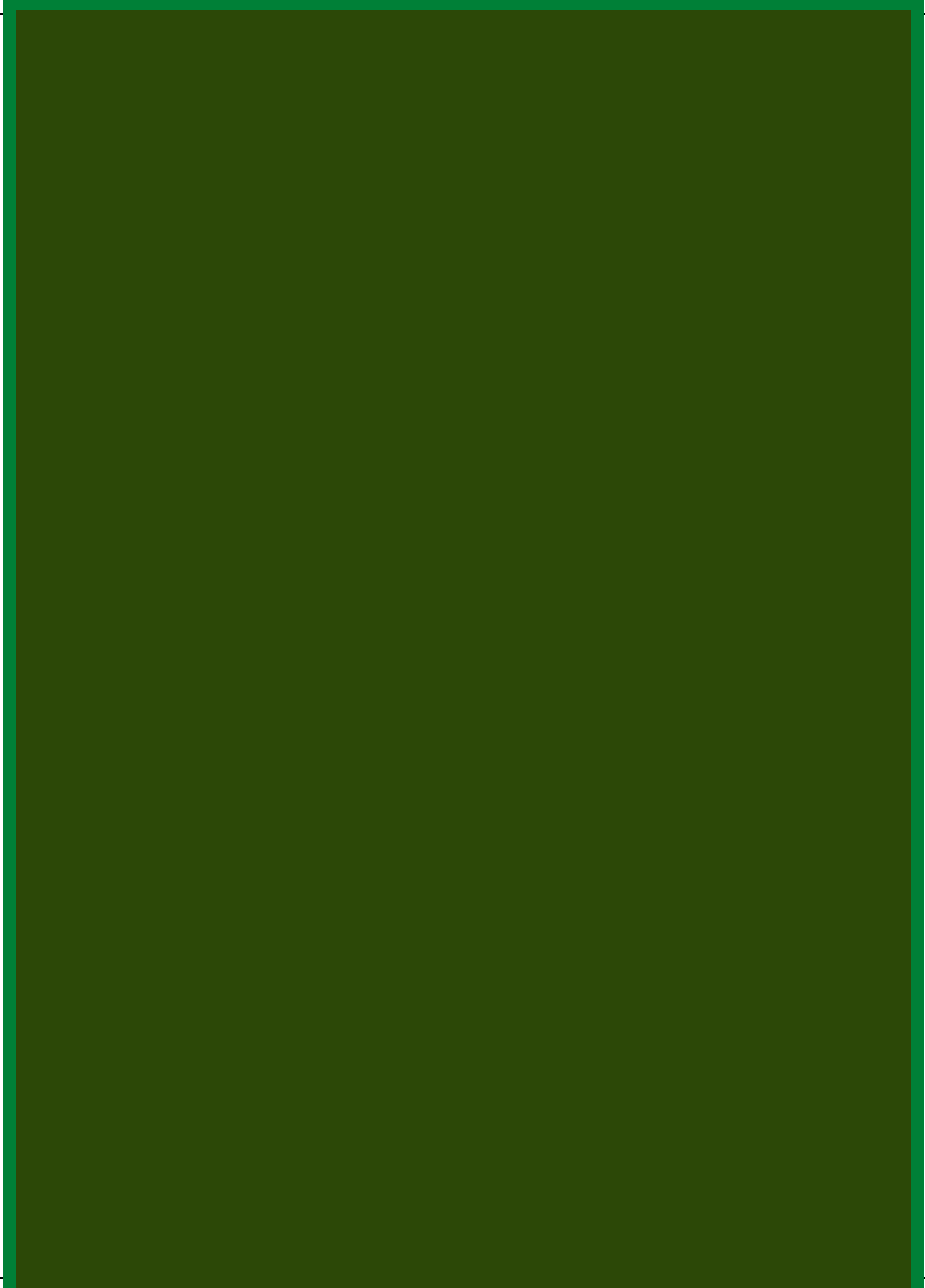




Mission Samriddhi
SOCIAL IMPACT ENTERPRISE

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CELEBRATION OF VILLAGES 2020





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SUMMARY

Celebration of Villages(CoV) is a celebration of the spirit of rural India. An initiative of Mission Samriddhi, it is an endeavour to acknowledge and appreciate the rural transformation towards sufficiency, resilience and prosperity. Initiated in the year 2019, the CoV identifies and celebrates villages exhibiting exemplary work in the area of Natural Resource Management, Livelihoods, holistic approach to MGNREGA and Community Empowerment.

In 2019, we celebrated the exemplary work done by the villages in the Yavatmal district in Maharashtra. In 2020 it is the inspiring villages of Wardha district in Maharashtra.

This year we received 59 nominations from 8 blocks of Wardha district, out of which sixteen Gram Panchayats were shortlisted; four in each category.

This is the story of sixteen of the shortlisted Gram Panchayats to prosperity.

FOREWORD

Ask any average Indian on the street to name 50 cities or towns in India!

Surely, within minutes, he or she will proudly display their General knowledge and geography and probably even surprise you with more than 50 names. Now ask them to name 50 Villages across India! Stumped? Exactly!

Hiware Bazaar, Ralegaon Siddhi, Gangadevipallyit will be a revelation even if 5 names pop up - leave alone 50. We can quite easily come up with the name of a city or a town in every district but prominent villages in that district - No!

This sums up our attitude towards rural India. Lack of knowledge coupled with apathy only seems to be growing. It is against this backdrop that we conceived the idea about Celebrating those villages that are truly inspirational. Inspiring because in spite of Government and public apathy, they have taken their destiny into their own hands and mustered every ounce of courage, hard work and community togetherness to move from adversity to prosperity. Prosperity through Livelihoods, Natural Resource Management, effective ways in leveraging MGNREGA and innovative ways in the Empowerment of their Communities.

Those villages in Yavatmal District who were proud to share their sense of self-belief beckoned us to tell their stories to the larger world outside. Each and every one of them is a role model in their own unique manner and in the truest sense. More than the formal Celebration event that ensued with the District officials, the real moment of celebration was when villages from Wardha visited Kumbhari (an award-winning role model village), observed their best practices, became inspired and started practising some of them in their own villages. Seeing is believing and this indeed was the moment of truth – for all of us!

Inspired by what happened at Yavatmal, we went about the process in Wardha. The stories that follow are a testimony to the spirit of their “Can Do attitude” and a tribute to their determination to succeed.

Won't it be wonderful if we can “Celebrate the Villages that inspire” in every single district of our nation?

We hope all of you enjoy reading their stories and are inspired to do something about it in your own way.



Ram Pappu
Programme Director
Mission Samriddhi

MESSAGE FROM CEO,
ZILLA PARISHAD,
WARDHA



'Celebration of Villages' (Inspirational village festival) program is making a social impact in Wardha district of Maharashtra. It's a project implemented by Mission Samriddhi, they are going to felicitate four Gram Panchayats that are performing best in the field of natural resource management, employment guarantee scheme with a holistic approach, livelihood, and community empowerment. This felicitation is going to encourage other Gram Panchayats to carry various developmental works.

Mission Samriddhi has always been carrying out innovative social projects at the national level. I am confident that the selected villages for 'Celebration of Villages' award will set an ideal example for other Gram Panchayats in the district. The selected Gram Panchayats for this award will help them to proceed with holistic village development activities in the future.

Mission Samriddhi used an independent method to shortlist the last four Gram Panchayats and included all 16 success stories of Gram Panchayats in this book. All these success stories will inspire and guide other Gram Panchayats.

I appreciate all the 16 Gram Panchayats that are part of the 'Celebration of Villages' project and congratulate the four Gram Panchayats that will be felicitated with the award. I am very thankful to Mission Samriddhi for implementing this praise-worthy project in Wardha district and wish them the best for their future endeavours.



Dr Sachin Ombase, I.A.S.
Chief executive officer
Zilla Parishad, Wardha

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At Mission Samrddhi we believe that nothing of substance can be achieved without connecting and collaborating. Celebrating the inspiring work of the villages in the Wardha district wouldn't be possible without the support from the District Administration.

We would like to express our gratitude to Dr Sachin Ombase, CEO and Shri Satyajit Bade, Additional CEO, Zilla Parishad, Wardha for their encouragement and support through the evaluation process.

We would also like to thank Shri Vipul Jadhav, Dy. CEO (Panchayat); Shri Sachin Khade, District Programme Manager; Swati Wankhede, DMM, MSRLM; the BMM and the Block Development Officers of Wardha, Deoli, Selu, Arvi, Karanja, Ashti, Hinganghat and Samudrapur blocks for their active participation, logistical support and guidance.

Thanks to Shri Vinesh Kakde, Block Coordinator, Care India Solution for Sustainable Development and Mahendra Phate, Programme Manager, KJBF, Wardha.

Our special thanks to all the 59 participating Gram Panchayats for sending their nominations and sharing their pathbreaking development initiatives with us. Thanks to the Sarpanch, all the elected village representatives and the Gram Sevaks of each of the participating Gram Panchayats, for their involvement.

Our heartfelt gratitude to each and every community member of the participating villages for sharing with us their knowledge and making this CoV an enriching experience for all involved. We hold with us the fond memories of all the participating villages - the warmth of the villagers, their humility and their smiling faces.



ABBREVIATIONS

Celebration of Villages	COV
Natural Resource Management	NRM
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	MGNREGA
Self Help Groups	SHG
Farmer Producer Organisations	FPO
Producer Groups	PG
Cluster Training Coordinator	CTC
Village Organisation	VO
Continuous Contour Trenches	CCT
Scheduled Tribes/Scheduled Caste	ST/SC
Other Backward Caste	OBC
Open Defecation Free	ODF
School Management Committee	SMC
Focused Group Discussion	FGD
Internal Community Resource Person	ICRP
Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission	MSRLM
State Rural Livelihood Mission	SRLM
Prime Minister Awas Yojna	PM Y
Village Health Nutrition and Sanitation Committee	VHNSC
Kamalnayan Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation	KJBF
Village Social Transformation Foundation	VSTF
Gram Panchayat Development Plan	GPDP
Gram Panchayat	GP
Zilla Parishad	ZP
Community Investment Fund	CIF
Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation	MoDWS
Convergence of Agricultural initiatives in Maharashtra	C IM
International Fund for Agricultural Development	IFAD
Mahila Arthik Vikas Mandal	M VIM
Below Poverty Line	BPL

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WARDHA

DISTRICT PROFILE



CC: cultural.maharashtra.gov.in

'Wardha', the name, according to [local interpretations](#), is a corruption of 'Varha', the boar incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The source of river Wardha, it is believed, is the mouth of Varaha or the boar. [Another interpretation](#) states that it means 'Var-da' or the blessings. According to [Sir Alexander Cunningham](#), the British Army Engineer who founded the Archeological Survey of India, it is 'Wad- tha' or the river of the banyan trees since the entire valley was lined beautifully by rows of banyan (wad) trees.

Nestled in the [Valley of Wardha River](#), in Maharashtra, the district of Wardha forms the western part of the Nagpur plains or the Wardha - Wainganga river basin and occupies more or less a central position in the [Vidarbha or the Nagpur division of Maharashtra](#).

All [the rivers](#) of the district originate from the various mountain peaks of the Satpura hill range from the northern side. The Wardha is the most important river in the district. It rises in the Multai plateau of the Satpura mountain ranges and flows all along the northern and western boundaries of the district. The other important river in the district is the Vena River, which flows from the adjoining Nagpur district to the Hinganghat tahsil to merge with the Wardha River at village Sawangi. Yashoda river, Vena and Bakli are the main tributaries of the Wardha River. Other rivers in the district are Pothra, Bor river, Dham and Kar, which remain generally dry during the summer but turn into furious torrents during the rainy season and pose a threat of flood to the nearby villages. Bor and Dham rivers originate from the Arvi Tahasil and merge with the Vena River at Mandgaon of Samudrapur Tahasil, whereas the river Yashoda originates from Arvi, also flows in Deoli Tahasil and further merges into the Wardha River.

The agro-climate of Wardha District is characterized by hot, dry, and sub-humid bioclimatic with dry summers and mild winters. The district receives its rainfall essentially from the southwest monsoon. This monsoon contributes 85 per cent of the total annual rainfall. Analysing the soil type in the district, it is found that black soil is the predominant soil type. This is classified into kanhar (Heavy soils), madhyam (Medium soils), and bardi (Light soils).

15.40% of its Geographical area is under the Forest Cover, with rich biodiversity.

The area constituting the Wardha district formed a part of the Nagpur district till 1862 when it was made a separate district under the plea that Nagpur, as it was then, was too large a district for efficient administration and that the interests of the cotton market and industry of the area demanded direct and special supervision. When the district was formed in 1862, the administrative headquarters was first located at Kaotha village near Pulgaon but, in 1866, it was removed to its present location when the town of 'Wardha' was built on the site occupied by the hamlet Palakwadi.

With 2.06 per cent of the area and 1.28 per cent of the total population (2001 census) of the state of Maharashtra, Wardha is one of the smallest districts in the state. There are three subdivisions namely Wardha, Hinganghat and Arvi with eight blocks or tehsil namely Wardha, Deoli, Selu, Arvi, Ashti, Karanja, Samudrapur & Hinganghat in the district. Of these Karanja, Ashti, and Smudrapur are entirely rural with no settlement being classified as urban.

The district headquarters is located at Wardha town is about 738 KM by road from Mumbai, the state capital of Maharashtra state. There are 520 Panchayats, 1361 villages and 6 towns in the district.

According to the 2011 census, the total population of the Wardha district is 1,300,774 of which male and female were 668,385 and 632,389 respectively. In the 2001 census, this figure for Wardha District was at 1.28 per cent of the Maharashtra population.

According to a study on the Wardha district by M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, "the percentage of the population living in rural areas in Wardha District is far higher than in the state as a whole. Maharashtra is one of the most urbanised states in the country, accounting for less than 60 per cent of its total population in rural areas by 2001. Thus, Wardha District is more rural compared with the state as a whole."

While the majority of the population in the district identify themselves as Hindu, there is a significant population practising Islam, Jainism and Buddhism. The Kunbis, Marathas, Mali, Ahirs, Telis, Bhoyars and Dhangars constitute the Scheduled caste communities practising farming. The Gonds and the Govari are the important Scheduled Tribes in the region. Marathi and Hindi are the most widely spoken languages. Banjari, Gond, Gujarati, Kolami and Sindhi are other languages spoken by a considerable population in the district.

Agriculture is the major source of livelihoods in the region with 80% of the population engaged in farming and allied activities.

In the district of Wardha, Kharif and rabi are the two agricultural seasons, and Kharif has always been the most important season with regard to the area brought under cultivation. 14 The Kharif season begins in mid-June with the onset of the monsoon and extends up to December depending on the type of crop sown. The Rabi season commences in October and extends up to February or March.

The important crops grown in the Kharif season are Cotton, Sorghum, and Pulses, and since the mid-1980s, Soybean has become an extremely important Kharif crop in Wardha District. In the Rabi season, Wheat and Gram are cultivated. According to the Wardha 'District Gazetteer', even in the early years of the twentieth century, Cotton and Sorghum have been the major crops in the district. Cotton and Jawar or Sorghum, therefore, cover two-thirds of the whole area and overshadow all other crops, even today.

Next in importance to the above staples comes Red Gram with an acreage of 85,000 or 8 per cent of the total land. This pulse is usually grown as a mixed crop with cotton. Til or Sesame occupies 22,000 acres or 2 per cent of the total area, and rice only 3,000 acres, while the pulses Urad and Tur are grown on about 9,000 acres. This cropping pattern seems to have remained intact till the introduction of Soybean in the 1980s. Cotton crop is the main cash crop of the district occupying about one-third of the total cultivated land. Chickpeas, Pigeon Pea, Soybean are other important crops cultivated in the region.

Horticulture is another important source of livelihoods, for the farmers with big landholdings and a source of irrigation. The region is known for its Oranges and other citrus fruits. Considerable land is under Banana plantations and one can see farmers also growing fruits like Guava, Custard Apple and Wood Apples. In recent years, the district administration has also promoted the cultivation of Mulberry trees with the aim of promoting Silk production in the region.

The region has a good number of heavy industries constituting primarily cotton mills

Wardha district is one of the major cotton-producing district and abundant agricultural resources. The dominant industries in the district, therefore, are Cotton ginning & pressing Mills, oil Mills, Dall Mills.

There is a growing trend in Agro and food products, fabrication of metals, textile industries, and non-metallic mineral in recent years.

The district has five industrial estates and 1399 registered industries. Together, the small scale industries and heavy industries generate employment for over 20 thousand people.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT



PALASGAON BAI

Nestled on the confluence of rivers Nanda and Manda, Palasgaon Bai is a village in Selu block. A beautiful stone temple of Lord Vitthala is a pilgrimage centre for the devotees of Lord Vitthal from across Maharashtra. The village is also known as the birthplace of Sant Sakhu Aai, a mystic born in the village and hence the name 'Palasgaon Bai' - bai means a woman. With a population of 1751, Palasgaon Bai is an important pilgrimage centre, with pilgrims from all over Maharashtra and Karnataka visiting the village.

“The spirit of community service is as though the village has received in inheritance. Creating a safe, clean and comfortable space for the pilgrims is considered a duty by each of the villager. This same spirit of community service percolates down to every task which we undertake in the larger interest of the village. Whether it is repairing the dam, banning liquor, managing the floods, we do not wait for the government or any other external agent to solve our problems. We find solutions to our own problems and each one of us becomes the agent of development. This is what we consider true community empowerment.”

Dhiraj Lende, Sarpanch

There was no gymnasium in the village and the youth wanted one. They approached the gram panchayat for funds. The funds were not available. Instead of being dissuaded or waiting endlessly for external help, the youth decided to set up a gymnasium themselves. The gram panchayat gave them ten by twenty feet of rectangular land, on the outskirts of the village. The youth, using their ingenuity, designed exercisers by upcycling the trash. Weights were made by filling sand in empty water cans, jerricans and milk cans. A pulley was made applying simple principles of physics. Disposed tyres of different vehicles were procured to use for muscle building exercises. Dumbbells were made with mud and cement. And within a month the village had its own gymnasium.

”



"What we needed was a space to exercise to build our stamina. Most of us here aspire to join the defence forces. When the funds were not available we discussed why we need money at all? We realised we could build a gymnasium using our existing resources. All we had to do was be a bit creative."

Rakesh Pandav, Hanuman Vyayam Shala

A few years back the village witnessed an anti-liquor movement led by women. "Even though our village is a pilgrimage centre and the general ambience here is religious, we found our youth succumbing to substance abuse. Alcoholism amongst the youth was increasing. The boys would get drunk and create ruckus at the weddings and other social events, harassing the poor, misbehaving with women. Instances of domestic violence were on the rise with the husbands beating their wives and sons their parents. It wasn't a happy situation." Kalpana Pandav, member, anti liquor squad.

The women discussed the matter in the gram sabha. They formed an all-women anti-liquor squad. Liquor production and sale was banned in the village. The squad is invited to various social gatherings and events to keep a check on the miscreants. "Pilgrims from far and wide come to our village. It is our responsibility to provide them with safety. It reflects poorly on the village if the visitors leave with a harrowing experience." Surekha Vani, member, anti-liquor squad.

The nearest market for Palasgaon Bai is Sindi railway at a distance of three kilometres. From buying grocery to medicines the villagers have to travel to Sindi. Since the village is off the track there isn't any state transport bus playing on the route. "Men have their vehicles. We, women, have to depend on them for the simplest of thing. As part of various women's groups, our travel had increased too." Vaishali Golhar, treasurer, Unnati Gram Seva Sangh.

Once again the women got together to demand a state transport bus to their village. Similarly, it was the women who came together to demand the ration slip for the ration they received from the shop. "We faced a lot of resistance when we demanded the ration slip. Villagers said, women are acting too smart, they are going out of control. But we persisted in our effort. Today all of us get a ration slip". Vaishali Golhar, treasurer, Unnati Gram Seva Sangh.



In the year 2013, the village was flooded. The village was surrounded by water from all three sides up to four kilometres making the village inaccessible. There was water logging all over. "The entire four-kilometre stretch of Sindi - Palasgaon road had multiple cracks up to two feet. The flood had posed a major challenge for the district administration. We have different social groups in our village like the youth group, Kabbadi group, bhajani mandal, and women's groups. Without any call for action from gram panchayat, all these groups got together to clear the road of all the silt and create access." Chetan Vavre, resident



Palasgaon is an example of a self-motivated community that believes in being proactive. There is a culture of community service which the village has been encouraging through various community engagements. Sports play an important role in bringing the youth together. The village has a Kabbadi club through which the youth from the village actively participates in various state and district level sports events. Similarly, Bhajani Mandal is another important platform for people to come together. Skau Aai's temple is a place of worship for people of all religion, caste and class. This is where the villagers meet keeping all their differences aside. There are 19 women's self-help group and a federation, actively working towards women's social-economic empowerment. The village has four youth clubs, six Mahila Mandals other than the SHG and one cultural centre.

"It's not easy to be a sarpanch of a village where the villagers are empowered. They constantly keep you on your toes. They raise issues, ask questions, demand explanations and seek accountability. But while doing so they themselves work hard for the development of the village. Whatever this village has achieved is because of its community of empowered and educated people." Diraj Lende, Sarpanch

In the year 2013-14 the village won the Maharashtra state governments 'tanta mukt' or conflict-free village award. The villagers of Palasgaon Bai truly understand their rights and duties. It is they who make their elected representatives work in the larger interest of the village.

कामाची लागण
लघुपाटबंधारे विभाग, जि.प.वर्धा.
जलयुक्त शिवार अभियान सन २०१८-१९ अंतर्गत
कामाचे नाव: को.प.बंधारा पळसगाव(बाई)चे दुरुस्ती काम
तालुका : सेलू जिल्हा : वर्धा
कामाची किंमत : १९.००लक्ष
लघुपाटबंधारे उपविभाग, जि.प.वर्धा.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Open Defecation Free Village, every house has a properly functioning toilet.
- Alcohol-free village, zero cases of alcohol consumption.
- Dispute free village, they won tanta mukt award of Rs 2lakh
- Won the Water Cup award prize organized by Pani foundation for community participation in water and soil management.
- Won the Gadge baba sanitation award for community participation in keeping the village clean.
- 19 SHGs with 192 women associated and 8 group enterprises promoted.
- 4 youth clubs formed
- A proper functioning gram panchayat office.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- All women Anti Liquor Squad
- Democratic decision making process with active and full participation of the villagers in Gram Sabha
- Active participation of youth and women in decision-making
- Proactive Youth clubs and Women groups.
- Village level committees like the health committee, education committee, tanta mukt committee, corona management committee, etc. have been formed to create a sense of responsibility and ownership towards village development among the residents.
- Village Sanitation and cleanliness maintained by the residents through Sharamdan.
- Health camps are organised regularly.
- Importance given to sports with participation of the village at various district and state sports events.
- Women empowerment through establishments of SHGs.
- Recharge of drinking water wells done through peoples Sharamdan.
- Well designed public spaces like library, all religion prayer hall and road side benches, facilitating community interactions.



KACHANGAON

“The mosquitoes thriving on wastewater released from my neighbour’s house can cause me malaria too. Our well-being is dependent on the well-being of the other. Cleanliness and sanitation of the entire village are important for each and everyone’s wellbeing. ”

Pramod Bhanudas Kapse, Farmer, Kachangaon



Kachangoan, with a population of 1610, is a village in the Hinganghat block of the Wardha district. The village has three wards and is at a distance of 40 km from Wardha city. On the outskirts of the village is a beautiful lake with tranquil water. Surrounded by lush green trees and flowers of myriad colours; this is where the villagers often walk up to spend quiet evenings. Until a few years back the lake was neglected by the villagers and was in a pathetic state. "The lake was rejuvenated under the Shivkaleen Pani Sathvan Yojana, in the year 1999 and has been a good source of water for our village. However, in the recent past, the lake was neglected by us. The water had stagnated and there was filth all around the lake." Pritilata Nilesh Kamble, resident.

It was the women from the village who took the initiative of cleaning the lake. Soon, the villagers joined and 400 trees were planted around the lake under the MGNREGA scheme. The surroundings were cleaned and the lake was deepened. The women members of various Self Help Groups in the village joined hands to grow flowers around the lake and soon the lake became alive with the sounds of birds, honey bees, and other pollinators. "The lake is a space for us to spend time with nature. We often hold picnics here. Sometimes we come here to have our SHG meetings. We sing, play and forget all our worries, once we are here around the lake." Sushila Manoharrao Khode.

The women's group has taken the responsibility of maintaining the lake and the surroundings. "We have planted various flowers around the lake. We allow some members to even sell the flowers. This is an additional source of income for the group. We water the trees. Clean the surroundings." Premila Shantaram Khode, resident.

The rejuvenation of the lake has recharged the wells and the groundwater table. It also serves as a source of drinking water for many wild animals and birds.



Sanitation and cleanliness were some of the biggest challenges before the village.

“Our streets were dirty.

There was no waste management system.

Generation of plastic waste, wastewater, open defecation were some of the issues we were struggling with. Open sewages, stagnant waters were the breeding grounds for diseases. Almost every child suffered from diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases.”

Pramod Kapse, farmer.

Looking at the seriousness of the problem, Sant Gadge Baba Village Sanitation Committee was constituted by the gram panchayat in 2018. Under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, awareness campaigns were conducted and the community was mobilized towards village sanitation and cleanliness.

“Village cleanliness and sanitation cannot be achieved without community participation. It had to be a collective effort. Everyone in the village came forward to participate in and contribute towards the effort. Women played an important role. Youth participation was exceptional”,

Ashokrao Barbure, a Grampanchayat employee (Sipahi), played a major role in mobilizing the community.

Rigorous campaigns were organized to create awareness about the ills of open defecation and instil amongst the villagers the importance of building toilets and soak pits. As a result, the village today is an open defecation free village with toilets and soak pits in every household.



On Thursday, October 4, 2018, all the villagers came together to clean the wastewater flowing on the road and channel it towards the tree plantation in the cremation ground. Since then every Thursday the village health and sanitation committee and villagers clean the village.

“This was the beginning of our village cleanliness drive. Since then every Thursday is dedicated to village health, sanitation and cleanliness. We call it ‘Guruwar Diwas’ when all of us discuss and execute the cleanliness action plan for the week.” Tanbaji Talvekar, Sarpanch

The village has 291 household waste disposal bins and 8 community waste disposal bins in which the waste is segregated as biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste. The gram panchayat has a hand cart to collect the village waste.

“All the biowaste is dumped in a community compost pit on the village common land; the compost from which is used for the trees planted within our village .”

Ashok Burbure , resident.

मौत को उसने पास बुलाया ।

स्वच्छ भारत मिशन (ग्रामिण) जि. प. वर्धा पं.स. हिंगणघाट

स्वच्छ भारत
एक पाऊल स्वच्छता

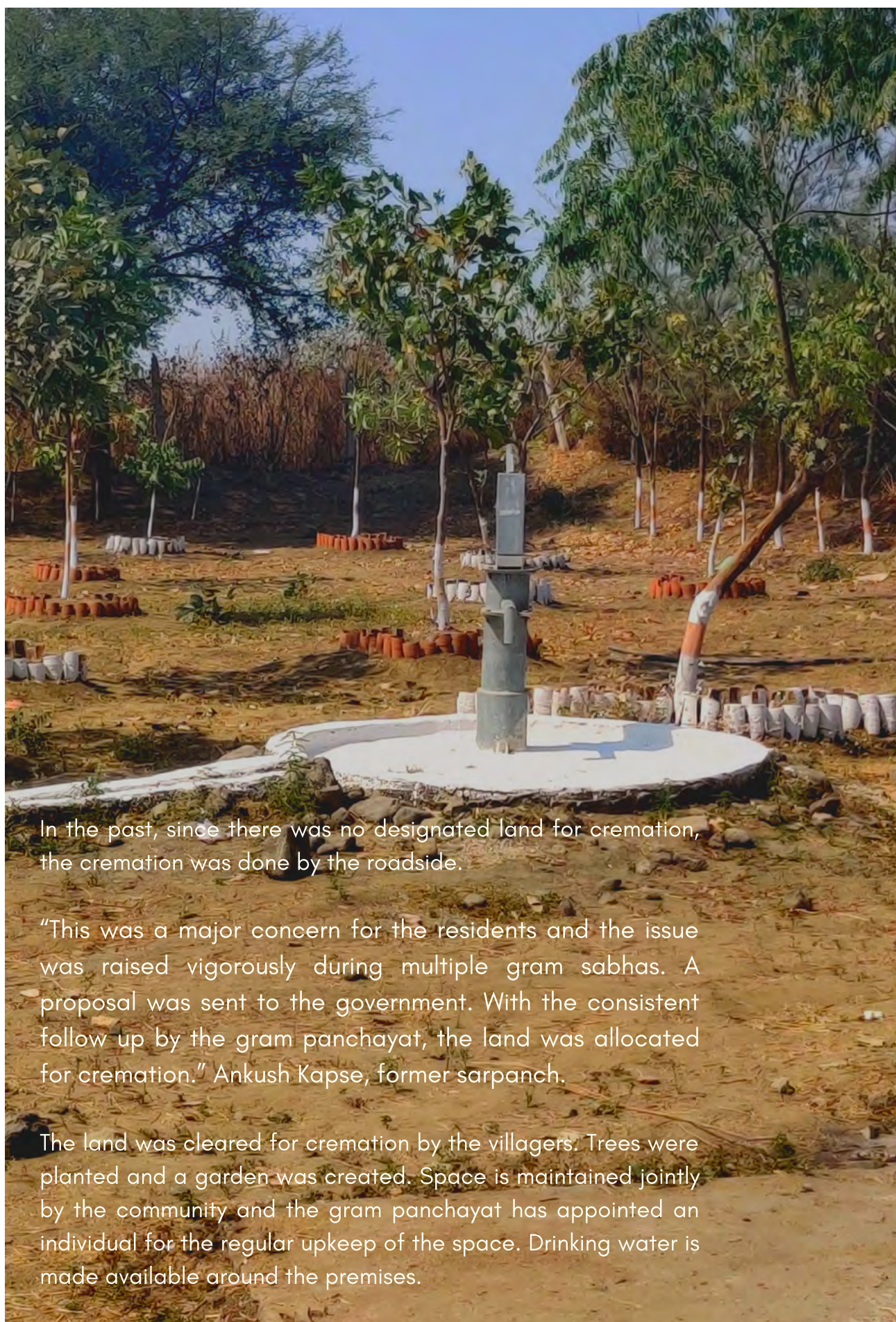


Kachangoan has 27 active Self Help Groups, which have promoted enterprises like dairy, goatry, poultry fishery, both at individual and group level. Currently, there are more than 100 such active enterprises promoted through these groups. There are two SHG federations - Unnati and Parivartan which have been cultivating and selling vegetables at a group level thus economically empowering all the women associated with them. These groups practise organic farming and have won a state-level award worth INR 52500 for their initiatives.

“As SHG groups, we have promoted household and community nutrition gardens to manage our wastewater. We have two community kitchen gardens - one at the primary school and one on the village common land.” Chandramani Gote, resident.

The Self Help Groups in the village are an important forum for creating awareness regarding health, hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness.

“During the monthly meetings, we would discuss the importance of toilets and encouraged members to build toilets. We told them about different schemes under which they could build toilets and soak pits. Importance of nutrition gardens in maintaining household health and management of water was instilled amongst the members.” Madhuri Khode, resident.



In the past, since there was no designated land for cremation, the cremation was done by the roadside.

"This was a major concern for the residents and the issue was raised vigorously during multiple gram sabhas. A proposal was sent to the government. With the consistent follow up by the gram panchayat, the land was allocated for cremation." Ankush Kapse, former sarpanch.

The land was cleared for cremation by the villagers. Trees were planted and a garden was created. Space is maintained jointly by the community and the gram panchayat has appointed an individual for the regular upkeep of the space. Drinking water is made available around the premises.

With a considerable population being from the scheduled caste, a need was felt for a 'Buddh Vihar' or community space for them.

"While the gram panchayat allocated land, it was with the monitory contribution of each and every resident in the village that the Buddh Vihar was built. Some donated benches, others planted trees. Buddh Vihar today provides as lush green and clean space for people to meet and interact." Nanda Dhabarde, resident

The village school was in shambles. The building wasn't well maintained.

"People would tie their livestock within the school premises and anyone would loiter around which made the premises unsafe for the children." Sushila Khode, resident.

Drawing the community's attention to the problem, a decision was taken in the gram sabha to reclaim school premises.

"We had no funds. It was agreed to utilise the award money of INR 2 lakhs won by the village for being conflict-free to renovate the school building and clean its premises. Yet again the village community came together for the larger cause of creating safe learning space for our children." Tanbaji Talwekar, Sarpanch.



What one can see distinctly in Kanchangaon is how cleanliness and sanitation issues were leveraged to mobilise the village community towards a common goal and bring them together for the development of the village. The community here not only understood the importance of village cleanliness and sanitation but actively contributed towards the cleanliness, rejuvenation and regeneration of common land, water and other natural resources. They have gone ahead to not only clean their own backyards but also that of others.

Kachangoan won the smart village award at block level worth INR 10 lakh in the year 2018-19. The village is 100% Open defecation free and every household has a toilet.

"All the decisions are made collectively and we are working together to make our village a model village."Tanbaji Talwekar, Sarpanch



ACHIEVEMENTS

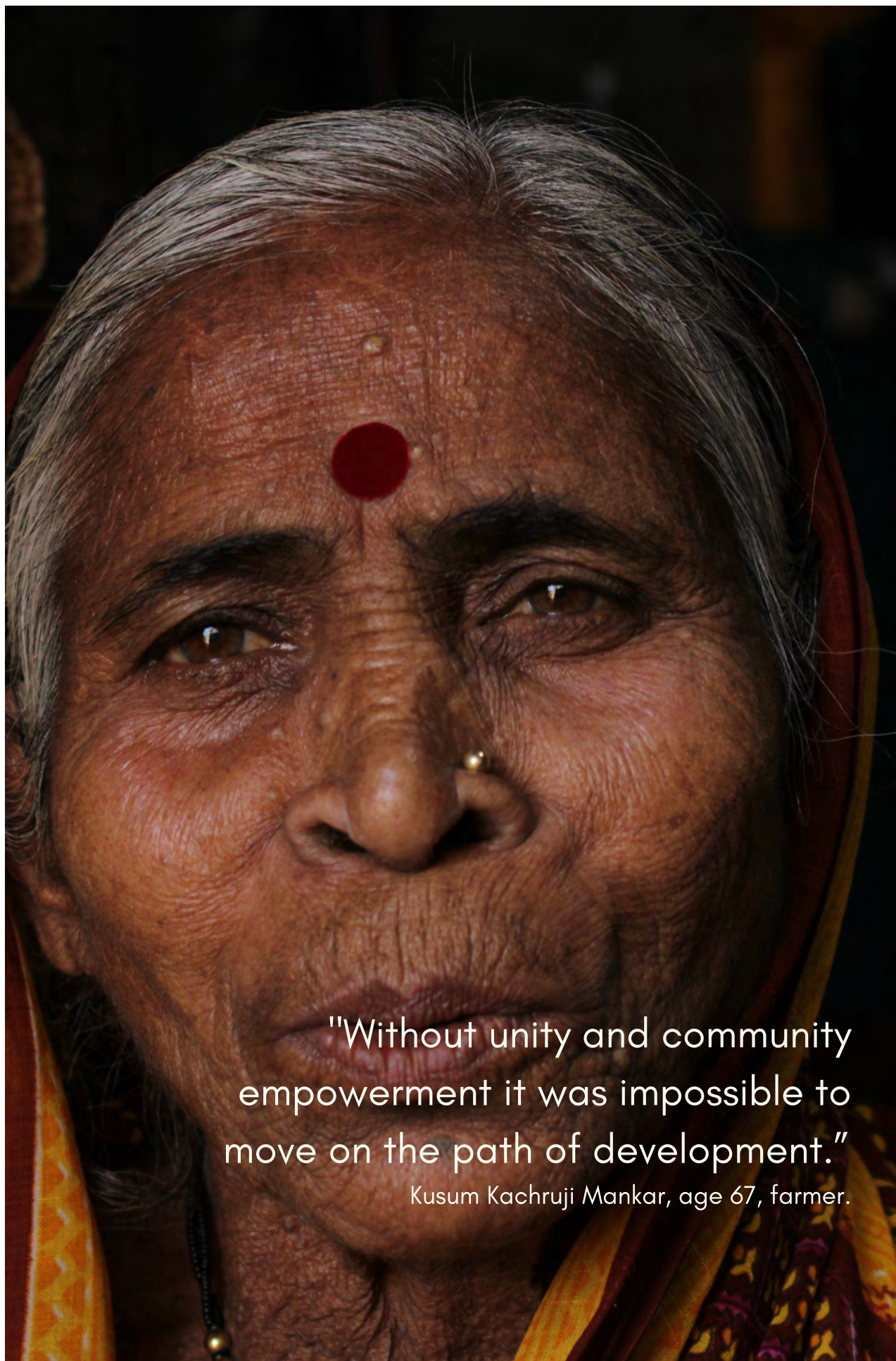
- Smart Village award won in 2018-19
- Won the Sant Gadge Baba Abhiyan award for cleanliness in 2018
- Won a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh for being a dispute-free village
- 100 % open defecation-free village and every household have a toilet.
- Tukdoji Maharaj clean village award won in 2018-19.
- The Producer groups practicing organic farming, won a state level prize of Rs 52500.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Weekly Sanitation Drive (Guruwar Diwas)- The community comes together on every Thursday to take part in the sanitation drive.
- An active Village sanitation committee.
- Proper segregation of waste as biodegradable and non-biodegradable- A concept of 'Ghanta Gadi' for proper collection of waste.
- Rejuvenation of a local water body through community efforts.
- Collective floriculture initiative started by SHG women. 400 flower plants planted by the lake.
- A Community library established within panchayat office premises.
- Gram Sabha and Mahila Sabha conducted at regular intervals-They discuss various problems and government schemes.
- Community Kitchen Garden.
- Community spaces established by the Gram Panchayat.
- They have a Tanta mukti samiti and all the disputes are resolved within the village.
- Community participation in renovating the cremation ground.



KELAPUR



"Without unity and community
empowerment it was impossible to
move on the path of development."

Kusum Kachruji Mankar, age 67, farmer.

Kelapur is a village in Wardha block, with a population of 1035. There are different communities, including the Kunbi, Buddhist, Maratha, Rajput and tribal communities like the Gond and Pardha living in this village. Close to 25% of the population constitutes the Gond tribe. Farming, which is the main occupation of the majority, is mostly rain-fed and cotton, lentils and Soybean are the primary crops.

"When I first came to Kelapur, after getting married in the year 1991 the village lacked even the most basic development. There were no roads. There were open sewages all over the village. There was filth everywhere. Schools were not good. There were diseases like dengue. Moreover, there were too many political differences. The village was divided on issues of religion, caste and political views." Ashwini Prakash Chavke, age 50, ex-deputy sarpanch.

By the year 2009, the villagers were disillusioned and disenchanted with the affairs of the village. As they discussed the way forward, they realized it was crucial to diffuse the internal political differences if there had to be any development. It was agreed to hold unopposed elections that year and have an all women's panel.

"Women are more perseverant. We men tend to be more corrupt and are influenced by politics. Men play the politics of opposition. Women on the other hand are able to work in unison towards a common goal." Prakash Chawke, resident.

Ashwini Prakash Rao Javke was elected as the sarpanch, unopposed. "The process of electing a panel unopposed was the decision of the entire village. It is all of us together who made it possible. That the villagers proposed my name for the position of the Sarpanch, is a great honour. Once elected, I received rock-solid support from everyone in the village." Ashwini Prakash Chavke.

The village stood strong with its leaders – supporting, guiding and participating in all development. Since then the transformation of the village is visible at different levels.

From two self-help groups with ten women members in the year 2001, currently, the village has 21 women's self-help groups. Women have come together to initiate various livelihood activities through these savings group. A federation, Jeevan Jyoti Gramseva Sangh, was formed of 21 self-help groups covering 242 households in the year 2010. Through this federation, four business units have been set up.

"Becoming part of the self-help groups led to the empowerment of women. Speaking of myself, I was married at the age of 16. Though my mother in law and my husband supported me to take higher education, in general, the villagers were not inclined towards the education of their daughters or daughters in law. Through self-help group, we women could come together to discuss our issues, dreams and aspirations. As women, we started supporting married women who wanted to pursue higher education. Today there are so many women in the village who went for higher education after getting married. Education of women naturally empowered them further, increasing their participation in the village development."

Darshana Ramesh Chikram, from Mukta Self Help Group.

The Self Help Groups not only led to the economic empowerment of the women but also their personal and social development.



Despite there being a government school in the village, the enrollment in the school was less. The parents preferred sending their children to the private school in the nearest town. The children of the poorest of the poor went to the village government school. The general impression was that the private schools provided a better education than the government school.

“We thought our children will speak in English. But soon most of us realized the quality of education in the so-called private school was no better. The entire village decided to send their children to the government school.”
Raju Kodape, resident.

Even those who could afford private schools enrolled their children in the village government school. The enrollment of the school increased. Encouraged by the trust bestowed by the villagers on the government school teachers, they took a greater interest in teaching, which further improved the academic performance of the children. The parent’s participation in the school management increased since now their children were studying in the school.

“Since the children from all class, caste and religion attend the same school the social differentiation has decreased and has led to greater equality.” Kanchan Bais, Deputy Sarpanch



The water from the higher reaches of the village flows down in a stream dividing the village into two parts. Since the point at which the stream flows through the village is low lying, the water there stagnated for over six months. This then turned into a breeding ground for mosquitoes. In 2018 there was an outbreak of Dengue in the village leading to three deaths.

"It was almost like an epidemic. Every family had at least one patient of Dengue. During the crises, the entire village worked day and night, supporting the patients and their families. What we suffered that year is something only we know. We pledged that never again will anyone in our village die due to Dengue."

Vandan Jadhav, age 50 years, small scale farmer.

In a gram sabha it was decided to take measures to stop the water logging in the village. Government funds were leveraged for channeling the water through a canal, which also served as a road. Soak pits were constructed. There are no open sewages in the village today. Open defecation has stopped and every household has a toilet.

"When our delegation went to represent our village at the Zilla Parishad Standing Committee, we were all nervous. We were apprehensive about speaking to the high-level officials. Encouraging each other, we reached the Zilla Parishad office. Seeing our passion and determination Zilla Parishad sent an engineer for site inspection and give cost estimation for our proposal."

Sunita Vasantrao Masram, Sarpanch.



The village managed to leverage over 50 lakhs of funds from various government sources. Once the construction of the road started, the villagers took turns to monitor the work. They approached their relatives or friends in the construction industry to understand the material requirement. The youth played a major role in overseeing the work.

“We knew that 12 bags of cement were to be added to the binding mixture. We noticed the contractor was using only six. We put our foot down made him redo the work. We maintained the records of even a single missing nail. We took turns monitoring the work on the site. All we had to do was see if 12 bags of cement are being added or not. If not, then tell the contractor – Bhau please add two more bags. We simply didn’t allow any corruption to happen.” Badal Borkar, 26 years, member gram pachayat.

Education, according to Kanchan Paras Singh Bais, ward member, has been the most important catalyst for community empowerment in the village. The village has multiple forums for the villagers to meet, interact, share information and voice their opinions. Places of worship are important spaces for the villagers to meet. There is a bhajani mandal that comes together on various occasions. The village has a library and a gymnasium, which provide opportunities for the youth to get together. Self Help Groups, youth clubs, farmer clubs provide a safe space for individuals to voice their opinions.

“What hampers development the most is politics. The election is like a competition. One competes against the other for a vote, for power. The aim is to create obstacles in the path of others and ensure that any initiative started by the other is not successful. So we decided not to oppose anyone for at least five years and work in unison. The village broke that cycle of ‘I pull your leg you pull mine’. This is something I had not seen in all these years in this village. Once we support each other, unite, we naturally become empowered.” Kusum Kachruji Mankar, age 67, farmer.



ACHIEVEMENTS

- Women empowerment through the creation of 21 SHGs, different enterprises have been promoted through these SHGs.
- Open defecation free village
- Gym Provision within village premises
- Clean Drinking water for all, throughout the year
- 1000 trees planted by the residents
- 40 houses constructed under the Awas Yojna
- Tantamukti Puruskar of Rs 2lakh in 2009-2010
- Awarded under the Village sanitation Mission for ODF in 2016-17.
- Sant Gadgebaba Gram Sawachta Abhiyan award with prize money of 10,000.
- Producer Groups: A group of 20 women took the responsibility of procuring and selling all the farmer's agricultural produce within the village.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Unopposed elections for three consecutive years.
- Strong women leadership
- Promotion of education in government schools. All the children in the village go to government school in the village, improving the quality of education and increasing accountability of the teachers in these schools.
- Major decisions are taken in Gram Sabhas with equal women's participation. Gram Sabha's are organized regularly at least 4 times a year.
- Active standing committee- school management committee, village health committee, village water, and sanitation committee.
- Tanta Mukti Committee established to resolve all the disputes internally.
- Promotion of household and community Nutrition Garden to improve health and nutrition.
- Regular health camps ; Hemoglobin testing camps
- Anemia free village
- Smart Gram Panchayat with internet facilities.

RAJAPUR

ग्रामपंचायत राजापूर

ता.आर्वी, जि.वर्धा

गुणवत्ता धोरण सन २०१९

आम्ही आमच्या ग्रामपंचायतीतील नागरिकांना शासनाने ठरवून दिलेल्या सेवा पुरविण्यासाठी कटिबद्ध आहोत, त्यासाठी आम्ही आमच्या गुणवत्ता व्यवस्थापन प्रणालीद्वारे सर्वोत्तम सेवा, गावाच्या गरजेनुसार प्रकल्प आणि यशस्विरित्या राबविणे, प्रक्रियांचे सु-संचालन, कर्मचाऱ्यांची व तंत्रज्ञानाचा पुरेपुर वापर प्रस्थापीत करून त्यामध्ये सातत्याने करीत राहू.

हे सर्व करीत असतांना पंचायत समिती राजापूर, जिल्हा महाराष्ट्र राज्य शासन यांच्या मार्गदर्शन सूचना व भारतीय कायदा, इतर संबंधित कायद्यांचे पूर्णपणे पालन करू.

ग्रामपंचायत राजापूर

ता.आर्वी, जि.वर्धा

ग्रामपंचायतीचे उद्दिष्टे

- १) ग्रामपंचायतीचे करवसुली १००% पूर्ण करणे.
- २) पिठ गिरणी द्वारे १००% कर भरना करणाऱ्यास ५०% सूट देणे.
- ३) आरोग्य फिल्टर प्लांट द्वारे स्वच्छ पाणी पुरवठा करणे.
- ४) स्मार्ट ग्रामचे निकष पूर्ण करणे.
- ५) वृक्ष लागवड करून गावात पर्यावरण सुरक्षित करणे.
- ६) गावात दिवा-बत्तीची सोय करणे.
- ७) सांडपाणी व घनकचरा व्यवस्थापन करणे.

'Nimn Wardha Project' or the lower Wardha Dam is an earth fill and gravity dam on Wardha river, built in the year 2010. Though the dam is at Varud (Baggaji) Dhanodi near Arvi in the Wardha district, administratively, it falls under the Amravati district in the state of Maharashtra. Rajapur is one of the many villages displaced by the project. The village was resettled and rehabilitated around Amaravati road.

Nestled on the bank of the river Bakali, it is a small village with a population of only 467. Divided into three wards, the village is 67 Km from Wardha and around 7 Km from Arvi. Spread over 379.83 hectares of land of which 221.12 hector of land is under agriculture. Since there is an abundance of water, the primary source of livelihoods for the villagers is agriculture. Some households also draw additional income from animal husbandry and selling vegetables. Most of the farmers grow cotton which is the primary cash crop.

Being a displaced village, Rajapur, was devoid of even basic facilities.

"Being displaced, our village had to struggle a lot. There were no internal roads, electricity, water supply system or drainage systems. There was no main road connecting our village with the city. We were thus on the periphery of all development. Even today our children have to walk seven kilometres to reach the school. There are no primary health care facilities in the village." Neeta Mude, Sarpanch.



Post-2011, the villagers initiated various development activities in their village.

“We had to help ourselves and make our voice heard. We all worked together and supported the Sarpanch in every development initiative taken by the gram panchayat. The village leveraged funds to provide toilets to 114 households and build homes for 65 households. Small and marginal farmers were supported to avail the benefits of various government schemes to get motor pumps, engines and other farm implements.” Dharmendra Raut, member, gram panchayat.

The village has ten Self Help Groups with a total membership of total of 103 individuals. The SHGs, besides being savings and credits groups are important social mobilisers.

“We meet every month. During these monthly meetings, we get to discuss our problems, issues in the villages and find solutions.” Sunita Mude, chairperson, women's federation.

Festivals play an important role in bringing different communities together. “We are proud to say that we celebrate all the festivals with great fervour in our village. There is no discrimination and these festivals have strengthened our bond.” Ashok Bokade, chairperson, conflict-free committee.

All decisions regarding the village are taken in a gram sabha. The village has been winning Adarsh gram panchayat award, Nirmal gram puraskar, conflict-free village award and Sant Gadgebaba Swachh Gaon Puraskar since 2011.

“Being a displaced and a resettled village, this is a great achievement. It is only due to community empowerment, awareness and unity that we could win these laurels and put our village on the path to prosperity. We are working towards establishing our identity as a socially aware village.” Neeta Mude, Sarpanch.



ACHIEVEMENTS

- Was awarded Adarsh gram puraskar , Niramal gram puraskar and Sant Gadge Baba gram swachatta puraskar for sanitation and cleanliness in year 2011, 2013, 2017 respectively.
- Was awarded conflict free village award
- Has won Shahu Phule Ambedkar puraskar for the welfare of SC and OBC community in the village.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Active participation of women in the development of the village.
- Community celebration of all festivals
- Awareness about various government schemes and leveraging government funds for village development.
- Free transport- bus- regular- beneficial for girls.
- Monitoring of mid-day meals.
- Women's health a priority with no anemic woman in the village.



NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

BAJARWADA

"Doesn't our mother encourage us to be independent and self-reliant? She says 'stand on your own feet. Similarly, our village should be self-sufficient too. We should be able to draw our sustenance and that of coming generations from this very land, we call our village, our country and our planet"

Rani Barde, a 20-year-old girl from Village Bajarwada.

With a population of 1155, Bajarwada is in the Arvi block of Wardha district. Inconspicuous, the village was no different from any other village in India. For Rani, however, it is the village with the happiest memories of her life.

A few years back Rani's father died. Alcoholic, he would beat his wife and daughters brutally. Rani grew up seeing extreme levels of violence at her home. It was only after her mother was beaten almost to death and was hospitalized, that Rani's maternal grandparents decided to bring them back to their home in Bajarwada.

"Bajarwada is my mother's village. As children, we came here to meet our grandparents and I have beautiful childhood memories of this village. This is where my mother found some peace and we sisters received love", tells Rani in her soft but clear voice.

Until two years back Bajarwada was a water-scarce village. Farming was dependent on rain and there were months when the village struggled even for drinking water.

"There were wells but most of them had dried. We even had a scarcity of drinking water. Every year we would work on deepening the wells - would do blasting, dig bore wells. Year after years this was the story. Whatever ground water was available was pumped out by farmer who could afford it. Poor farmers had no option but to work as a manual laborer for daily wages."

Bhaskar Tulshiram Gulbase, Vice sarpanch

The major crops cultivated in the village are gram and wheat as Rabi crop and cotton, soya, lentils as Kharif crop. However, due to water scarcity, farmers could grow only one crop in a year. Summer crop wasn't possible. Seasonal migration was high and most of the villagers worked as manual labourers for the better part of the year. The youth were unemployed.

"The youth here were disillusioned. The quality of education we received was not good enough to get a decent job and farming was not profitable owing to the drought-like situation almost every year. We had no aim, no purpose and no dreams", told Vikram Patil, Rozgar Sevak.

The story changed in the year 2019 when Bajarwada decided to participate in the prestigious Satyamev Jayte Water Cup by Pani Foundation. The youth from the village took the lead and Rani was at the forefront of this initiative. She was one of the first few girls to step out of her home along with men to volunteer labour in various water conservation and management structures which were to be built. The village won first prize at the block level and received a cash prize of ten lakhs.

"Bajarwada is not my village. It falls in my panchayat. It was my first year as the sarpanch when these youth from Bazarwada approached me with the proposal to participate in the water cup. I wasn't confident of taking it up. It seemed impossible to achieve the target in the given time and resources. But the youth from Bazarwada were determined. They managed to convince me and the other elected representatives. They were as though possessed. They simply wouldn't take no for an answer", told Kailas Madhukar Ramtek, Sarpanch.


What happened in the next two months in Bajarwada changed the very trajectory of its development. A gram sabha was held to discuss if the village should participate in the competition. After much discussion and deliberation, it was unanimously decided to participate in the competition.

“Water was everyone’s need. We all knew how we suffered because of water scarcity. The competition was only a pretext. What motivated us was this thirst for water.”

Bhaskar Nikalje, resident







Everyone volunteered. Some worked on the site. Others cooked food. Yet others donated the tools. From a child to an octogenarian each contributed in their own way. Trenches were dug, recharge pits were made, farm ponds were created, and streams were deepened.



Women play a significant role in natural resource management. Every household had a kitchen garden for better management of water. These kitchen gardens are solely maintained and nurtured by the women.

There are six women's self-help group in the village. During the water cup, each of them contributed to the effort by volunteering their labour at the worksite. Many of them took to preparing refreshments for those working on the site.

"Though water is everyone's concern, it is the women who suffer the most in case of water scarcity. Women's issues are very different. When there isn't enough water, the first thing that gets compromised is personal hygiene. Don't get me started on the drudgery of fetching water. Even today it is we women who fetch water - for drinking, washing, cleaning. For once the village was actively working towards resolving the issue of water scarcity. We women unanimously supported the decision to participate in the water cup." Sakshi Patil, resident

Since 2017, the village has been planting 1000 native trees every year, with a 100% survival. Native grass varieties were revived. This has further improved the village ecology and groundwater levels. MGNREGA funds are leveraged for afforestation. College going students above the age of eighteen were encouraged to take up tree plantation and their maintenance on a daily wage basis.

“We earn Rs 230/ day to take care of 200 trees for three years. This takes care of our college expenses. How many of us can say they have saved two hundred trees in their lifetime? I feel blessed to be doing this work.” Saurbh Madave, Student.

The impact of the work has a ripple effect. It can be seen at multiple levels – on ecology, on livelihoods, on health and on social integration. The groundwater level has increased which can be seen in increased water levels in the wells. Almost all the land is now under irrigation. Due to availability of water throughout the year, farmers are growing more diversified crops, growing two crops each year.

“



ACHIEVEMENTS

- ISO Gram Panchayat, 2015
- A Kolhapuri type dam built through convergence with the agricultural department
- Organic compost Fertilizer Tank: No liquid, no culture, mostly wastage from crop residue
- Increase in the irrigated land due to farm wells. Total 61 individual farm wells.
- 20 Recharge wells under the “veer puran bandhan” scheme
- Promotion of sustainable agriculture practices by use of sprinklers and drip irrigation.
- Farm Ponds funded through the agriculture dept.
- Convergence with Civil Society organizations like Pani Foundation, Red Cross Society, Lions club
- Most of the land is under irrigation.
- Year-long water availability
- Increase in the cultivation of fruit orchards fruits like oranges, custard apple and guava

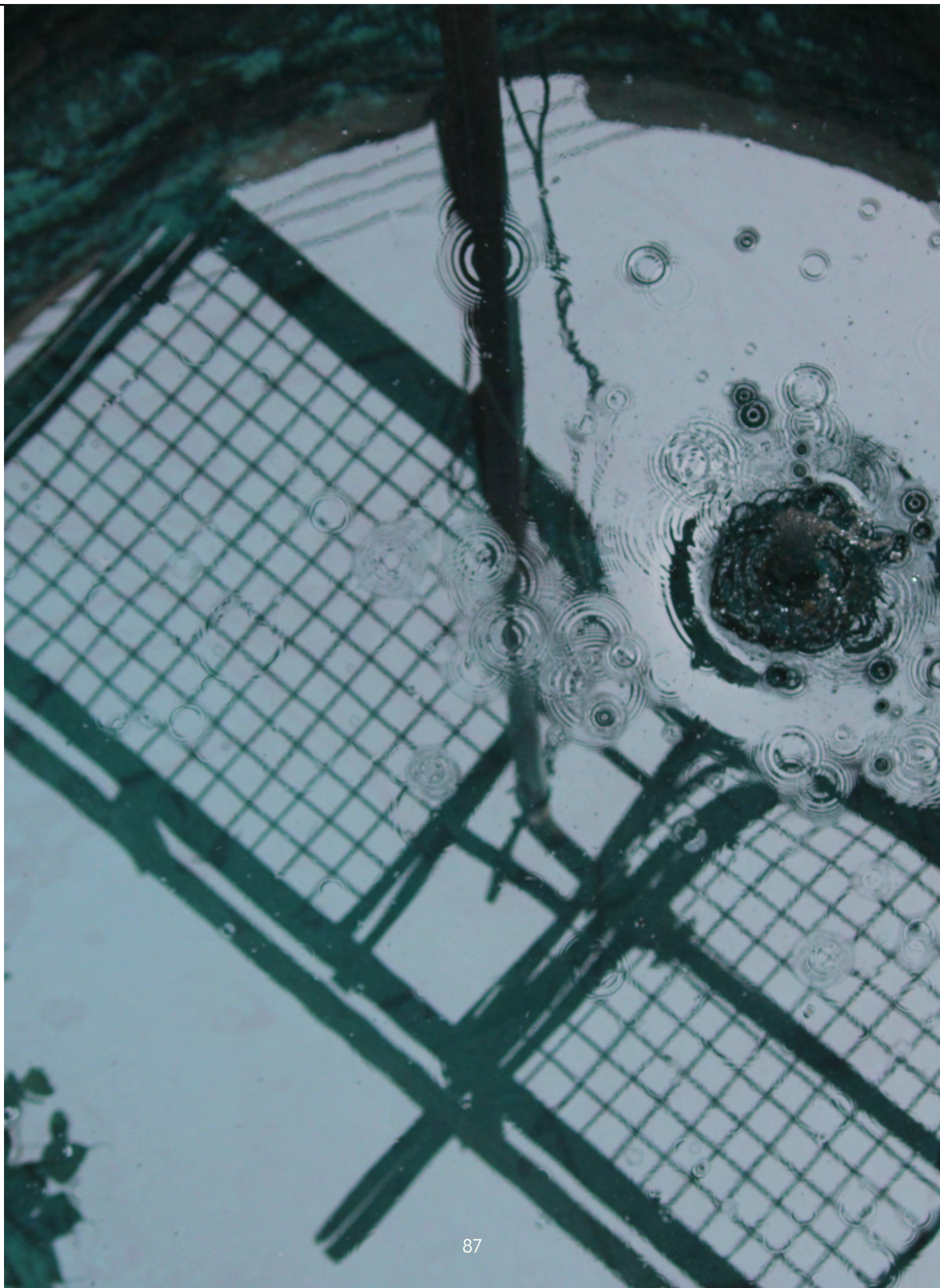


PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Democratic decision-making process. All decisions concerning the village are taken in gram sabha. The participation of villagers in these gram sabhas is more than 50%.
- The youth plays an active and important role in village development. They encouraged and supported by the elected representatives.
- Women and adolescent girls actively participate in all development activities.
- Water budgeting is done based on average rainfall measured through a water gauge installed in the village, which helps farmers decide water-wise cropping pattern.
- Every year 1000 native trees like Neem, Banyan, Peepal are planted and maintained under MGNREGA, with almost 100% survival.
- Revival and rejuvenation of native fodder varieties on the village common land. The panchayat earns around 12 to 15 thousand through the sale of fodder.
- Efficient management of water through household kitchen gardens and soak pits.
- Sustainable agricultural practices like organic farming, water budgeting, crop rotation and crop diversification.
- Filtered drinking water available for all

"The award certainly boosted our confidence. The process, however, changed our mindset. All our petty village differences diffused. Our village is now united. Our youth who were leaving the village now wants to live in the village. They want to be farmers. Where it was impossible to cultivate even a single crop, farmers are now confident of growing two crops. Crop diversity has improved. We can see abundance. There is prosperity. Our village has transformed and while a lot of it is visible, much of it is invisible like the groundwater. My village has its own identity now. " Rani Barde





ANTARGAON

"We have lived through such crises that never again will we take our water and natural resources for granted. We have suffered a draught. We know what it is to be without food. All the wells that year had dried out. None of us can forget those days of distress. We suffered so much that we will ensure our children do not suffer the way we did. We know these natural resources are limited and must be managed sensitively so that the coming generations can survive too."

Ishwar Motghare, Resident



Antaragoan is a village in Seloo Taluka of the Wardha district. The village has 250 houses and a total population of 789. The main source of livelihood in the village is agriculture and most of the farmers have an average landholding of 3-5 acres. Most of the cultivable land is rain-fed.

Till 2011, Antargoan was going through an agricultural crisis and was distressed. The village was included under IFAID'S Convergence of Agricultural Intervention Maharashtra's Distressed District Programme (CAIM). The project included 1,200 villages in the districts of Wardha, Akola, Amravati, Buldhana, Washim and Yavatmal, where agricultural distress and farmers' suicides were pressing issues. Farmers' productivity and incomes were low, and they faced food insecurity, partly as a result of inefficient water use, depleted soil fertility and indiscriminate use of fertilizers and hybrid seeds.

Farmers were mostly growing high water-intensive crops like cotton and soya-bean. In the monsoon, the village struggled with the problem of floods and so they had to keep the land by the river barren. The subsequent water-logging and lack of drainage significantly lowered agricultural productivity. In summers they could take only one crop due to water scarcity.

"Most of the agricultural practices we followed were unsustainable and farmers were barely able to make their ends meet. We were debt-ridden and such adverse conditions prompted many to migrate to nearby towns to get employed as daily wage labourers." Raju Latore , farmer practicing organic farming.

Taking cognizance of the agricultural distress, in the year 2011, the village community initiated various natural resource management interventions. With the support from Kamalnayan Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation (KJBF) Water harvesting and soil conservation activities were initiated to address the core problem being faced by the farmers.

In 2012-13 the stream flowing from village Borkhedi to Antargaon was widened and deepened, covering a total distance of 6,610 km, benefiting three villages - Borkhedi Kala, Borkhedi-Gawande and Antargaon. Antargaon, being downstream, was the major beneficiary of this project. Check dams were constructed, through the stream, which ensured year-long availability of water.

Through these intense water harvesting activities, 102 farmers benefited and 428 acres of land was made irrigable. Moreover, the problem of floods during the rainy season was resolved. The check dams further led to the recharge of four wells within the village. The groundwater table increased and proper drainage of nearby fields prevented soil erosion resulting in an increase in agricultural productivity.

Due to the availability of water, the farmers here are now cultivating crops like groundnut, papaya, chilli, thereby promoting crop diversity in the village. The farmers now practice and promote sustainable agricultural practices like crop rotation, organic farming and water budgeting. The impact of natural resource management can be seen on livelihoods.

“The household incomes have increased.
We now engage in multiple on-farm and off-farm income
generation activity. Water is needed for everything from
farming to animal husbandry. Once the water was available
we could think of investing in diverse livelihoods.”

Gajanan Khope, farmer





The village is promoting non-conventional energy sources like biogas and solar energy. Currently, there are eight biogas plants in the village. Besides reducing women's drudgery of collecting firewood and thereby enhancing their health, the biogas plants also have a lower ecological footprint. Many farmers in the village are using solar-powered water pumps.

Planting trees every year is another initiative the village took towards natural resource management. "Last year we planted 1000 trees. Each and every tree planted has survived. We also supported the forest department in tree plantation to create a social forest with 1500 trees." The village has an active biodiversity committee. Soak pits have been constructed to conserve the run-off rainwater with the help of MGNREGA and funds from Panchayat Samiti.

Around 22 farmers in the village are doing organic farming. Some are doing Natural farming of cotton through the Better Cotton Initiative(BCI). Companion planting to control pests has reduced the use of harmful pesticides. Waste management is done through composting of all bio-degradable waste.

"We follow zero budget natural farming practices. Our cost of production has reduced by 25 %. We have proper records to prove this. We use pest traps, Jeevamrut, use cow dung manure which has reduced our input cost. The quality of soil has improved", tells Jyoti Shah Raut, a resident of the village who has been conserving indigenous seeds and promoting them.

Anatargaon, through its various natural resource management initiatives, has reversed the rural rhetoric of poverty, scarcity and migration. They have achieved increased agricultural productivity through water conservation, organic farming, sustainable and low input agriculture. Combined with a reduction in production costs, this has resulted in increased household incomes and improved food security. Diversification into fruit, vegetable and livestock products has further contributed to better nutrition and enhanced household health. The initiatives taken by the village have enhanced soil fertility and increased moisture retention, allowing higher cropping intensity.

"We have suffered drought. We know what it is to be without water. Today you will see a pot of water in every courtyard for the birds as we can feel their plight without water."

Madhuri Khode, resident



ACHIEVEMENTS

- 1500 trees planted to create a social forest.
- 428 acres of land was made irrigable.
- The water table increased by average 4ft due to water resource development activities.
- Crop diversification from traditional crops like cotton, tur to groundnut, papaya, chilli, cucumber etc.
- 8 Bio gas plants are in active usage.
- Won several awards like the Tanta-mukti dispute free village award, Santh Gadgebaba award and smart village award.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Water and soil conservation activities like stream widening and deepening which helped in solving the problem of floods.
- Check dams constructed which lead to rise in ground water level and recharge of wells.
- Convergence of various government schemes like CAIM, MGNREGA for Natural resource management.
- Farmers practicing sustainable agricultural practices like crop rotation, organic farming, use of sprinklers, drip irrigation etc.
- Promotion of non-conventional energy sources like bio-gas and solar energy.
- Soak pits have been constructed for rain water harvesting.
- An active biodiversity committee.
- Promotion of zero budget natural farming practices like pest traps, jeevamrut, cow dung manure etc.
- Promotion and conservation of indigenous seeds.
- Every household keeps a pot of water for birds.



DHANOLI



On the outskirts of Bor wildlife sanctuary, Dhanoli is surrounded by thick deciduous forest. Nestled in the Satpura mountain ranges, Dhanoli is a small village with a population of 1100 in Karanja block of Wardha district.

“Living in the forest, our survival has been dependent on these very forests. From minor forest produce like berries, resins, firewood to fodder for the animals, we are dependent on the forests.”

Prashant Kanheri, Van Rakshak

Though the Bor wildlife sanctuary was declared a Tiger reserve in the year 2014, the sanctuary is home to over 26 species of reptiles belonging to 11 families, of which 6 species are endangered. As per the 2010-11 tiger estimation report, there are 24 tigers, together in Pench and Bor wild life corridor. Being an eco sensitive zone the forest officer for the region is based out of Dhanoli and works in collaboration with the villagers.

“Living in such close proximity to a forest, it is important that both human beings and wildlife co exist. There have been multiple cases of wildlife attacks on the villagers . We too interfere with the wildlife. However we understand that these attacks are because we are encroaching upon the forests and disturbing their habitat. In Dhanoli, we work in collaboration with the forest department to conserve the natural habitat within the wildlife sanctuary. If their habitat is protected, they will not attack us and all can leave in harmony.”

Ajay Chopde, Sarpanch



The main source of income in the village is from farming and animal husbandry. Around 90% farmers in Dhanoli grow oranges and it is one of the major cash crops for them. There are many who engage in collecting non timber forest produce like tendu leaves, wild honey, berries, tubers and grasses.

“During summer, due to water and food scarcity, the wild animals venture into the village. There have been instances of villagers being attacked by the tigers and other wild animals. We realized that the main reason for the animals to step out of the forests was the scarcity of water and food during the summer months.”

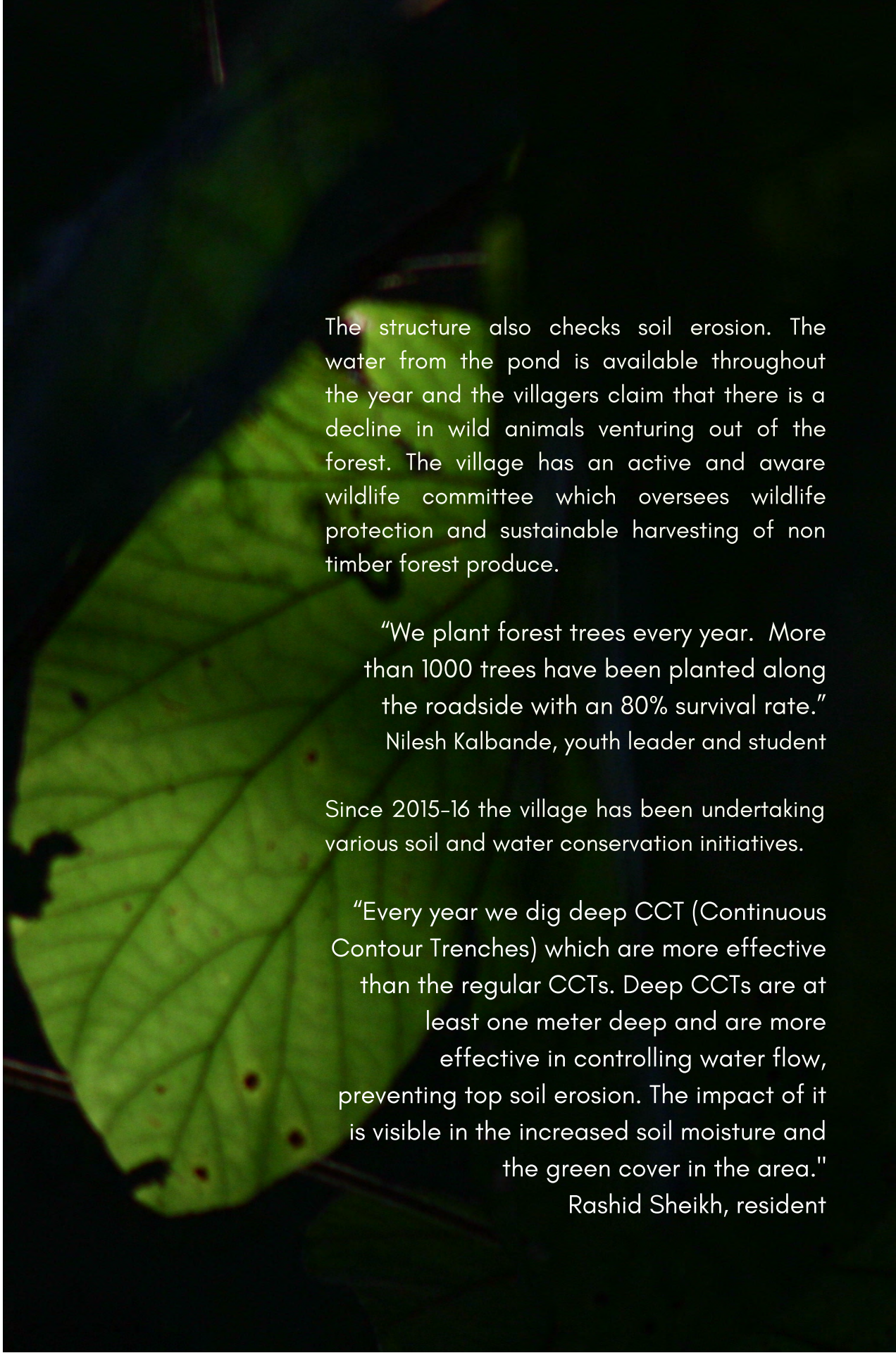
Buddheshwar Patil, Vice Sarpanch

In association with the forest department officials, it was decided in a gram sabha to build a water reservoir within the sanctuary. In 2016, the villagers undertook the task of digging a water reservoir. A 30 by 30 meter pond with a depth of 3 meter was dug under MGNREGA scheme. A total cost INR 6.5 lakh was incurred.

“The pond not only provides water to the animals in the sanctuary but also serves as a catchment for rain water from the hillocks around. It has recharged the ground water within the periphery, benefiting our Orange orchards and farming in general.”

Prashant Kanheri, Van Rakshak





The structure also checks soil erosion. The water from the pond is available throughout the year and the villagers claim that there is a decline in wild animals venturing out of the forest. The village has an active and aware wildlife committee which oversees wildlife protection and sustainable harvesting of non timber forest produce.

"We plant forest trees every year. More than 1000 trees have been planted along the roadside with an 80% survival rate."
Nilesh Kalbande, youth leader and student

Since 2015-16 the village has been undertaking various soil and water conservation initiatives.

"Every year we dig deep CCT (Continuous Contour Trenches) which are more effective than the regular CCTs. Deep CCTs are at least one meter deep and are more effective in controlling water flow, preventing top soil erosion. The impact of it is visible in the increased soil moisture and the green cover in the area."
Rashid Sheikh, resident



The climatic condition and topography of the village is ideal for cultivation of oranges. However, owing to scarcity of water, most of the farmers preferred growing only Cotton.

In 2019-20, under Vasundhara Watershed Development programme, a stream flowing through the village was widened and deepened. The total cost of the project was INR 14 lakh, covering the catchment area of the three nearby villages, benefiting 300 households residing in these villages. The land under irrigation has increased due to this project, enhancing agricultural production. The marginal farmers who could not afford to irrigate their land and thus took only one crop, are now taking multiple and diversified crops through the year.

“I wouldn’t have dared to plant an orange orchard a few years back. Now with the availability of water I have my own orange orchard with 100 trees. Currently most of the households own an orange orchard. My orchard will give fruits in another year or so.”

Vinod Chowdhary, resident



ACHIEVEMENTS

- Vasundhara Watershed Development programme for stream widening and deepening which benefitted 300 families.
- Increase in agricultural productivity and crop diversification.
- Deep CCT for controlling water flow and preventing soil erosion.
- 1000 Trees planted.
- Reduced Human- Wildlife conflict.
- Won Nirmal Gram Award, Santh Gadge Baba sanitation award

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Several measures taken to create awareness against encroachment of wild animals.
- A water reservoir was dug within the forest for wild animals and to reduce animal human conflict.
- Convergence of MGNREGA scheme for Natural resource management.
- Active Wildlife committee which oversees wildlife protection and sustainable harvesting of non timber forest produce.
- Soil and water conservation initiatives.
- Shift from traditional crops to horticulture. More than 80 % farmers in the village are growing oranges which has a high return.



MIRZAPUR (NERI)



"Nature goes beyond borders. Nature doesn't discriminate.
A tree in your garden can give shade to me. Water flows.
Rain is for everyone."

Savita Nilesh Kathane, resident.

Mirzapur (Neri) is one of the villages displaced by the Nimmn Wardha dam project in the year 2007. Hundred and fifteen households from the village were resettled in Arvi block. Being a displaced village all the households lost their farm land.

"All of a sudden we were displaced from our village. We
had to leave our land, homes and even cattle.
Here, in the new village, we were given land only to build
houses. This was a barren land, with no trees, no source of
water, roads, schools or health facilities. More so we did not
have a land of our own to till."

Namrata Babarao Jadhav, resident.

Livelihoods were impacted. Only 18 households managed to purchase farm land after displacement. The rest work as farm labour in nearby villages. Few have jobs in the cities. The new village was devoid of even basic infrastructure like drinking water, roads and electricity.

"Every year we had to bring a water tanker to provide
drinking water for the villagers. We had no clue about the
direction to move forward in. All we saw was limitations."

Narendra Kolhe, resident.



In the year 2017 the village decided to participate in the water cup competition organized by the Pani Foundation.

“We heard about the competition. All the nearby villages were participating and there was a considerable excitement in the region about it. The villagers here too expressed the intent to contest for the water cup.”

Balabhau Sontakke, deputy sarpanch.

The matter was discussed in the gram sabha and while the villagers were keen to participate they did not have the required land to build water conservation structures. It was proposed by the women in the village to work on the bordering farm land of neighboring village.

“This seemed impractical to most of us. To contest a competition for which we did not have the required resources were indeed strange. But we had to do something.”

Raju Shendre, gramsevak.

To the North East of Mirzapur (Neri) is village Bazarwada. Mirzapur (Neri) is a catchment for the water flowing down from Bazarwada. Any water conservation initiatives in Bazarwada would naturally help recharge groundwater in Mirzapur (Neri). It was decided to participate in the water cup competition and Bazarwada supported by offering their land bordering Mirzapur (Neri) to build water conservation structures.

“All of us here work as daily wage laborers. We would work half a day and then work on building water conservation structures. None of us ever mentioned the wages we lost or the hardships we had to go through.”

Padma Indrajit Mundare, sarpanch.



The village had an old, dilapidated and dry well. The well was cleaned and deepened. The impact of water conservation structures made by the villagers was seen on the water level in this well.

"The source is recharged and the well now has water throughout the year."

Padma Indrajit Mundare, sarpanch

Mirzapur (Neri) won the second prize at the block level at Water cup.

"We received award money of INR 750000/-. This money was used to buy a water filtration unit. Today the entire village has access to safe drinking water and we did not feel the need for a water tanker for the past three years."

Padma Indrajit Mundare, sarpanch



The water cup brought a new lease of energy amongst the villagers. One thing led to other. Trees were planted. Oxygen park with native tree species was planted. Various funds were leveraged to build internal roads, anganwadi center, primary school, water tank and community center. Every household has a soak pit and there are no open drainages in the village.

“Even though we do not has agricultural land, each one of us in the village have planted our own kitchen gardens.

These gardens are small, but provide seasonal vegetables sufficient for household consumption. That saves us a lot of money besides taking care of the waste water.”

Savita Kathane, resident

The villagers in Mirzapur (Neri) understand the interrelated and interconnected web of life where impact on one individual's actions goes beyond the individual. They worked selflessly on the property of their neighboring village, benefiting the residents of both the villages. In doing so what they have exhibited is the spirit of cooperation and co-existence.

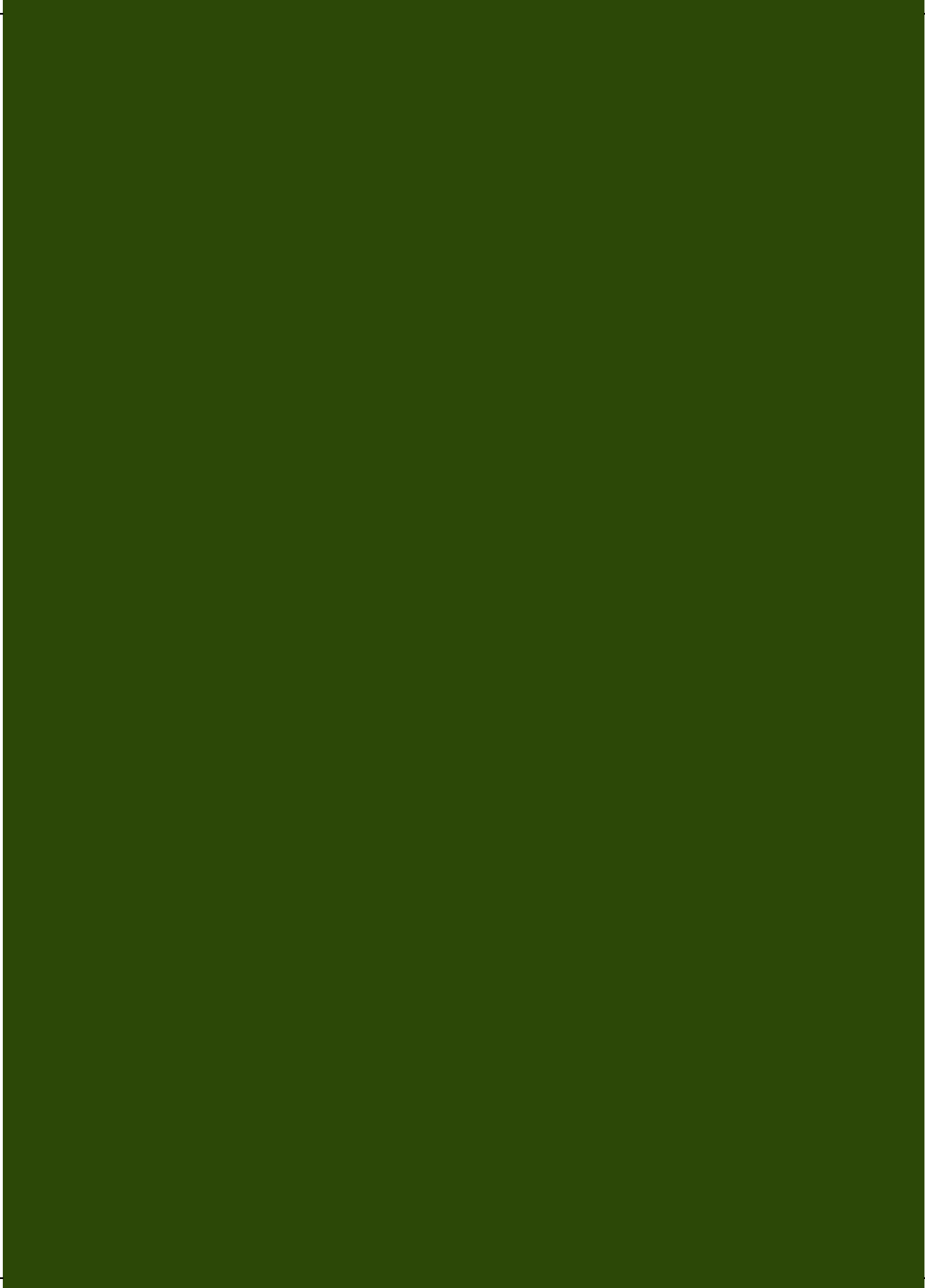


ACHIEVEMENTS

- Won the second prize of Rs 750,000 at block level at water cup.
- Rise in the ground water table.
- RO Plant within the village premises with access to clean drinking water to each and every household.
- 100% Open Defecation Free village.
- Won the Smart Village Award of Rs 10 lakh.
- Won Santh Gadge Baba Sanitation award in 2017 and 2019.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Participated in Pani Foundation's water cup challenge.
- The residents did 'sharamdan' in bordering farm land of neighboring villages.
- An old well was restored and cleaned.
- Soil and water conservation structures constructed.
- Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas are held at regular intervals.
- Oxygen Park with native tree species.
- Every household has a soak pit and there no open drainages in the village.
- Promotion of kitchen gardens.



SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD

PARSODI TEMBHARI



“Farming, being rain-fed, wasn’t a reliable source of income. We knew we needed to diversify our sources of livelihoods. There was no point investing our resources on income generation activities we had no experience in and be dependent on others for production and marketing. We had to build upon our strengths; on skills we had and the knowledge we possessed.” Surekha Pandhare, Sarpanch, Parsodi Tembhari.

Thirty-five kilometre from Arvi, village Parsodi has a population of 937, with almost all the 230 households engaged in farming and related vocations. Most of the land is non-irrigated and farming is totally dependent on the rain. If the monsoon is good, the villagers harvest crops like lentils, cotton, wheat and gram. Creating sustainable and diversified sources of livelihoods was one of the major challenges before the village.

“Failure of even one crop meant a big economic blow to the household. Being dependent on rains, we take only one crop in a year. Seasonal migration, therefore, was high. There was a need to create sources of additional income.” Mohan Ramkrishnaji Sakharkar, farmer, resident.

In the year 1983–84, Santoshi Mata Dairy was set up in the village, which provided a stable source of additional income to the villagers until the year 2013. However, for unforeseen reasons, the dairy was closed and the villagers lost a major source of income.

“We couldn’t afford to rear animals. The grazing grounds were depleted due to drought; the dairy had closed and we could not get good returns for milk. We started selling our cows.” Dhiraj Thakur, resident



In a village where every household had at least one cow, now none was seen. This made the communities here, especially those with non irrigated land, highly vulnerable. Farming, without the cows, wasn't viable, either.

"Cows complement farming by providing a good source of organic manure. So without cows farming too became expensive. We had to bring the cows back. Farming is not affordable without cattle." Abhay Khedkar, resident.



That sustaining solely on agriculture wasn't possible, was well understood by all. To diversify sources of livelihoods to generate additional income to create a buffer against the risks involved in farming was important. A gram sabha was held to discuss the possibility of reviving animal husbandry and dairy business in the village. Even though the villagers had prior experience of rearing cows, they were skeptical.

"There were many doubts – who will collect the milk, what if the rates fall, what would be the capital investment, where to get the finance from. These and many such questions deterred villagers from moving forward." Dhiraj Thakur, resident

The youth from the village was mobilized to hold awareness camps to inform villagers and address their concerns. Various camps were held to provide information regarding different government schemes, new breeds of cattle and market opportunities. Exposure visits were organized to successful models of cattle farms outside the Wardha district with support from the department of animal husbandry.

Finally, in the year 2017-18, leveraging funds from various government schemes to enhance livelihoods of small and marginal farmers, 28 cows and 5 goater units were bought by 33 households in the village. A milk collection centre affiliated with Mother Dairy was started in the same year. Encouraged by the profit earned by these households, 85 cows and 5 more goater units were purchased in the year 2019 – 20 by another 50 households. Currently, 83 households with non irrigated land are directly benefiting from these units. Around 1200 litres of milk is collected daily from the village. Within a span of five years, Parsodi village revived the animal husbandry and dairy business. "Once again our village woke up to the sounds of cow and the tintinnabulation of bells." Mohan Ramkrishnaji Sakharkar, resident.

After completing higher secondary schooling, Rahul Pandhare had started assisting his father in farming. It was around the time when Mother Dairy was looking to set up a milk collection centre in the village. Rahul showed interest and was trained by Mother Dairy to set up the milk collection centre, which today collects milk from both, Parsodi and Tembhari villages.

"I started this milk collection centre affiliated to Mother Dairy with a daily collection of only 40 litres of milk five years back. There were only four to five households with cows at that time. Today I collect close to 1200 litres of milk every day. I earn Rs 20000/- additional income monthly from this collection centre. It's opened for two hours in the morning and evening. The rest of the day is free for me to do farming. It is a great source of assured monthly income for me and has also boosted the confidence of the farmers to invest in cows", tells Rahul Pandhare.



As the number of cows increased, their well being became the concern of the villagers.

“We realized that our animals were falling ill eating the plastic thrown on the streets. A massive cleanliness drive was organized. It was decided in the gram sabha to ban plastic. A fine of Rs 500/- was imposed on the use of plastic.” Surekha Pandhare, Sarpanch.

Since during the community gatherings food was served in plastic plates, the ban on plastic made serving food on such occasions difficult. Rani Laxmibai Women’s Self Help Group saw an opportunity here. Soon there was yet another viable business providing an additional source of income to the women in the village.

“We took a loan from the federation to buy utensils, which we provide on rent. It is a joint business started by our group. A set of steel plate, two bowls and glass is rented for Rs 2 per set. We also provide someone to wash the utensils. That’s an additional income for the member.” Usha Raut, member Rani Laxmibai , Bhumi Gram Seva Sangh.



Pratibha Marutirao Phulane was leading a hand to mouth existence. The cotton crop had failed for two consecutive years. There was no other source of income for the household. As she was contemplating setting up some 'side business', she realized that the villagers struggled to source cattle feed from Wardha.

"Since most of the households here have cows, they had to travel to Wardha every month to buy the cattle feed. That took an entire day of theirs, plus the additional travel cost. I saw the need and made the cattle feed available in the village itself. We are now thinking of producing it here itself. The women in my self-help group encouraged me to take a loan. I took a loan from the federation to buy cattle feed worth Rs 50000. Currently, my monthly turnover is close to rupees one lakh. I sell two to three sacks of cattle feed almost daily." Pratibha Marutirao Pholane, proprietor, cattle feed enterprise.

The youth, which was once shying away from farming, today takes pride in being a farmer. They are taking an active interest in animal husbandry and are curious to learn more about the subject.

"Animal husbandry is a science. I have to know about different breeds of cattle, goats, hens; their diseases and treatment. Previously I thought it below my dignity to clean the cowshed. Now I clean the cowshed. I know how to milk cows. I even clean the poultry. I am not joking but one would die of that stink in the poultry. But I don't mind doing it. Who would if one can earn close to Rs 70000 per month from these animals?" Vaibhav Santoshrao Jadhav., farmer.

After his father's demise, a few years back, Vaibhav took to farming and animal husbandry. He has devoted half an acre of land only to grow high-quality fodder for his cows.



"I have a dream of expanding this business. Currently, I get 35 to 40 liters of milk daily. I want to increase it to 100 liters at least. I have a poultry farm with two hundred indigenous hens. I raised these hens from just twenty hens. One egg sells for Rs15/- During Holi, I will easily make a business of Rs 10 to 15 thousand in a day, by selling these local hens. This business is highly profitable if done properly. Of course like any other business, this too has its ups and downs. But that's a risk one must take", says Shakti.

What one can see in Parsodi village is an intelligent integration of traditional knowledge and skills of the villagers with the modern outlook and approach to enhance their livelihoods. The village has built upon people's assets and honed the skills they already had. The revival of animal husbandry and dairy has created a ripple effect leading to water management, rejuvenation of native fodder varieties, increased youth engagement, economic empowerment of women, and ecological restoration. Organic manure enriched the soil, increasing its fertility, in turn increasing agricultural production.

With their ingenuity, support from the gram sevak and district administration, they have successfully revived animal husbandry and the dairy business in their village. In only five years the village Parsodi has created sustainable and diversified livelihood options for its villagers.

"We are entrepreneurs today with our own business. We are our own masters." Shakti, farmer



ACHIEVEMENTS

- A flourishing dairy business
- Youth engagement and participation
- Increased household income
- Diversified livelihoods complementing farming
- Rejuvenation of native fodder species
- Promotion of organic farming, improved soil quality, conservation of water
- Promotion of household individual and group enterprises

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- The SHGs have been empowered not only as saving groups but as entrepreneurial units. Different group enterprises have been promoted through these groups.
- Livestock development and animal husbandry have been promoted as alternate and sustainable livelihood options.
- A very efficient Dairy marketing and distribution model.
- Employment opportunities created within the village leading to the reduction in the number of people migrating to the nearby cities for employment.
- Strong women leadership and important role played by women in village development.
- Ban imposed on the use of plastic because it was harming the environment and livestock.
- Promotion of indigenous knowledge and skills.
- Increased engagement and participation of youth in the development process.

MAHAKAL



“We decided to start a poultry farm. Even though we have been rearing hens for ages, initially we were hesitant. Running a business is whole different thing.

We started small, with only 15 birds and gradually increased the number. At present, there are 75 birds in this shed. Now we have started selling the eggs.

We were supported by the gram panchayat and other villagers. We received training in managing a business, maintenance of the poultry, health and hygiene of the birds and today we are running a successful business.”

Ranjana Dhavne, member Sahara Producer Group.



On the banks of river Dham, Mahakal is nestled upon a hillock. With a population of 2186, the village is at a distance of 8 Kms from Wardha. The village being well connected to a market has ample scope for small scale, home-based enterprises; an opportunity the village has made the most of.

The village has concentrated on promoting producer groups by mobilizing the SHG to initiate group enterprises. There are 32 SHGs active in the village, 50 different enterprises being run successfully either by individual members or as a group enterprise. The SHGs were promoted under Umed-Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission(MSRLM). More than 300 women are associated with 32 SHGs. There are two producer groups.

“ What usually deters the villagers from starting an enterprise is the lack of initial capital and revolving funds required to keep a business afloat. With some training and exposure they feel confident of taking the risk.” Suraj Madhavrao Goho, Sarpanch

The Mahakal Gram Panchayat has been working towards creating livelihood opportunities for women and youth through leveraging support from various government and non government bodies. Organizing trainings to build capacity and skills is something the gram panchayat does on a regular basis.



“For the last 12 years, I have been living in Mahakal. I started a lentil processing mill at an individual level. In a day I manage to process around 4–5 quintals of lentils. My mill runs for three months, during the season and in these three months I make a profit of INR 50,000. This money takes care of the education of my children.”

Usha Thool, member, Ujjwal SHG.

The village has promoted two producer groups under the Umed- Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission, managed solely by SHG members. The Shree Shakti Women Producer Group is a group of 11 women running a goatery since February 2020.

Sahara Women Producer Group who is running a poultry enterprise was started in June 2020 with 11 women on board.

"The enterprise has provided us with additional income and has given us the confidence of running a business. From cleaning the goats shed to maintaining accounts, we do everything ourselves. Never had we imagined that we would be handling finances of this scale." Vishakha Sonatakke, member, Shree Shakti Women Producer Group.

The group has employed a woman who takes the goats for grazing. Timely vaccination of the goats, their health and hygiene are taken care of meticulously by the members. Encouraged by the response and empowered by the experience of running a business, the group has initiated another enterprise to process spices.

"The two enterprises counterbalance the risks of the other." Vishakha Sonatakke, member, Shree Shakti Women Producer Group.



The Mahakal Gram Panchayat has been working towards creating livelihood opportunities for women and youth through leveraging support from various government and non-government bodies. Organizing training to build capacity and skills is something the gram panchayat does on regular basis.

“We concentrate on giving exposure to the villagers through training and exposure visits. We introduce them to various off-farm livelihood options they could engage in to enhance their incomes; besides connecting them to various schemes and linking them to banks.” Narendra Chaure, Member, Gram Panchayat.

The gram panchayat also actively explores ways to market the produce and actively looks for avenues to strengthen forward linkages at district and state level.

“We want our livelihood model to become successful in the long run so that our village could be a role model for others to follow. Gram panchayat can play an important role of a mentor and make these livelihood initiatives successful making the entire village prosperous.” Suraj Goho, Sarpanch.



ACHIEVEMENTS

- 32 active SHGs with more than 300 women associated with them.
- 2 producer groups promoting enterprises like Goatry and Poultry with 25 women directly involved.
- 50 individual and group level enterprises being promoted through SHGs.
- Won Sant Gadgebaba Sanitation award in 2019

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Promotion of producer groups by mobilizing SHG women.
- Skill training and capacity building workshops provided to SHG women.
- Creating livelihood opportunities for women and youth through leveraging support from various government and non-government bodies.
- The panchayat supports the women in marketing their products.
- Women empowerment and increase in household income.
- Alternate livelihood to cut down the risks faced in agriculture.
- Effective implementation of Umed- Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission.



PALASGAON ABAJI



"Appropriate and sustainable livelihoods is one of the basic needs on which all other needs like food, clothing, shelter, health are dependent. In fact, if household's livelihoods are secure, all their other needs are naturally taken care of." Ritesh Kamble, Sarpanch.

Palasgoan (Abaji) is a village in Deoli Block of Wardha district with a population of 1001 with 265 households residing in the village. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood. Over 25% of the population is landless, working primarily as farm labourers.

"Since our village is on the banks of river Yashada, 100% land is under irrigation and agricultural production is good. We grow cotton, lentils and soybean as the Kharif crop, Gram and Wheat as Rabii crop. Corn is cultivated primarily for fodder and many farmers have flourishing orange orchards. Due to the availability of water, vegetables are grown as per the season. Our approach to livelihoods has been strengthening agriculture. Also, since a large percentage of the population is devoid of basic asset of land, creating an alternate, off-farm sources of livelihoods which complement agriculture, has been our priority." Suchita Mohan Shende, Vice Sarpanch

The Gram Panchayat has focused on institution building by promoting women's self-help groups. In the year 2009, women's self-help groups were promoted under Umed - Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM) and four SHGs were promoted under Mahila Arthik Vikas Mandal (MAVIM). Currently, there are 17 active SHGs in the village with a total membership of 178 women. The SHGs are federated into Vikasit Mahila Gram Sangh, a federation.

"Creating financial capital through regular savings was the crucial first step towards promoting livelihoods. With regular savings, these SHGs created enough revolving fund to support the capital investment required to set up business enterprises." Sunil Tahlani, Gram sevak

Through MSRLM and MAVIM regular training and skill development programmes are organized. The federation provides revolving funds required for business. Currently, there are 15 enterprises supported by the federation.

"Women in the village are successfully managing the diverse business enterprise. Being part of the SHG they are financially literate and can manage all accounts, bank transactions and other financial transactions. They are confident of running any business if given the right training because their foundation is strong. The gram panchayat is in the supporting role." Ritesh Kamble, Sarpanch



"I took a loan of Rs 40,000 from my SHG and started a flour mill as an individual enterprise in the year 2018. Every month I earn around four to five thousand of profit . Apart from milling flour I also mill turmeric, chili, coriander and garam masala. I have received the training to operate this machine in Wardha and now I can fully operate this on my own. The money from this enterprise is mostly used for household expenses. During the COVID lockdown this mill was our savior."

Sarita Rangrao, member, Vitthalrao Meshram Smriti SHG

Multiple group enterprises like spice processing unit, flour mill, cloth business, renting farm implements have also been promoted through these SHGs. Village Social Transformation Foundation, a foundation working in the field of public health was implementing certain health initiatives in the village. The foundation demonstrated the making of a nutrition mix to the members of Self Help Groups. The training was given on the production of the nutrition mix. Around sixty kgs of nutrition mix were produced by the SHGs and were made available to the anganwadi. Seeing the quality of the nutrition mix the SHGs in the villages were given a contract of supplying this mix to 55 anganwadis in Deoli block. All the raw materials were procured by the SHGs and within 25 days the nutrition mix was supplied to all the 55 anganwadis. The group earned a profit of Rs 17,000 from this business and this amount was deposited in the bank account.

Alka Mankar, a member of Dhairyata SHG started her individual spice processing unit with a loan of INR 1.4 Lakh from her group. She sells around 10 kgs of different spices every month. She buys the raw material locally, from farmers practicing organic farming., processing and marketing the spices herself.

"I have a FSSAI license and attractive packaging for all my products. All my products are available in the rural mall in Wardha city for sale. It is such a fulfilling experience when someone picks up my product from the shelf to buy. I have also been to Delhi, Mumbai, Aurangabad, and Raipur to sell my products at various exhibitions."

Alka Mankar, Dhairyata Self Help Group.

Wardhini
CHILLY
POWDER

Best Before 6 months from the date of manufacturing
Empty the contents in a container & Store in a cool dry place.
Use Dhairyata Self-Help Group Products and make a rural home self-reliant.
DRDA, WARDHA - 07152-249229 (Helpline No.)
e-mail (ID) wardha.dn.mkt@gmail.com

8 JAN 2021

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(Incl. of all Taxes)
Month of Mfg. :
Batch No. : 2021

DRY & HYGIENIC PLACE

Marketed By :
Wardhini Seva Sangh
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Annsuraksha Regd.
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Wardhini
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POWDER**

Chilly Powder
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Nutrition Facts

Parameters	Result (g/100g)	Specification (as per PFA)
1. Moisture	7.58 %	Not more than 12.0 % by weight
2. Total Ash	6.03 %	Not more than 8.0 % by weight
3. Protein	13.41 %	No Specification
4. Carbohydrate	49.18 %	
5. Fat	16.09 %	

KEEP IN COOL, DRY & HYGIENIC PLACE

MSRLM Umed Mahindra

धैर्यता स्वयंसहाय्यता गट
पं. देवकी (आ.), पो. नांदोरा (ड.), त. देवकी, जि. वर्धा.
Mob. 8888938382, 9323153174

"I took a loan of Rs 10000/- from my SHG and invested another Rs 10000/- to start my own cloth business. From the profit earned, I slowly repaid the loan, and today I earn Rs 5000/- every month from my shop. My children are all grown, with good jobs. They insist on sending money to me. But the satisfaction of earning my own is unmatched. I feel great joy when I buy a gift for my children with my hard-earned money. It boosts one's self-esteem to not ask for money from anyone. "

Sadhna Chahande, Resident

ACHIEVEMENTS

- There are 17 active SHGs in the village with a total membership of 178 women.
- 2 men SHGs have been promoted.
- 15 individual level enterprises promoted so far.
- 10 lakh has been disbursed as loans through these SHGs so far.
- Social and economical empowerment.
- 100 % Open Defecation free village.
- Dispute free village.
- Won Environment conservation award and Sant Gadgebaba Sanitation award.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Promotion of alternative and off farm livelihood opportunities.
- Institutional building by promoting women self groups and federations.
- Convergence of various government programmes, CSR and NGOs like MSRLM, MAVIM and VSTF.
- Regular training and skill development programmes are organized.
- FPO promoted at a cluster level, 6 members from this village are a part of this FPO.
- A Tracker of 10 lakh given out to a SHG group under the VSTF funding.
- Promotion of organic group farming through Men SHGs.
- Processing, Packaging, Marketing and licensing of products produced by SHG.



DIGHI (BOPAPUR)

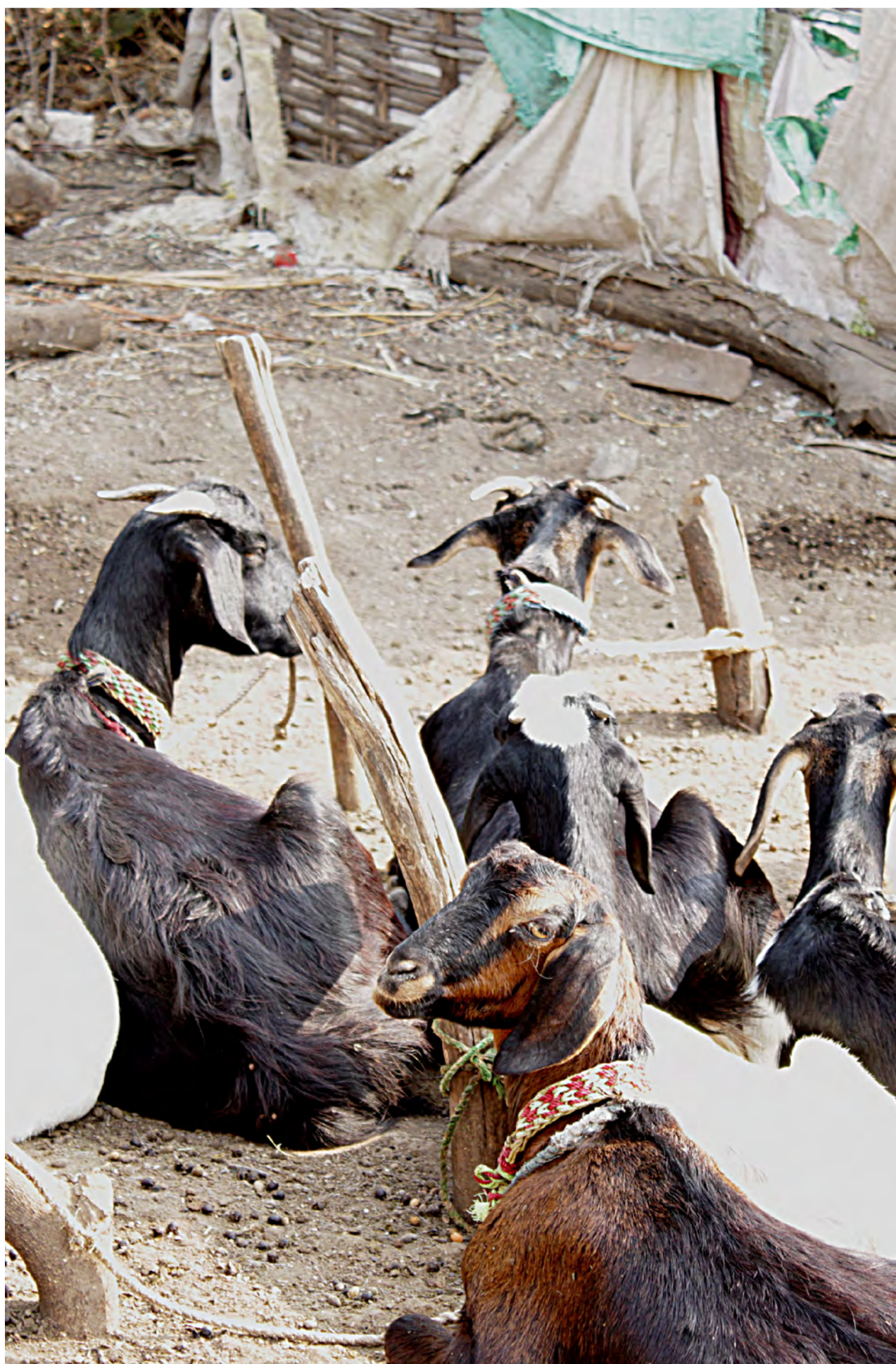
I have a small piece of land. Rearing goats requires a small place. I took a loan of Rs ten thousand from my group and bought two goats. Two became four and four became six. I have repaid the loan, within six months. Goats are low maintenance, are not fussy eater and give a quick return. I also like goats. Aren't they adorable? To see them jump around is such a joy."

Ganga Nehare, Member, Gaytari SHG

Ganga is a landless farmer. Her husband works as a mechanic and she as a farm labourer. Initially, she was reluctant to join a Self Help Group, saying she was left with no time after working as a daily wage earner. After much convincing, she conceded to joining a Self Help Group, formed of the women in her neighbourhood. Soon she realised the benefits of monthly saving.

"We save Rs 100 per month. I was encouraged to start a small business. Since I like goats, I decided to take a loan and buy the goats. A full-grown goat sells for around Rs 8000/- It is good money in case of an emergency. They say a goat is a poor person's bank. One can encash the money whenever one wants."

Ganga Nehare, Member, Gaytari SHG



Dighi Bopapur is a small village located in the Deoli Block of Wardha District, Maharashtra. River Yashodha flows through the village which has a population of 634. The main source of livelihood is agriculture which is mostly rain-fed. Most of the farmers are small and marginal farmers, with a large percentage of landless farmers. The main crops grown are cotton, wheat, lentils and Soya-bean.

The panchayat has promoted various livelihood initiatives through the medium of the Self Help Groups. There are 10 SHGs with 120 members. The SHGs are federated into Sakhi Mata Mahila Gram Sewa Sangh. The federation has received a loan of 7 lakh from banks and a Rs 3 lakh Community investment fund (CIF) from MSRLM.

In the year 2019 community vegetable garden was developed under Umed - Maharashtra State Livelihoods Mission. The members of the self-help groups were encouraged to take up the activity as a community business. A patch of village common land was provided by the gram panchayat. The SHG members cleared the land and began cultivating seasonal vegetables following organic methods.

"It was the women members of the Self Help Group who came up with this thought of growing vegetables. The initiative has been extremely successful in providing additional income to the women members through the sale of vegetables. Being well connected to the cities, there has been good scope to sell fresh vegetables in the city."

Amoliya Vaitage, Gram Sevak

Encouraged by the success of the pilot project, 1000 square-shaped vegetable gardens have been made in the village, managed by 10 Self Help Groups. The production is completely organic using indigenous seeds saved by the women's group in a seed bank.

"Vegetables required, sustain daily consumption of 180 households currently produced through these vegetable gardens."

Savita Devidas Kumare



Supporting the organic cultivation of vegetables, a group started the production of vermin compost. As the demand for vermin compost had increased since the villagers understood the importance of organic farming, these units provided an easy source of vermin compost to the farmers. Currently, eight individuals are engaged with the production of vermin compost which has increased their monthly income by 2%.

More than 140 small individual enterprises like Dairy, Poultry, Goatry, Kirana Shop, Masala Mill have been promoted through these SHGs.

"The federation gives loans at a very low interest rate to the members so that they can start their own enterprises and enhance their livelihoods. We conduct regular SHG meetings and maintain proper records. Every month each SHG saves around Rs 7500/-. These livelihood opportunities have led to an improved quality of life for the households and they no longer have to be worried about funds for capital investment. They know the federation is there to support them."

Rekha Dilip Bhoyar, Resident

Currently ten individuals are running a poultry farm which gives them an assured income of INR 50000/ per year. 26 individuals have invested in goateries earning an additional annual income of INR 1.50 lakhs.

"Other than these, the members have taken loan to set up grocery shops, cloth shop, stationary shop, to purchase fishing tools and farm implements."

Vaishali Bhaskar Dighekar, Community Resource Person



ACHIEVEMENTS

- There are 10 SHGs with 120 members.
- 140 Small individual level enterprises have been promoted through SHGs so far.
- The SHG federation has received a loan of 7 lakh from banks and a Rs 3 lakh Community investment fund (CIF) from MSRLM.
- 1000 vegetable gardens.
- Improved quality of life due to alternate livelihood options.
- 100% Open Defecation Free(ODF) village.
- Dispute free village.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Promotion of small enterprises and business for landless families.
- Livelihood promotion through SHG Groups.
- Promotion of Kitchen gardens as a group enterprise.
- Convergence of various government programmes like Umed-MSRLM.
- Promotion of indigenous seeds through a seed bank.
- Sustainable agriculture practices like use of vermi-compost etc.
- Regular SHG meetings and proper records.



MGNREGA

सहात्मा गांधी राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोज

हमी योजना

क्रमाचे नाव-वैयक्तीक सिंचन विहिरी (नारायण न. धोटे)

क्रमाचा ताकतानंक-१८२६००३०३४/IF/१२३४१२६१४१

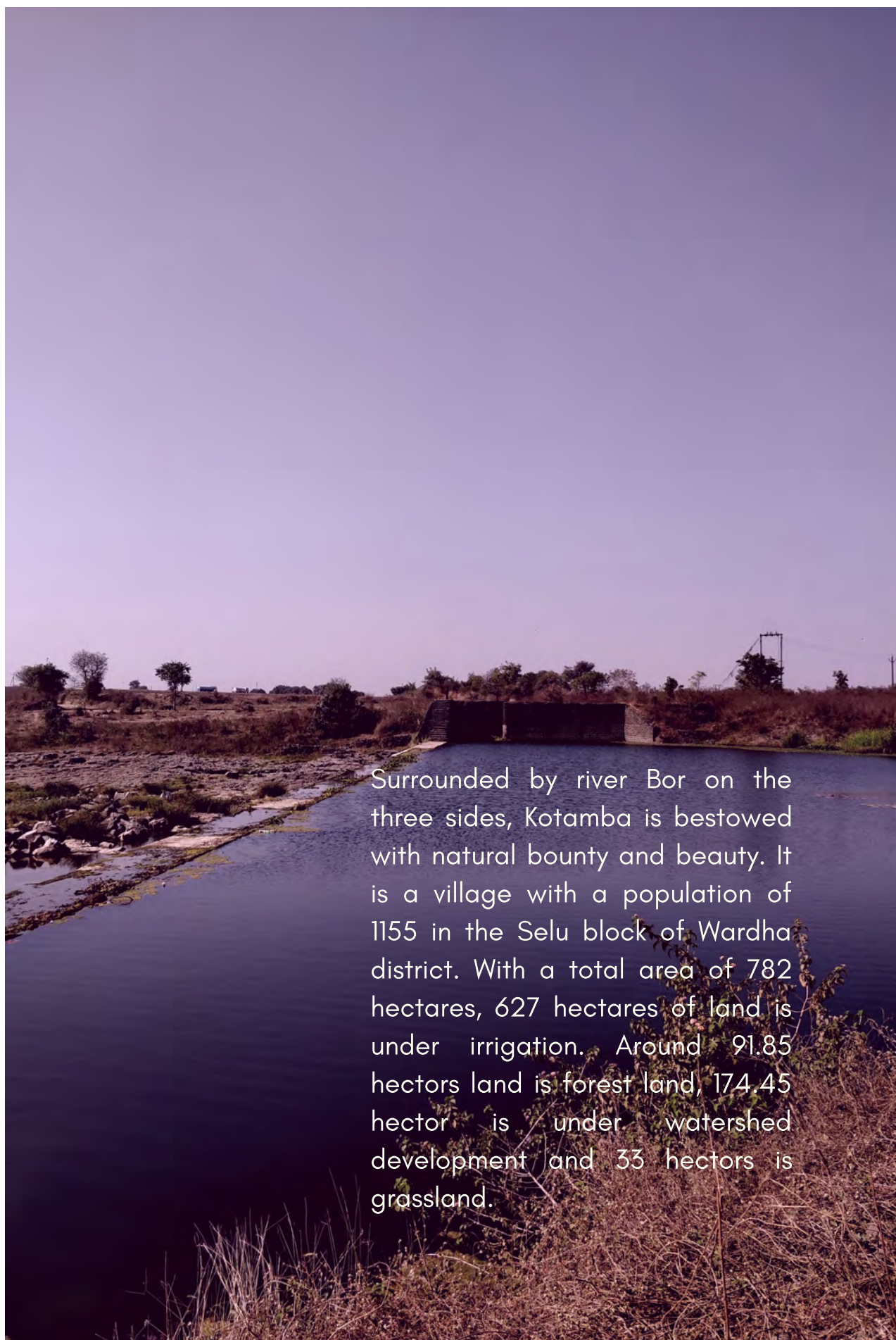
का.अ. किंमत (ला.) ३.० लक्षा * काम पूर्ण झाल्याचा दि.

काम सुरु झाल्याचा दि. १-५-२०२० * कामावर झालेला खर्च अ.रु.

मनुष्य दिवस मजुरीचा दर :- २०६

यंत्रणेचे नाव : ग्राम पंचायत तास

KOTAMBA



Surrounded by river Bor on the three sides, Kotamba is bestowed with natural bounty and beauty. It is a village with a population of 1155 in the Selu block of Wardha district. With a total area of 782 hectares, 627 hectares of land is under irrigation. Around 91.85 hectares land is forest land, 174.45 hector is under watershed development and 33 hectors is grassland.

It was in the year 2010-11 when the work under MGNREGA started in the village with the plantation of 3200 native trees, as a community forestry initiative, providing employment to three individuals, incurring a cost of INR 72,181/-. While the village has undertaken various development works under the MGNREGA scheme, most of the fund utilization is towards tree plantation. Out of INR 28,87,371/- worth of work done under MGNREGA from 2010 to 2018, in a period of seven years, close to INR 10,37,649/- funds were utilized for the plantation of forest and fruit trees in the village. Around 7064 trees were planted in this period providing an employment guarantee to 26 individuals.

“Since we are surrounded by the river on three sides, water wasn’t our concern. Our challenge was to conserve our natural resources, including water. We are primarily an agrarian community and our livelihoods and survival are directly dependent on natural resources. Since 2010 we have used maximum funds under MGNREGA towards afforestation and forest conservation.”

Renuka Kotambakar, Sarpanch



A nursery of forest and fruit trees was created to ensure a steady supply of saplings for the tree plantation in the village. The nursery, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Nursery, was managed by a five women group, generating additional income for them.

“We created 38500 saplings of forest and fruit trees. From purchasing the planting material to the maintenance of the nursery, we managed it all. It not only gave us an additional income but has given us a new skill to set up our own business.”

Vibha Ashok Bhongade, Caretaker, Nursery

The village has been innovative and judicious towards the utilization of all its financial, natural and human resources. To water the Teak saplings a chamber was created to collect the overflow from the water tank and channelized towards the plantation. Similarly, the household wastewater was channelized to water the saplings planted around the individual houses.

“This not only nurtured the saplings but also resolved the problem of sewage. Just because there is a river around our village, doesn’t mean we have to be irresponsible towards the use of water.”

Kunda Shankar Funne, member, gram panchayat

The choice of trees reflects the village's integrated and holistic approach towards ecological conservation. All the trees planted are native and indigenous. There is a healthy combination of fruit trees, medicinal trees, broad-leaved trees and income generation trees.

"Teak was planted because it is a native variety and can generate income for the village. Trees like Neem and Karanj were planted for their medicinal properties. They also purify the air. All along the riverbank, we planted Velu trees (*Dendrocalamus Strictus*). Velu holds the soil and maintains the groundwater level. One can see a good number of fruit trees like Custard apple, Wood apple, Gooseberries." Renuka Kotambkar, Sarpanch

The gram panchayat has allowed the villagers to harvest fruits, medicines and other non-timber forest products from the village forest land. As per the season, the villagers take permission from the gram panchayat to harvest fruits like Custard apples and gooseberries for self-consumption and also for sale. This provides an additional source of income to households without farmland like the Pardhi community and other nomadic tribes.

“Convincing villagers to undertake tree plantation and not mindless construction work was a major challenge for me. Villages around were using the funds for the construction of panchayat bhavan, the entrance gate to the village, or roads. Using these funds for tree plantation and ecological conservation was a new thought which most of the villagers were not convinced about. However, through various gram sabhas and awareness meetings, we managed to explain the long term benefits of planting trees. Today, after seven years, when we see the impact of these trees on quality of water, air and land, we feel happy we invested in tree plantation.”

Renuka Devendra Kotambakar, sarpanch.

Other than tree plantation, MGNREGA funds have been utilized for the construction of irrigation wells, housing, toilets and cattle sheds. Every household in the village today has a toilet and the village is an open defecation free village. There is a continuous water supply to each and every household, besides a common water filtration unit to make safe drinking water accessible to all. There are sixteen self-help groups with active participation in all village development work. The village has won various awards at the national, state and district level for its outstanding performance in the area of cleanliness, conflict resolution, social forestry, social justice, transparency, accountability and innovation in work.



ACHIEVEMENTS

- ISO certified Gram Panchayat.
- Afforestation and forest conservation.
- Between 2010-2018 7064 trees planted providing an employment guarantee to 26 individuals.
- Every household has a toilet and the village is a 100% open defecation free.
- Strong women leadership.
- Dispute free village award 2009-2010.
- Won the Nirmal Village Award under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- Smart Village award.
- Several other awards for social forestry, social justice, transparency, accountability and innovation in work.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- 3200 native variety trees like neem, karanj etc. planted with 100% survival rate as a Community forestry initiative thorough MGNREGA.
- Generation of employment opportunities along with village development.
- Promotion of a fruit and plant nursery managed by a group of SHG women.
- Integrated and holistic approach towards ecological conservation.
- Promotion of livelihood opportunities from non timber forest produce like custard apple and gooseberries.
- Irrigation farm wells have led to increase in agricultural productivity.
- A RO water plant for safe and clean drinking water.
- Active Tanta Mukti Committee to resolve disputes.



TAS

Located at a distance of 52 kilometres from Wardha, Tas is a small village in Samudrapur block of Wardha district, Maharashtra. There are three villages that come under the Tas Gram Panchayat - Vadgaon, Tas and Dhagadban. The population of the village is 1522 with 698 females and 824 males. The village is located at the side of Chandrapur highway.

The total village area is around 3912 acres with 618 acres of forest land. The village is inhabited by equal percentages of SCs/STs AND OBC communities.

The main source of livelihood in the village is agriculture and since most families are landless, there is a large section of people who seasonally migrate to cities for work. The challenge was to provide these landless families with some kind of employment relief. This problem of outward migration was solved by effectively implementing the MGNREGA scheme. Not only did people get employment but these interventions also led to the overall holistic development of the village.

“At present around 557 people are registered as beneficiaries of work done under MGNREGA scheme. Three hundred twenty-nine individuals have job cards, of which 280 are currently employed under MGNREGA.”

Vineeta Chandrashekhar Zoting, Sarpanch.



Initially the villagers were not keen to enroll under MGNREGA. It took considerable effort on the part of the gram panchayat to create awareness about the scheme and its benefits.

“It was also important to ensure transparency in all transactions and see to it that the villagers receive payments on time.”

Chandrashekhar Shirude, Rojgar Sevak

Until a few years back the residents of the village were finding commuting difficult owing to extremely bad road.

“During the rains the entire road would be flooded with water. The bikes would skid. Four wheelers would get stuck. Usually we ignored it but during an emergency the condition of the road would be a great hindrance. We do not have a primary health center in our village. We have to travel either to Nandori which is 12Km away or to Wardha in case of any medical emergency.”

Devidas Parchake, resident.

A decision was taken in the gram sabaha to repair the road under MGNREGA. A proposal was drafted to repair the main road connecting the village to the highway. In the year 2015, a stretch of around twenty Km of road was cemented by converging Prime Minister Village Road Scheme and MGNREGA. Both, men and women residents from the village were employed for this work.

Following the road construction the village took up a tree plantation drive where in 2000 trees were planted alongside the road. Job cards were given to the physically challenged residents to maintain the trees.

To stop open defecation, 159 toilets were constructed, providing employment to 129 residents. The village is now open defecation free village. The village has also initiated the plan of constructing soak pits in order to prevent wastage of rainwater and promotion of water conservation.

“We have constructed 5 soak pits. A soak pit for every household is proposed in the current GPDP.”

Sanjay Kolhe, member gram panchayat.



Converging Gharkool Awas Yojana and MGNREGA, 30 houses have been constructed providing homes to 30 households from below poverty line. An internal road of 2 Km was build connecting the village to the farming areas. Since agriculture, which is mostly rain-fed, is the main source of livelihood in the village, around 40 farm wells for irrigation were sanctioned by the panchayat under MGNREGA.

"This has led to increase in agricultural productivity and our income. We were growing only one crop due to scarcity of water. Now we grow 2-3 crops a year."

Raju Dadaji Tandulkar, beneficiary.

Recognizing village's efforts towards the development of the village and the welfare of the villagers, the village has been awarded Nirmal Gram Award, Conflict Free Village award and Sant Gadgebaba Sanitation award.





ACHIEVEMENTS

- Problem of outward migration solved by effectively implementing the MGNREGA scheme.
- Holistic development of the village.
- 20 Km of road was cemented by converging Prime Minister Village Road Scheme and MGNAREGA.
- 2000 trees with 100% survival rate planted along the roadside.
- 100% Open Defecation Free village.
- Increase in irrigated land and agricultural productivity due to farm wells.
- Several awards won like the Nirmal Gram Award, Conflict Free Village award and Sant Gadgebaba Sanitation award.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Employment relief to landless families.
- 557 people registered and 280 active job cards.
- The Gram panchayat ensures there is transparency in fund utilization.
- Awareness creation done by the Panchayat on MGNREGA scheme.
- Convergence of various government schemes for village development activities.
- Decisions regarding development works are taken in the Gram Sabha.
- 159 toilets were constructed.
- 30 houses have been constructed converging Gharkool Awas Yojna and MGNREGA for BPL families.
- Promotion of soak pits for water conservation and water management.
- A 2 km internal farm road built.
- 40 farm wells sanctioned.



JANGONA





“Our aim has been to create sustainable livelihoods by leveraging MGNREGA funds and not just generate employment. By building a road, employment is guaranteed only until the construction of road. But we thought of investing funds in activities which will enhance livelihoods and create more permanent sources of income.”

Nitin Wagh, Sarpanch

Located at a distance of 36kms from Wardha, Jangona is one of the few villages in the district which is exploring the scope of sericulture in the region. While the Wardha district is known for its cotton production, the region is conducive to the growth of silkworms as well.

To effectively address the issue of poverty alleviation, the government has been proposing inter-sectorial convergence of development programmes. MGNREGA, according to the ministry of textile offers a major opportunity for leveraging convergence and the Ministry of Textiles is an important partner in this regard. Plantation of mulberry trees to raise different species of silkworms is therefore being promoted by the district administration.

"We were told about sericulture by the MGNREGA officials. Few farmers from our village took the initiative and offered to plant mulberry trees at an experimental level. Currently, one acre of land is under Mulberry plantation."

Suresh Warkhare, Vice Sarpanch

The MGNREGA funds were used to dig pits and develop land for the plantation of Mulberry trees. The plantation used new technology and varieties that sustain drought conditions and ensures continuity of sericulture throughout the year. The training was provided to the farmers by Sericulture Research and Development Council.

"Already more farmers are showing interest in sericulture and we are hopeful that in next few years we will have more acreage of land under Mulberry cultivation."

Ek Nath Kale, resident

The layout design of the field was done to ensure deep rooting and firm anchorage of plants. Pits were dug accordingly keeping appropriate space between the two saplings. The initiative has created more sustainable livelihoods for the marginal and small farmers who are the beneficiaries of the initiative.

"This naturally will lead to more employment as the processing of silk would begin, eventually."

Moreshwar Thakre, resident.



Similarly, to enhance agricultural production of small and marginal farmers, 13 farm wells were dug under MGNREGA on the private land of such farmers with non irrigated land. Incurring a cost of INR 2 to 3 lakhs per well, depending on the groundwater table, the wells have ensured a reliable source of water for these households.

“The land here has hard rock. It requires a machine to drill through them. We couldn’t have afforded the cost of it all. These wells, dug under the MGNREGA scheme, will provide water for irrigation throughout the year. Otherwise, we were at the mercy of rains. This has been a blessing for us.”,
said one of the beneficiaries.

Currently, 550 individuals in the village have a job card. The monitoring and evaluation of the work is done by two panels from the Panchayat Samiti. The nature of work to be undertaken is also decided collectively in a gram sabha based on the priority. The village has efficiently leveraged funds for the construction of household toilets, soak pits and plant trees. Eight farmers have been supported in the development of fruit orchards, other than the Mulberry plantation.

“Depending on the availability of work, I work under MGNREGA for 15 to 20 days in a month earning an additional income of Rs 3000 to Rs 4000/- Since the wages are deposited directly into my bank account, it is not spent impulsively and adds to my savings.”

Aarti, one of the job card holder



ACHIEVEMENTS

- Increase in agricultural productivity and land under irrigation.
- 550 people have active job cards.
- Total 928 toilets were constructed and now the village is 100% Open Defecation Free.
- Eight farmers have been supported in development of fruit orchards.
- 400 trees planted under MGNREGA.
- Won the Smart Village award at taluka level.
- Dispute free village, Tanta mukti award.
- Sant Gadgebaba Sanitation award at district level.
- Awarded for maintaining social justice and harmony in the village.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Water ATM machine for safe and clean drinking water
- Sustainable livelihood creation and employment generation.
- Holistic village development.
- Promotion of plantation of mulberry trees to raise different species of silkworms.
- 13 farm wells were dug under MGNREGA on the private land of such farmers with non irrigated land.
- The nature of work to be undertaken is decided collectively in a gram sabha based on the priority.
- Soak pits for rain water harvesting and waste water management.
- Each and every household has a toilet.
- Promotion of horticulture and sericulture.



SHEGAON KUND

"We are a family of 5 members and lived in a small hut. Last year we received a fund of 1.2 lakh under the Shabri Awas Yojna to build a house. The labor to construct the house was from MGNREGA. Since we both, my wife and me, have a job card we worked as labour and built the house ourselves. Together we earned Rs 18000 as wages. We now have a proper house with two rooms, kitchen and toilet."

Sonu Gajanan, resident.

Shegaon Kund, is a village with a population of 1198, in Hinganghat block. With a history of farmer's movement under the aegis of Sharad Joshi, a well-known farmer's leader and the founder of Shetkari Sanghna, Shegaon Kund is an aware and empowered village.

Farming is the main occupation with the cultivation of crops like Cotton, Lentils, Soybean, Wheat and Pulse as major cash crops. Most of the farmers in the village are small and marginal farmers, with non-irrigated land.

On 15th Aug and 26th January, Gram Sabha's are held and after that residents collectively make a village development plan called *Ara Khada*. During these planning meetings, the development concerns are recorded and prioritized.

"This allows us to prioritise our problems as per the available resources. We also know the funds we need to raise leveraging various government schemes. MGNREGA is one of the important schemes which gives us tremendous scope to undertake various development work and also generate employment. We have built roads, farm wells, nursery, household toilets, homes and community hall leveraging the funds from MGNREGA. At present 840 people have active job cards under MGNREGA."

Raju Nagrale, Sarpanch



Open defecation was one of the serious problems faced by the village.

"During summers children and elders suffered from Diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases. The water had faecal contamination. Open defecation was leading to major health issues and environmental pollution. Even though villagers had to walk for miles to defecate, building toilets somehow wasn't their priority. Considerable efforts were made to encourage villagers to build toilets."

Sachin Thavshe, Member Gram Panchayat

Awareness was created regarding the importance of toilets were constructed for each and every household under MGNREGA.

"This led to a behavioural change amongst the people and changed their perspective on the importance of personal hygiene and sanitation."

Sachin Thavshe, Member, Gram Panchayat

A total of 278 household toilets have been constructed so far. The village is now free of open defecation and won the Nirmal Gram Puruskar for cleanliness and sanitation.

"We would walk for around 2.5 kilometres to the fields, every morning due to non-availability of toilets at home. That was very difficult and unsafe for us, especially during the rainy season. Last year under the MGNREGA scheme a toilet was constructed in our house. We received a fund of Rs12000 from the Panchayat."

Suvarna, Resident



Increasing agricultural productivity was another area of focus for allocation of MGNREGA funds. Around 42 farm wells were sanctioned and constructed benefiting 42 farmers with non irrigated farm land. In addition a 3 km stretch of stream flowing through the village was deepened and cleaned. The labor for this project was hired from within the village as well as from neighboring villages. The initiative benefited around 70 farmers, irrigating 350 acres of land, increasing the yield by 20% due to availability of water.

In 2011-2012, a community hall was constructed under MGNREGA. The hall is rented for INR 2000 per day, the proceeds of which are deposited in the Gram Panchayat Bank account.

"Earlier there was no such facility in the village due to which no social and cultural gatherings were held. Every year around 35-40 social functions or weddings are held in Shegaon Kund. Now people can rent out this community hall within the village premises."

Madhusudan Harne, Vice sarpanch.

Shegaon Kund, through its initiatives has demonstrated sectoral convergence of various schemes with MGNREGA to bring about holistic development of the village.



ACHIEVEMENTS

- 840 people in the village have job cards.
- 100% Open Defecation Free Village.
- A total of 278 household toilets have been constructed so far.
- Won the Nirmal Gram Puruskar for Cleanliness and Sanitation.
- 42 farm wells were sanctioned and constructed.
- 70 farmers benefited from steam deepening and cleaning.
- 350 acres of land which was earlier rain-fed is under irrigation now.

PRACTICES TO EMULATE

- Convergence of various government schemes with MGNREGA
- All the development initiatives are decided in a gram sabha after making a Gram Panchayat Development Plan(GPDP).
- Awareness created regarding the importance of toilets and toilets were constructed for each and every household under MGNREGA.
- Increasing agricultural productivity through construction of farm wells.
- 3 km stretch of stream flowing through the village was deepened and cleaned.
- Holistic and sustainable development.
- Construction of community hall within village premises which is also a source of income for the panchayat.



CONCLUSION

Each of the sixteen shortlisted Gram Panchayats has a unique story of change to tell.

One can see multiple forces that led to the transformation of these villages from scarcity to abundance. While in some villages it has been a community-driven process of change, in others the change is initiated by a visionary leader or individuals. The change however has been due to multiple catalysts. From education to religion, the catalysts of change in these villages are fascinating and inspiring.

In Bazarwada, for instance, it was the disillusionment that had crept in over the years of complacency and cynicism, accompanied by an external push from Satyamay Jayte Water cup, which motivated the villagers to act. A dire environmental condition, with an acute shortage of water, posing a threat to life itself, is another catalyst for change. The pandemic also has a role to play as the youth realized the importance of land-based livelihoods, encouraging them to take pride in farming and allied activities.

Social reformers like Gadge Maharaj and Tukdoji Maharaj have a tremendous influence on the villagers in these parts. The values preached by them not only guide the communities here to the path of social and cultural reforms but also unite them. Gramgeeta, written by Tukdoji Maharaj is revered and directs the development interventions in these villages.

District and state government schemes and competitions have created an atmosphere of constructive competition, motivating the villages to excel. The presence of community-based organizations like Self Help Groups and Federations have played a major role in mobilizing women towards village development by empowering them. Similarly, the presence of development accelerators like Jamanalal Bajaj Foundation, Pani Foundation, Care India, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Jankidevi Bajaj Gram Vikas Sastha has been critical towards sustainable and holistic development of these villages. Similarly fellows placed in the villages under Chief Minister's Fellowship Programme have had a powerful influence on the people.

What one can see across these sixteen stories of transformation is a deep suffering or crises, alienation of society and collapse of faith, leading to the path of self-reliance. Almost all the villages have gone through extreme experiences of deprivation, displacement and drought to overcome their cynicism and dependency syndrome to finally take charge of their own development.

Finally, all these stories point towards change from the grassroots. They have all adopted a holistic, inclusive, ecocentric and sustainable approach to development. It is no coincidence that the villagers are now aware of the importance of native and indigenous species of trees; that they are inclined towards organic and low-cost farming techniques and water and soil conservation. Unsustainable livelihoods leading to environmental degradation is something the villagers have recognized as the culprit leading to poverty and migration. 'Divisive politics is not democracy and true democracy is never divisive' is what they believe in and preach. More so they are now proud of who they are, of their rural roots and identity. They take pride in being a farmer and living in a village.



A little over a decade ago, the villages in Wardha district were in news for agrarian crises and increasing numbers of farmer suicides. Land fragmentation leading to smaller landholding per household, depletion of groundwater, soil erosion, frequent floods and drought had led to a high rate of migration and poverty. Ten years down the line, to see those very villages in the district carve out a model of prosperity is overwhelming. There is much to learn from these villages and their stories of change.

Credits

Writing and Design: Jyoti Patil

Content Development & Research: Pallavi Saini, Mansi Sharma, Kishor Jagtap, Charusheela Thakare, Maroti Chaware

Photographs: Jyoti Patil, Mansi Sharma, Pallavi Saini

Proofreading: Sharmishtha Khanapur, Kishor Jagtap

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Mission Samriddhi
SOCIAL IMPACT ENTERPRISE



Plot No. 3/G3, Siruseri, SIPCOT IT Park, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600130



info@missionsamriddhi.org



+91 8939716517