

OXFAM / ODA. NGO CO-FUNDED PROJECTS: ORISSA, INDIA

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The Projects

This joint ODA/OXFAM evaluation covered two NGO projects funded by Oxfam in Orissa, India: the promotion of environmental protection by BOJBP; and the development of organisations representative of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, by UAA. The ODA Joint Funding Block Grant Scheme provided 20% of the £198,292 provided to BOJBP and UAA by Oxfam between 1983 and 1993.

Since the early 1980s BOJBP has focused on the formation of village forest protection committees, the association of committees sharing common forests and the federation of those associations. A total of approximately 325 villages, protecting an estimated 65,000 acres of forest, are now represented by 18 associations and one federation. Running from 1989 to 1991 UAA's Community Organisation and Training (COT) programme has focused on scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people in 51 villages. The programme has combined community organisation work with income generation and health service provision, with an emphasis on gaining improved access to government services.

The Evaluation

This evaluation was one of a series of joint NGO/ODA evaluations of NGO projects. The evaluation was undertaken by a team consisting of representatives from ODA and Oxfam, and three independent consultants. The field work was carried out in September 1993.

Overall Success Ratings

In relation to the objectives set for its core activities, BOJBP's work was judged to be *successful*, in terms of outputs, costs and timescale, with significant overall benefits in relation to costs.

The UAA COT programme was also judged to be *successful*, in the same terms.

The Main Findings

- Both NGOs have placed a strong emphasis on participatory development, giving a substantial level of responsibility to village level organisations, but supporting these through contact on demand and organised sharing of experience between

village organisations.

- Both organisations have been successful in the promotion of the development of peoples' organisations. Organisations in tribal villages have sustained their levels of activity more than those in scheduled caste villages. The performance of some of the older village forest protection committees was not as good as that of those more recently established, which is consistent with experience elsewhere in Orissa.
- In the case of UAA there was extensive evidence at the village level of the achievement of enhanced awareness of peoples' rights and self-confidence in interaction with higher status and more powerful groups, especially governmental bodies. Similarly, in the BOJBP-associated villages there was extensive evidence of awareness of the need for forest protection and environmental conservation generally.
- BOJBP appears to have leveraged forest protection activities many times the value of the cost of their funding by Oxfam. Its activities in the promotion of indigenous tree species has been modestly profitable. In the case of UAA, identifying the net cost and benefits has been more difficult because of the difficulty of establishing a causal link between UAA's awareness-raising activities and the outcomes of peoples' actions, especially in relation to government. With regard to income-generation activities promoted and aided by UAA, there were clear indications that tree crops, especially cashew nuts, will generate substantial benefits, while the continued participation of people in many of the other activities suggests that they too were generating significant benefits.
- Both organisations have objectives relating specifically to women's development but it is only in the UAA COT programme that activities focused on women have taken place on a major scale. Its development of women's organisations has been successful in the case of scheduled caste villages but not in the case of tribal villages.

Lessons

- Project documentation of NGOs promoting the development of peoples' organisations should discriminate between the objectives of the different peoples' organisations, as well as those of the NGO concerned with their development, rather than assuming a simple commonality of interest in an overarching general objective. This would be more consistent with a participatory development strategy and facilitate the evaluation of achievements by both insiders and outsiders.
- Further applied research into the performance of peoples' organisations should seek to identify the factors associated with "good" and "bad" performance amongst the long - established village committees, especially where substantial assets are being accumulated.
- If the "protection of the physical environment" is made a central project objective

there is a risk of ignoring the different human interests that are at stake in any change in the management of "public" property, especially those of the poorest.

- If funding arrangements for NGO projects are allowed to develop and change over time, rather than be required to go through formal appraisal processes, documentation of on-going negotiations should clearly state where follow-up actions are required, and if and when they have been taken.