respondents:

70% of the respondents continue to work in addressing issues of poverty. The pursuit of their journey remains the same as PRADAN had set them on.

19% of the respondents remain in the broader not-for-profit sector related to the field of development

Only 11% of the respondents are working in fields unrelated to development

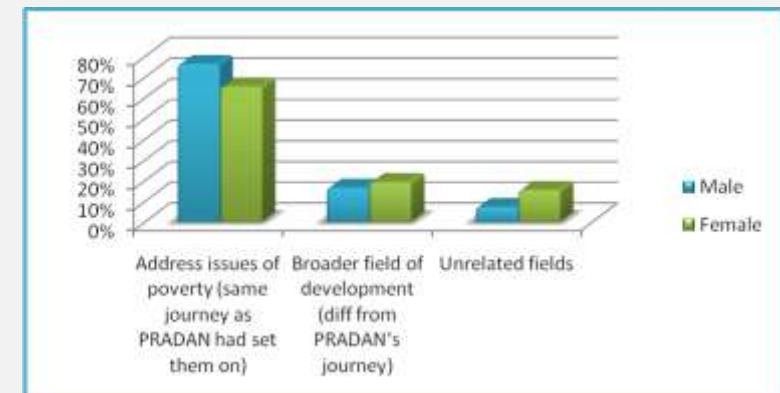


### Out of the 117 respondents:

More male respondents continue to work in addressing issues of poverty on the same lines as PRADAN set them on

More female respondents remain in the broader not-for-profit sector related to the field of development

More female respondents are working in fields unrelated to development



# The Circle of Influence

## Nature of Work

Regardless of the domain and the kind of organisations that they have chosen to work in, the alumni are engaged in the following work areas (in order of reporting):

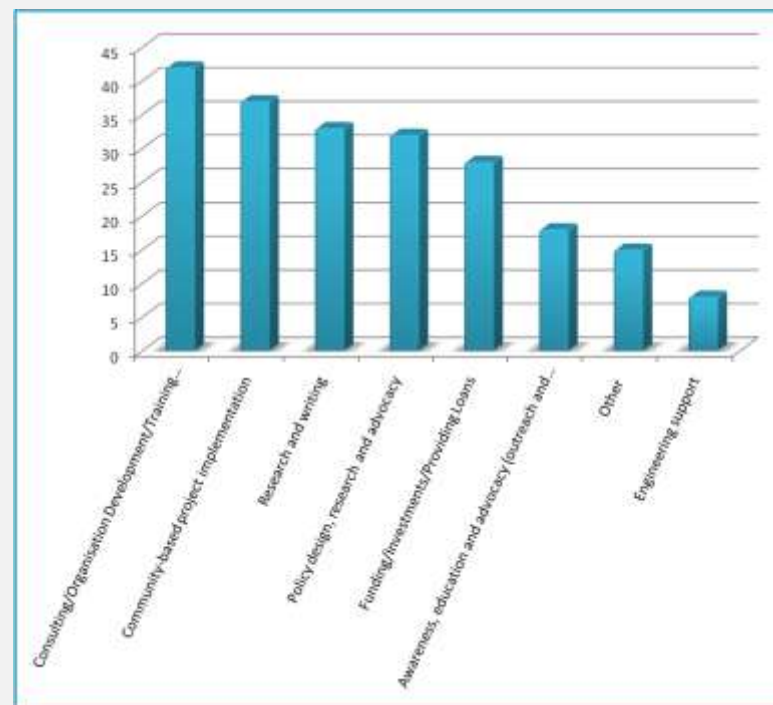
- Consulting, organisation development, and training/capacity building in the development space. Clearly, PRADAN's facilitative approach towards team, intensive HR and training processes, and systems for organisation-wide inclusion have given the alumni a set of tools and how-tos that they have further adapted and polished while offering their services to organisations in the field.
- The largest segments of the alumni who are working to directly address issues of poverty, as well as those working in broader fields of development, are engaged in community-based project implementation (23%, and 25%, respectively). This, again, is a journey that they flagged off while in PRADAN. The number of men engaged in community-based project implementation is twice that of women.
- Research and writing.
- Policy design, research and advocacy. The number of women engaged in research, writing and policy and advocacy related work is almost double that of men.

Those who participated in qualitative interviews mirror the (above) patterns of the alumni's current domains and nature of work.

## Geographies of Operation

The data set below is telling in that the majority of those who identified geographical isolation as a significant reason for exiting PRADAN, moved to urban locations. However, it was

## Current Nature of Work of the Alumni



### Others:

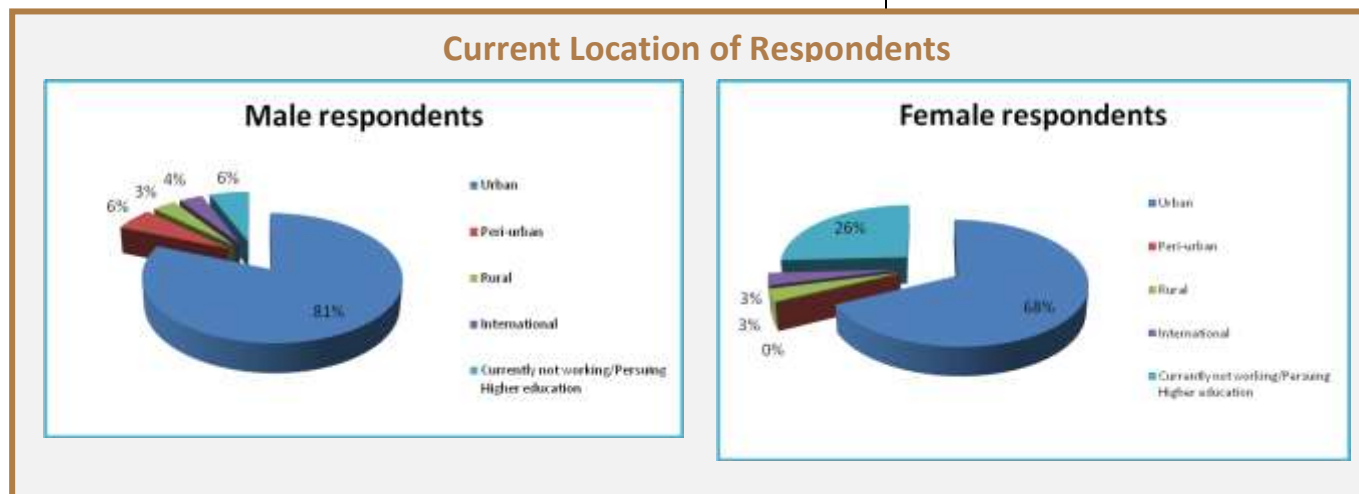
Task completion as per deptt. | Guidelines, Administrative and sales, | Coordination of conference, | Marketing of agri inputs, business solutions, Market research, insights generation and consultancy, Teaching in school | technical & management level, Lecturer, | Have to coordinate and Monitor all Line Departments and help implement projects both at Government and Private | Sector and prepare Disaster | Management plans of the District.

found that their current place of domicile does not indicate their disengagement with grassroots rural communities. Rather, their chosen areas of residence today are primarily urban and peri-urban:

- 81% of the male respondents and 68% of the female respondents today reside in urban areas (Tier 1,2 and 3 cities).
- 6% of the male alumni live in peri-urban or *mofussil*<sup>2</sup> locations (Tier 4 cities).
- 3% of both male and female respondents continue to live in rural areas.

PRADAN's most valuable gift to its alumni has been a set of social change principles. The principles are as follows:

- The community is the centre of gravity of all developmental efforts.
- Change processes are impermanent if they do not build community agency.



- For change processes to be democratic, the change vehicles (whether individuals or organisations) need to be open, transparent, and inclusive.
- The role of a development professional is to put communities in charge of their own social change processes.

## Impact of PRADAN on its Alumni

For all alumni, every experience in PRADAN led to indelible impressions and unforgettable lessons on how to engage with poverty and facilitate change—one family, and one village at a time. They reported that their years in PRADAN cemented the foundations of their professional journeys and paved the way for their second curve of work.

Across the online survey and qualitative interviews, the alumni said that they diligently apply these principles in every aspect of their work, regardless of the sectors in which they are located. Consider these examples:

- All interviewees agreed that PRADAN's people processes, leadership and organisational culture are outstanding; that they have yet to find another comparable experience of trust-based, open work environments. Most have taken the initiative and moved efforts to build collegial work cultures in their organisations, though this was not always easy. One alumnus had adapted PRADAN's rotational leadership system into his organisation.

<sup>2</sup> Peri-urban or rural areas in India.



## The Circle of Influence

- For those interviewees who run their own consulting practice, PRADAN's training of large-scale livelihoods and NRM project management made them the preferred technical consultants for statewide poverty alleviation programmes. The external world viewed them as technical experts who were grounded in a community-centric value system—a rare combination.

- The alumni also stated that their definition of leadership for social change had been drawn directly from PRADAN's leadership practice. They reported that they try to bring the following acts of leadership into the daily rhythm of their work—a practice that they had picked up from their mentors and Team Leaders in PRADAN:

- Transparency in all dealings with stakeholders.
- Openness and active listening.
- Fearless sharing of ideas and organisation with all team members.
- Opening up spaces for teams to experiment, trying out new ideas, gaining confidence, and valuing mistakes.
- Leading by example.

- More than 50% of the interviewees said that they now have an internal compass that invariably moves them to search and integrate the most marginalised communities into their programmes.

- A majority of those who have set up their own ventures said that they had structured their organisations on the DNA

of PRADAN's social change principles.

- Alumni working in funding agencies reported that they look for ways to centralise the community in every grant proposal that they review, asking hard questions around community agency of potential grantees. A few are sharpening the funding guidelines, metrics, and reporting frameworks of their funding bodies to place the community more forcefully centrestage into all evaluations and funding decisions.

- Those employed by the corporate sector have found different routes to stay engaged with community development issues, either within the boundaries of their job, or by setting up initiatives outside their workplace.

### The Value of Being a PRADAN Professional

“When I am in a meeting with partners and they learn that I am ex-PRADAN, I can see the spark in their eyes. People probably think, ‘she knows the grassroots and she’ll understand the issues’. I was at a meeting where I suggested a change in what the director of agriculture was proposing. He began to say, ‘You folks at Oxfam...’ but I interrupted and said, ‘I’ve come from PRADAN’. Immediately, he was willing to listen.”

“PRADAN professionals are always seen as technically-strong interventionists. More importantly, they are also seen as transparent, reliable, committed, and ethical.”

“Because of their field-based project implementation capabilities, even those who do not stay on to complete their DAsip are valued in the job market. They are least valued in government committees since the *babus*<sup>1</sup> don’t like people who speak the truth.”

- All alumni working in the government or in allied systems shared how, despite the obstacle course of red-tapism and bureaucratic delays, they consistently direct their energies towards rooting PRADAN's values of community-centred development and transparency into the public sphere.

Net-net, a majority of the alumni recognised that though they had left PRADAN, the *values and work culture of PRADAN* had not left *them*.

## Degrees of Impact

Because of a combination of the above factors, an overwhelming majority (76.4%) of the study respondents stated that their current work and success could be correlated to their PRADAN training. Only 13% said that they had only been partially prepared/trained by PRADAN for the work that they are currently in.

However, 78% of the alumni felt the need for (and a few went on to access), academic or technical re-tooling programmes to supplement their PRADAN experience in order to be better equipped for their next phase of work.

The areas where alumni felt the most need for training were:

## Corporate Careers Can't Derail Development Dreams

4% of the alumni interviewed had transitioned to the corporate world. Though (unsurprisingly), PRADAN had not equipped them to land on their feet in the world of business per se, they brought their PRADAN sensibility to effect change.

One alumnus signed up for a leadership role in the strategic management function of a large manufacturing company. He also served as the CEO's executive assistant. Despite a full plate of deliverables, the alumni willingly assumed responsibility for the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) division of the company. He quickly steered the organisation to see its CSR functions through a whole new prism, where it went "beyond signing welfare cheques, to saving lives". He was responsible for making CSR a "serious business" for the company.

Another early development professional (pre-DA) worked with two Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) after being recruited by PRADAN from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. After two years of grassroots engagement in the field, she joined a private bank, where she moved rapidly up the growth ladder. However, her experience with PRADAN did not leave her, and nor did it let her rest. Juggling her considerable leadership load at the bank, she set up a fundraising organisation for local CSOs that were working with very poor urban communities. She leveraged her goodwill and put her strategic and financial planning skills to work and was able to raise significant resources from High Net Worth Individuals (HNIs) for small, credible groups in her city. More recently, she has joined an international venture capital firm, where her responsibilities include setting up a patient social welfare capital fund, designed for social enterprises at an inflexion point.

# The Circle of Influence

- In new domains (beyond the pale of PRADAN's livelihoods work).
- Development of new skills, such as human resources development, organisational development, monitoring and evaluation, grant management, documentation, writing and communication, and stakeholder collaboration. This was felt most acutely by those alumni who are today engaged in the business sector, research and writing, and in the managing of grants in funding organisations.
- Building on conceptual frameworks for understanding development or development praxis.

## The New Journey: How Different from the PRADAN Experience?

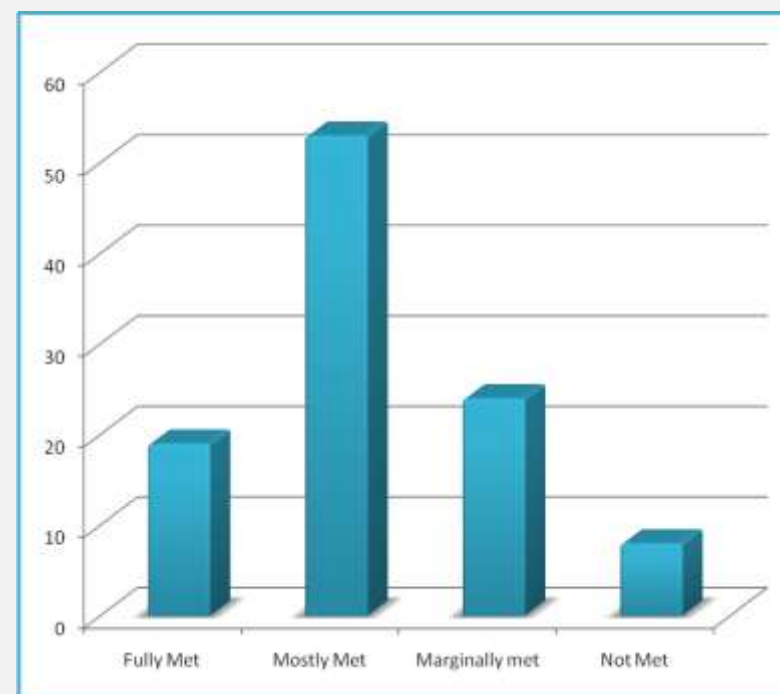
The tracer study reinforced that PRADAN facilitated the alumni to consolidate their core—their paradigms, principles and theories of change—while outfitting them with technical skills and the life experiences to chart new futures.

Did the individuals script *significant and more fulfilling* professional lives after leaving PRADAN? The answer was a definitive, 'yes'.

- 18% of the online survey respondents said that their motivation/s for leaving PRADAN had been fully met in their current jobs/work engagement.
- 50% of the respondents reported that their motivations for exiting the organisation had been mostly met in their current areas of work.
- 24% reported that their current work only partially satisfied their motive for leaving PRADAN.

- 8% of the respondents said that their reasons and motivation for quitting the organisation had not been met.

### Motivations – Were the motivations for respondents to leave PRADAN met in current job?



68% of the respondents feel that their motivations to leave PRADAN were fully/mostly met in current job

18% of the respondents feel that their motivations to leave PRADAN were fully met in current job

8% of the respondents feel that their motivations to leave PRADAN were not met even in current job

Our interviews further qualified the above findings:

## **Addressing Livelihoods, but on One's Own Terms**

33 of the 46 alumni interviewed continue to work in the livelihoods domain, though they all reported qualitative shifts and a broadening of vision in the way they conduct their work today. Despite livelihoods being the core thrust of their work, they also explore synaptic connects with other domains such as health, sanitation, and education.

A majority have moved away from the pure operations/implementation mode that they were familiar with in PRADAN, and lead organisational processes in their organisations (strategic planning, financial planning, team building, etc.).

Many, by choice, work in teams that are far smaller than PRADAN. The quality of their direct interface with para-professionals, grassroots volunteers, and field teams is higher now than it was during their time in PRADAN.

## **Leadership, Post PRADAN**

Of the 46 respondents, 14 have launched and led civil society organisations after exiting from PRADAN; seven set up their ventures within the first year, while the remaining did so within three years of their departure from PRADAN.

15 alumni joined CSOs in key leadership positions immediately after leaving PRADAN. Of these, five are in the fields of education and health; three work in CSOs promoting micro-finance and livelihoods; two are in the foundation arm of corporate houses; and one works in a funding agency that addresses issues of child development.

Thus, taken together, 29 of the 46 interviewees testified that they had charted growth paths for themselves through a combination of the following:

- Experiencing entrepreneurship.
- Taking up jobs where they led the setting of agenda and strategic directions for their organisations.
- Moving beyond the livelihoods domain, to embrace other social sectors.

## **Collaboration – A Vehicle for Growth**

35 alumni reported that their portfolios of work now have an exciting new vertical—networking and collaborations with multiple stakeholders to build larger eco-systems of support for the rural poor. This is an important addition to the way in which they perceive their role as development facilitators. These alumni have stepped out of working in a single-organisation framework to partner with multiple sectors. Their endeavour: to move hitherto disparate actors (CSOs, corporates, media, etc.) on a set of common goals for the advancement of the rural poor.

## **Experiencing Leadership by Building Grassroots Leaders**

Of the PRADAN alumni who have remained invested in the livelihoods domain, three have shaped for themselves an incubator-cum-investor role to launch social change agents from within the communities they serve. Thus, one has launched an initiative to start up youth entrepreneurs and their ventures in the most economically deprived communities of Assam. Another runs a large CSO that had incubated 10 youth-led community enterprises in Maharashtra and



Himachal Pradesh. The third, a senior professional who quit PRADAN after a 19-year tenure, has set up an innovative financing vehicle for small MFIs and producer companies in north India.

## Movement to New Sectors – A Legitimate Growth Path

A significant slice of the tracer study participants have crossed sectors, moving to either business or the government and allied services. The difference in scale and approach of these sectors pushed the alumni to work in new ways, leading them to report growth and satisfaction in their current work space.

## Impact of Alumni on PRADAN

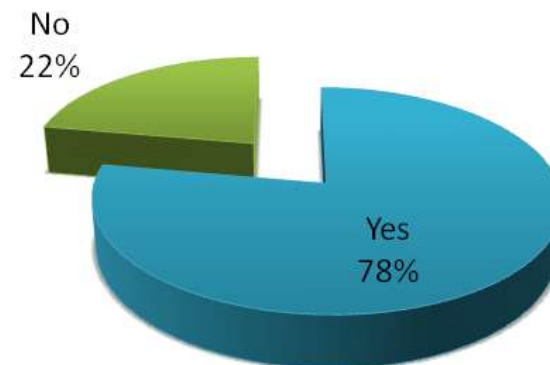
### Building the Brand Quotient

It was widely recognized by all participants that the PRADAN brand is highly valued by the government and development sectors of the country. What was, however, less recognised was that the PRADAN alumni have had a significant role in building this brand.

The stories of the alumni journeys are a testimony to the above point. With their high-impact work in the external world, deep community connect, and strong ethical fibre, the alumni have always been true brand ambassadors of PRADAN. Taken together, they have opened new windows for the business, government, and CSO sectors to experience and recognise PRADAN's impact in creating development professionals for the country.

Thus, every departure of a professional from PRADAN potentially opens up possibilities of impact in new locations and greater recognition for the organisation.

## Training – The Alumni's Need for Training, Post-PRADAN



### ❖ Training in New Domains

- Appropriate Technology
- Rural Marketing
- Child development programs

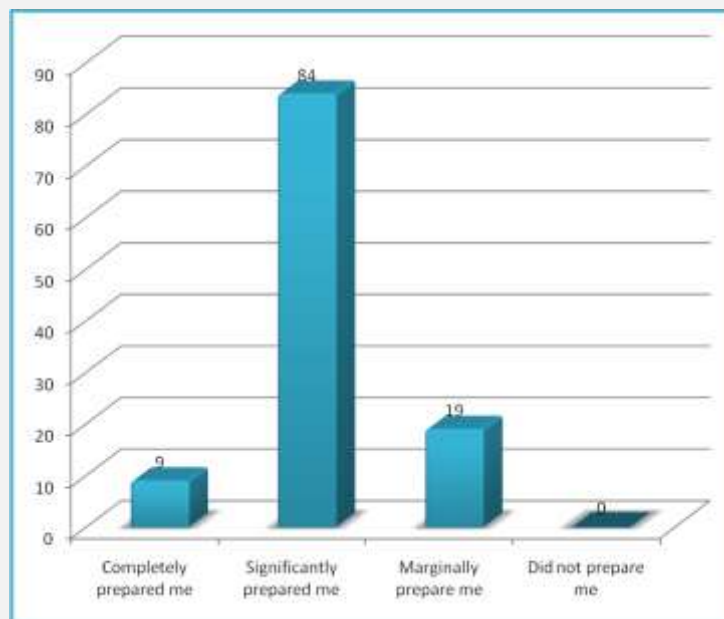
### ❖ Strengthening Conceptual Understanding

- Understanding larger perspectives of livelihoods and role of Entrepreneurship development
- More conceptual understanding of agricultural innovations, management of producer companies

### ❖ Training in New Skill Areas

- Human resource, Organizational development and Leadership training
- Programme evaluation - Rating tools, statistical analysis, evaluation techniques,
- Business Communication - Communication and presentation skills, reporting and documentation
- Grant and fund Management
- Stakeholder collaborations

## PRADAN's Preparation/Training of the Alumni



1. 75% of the respondents were of the opinion that PRADAN's experience significantly prepared them
2. 16% of the respondents were of the opinion that PRADAN's experience marginally prepared them

## The Other Face of 'Brand PRADAN'

A slice of the respondents spoke of the flip side of Brand PRADAN. They opined that while at PRADAN, the confidence of being in the organisation could make professionals feel superior in their outlook and approach. They also tabled the view that PRADAN's flexible, democratic environment, designed to encourage independent decision-making and action, gives the more structured organisations a reason to pause before employing ex-PRADAN personnel.

## Alumni as PRADAN Ambassadors

"25% of the professionals working in the country's Natural Resource Management sector are PRADAN alumni."

"There is probably an ex-PRADANite in a senior decision-making level in a majority of the top-ranking NGOs of the country."

"PRADAN's impact (on DAs) is immense. All PRADAN professionals I know (directly or indirectly), are doing extremely well, are leading organisations and ideas, and do not get co-opted by negativities of their work domains (especially those in the government)."

"Many large NGOs suffer from an identity crisis and feel they need to market their 'brand'. PRADAN doesn't need to create awareness about itself. The work of its alumni is ensuring that PRADAN is replicating."

## Conclusion

Clearly, the conduct, work quality, and impact of the alumni, *outside the organisational matrix of PRADAN*, are the true measures of the PRADAN brand. Both PRADAN and its alumni have contributed to each other's quotient of impact. PRADAN's work in developing its alumni is widely (and generously) recognised by the latter. Going forward, PRADAN may want to consider more institutional recognition of its alumni's role in the high valuation and credibility that it enjoys in the country. ■

# Conclusion: Webs of Impact

What emerged conclusively from the tracer study is that every alumnus takes with her/him, an imprint of PRADAN into the larger world of social change. **Even as PRADAN scales its direct impact on the poorest rural communities of India, its alumni have seeded, replicated, and consequently, scaled the principles and values of PRADAN (what we call the ‘normative’ PRADAN) in different geographies and domains.**

As the alumni tellingly commented, their greatest contribution to PRADAN is that they have set up high-impact CSOs in remote areas based on its principles of change. Some identified their biggest contribution to PRADAN as their (successful) efforts in integrating PRADAN values into the design and delivery of public or government projects.

What was also evident was that the alumni have created an informal—yet robust—ecosystem of support that sports the distinctive PRADAN watermark.

## Connections Between PRADAN and the Alumni

A range of associations have been forged among the alumni, and between PRADAN and the alumni:

- Senior PRADAN personnel are on the governing or advisory boards of organisations established and/or led by the alumni.
- PRADAN provides alumni support that ranges from technical advice to recommendations to funding agencies, connections to key officials in local and state governments, and field visits for their teams.
- Those alumni who are in funding agencies maintain a formal funding relationship with PRADAN.
- For several PRADAN alumni who have set up their own consulting ventures, PRADAN is a, if not *the*, key client.

However, all alumni said that accessing support from, and building relationships with, PRADAN invariably translated into connecting with an *individual* in the organisation. They did not approach PRADAN—the institution—for support. The relationships that have thus far fuelled the alumni-PRADAN connect are personal, and not organisational.

## Staying Connected

“Recently, we bid for the Odisha tribal empowerment project with PRADAN. It helps us to work as a consortium; it’s a definite advantage in bagging assignments and for doing meaningful work.”

“PRADAN continues to support us in spirit and with ideas. I keep demanding of PRADAN that it develop a training process for paraprofessionals in effective management of social change processes. This could be the biggest support that PRADAN could give us.”

“PRADAN provided me with a lot of support in setting up my organisation. It helped me to get our first large consulting business and then opened up a few crucial funding connections.”

## The PRADAN Alumni Network

95% of the participants of the tracer study said that they were part of an active alumni web of ideas and connections. This informal space served as a veritable security net, attracting

## Conclusion: Webs of Impact



Alumnus Ashwini Bhattacharya demonstrating System for Rice Intensification (SRI).

and welcoming professionals after their exit from PRADAN. Thus, the alumni had worked in each other's organisations, been part of joint consulting teams, co-created new venture ideas, served on boards of each other's NGOs, and formed a common resource pool of techno-managerial advice.

A few said that their contact with PRADAN—be it with colleagues who are still at PRADAN or with other alumni—is dwindling with time.

As many as 95% of the study respondents favoured the formation of a PRADAN alumni network. But when probed through interviews on what shape and format this network could take, the question drew mixed responses. Most were unsure of what to expect from a formal alumni initiative.

The respondents came up with suggestions on how a formal alumni network could create value for PRADAN as well as

individual alumni. These included: mapping PRADAN's future direction; playing a role in building alliances between PRADAN and the outside world (in the development field and other sectors, especially the corporate world); mentoring of new recruits; and functioning as a referral system for ex-employees.

### On Building the PRADAN Alumni Network

#### The Challenges

"PRADAN is still an organisation that I learn from. It updates its organisational knowledge and puts in place the most sophisticated technical processes before anybody else. But, it is hard to contribute to PRADAN because it does not feel the need for outside inputs. As an organisation it draws energy from itself."

#### The Opportunities

"The most positive step that PRADAN has taken in recent years is towards collaborations and partnerships. This is a new space that is opening up and a PRADAN network could be relevant in this new context." (A majority of the alumni were positive about PRADAN's openness to collaborations.)

"I certainly think that a PRADAN alumni network could be a very good resource pool for new organisations that are emerging, even for outfits that are cropping up to run government agendas."



## Charting PRADAN's Future

"PRADAN alumni are working in many different sectors and most want to give back something to PRADAN. If I were PRADAN I would use an alumni think tank to redefine my operations model (not for fundraising or project implementation), and explore the future direction that PRADAN needs to take. What should be the direction of growth? How can new sectors like IT and banking play a role in the new PRADAN?"

"A PRADAN alumni network could play a role in charting PRADAN's course in the future. We could advise PRADAN on how it can re-look its models, and revamp and update them to keep them relevant and effective."

## Brand Ambassadors

"There is the feel-good factor in reconnecting and getting back with one's family. Such a network could help in cross learning. PRADAN could map what its alumni are doing—the various areas of specialty—and so have a bank of resource persons. The alumni can create awareness about PRADAN in different sectors/areas and publicise the larger issues that PRADAN works on. They can be ambassadors."

"An alumni network can build PRADAN's image, especially since alumni are in many different professional spheres."

## Recording and Spreading the PRADAN Experience

"The documentation and sharing of knowledge and experience could be a big role. But it shouldn't be too ambitious/large, for then it is doomed. The scope of the network and the projects that it undertakes must be well defined."

## Providing Pro Bono Expertise

"At PRADAN, a mapping of alumni strengths could lead to an understanding of the parcels of contribution that individuals can make. But what is critical is for there to be a team at PRADAN to play the co-coordinatory role of actually stringing these parcels together so that they are effectively used."

## Conclusion: The View from Outside

While closing our conversations with the PRADAN Alumni, we asked them to share their perspective of PRADAN today. Most said that they felt a combination of pride tinged with some concern at PRADAN's growth. They were proud of how hard PRADAN continued to work to ensure security, dignity and livelihoods for the poorest of the country. The area of concern was the high-paced scaling of the organisation, which they felt had begun to chip at the spaces of learning and fun for development professionals. They asserted that because organisations such as PRADAN are rare, they needed to be urgently protected. ■