



# IMP @ CT

## THINK BUSINESS

The Bridge Foundation has entered a challenging and an exciting environment. It has taken us 20 years of hard work commencing with a small loan of Rs 4,500 to two clients, to today serving above 70,000 clients in five States. The new environment demands from us a new process and everyone in the organisation must attune his or her mind to start thinking in a businesslike manner. This needs a conscious effort by all members of The Bridge Foundation family to bring about a radical change in the thinking process.

What we decide to do fast or not, right or not is based on the result of our thinking. This demands a mindset, hard work and over and above a change in our attitude. If the NBFC has to be successful, we not only have to change our thinking but also the efficiency of accomplishing our task. Peter Drucker - the management guru observes - "The most important contribution management needs to make is to increase the productivity of the knowledge worker."

I am confident that every step we take will enable us to touch higher levels of success. The change to a formal financial institution definitely has an impact on our working style and delivery mechanism. The present thrust is on efficiency, effective working and the best practices in the Microfinance industry.

TBF group has reached a milestone in its historical development. We are today the first Christian Non Banking Financial Company that will be involved in poverty alleviation and for this we need to appreciate the role of Opportunity International, who have worked very hard to change the mindset. One of the major concerns that we have had during the period of transition is to equip all the staff to become more efficient and follow best practices.

What is it that will enable us to achieve success? The most powerful asset in business - the human mind has to be taught to think business and make good business decisions. In this age of advanced technology, rapid changes and innovation, the people need to gear up and be in the race.

The world of high tech has radically improved and has become better, faster and stronger. This is mainly due to relentless innovation and engineering. If we are looking at success, being members of a successful team and running a successful organisation, then we must understand that success will come, only when "The Human Capital" (intellectual and social) - the most valuable asset possessed by human beings is improved just as relentlessly as technology.

What about our human technology? What human innovations have we been relentless about?

Stop! Think! Reflect! What do we need to do? The answer lies in action i.e. an overhaul of our mental operating systems, such that we will keep pace with changing technology. If we are not quick in our thinking, we will become obsolete. If mental operating systems, do not keep pace, our business thinking will crash.

The sad truth is that companies and organisation do not fail, people do. The year 2003 is our challenge; we need to change our thinking. We cannot afford to look back and operate on the laurels of past successes, hoping to be a 100% efficient organisation. There is a definite attitudinal change that has to be accepted and lived by from now on.

It is a new direction and is governed by principles, prudential norms, strategic planning and global best practices. The business solution to global poverty is Microfinance. Improving poor peoples access to financial services is a core component. Our past experience of the poor being credit worthy, honest and dependable is now the platform on which we can take Opportunity Microfinance India Limited forward and do our best in reaching the triple bottom line - poverty focus, sustainability and transformation.

In this our first publication of Impact, you can see for yourself that we continue to accept the challenge of poverty in the stories narrated, we have been able to make a impact in the lives of these poor women beneficiaries. We need support to reach out, we need to become more productive, we need to innovate and develop new financial products. We need to be calculative in our risks and above all the whole team needs to be fully focused on our core values of stewardship and commitment.

Opportunity Microfinance India Limited is the public arm of The Bridge Foundation. We are now in business with the poor. People are investing in us so that we develop new markets for the poor entrepreneurs, providing solutions to poverty. Can we make this happen?

**Eric D. Jacob**  
Director

Quarter Ending December 2002		
1	Projects Funded	70,856
2	Active Projects	21,327
3	Jobs Created	55,581
4	Partners Associated	460
5	SHGs Involved	6,530
6	Villages Covered	4,875



Chinna Nagamma an uneducated, illiterate woman was married to Mallaiah who worked in the railways. Mallaiah lived with Chinna Nagamma for 3 years. One day he decided to remarry and threw Chinna Nagamma out of her house. Helpless, unqualified for any work with no money at her disposal, Chinna Nagamma went back to her parents and began her lonely life totally dependent on her parents. The local NGO had just begun mobilizing women into Self Help Groups in Virupapuram in Tamilnadu.

Chinna Nagamma's mother was already an established businesswoman. She used to go door-to-door, selling aluminium vessels, which she purchased in wholesale. Initially Chinna Nagamma joined her mother in carrying the loaded basket on her head. The income generated from this business was barely sufficient to take care of her self and her sick husband and also clear the debts of moneylenders.

In the meantime the Self Help Group was becoming stronger and very supportive of this deserted young woman Chinna Nagamma. When her application for loan was submitted she had the unanimous support of the members. She was sanctioned a loan of Rs 5000. She decided to do aluminium vessel vending but while she sold these aluminium vessels at the retail price, she also purchased old damaged aluminium vessels on kilogram basis. This was an additional income to her.

Chinna Nagamma's mother with the additional income cleared her debts and both mother and daughter ran their individual and successful businesses. Transformation has taken place in the lives of Chinna Nagamma, her mother and father. Chinna Nagamma now supports herself, has developed self-confidence and lives with dignity. Within one year she purchased the land in which they had a hut and built a concrete structure at the cost of Rs 30,000. She has gained the respect of all the Self Help Group members and also those of the community.

People look up to her. The once deserted helpless woman is a strong example to other single woman in the society. Her aged parents are proud of her support to them. She expresses her sincerest thanks to The Bridge Foundation for its intervention.

Karnataka State and more specifically Bangalore District is called the software capital of India. It is from here that TBF Project Executive for Karnataka operates, through a number of NGOs, which have penetrated into the deep rural areas of Karnataka. The village Beediganahalli, the district Gokunte.

In this village Kamalamma and her husband live with their six children. She is a daily wage agricultural laborer and her husband the village servant who in common parlance is called 'Naukar'. Surprisingly the barter system still continues to be practiced. For every job the naukar does, he is paid in kind. He collects a handful of Ragi as wages for his labour. To manage six children with limited work and some food items was a difficult proposition for Kamalamma. She could never make the two ends meet and on some days, she and her children had to satisfy themselves by eating raw onions and green chillies with a lump of ragi. Her desperation grew. The village Self Help Group encouraged her to become a member, as she was a woman with commitment and dedication. She knew that one-day life will change. The group decided to support her for a loan because of her regularity in setting aside savings from her meager income. Every month she put aside Rs 20 and an unblemished record over 8 months. TBF funded her for Rs 10,000. Putting her savings together, she was able to purchase a healthy cow for Rs 14,000.

The cow yields 15 liters of milk and the local milk society purchases the same giving her Rs 2000 every fortnight. The poverty situation began to ease. Her basic needs were met. Within six months she was able to meet the marriage expenses of her eldest son and her two daughters. The village social obligation of feeding families was also met.

Kamalamma is a happy woman, her life has been transformed. I personally visited her in September. She wished me raising her paralysed arm - " Sir, God sent you (TBF) to transform my life. My children go to school and are in the final year. We are happy and content, praise God for the opportunity given to us. Kamalamma says boldly - "There is a way out of poverty, look at me and take that bold step."





Lilly Rani Mary living in Marianathapuram was suddenly faced with a crisis. Two years ago when her husband deserted her. Struggling to survive she took to agricultural labour and managed to eek out a living.

The Self Help Group in this village encouraged her to join them. As a lonely woman needing support, she willingly agreed. Deep down inside her, frustrated, fearful of the stigma of society and the shame of being a deserted woman, continued to haunt her. She had something to prove: she could stand on her own two feet.

Through the group she approached the society for a small loan. She was funded Rs 3000. In her little hut, she decided to accept life's challenge and set up the first fancy store in the village. With the funds available spending the least on infrastructure she bought stocks of fancy items like glass bangles, earrings, trinkets and items generally used by the rural folk. The stock enabled her to make her fancy shop more attractive.

Lilly Rani Mary expanded her business within one year, introduced new items like lady's slippers and boy's shoes. Lilly Rani Mary continues to grow. Her Rs 3000 investment gives her a return of Rs 1500 net monthly income. Attending the Self Help Group has given her more confidence. Self sufficient and using every opportunity to scale up, her business continues to grow.

She has the confidence and determination, which she lacked. The Self Help Group members support has enabled her to become what she is. She leads the group to fight for community needs and infrastructure and her economic security has given her the desired confidence level and motivation. She acknowledges, but for The Bridge Foundation, she would never have seen this prosperity.

Sunkulamma is a 45 year old Dalit woman living in Dibbanakullu village in Andhra Pradesh, with her husband and 8 children. Both agricultural labourers and owners of a two-acre non-productive land, they found it difficult to make two ends meet. They could not send their children to school because of financial problems. Every time Sunkulamma looked at the other prosperous families; she felt the need for support. She confesses - 'If I could be given an opportunity, I know I can make it.'

She had heard about Self Help Groups and decided to join. She consciously set aside a small amount towards savings. Returning from the field, Sankullama used to sit at her doorsteps and contemplate about some business activity that she and her husband could do. A survey of the number of families, the difficulty to find firewood easily in the forest and the possible income that she could generate were always brewing in her mind. One day these ideas had to become a concrete reality. Through her group she approached the NGO and presented her project proposal. Her proposal was forwarded to TBF and she received her first loan of Rs 5000. She hired a bullockcart on a daily basis and collected firewood from the forest department and transported the same to Adoni town for sale.

The profit of her first capital infusion of Rs 4000 was motivating. She took a second loan and then a third loan. She now had Rs 25,000 for investment. Sunkulamma is prospering and growing. She has repaid two of the loans promptly and presently has a turnover of Rs 50,000. Her net profit for the month averages around Rs 10,000. Outside the firewood depot she has invested in bulk supplies of tender coconut. Her daily sale from this is an additional source of revenue.

People in Adoni town have watched this family grow. There is a radical change in the family's welfare. She was able to perform the marriage of three of her sons. She has purchased three acres of land in her own village. Her old thatched roofed house is now a concrete structure, with a strong compound wall and a beautiful garden. The demand for firewood being so high, she has plans to move from a rented place to buy her own firewood depot. She has provided employment to four young people. The four younger children have joined school. The youth working in her depot are also enrolled in the village adult literacy program. The family's status has improved and they live with self worth and dignity. She has the determination and looks back into the last 2 years and appreciates The Bridge Foundation's intervention, which has made her what she is.



BOOK-POST

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