



LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE ANDHRA PRADESH RURAL LIVELIHOODS PROJECT

1998-2007

Janet Seeley

OCTOBER 2007





LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE ANDHRA PRADESH RURAL LIVELIHOODS PROJECT



1998 - 2007

Janet Seeley

OCTOBER 2007

*This publication is an output from a project funded by the
Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom.
The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID
or the Governments of India or Andhra Pradesh.*





Janet Seeley holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Cambridge (1985). In 1987, after postdoctoral research in Zambia on poverty and HIV and AIDS, she joined DFID (then ODA) and spent 13 years in long-term postings as a technical cooperation officer/ researcher/social development adviser for DFID in Uganda, Nepal and India. She joined the School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia in 2000 and since then has been engaged in teaching, research and consultancies.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
ABBREVIATIONS	5
INTRODUCTION	6
BACKGROUND	7

LESSONS FROM DESIGN 8

LESSON 1: Commitment, time and sharing common aims	8
LESSON 2: Gaps in design	9

CONTENTS



LESSONS FROM IMPLEMENTATION 10

LESSON 3: The importance of process	10
LESSON 4: Focusing on people (not on resources)	12
LESSON 5: Broad-based participation	14
LESSON 6: Quality in capacity building	16
LESSON 7: Men are gender too – gender mainstreaming	17
LESSON 8: Human resource development	19
LESSON 9: Strength through convergence	20
LESSON 10: Working with NGOs	22



LESSONS FROM DFID'S WITHDRAWAL 23

LESSON 11: Mapping out the way forward	23
--	-----------

OVERALL LESSON 24

LESSON 12: Never a stand-alone project!	24
---	-----------



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone for their contributions to the lessons I have listed in this short document. My apologies for any errors and omissions; they are entirely my fault!

Janet Seeley
Norwich, UK



APARD	Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development
APD	Assistant Project Director
APMAS	Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivrudhi Society
APREGS	Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
APRLP	Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project
CLDP	Comprehensive Land Development Programme
CRD	Commissionerate of Rural Development
DCBC	District Capacity Building Centre
DFID	Department For International Development
DPAP	Drought Prone Areas Programme
GIS	Geographical Information System
GoAP	Government of Andhra Pradesh
Gol	Government of India
HRD	Human Resource Development
IKP	Indira Kranti Patham
LRC	Livelihood Resource Centre
MANAGE	National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PD	Project Director
PIA	Project Implementing Agency
PMU	Project Management Unit
PSU	Project Support Unit

RDT	Rural Development Trust
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VO	Village Organisation
WASSAN	Watershed Support Services and Activities Network

ABBREVIATIONS



The first recorded reference to the soon-to-be Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (APRLP) is contained in a DFID file note dated 6 January, 1998. The note outlines possible future-projects in the area of rural development and lists 'Watershed and Wasteland Development' as a possibility for an input in Andhra Pradesh. The note records the enthusiasm of the then Commissioner, S P Tucker, for the establishment of a collaborative venture in watershed development. Two of the ventures in that file note went on to get DFID support. One was for watershed development and the other for women's banking. Mr Tucker's enthusiasm carried us all forward in both. By the middle of 1998 we were participating in design workshops in Hyderabad for the new watershed-based project. At that time I was Social Development Adviser in the Rural Development Group of DFID India. I soon became DFID Project Adviser for APRLP, a post I held until I left DFID-India in September 2000. I then took on the role of Project Adviser on a consultancy basis through DFID, providing regular inputs to the Project to date. I have, therefore, been with APRLP for 10 years, a rare privilege. It is on the basis of that experience that I have put together these 12 lessons in discussion with others who have had a long association with APRLP.

The design workshops in 1998 included many of the people who were to play a major part in the APRLP. In addition to S P Tucker there was Dr Ashok Jain, Mr Shastri and colleagues from WASSAN; Peter Reid and Mike Wilson from DFID ... the list goes on. In the years that followed many people contributed, among them: K Raju, former Commissioner and now Principal Secretary, Rural Development; Dr Kota Tirupataiah, formerly of APARD now Special Commissioner in CRD; Ramachandrudu, Ravindra, Vanaja and Suresh of WASSAN; the members of the Project Support Unit (PSU) and Project Management Unit (PMU); C S Reddy, formerly of CARE and now with APMAS; and the Rural Development and APARD Commissioners through the years, such as Mr Punetha and the present Commissioners Santhi Kumari and Umamaheswara Rao, as well as the various Advisers and Administrators who have passed through DFID. All those people will have different lessons that they would focus on. Some may disagree with me. So I offer this as my personal view, looking back over a decade of a unique project that I, and many others, believe has done a considerable amount to contribute to rural development in Andhra Pradesh.

INTRODUCTION



I begin with a very brief overview of the Project before presenting two lessons from the design of APRLP, followed by eight lessons from implementation and one from the closing months of the Project funding. Finally, I set out one overall lesson from what has been achieved.

The Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project set out with the aim of reducing poverty through the strategy of building 'effective and sustainable rural livelihoods'. It was a multilateral programme of the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP), and the Government of India (GoI), partnered by the Department for International Development (DFID), UK. The Project was implemented through the Commissionerate Rural Development, GoAP, as a part of the Government-funded watershed programme. The Project Director was the Principal Secretary, Rural Development.

The purpose of the Project was to enable the Government of Andhra Pradesh to implement, comprehensively, pro-poor watershed-based sustainable rural livelihoods approaches in all the districts of Andhra Pradesh. The Project's broader goal was to ensure that more effective and sustainable approaches were adopted by government agencies and other stakeholders to

eliminate poverty in the drought-prone areas of Andhra Pradesh. An important part of the Project was to help the Government of Andhra Pradesh to identify policy changes to increase the impact on rural poverty.

The Project started in 1999. For the first five years the Project districts were Anantapur, Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar, Nalgonda and Prakasam; all semi-arid, drought-prone and among the poorest in the State. In those districts the Project fully financed all activities in 500 watersheds, and provided extra finance to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for additional activities such as capacity building, different forms of livelihood support and convergence with other schemes and services in 2,000 more watersheds. In 2004-2005 the Project approaches were extended to all the watersheds in all 22 rural districts of Andhra Pradesh, and the end date of the Project was moved from June 2006 to December 2007. The total outlay of the Project was Rs.316.41 crore (£45 million).

BACKGROUND



The impact assessment of the Project, carried out in 2007, found a discernible impact from the Project on a number of areas including incomes and on lasting policy change.¹ In some areas development has been slower than had been hoped, and there are poor people in the Project areas for whom the benefits have been limited. The Project was ambitious; the scaling up of the Project in 2004-2005 even more so, but the scale of the task of addressing poverty merited such an approach. Time will tell whether the changes that have occurred in many poor people's lives will be sustained.

¹ TARU *Leading Edge* (2007) 'Assessing the Impact of APRLP on Poverty; mimeo



LESSON 1: Commitment, time and sharing common aims

LESSONS FROM DESIGN

People who believed in what APRLP was about and shared the vision of a poverty-focused watershed-based programme were vital in the genesis of the Project. APRLP was not a donor idea. DFID joined the Government of Andhra Pradesh and partner NGOs in developing an idea that built on people's experience of the watershed programme in the State. DFID advisers contributed the livelihoods approach, which was new then, and learning from other projects and programmes; but the focus and content of APRLP came from within the State.

It was important during the design and first year of the Project to have a group of people in different organisations and positions who were committed to seeing APRLP launched and grounded. Those involved in the design in Andhra Pradesh and DFID-India put in long hours to ensure a document was put together that satisfied the demands of the partner governments. After that it was Dr Mohan Kanda, then Additional Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, Smarajit Ray, then Principal Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of Andhra Pradesh and B N Yugandhar, retired senior bureaucrat

from the Government of India and Government of Andhra Pradesh who were instrumental in lending their support to S P Tucker, and the Rural Development Group in DFID-India, in sorting out administrative arrangements for the Project. Nesting a donor-funded project within a government programme was not easy; it would have been much harder without the determination and commitment of these key people.

Building the understanding of what the Project was about, and what it hoped to achieve, took time but the design workshops, different stakeholder meetings as well as one to one meetings with senior officials paid off. Mr Tucker put considerable time and effort into building a consensus. I spent a lot of time going from office to office in Delhi and in Hyderabad, sometimes wondering if any progress was ever going to be made! Yet, that was time well spent. With so many different people involved, many with very different interests, it was difficult to get everyone 'on board' but we certainly tried. Over the years that followed the goodwill built up during those early months continued to support the Project through difficult periods, proving beyond doubt the value of that investment.

LESSON 2: Gaps in design



We did not, however, get everything right. The design was far from perfect. Some of the deficiencies in the design have affected the progress of the Project through much of its life.

The biggest gap in the design was in the management structure. How in retrospect could we possibly have omitted the pivotal post of the Collector in each district from the organogram? This key person has come in many places to play a vital part in the project implementation, providing a focus for convergence and an invaluable source of support to Project Directors under pressure from political bodies or contractors (wishing to use machines, rather than provide wage labour). Where the Collector has not been supportive, the project approach has suffered. We failed to realise how dependent we were on having 'good' Project Directors and 'good' Collectors in place. Measures

put in place by K Raju, during his present tenure as Principal Secretary, to build up a cohort of committed Project Directors has helped to address this problem, but more needs to be done.

We also failed to give due attention during design to the terms and conditions of contract staff and their relationship with government officers. We have paid for this omission, losing well qualified staff and seeing carefully balanced teams dissipate, disillusioned by the challenge of working in government structures that had not yet been attuned to different ways of working and some government staff who assumed a leadership role as their 'right'. Building effective mixed teams, made up of government and non-government staff, women and men, has been extremely challenging and often dependent on the skills of a Project Director, many of whom have no experience of team building.

A failure to ensure that the Society established at APARD, the body put in place by APRLP to service contracts, was properly staffed by people experienced in human resource management right from the beginning, also led to many problems for people on contracts, as well as service providers contracted for short pieces of work.

DFID-advisers at the time, me included, were naïve about the ability of government systems to accommodate different types of staff; government officials were perhaps overly optimistic about the ability of their systems to adapt. None of us paid the attention to staffing, in all areas, that we should have done and project progress has from time to time, in different places, been affected by our neglect. Fortunately, we have often managed to put things straight, but time has been lost, along with valued skills.



LESSONS FROM IMPLEMENTATION

LESSON 3: The importance of process

In 2002, the then Project team produced a publication² setting out the steps to be taken to operationalise the livelihoods approach in APRLP. This document makes clear the importance of following a process in new watersheds to build consensus for a different way of working. The idea of a 12 month probation phase had been used successfully in the Indo-German Watershed Programme in Maharashtra. Crispino Lobo, one-time Director of that Project, and Dr Marcella D'Souza, the present Director, collaborated with APRLP and shared their successes and failures. The APRLP team, with the Project Directors in the five districts in which the Project began (Anantapur, Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar, Nalgonda and Prakasam) built on this learning to set out the clear steps to be followed in the establishment of livelihood-focused watersheds. Stress was laid on participatory processes to establish existing livelihood options in the area as well as land and water-use and to identify who the poor were to ensure their inclusion in the programme; then the negotiation with villagers, to establish what was to be done, when, for whom and where. This all took time, but resisting the pressure to spend by putting in place watershed structures, without proper consultation, paid off in terms of building ownership of the process as well as ensuring that options for all stakeholders could be explored. Experience shows that where this process has been followed there is a far greater likelihood of the benefits of the programme inputs being sustained.



It would be wrong to suggest that a process approach has only been important in the villages. The whole approach to the Project has been to view it as an evolving process. This allowed us to build on learning as we went along. We learnt, for example, that having the Project Support Unit as an external unit in the first 2-3 years did allow considerable innovation, but it gradually began to create tension with Project Directors looking to the Commissionerate for instructions, not to the external Project Coordinator and PSU, even though the Coordinator was a senior government official. So, the Project Support Unit gradually became the Project Management Unit and moved into the

² This step by step guide can be found at: <http://www.rd.ap.gov.in/aprpl/Publications/volume-2.pdf> (last accessed 9th September 2007).

Commissionerate, as a separate body in the same office but answerable to the Commissioner. Gradually, over time, the PMU has become more involved with other CRD schemes (such as the APREGs [the Employment Guarantee Scheme] and CLDP [Comprehensive Land Development Programme]). Now, as the DFID-funding ends, the functions of that Unit are being absorbed into the staffing of the Commissionerate so that their skills in institutional development, gender and equity, productivity enhancement etc. can be used in all CRD schemes and activities.

Consultancy support has also been a process. APRLP has never had a consultancy firm as a management or support group, unlike other DFID-funded livelihood projects. Neither the Government of Andhra Pradesh nor DFID felt this was necessary during design - a decision that has proved to be correct. External support has been brought in on a needs basis, in monitoring and evaluation, institutional development, micro-finance and livestock, for example. I was asked initially to provide help on process documentation, then on gender. My inputs have been a process, as they have developed and changed over time, as I have gradually taken more of an overview of all activities, while maintaining a particular interest in the development of the gender agenda in APRLP. One may speculate as to why the model of not having a consultancy firm contracted to

provide support to the Project has worked in APRLP. The strength of the organisational structure in the Commissionerate, right from the early days with S P Tucker and Dr Ashok Jain working for the watershed programme as a whole has been very important. DFID advisers and administrators have certainly played an important part in providing suggestions and support to the Project. The presence of a vibrant civil society able to offer ideas and support has filled roles that consultants might have performed (in monitoring and support for micro-finance, for example). Above all, the ability to build on personal relationships between DFID, other partners (including myself) and the Project, because of the continuity of key people, like K Raju, Dr Tirupataiah and Kishan Das, has provided a vital thread that has sustained the management of the Project and kept things on track.

A comparison between the Project Memorandum, appraised in late 1998 and agreed by GoAP, GoI and DFID in 1999 and the situation on the ground now, will show just how important taking a process approach has been. The Project in 2007 differs in many respects from that described in the 1999 document. There has been time for reflection on changing priorities as well as flexibility and responsiveness to different demands, including changes to the watershed guidelines which led to the formulation of 'process guidelines' to support the changes those guidelines brought. Mistakes have been made, but they have often provided valuable lessons. Who could have imagined that we would now have APRLP approaches scaled-up to all on-going watersheds in the State?





LESSON 4: Focusing on people (not on resources)

Taking a livelihoods approach means placing the household, the people, at the centre of development. In livelihoods analysis we look at the resources used by household members, be they financial, human, natural resource, physical infrastructure or social, the policies and institutions that affect what people can and cannot do, and the things that put livelihoods at risk (such as the weather or political instability) in order to understand what the outcome for their livelihood will be. That is rather different from the old approach in the watershed programme which assessed the state of the soil and water and set about building up the resources in an effort to improve the natural resources available to those who used that land.

Putting people at the centre of development - women and men, with and without land - helped APRLP to focus on different ways that land and non-land-based livelihoods might be supported for everyone living and working in an area, not just those who owned the land. This had implications for the way watershed funds were used in APRLP. Instead of large sums of money going to structures like concrete dams and machine built drainage ditches, the focus turned to low-cost structures placed through consultation with land-users as well as engineers and community leaders. Money was reserved for productivity enhancement in agriculture and livestock, which provided viable livelihood options for many small and marginal farmers as well



as capacity building in a range of skills. So, while the watershed programme maintained a focus on land-based activities, and the concern for water and land management, it broadened its remit to look at all land in a watershed, not just so-called 'productive land' and also embraced the need to look at livelihood options beyond the land, in enterprise development, for example. The focus on people also reinforced initiatives under APRLP, and related projects in the State (such as the World-Bank funded IKP) to do more for women's empowerment and development. The formation of village organisations (VOs), made up of smaller self-help groups of women in villages, who took over the management of the watershed programme from watershed committees/watershed associations which had often been



dominated by land-owning men, was a bold move. Women do a considerable amount of work on the land, yet until five or six years ago, they were rarely involved in the watershed programme which was seen as a men's programme supported by technical staff from government who were usually men too. That has changed. Even under the Hariyali Guidelines which were put in place in 2003 by Gol, where the Panchayati Raj system has been given a central role in watershed development, the VOs are now seen as a sub-group of the Gram Sabha and play a key management role.

The focus on people is a focus on women as well as men and the resources they use and might use in their livelihoods. The lesson from this change is that such a shift in focus can lead to greater inclusion and make the watershed programme more relevant, and beneficial, to a greater number of people and thereby have a greater impact on poverty.



LESSON 5: Broad-based participation



Linked to the focus on people comes a concern with broad-based participation. This has happened at various levels. At the village level, the process approach, which gives time to engage with all community members on development concerns and priorities, provides a mechanism through which different people from all levels in society can engage with the livelihoods agenda. It stands to reason that the very poorest people in a village or hamlet may require very different interventions for their livelihoods from those who are much better off. Self-help groups may well provide welcome support to many women in a village, for example, but a very poor woman may not have the time to join such a group or she may fear 'failure' if she cannot contribute savings as other group members do, so another way of helping her to improve her livelihood will be required. Likewise poor and landless men or unemployed young people; they all have different concerns.

Broad-based participation in the village also calls for a broader group of those who provide development support and inputs. The old watershed development team and multi-disciplinary teams, made up of foresters, agriculturalists and engineers, with a social mobiliser in some but not all cases, cannot provide all the inputs required. Hence the need for help from a range of different providers, including other government departments, NGOs and individuals as well as the professionals in the Project Director's office, the Assistant Project Directors (APD) of the District Capacity Building (this is the term used for the five original districts), or District Livelihoods Resource Centre (this is the term used for the districts that have been included through up-scaling) team.



A glance at Annex 2 of the Project Memorandum will show that we had envisaged four APD posts in the same office as the PD and four posts in the DCBC:

PD'S OFFICE

- APD TRAINING
- APD LIVELIHOODS
- APD SOCIAL MOBILISATION
- APD INFORMATION

DCBC

- SOCIAL SCIENTIST (COORDINATOR)
- HRD SPECIALIST
- GENDER & EQUITY SPECIALIST
- M&E SPECIALIST

In the end we had up to seven APD posts with rather different titles from those laid out in the Project Memorandum in the five original districts.

- APD CAPACITY BUILDING
- APD GENDER AND EQUITY
- APD AGRICULTURAL BASED PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCEMENT
- APD LIVESTOCK BASED PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCEMENT
- APD MONITORING
- APD GIS
- APD ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The APDs in the PDs office and those in the DCBC were merged into a support unit.

In the up-scaled districts one or three posts were created (depending on the number of watersheds in the district):

- APD CAPACITY BUILDING
- APD PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCEMENT
- APD CONVERGENCE

The development of these different posts and functions was a direct result of the demands of the programme as different professional skills were called for to support the diverse range of activities emerging in the villages under the Project.

Under APRLP we had the flexibility to establish posts for a range of different professionals. We cannot claim that these different posts were always welcomed by Project Directors. Some saw little need for skills beyond those of the traditional Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and put their new professionals to work doing mundane administrative tasks until supervisory visits from senior staff from CRD could set things back on track (or talented professionals sought transfers elsewhere, thereby alerting senior staff to the problems). Gradually, where the new posts and staff were valued, examples of the difference this could make to development began to emerge and influence those resistant to such change. With each new appointment of a Project Director there is a risk of a challenge to the new structure but as time passes, and broad-based participation in village and district and state office becomes the norm, those challenges are subsiding.





LESSON 6: Quality in capacity building

Training courses have been an important part of spreading messages about new approaches and techniques. Too often these have consisted of a lecture or lectures from a specialist delivered to 'leader farmers'. There has been little follow-up and the chances for women and poorer people to attend watershed programme related training have been few.



Capacity building was acknowledged, from the very start of APRLP, as essential in supporting the changes that the Project was expected to bring. While APARD was viewed as being an important provider of capacity building, APRLP was also seen as a way to build the capacity of APARD so it could be more effective in its role in providing training and broader capacity building in the State.

Over the last few years APARD has been joined by a number of other organisations in a 'capacity building consortium'. Some of the members are regional/national NGOs, such as CARE, others are based in the State such as APMAS and the network WASSAN, and others are small local NGOs. A lot has been learnt about the running of this consortium over the last three years: the importance of good communication, the value of focused, time-bound meetings on consortium business, and the need to assign definite tasks and areas of responsibility for consortium members. The consortium has been invaluable in providing support to District and Cluster-level Livelihoods Resource Centres which

have been established in the 17 remaining districts in the State since the up-scaling of APRLP approaches began in 2004. Some consortium members provide hand-holding support to the staff in these centres while others provide professionals for specific courses or inputs. The benefit has been the provision of training, mentoring, study tours etc. to Project stakeholders at all levels by people with specific skills and expertise. As the capacity of those receiving such inputs has grown, so have their expectations and demands, placing pressure upon the providers to improve the quality of inputs.

There is much more to be done. Some capacity building is not of a high quality, but evaluation from participants and careful monitoring by consortium members and LRC staff, as well as members of the State level Project Management Unit is lifting the quality, changing the form of courses and inputs to suit the needs of the participants and generally ensuring that 'capacity building' is not just a budget line item, but actually leads to improved development across the board.



LESSON 7: Men are gender too - gender mainstreaming

As we have noted above, the watershed programme was a 'men's programme', and principally a land-owners' programme. That is no longer the case. We have never wanted it to be a 'women's programme'; we have always looked for ways to ensure that women as well as men are supported in their participation and that our focus on 'gender' has been for men as well as women. Men are, after all, gender too, and so often interventions for women fail because the power and social relationships between women and men are not taken into account.



The placing of a Gender and Equity specialist in the PMU, as well as in each of the five original districts, was an essential part of supporting this agenda. Taking the mainstreaming agenda forward had to be a part of someone's job description. When it was everyone's responsibility at the State level at the start of the Project, it became no-one's responsibility. Considerable efforts have been put into sensitising men and women to gender issues at village, district and State level. Support has been given to help the female dominated VOs to work with the largely male-dominated Panchayati Raj bodies, so that they can work together effectively. Efforts have been made to support mixed teams at district and State level to work together to respect each other's professional competence and not assume that old gendered-stereotypes apply.

The late Smarajit Ray, when he was Special Chief Secretary and then APRLP Project Director, once said to me, "You really don't believe men are from Mars and

women from Venus, do you Janet?" He was right. Men and women are not two homogenous groups. Among women and men there are different aptitudes and interests. What is often needed by a woman or a man is the chance to do something, to say something and to prove that something is possible. That has been our agenda - to provide the space for women as well as men to come forward. We have been as concerned about men's gendered needs as women's, knowing only too well that if one group resents the opportunities afforded to the other, change is often not sustained.

The majority of gender specialists working with APRLP have been women, with a few notable exceptions. This is often the case because many women know what it feels like to be overlooked or 'put in your place' and they want to do something about it.



The danger is that this agenda is seen as ‘women’s work’ and men do not take the agenda seriously. We have suffered from this in the 17 up-scaled districts, where there has been no separate Gender and Equity specialist. The Capacity Building APDs, assigned responsibility for ensuring that mainstreaming moves forward, have had other things to do and so the progress we would like to see has not been made.

Important lessons for us have been:

- **The support of senior management is essential.**
- **Time taken in sensitisation and awareness raising is time well spent, but these are on-going inputs, not one-off courses or sessions.**
- **While everyone needs to be encouraged to take this agenda on board, persons at different levels in the structure, who really care about making a difference are essential to ensure that progress is monitored and outcomes evaluated.**
- **Gender is not just for villages: the way people behave, write and speak in their offices from the village to the Secretariat, reflects their view of gender norms. Efforts are required at all levels to ensure that women as well as men are treated fairly and their skills valued.**



There has been the realisation that this is much, much more than a ‘women’s empowerment’ agenda. We must remember why we use the word ‘gender’. Gender means women and men, underlining the importance of recognising that men are gender too. We must continue to strive for gender equity not just equality. Equality would mean that men and women would have equal opportunities; equity, however, means fairness of treatment for women and men according to their respective needs – that may mean providing extra inputs to certain women or certain men to allow them to access benefits available to others; it doesn’t mean an exclusive focus on one group



LESSON 8: Human resource development

In the Project Memorandum we listed a post for 'Human Resource Development' in each DCBC at district level. We established a post of a Human Resource Development manager in the Project Management Unit. These posts were never filled. We failed to take the need for these posts seriously, believing, as many others did, that since the Government of Andhra Pradesh had a staff code, there was nothing more to be done to support APRLP post-holders.

We were very wrong. Skilled staff voted with their feet, leaving their posts because they felt unsupported by senior staff, many of whom were from government and simply did not understand what it was like to work on a short-term contract. The Society at APARD (CDS-Centre for Development Studies) did not have the skills to tackle the staffing issues that arose from their management of staff contracts. We found the rights of contract staff to maternity leave being questioned or assumptions being made about the hours of work, with no provision being made to ensure the safety of staff, particularly female staff, travelling home late at night.

At last this has begun to change. The large numbers of short-term contract staff that have had to be engaged to support the AP Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has heightened the awareness of the problems faced by contract staff, and the problems faced by government if proper management systems are not put in place.

Project Annual Reviews (jointly undertaken by GoAP/Gol and DFID) repeatedly drew to the attention of authorities the lack of inputs to Human Resource Management. Finally, in 2006, there was a change when it was agreed that outside help to develop policies for short-term staff, as well as new contracts, could be engaged. This began very slowly, with progress hindered by some resistance to institutionalising terms and conditions for contract staff. Finally, in the last six months of DFID-funding for APRLP, there has been a dramatic change. Not only are new terms and conditions agreed and new policies shared but new contracts are being rolled out for all the APRLP staff who have performed well (which is most staff) and wish to stay to fill newly designated posts within the government structure, thereby ensuring valued skill sets are not lost to the watershed programme.

Support is still required for some time, but the Government, including the Minister for Rural Development, is committed to supporting this change. Senior staff know they cannot do their work without the inputs of contract staff and skilled staff need to be recognised and rewarded, otherwise they will find jobs elsewhere, as so many of those recruited through APRLP have already done.

APRLP has suffered as a result of losing quality staff in the past, but lessons have been learnt and will continue to be learnt about the importance of good management systems and attention to human resource management and development. If staff feel let down, they will leave (and sometimes discourage others from filling vacancies) and ultimately the quality of the programmes suffers.





LESSON 9: Strength through convergence

Convergence has been a cornerstone of APRLP from the very beginning. In the Project Memorandum I mentioned in Annex 4 the valuable lessons on village level convergence that might be learned from a UNICEF project operating in the State at that time, where different government departments and non-government bodies worked together in a village to provide development support for small communities.

Getting lower level functionaries to work together in a village seems relatively straight-forward now compared to trying to get State level bodies to work together, because each has its own agenda, targets and budget and working together seldom seems to be valued!

APRLP has taken a pragmatic approach to convergence. The Project is based on the watershed programme and therefore, has limits as to how far it can go in providing support to activities beyond land-based development/livelihoods. However, people's interests and needs have no such boundaries, so providing links to people and organisations that can provide the support needed, has been important while building alliances. A partnership requires two willing partners, both of whom will get some benefit from working together; the APRLP convergence agenda has been based on this understanding. The oldest and most established partnership at State level which is working through the districts to the villages is with the Department of Animal Husbandry. There was a demand for veterinary services in the villages that the Department of Animal Husbandry could not meet. APRLP established livestock paraworkers at the village level, supported by the Animal Husbandry District and State level offices with training, drawing also on the help of NGOs with skills in this area. This collaboration has been extremely fruitful. The convergence with the Department of Agriculture has been less



effective. Agricultural extension support has generally not been packaged for people with land and labour constraints, so the level of demand for specialist services at the village level for poorer people has been less clearly defined. There has also been a difficulty in establishing partnerships with such a large and diverse sector. Even so, some agriculture paraworkers have made a success out of promoting vermi-composting and other small scale inputs.

Convergence with other government schemes in Rural Development has been an important area of work in the last two to three years. K Raju, Principal Secretary, has been instrumental in pushing this forward. APREGS is focused on land-based work, CLDP is directly aimed at developing degraded land, IKP, with its agenda of women's empowerment and village level institution building,



interfaces with APRLP's work with the same village level bodies. Working with these schemes, helping APREGS and CLDP to develop along the lines of APRLP approaches while sharing skills with IKP to reduce duplication and increase impact have all been central to the convergence agenda. A livelihoods approach does not see a person's life in sectors, so it is important that livelihood support takes a joined up approach too, making the most of synergies with other service providers and drawing skill sets in from other professional areas (like education and health) when the demand is there, rather than trying to go it alone.



Convergence takes time. Like so many other things it is a process of gaining confidence, building alliances and trust and taking a longer term view of development and how working together can evolve in the future for the benefit of those who should benefit from our efforts.





LESSON 10: Working with NGOs

When APRLP began, NGOs had a central place in the Project through their role as Project Implementing Agencies in the watershed programme. NGOs in this PIA role played a prominent role in the development of APRLP until the coming of the Hariyali Guidelines that removed NGOs from this role in all new watersheds. The Hariyali Guidelines placed the emphasis on the Panchayati Raj system which created a challenge for the watershed programme in Andhra Pradesh that had relied on a partnership with NGOs. WASSAN, the influential NGO network in Andhra Pradesh, rose to this challenge with the support of government and carved out a new role for NGOs as facilitating agencies in the watershed programme, providing support to village and district level implementers. The example of the way government, elected bodies and NGOs can work together in this State has been valuable for people elsewhere in India, and has served to influence new guidelines and policy nationwide.

While APRLP welcomed the participation of small local NGOs as PIAs, and now in the facilitating role, the tendency has been to look to bigger regional or national NGOs for support at State level for capacity building or professional inputs. Sometimes this worked out well but sometimes it was a mistake. Big NGOs often have big workloads and a staff that is sorely stretched. We have found that it is often better to look to local NGOs for help and support: they have a vested interest in doing well in their place of work because they live and work there. Skilled people in the organisation are likely to make themselves available for the work because of the importance of 'getting it right'.

So, we have learnt that it is important not only to know an NGO's track record but also to look beyond the size of the organisation to the quality of what they have done and can do. NGOs too will look carefully at the way government behaves towards them and values their work before accepting assignments to work closely with government functionaries. Respect and trust is needed on both sides.





LESSONS FROM DFID'S WITHDRAWAL

LESSON 11: Mapping out the way forward

APRLP is not closing; only the DFID-funding is ending. That knowledge has made preparing for the end of DFID's support much more straight-forward than the end of other DFID funded projects that I have been involved with!

Losing a funding-stream does concentrate the mind, but in a helpful way. People are working hard to get new systems in place while the Project funding exists. DFID-funding and the project structure that came with it, including the logical framework, have provided objectives and activities which have defined the work programme. Things that have been valued in that structure are, as I have noted several times above, being retained. This means that rather than planning for closure, DFID, and those funded by DFID, have been a part of the planning for the future. The Project Completion Review, undertaken in September 2007, was less about 'closing the books' than about planning for new activities that take the agenda forward into a new phase.



An important lesson for us from this process is the value of planning for upscaling/ mainstreaming (or whatever you want to call it) successful approaches from a project well in advance. The upscaling of APRLP approaches to the whole watershed programme in the State began in 2004. The putting in place of Livelihood Resource Centres began then and has continued for the last two and a half years. Plans for their future, including how valued posts will be funded, were on the table in early 2007. Some things have been done in a rush, but not this: structures, functions and future funding have been thought about well in advance. This is largely due to the vision of the present Principal Secretary, K Raju and the hard work of those in CRD, including the present Commissioner Santhi Kumari and Special Commissioner, Dr Tirupataiah.





LESSON 12: Never a stand-alone project

OVERALL LESSON

The idea for APRLP was born out of the then Commissioner, S P Tucker's, strong belief that there was a need for a 'professional approach' in the watershed programme. By this he meant the introduction of ways of working that built on lessons, that monitored and evaluated progress and, most of all, really tackled poverty in Andhra Pradesh. This could not be done by an external body trying to influence by example; it had to be done from within Government.



APRLP has never been a stand-alone project. Even when the Project Support Unit was situated in APARD (2000-2003) it was working with the staff of the watershed programme and implementing the APRLP approaches with the government Project Directors and their staff in the districts.

Joining, and staying with, an on-going programme is not easy. Ways of working are set and hard to change, existing staff may resent innovation, and changes in the programme that occur at a national level, beyond the power of the State Government, may threaten the viability of approaches introduced under APRLP (as happened with the introduction of the Hairyali Guidelines in 2003). However, having the DFID-funding stream within the watershed programme, supported desired change by providing space for experimentation and capacity building, allowing staff and systems support for change and countering threats by providing space to work with people looking for innovative

ways to respond. Out of the challenges posed by the Hariyali Guidelines, for example, came Process Guidelines which supported existing stakeholders in the implementation of the Hariyali Guidelines while, at the same time, influencing the way future guidelines and policy evolved in the Government of India.

So, as DFID funding ends, there is no sense of closing a project. APRLP simply moves on to a new phase where what it has supported and stood for has become the 'watershed programme', and many of those who worked with APRLP have become invaluable staff members in that, and associated programmes.

Such an approach may not work in other places where conditions and the capacity is not the same as in Andhra Pradesh. The lesson for us is that despite the slowness of progress that sometimes frustrated us because we were within such a large government programme, the end result has been lasting change in some significant areas of development that really can make a difference to poor women and men's lives.

*This publication has been edited and designed by **Write-Arm, Bangalore**
270, 1st floor, 1st Main, Defence Colony, Indiranagar, Bangalore 560 038 Telephone: 080-25272827 E-mail: wriearm@right-lines.com
PRINT@PRAGATI.COM*

