

Collective Marketing: An Empowering Tool

Tumudibandh a tribal block of Kandhamal district about 120 km away from the district headquarter. Most of the villages in this block are situated at remote locations. People walk miles together on the hill stiff to reach the villages. More than 60% villages are devoid of with regular communication facility. The per capita income of the people in this locality is even lesser than the BPL life line. Starvation death, forced migration, child labour, high mortality, nutritional related health hazards etc are the characteristics of the area. In spite of the focused efforts of Government, sanctioning the special project called “KUTIA KANDH Project” aiming at overall development of the primitive tribe, the status of people were miserable.

It was end 2004, when Orissa Tribal Empowerment & Livelihoods Programme (OTELP), was launched in these area covering 50 odd villages from 3 gram panchyats. Series of meetings / sensitization camps were organized at the community level sharing the participatory process of programme implementation putting community at the cardinal point. Sincere efforts and continued facilitating support of the WDT personnels of PRADATA, the F.NGO of OTELP for two years started yielding good result at the community level. Numbers of grass root institutions were formed / strengthened to plan and execute micro plan prepared by them. Irrigation potential was improved remarkably with different water harvesting structures, percolation tank, canals etc. Land development

work was taken up on priority by the community. Gradually, the villages looked further greener and the villagers started not only yielding two / three crops a year also exposed new crops such as tuber-crop, banana, pulses, sun flower etc. Remarkable differences observed in the life style of the people live in programme village and other.



Later, the members of the community felt the need of marketing of the surplus produces they yield from the village. In spite of hard and sincere efforts of the farmers in

enhancing the production in the field, the lack of market support made them vulnerable to sale the produces to the middleman in a throw away prices. Besides, the limited knowledge of the villagers in weighing system and the lack of knowledge of external market contribute further being cheated by the middleman. They started feel of *alienation* of their own product. High yield in the field coupled with food grain support of WFP resulted in surplus of food grain but marketing provision stood as stumble block in the entire locality to strengthen their financial stability. During mid 2006, it was decided by

the programme authorities to install a weighing machine in each micro watershed with adequate sensitization and hands on training. This was the first level empowering tool for the community to deal with the middlemen operational in the villages.



The entire concept of Collective Marketing as designed in consultation with the resource NGO the MART was thoroughly discussed with the members of facilitative agencies. Based on the feed back received, the collective marketing was launched in the programme villages. On priority, the villagers were sensitized on collectivization of products and its impact on better marketing. They were exposed to different near by markets and the quality of products available in the external market. Interface was also organized by M/s MART with the different traders with the community. The above



exposure helped the communities to understand the marketing dynamics, availability of different traders and the quality vis-a-vis the price etc. Soon, collective marketing reach the boon and whole heartedly accepted at the community level. SHGs, CIGs took the lead role in collectivization of products and for sale management.

This processes expanded to every nook and corner of the programme villages of Tumudibandh block. This resulted increase of additional **15% - 20%** extra profit from their profit they used to earn through middleman.

Later, the facilitating NGO along with district administration jointly planned to strengthen the marketing provision for the tribal by establishing a separate market yard in the block head quarter. Accordingly, a tribal market yard namely “**ADIBASI MARKET**”

was constructed with the financial assistance of District Administration. The management of the market yard was jointly guided by F.NGO and the Community



Today, a well organized network has been developed among all the programme villages of Tumudibandh block for collectivization of product and proper marketing of the same. The marketing volunteers identified from the programme villages (**cadres**) are supporting for information flow and management of the produces to avoid any loss. The villagers also took care of timely transportation of products and proper sale management at the Adivasi Market by forming a marketing committee.

It is matter of surprise, that the concept of marketing through middleman not only has been abolished in the programme villages but also the same practice has been adopted in the near by programme villages. Today, the villager has mechanism of flow of market information to the community on day to day basis. Traders are in touch with the market committee and cadres for timely product lifting. Necessary tie up such as transportation, proper storage, value addition etc are also taken care jointly by the traders and the villagers.

Today, the status of villagers has improved remarkably. Stress migration has been absolutely stopped. Food habit and dress pattern has improved. School retention has been improved. People are empowered. As a striking change, villagers are able to negotiate with the traders and outsiders for the community development. *Now the people from the community say that “After a decade of hopelessness, we now have a sense of security.*

We no longer have to worry about our next meal. OTELP has promoted several income generating activities and adequate forward and backward linkage. This is our greatest strength.