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- > Prasad will send a detailed report after a few weeks but here are
- > some of his thoughts. Prasad was with GC for 2.5 days & as he has
- > grown up in Orisaa, he can speak fluent Oddiya. Prasad visited GC
- > with Peter Bokas who according to Peter has taken lot of initiative in
- > working with lot of NGO's in Orissa. Peter is a very professional guy
- > and is very hands on kind of a guy. "Keonjhar" is 1 hour from the NGO
- > and the concerned villages & the road access is extremely bad. It gets
- > even worse if it rains. The travel to Keonjhar from Bhuwaneshawar is @
- > 8hrs.
- > Prasad told me that NGO is working in that area for 10+ years. He
- > feels that NGO lacks the professionalism, not very efficient & not
- > very aggressive in persuing the goals. He feels that when he sees
- > other NGO's in Gujarat, Maharashtra or TSNF. But he thinks many NGO's
- > in Orissa have this problem. On the other hand, Prasad thinks that
- > the area has a great potential to develop. This is one of the most
- > underprevilaged area he has seen. He thinks that when compared to
- > tribal areas in other parts say Maharashtra, these tribal areas are in
- > much much worse conditions. There is no electricity. No schools after
- > 5th grade. The nearest school is 11 Km ... and with such a bad roads,
- > virtually no one goes to school ! Peter thinks the area has a great
- > potential due to great amount of natural resources & minerals. The
- > quality of the produce is great !! As the resourses are so plently
- > available, virtually no need for adultration & hence quality is great.
- > Tamarind, Haldi, Zoono insense (used as mosquito repellent as well),
- > masala, karanji seeds [can be used for oil as bio diesel] are the
- > examples. As far as minerals are concerned, iron, aluminium, boxite,
- > coal are in plenty.

\*\* So what this essentially means is that the self-help groups (SHGs) Gana Chetana works with have plenty of potential to produce and market these products. Needless to say, getting to such a stage will involve a LOT of work on the part of everybody; Gana Chetana in particular. This is because of several factors; mainly because of the complete lack of any enterprise at all in the area. People have to be made aware of the opportunities, made to feel confident enough to take them on, and there has to be a consistent supply chain from Gana Chetana's side, and good packaging and marketing. Each of these is a non-trivial task (for this area). However, it is worth emphasizing that Gana Chetana has made a beginning. Whatever little is happening (in this very backward area) is almost exclusively due to Gana Chetana. I might not be very impressed with the entrepreneurial spirit shown by Gana Chetana (in actions, not in words), but perhaps my expectations are somewhat unrealistic. While this is not to say that we must relax and let Gana Chetana proceed at their own sweet pace (we should certainly exhort them to be somewhat more goal-oriented and move a little faster..how we do that is also a tricky question) it should be borne in

mind that the general situation in this area is far worse than any other place AID might be working in.

- Prasad thinks NGO lacks the kind of enthusiasm or eagerness which he
  - > would have liked to see. He thinks that their marketing talks are more
  - > of talks & actual implementation is not aggressive. He saw the
  - > electric poles not very far from village, but no electricity.
  - > Government claims that the area is electrified since 1985. When asked
  - > about it, the NGO gave him reasons like someone steals electricity etc
  - > ... etc ... Prasad thought there is more of a "chalta hai" attitude.
  - > Peter also tried to link NGO with some markets in Bhuvanashwar, but
  - > NGO is moving slow. Another example is when Prasad was there, NGO put
  - > a stall in Keonjhar ... It was raining that day. NGO had a very few
  - > items with them to sell, even though opportunity was huge ... Prasad
  - > was bit disappointed with this initiative shown by NGO.

>Another point

- > he made was NGO guys stay in homes & they are not really going through
- > the hardships other villagers are going through. The tribal people
- > according to him go through a lot of hardship.
- Okay, a bit of clarification here: what I meant was that most Gana Chetana members essentially stay in their own homes...or close to it. So they are essentially at home, and they are accustomed to the life they lead. This is true of almost everyone, except for one girl, Sunita Padhi, who has actually come from a village some 50 km away (this is a large distance in these parts, which are quite cut off from the outside world) and is working to sustain her family. Anyway, my point in mentioning this was as follows: many times, there are attempts by NGO workers to imply that they are facing all these hardships, living in remote villages and working with people there. I just think that they enjoy a pretty good quality of life; there might not be any running water or electricity, but water in general is plentiful, and the air is wonderfully pure, and the general environs absolutely beautiful. Besides, they are staying in, or close to their own homes...so its not as if they've been transplanted from very different surroundings into these hardships. In any case, this is somewhat of a minor point. I just wanted to clarify it.

So AID needs to have

- > some presence in this area as this is very very underprivileged area.
- > Villagers have faith in GC & hence GC is important. Prasad also
- > stressed that even with above disappointments, it's ONLY due to GC
- > there is progress [Even if it's too slow] .. It's due to GC, there are
- > SHG's & the marketing of these products happen ONLY because of GC. The
- > general scheme they adopt is GC keeps 50 % profit & 50% profit is left
- > to SHG. Another thing to note is there is no political representation
- > in this area. It's very difficult to engage people & it's an extremely
- > extremely hard task. GC has done it. There is no media focus in this

- > area & hence they don't get benefits which typically media hyped
- > areas. 70 % of people haven't seen newspapers. Prasad is not aware of
- > any other NGO
- > working in this area.
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- > Ashram Construction
- > =====
- > The idea is to earn livelyhood for NGO people so that they don't have
- > to struggle for their earnings. If they can get bread & butter, they
- > can help villagers in a better way. So inderectly villagers will get
- > benefited. Also in order for villagers to beleive, NGO has to show
- > what works best and hence the demonstration farm.
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- > Organic farming techniques are not employed properly. GC will show
- > them how to use the ornanic fertilisers, ornanic perstisides like
- > neem, ornanc compost etc ... Nursery will be of fruit bearing plans &
- > herbal medicines. Here the talks with Herbal companies are not very
- > well managed. Pond will show how to do effective fish cultivation etc
- > ... People can use these techniques & sell fish / or duck eggs etc ..
- > Most of the land in this area comes under "forest land" so even if
- > villagers don't own the land, they can use this land as a community.
- > Of course they can get kicked out if government comes up with a
- > scheme.
- > Prasad communicated to NGO that we expect some details about the past
- > projects .. But they haven't yet given that information to Prasad. I
- > told him about the post approval workshop & he liked the idea of
- > sending the AID information & "ASKING NGO TO GIVE TIMELINE FOR
- > DIFFERENT TASKS"
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- > Summary
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- > Change is Very Very slow in this area. If we try to compare this NGO
- > with NGO's in Gujarat, Maharashtra or TNSF, they are not well
- > organised, not very eager to move fast. But whatever is the progress,
- > it's ONLY because of GC. No political presence in this area & no media
- > attention. People in this area do suffer a lot. Their survival is
- > tough .... They have great potential as they have huge natural
- > resources available. AID needs a foothold. We have great, dedicated
- > people like Prof. Dhanada & Peter Bokas working in Orissa. [But we
- > also need to understand that they look after many more NGO's]
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