

NGO of the Year SMALL



Pragati, Koraput



THE NEED

Pragati, Koraput was established in 1992 to work for socio-economic upliftment of the poor, living in remote areas of Koraput District in Orissa. This is a remote and backward region with majority population consisting of tribals living in forest fringe villages and depending on forest and forestlands for their livelihood. Inaccessibility of the region reduces livelihood options for the poor and marginalised families, cutting them off from mainstream society and leaving them susceptible to exploitation by traders and middlemen. Agriculture is the primary means of livelihood but the small land holdings cannot provide food throughout the year. The district has low literacy rate and despite living in forested area the local people are unaware of the use of forest resources, prudent use of natural resources and the income that can be generated from forests.

INTERVENTION

Pragati works in 168 villages in remote and inaccessible pockets of Nandapur and Koraput blocks of Koraput district impacting approximately 7,000 beneficiary families.

The organisation 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 and to ensure dynamic socio-economic change for sustainable development by advocating for pro-poor governance and bringing women, children, tribals and downtrodden to the mainstream of the society". Programmatic interventions are planned for, after meticulous analysis of social, economic and political context of the area and the people. Pragati has facilitated micro-plans for intervention in the villages through Participatory Rural Appraisal in order to help communities identify their problems, their causes, effects and develop action plans for their solution of the same.

Pragati focuses on livelihood augmentation and natural resource management, addressing issues like climate change and food security for vulnerable families. Programmes include:

- Facilitation, nurturing and strengthening of civil society organisations
- Educating and demonstrating conservation and sustainable management of natural resources
- Enhancing livelihood security of the poorest of

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poor and women headed families

- Promotion of SRI (System of Rice Intensification) and Sustainable Agriculture through organic farming practices.
- Establishment of Seed and Grain Banks.
- Disaster preparedness, relief and rehabilitation.

The SRI (System of Rice Intensification) Programme works to enhance food and income security of over 2,000 small and marginal farmers and sustainable agriculture in seven blocks of Koraput district. A district level network of forest protecting communities covering 742 villages of the district has been promoted by Pragati with a view to consolidate the initiatives for community forest protection and conservation. Two-thirds of the stakeholders belong to Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes with 80 per cent of them being small and marginal farmers.

The community based organisations are involved at all levels of project planning, implementation and management including mobilisation of funds from various Government departments. Focus is on empowering the communities and building their capacities for sustainability of the interventions. Transparency is ensured in the programmes and all project proposals and budgets are published in the local language and circulated to all stakeholders-the people's organisations, panchayat representatives and government officials. Gender mainstreaming has been integrated in all the programme components to enable women to have



access to community decision-making and to ensure their participation.

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 for proper monitoring and assessment of programmes. Performance indicators within the specified time frame are set up to measure the achievements and changes to the target groups against the stated objectives and these are reviewed from time to time using the Logical Framework Analysis for each project.

Pragati emphasises on self-evaluation during project execution by holding regular review meetings, feedback is sought from stakeholders and partners to assess the changes brought about by their interventions.

The programmes are carried out on the basis of an annual action plan, which is divided into half-yearly and monthly action plans. The Director monitors the progress of project activities through monthly reviews with the core team comprising of Programme Coordinator and Sector Coordinators, who in turn monitor their respective field activities. Progress reports are submitted to supporting agencies as agreed in the MoU along with logical framework and financial statements. Audits, reviews and field

visits are also conducted by the donor agencies from time to time.

Pragati, with active community support, has been able to lobby effectively for implementation of the NREGS through public rallies and meetings, workshops creating awareness through print posters, leaflets and booklets. Interface meetings of community leaders with PRI representatives and line department officials have been organised, enabling the people's organisations to play an active role in sensitising people to demand for job cards, wage employment and proper wage payment in the action areas and mobilising government funds.

GOVERNANCE

The 23-member General Body (GB) is the supreme body of the organisation. It meets at least twice a year and reviews ongoing programmes, chalks out strategies for new programmes, appoints statutory auditors for audit of accounts of each financial year, frames policy guidelines and constitutes committee(s) as may be needed to bring in more transparency and accelerate programme activities.

The nine-member Executive Board (EB) looks after day-to-day activities and ensures compliance with laws and regulations. The minutes of General Body and Executive Board meetings are sent to all the members for information and follow up action. Pragati has well-documented human resource and financial management policies to ensure transparency and accountability.

The organisation believes in decentralised administration with 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 certain extent.

Pragati is a learning organisation and importance is given 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. Nearly 6-7 per cent of budget each year is invested for capacity building of staff members who are also sent out to different resource agencies for enhancing their knowledge on thematic areas of work.

SUSTAINABILITY

According to Pragati's organisational strategy, the General Body has nominated the Secretary responsible for resource mobilisation. Projects are formulated by the senior management in consultation with staff and federation leaders.

Support has been traditionally received from international and national donor agencies such



as Trocaire, Ireland, Centre for World Solidarity, OXFAM India Trust, German Agro Action and Sir Dorabji Tata Trust. Government support such as from the agriculture and horticulture departments and membership fee received form a small part of the organisations annual receipts.

Besides financial support, Pragati also receives in-kind support like food items, clothes, blankets, technical support and reading materials from different sources.

Pragati prefers to engage in long-term partnerships with its partners and budgeting is done for three years at a stretch. Currently, all its projects are long-term projects with commitment from donors ranging from 10-15 years. Funds raised by the organisation are supplemented with in kind contributions from the community up to almost 30 per cent of the total budgets.

“ We observed real sustainable development where the community themselves are taking issues forward, dealing with the Government machinery and making them move. The community is being empowered to use natural resources sustainably and develop themselves. ”

*Jaishree & Chandrakant,
Green Earth, Pune*