



Creation of a Resource Centre to facilitate Model Village Development based on the SDGs

Action Research Training Programme at Ashankur
18th June to 20th June 2025

Significance of a programmatic approach to Model Village Development



Waste Management Programme supported by Prarambh

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Training team¹

Institute for Ecology and Livelihood Action



Viren Lobo
Sunil Dubey
Seema Upadhyay

Ashankur

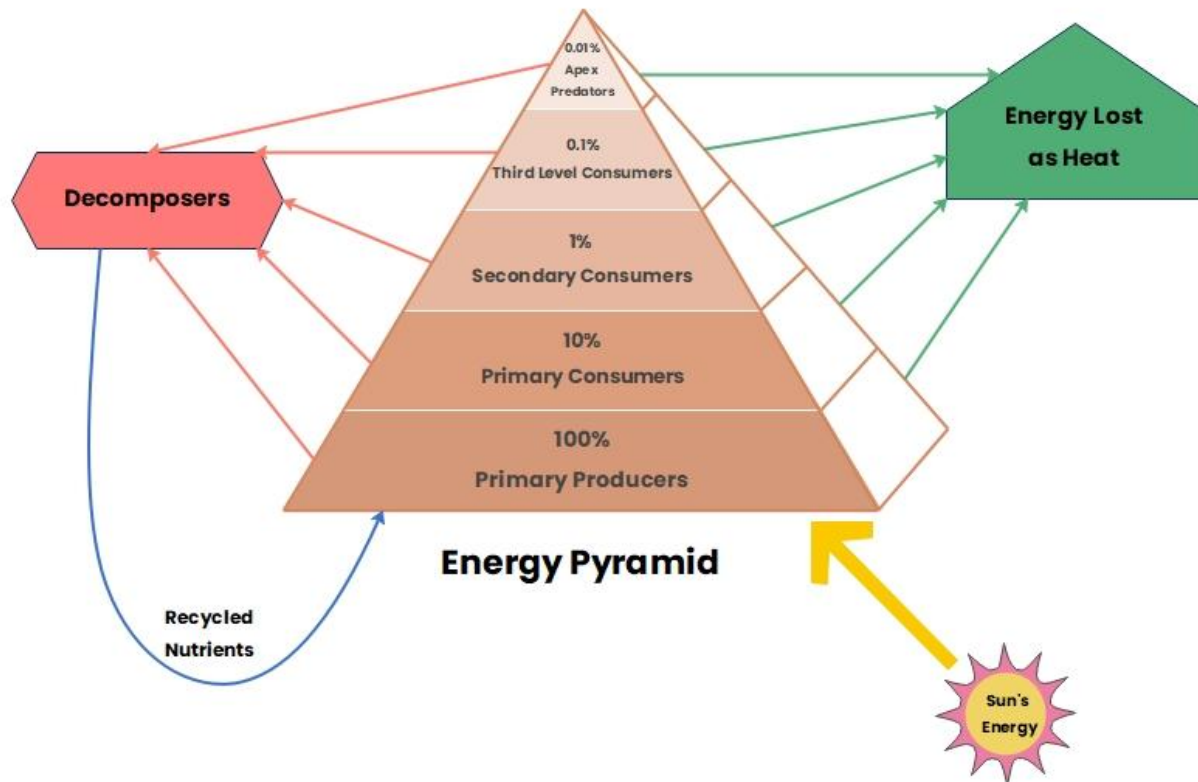


Sr Prisca Tirkey
Kalpana Fernandes
Sr Agnes Guria
Rekha Thorat
Ashwini Pawar
Atul Abuj
Prakash Choudhary
Rita D'Souza

¹ We are not giving designations here because we believe that in research such as this, the role that each person plays is both unique and dynamic. Apart from this there are many people contributing to this research in ways that we cannot immediately fathom. Sunil Dubey & Seema Upadhyay were not present for the training but their perspective has been included in the plans developed, Sr Prisca, Ashwini Pawar and Prakash Choudhary were not present for the first two days, but their perspective and vision guided the deliberations.

Background:

The significance of Three plus Five for life on Earth



Producers, consumers and Decomposers

The Three Doshas:

The energy triangle is based on the principle that matter cannot be created or destroyed but that one form of matter gets converted into another form of matter. At a particular phase of this development, life is created. This turns into the cycle of life namely producer (plants), consumer (animals and human beings) and decomposers (bacteria etc). While this is shown as part of the energy cycle there are other cycles which form a part, namely Nutrient cycle and Water cycle. Later on the evolution and development of human beings the development of Ayurveda outlined a way to relate Human beings to nature, the concept of well being is measured by the three doshas (Vaata, Pitta and Kapha). While there is striving for balance, one or the other is dominant in an individual determining the kind of nature and diseases they are vulnerable to.

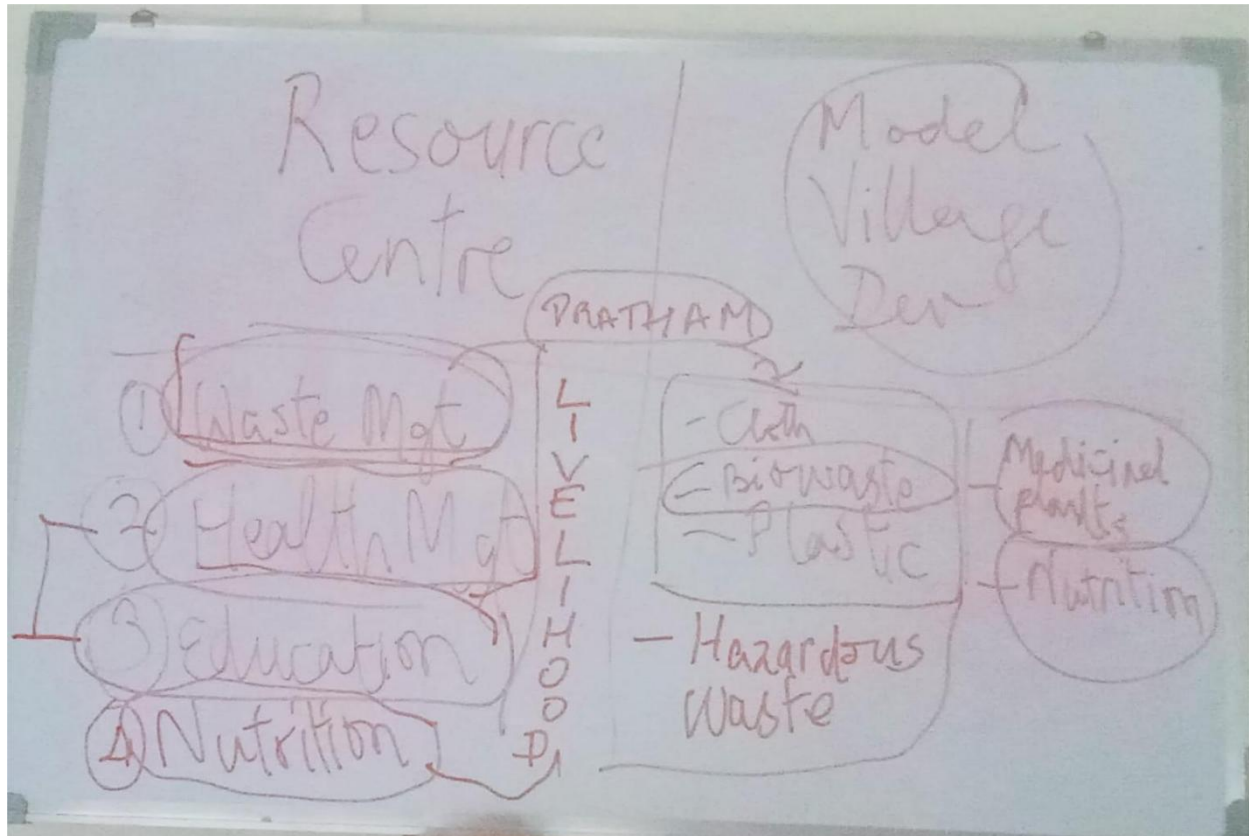
The Five Tattvas (elements):

Earth (Dharti), Air (Vayu), Fire (Agni), Water (Jal) and Space Akash) constitute the five elements that come together to make life. Note how the current understanding of the energy cycle and other nature cycles were represented earlier on the basis of observations. While current science

makes a break from the fundamental tenants of earlier philosophy. The play between the Doshas and the Tattvas provides us with the essence of what is living and non living. The need to go back in time to understand how our ancestors saw life and current conditions is an attempt to pick up societal threads differently, differentiating human made constructs from nature linking past to the present with an eye to the future.

Part I

Understanding the significance of the Programmatic approach to Model village Development



Programme Overview

Ashankur experience with the Pratham programme - Prarambh:



Prarambh Programme

Prior to the initiation of the action research training programme a three day training programme on how cloth waste could be processed into other items like laptop bags, bags for carrying water bottles and other items was carried out by Prarambah a unit of Pratham looking into different aspects of waste management. The programme had already drawn a very good response from the women of the SHGs who were not able to enhance their skills but were also promised a market for the different items produced from the tailoring class. Since this training of the women was undertaken at the behest of Ashankur, it was felt that if a comprehensive perspective on waste management could emerge, it would go a long way in strengthening Ashankur approach to the creation of model villages in the region as waste management is an essential component of creating clean and healthy villages.

In the discussions that followed the following components of waste management emerged in relation to its three R principles namely Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

a. Dry Waste: This includes cloth, paper

b. Plastic: Though a part of dry waste, dealt with separately due to specific concerns related to its collection and disposal. It was pointed out that a unit had been set up in Jawai (Rajasthan) which was collecting and processing plastic into other products like chairs, tables, almirahs etc. In further discussions, options to use plastic bottles in pest management as also development sticky pads for catching insects was also explored.

c. Wet Waste: This includes all types of biowaste that could be processed into compost. Various ways of processing biowaste were also discussed including vermi compost and Jeev amrit.

d. Hazardous waste: This includes glass items that could injure a person, poisonous waste material/ chemicals etc. This requires a different type of collection and disposal process.

The discussions indicated that while Prarambh could help give shape to this as a programme Ashankur would have to think through the various options independently and work out its own solutions which could be done by Ashankur or others too. To take this to the villages as an integral component of the model village programme would require greater clarity on the part of Ashankur on the specifics that could be taken up to start with. Options to improve pest management looked like one item that could be pursued further.

Health, Nutrition and Overall Well Being :



Drumstick

As part of the women's day programme in March, Ashankur had planted some medicinal and nutritive plants and also put up boards to indicate the medicinal/ nutritive use of various plants. In the talk on women's day, one of the key note speakers Sister Usha Gaekwad of the Medical Mission Sisters based in Pune highlighted the relevance of good health practises.



Medicinal and nutrition plants planted for Women's Day programme

Prior to this programme, the exercise done in February provided a perspective on the relevance of biodiversity to develop an indigenous programme related to Nutrition, Health, Education, Livelihood and Overall well being. This was the basis of the initial formulation related to creation of model villages for which Bhokar and Ashankur were used as examples. To facilitate this process, a herbal garden was created in Ashankur and combined with other plants in the campus. Placards were developed to identify these species and highlight their nutritional and medicinal properties as well. The nursery in Ashankur has nurtured plants which are being distributed to the local communities this monsoon for plantation in the villages.

The discussion with Medical Mission Sisters opens up the possibility of developing this understanding of the biodiversity into a health programme which can strengthen the operation of the Primary Health Care Centres run by the government in each village. This will also link to the

Aanganwadi and Mid day meal programme of the government. Keeping women and children in the centre with whom Ashankur have deep engagement this can also incorporate elements related to the waste management programme talked of in the earlier section and develop elements related to clean and healthy villages incorporating management of wetlands, common spaces and recreation as well. Critical value addition using renewable energy while aiding in the three R's will also identify key elements that can strengthen the existing livelihoods of these communities.

The above two aspects indicate how Ashankur with the help of IELA can develop concrete programmes with the help of strategic partners having a specific thematic expertise.

Education and the relevance of the study of man animal conflict:



Diana with the spiked collar to protect from leopards

Since the time of the baseline study in Mandve which highlighted the presence of the leopard in the sugarcane fields, reports of increasing attacking have been surfacing with Ashankur campus being at the centre of at least seven such incidents. The picture of Diana (From Ashankur) above indicates one of the many injuries she sustained while warding off a leopard. If it was not for the spiked collar, she would have been finished.

Considering the increase of such incidents in the region related to the protective cover provided by sugar cane and other tall grasses and plants, it was felt that a systematic study of this issue could provide a framework to understand the complexities facing resolution of the man animal conflict brought about because of the drastic reduction of common spaces in general and forests in particular. Increased presence of wild boar that destroys crops would also surface in such a study. It was therefore suggested to Ashankur that if over the next three months, people were encouraged to report and record such incidents, it would be possible to get an idea of its magnitude and the nature of interests/ concerns that the local communities would have. This general understanding could also factor into teaching modules being developed for Ashankur.

Recently one of the members of Ashankur went for a training at Bhopal on how to use the Eco Eureka kit. The use of this kit would considerably enhance the ability of Ashankur to give quality orientation to the teachers on the scientific approach to education (learning by doing).



Weighning of chillies collected on the campus

Development of women leadership at Village and Federation level:

While reporting on the progress made on implementation of the Model Village plans, it was reported that a twenty member leadership group had been created in Bhokar to take forward issues related to the planning, follow up and implementation of the Model Village plans. It was suggested that this group of women could be trained the way Ashankur staff was trained over the last three years. This group can be encouraged to develop ideas related to the Model Village plans, follow up with the Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti at the Block level, Zilla Parishad at the District level and government officials at Panchayat, Block, District, State and National levels. Participation of the village members does only imply the provision of free labour but also time to assist in surveys, planning, follow up and implementation as well. This is a continuous process that would progressively enhance their capabilities which can also get reflected in leadership taken to develop the Federation of women's self help groups whose activities will expand considerably beyond the savings groups, training and entrepreneurship of the individual women members.

To provide a perspective on these issues, it was suggested that this year's exposure visit should provide a comprehensive vision as to how collective leadership can be developed to run programmes and facilitate enterprise development in the village. A visit to Timabktu Collective based in Chennakotapalli of Anantpur District of Andhra Pradesh was suggested as an option.