

Channel of change

TO
TELL
PEOPLE



ORISSA TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT AND LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME

Documentation and compilation

Sonali Patnaik

Arupa Mission Research Foundation

Assisted by

Lopamudra Mishra

Brahmananda Sahu

Shantanu Kanungo

Photography and Designing

Rudra Prasanna Mahapatra

Arupa Mission Research Foundation

Photography assistants

K. Mohan Rao Dora

Sushant Kumar Panda

Guidance and Input Support

Deepak Mohanty

Pravanjan Mohapatra

Introduction, Conclusion and Editing

Sudin K.

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NR Management Consultants (I) Pvt. Ltd.

Procurement Support Team, OTELP

N-1, A-5, IRC Village

Bhubaneswar - 751 015

Tel.: +91 674 2551243, 2551710

Fax : +91 674 2558808

On behalf of:

Orissa Tribal Empowerment Programme (OTELP)

Programme Support Unit

2nd Floor, TDCC Building, Rupali Square

Bhubaneswar - 751 022

Tel.: +91 674 2542709, 2547854, 2547535

Telefax : +91 674 2541772

E-mail: support@otelp.org

www.otelp.org

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In the ultimate analysis stories presented in this book are representative of many other such people or communities who have brought about these changes with willingness, ownership and hard work under very harsh and unforgiving living conditions. We salute their courage.

Documentation and Compilation Team
Arupa Mission Research Foundation



Acronyms

ASHA	: Accredited Social Health Activist
CCD	: Centre for Community Development
CYSD	: Centre for Youth and Social Development
FNGO	: Facilitating Non Government Organisation
GVT	: Gramin Vikas Trust
HS	: Hemorrhagic Septicemia
ICDS	: Integrated Child Development Scheme
IFAD	: International Fund for Agriculture Development
NGO	: Non Government Organization
NREGA	: National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NRM	: Natural Resource Management
OTELP	: Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme
PRDATA	: Phulbani Rural Development and Technology Agency
PTD	: Participatory Technology Development
RASS	: Rashtriya Sewa Samiti
SHG	: Self Help Group
SRI	: System of Rice Intensification
SWWS	: Society for Welfare of Weaker Sections
UNWFP	: United Nations World Food Programme
VDA	: Village Development Association
VDC	: Village Development Committee
VDF	: Village Development Fund
VDLP	: Village Development and Livelihood Plan
VLSC	: Village Level Sub Committee
VSS	: Vana Sangrakshana Samiti



Foreword

Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP) started in 2004. Today it is in the mid-term of its implementation. The Programme seeks to empower the tribal communities and enable them to improve their livelihoods and achieve food security.

The Programme is built on the principles of convergence right from the funding arrangement till the implementation on the ground. A key challenge is to ensure food security for the tribal communities who are witnessing a gradual erosion of their traditional resource bases, not just in the scale but also in its productivity. This calls for more than just a productivity enhancement programme and actually needs a holistic approach that includes enhancing the knowledge and skills of the tribal farmers.

The tribal community needs systematic support in enhancing their awareness of their rights and entitlements. They need institutions, those that help them connect productively with the external institutions and services, those that instil confidence in them, those that help them access and negotiate their rights and entitlements, those that represent their interests and those that can help them identify and make use of economic opportunities in the long run. They will also need the confidence and the skills to manage these institutions on their own. A large part of OTELP initiatives are therefore geared towards enabling the tribal communities to develop and manage institutions like Self Help Groups, Village Development Association, Village Level Sub Committee, Village Level Social and Financial Audit Sub Committee, Adibasi Bazaar Committee.

OTELP uses a mix of short-term, medium-term and long-term strategies in response to the operating context. It focuses on improving the food security of the people. The land and water resource development works provide employment to people giving them better cash wages and food support. Convergence with NREGA has helped in this. These works have a medium to long term impact on improving the productivity of the farmlands, most of which were affected by erosion and run-off. The regeneration of hills degraded due to the practice of shifting cultivation will help restore ecological balance in the long term. Besides, the increased productivity of farm lands and better self-employment opportunities in the non-farm sector are reducing shifting cultivation.

Creating synergies at all levels between various groups of stakeholders is critical to the success of these strategies. OTELP involves a close partnership between international agencies at the funding level, national and state departments, government agencies like Integrated Tribal Development Agencies and non-government organisations, people's institutions and resource agencies.

This document attempts to capture, in the voices of the tribal communities, their experience of working in partnership with the Programme; the type of change that they feel in their lives. OTELP is thankful to all the institutions that have come together to address this huge challenge and all the people who are involved at different levels to implement the strategies on the ground. It is grateful to the tribal communities for their enthusiasm, trust and partnership.

Deepak Mohanty, IFS
Programme Director, OTELP



Introduction

South-western Orissa is one of the most deprived regions of India. It has a population of 1.4 million, and three quarters of the people are poor. Among the population, 50 per cent belong to tribal groups, and 12 per cent to scheduled castes.

The region is marked by dense forests and the terrain is undulating and dotted with hills. The villages, particularly the ones inhabited by tribal communities are often situated in remote pockets of this region. Poor connectivity and low levels of infrastructure characterise this region. The communities score very low on almost all the human development indices.

It is in this region that Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP) has been operating since 2004. OTELP is a jointly funded initiative of International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) Rome, Department for International Development (DFID) UK and United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) and Government of Orissa. The Programme is anchored with the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste Development Department (ST/SC) of the Government of Orissa.

OTELP works for the empowerment of the tribal communities residing in the districts of Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nawarangpur and Rayagada in the South-west of Orissa. The tribal communities here suffer chronic poverty, have very poor skills and poorer access to new skills and knowledge, live in remote areas and face regular food shortages and morbidity. In short, they face deprivation on several fronts. So, any programme that wishes to bring a lasting change in this situation has to overcome multiple challenges and come up with multipronged solutions.

The Programme has chosen its goal statement as "to improve the quality of life of poor tribal households in remote areas through livelihood support and food security". OTELP adopts a rights based approach with 'empowerment of the tribal communities' at its core; empowering them to plan and manage their development. It focuses on helping the poor people build and strengthen institutions that can help them to access financial services, markets, skill development opportunities and basic services.

The wide swathe of the Programme covers activities to enhance the food security of the people, supporting the community based organisations to take greater control of their development process, helping to bring legal clarity to land titles for the tribal people, enabling people to access better wages and self-employment opportunities, and developing better infrastructure at village level.

The Programme is multifaceted as they try to cover aspects related to improving the productivity of land under permanent cultivation, water resource development, diversification of agriculture, reducing the dependence on shifting cultivation, enabling the communities to obtain better returns from the forest produce, improving livestock productivity, enabling people to come out of chronic debt trap through SHGs and skill building.

OTELP has a multi-layered delivery mechanism with decentralised implementation and facilitation. It seeks to put 'decision making' as close to the community as possible. On an average, three to four villages or hamlets exist under one micro watershed. Hence Village Level Sub Committees (VLSCs) have been formed at village level in addition to the Village Development Committees (VDCs) at the watershed level. The VLSCs handle a portion of the funds under the project. At the district level, Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA)



acts as the Programme Management Unit (PMU). A facilitating NGO (FNGO) is selected at the block level to provide support to planning and capacity building processes at community level. At the state level, a Programme Support Unit (PSU) under the ST/SC development department manages the Programme.

The Programme is designed to run for ten years. It aims to reach and positively impact the lives of around 75000 households in about 1080 villages in this period. As the Programme enters the fifth year, it is nicely poised to use the experience gathered so far to charter the path ahead; to understand the impacts created so far to refine strategies for future.

The Programme is trying to overcome complex challenges in the region. It will be a tremendous morale booster to the Programme to learn about the specific differences it has made to the lives of the poor people. And what better to do this than getting to understand it from the people who have experienced that change first hand. This publication is an attempt by OTELP in this direction. It is based on interactions with the tribal communities in Gajapati, Koraput, Kandhamal and Kalahandi districts. They portray some of the difficulties faced by the tribal people in these villages and hamlets to put 'food on the table'. At the same time they are also about the new hope and confidence coursing through the collective veins of these people, which in a small measure can be attributed to OTELP.





Channel of change


Surrounded by lush green hills, Mahaguda village is home to 180 households of the *Kandha* tribe. It is a part of Kuturubeda panchayat in Bandhugaon block of Koraput district. It started getting support from OTELP in the year 2005, when the Programme selected the Maa Tarini Micro Watershed for implementation. The villagers consider the 700 meter long field channel as the most popular support from OTELP. Twenty households benefit from it. They have organized themselves in to two user groups of ten members each. The groups are yet to be named by the members.

Jagarao Praska, a member of one of the user groups says, "The land holding of the members varies between 1-5 acres. Before the field channel, we grew only a single crop of paddy in summer. Most of it was rain fed. Only 40 acres could be irrigated. After harvest, we worked as daily wage labourers for wages as low as Rs.35 for men and Rs. 30 for women. This way we could manage enough for six months of the year with the rest being a big struggle."

During the Participatory Rural Appraisal by OTELP team and the facilitating NGO(FNGO), RASS, the villagers identified construction of field channel as a major need. The first 350 meters was constructed by the user groups in 2006 and the second 350 meters in 2007. Now approximately 800 acres of land is being irrigated by the channel, bringing water from Rupanikata *nadi* (stream).

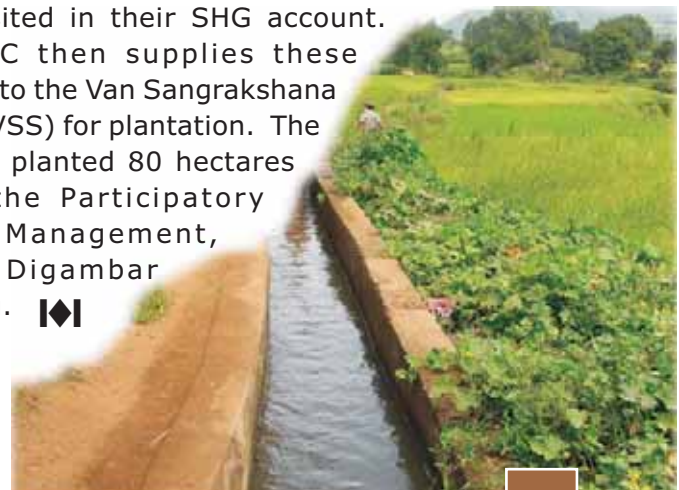
"Now we grow two crops of paddy as well as vegetables. The produce from the first crop is kept for our consumption alone. People now have enough food for eight months. Only those who have two or more acres of land manage to grow enough for the whole year. The produce from the second crop of paddy currently fetches Rs.700-800 per quintal and

one acre yields 20 quintals of paddy. Another remarkable achievement for us is that we have been able to successfully negotiate minimum wages from the contractors. Since the wages for NRM activities is higher in OTELP, we demanded the same", says Sridhara Khara, the Secretary of the VDC.

Jagarao Praska is now able to buy fresh fish from the local market at least two times a month and also has vegetables with each meal. Earlier it was mostly salted dry fish and rice with *saag* that was locally collected from the hills. Both his sons study in the government school and avail of the mid day meal scheme. Raska Basanti, Jagarao's wife has become the member of a Self Help Group initiated by the FNGO; RASS. Raska says "I have been able to buy some gold and new clothes after being a member of the SHG. My group also works in the plant nursery supported by OTELP. "Saplings of *Sishu*, tamarind, etc. are sold to the Village Development Committee (VDC). The money is deposited in their SHG account. The VDC then supplies these saplings to the Van Sangrakshana Samiti (VSS) for plantation. The VSS has planted 80 hectares under the Participatory Forest Management, says Digambar Dasbabu. 



Jagarao Praska





The 'ABC' of fair processes



The Adibasi Bazaar Committee was set up with OTELP support by PRDATA, a facilitating NGO in Tumudibanda block of Kandhamal district.

It was an innovative way of institutionalizing transparent marketing mechanisms that enables the tribal community to negotiate better prices for their produce. It enables them to have more control over the price. Earlier they were being exploited by middlemen, traders and money lenders.

The Adibasi Bazaar Committee (ABC) came into being after PRDATA found out how the tribals received low returns and profit and were cheated not just in price but also in weight. They cheated by entering into a barter system with the tribal producers and using a non-standard weight of *mano*. The traders used to fix a uniform rate of Rs. 12 per *mano* for any produce. To compound the problems, the traders also misbehaved with the villagers and often paid them in parts.

These malpractices were noticed in 24 villages in seven watersheds during the baseline study. It was then decided to set up a free weighing centre at Belghar market. The villagers would be issued slips with the details of their products and the weight. They would be made aware of gradation and cleaning of the produce.

After the weighing centre was set up, people learnt to weigh their produce and the weights were recorded on paper. Each individual had his or her own record. The

traders resented this initially. But with time and the pressure from the villagers, who were more organized and aware than before, they reluctantly accepted it. The traders now do not weigh the produce of anyone who carries the *chit* from the ABC.

The process was by no means very easy. Village meetings were organized in the villages to introduce the concept of Adibasi Bazaar Committee. The community couldn't believe that they could negotiate with the traders. At the same time they knew that they were being cheated and had nothing more to lose. The traders also have to do business and they will need the supply. Village marketing committees were formed with two members each from the self help groups and the user groups. The VDC took the responsibility of monitoring the marketing processes at cluster level.

The Adibasi Bazaar Committee ensured marketing of the produce to obtain better price from the business community at block level. It was for the first time that such a marketing system was tried on such a large scale in Kandhamal. There now is a growing awareness among the tribal community about the alternate marketing avenues,



Farmers weighing their produce at the ABC



bargaining and negotiating of rates, correctness of weight and value chain processes.

They now understand the benefits of collective bargaining, value addition and tracking market rates. They are developing faith in their own abilities to own and manage institutions. They have begun to see the value in increased involvement of women's self help groups, stocking and timely repayment of loans.

With the success of this concept, there is now a demand for scaling it up throughout the OTELP watersheds in Kandhamal. MART has developed processes for collective marketing of specific products and its market linkages. The scaling up of this concept would include the processes of product planning, sharing of market information, capacity building of different communities and initiating the formation of the Adibasi Bazar Committees.





Touching lives in different ways

Minapai Village of Majhigouri micro watershed has 140 households and is situated in Laxmipur block of Koraput district. It comes under Kutingia Panchayat. OTELP started working in this watershed in the year 2006 with assistance of CYSD. The activities of the Programme spanned the areas of Natural Resource Management, Livestock rearing and breeding, composite farming, System of rice Intensification (SRI) and supporting traditional bamboo craft-making.

Today the impacts of these activities are beginning to be visible in Minapai. The forest dependent community traditionally collected bamboo from the forest for making baskets and other artifacts. Radhika Baag of Maa Samalai Group says, "Since collecting bamboo from the forest is a very time consuming process, our production remained low." OTELP convinced the women in the village to form SHGs. The women working on bamboo formed the Maa Samalai SHG with 12 members. This group received a support of Rs. 5000 from the revolving fund and bought 60 bamboos from the market. This way they could focus only on production and managed to make large quantities. When traders came to know of such quantities, they came to the village and offered to buy from the group. Each member earned a profit of Rs. 300 from the Sale. They returned the seed money and took another loan of Rs. 15000.

With support from OTELP and facilitation from CYSD, 6400 bamboo saplings were planted in 16 hectares (ha) of common land at a spacing of 20 x 20 feet. This will help people find bamboo easily and sustainably. Thus it honoured the demand from the community, made during the micro planning process. Besides these two aspects of the Programme support, the group also benefited from the construction of a farm pond. They have now started growing fish as well.

The multi dimensional nature of the Programme activities has had a wider impact in the village. "OTELP helped rehabilitate 40 ha of the hill degraded due to shifting cultivation.



Radhika Baag

Plantations, gully plugs, staggered trenches and check dam have helped to reduce run-off and increase percolation. The seasonal stream had water all round the year for the first time in many years. Irrigation became possible for nine months against three months earlier. Farmers have started growing three crops in the year. With diversion weir and field channels 19 acres of upland is being irrigated now compared to eight acres earlier", says Ashish Kumar Garada, community mobiliser.

Farmers have gained a lot from the training on composite farming and use of organic manure and pesticides. During Participatory Rural Appraisal, the concept of composite farming was introduced. CYSD arranged a visit to Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Simliguda for a group of farmers to learn about this method of farming.

This is not all. Ashish Kumar Garada says "To supplement the meager agricultural income many of us rear goats. But these goats were of the 'Black Bengal' variety which produced less meat and fetched only Rs. 800 to Rs. 900. The Programme then supplied three bucks of 'Jamunapari' variety for breeding with the 'Black Bengal' goats. Now almost all



Raghu Meniaka



the household have cross-bred goats in varying numbers. People are expecting a price of Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000 for each of these goats. Some villagers have been trained by OTELP to take care of the bucks.” Raghu Meniaka who is in-charge of the ‘Jamunapari’ bucks, says “I take total care of them. Every morning I take them out for grazing. In case of any health problem the nearest veterinary doctor is immediately consulted.”

S a n j e e b Meniaka, the watershed association secretary, says “For those having poultry, in three villages OTELP supplied



Sanjeeb Meniaka

seven roosters of 'Banaraja' variety for breed improvement. The cross-bred chicks are much bigger and healthier. Now almost all of us are keeping poultry and earning an extra sum of up to Rs. 300 per month.

With so much positive change around them, the people of Minapai decided to convert an area of 700 ha that was under shifting cultivation into a green belt through plantation of teak, bamboo, mango, amla, japhra, tamarind and sishu. This mindset change has been one of the most significant impacts of the Programme in this village in such a short time.





Rebuilding lives

Mahani Dei and Rupang Majhi



Jivan Jyoti SHG Group of Amjhola village was formed in the year 2000. The group had 16 women as members but they did not have access to any funds to do anything more than savings and credit activities. Rupang Majhi (45) and his wife Mahani Dei (35) also live in this village with their five daughters and a son. Likewise do Bali Majhi and his family of four.

Most of these families belong to *Kutia Kondh* tribe. They worked hard throughout the year to grow crops like *niger*, *ragi*, *corn*, *kandula* during rains. Most of them take loans from moneylenders mainly on occasions like festivals, marriages and funerals. When they fall sick they visit the village quack (*Guru*, *Gurumai*). Like most families, Rupang Majhi's

family also faced food shortage for four months in a year.

They owned one acre of land on which they grew paddy. They

practiced shifting cultivation from July to December, which yields them Rs. 1,500 on average. From January till June, he and his wife worked as

labourers for low wages of Rs. 10 per day. They didn't send their children to school. They were regularly paying Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 as interest on various loans.

Bali Majhi also owns one acre of agricultural land. He too practiced shifting cultivation from July to December and worked as a casual labourer for rest of the period on wages of up to Rs. 20 per day. He had mortgaged his wife's gold ornaments for a loan of Rs. 2,500. This was 13 years ago and he still has not managed to release them. Not only that, he regularly borrows Rs. 400 to Rs. 500 every year from the moneylender.

It is in this backdrop that OTELP and through it, the NGO Antodaya started working in Amajhola. They called a village meeting and introduced the process of micro planning. During this process the NGO and OTELP team were made aware of the gravity and extent of the poverty in the village. OTELP and Antodaya convinced the villagers to undertake various soil and moisture conservation works and agricultural development activities for improving their livelihoods. They were also introduced to new knowledge and skills and encouraged to try new crops and new but proven technologies in agriculture. As the Programme objective became clear to the people, they also started seeing the various opportunities to improve their lives.

Like many others in this village and elsewhere where OTELP started working, Rupang Majhi and Bali Majhi along with their wives began getting regular work for building check dams, contour bunds, field channels, staggered trenches, ponds and plantations. The work was not only regular but at Rs. 70 per day it was six to seven times better paying than their earlier works. They are both able to earn up to Rs. 20000 per year. They have both also gained from the expert advice and training on agricultural practices provided by the NGO.

Bali Majhi



They are able to grow 10 to 15 bags more of paddy from their lands. Both of them have started sending their children to school. While Rupang is planning to buy gold for his wife, bicycle for his son and bullock for farming; Bali has managed to release the mortgaged gold ornaments by paying Rs 10,600 to the moneylender.

While these two were rebuilding their lives and lifting their families out of the debt trap, the Jivan Jyoti SHG was also looking for ways to improve the lives of its members. In a meeting they decided to use the

facility of hassle and interest free credit from the village development fund (VDF) to do some business. In January 2006, they took a loan of Rs. 40,000 from the VDF to purchase hill broom, niger and mustard from the nearby

villages. The group earned a profit of Rs. 20,000 when they sold this to Local traders. They repaid the loan and with their profits again purchased niger and mustard for Rs. 20,000 and made a profit of Rs. 8,000. They have deposited this income in the group account. The group has also received training for making *amla* and ginger squash,

processing of *Kandula* and making hill broom.

A m j h o l a village comprises of 32 families and is a part of Nakurundi Panchayat of Kalahandi district. This village is

surrounded by lush

green forest under Jijraja watershed of Thuamul Rampur block. OTELP started working in this village during the year 2005.



Jivan Jyoti SHG members





Fruits of hard labour

Bangusahi is a village consisting of 43 families in Jirang Panchayat of Rayagada Block, Gajapati district. OTELP started in this village in 2005. The village comes under the Jambunala Village Development Association (VDA). The village has mostly Saora tribal families residing in it. The people in the village are illiterate, suffer from chronic poverty and poor health.



Swetambar Sabar

Swetambar Sabar is 35 and lives with his wife, two sons and a daughter. Prior to the start of the Programme, he used to work as a labourer in nearby places for wages as low as Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 per day. Besides, he also sold lemon and earned around Rs. 150 per year. He had mortgaged two acres of his fertile land to borrow money for his father's treatment and



Rama Sabar

education of his children. He also had to give five Kgs of cashew nuts to the moneylender every year towards loan repayment. His main worry however was the lack of regular work.

After OTELP started, this worry has been taken care of for now as he easily finds work in the several land development activities. Besides, he also works in the village nursery. Furthermore, he gets a much higher wage of Rs. 70 per day in OTELP as compared to his wages elsewhere. Thus he has managed to save money and release his land by repaying the loan of Rs. 6000 to the moneylender. Swetambar has started cultivating his land. He also attended the training programme on SRI organized by the NGO, SWSS and started applying this method for growing rice. He obtained 22 quintals of paddy from two acres.

Swetambar now manages a monthly income of around Rs. 2000 from manual labour. He proudly says that he now engages other people as labourers to work on his own land and pays Rs. 30 per day to them. He is now saving money to send his children to a better school.

Rama Sabar too lives in this village with his wife, two sons and two daughters. He owns no land and works as a share cropper in nearby villages. He and his wife also work as manual labourers. But work was not available to them on a regular basis and the wages were as low as Rs. 15 per day. Their average annual income was Rs. 2500 per year. It was not sufficient for them for taking care of the needs of their family. Food was scarce for six months of the year. To tide over lean periods they borrowed from moneylenders, but unlike Swetambar he did not possess any land to mortgage. He worked very hard to repay the mounting debts. They even stopped sending their children to school.

But like Swetambar, Rama also found regular work in OTELP activities and on the same wages of Rs. 70 per day. His average monthly income increased up to Rs. 2000. He also works as a share cropper in other peoples land. Now a days he has a saving account in



which he saves Rs. 25 per month. The family situation is improving gradually and there is now more food in the house. He now plans to send his children back to school.

Besides enabling these individual families to escape the poverty trap, the Programme has also made a difference to the lives of a group of men in the village. The Programme along with SWSS motivated this group of 12 men to form an SHG. This group was called Nirjhar and was formed in 2006.



Nirjhar Group

According to Basudev Bhuian, president of this group, while some members did not own any agricultural land, some of the others had mortgaged theirs to the moneylenders. Putting food on the table everyday became a difficult task.

Their knowledge of agriculture was limited to traditional crops and they never tried any new method or crops.

In their first meeting, the Nirjhar group with support from OTELP and SWWS decided to open a joint account in Rusikulya Gramya Bank and to save Rs. 10 per month. During the year 2007 they collected a total Rs. 3,700 from the members and leased 20 tamarind trees on the village common land for one year. In February they sold tamarind worth Rs. 25,000. Since they now have regular income from working on the various land and agriculture development activities in the Programme, they decided to deposit the entire proceeds in the bank and not to distribute the profits. The group plans to invest this money in trading of cashew nuts and to lease more tamarind trees next year.

The problems facing most of the households were very similar. Most of these families have benefitted immensely from the wage employment opportunities created by the land and water conservation and development activities in the Programme. The land owners have benefitted by improved land productivity and better agricultural practices. The SHG and revolving fund has managed to help people pursue small business opportunities to rebuild their lives. The story of Bangusahi is not an isolated one.





Asato ma sat gamaya

(from darkness to light)



"We have moved from living in darkness towards light," says Limbe Wadeka, the secretary of the 'Wadeka Raju Jani' village energy committee(VEC). Tinganput village, which would otherwise have remained in darkness due to absence of any conventional electrification due to its remoteness now boasts of being electrified the renewable way.

It all started when the people of the village identified electricity as their primary need while developing their village development and livelihood plans (VDLP) in 2005. The FNGO, Vikash facilitated this exercise under OTELP. In consultation with the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) Hyderabad, the Programme sent Talsu Minikia, Minakshi Diwan, Pulka Wadeka, Bunei Hidreka to Paderu to learn fabrication, wiring and installation of solar electrification system. The training was organized in 2006 and was for five and a half months duration.



Pulka Wadeka with solar lamps

On their return to the village, the women discussed their experiences with everyone and suggested setting up a solar lighting unit. The community responded enthusiastically and

thus 'Wadeka Raju Jani' VEC was born. A bank account was opened in the name of this committee. The four women, who received the training along with few other women became members of this committee. The villagers told the committee to go ahead do whatever was Necessary to set up the unit.

To make the unit self sustainable it was decided to collect user charges of Rs. 50 per month from each household. Further, a fixed amount Rs.700 will be collected from each household for replacing the battery at the end of five years. The lighting system was inaugurated on March 26th 2007 by Mr. Lennart Bage, President IFAD. The system supports a 18 W lighting system in every household with additional facility for radio, Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) lanterns and one street lighting system.

The women have registered themselves as the Orissa Tribal Women Barefoot Solar Engineers Association (OTWBSEA) under the Societies Registration Act 1860 on October 3, 2008. They say this will help them to get funds for expansion of their solar lighting business. Pulko Wadeka, a leading member of the energy committee says, "We have learnt how to set up different solar lighting products and systems. We know everything about capacitors, condensers, integrated circuits (IC). Now we want to assemble and market solar lights in Orissa. We can also repair the system and the battery as long as we can get



Krushna Chandra Wadeka



the spare parts. We are confident of working as well as the barefoot solar engineers of NIRD.”

The women in the village say that their lives have changed ever since their homes have been electrified. Earlier, they would have to get up early in the morning and ensure that all the household chores are completed within day light. This was besides working in the field which anyway could only be done during the day. “But now we can do some activities in the evening. We have started cooking a little late and grind the millet in the evening. The pressure on us during the day has reduced. We are more comfortable and able to work harder,” says Pulko.

Once when the battery was stolen, the energy committee lodged an FIR with the police, pursued the case and managed to have the culprit caught. The battery was put back in place.

Dalu Nishika, the first graduate of the village and ex-community mobiliser in OTELP is now a teacher with the *Sarba Sikhya Abhiyan*. He says,



Dalu Nishika

“Children have benefited a lot from electricity. They can now study in the evenings. When I was a child, I could only study during the day. The changes in my village are quite noticeable compared to others where there is no electricity. Life has become a little easier.” The present community mobiliser, Krushna Chandra Wadeka who is also studying in high school feels that sale of solar lights would be a great source of income to the energy committee.





United we gain

Kandula or pigeon pea is a very popular pulse in the tribal pockets of Kandhamal including Bearmah village. Lazara VDC manages OTELP activities at Bearmah with support from the NGO, Jagruti.



Samila Malick

The President of the VDC, Sukanto Pattomajhi says, "Earlier the trader used to collect *kandula* from our doorsteps. He would then take it to his house, measure and fix the rate. We had no idea of how much we have sold as the weighing was

never done in front of us. We were then advised by OTELP to collect all the *kandula* in one place and weigh and note down how much each person has given and then negotiate with different *sahukars* for a good price. Jagruti and MART would sometimes find out and inform us about the rates prevailing in Phulbani. We would then sell it to the trader offering the highest price. Last year (2007) we sold 220 quintals of *kandula* collected from 56 households. Collection and weighing was done in a single day itself."

The earnings varied from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 35,000. While Guda Mallick earned Rs. 35,000, Samilla Mallick says, "I earned

Rs. 15,000. I could buy clothes, food, medicines and most importantly asbestos sheets for the roof of my home."

Brahmavati Pattomajhi has four daughters. She and her husband sold *kandula* worth Rs. 17,000. With that amount she was able to buy two *bharis* of gold for her daughters to wear. She was also able to pay the school fees



Panicka Malick

(Rs. 2,000) each for her two daughters who are now studying in the Jubaguda School which has hostel facilities. Panicka Malick has four children. She earned Rs. 23,000 from selling *kandula* last year and bought some gold. Panicka says the gold can be mortgaged during any emergency. She also wants to keep the gold for her daughters' wedding.

Susmita Pattomajhi says that they grow *kandula* in the hills through the practice of shifting cultivation. However, with the increasing opportunities for wage and self-employment becoming available in the village, they do not need to do shifting cultivation. She hopes that work would always be available for all otherwise they might have to go back to their old methods of production of *kandula*.





(Interest)ing concept

There has been remarkable change in the lives of the people in the Bearmah village. Philimania Pattomajhi the secretary of the Soudamini SHG says, "Food is now available throughout the year."



Philimania Pattomajhi

every 10 kgs borrowed. At present a quantity of 54 quintals of paddy is outstanding with different people. So far nine quintals have been collected as interest. All those who had borrowed grains have paid the interest. The capital quantity of grains will be repaid after the harvest this year."



Henri Pattomajhi

"By being able to borrow grains from the *sashya panthi*, people have stopped going to the *Sahukar*", says Philimania. Henry Pattomajhi, the secretary of the VDC says that when all the grain has been borrowed from the grain bank and till such time people return it, any food shortage is met through the three kilos of paddy paid along with their cash wages under the Programme. The community is planning to construct a storehouse for the grain bank. At present Soudamini group has been given the charge of the grain bank.

The members of the Soudamini Self Help Group mention that they had to borrow money regularly from the local moneylenders to buy food during the lean season or during festivals like Christmas. They have had to mortgage their land, ornaments and even standing crops in the field. For the last one, the rate of interest depends on the quality and quantity of the standing crop. The moneylenders charge an average interest rate of Rs. 10-15 on every Rs.100 borrowed.

Things began to change when, under OTELP, the NGO Jagruti introduced the concept of *sashya panthi* (grain bank) to the village. The record keeper of the grain bank, Jitendra Malick says, "It has been unanimously decided that anyone wanting to borrow grains can do so at an interest of 200 grams of paddy for

Bearmah is a remote village in Kothagad block of Kandhamal district and is inhabited by the Kutia Kondh tribes. OTELP is being implemented in the village with the facilitation of the NGO, Jagruti through the Lazara VDC.



Jitendra Malick





Aroma of success

Hari Shankar says, "People come from Vishakahpatnam, Hyderabad and Mumbai. The industries that produce cosmetics, incense sticks, balms, aroma therapy, ayurveda, soaps and other cleaning liquids and solids, perfumes etc. have a need for lemon grass oil. Lemon grass cultivation has changed the standard of living of many people in this block. You will hardly find a person who has not benefited from either its production, oil extraction or its export. There is no unemployment now in Katulipeta village."



Hari Shankar

Hari Shankar is popularly known as the 'father' of lemon grass cultivation in Bandhugaon block of Koraput district. He has trained many people on lemon grass cultivation in the district. Tired of

continued poor production of paddy and minor millets, several people have changed to cultivation of lemon grass and oil extraction.

O TELP is operating in the Pedallama micro watershed and Katulipeta is one among the three villages under this watershed. Hari Shankar the President of the VDA. Nukallama and Pardesiamma are two Self Help Groups in Katulipeta. These were formed in 2004 but became defunct within six months. When O TELP started its work in the village in 2005, the FNGO RASS revived these groups and trained them in maintaining books and records, accounting, meeting, managing conflicts and business management.

They first received a seed capital of Rs. 5,000 each from O TELP, which they invested in

growing Tobacco. They had low profits as the production was limited due to lack of rains. They then decided to grow cotton. The Programme helped them get a loan from the Utkal Gramya Bank Alamanda. The production again wasn't much because of a dry spell. The groups incurred a loss of Rs. 30,000 collectively and members went back to working as casual labourers.

Having seen the success of Hari Shankar in lemon grass cultivation and having failed with cotton and tobacco, the women decided to try growing lemon grass. Hari Shankar assured to buy their entire produce. He

trained them on the cultivation practices. The VDC agreed to finance 50% of the total project cost which came to Rs. 32,500. The group managed to get another Rs. 50,000 as loan from the bank. With this money they cultivated lemon grass in 35 acres. Because of the assured market they are expecting a return of around Rs. 11,000 per acre per year.

The women said that there is a great demand for lemon grass oil. One can get up to four crops in a year. With one planting they can continue to harvest for two years. There are around nine oil extraction units in the village itself. Inspired by the success of these women, few young men from the village formed an SHG called Majhigouri and have also begun growing the lemon grass. RASS now plans to procure oil extraction units for the SHGs.



SHG members in field





Slopes and bunds

Kundra Mandal



The farmers of Nidhigudi micro watershed consider the construction of the check dam as a turning point for their villages. They say that this check dam has benefitted them immensely. The construction began in the year 2006 after OTELP along with the NGO PEACE chose this watershed to work in. It took two years to complete at a total cost of rupees three *lakhs*.

The need for this check dam was felt as the farmers were losing their crops or were not able to cultivate their fields. During rains and owing to higher degree of slope, water would run off at great speed carrying the precious top soil with it. Kundra Mandal, a farmer with 14 acres of sloping land, says that cultivation was only possible during monsoons and it was also during this time that the rainwater would wreck the land. The villagers mainly grew *makka* (maize), *mandia* and *janha*.

The decision to build the check dam was taken in the VDC. Besides the check dam, the VDC also decided to support land leveling and bunding of sloping lands like that of Kundra's. Not only did it help Kundra but it also provided much needed cash wages and 2 ½ kgs of rice for several people.

Kundra says, "I have a large family of nine members. Earlier I could only produce 8 to 10 Kgs of *makka* that we kept for our own consumption. During summer we had *mandia*

and *janha*. We rarely ate rice. If anyone fell sick we did not have the money to take them to the hospital, as Berhampur is 150 kms, Gunpur is 60 kms and Chandragiri is 40 kms from where we live. I once had to take a loan from the *sahukar* for this purpose. I was always dependent on him. In 2002 when I got my daughter married, I took another loan by mortgaging two acres of land with him. I am yet to recover the land."

Kundra says that on the land that he still possesses, he has started taking two¹ crops of Paddy in a year, which is



Check dam

new to his Saora co-villagers. This, he feels has been possible only due to the check dam and the field channel. He now cultivates Lalat, Puja and RGL varieties of paddy. This year he expects 80 to 90 bags² of paddy. Like Kundra, there are other farmers who have benefited from the construction of the check dam, field channels, leveling and bunding. Junas Gomango, Joseph Rohita, and Padma Mandal are some of the farmers who were previously practicing shifting cultivation and were very badly affected by the dry spell in 2003.

Soloman Mandal, the secretary of the VDC, says that the trainings and exposure to different agricultural practices has changed the outlook of the farmers. They not only practice double cropping but have also changed their food pattern. For example, earlier they had gruel with *sag* boiled only in water and red chilli paste as their main meal. People have started trying out new dishes that they tasted during their visits outside. ◆◆

¹ Once each in Kharif and Rabi seasons. ² One bag = 75 Kgs





There is something in the air

The Patangipadara village is waking up to a new aroma these days.

The smell of fresh bread and cakes emanates from the first ever bakery

unit in the village. The unit was set up by the women of Halleluiah Self Help Group.

Patangipadara is one of the villages in the Badanala micro watershed in Gajapati district. While discussing the various business opportunities with the NGO PEACE and OTELP team, the women from the group expressed their desire to start a bakery. In Tari Rohita's words "There is great demand for bread in our locality as there are no bakeries for miles together in these hills". This was the rationale behind choosing this business.

PEACE helped arrange three rounds of training for the group at the bread factory in Mohana block of the district. They not only learnt to make bread and cakes but also learnt about storing, packing and marketing these.

The women are glad that they took the advice from the Programme and its NGO partner to come together as a group and start regular saving. Their family members, who were initially opposed to them forming SHGs and engaging actively in the Programme activities, are happier now. Each member saves Rs. 10 every month. The group deposits it in their



Tari Rohita

account with the Rushikulya Gramya Bank, Udaygiri. At present they have a total saving of Rs. 20,000.

Once they acquired the requisite skills in baking, the next critical task was the necessary infrastructure and location for the bakery. This is where the enabling provisions of the Programme came to their help. The group contributed Rs. 5,000 while they received a support of Rs. 45,000 from the Programme to build the room. Then they borrowed Rs. 20,000 from the Revolving Fund of the Programme to purchase tools and raw materials for baking.

Tari Rohita says, "We have learnt how to make bread and cut it. We have also learnt to make cakes. We sell a packet of bread for Rs.10. We have also appointed a man to help us with the baking and there are other people who help us sell the products in nearby villages. Earlier we spent most of our time only on shifting cultivation which is a difficult activity and not very profitable. The income from baking unit is regular and good and we also have time for ourselves."



Mausiya Rohita is a trained baker, who trains others. So the SHG employed him at the rate of Rs. 50 per day. Then there are others who also have started earning a living by selling


Sayuri Rohita



the products of this bakery. Thus the group has been instrumental in providing employment to other skilled people in the village.

Sayuri Rohita, a member of this SHG says, "As the only local school doesn't function regularly, I wanted my children to study elsewhere but didn't have the means to do so. Now as the bakery unit profits have started pouring in, three of my children are studying in private residential schools in Mohana. I paid admission fees of Rs. 1200 for my son who is

in class I, Rs. 2,000 for another who is now in class VII and Rs. 2,500 for my daughter who studies in class IX. Often in the past I would pull my daughter out of school whenever we had a financial crisis. She has dropped out twice already. But now, there will be no problem."

Women in the group are happy that besides earning profit, the bakery has also helped to change the attitude of their families who now respect them and look forward to the bread baked by them. 





Adibasi Bazaar

Guchkadu Majhi



Inhabited by the *Kutia Kondhs*, Kadapana is an interior village in Belghar block, *Kandhama* district. The women of this village engage themselves in collection of forest produce like hill brooms and *siali* leaves for meeting

their daily needs. February is the month for collection of hill brooms while *siali* leaves are available in the forest throughout the year. The best *siali* leaves are available right after shifting cultivation when the creepers produce new leaves. The villagers also cultivate *kairi*, mustard, *judhanga* and niger. Niger is grown in October and November, *judhanga* in November and mustard in January.

Guchkadu Majhi says, "The *mahajan* used to buy these products from us individually. He would measure everything in terms of a *mano*¹ and pay Rs.10 to 12 per *mano* for any of these products except *siali* leaves. Then PRDATA told us about the Adibasi Bazaar Committee (ABC). We collected all our produce there and sold it to middlemen after negotiating the price".

With support from OTELP and PRDATA the women of the village organized themselves into two self help groups namely Karkapatangisaru and Laxmibai. In 2007

Laxmibai group earned a Rs. 3,200 and Rs. 6,200 in 2006 as profit from the sale of niger through the ABC. "The revolving fund with which we had done the collective marketing was returned and the profit was shared among the members", says Guchkadu.



Judhanga

"There has been a change in our food consumption since the Programme started in the village. Earlier we mostly had rice and *judhanga*, *kairi* and *mandia*. Vegetables were not a part of the daily diet. Now the women visit the local markets just to buy vegetables" says Subala Majhi the VLSC secretary.

Jayanti Naik and Kinadadu Majhi of karkapatangisaru SHG have bought some gold from the profit. Kinadadu

Majhi says, "The gold is for my daughter's wedding. Earlier when PRDATA was not there we would go to the moneylender and borrow money to buy gold. The interest rate used to be very high".

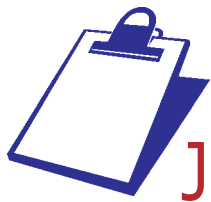


Kinadadu Majhi



¹ A *mano* is equivalent to 4 Kgs





Journey of a sarpanch

Vataka Ratanu is 29 years old who is always on the lookout to do a good turn to those who needed assistance. Having been educated up to ninth standard he would help others in his villagers with writing letters, petitions, applying for pensions etc. At the same time he was also searching for a suitable opportunity to work that would give a direction to his life. His dream came true when OTELP started work in his village. Vataku learnt about Participatory Rural Appraisal, Problem tree analysis and assisted the teams from OTELP and RASS in doing household survey and entry point activities. These skills enabled him to be of assistance to the entire watershed community.

The Gadahada micro watershed has two villages, Ramjiput and Kanagaon. Even though, Vataku belongs to Ramjiput village, both villages nominated him as the President of the VDA of the watershed. Soon after he was elected as the Sarpanch of Kanagaon Gram Panchayat.

Subudhi Dama, a peon in the Sarpanch's office says, "Ratanu is a very nice boy. He has always been helping others; especially old people to get their pensions. He did this even when he was not holding any office. He did lots of good work for the watershed villages. We trust him and therefore elected him as the Sarpanch by a margin of 947 votes"


As sarpanch, Ratanu faces a stiff challenge. The Panchayat has seven villages in it but OTELP works only in three. "Often there is conflict between these and the non- OTELP villages as the former have received vegetable



Vataka Ratanu

seeds, saplings and have gained from various agriculture and other development activities. Ratanu now implements other development schemes in non OTELP villages by using the acquired participatory approach. "I am trying to cover all the elderly people in the 11 wards under the old age pension scheme," says Ratanu.

His vision is to increase the collection in the village development fund (VDF), so that when OTELP withdraws, the villagers can still carry out development activities and maintain the existing watershed structures.

Vataku Ratanu says that interactions with OTELP and RASS have changed his life completely. He has learnt new skills and improved his knowledge of the world. He can now easily maintain accounts and records, conduct meetings and social audits and talk about any subject; be it women's empowerment or agriculture. This has helped him a lot in carrying out the duties of the Sarpanch with confidence. 





Challenging and winning

Saraswati had studied till class ninth. When OTELP started working in Padallama micro watershed of Bandhugaon block, Saraswati was married and was a part of a large joint family. As she was literate and grasped things well, RASS with OTELP's support trained her as a community mobiliser. Gradually with further training, she became a trainer herself.

Saraswati started training the SHGs. She also imparts training on agriculture and natural resource management. She has an intuitive knack of identifying best locations for soil and water conservation structures. The Project identified and honed this further by providing her training. Today the community has high regard for her skill. She is often called upon to help in identifying the most appropriate and best location for developing watershed structures such as ponds, embankments, field channels.

Working with OTELP and RASS she gained a lot of experience and confidence. She has also learnt to facilitate meetings and regularly helps to conduct different kinds of meetings. Her good work is much appreciated by the community. This appreciation sustains her motivation and her tenacity keeps her going

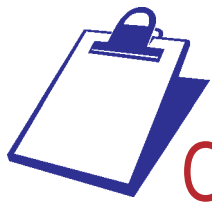


Saraswati

despite the lack of much support from her immediate family.

Not content with resting on her laurels, she likes to continuously challenge herself. She wants to learn new skills. Today, Saraswati is the ASHA of her locality. She provides health and hygiene advice to the villagers and provides help to pregnant women for counseling and check ups with the doctor, birth registration and certification. Saraswati has also become the ward member. Other women in the village are highly inspired by her dedication and confidence and achievements. The young girls also want to emulate her and gain the respect and recognition of their families and the community.





Overcoming challenges



Dina Nayak

Dina Nayak is physically challenged right from his childhood. He belongs to Prustiguda village of Kaniguma Gram Panchayat in Thuamul Rampur block in Kalahandi district. He has a large family with five sons and two daughters. His family completely depended on his father's earning as a cowherd. Meanwhile as his father grew old and it became too difficult for him to work, the family lost their main source of income.

The family has 1.5 acres of undulating land which yields about two quintals of paddy. It is not enough to last them till next harvest. His wife worked as manual labour in and around the village but the income was not very sufficient for the large family. Sometimes they went without food. Dina Nayak was forced to go door to door to borrow money but was unable to get a loan due to the high interest rates and mortgage.

When the OTELP started working in his village he came in contact the NGO, Gram Vikas. On February 23, 2008, he was selected by the VDA to receive a loan of Rs. 5,000. With this,


Dina bought some goats. He has made a profit of Rs. 3,350 in a period of eight months. At the same time his wife got 15 to 16 days of manual work in the Programme's land development activities. The wages included both cash and food grains.

OTELP also helped Dina to level his land and build contour bunds to check soil erosion and run off during rains. With this, his land became more productive and it produced four quintals of paddy this year in 1.5 acres. While this is still not very high but with better seed and better cultivation practices, he can hope to increase the production further in the coming years.

He is on the look out for a suitable business opportunity that is profitable and demands less physical stress. The support from OTELP



Dina Nayak With Family

and Gram Vikas this year has given him new hope and confidence. He is planning to open a grocery shop in his village. He also wants to educate his children so that they have a better future. 



Intensified efforts

Paddy under SRI



When Mela Menieka decided to try the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), he hoped that it would work for him as it has worked for the farmers in Gunupur and Padua villages. When OTELP and CYSD first introduced the farmers in Minapai village of

Laxmipur block, Koraput district to this concept, it was met with skepticism. The promised yields sounded unrealistic and that too with a huge reduction in seed usage. "This can't be true", they all said.

Mela felt that there might be nothing wrong in accepting OTELP's invitation and support in going to Gunupur and Padua and seeing for himself. He returned amazed but being a practical man, he first tried this system with only 200 grams of seed. He couldn't believe the yield of 4.5 quintals. But this time it was in his field. He says, "I have five acres of land of which I was growing paddy in two acres in the traditional way. I was using 65 kgs of seed of the local variety. Further, the pesticides and fertilizer would cost almost Rs. 300 per crop. It was difficult to meet these expenses. With support from OTELP and CYSD I visited Gunupur and Padua villages and saw the SRI system of growing paddy. I was convinced that it would work. So I volunteered to be the first to try it in my village but on a very small scale."

In the next year he grew his paddy in the entire two acres using the SRI system. "I am now more than happy with the yield. After seeing the result, now almost 25 farmers have adopted the SRI practice. They are waiting

for their first crop while this is my third crop."

One of the farmers inspired by Mela's success is Sanjeev Menieka. He says, "The results of SRI have been beyond our expectations. Earlier we used to grow food to last us only for 6 to 8 months but now there is absolutely no food insecurity. This method costs between Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 3,000 per acre but the profit is more than double of the traditional method. With the extra income we are now able to lead a comfortable life. We are now celebrating our *parab*¹ without any money constraint and we hope to get our daughters married in a good way by giving her good ornaments."



Mela Menieka

Most farmers in this village own between one to five acres of land and grow rice, *mandia*, onion and garlic. Mela and Sanjeeb say "We never realized that yields could be so improved. In the traditional system of growing rice, only those who with three acres or more were able sell a portion of their produce. Others just about managed to meet their own consumption for the year and worked as manual labourers for part of the year. We were buying food on a daily basis".

They feel that SRI is much better as it uses very small quantities of seed but yields more. The planting of saplings in rows with a spacing of 10" inch reduces labour cost as compared to planting in 4" spacing. Irrigation facilities have improved due to soil and water conservation activities in OTELP. Only organic pesticides like neem and *karanaja* oil are used. So the cost of pesticides is also reduced and yield is much more than double.

¹ Annual festival of tribes in Koraput.





Born to lead

Pada Sahi village in Sanatundi Panchayat of Rayagada block of Gajapati district has 16 households. It falls in Badapathara watershed supported by OTELP. Laxmi Bhuian is 48 years old who lives in this village with her family of five members. She used to work as manual labourer on daily wages. She used to get Rs. 30 and her husband Rs. 50 per day as daily wages. Laxmi had no knowledge about the *Palli Sabha*. Laxmi and her family had to struggle hard to feed themselves throughout the year. Her family had to regularly borrow money from the moneylenders. In 2004, she was elected as ward member of the Panchayat from this village. It was during this period that she gained basic knowledge about the role of *palli sabha* and entitlements of the community.

In 2006, OTELP started its work in Rayagada block with facilitation from SWSS. A legal aid camp was organized and Laxmi joined the camp. The Collector of Gajapati district was also present. He explained about various government schemes and entitlements such as medical facilities, free education and information on land records. Laxmi Bhuian informed the Collector that it is not easy to avail these facilities, especially information on land records. The Collector assured her that he would look into all such matters in their village and within a month all villagers got their land records. This was a major achievement for her and the village. She became confident of her actions.

Laxmi then convinced all women in the village to attend the *Palli Shabha* to know more about their rights and entitlements. With the support of SWSS, a block level federation of women SHGs named Udyam was formed in 2006.

Laxmi Bhuian was elected uncontested as the President of the federation. She was elected due to her strong communication skills, friendly nature and because she listened to their grievances and assisted them immediately.



Laxmi Bhuian

Under OTELP, people began getting work regularly in building infrastructure such as village roads, walls, bunds etc. People also received higher wages of Rs. 70 per day. Villagers have also developed a nursery in the village and have planted cashew trees. OTELP has also supplied mango saplings, paddy and niger seeds. They have managed to earn a profit of Rs. 5000 per annum from the sale of cashew nuts from common lands.

Kanta Rani Naik from the same village says, "Once when the transformer was damaged and there was no electricity in the village for many months, Laxmi went to the Executive Engineer and registered a complaint. After that, the transformer was repaired. Even the men in the village respect her leadership quality." Laxmi says her other achievements include getting an aid of rupees two lakhs for construction of a wall and getting permission for cultivation of 12 acres of land for the 16 families in the village.





Prevention is better than cure

Pison Micro Watershed in Gumma block of Gajapati district is witnessing the growth of one its youths under OTELP. From being a community level worker (CLW), Sashi Gamango is now employed as a member of the Watershed Development Team with responsibility for livestock development (WDT-Livestock) in the watershed. In the year 2006, Sashi received training on livestock husbandry, health, disease prevention and identification and first aid with support from CCD and OTELP. This training for para-vets was conducted in Tahajung village for three days in which ten people including sashi were trained to be para-vets.



Sashi Gamango



Simon Sabara

“Earlier people used traditional methods to treat their livestock. For example in Hemorrhagic Septicemia (HS) of cattle traditional herbs were given. Some animals would survive while others would die. But after the training, we know that this is a

bacterial infection and can be prevented by vaccination. So now we vaccinate the cattle before the outbreak. As a result, there has been a reduction in the cases of HS in our watershed. We have also been given sophisticated kits with medicines and containers for storing vaccines and instruments. Some of the common diseases we find here are Hemorrhagic Septicemia, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Fever,” says Sashi.

Simon Sabara, secretary of the Debagiri micro watershed is a trained ayurvedic practitioner who also looks after the ayurvedic healing programme of CCD. He says that some of the traditional herbs are very effective, especially for physical injuries like fractures. These herbs are recognized in the ayurvedic system of medicine. He believes that a mix of traditional and contemporary medical practices as and when required would be beneficial for people. Simon illustrates his point and says, “Earlier FMD was application of turmeric, honey and mustard oil on the sores. This gives relief from the pain. However, now people realize that it is better to prevent the disease. So with the help of the Livestock Inspector and para-vets they have started vaccinating the animals before November which is the season of outbreak. Despite this, if there is an outbreak then the traditional method helps relieve the animal from pain.” The para-vets have been linked to the Livestock department of the government to support them for better out reach.





From borrower to lender

Rajbhui Majhi



Rajbhui Majhi is a young and hard working person belonging to Kalakupa village of Bijapur Panchayat of Lanjigarh block in Kalahandi district. The village has a predominant tribal population. Rajbhui is the eldest son in the

family and lives with his old father, two brothers and one sister. He has four acres of land where he worked hard to grow paddy, *ragi*, black gram, *janha*¹, and horse gram. But the yields were low due to lack of irrigation. To tide over food and financial crisis he had to mortgage his pair of oxen to borrow money from the moneylender at an interest of 5% per month.


When two people from his village asked him for financial help, he couldn't help but think of his earlier situation. He was glad that he got the opportunity to improve his situation. It happened after OTELP started in his village with assistance from Gram Vikas. Before this Programme, Rajbhui had received 200 banana saplings from ITDA. But he says "I had no one to guide me on its cultivation. The OTELP team taught me the finer points of banana cultivation. I soon got the results as I sold bananas worth Rs. 10,000. I had never seen so much of money together at one time." His achievement was appreciated by everyone. He was called to Bhubaneswar by OTELP to share his experience.

OTELP and Gram Vikas, in the mean time had already built an irrigation canal in the village.

This helped farmers to produce a variety of crops including vegetables. With OTELP support Rajbhui's land also has been leveled and he began cultivating vegetables like onion, tomato, carrots, radish, and ginger on it. He uses only organic manure. He made a profit of Rs. 2,500 from onion, Rs. 500 from tomato, Rs. 200 from radish and Rs. 100 from carrots. He did not have to go any where to sell them as an SHG in his village bought these from him. In addition, he has also adopted the SRI method of growing paddy. Now in place of the 3 to 4 quintals of paddy, he gets a minimum of 10 quintals per acre. Rajbhui also works as a manual labourer whenever land development activities of OTELP take place.



Rajbhui Majhi in his field

Rajbhui Majhi loaned Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 4,000 respectively without any mortgage to the two people who sought his help. They have promised to pay him an interest of 2% interest per month, which is much lower than that of the moneylender. He has also spent Rs. 2,000 for the treatment of his father. Rajbhui dreams of purchasing a house of his own. 

¹ Sorghum





Upward mobility

Udhaba Naik has stopped going out of the state in search of work. He now gets sufficient work in his own village. He gets paid Rs. 70 per day which includes three Kgs of rice at Rs. 10. Now he is growing crops like niger, *ragi*, *kosala*¹, and paddy on his land and is able to earn about Rs. 5,000 to 6,000 from this in a year. He is able to now earn around Rs. 25,000 per year.

But things were not always like this. Udhaba is 25 years of age and lives with his family in Jalkinda Village under Bijepur Panchayat of Lanjigarh block in Kalahandi. His family consists of five members. He owns four acres of agricultural land, which he used to cultivate only between July to October. During the remaining period of the year he used to go to Kerala to work as a domestic labourer. He managed to earn an average of Rs. 15,000 per year. But his expenses were much higher due to his large family and high medical expenses. The cost of living was also very high in Kerala.

Udhaba worked hard throughout the year but did not enjoy the fruits of his labour as much as he should have. He had to even mortgage two acres of his land for a small amount of Rs.5000. Now the moneylender took a major part of whatever he grew on the land. He would visit the village quack for treatment in case of illness. At times he would give Rs.10 and sacrifice animals to please the Gods. He had earlier borrowed from the moneylender for festivals. He had to pay an interest of 3%.



Udhaba Naik

When OTELP started working in this village in 2005, it supported lot of agriculture development works. Soil and water conservation structures began to be built, plantations were taken up, and nurseries were established, among other things. All these generated employment in the form of manual labour for people like Udhaba. Besides working on land development activities, Udhaba also works in the village nursery. In 2007, he managed to release his mortgaged land. His own land benefitted from the development work and he also learnt better agriculture practices as well as received better inputs.

His family does not face food scarcity now. He has purchased a motor cycle, mobile phone, three goats and five hens from his own resources. He hopes to add significantly to his income from these. Udhaba doesn't depend on moneylenders now.



¹ Green leafy vegetable





Seizing opportunities

Ramia's family faced food shortage and scarcity for about four to five months in a year. From January to April every year, he had to work as a daily wage labourer in his own and nearby villages for wages as low as Rs.10 per day. During monsoons he practiced shifting cultivation on the uplands. He grew and sold 4 to 5 bags of paddy. He also collected and sold firewood in the nearest market. This would fetch him not more than Rs. 30 per day. All these put together was also not sufficient to support his large family and their basic requirements. Every year he had to borrow money from the money lenders at an interest of 5%. Ramia Naik lives in Talatahajanga Village with his family of seven members.

Talatahajanga is a tribal village under Gumma block of Gajapati District, where OTELP started its work in 2005. It is inhabited by the Saora tribe and is located in the Pison micro watershed. The main focus of the Programme is to ensure food security and livelihoods of the villagers during the lean period. Communities with the facilitation of Centre for Community Development (CCD) built a large number of NRM structures in this village such as check dam, loose boulder structures (LBS) and canals for proper land and water management to enhance soil fertility and productivity.

Ramia Naik's family was identified as vulnerable. He was convinced to attend the training programmes on horticulture, vegetable cultivation, soil and water management, agriculture and collective marketing conducted by the Programme and

CCD. He is currently applying CCD's Participatory Technology Development (PTD) processes for farming. He treats the seeds before sowing and participates in seed exchange programmes. He has been able to double the



Ramia Naik

production to get 10 bags of paddy in the *Kharif* period. Ramia says he has developed a keen interest to cultivate vegetables during the Rabi Season.

He also works as a casual labourer in the various NRM activities undertaken in the Programme and also gets Rs. 70 per day through NREGA. His wife is now a member of the village SHG group. Ramia says that his family has benefited a lot from the support of the Programme and therefore participates regularly in its training programmes.

As a result of his hard work Ramia now sells vegetables twice a week in the local market. His income has become more regular and he manages to earn an average of Rs. 2,500 per month. His wife has taken loan of Rs. 300 from the SHG to send their children to school. "The SHG charges an interest of Re 1 per Rs. 100", says Ramia. He is thankful to CCD and OTELP for enabling him to earn a better and regular income.





From resource less to being a resource

Gangana Gomango



Gangana used to migrate to Arunachal Pradesh to work as a casual labourer. Living conditions were very harsh there. His son also used to go with him. Put together they would only bring back Rs. 1,500, most of which was used to pay off the moneylenders.

Gangana Gomango is fifty and has a large family of 13. In his absence, the family survives by collecting wood from the forest and selling it. "We celebrate Christmas in a big way and the expenses are high, so we need to take loans. Family members fall ill and that requires attention too. Things reached a peak when we were neither able to take any more loans or repay the previous ones." Gangana sighs and says, "*Aame daridra ru daridra hei gaulu. Kintu OTELP aoo CCD asila paure saubu thik heigaula.*"¹

OTELP and CCD started working in Talatahajanga village under Pison micro watershed in 2005. The focus of the Programme was on improving the livelihoods of people like Gangana. After several rounds of discussions and planning in the VDC and in the community it was decided to include them in agriculture training and Participatory Technology Development (PTD) programmes.

Gangana learnt to sow, transplant, and harvest in the right way, learnt how to develop

a nursery and learnt about pesticides and fertilizers. He also learnt about the SRI and PTD methods for growing paddy. SRI was new to all of them in the village. "But I began practicing SRI and got good yield. The yield from PTD was also good. This influenced others also to take up the same. I have also taken up double cropping. Today, I earn so much that I am able to meet all my expenses without going to the moneylender. In the past one year my medical expenses have been very high. My wife was not well and I myself had liver infection. Besides, my grand daughter has sickle cell anemia and needed blood transfusion. Other children of mine have had malaria now and then. I spent almost Rs. 16,000 on these and that too without going to a moneylender. This has been



Gangana Gomango Demonstrating

possible only due to the profit I made by adopting the SRI and PTD methods of cultivation", says Gangana.

Another thing that he has learnt is to negotiate with the cashew nut traders. Earlier the traders bought cashew nuts from him and paid him on the basis of *mano*, where one *mano* was equivalent to 3 ½ Kgs of nuts. They paid him Rs. 40 per *mano*. But when the Programme sent Gangana and others to





Palasa to understand the cashew market, they learnt that cashew is traded on the basis of standard measure of Kilograms(Kg) and fetch the same price per Kg that they were getting for a *mano*.

"Now we make a telephone call to

Palasa to find out the current rates and fix ours accordingly so that the trader also makes

a profit. When four or five traders turn up we bargain and negotiate the rates with them. At present a kg of cashew nuts would not fetch less than Rs.45. People's earning has gone up through collective marketing² of cashew."

Due to lack of resources, Gangana had stopped his daughter from going to school. Now with a better income and motivation of the CCD Programme staff he has readmitted her in school. From a migrant labourer, Gangana has turned into an agricultural trainer. He trains people on SRI and PTD. People from different villages come to him for advice. He belongs to the Lung II hamlet of Talatahajanga village.



¹ "We became poorer than the poor. But after CCD and OTELP came, things became alright."

² Instead of selling individually, the farmers pool their produce and sell it as one lot thus generating greater economies of scale and having a better bargaining position vis-à-vis the trader.





Combining traditional knowledge and modern means

Hatimunda village is in Lankagad Panchayat of Tumudibandha block of Kandhamal district. The only way to approach this Panchayat is through a *kacha*¹ forest road which takes over an hour to cover the eight kilometres. Nestled among the hills, Hatimunda faces the wrath of a perennial stream which floods and silts and casts sand and gravel on agricultural land during continuous and heavy rains.

O TELP is working in this village through the facilitating NGO PRDATA. Tulasa Patro is the president of the VDC. He belongs to the Gonda tribe. The problem of flooding and sand casting of lands was one of the major issues of discussion in the VDC in the early periods of the Programme. Based on his father's traditional knowledge and with support from O TELP, a check dam of bamboo, mud and stone was built and field channels were constructed to reduce the force of water and divert it gently to the fields.

Personally, Tulasa considers field bunding and land levelling as two of the most effective interventions that worked for him. "All the water used to drain out of my field earlier and during heavy rains it used to spoil my field. Now the field bunds protect my land and at the same time the water soaks in slowly. The difference can be easily seen when you look at patches where there is no field bund. These areas invariably are full of sand and gravel after the rains."

Earlier Tulasa used to produce 50 to 60 bags (each bag of 75 Kgs) of paddy in a year from 10 acres. He never had enough to sell after setting aside for family's consumption. Right after paddy, *kolotha* (horsegram) and *mandia* were grown in summer. This was again for self-consumption. The family, thus managed




Tulasa Patro

to have sufficient food for eight months in a year. The remaining four months he worked as a casual labourer to put food on the table.

Besides helping him construct the field bunds, the Programme sent him and others in the community on exposure visits to see better agricultural practices. He also received training from agriculture experts who were invited by O TELP and PRDATA.

"I am producing 70 bags of paddy in a year. I have also increased the production of *mandia* and *kolotha* by using the techniques explained to us by PRDATA. Now I have to work as a casual labourer for only two months", says Tulasa.

Tulasa has also learnt about sunflower cultivation. Last year he produced 800 kgs of sunflower seeds from two acres. He took it to an oil press and converted it into 11 tins of sunflower oil; each tin containing 16 litres. He sold 10 tins for Rs.1,000 each, earning him a profit of Rs. 10,000. Tulasa spent the money on clothes, festivals and medicines. He kept a tin of oil for his household consumption. Earlier his family was using niger oil for cooking. The sunflower season will be starting soon and he plans to grow it in five acres this year. Tulasa says he expects a profit of Rs. 25,000 from sunflowers this time. 

¹ Fair weather



Conclusion

The publication features the 'stories' about real people, their real struggle, and their hopes. These stories are from four different districts of South-west Orissa and are about the lives of different tribal groups. But they are united by a common thread of structural disadvantages and deprivation, harsh living conditions, vulnerability and struggle for survival.

These are also united by the underlying resilience that people in this region have shown. The hope that sustains itself despite several setbacks. It is their strength and also their vulnerability. The development programmes wanting to work with these communities must recognise this. The existing strengths of the community and individuals need to be identified and programmes and projects should facilitate them to build on these. Saraswati, Vataka Ratanu and Laxmi are examples of how a little encouragement, recognition and support can go a long way in helping people make the best use of opportunities and grow to heights they once couldn't hope for.

Development entails linking the resource poor and vulnerable section of the population to a complex and lesser known environment of modern institutions, with the objective that they will benefit from the association in a sustainable manner. It therefore becomes important to see that the poor are in a position to negotiate their rights and entitlements. Mechanisms are needed that can mitigate the risks associated in such cases. Institutions that are relevant and sensitive to the needs of the Poor people can be one such important mechanism. We see several examples of this among the successful women's SHGs like Jivan Jyoti, Nukallama, Pardesiamma Karkapatangisaru, Laxmibai, and Halleluiah and of VDCs like Lazara VDC.

Institutions like Adibasi Bazaar Committees help level the playing field to some extent for the disadvantaged communities. The collective marketing of produce gives the poor producers, who individually do not command the economies of scale, the necessary bargaining tool to obtain a fair return for their toils. It is also important to trust the inherent capacity of the people to make a right choice. Programmes and projects can present options to them and encourage them to explore and experiment. Such a process will lead to sustainable adoption of change as opposed to innovations being thrust upon them. The example of Mela Menieka is a sterling one in this context.

We also see from the experiences of Tulasa, Mela and Sanjeeb Menieka and Kundra the importance of supporting the farmers to improve the productivity of their lands. Very often these solutions are uncomplicated and come from the community itself, who possess a deep knowledge of their environment. It is also important to enable the people to access new and appropriate technologies and inputs that have the capacity to significantly augment the productivity of their resources. The examples from Minapai village where the traditional 'Black Bengal' variety of goat was cross-bred with 'Jamunapari' buck and the training of farmers on System of Rice Intensification (SRI) are some of the many in the Programme.

One of the most significant lessons underscored by these stories is that programmes will have to rely on a variety of strategies that simultaneously work at different levels; individual, group, community, men, women and impact different resources; natural, physical, human, social and financial. Separately each of them is a necessary condition for development but not a sufficient one.

These are stories of hope that several people in these villages are experiencing. These are stories of confidence that they are feeling. These depict a resolve that the people have to improve their lives. These stories encourage all those who have participated in the process of change to keep moving ahead.



Glossary

Adibasi	: Tribal community
Amla	: <i>Emblica officianalis</i> (Indian gooseberry)
Alasi	: <i>Guizotia abyssinica</i> (Niger)
Bazaar	: Market place
Bhari	: Ten Grams (usually used in gold & silver)
Chakunda	: <i>Casia siamia</i> . It is commonly planted in social forestry projects for firewood purpose.
Check Dam	: A check dam is a small, temporary or permanent structure constructed across a drainage ditch, canal or channel to reduce the speed of water flow.
Diversion Weir	: It is a small weir or wall across a stream or river, diverting water into a pipeline or tunnel. It is used for soil and water management.
Field Channel	: These are channels for the flow of water from a stream, reservoir, check dam, canal etc.
Gram Panchayat	: Unit of local self governance in rural areas under the 73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution
Gully Plugs	: Barriers or plugs of different types of material are put at certain intervals across the gullies to prevent erosion.
Guru	: Traditional healers.
Gurumai	: Traditional healers
Hemorrhagic Septicemia	: Hemorrhagic septicemia is a bacterial infection in cattle.
Japhra	: <i>Bixa orellana</i> . This is a shrub with inedible fruits, harvested for its seeds which contain annatto, known for its colouring properties.
Judanga	: String Beans
Kandula	: <i>Cajanus cajan</i> (Pigeon pea).
Kharif	: The season of cultivation from June to September during monsoons.
Kolotho	: Horse gram
Kondh	: A tribe in Orissa. Among the 62 tribes they have the largest population in the state.
Kutia Kondh	: A primitive tribe. They are considered to be a section of the Kondh tribe, but more primitive.
Lalat	: Variety of paddy
Lakh	: One hundred thousand
Mahajan	: A moneylender



Makka	: Maize
Mandia	: <i>Eleusine coracana</i> (Finger millet or Ragi)
Mano	: A traditional measure equivalent to 4 kilo grams approximately.
Micro Watershed	: A geo-hydrological unit having a common drainage point and an area of approximately 500 ha
Mohula	: <i>Madhuca indica</i> . The flower is used for brewing local liquor by the tribal communities and edible oil is extracted from the seed
Rabi	: The season of cultivation from October to January during winter
Sahukar	: Moneylender
Saora	: A primitive tribe of Orissa.
Sarba Sikhya Abhiyan	: Education for all
Sarpanch	: The elected head of a Gram Panchayat.
Sashya Panthi	: Grain Bank
Sishu	: <i>Dalbergia latifolia</i>
Siali	: <i>Bahunia vahlii</i>
System of Rice Intensification (SRI)	: A method for increasing the yield of rice invented by French Jesuit Father Henri de Laulanie in Madagascar
Tamarind	: <i>Tamarindus indica</i> .
Teak	: <i>Tectona grandis</i> .
User Group	: Groups which are associated with one or other community oriented assets.
Village Development and Livelihood Plan	: A micro plan developed at the village level.
Vana Sangrakshana Samiti	: It is a Forest Protection Committee that works jointly with the Government for forest protection
Village Development Association	: It is an institution registered under the Society Registration Act (1860) to function at the micro watershed level.
Village Development Committee	: Executive body of Village Development Association.
Village Level Sub Committee	: A sub committee at the village level









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For more information, contact:

NR Management Consultants India Pvt. Ltd.
C/o. CABI, Office Block, II Floor
National Agriculture Science Center
DPS Marg, New Delhi - 110 012
E-mail: info@nrindia.co.in