

Interchange

Facilitating international networking and promoting best practice in the development community

A Biannual Newsletter

Volume No. 1 Issue 2

Developing Projects With Communities

ERDS discusses the process of developing a project with a community.

Page 2



Encountering Problems During Implementation

NBJK presents how they deal with projects that are not working the way they were originally planned.

Page 3

FEATURE GROUP

This issue we highlight the work of PISUFAS. In this article, Muluh Penn discusses how they use participation while developing their community projects.

Pages 4 - 5

New Partners

A brief introduction to our new partners.

News in Brief

Highlights from around the world on events taking place in and around the development community.

Recommended Website

Page 6

Tzedek Project Map

A map of current Tzedek partners and the type of project they are working on.

Page 7



Project Planning

Building a community and designing a project. In this article Tzedek's Peter Ndonwie discusses his experiences.

Page 8

Greetings!

Welcome to the second issue of *Interchange*. We have received lots of great feedback from you all about the first issue and have had many positive articles submitted to us for publication. In this issue we have added a few new elements that we hope will be useful for you. These include:

Recommended Website

Tzedek spends a lot of time researching development projects and practices from around the world. Sometimes we come across particularly useful websites that we feel many in our community would benefit from. This will be the first time we start sharing some of these sites with you, so if you find them useful please let us know so that we will continue to include this section. We also recognise that many of you have sites that you already use for ideas and inspiration. If you would like to share these with us we will be sure to highlight them in future issues of *Interchange*.

Overseas Co-ordinator Contribution

This year Tzedek hired our first overseas employee. We are not aiming to participate or assist in any of your projects beyond what we have already done in the past and his job primarily centers around working with UK volunteers that may travel to his respective area. We recognise that he is a valuable resource to have on the ground and you may hear from him when working with the OPT in some circumstances, but these will not happen often and we will not interfere with the management of your project. The section in *Interchange* that the Overseas Co-ordinator will contribute will be able to provide insight and thoughts from another perspective on the ground and you can contact Peter if you have any questions or would like any support, but keep in mind that all funding related questions should only be addressed to your OPT contact.

We hope you enjoy this second issue. For all our new partner and project groups, please explore this issue and all that it has to offer. All contributors have their contact e-mail addresses printed should you have any questions for them, and we look forward to your own contribution in the near future.

Will Schreiber, *Interchange* Editor and Chair of the Overseas Projects Team, Tzedek



Pisufas preparing the land and area for potato cultivation.

The Process of Developing and Initiating A Project



Madhu Basu of ERDS explains how a project develops from the planning stage to success, changing in response to new challenges.

A Project needs strategic planning to address a felt need of the area. We gradually try to explore the felt need of the area through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The PRA method ensures the participation of the stake holders and transparency in identifying the felt need of the area as well as outlining how the felt need might be addressed. The PRA is location specific. We undertook a PRA at Thinagore and Gajole at Malda district, West Bengal, India, and it came to light that women's dependence on the whims of their male counterparts was due to the fact that women had been deliberately kept away from income generation. Therefore if the male counterparts do not earn or refuse to part with the income for the sustenance of the family, women are helpless. The solution that emerged through the PRA method was that the women need to be involved in the income generating process. The involvement of women in income generation process will impart to the women a sense of confidence to assert their rights.

Ultimately it was decided that sensitization camps would be held to motivate the women to form Self Help Groups (SHGs). The SHGs would become the platform for the women to get organized or united. The SHGs would become fulcrum for the women to take-up income generating activities. Once they commence income generation it would impact on family income. This impact would gradually motivate their male counterparts to relax their rigidity. Slowly but steadily, the women would be able to break the shackles.

Despite being put forward by the women in the PRA, the project faced problems. In the beginning the response was lukewarm. The male members were not very much willing to allow their spouses or grown-up daughters to attend the sensitization camps. So to explore the reason for the problem we began to hold focus group discussions with the male members to get their feedback about women involvement in income generating activities. We also tried to reason with them regarding the fallacious mind set that women were meant for the hearths and their prime responsibility were to maintain the family and their children. It was a tiring process. Slowly but steadily we could convince the male members the financial impact that could follow through the involvement of women in income generating activities. However, the male members were found to be mostly worried about losing

their grip over the female members, if they were allowed to step out of the hearth to organize income generating activities.

Through persistent effort gradually we could soften the opposition and reservation of the male members. Once there was tacit support from the male counterparts, the participation of women at sensitization camps increased. The women were highly motivated to go in for SHG - it offered to them an opportunity to do something positive. SHGs were formed in quick succession. The rapidity with which SHGs were formed clearly pointed to the enthusiasm of the women. But we were also worried about a second problem - whether all necessary precautions were taken to form the groups, if choice of leadership was un-biased and

If there is any conflict within the project it must be resolved through "dialogue"

other pitfalls. Therefore after reviewing all the pros and cons, it was decided to hold a training session for the SHGs to explain to them the role and purpose of the group, the role and responsibility of the members of the group, the role of leadership, the accountability of the members and the leaders to the group. Women in general thought that by merely forming the group, she could attain salvation. We explained to them the group dynamics and other important issues as mentioned above. The training session cleared many misconceptions and myths about SHGs.

It will be evident from the above that conceptualization of a project must be need based and it can only take off if it is duly pursued with ears and eyes open. One must be ever ready to learn from feed backs to initiate next course of action. Successful implementation of a project depends on the participation of the stake holders and also of the people standing on the side lines or opposed to it. If there is any conflict within the project it must be resolved through dialogue. Transparency and participation, feed back and remedial measures are the key factors to make a project bear the desired results.

Madhu Basu
erds@cal2.vsnl.net.in



Facing Up To Problems

NBJK discusses how they approach problems when their project does not go as planned.

In 1971 when four engineering graduates of BIT Sindri deserted their comfortable lifestyle and turned towards exploring ways to establish a “just” society, in which no one remains hungry, unemployed, discriminated and exploited, Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK) came into being. For over thirty years NBJK has worked towards these ends and has grown into a sizeable professional organisation with 348 full-time staff and over 1600 field staff and volunteers. With this staff we are able to run five core programmes: socio-economic programmes, advocacy & governance, health & sanitation, education and the promotion of small voluntary groups.

Recently NBJK realised the precarious socio-economic condition of women, who are the most deprived section of rural community. In particular, we have found that within several villages there is large number of women who are further classified as Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) who are neglected without having any support from society. There is no support or social security measures in the milieu of their personal life and has thus necessitated the provision of certain basic services to ensure a reasonable standard of living of the target population. From this the Credit and related Credit Plus project was created to cover 15 remote and poor villages of Kanke block in Ranchi to cater the most immediate needs of the rural poor.

Since this is a large and complicated project, it is crucial that we have a clear and manageable system to monitor our activities. NBJK has thus developed a standard and uniform reporting format to collect both qualitative & quantitative information relevant for the project. This has included daily planning, weekly planning & monthly planning reports and at the end of the month a meeting is conducted to review the month's performance. Additionally, a specified visit schedule is made at all levels of the project for respective field areas, which are monitored on daily basis. The relevant project officer also conducts follow up visits at the ground level on regular basis.

Evaluation of our project also takes place on a continuous basis where we use impact assessment exercises and quick evaluations to assess the impact of the programmes and to identify the problems in the course of implementation so as to make mid-course corrective measures wherever necessary. The coordinators and head of NBJK are involved in conducting evaluations so that the experience and innovations of other projects are intermingled to ensure the best practices are adopted in addressing problems. In

addition to this information being conveyed in quarterly and annual evaluations, our final project evaluation includes information on the following elements:

- Level of Organization Building
- Capacities with the beneficiaries
- Financial Independence resulted
- Income Generation atmosphere
- Level of awareness on key issues
- Social Action
- Impact of each project component
- Other relevant issues as agreed participatory

From our monitoring and evaluations techniques we have realised that we have been faced with a number of obstacles during the running of our projects including problems in strengthening linkages with government agencies, a general lack of awareness on government schemes and related issues, the inaccessibility of PWDs to aids, appliances and certificates, and difficulties in sensitizing PWDs, their parents and community to our project and its goals. As such, we have developed solutions to these problems during the execution of the project by organising motivational and counseling camps for PWDs to increase their self-confidence, collaborated with the Civil surgeon, RINPAS, DDRC for equipping PWDs with aids, appliances and certificates, met with the SDO and formed a Social Action group called Lok Samiti for delivery of anti-poverty schemes and welfare measures. Other measures have included meeting regularly with the governmental authorities to ensure proper coordination with the relevant people.

Our project has been successful largely due to the integrated and corrective framework provided through this simple system of evaluation. The project has completed its 3rd year with some scalable learning with regard to credit delivery, health care, people's organization, disability action and government linkages. In particular, it has empowered 622 women in 15 remote villages of Kanke block in Ranchi by means of institution building, awareness generation, and capacity building and networking with support agencies.

Rajesh Kumar Das
nbjkran@rediffmail.com

Feature Group: PISUFAS

Using participation to drive project development

The Participatory Approach in Cameroon – *Muluh Penn, director of NGO 'Pinyin Sustainable Farming System' (PISUFAS), talks about why he integrates participation right from the start*

The Pinyin Sustainable Farming System (PISUFAS) has designed a participatory approach to project planning; this approach enables the beneficiaries to take part in all the stages of the project design for a more complete personal (inner) strengthening and learning experience. The approach enables beneficiaries and facilitators to contribute not only in content but also to the structure of the project.

This approach has been chosen because PISUFAS believes that farm families, peasants and the chronic poor in rural communities learn more effectively when their own knowledge and capabilities – resources, abilities, potentials and inner strength – are shown to be valued. Participants or beneficiaries are involved at all levels, and are therefore able to share their thoughts and analyse their experiences within an environment that is conducive and secure to self-development and improvement. They become satisfied that the project is theirs and are thus bent on seeing the project succeed and be sustained. Poverty itself prevents

those affected from participating fully in the socio-economic and cultural development of their communities – so it is part of the development process to encourage and empower communities to participate through shared knowledge.

The principles of this members-led initiative are aimed at building an atmosphere of confidence and mutual understanding. Participatory learning appraisal encourages the beneficiaries to exchange information and experiences (the aspect of learning) and investigate into their own issues and develop thinking around their situations (the aspect of appraisal). This process leads to farmer-to-farmer extension (practical action).

Through participation the culture, values, beliefs and other social context of the community are considered by its members and make their way into the projects. One thing that also stands very clear is that innovations initiated by stakeholders are flexible – they can keep on changing as physical, social and economic conditions change.

However it is true that the community members may not have enough information to analyse their situation and plan solutions. Therefore it is also important for the group to consult both within and

without. The possibilities identified by stakeholders may need to be reviewed and studied by technicians. The stakeholders lead the way because they know their situation, potentials and inner strengths. Hence stakeholders have good ideas/innovations but need assistance (technical) on how to put these innovations in the best possible (compatible) arrangements.

The practicalities of the participatory approach

Structures are needed to make a conducive environment that will help the beneficiaries explore their own context (felt needs etc), bring out their inner strengths and potentials and enable them to participate, share ideas/innovation, learn and also decide on a common strategy for their common good. PISUFAS focuses on small scale (micro) planning that is largely problem driven. Each action or decision in turn identifies subsequent action(s)/approach(es).

An example of PISUFAS's participatory project planning is as follows:

TITLE:

Identification of income generating projects

OBJECTIVES:

➔ **Global:**

To identify various income generating activities/projects for peasants from Pinyin rural communities

➔ **Specific:**

- ✓ To identify 3 main income generating activities/projects.
- ✓ To involve the farm families and groups themselves in the identification process.
- ✓ The peasants know the importance of working in groups and teams.
- ✓ For each identified project or activity, participants are able to produce a plan of work and also their own practicable contributions toward the realization of the individual activity/projects.

PARTICIPANTS to include:

- ✓ Widows' groups Leaders
- ✓ Farming groups leaders working with PISUFAS
- ✓ Other interested group leaders

STRUCTURE:

The group is split into three to discuss the problems of the community and suggest projects that might help them to overcome these problems. Each group elect a chairman and a reporter. The groups identify the income generating projects of Irish Potato, Pig production, Poultry, Cattle production and Leeks, celery and tomato.

During a plenary session the participants then arrange the projects in order of importance. The groups vote for their 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices and the totals are added up to identify the most popular three projects – in this case Irish Potato, Pigs and Poultry.

With these projects in order of preference, participants in a plenary then proceed to make the synthesis of the problems to see what the group can solve by themselves and what difficult problems need to be channelled up to others for solutions. The problems and suggestions for Irish Potato are shown in the chart below.

Finally the group makes a plan of action as to how to proceed, outlining what will be done by the farmers and what will be done by PISUFAS. PISUFAS may then involve experts to produce several proposals for possible funders to increase the productivity of Irish potato farming.



These may include providing improved seeds on credit, providing training on farming techniques, providing micro-credit loans to buy equipment etc, all based on the improvements suggested by the farmers.

PISUFAS also uses the opportunity to take down details of the beneficiaries lives (for example their educational level and age) which will help them describe the needs of the community to potential funders, and to conduct some training on record keeping.

A final word...

Creating a shared vision (thinking) is one of the ways of building capacities of the communities to adapt, survive and thrive into an unknown and hopeful future. Sharing knowledge (thinking together) can bring coherence to the activities of diverse stakeholders and create the incentive and basis for participatory planning. By holding workshops which integrate knowledge from many different sources and which offer many opportunities for joint learning among relevant social actors, PISUFAS can lay the foundation for successful innovations or collective social competence.

The Participatory learning appraisal/ approach is a complex approach that gives interesting insights in the different priorities of the actors and the development agents. This is because they show different perception priorities given to new, local and modern ideas by the different actors. This shows that participation can be a complex issue that is essential at many level and stages in the development and scaling up process. The development organizers are constantly in the discovery process as they are working with these actors.

- Muluh Jacob Penn
pisufass@yahoo.com

PROJECT	PROBLEMS	AXIS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<p>IRISH POTATO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degenerated seeds - Rotting of leaves (blight) - Low soil fertility status - Destruction of tubers on the farm and in the store by pests - Premature germination of seeds in the store - Rotting of ware potato in store - Bad roads to the farm - Fluctuation of prices of agricultural products - insufficient capital for investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtain new seeds (foundation seed) - Spray with fungicides - Training on use of chemicals - Use manure /fertilizer/ insecticides - Training on fertilizer application - Use insecticides - Training on storage techniques - Construction of storage facilities - Road maintenance - Search for external market - Search for grants/credit

New Partner Projects

Chanard

The Centre for Human and Natural Resources Development (Chanard) works in Tamil Nadu, India. Tzedek is supporting their work with female sex workers in the hill town of Kodaikanal, providing training in trades such as jute bag making, tailoring and computers, as well as entrepreneurship training. The aim is to help the women move out of sex work, and prevent their daughters from starting sex work. Chanard have been working with sex workers in Kodaikanal for several years, running

a free health clinic and sensitising the community on sexually transmitted diseases. They have also trained sex workers to be peer educators.

Maltiti

The Maltiti Child Foundation is a young organisation working in Tamale, Ghana. Maltiti means "Support us to develop" and Tzedek is supporting a multi-faceted project focusing on increasing access to education. This involves giving goats to needy students, which can be used to bring in money to support their education, as well as running after

school reading groups for students in non English language schools.

Muslim Family Counseling Services

Muslim Family Counseling Services (MFCS) is based in Kumasi in Ghana. Tzedek is supporting a small project for 30 vulnerable youths which involves training in vocational skills (for example carpentry, hairdressing and tailoring), as well as business skills and life skills. The youths are encouraged to pass their skills on to others once they are trained. MFCS works with the whole local commu-

nity, regardless of religion.

BREAD

The Bureau of Rural Economical and Agricultural Development (BREAD) works in Bihar, India. Tzedek is supporting their project to provide vocational training and entrepreneurship training to 120 dropout youths of the lowest castes and help them to identify employment or access to microfinance for self-employment. Trades will be embroidery, motor winding and generator set/diesel pump set repairing, which have been chosen by the youths.

News in Brief

World trade talks failed in Geneva

The latest round of trade negotiations through the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva have ended without an agreement being reached. The issue that broke down the discussion was in what conditions countries would be allowed to bring in emergency tariffs to protect their farmers from surges in the market. The United States could not agree with China and India on the level of market surges that could trigger these emergency tariffs.

This round of WTO talks is called the "Doha Round" and started in 2001. Over the years, the talks have repeatedly collapsed as developed countries failed to agree with developing nations on terms of access to each others markets. Analysts have suggested developing countries may decide to focus on individual agreements with other nations rather than these multilateral agreements. However despite the problems with emergency tariffs

the Doha Round has delivered in other areas, including banana trade, agricultural subsidies and the role of tax and quotas in international trade. It is unclear when and how the Doha Round will continue after this failure in Geneva.

G8 summit 2008

The G8 summit – a meeting of the leaders of the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Germany, the US, Japan, Italy and Canada – met in Japan this year. The key items on the agenda were oil, climate change, international politics and international development. They called for more investment in the production and refining of crude oil, for more efficient use of energy and more work on alternatives to oil in order to mitigate against the rising oil prices. In international development there were no new promises of aid. On climate change they embraced a "vision" for a global target of halving greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, but with no

specific commitments on how to achieve it. On international politics the G8 recommended a special UN envoy to be involved in mediation between political parties in Zimbabwe in order to bring about a government that truly reflects the will of the people. They also emphasised the importance of disarmament talks with North Korea.

African aid shortfall

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has said that Africa faces an aid shortfall of \$40bn (£26bn). Within a programme of increased aid in combination with increased good governance from African leaders, Mr Annan criticised both parties. He said that the industrialised world will fail to meet the pledges they gave to double aid by 2010, and that Africa had to do "much, much more" to keep its promise to improve governance, singling out Zimbabwe and Darfur as areas of particular concern.

Website of Interest

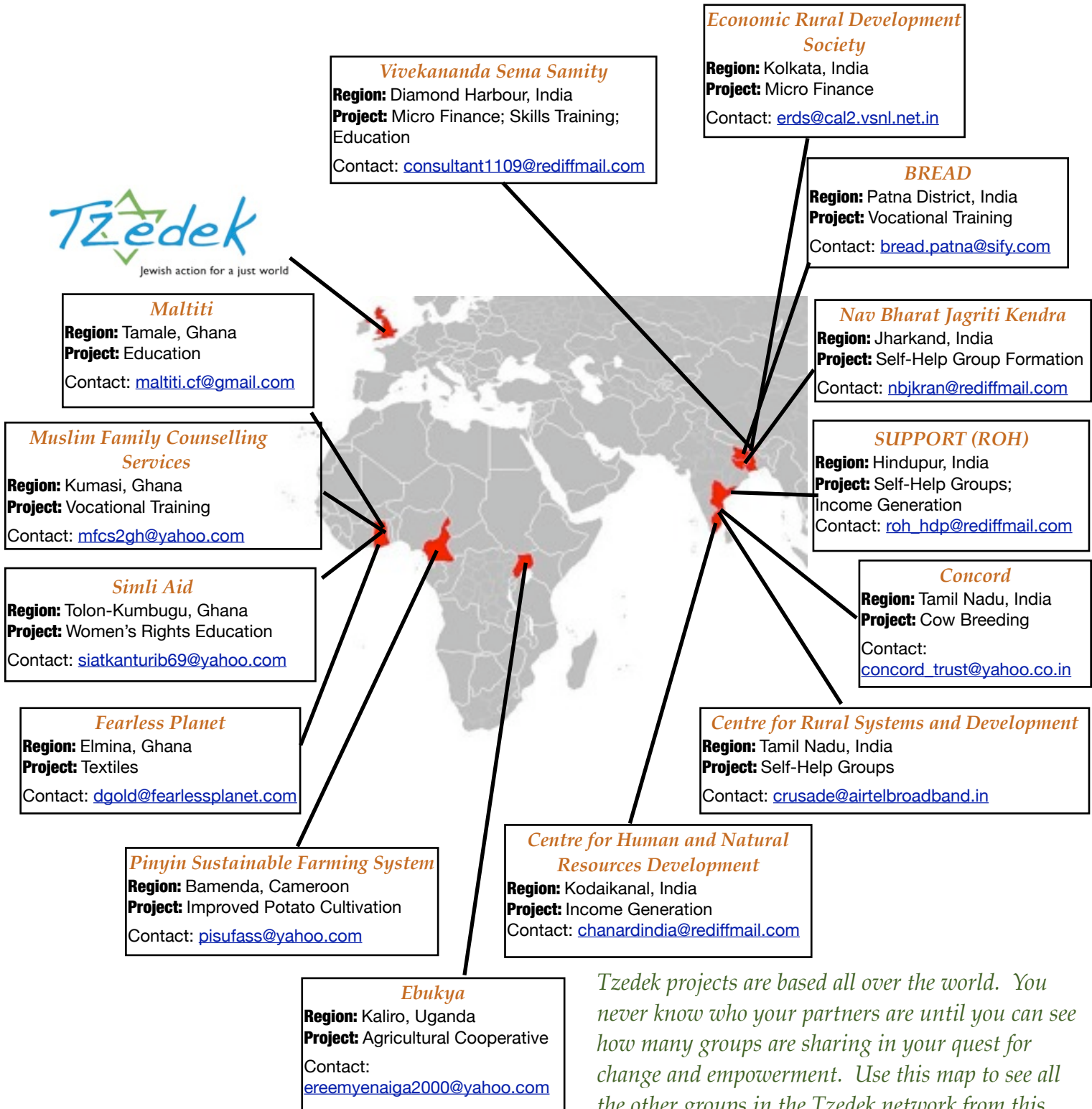


<http://practicalaction.org/practicalanswers>

The organisation Practical Action focuses on sharing sustainable local technologies. On the website you can download leaflets on these, for example how to make compost bins, do water harvesting, low technology construction techniques and food processing. NGOs throughout the world leave reviews which may focus on your local problems and solutions. Anyone can submit technical questions and receive free answers from Practical Action.

Tzedek 2008 Partners

Jewish action for a just world



Tzedek projects are based all over the world. You never know who your partners are until you can see how many groups are sharing in your quest for change and empowerment. Use this map to see all the other groups in the Tzedek network from this year that we encourage you to work with and discuss common problems and solutions.

Special Contribution: *Tzedek's Overseas Co-ordinator*



Planning projects requires plenty of time and resources. To highlight some of the issues and tasks necessary for a successful project, Tzedek's new Overseas Co-ordinator, Peter Ndonwie, explains some of the steps he goes through when planning a project.

My name is Peter Ndonwie, I am presently the first Overseas Coordinator for Tzedek in Ghana. Part of my role is meant to see into it that projects initiated by local partners of Tzedek are well planned in a way that will be long lasting towards the alleviation of poverty and ultimately sustainable. Having this in mind, I am here to talk about some golden rules which each and every one needs to follow when planning a project.

What is a Project?

A 'development project' is any development initiative that an individual or a group of persons are planning to undertake to improve on their living standards and that of their immediate community now and in the future. This therefore shows that to achieve your intended objectives or to arrive at a resounding success with your project you need to PLAN well in advance. Take note that if you FAIL to PLAN you are PLANNING to FAIL. My father once told me that "Peter if you do not know where you are going in life then you will certainly end up somewhere else" This is true because you need to sit down and write on a piece of paper where you want to be in the next coming three to five years. Time scale is very important in any thing you plan to do. If you know what it will take you to be successful in the next five years then you will certainly achieve your intended goals. This is what is called Strategic Action Planning.

Planning:

Take note that the implementation of your Strategic Action Plan and your work may depend upon that of others. Make this very clear so that these people too will receive warning of your needs. Highlight the effect that problems with these would have upon your project so that everyone is quite clear about their importance and role. To be sure, contact these people yourself and ask if they are able to fulfil the assumptions in your specification. If you want to succeed in your project then you need to undertake a proper study of your immediate environment to determine those forces working for and against your intended plan.

Feedback

Do you find this newsletter useful? Do you have a specialist article or skill you feel the wider development community could benefit from? We would love to hear from you and work with you on developing a contribution for future publication in *Interchange*.

Editor

Will Schreiber

Will@tzedek.org.uk

Resources needed:

In your note book, which embodies your project specification, you should identify the materials, equipment and manpower that is needed for the project and where the financial resources will come from so that once you start the implementation phase you will not immediately run into problems.

After having decided what the specification intends, your next problem is to decide what you and your team actually need to do, and how to do it. You have to provide some form of framework (structure) both to plan and to communicate with others what needs doing. Without a structure, the work is a series of unrelated tasks which provides little sense of achievement and no feeling of advancement. If the team has no grasp of how individual tasks fit together towards an understood goal, then the work will seem pointless and they will feel only frustration and may abandon a good plan because of lack of structure.

To take the planning forward, therefore, you need to turn the specification into a complete set of tasks of what to do in the coming days or months, how to do it and when to do it. This is what is called **Activity Plan**. Your Activity Plan will need human, material and financial resources to carry it forward. Where possible you and your team should put in place a PROJECT REPORT CARD which in it each an every one can see the level of individual involvement in the project activities. Indeed any individual task should be seen as merely a single step in your team's development with the ultimate goal being the success of the project. Sometimes tasks can be grouped and allocated together. For instance, some tasks which are seemingly independent may benefit from being done together since they use common ideas, information and talents. This will enable each and every one of you to see the project as your COMMON IDENTITY.

The doing phase of the project is call the **Implementation Phase**. This always comes after the planning phase is over, but what this entails will be discussed further next time. I hope this has been useful and I look forward to working with you all.

-Peter Ndonwie
Overseas Co-ordinator
Peter@tzedek.org.uk



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