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Work Experience

- **August 2008 – till present: Working independently in Dungarpur district, Rajasthan, with fellowship support of Access Livelihoods Consulting India Pvt Ltd, Hyderabad**

Access Livelihoods Consulting India (www.accesslivelihoods.org) is a Consulting Organisation that provides management solutions to improve livelihoods of disadvantaged and marginalised communities in India.

1. Primary work being done in this period, is preparatory groundwork towards setting up a community-based organisation of small farmers in Dungarpur district, Rajasthan, that can work to improve livelihoods of its members through specific water, land, biomass and marketing interventions.

- **August – November 2008: Coordinator, Samarthak Samiti, Udaipur district, Rajasthan**

Samarthak Samiti is a Community-based Organisation promoted by Astha, Udaipur (www.astha.org), that works to improve livelihoods of forest-produce collectors in Southern, Rajasthan.

In this period, was responsible for overall management of "Strengthening minor forest produce-based livelihoods of forest-dwelling *adivasi* families in Southern Rajasthan" program of the organisation. Primary work responsibilities in this period were:

1. Providing production, marketing and management support to strengthen minor forest produce cooperatives, promoted by Samarthak Samiti.
2. Providing administration support to Samarthak Samiti, towards improving its internal organisational systems and building capacities of its team members

- **November 2007 – April 2008: Was based within the Adivasi Bhil hamlet of Amarpura and Magarda, Chittorgarh district, Rajasthan**

These are both 'upper'-caste dominated villages in the feudal Mewar belt of South Rajasthan. The purpose of the village stay was to gain some practical experience of living and relating with the local community in a Rajasthan village. I was not working with any group or organisation in this time.

- **August 2004 – September 2007: Core Team Member – Organic farming and marketing program team, Timbaktu Collective, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh.**

Timbaktu Collective (www.timbaktu.org) is a Civil Society Organisation that promotes Community-based Organisations of rural marginalised and disadvantaged communities in Anantapur district (Andhra Pradesh), that work to achieve social, gender justice and equity and improve livelihoods of its members.

In this period, was responsible for the design and overall management of "Timbaktu Organic" - collaborative venture involving the Timbaktu Collective (a civil society organisation) and Adisakthi MACTS Limited (a thrift

cooperative society with rural women as members), that worked to improve income of participating dry land farmers in Anantapur district, by promoting sustainable agri-based livelihood activities.

The three main thrust activities of the program are:

1. Promoting labour-intensive organic farming methods based on locally available inputs. This reduced production costs and improved the soil fertility over a 3 year period with no drop in yield.
2. Diversification of the existing groundnut-mono-cropping with millets and pulses. This reduced the risk of crop-failure and improved food security at the household level.
3. Organising marketing of organic produce in both local and urban areas. This improved the net price and weight received by farmers over the local market and also ensured a minimum support price for millets and thereby provided some incentive for farmers to shift from groundnut. Millets are hardy and nutritious cereal food crops, which otherwise were sold for poultry feed at a throwaway price.

Apart from overall management responsibilities, was specifically responsible for implementing the post-production and marketing sub-division of the venture, with activities ranging from fund-raising, research and documentation, organic certification, procurement from farmers at a premium price, processing, storage, building a team of 10 full-timers, setting up a storage and processing unit, marketing in local and urban markets including promoting consumption of millets, building capacities of Adisakthi MACTS Directors (who are all women leaders from rural farming and labour background), as well coordinating with and providing necessary support to the production sub-team.

Main Achievements

1. The pilot phase of the venture (2005-09) involved about 450 small-holder dry land farmers covering 1400 acres (560 Ha) in 10 villages. It improved cash incomes of participating farmers by over 30%, over the 3½ years, through gains in reduced production costs, improved yields and better prices and weight.
2. Apart from this, the program led to a net improvement in community asset base in the form of land, biomass and livestock resources. Use of toxic pesticides and chemical fertilisers was completely stopped by farmers from Year 1 itself, leading to natural regeneration of soil life; a minimum of 50000 trees survive of the 140000 planted which will be used in composting and finally, the number of livestock significantly improved due to the new and greater demand for cattle dung and urine as organic farm inputs. Additional gains are in terms of better health of farmer families and the environment as a whole.
3. In 2008-09, the marketing organisation managed by Adisakthi Women's Cooperative Society, achieved a net turnover of Rs. 30.27 lakhs, at a gross profit of Rs. 0.99 lakhs, after giving farmers a premium of at least 15% (amounting to approx Rs. 3.4 lakhs), over the local market, through better price and correct weight. The total net value of fixed assets created, including building and processing machinery, as of 2008-09 was about Rs. 20 lakhs.
4. The marketing venture was driven not by regular sources of capital, but by a group of 60 Socially Responsible Green Investors, who contributed approximately Rs. 35 lakhs as loan, based on their interest in supporting a venture oriented towards triple bottom-lined social, ecological and economic goals. For a note on this subject, please see this article by Rajni Bakshi (Author of *Bapu Kuti*), titled Mindful Markets: <http://www.indiatogether.org/2005/nov/rbk-markets.htm>

5. The pilot phase of this unique comprehensive production end to marketing end program, served as a base for the ongoing expansion phase (2009-14). This will take the total organic farmer member strength to 1200, covering 3650 acres in 28 villages, with a minimum sales potential of Rs. 150 lakhs and an estimated gross profit of Rs. 20-25 lakhs, making it the largest and most comprehensive livelihoods program ever, promoted by the Collective. The program is anchored now by the Dharani Farming and Marketing Cooperative, an independent community-based business organisation, composed now of the member organic farmers themselves. Adisakthi MACTS now serves an advisory role in the new institution.
6. The venture serves as a sustainable model in resurrecting the agrarian crisis triggered by faulty State policies in Anantapur district and other similar regions, which has led to more than 700 farmer suicides over the last one decade in Anantapur alone and more than 100,000 farmer suicides in the whole country (figures as of 2004).

It must be noted that the above work was built upon 15 years of expertise built by the Collective in working with natural resources and more than 10 years of relationship that the two organisations (Adisakthi and Timbaktu Collective) had built with the participating farmers until that time.

The above work also equally represents the contributions of co-team leaders and co-team members.

Education

- Post Graduate Diploma in Rural Management from the Institute of Rural Management (IRMA), Anand, Gujarat (2002-04)
- Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Civil Engineering from the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani, Rajasthan (1998-02)
- Completed schooling in Chennai from DAV (CBSE) and Spartan (Matriculation)

Internships

- Action Northeast Trust, Bongaigaon, Assam – 10 week Management Traineeship (2003)
- Kala Raksha Trust, Kutch, Gujarat – 10 week Organisation Traineeship (2003)
- Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan, Kutch, Gujarat – 10 week Village Fieldwork (2002)
- Carborundum Universal Ltd (Murugappa Group), Chennai – 9 week Practice School I (1999)
- RITES Ltd, Delhi – 26 week Practice School II (2002)

Major Trainings/Workshops

- Basic Lab in Human Processes, Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Sciences, Mumbai (2006)
- 10-day Vipassana Meditation Workshop, VRI Hyderabad (2004)

Research / Publications

- In partnership with the Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (www.crispindia.org), ICRISAT, Hyderabad, conducted a 3-month action-research study of the Timbaktu Collective's work till date on increasing millet production and consumption, using the Actor-oriented Innovation Systems framework.

Language Skills

- Fluent in Hindi, English
- Speak and read Telugu, Speak Tamil and Oriya

Extra-curricular activities

- Member, Students' Placement Committee, IRMA Anand (2003)
- Volunteer (1999-01) and President (2001-02), National Service Scheme (NSS), BITS Pilani
- Assistant Coordinator for the Civil Engineering Association Exhibition during APOGEE, BITS Pilani's Academic Festival (1999)
- Hostel Sports Secretary, BITS Pilani (1999)
- Member of School Athletics, Cricket, Football and Volleyball teams, DAV CBSE, Chennai (1993-1998)

Hobbies and other interests

- Playing the acoustic guitar
- Listening to music – largely indian classical, old hindi, acoustic, folk, country, blues, soft rock
- Learning hindustani vocal music
- Collecting and watching offbeat films
- Have interest in photography
- Regularly travel across the country – largely to visit and interact with individuals and groups involved in development work

References

- Mr. Haribandhu Panda, Director, HDF School of Management, Bhubaneswar and formerly Professor and Member of Governing Board, IRMA, Anand;
Ph: 0674-2743380; Email: haribandhu_panda[at]yahoo[dot]co[dot]in
- Mr. Arvind Gupta, Professor and Member of Governing Board, IRMA, Anand;
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- Mr. KV Raju, Associate Professor, IRMA, Anand;
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- Mr. AK Sarkar, Professor, Civil Engineering Group and Dean, Instruction Division, BITS Pilani;
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- Mr. Motilal Dash, Assistant Professor, Humanistic Studies Group and formerly Faculty Coordinator, National Service Scheme, BITS Pilani;
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The above are faculty references from academic course work; references from work experience, are given in the main application.