



IFAD photo by Radhika Chalasani

Women attend a local savings group meeting in Powerguda village, Andhra Pradesh, above. Women have taken the lead in increasing savings and improving money management practices in tribal communities. In the past, many tribal people were forced to borrow from non-tribal moneylenders in times of drought or difficulty and had to use their surplus at harvest time to pay off debts at exorbitant interest rates.

Project data

Total project cost	USD 46.5 million
IFAD loan	USD 20 million
Co-financiers	Government of India/ Andhra Pradesh, The Netherlands
Loan effectiveness	April 1991
Closing date	March 1999
Co-operating institution	United Nations Office for Project Services
Executing agency	Department of Tribal Welfare of the Government of Andhra Pradesh

Building peace What role for development?

Andhra Pradesh Tribal Development Project

Andhra Pradesh is home to 4.2 million tribal peoples, amongst the most vulnerable of all social groups in India. Before independence in 1947, there were at least four significant tribal revolts each with common factors of resentment such as infringement of freedom and land rights. The APTDP, the state's first donor-funded tribal development project, set out to improve food productivity and farming techniques, and raise tribal incomes. The eight-year project saw the successful participation of tribal people in creating independent community and village institutions and contributed significantly to building peace in the area.

Key policy issues and recommendations arising from the APTDP evaluation are:

- **Participation cannot be determined from the top down.** Group building and local institutional development will lead to empowerment. Village institutions need to be nurtured, their functions and funds controlled by local communities, with the emphasis placed by the government on capacity building maintained.
- **A deeper understanding of traditional institutional arrangements** and community-based authorities is crucial as well as of the relationships between new and old institutions to avoid the emergence of parallel, divisive structures.
- **An exit strategy and post-project monitoring mechanisms** should be integral to project design in the form of a completion plan. IFAD's continued support for institutions and project processes after a project ends, would lead to better consolidation of investments and longer term impact. ▶

Main achievements

In replacing traditional methods of podu (shifting/slash and burn) cultivation with settled irrigated systems, food production increased by 500 percent: almost 20,000 hectares of dry land are now irrigated, thanks to new dams and channels, whilst paddy production has increased threefold. Coffee is a popular crop, providing substantial economic returns. Many podu areas are now orchards – good for the environment and more lucrative for farmers. Yet, switching to a totally new agricultural system requires training in new crops and farming techniques, relevant research, and effective extension services. The Girijan Cooperative Corporation undertook research and contributed to adding value to selected non-timber forest products which helped increase prices and strengthen sales of gum karaya, for example – now a major source of income for almost 12,000 tribal people, especially women. Efforts are being made to market forest produce throughout India and possibly abroad. A thousand new Community Health Workers now ensure there are basic health facilities in remote areas and 1,323 community schools received matching funds for construction, teachers' salaries, and basic equipment. Over 80 new resource centres contributed to better teaching methods whilst new schools and increased parental involvement led to higher enrolment and attendance rates: 40 percent of new pupils are female and drop-out rates are down by 18 percent.

► Bottom-up participation

The project brought about changes in tribal development, allowing a multi-stakeholder approach with a specific focus on tribal people. The shift in focus from the limited objectives of increasing employment and service delivery to that of programme management by tribal communities to improve their natural resource base and means of livelihood, paid dividends. Communities responded positively, proving that the right kind of support can help resolve the key issues affecting people's lives. The propensity to save, for example, is now well-established through thrift and credit groups.

Projects need be more realistic, however, about how far communities already have the capacity to participate. Villages with strong traditional institutions take on board new approaches and technologies more easily: the level of project delivery should be decided village by village and based on institutional capacity rather than predetermined and rolled out across the board. 'Participation' was often seen as a mechanism for service delivery, rather than as a platform for community involvement and empowerment: what is important is people's ability to manage change. Village institutions need to be nurtured, whilst skills and capability development for social mobilisation should be an integral part of project design and implementation. Newly acquired expertise, skills, and capabilities also need to be institutionalised so that they are developed, sustained, and upgraded in the long term.

Collective village authority still resides with the elders. A real understanding of traditional institutional arrangements and the nature of traditional authorities is essential before effective links can be forged between tribal and new institutions. Building strong community institutions is a long-term task. Participation has contributed positively to changes in social relationships: ITDA officials have become more sensitive to the nature and needs of tribal societies with reciprocal adjustments in tribal people's attitudes towards officialdom.

A facilitating role for IFAD

Setting up the APTDP was a bold move. IFAD contributed significantly to helping the government and civil service understand and address the root causes of the protest movement in the project area. The People's War Group had spearheaded a campaign marked by violence in the 1970s and 1980s, to end exploitation and achieve social justice for tribal communities. Expansion of the government's Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (tribal areas) was a restraining influence on the PGW's activities and succeeded in persuading local communities that integrated development was the best way forward. IFAD's involvement was seen by the government as a serious effort to respond to the sensitive issue of tribal disaffection. Through the APTDP, IFAD gained the confidence of the PWG, playing the role of a trusted facilitator committed to tribal interests. PWG was impressed, for example, by the involvement of Village Tribal Development



IFAD photo by Katia Dini

The average yield of paddy throughout the Andhra Pradesh project area has increased threefold.

Associations in the construction of irrigation and soil conservation works (an innovation later adopted in all tribal areas in Andhra Pradesh) and by the APTDP's efforts to shift from top down approaches to promoting empowerment and decision-making at a local level.

Exit strategy?

IFAD, as can be the case with other development agencies, often ends a project leaving its partners, especially at the local level, in disarray. In Andhra Pradesh, post-project support for savings groups and community health initiatives, for example, was not provided, nor were tribal organisations well-integrated into wider umbrella institutions or federations which could have provided post-project support and guidance at the village level. Continued support for community participation would have left behind stronger people-centred, community-driven institutions, less reliant on ITDAs than is currently the case. Evaluation in 1999 of IFAD's Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project, a highly successful intervention with innovative approaches to empowerment, capacity building and income generation, provides further evidence that a well-articulated exit strategy is crucial. Although the project was scaled up and replicated by the Tamil Nadu government, IFAD's withdrawal created a vacuum that exposed the project to external political pressures, for example, in the selection of NGOs and commercial banks ■

Further information

India: Andhra Pradesh Tribal Development Project Completion Evaluation, Report #1183-IN, August 2001, available from: Office of Evaluation and Studies, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Via del Serafico 107, 00142 Rome, Italy. Visit www.ifad.org/evaluation.htm; Email M.Keating@ifad.org; Telephone +39 06 5459 2048.