

Regional Winner – East (Small)



Pragati works in over 168 villages of 16 Gram Panchayats of Nandapur and Koraput Blocks of Koraput district in Orissa reaching out to 6,979 beneficiary families. It has also promoted a district level network of forest protecting communities covering 742 villages of Koraput District .

Pragati

THE CONTEXT

KORAPUT DISTRICT in Orissa is a remote tribal area and a lot of areas in this region are inaccessible. The poor and marginalised families in this region remain cut off from mainstream society. There are few livelihood options here and thus these people are susceptible to exploitation by traders and middlemen. Also, inspite of living in a forest area, they are unaware of the resources and income that can be generated from the forests.

Pragati's role is to function as a facilitator for the welfare of rural deprived sections of society in order to merge them in the social mainstream. It has initiated different interventions for the development of socio-economic standards of the people living in backward areas of Koraput district. Pragati's action areas are remote and predominantly inhabited by people from the Paraja, Kotia, Dora, Rona, Gadba and Kandha tribes.

IMPACT

Pragati is implementing different projects in remote and inaccessible pockets of Nandapur and Koraput Blocks of Koraput district for livelihood augmentation. It has planned its programmat-



ic interventions after meticulous analysis of the social, economic and political context of the area and the people. It has facilitated micro plans for the intervention villages through participatory rural appraisal in order to help communities identify their problems, their causes, effects and develop action plans for the solution of the same.

Pragati's programmes are focused on

- Facilitation, nurturing and strengthening of civil society organisations (Village Development Committee, Village Forest Committee, Farmers Associations, Women Self Help Groups for women empowerment, federation of forest protecting communities at the gram panchayat, block and district levels).
- Educate and demonstrate conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, i.e. community forest protection and management, soil conservation through plantation and land development, and micro-watershed planning.
- Enhance livelihood security of the poorest of poor and women headed families through off-farm activities and sustainable harvesting, value addition and market access to non-timber forest produce.
- Promotion of sustainable agriculture through organic farming practices.
- Establishment of seed and grain banks.
- Disaster preparedness, relief and rehabilitation.

A five-year (1999-2004) micro-watershed project, the Phuljholla Watershed project has been set up in Nandapur block through consortium approach with support from the German Agro Action. This project was implemented by a consortium of nine partners in seven districts under coordination of the Watershed Coordination Office, Bhubaneswar.

Pragati has been implementing DALAP (Disaster Prone Areas Livelihood Augmentation Programme) project (2003-2006) with support of OXFAM. An agency called Green Earth from Maharashtra evaluated the project in May 2006. An impact assessment of this project has also been completed by Margadarshak of UP for OXFAM.

Pragati has facilitated peoples' organisations and users' groups who are empowered to look after interventions after the organisation withdraws from a project upon its completion. One of its watershed projects completed in 2004 is at present owned by the community. In order to monitor the completed projects, Pragati also conducts periodical reviews with the representatives of peo-

ples' organisations and users' groups.

Pragati's programmes are distinctive because right from the beginning community-based organisations are involved in project planning, implementation and management. It attaches utmost importance to community empowerment process and building capacities of communities for sustainability of interventions. The peoples' organisations are being empowered to outsource funds from different government departments. Gender mainstreaming has been integrated in all its programme components to enable their access to and ensure their participation in community decision making.

Pragati emphasises on self-evaluation during the execution of a project by holding regular review meetings, feedback from partners and stakeholders to assess the qualitative and quantitative changes brought about by the project activities. It has a team of committed and trained staff for implementation of its various project activities.

Pragati works in over 168 villages of 16 gram panchayats of Nandapur and Koraput blocks of Koraput district, reaching out to 6,979 beneficiary families. It has promoted a district-level network of forest protecting communities, covering 742 villages of Koraput district, with a view to consolidate all initiatives for community forest protection and conservation. Two-thirds of the stakeholders belong to the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, with 80 per cent of them being small and marginal farmers.

With active community support, Pragati has been able to organise rallies, public meetings, workshops, and print posters, leaflets and booklets for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). It has also organised interface meetings between community leaders and panchayat raj institutions and line department officials.

As a result, people's organisations have played an active role in helping Pragati sensitise people to the demand for job cards, wage employment and proper wage payment in its action areas and mobilising government funds. Through its various activities, Pragati seeks to:

- To lead the people in achieving a sustainable livelihood base by promoting proper natural resource management and watershed development activities with close community participation.
- To strengthen locally available human resources and skills for the all round well-being of the community and empowering local



residents to undertake their own programmes in an effective manner.

- To educate the target groups about their problems and how to solve them with the resources available at their disposal through collective actions.
- To facilitate various development programmes in collaboration with government, donor agencies and other like-minded organizations.
- Pragati has facilitated Village Development Committees in all its action villages, 16 panchayat-level federations, farmers' associations, two block-level federations and a district-level federation of forest protecting communities. These peoples' organisations are involved in project planning, implementation and management.
- The Village Development Committees (VDCs) select the beneficiaries with facilitation of Pragati's programme staff which is approved at panchayat level federations.
- To ensure transparency in its programmes and utmost participation of different stakeholders, Pragati publishes its project proposals and budgets in the local language and circulates it to all the VDCs, panchayats raj representatives and line department officials.

Pragati's programmes are distinctive because right from the beginning community-based organisations and peoples' bodies are involved in project planning, implementation and management. Gender mainstreaming has been integrated in all its programme components to enable their access to and ensure their participation in community decision-making.

Pragati believes in decentralised administration, with a mechanism for effective control and supervision. Decision-making is collective with a hierarchical process of monitoring and supervision. Each hierarchy has its own prescribed roles and responsibilities and within their sphere, they have right to decision-making to a certain extent.

GOVERNANCE

Pragati's general body, consisting of 21 members, is the prime authority which lays down policy guidelines. It meets at least twice a year and reviews on-going programmes, chalks out strategies for new programmes based on the needs of communities, appoints statutory auditors for auditing of accounts of each financial year, frames policy guidelines and constitutes committee(s) as may be needed to bringing more transparency and acceleration in programme implementation towards realisation of objectives of the organisation.

The board consists of persons from different tracks and experiences like intellectuals, social workers and community leaders of the locality, who provide necessary guidance and inputs for resource mobilisation. The board members, belonging to the project areas, provide suggestions about the context of the area and people basing on which projects are formulated. After the preparation of the project proposal, it is discussed in the executive board, which authorises the secretary to submit the proposals to different supporting agencies and negotiate with them for



resource mobilisation befitting Pragati's organisational vision and strategic objectives.

The executive board consists of nine members, including office-bearers like chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, joint secretary and treasurer, who look after the day to day activities. The executive board is elected by the general body from among themselves for a term of two years.

The general body is open to new members also. Person or persons having commitment towards Pragati's vision, mission and objectives can apply for membership of the board.

The organisation has to interact with a number of stakeholders and there are appropriate channels of communication to deal with each of them. Some of the key stakeholders are:

Supporting Agencies: On behalf of Pragati, the secretary negotiates with supporting agencies for mobilisation of resources befitting the organisation's aims. Accordingly, reports and returns are submitted to the supporting agencies. The supporting agencies also monitor the aided projects through evaluation, reviews, field visits and feedbacks from time to time.

Peoples' Organisations: Pragati has facilitated Peoples' Organisations at different levels as one of its strategic objective of community empowerment. These organisations are actively involved in projects, which are identified by Pragati through the participatory rural appraisal and micro-plans. The project funds are also utilised through such organisations at different levels.

Panchayati Raj Institutions: Pragati's operational areas come under the Vth Schedule of the Constitution, where panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) are entrusted with a lot of powers. Hence, Pragati has taken up capacity building and liaisoning with panchayati raj representatives for ensuring proper functioning of local self governing bodies and ensuring active participation of people in the process.

Line departments of the government: The government is the largest investor in development. Hence, Pragati facilitates the process for liaisoning and linkage with line departments for mobilisation of government plans and programmes. It has established linkages with block and district administrations, and agriculture and horticulture departments, among others.

Local NGOs: In its strategy to reach out to larger groups and produce multiplier effects of all interventions, Pragati has forged alliances with 18 local NGOs having analogous ideologies and commitment towards communities, collaboratively working for

facilitation of institutionalised community forest protection and management in the district.

State and National Networks: Pragati also expresses solidarity for common cause of vulnerable communities as a member of State-level NGO forums like Sanjojana, ODMM, KBK NGO Forum and Orissa Jungle Mancha. It is also a member of various national networks like Credibility Alliance, expressing its commitments towards transparency and good governance in the social sector, and with Women Power Connect, supporting gender equity and justice towards women.

The organisation believes in decentralised administration, with a mechanism for effective control and supervision. Decision-making is collective with a hierarchical process of monitoring and supervision. Each hierarchy has its own prescribed roles and responsibilities and within their sphere, they have right to decision-making to a certain extent. Vital decisions are taken in a collective manner.

Skilled staff are necessary for better programme delivery, qualitative work and organisational growth. Pragati is a learning organisation and it attaches importance to capacity building of staff from time to time. The training needs of staff are appraised from time to time through internal evaluation and accordingly trainings are designed. Pragati invests nearly 6-7 per cent of its budget each year for capacity building of staff on themes like leadership building, communication skills, reporting and documentation and also technical aspects of Natural Resource Management and Sustainable Agricultural Practices. It also send its staff to different resource agencies and exposures for enhancing their knowledge on the thematic areas of our work.

SUSTAINABILITY

Pragati prepares projects and budgets based on context of the area and community needs befitting its long-term vision and mission. Currently, Pragati is in the process of preparing an annual plan for flow of funds. Basing on the annual plan, it will prepare the monthly plan for implementing project activities to be followed by the concerned project staff, field staff and CBOs. The Project Coordinator submits fund requisitions from time to time basing on monthly plan and funds are drawn from the bank account for utilisation. Financial status is also reviewed periodically along with project activities. The peoples' organisations are directly involved in utilisation of funds.



The organisation gives utmost importance to smooth implementation and management of programmes and office administration. There is a regular system of monitoring and supervision that helps in smooth administration and programme delivery. The programme coordinator is responsible for implementation of project activities, preparation of reports and returns supported by the team of implementing staff who are assigned with different roles and responsibilities prescribed in guidelines. There are periodic reviews, field visits interaction with people's organisations and other stakeholders that gives a scope for proper monitoring and assessment of programmes.

The organisation prefers to engage in long term partnerships. Most of its projects being implemented at present have long-term commitment from donors ranging from 10 to 15 years. Two of ongoing projects have already been signed for three years duration while the micro watershed is a four-year project.

WAY FORWARD

Pragati seeks to facilitate and strengthen vibrant people's organisations at different levels of society that will protect, utilise, control and manage local resources and through collective action, ensure dynamic socio-economic change for sustainable development by advocating for pro-poor governance and bring women, children, tribals and downtrodden, into the mainstream of society.



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