



An overview of the work done by Raintree Foundation

Inauguration of water filter units, biodigesters and farmponds



We are happy to announce that we collaborated with Rotary Club of Pune, Riverside for supporting 3 interventions in our Sustainable Landscape Management Program under the Water Security, Renewable Energy and Sustainable Livelihoods thematics. This collaboration has resulted in the installation of 8 community water filters, 60 biodigester units and 17 farm ponds.

This water filters have provided clean and safe drinking water to the people of the villages. 608 families in 8 villages have access to clean drinking water. 60 Bio digesters have provided the villagers with access to cooking energy and clean and safe cooking gas. This has stopped logging, eliminated the smoke from burning wood in the house and reduced the smoke exposure to the little ones in the house. At the same time, the time spent by women collecting firewood has been saved. In this free time, women can focus on personal and village development issues. Due to the 17 farm ponds installed in the villages, the water shortage problem of the farmers has been resolved. It was difficult for the farmers to provide water for their crops for a few months after the monsoon. But now due to these farm ponds, they have not only got water supply, but also other options of livelihood have been generated. Farmers will be able to grow other crops and start fisheries in these farmponds.



With the help of our partner organization RSCD, Raintree Foundation organized an open discussion and information session on 'Village Development' and 'Adarsh Gaon'. All 9 villages were represented at this meeting by members of the Village Development Committee. The RSCD's Datta Gurav helped the villagers understand the village development process. A discussion was held about what it takes to create a perfect village and what villagers can do to contribute.



Raintree Foundation is always striving to create employment opportunities for women. As part of this effort, Santkripa Griha Udyog of Pune organized an informative session on how to start a group business for women of self-help groups in their nine villages. Vishal Jadhav, the Founder of Santkripa Griha Udyog, organised this session in Raintree's office in Sakhar village. Women were helped to understand the importance of small business, the tools and skills needed to start a business by him. He interacted with the women on what kind of business could be promoted in their village, how to start a business and cleared the doubts of the women. At the same time, he promised to give women all the assistance they need to start businesses in the future.

Access to clean and safe drinking water



These are 9 villages in Velhe taluka at the base of Rajgad Torna, which lack access to clean drinking water throughout the year despite rains of up to 2200–2500 mm. Water scarcity in summers aggravates women's hardships, while muddy, germ-ridden water in monsoons worsens people's health. A preliminary survey conducted by the Raintree Foundation in 2019-2020 revealed that only 55% of households use filtered water and 37% of people drink this water without any remedial plan. In some villages, this figure is up to 72%. The number of people who drink boiled water is less than that. A preliminary survey of the drinking water sources of all these villages was also carried out in the laboratory, where bacteria and turbidity of the water were revealed. These causes were harming the quality of the water quite drastically.

'The Raintree Foundation is committed to the goal of having and providing access to 'clean water for all'. Similarly, this initiative is associated with Sustainable Development Goal 6 of the United Nations. Scientific, social, economic, and environmental options have been considered. Eight villages were provided with ultra-filtration machines with chlorination to remove turbidity and bacterial contamination and make the water safe for drinking. This ultra-filtration machine does not add any chemicals to the water, thus avoiding wastage of water in water purification and also reducing the electricity requirement. A 'Community Water Purification System' was installed with the initiative of the Gram Panchayat, with the financial support of the Rotary Club of Pune Riverside and Raintree Foundation's 'Sustainable Land Management' program.

In each village, discussions were held with the community and training was conducted to inform them of the importance of this initiative. Rather than burdening the villagers financially, the villagers had to provide space for the filtration machine, pay electricity bills, and connect the village's drinking water source to the filtration machine. In addition, the Gram Panchayat assured full cooperation. The Gram Panchayat proposed a levy in order to maintain the sustainability of this initiative, as opposed to merely installing machines to meet the current needs. Rs.4 per 20 liters of water.

This filtration machine can last for 10 years, and the revenue from the ATM will easily cover the annual maintenance costs, and even help purchase a new one after 7-10 years. This program will provide drinking water (potable) for 600 households per year, reduce waterborne diseases and health costs, reduce women's labor, and give women and their communities time to engage in other productive activities. Stakeholders in each village have been given ATM cards. Demonstrations were given on how to use the card and how to clean the machine. Each Gram Panchayat has appointed someone responsible for maintaining these machines. Along with this, the Gram Panchayat has taken responsibility for day-to-day operations, cleanliness of the filtration machine and security of its shed.

We understand your mental health needs Counseling services in nine villages by Raintree Foundation



Mental health is an important thematic of our work. We are happy to share that Raintree Foundation is soon starting free of cost counselling services for its community in Velhe. We all know how the changes in the lifestyle and environment affects our well being and thus, to tackle these daily stressors and maintain our emotional and mental well being we are starting these services for our community from the end of October.

Villagers can avail these services where you will be able to freely talk to our counselor about your feelings, anger, stress, sadness. Counselors will be available at Raintree's Shakar Village office twice a week on Tuesday and Saturday mornings from 9am to 5pm. We hope to create a happy, vibrant and healthy society together. The information you provide in this session, your thoughts and feelings will be kept confidential. It will be between you and the counselor only.

Introduction to farm-based aquaculture and Study tour for farmers



In order to create another means of livelihood for the farmers, Raintree Foundation introduced the subject of farm-based fish farming to the farmers. 26 farmers participated in this workshop. Avinash Nakhwa, Assistant Commissioner, Fisheries Department, Government of Maharashtra, Kiran Waghmare, Technical Expert addressed this workshop. The important objective of this workshop was to introduce fish farming to the farmers and educate them on topics such as how it can be done, what are the benefits of fish farming, right climate for fish farming etc. The government officials also gave information about the government schemes and policies for fish farming and what kind of support one can expect from the government and department of fisheries. After this, the farmers were also given a demonstration about fish farming. During this visit, information was given on how to release fish in the pond and preparations to make fish food. In order to give more information to the farmers, a visit was organised to the fisheries department of the government at Hadapsar, where the farmers got more information on the subject. This is an important step towards creating more farm-based livelihoods. Farmers of our 9 village expressed interest in starting fish farming.

Let's learn about the fishing business from the experts



Mr. A. P. Nakhwa,
Assistant Commissioner
Dept. of Fisheries, Pune

Fish is a nutritionally important protein rich food in the daily diet of the general public. Fish farming business has created a large number of employment opportunities in India. To further accelerate the development of this field, Government of India is implementing 'Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana' from the year 2020-21. Sustainable and responsible development is the key to ushering the blue revolution into India's fisheries sector. Considering the geographical area of Velhe taluka, the average annual rainfall in this taluka is quite good. Encouraging the farmers of Velhe taluka to take up fisheries as a supplemental business will provide them with employment opportunities and help in economic and social upliftment. Velhe taluka has a good scope for aquaculture along with paddy cultivation, fish farming in ponds, and bio flock method.



Which are the useful fish for rice fish farming?

- Cyprinus, Tilapia, Maral or major Indian carp (Katla, Rohu and Mrigal) are useful fish
- 50 to 100 mm seed storage is very suitable
- Cyprinus fishes are mainly used for paddy cultivation and have habit of flooding the land, by continuously tilling the soil around the paddy root, the root gets a lot of nutrients along with oxygen and the paddy grows rapidly
- Better fish production is achieved on the basis of proper management in earthen pond along with plastic liner pond
- Fish farming requires the same care as agriculture. Fish need to be fed 2 to 3 times a day. Indian major carp fish usually takes 10-11 months to reach 1 kg weight
- Tilapia and pangasius fish can attain a weight of 600-700 grams in 7-8 months

Schemes in Fisheries Departments -

In the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, the benefit of the scheme can be availed on subsidy. The percentage of subsidy for this scheme is 60% for SC, ST and women category and 40% for general male/female and other categories. 1) pond construction 2) bio flock pond system 3) fish selling center 4) fish selling vehicle 5) hatchery for fish seed production etc. can avail the scheme.

Biodiversity Management Committee

A step to preserve the rich biodiversity

Velhe taluka is blessed with great biodiversity. The source of biodiversity here is Rajgad and Torna area. The grasslands, rivers, streams, mountains, valleys, forests here are actually shelters and havens for biodiversity. Birds, animals, plants, insects of different sizes and colours are found in this region. This biodiversity is a part of our taluka, our area, our neighbourhood and our village. It is a matter of pride and honour for us. Unfortunately we are taking development steps forward by ignoring this rich biodiversity. It is absolutely necessary to implement them keeping nature at the centre. The first and primary step for this is to create a Village People Biodiversity Register.



The Biodiversity Act, 2002 provides indigenous people with the following rights –

- Rights to Indigenous Biodiversity
- Ownership of traditional knowledge related to biological resources
- Participating in the benefits of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge in the case of commercial exploitation
- Establishing local biodiversity heritage sites
- Implementation of plans to conserve local biodiversity

How will Raintree help in this process?

- Help set up Biodiversity Management Committee
- Technical and financial assistance for preparation of People's Biodiversity Register
- Technical assistance for implementation of conservation projects

According to the Biodiversity Act, every Gram Panchayat is required to establish a Biodiversity Management Committee within their jurisdiction. The Biodiversity Management Committee is an autonomous body under Section 41 (1) of the Biodiversity Act, 2002 and is to be treated as a Village Development Committee as per Government of Maharashtra Decision dated 02 May 2016. In the said government decision, Biodiversity Management Committee is to be established at all levels of the Panchayat Raj system.

Who can participate in Biodiversity Management Committee?

- Member of Joint Forest Management Committee
- Representatives of various local organizations
- Traditional knowledge holders
- Horticultural/dryland farmers
- Cowherd/Shepherd
- Knowledgeable individuals (agriculture, fisheries, medicine, secondary forest produce, tribals, animal husbandry etc.)
- Tribal representative
- persons interested in biodiversity work
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Composition of Biodiversity Management Committee -

- Chairman- 1
- Women Members - 2
- Member of Scheduled Caste/ Tribe - 1
- General (Open/Other) Members - 3
- Gram Sevak (Ex-officio Secretary) - 1
- Total Rep - 8

Appointment of Swati Kumbhar of Sakhar Village as Bank Sakhi



Our initiative 'Bank Correspondent Sakhi' (BC Sakhi) has had a happy start in building women entrepreneurs. Our nominated BC, Sakhi Swati Kumbhar of Sakhar village, was recently invited by MSRLM for a felicitation program at the Pune Collectorate office. All the other newly appointed bank Sakhis were also invited to this event. The Guardian Minister of the State, Hon. Chandrakant Patil, Collector of Pune City and other administrative officers felicitated Bank Sakhis with appointment letters. The training of all these bank Sakhis will be started by the Bank of Maharashtra in the next few days. In this program, other established bank Sakhis of the district shared their stories and experiences. Raintree congratulates Ms. Swati Kumbhar on her appointment as Bank Sakhi, and we look forward to the same progress in her work.

Raintree Foundation organized a painting competition for students on the theme 'Human-Environment Relationship'. The competition got good response from all the schools. Selected images are printed below.



Appointment of Environment CRPs - A step towards establishing relationship between Raintree and villagers for Environment Conservation



Five youths have been selected as Environment CRPs to build a new movement for environmental conservation in 9 villages of Velhe taluka. These CRPs will further assist in environmental conservation surveys, monitoring and records.



They will assist in implementing various activities of environmental management, wildlife awareness and public education. These newly appointed CRPs will go through various trainings for capacity building, study tours and nature tours. In future, they will be recognized as 'local environmental experts' in sustainable village development work.

We are happy to announce that our Community Resource Personals (CRP) have just completed 1 year of working with Raintree Foundation. CRPs are an important part of our family. He has a great role in reaching the work of Raintree Foundation to every person in the village. Thanks also to the villagers for their good response to our CRP. We hope that we will all continue to work together.

Making of women entrepreneurs through Bank Sakhi



Bank Sakhi has been initiated by the Raintree Foundation in collaboration with MSRLM and Bartonic Private Limited. SHG Member who sits in bank branch to support Branch Manager is called as Bank Sakhi. This initiative has been started in order to make bank transactions easier for the people of the village and to create employment in the villages. In order to create new entrepreneurs in this subject, a study tour was planned by Raintree in Narhe village in the month of September, in which five women from our village participated. The study tour was organised to understand the work of Savita Nigde who works under Bank Sakhi, Bank of Maharashtra.

Following were the objectives of the study tour –

- To understand how the Bank Sakhi model works
- Learning from the experience of a successful Bank Sakhi
- To know about the bank facilities we can offer through this initiative
- What are the doubts of the women of our village about Bank Sakhi and to clear their doubts
- Encourage more women to register for this initiative by understanding this model



During this study tour, Bank Sakhi Savita explained how the POC machine works, how to do bank transactions through it, and what the benefits of it are. She emphasised that the need for better skills and better training is important for business to run well. The study tour was informative and encouraging. After this study tour, four women applied for the Bank Sakhi initiative, and Swati Kumhar of Sakhar village was selected. We intend to carry out more such activities for women in the future.

Say yes to eco-friendly Diwali, Say no to pollution



Diwali is the festival of lights. It's a celebration that marks the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali is celebrated across all communities of India, creating a homogenous environment of goodwill and happiness. It is a festival to celebrate with family and friends, to light up our and others' lives with lights, gifts, and sweets. Yet, bursting firecrackers has become a prominent part of the festival. Firecrackers lead to gaseous pollutants emissions that harm the environment and health. Also, the noise causes distress to the elderly, especially to those with heart disease.

Huge amounts of crackers and sparklers are burned mainly on the day of the festival and also before and after Diwali. The fireworks contain a lot of chemicals such as potassium nitrates, potassium chlorate, aluminium, iron dust powder etc. These firecrackers, when burnt, release various gaseous and particulate air pollutants and toxic metals, which degrade the air quality. These fireworks emissions reduce visibility to a large extent and generate a dense cloud of smoke. Along with polluting the air, these crackers generate noise pollution; the noise triggers annoyance, aggression, hypertension, high-stress levels, hearing loss and sleep disturbance.

A good way to avoid contributing to the existing pollution is to opt for an eco-friendly Diwali. We should say no to firecrackers. We should light traditional earthen lamps or diyas, instead of electric lights or candles. We should use seasonal flowers and leaves for Diwali decoration. We can use old dupattas, silk sarees etc., for decorations. We must involve our kids and use old CDs, bangles and other craft materials to make interesting decor items. We can make natural rangolis by using natural colours such as rice powder, turmeric etc. Also, we make rangoli from flowers, petals and leaves. We should buy Diwali gifts by taking care of the environment. We can gift a plant to our relatives. We should avoid the use of plastic and should not buy unnecessary items that generate waste. While hosting a small Diwali get-together, we should use biodegradable plates, cups and glasses. Banana leaf plates and bamboo plates are good options, and for serving drinks, kulhads (mud pots) are the best.

Let's make the Diwali festival full of happiness, love, sweetness, peace for all. Let's enjoy the festival of light by taking a pledge not to burst a single cracker. Let's celebrate eco-friendly Diwali, not pollution friendly.

A step towards eco-friendly Ganeshotsav

Ganeshotsav was celebrated with a lot of enthusiasm by all of us. During this period, Raintree Foundation promoted eco-friendly Ganeshotsav through public awareness and campaigns. We conducted awareness campaigns in our villages on environmental damage caused by use of plaster of paris (POP) idols, pollution of rivers and pollution caused by use of plastic and thermocol. Few families in our project area celebrated Ganeshotsav while preserving the environment in response to our campaign. During Ganeshotsav, they did not use plastic and thermocol in decorations and used shadu (earthy) Ganesh idols. These families were awarded by Raintree. Their Ganpati photos are printed below. Next year, we hope to have more people join our campaign.



Navratri celebrations

A day filled with joy !

During Navratri, Raintree Foundation organized traditional Navratri activities, Bhondla, and fun games for women and girls. Women enthusiastically participated in large numbers and celebrated the festival by singing Bhondala songs, traditional dance, playing musical chairs, phugdi and dandiya. We wanted to give women a chance to take a break from their daily routines and enjoy cultural activities, play sports, and just be together. School girls and teachers also enthusiastically participated in this. During this event, Raintree created awareness about mental health and its importance as well as distributed booklets explaining backyard kitchen gardening (BKG).



Upcoming workshops and events October - December

Livelihood -

Workshop on Dairy and Poultry
Study tour to Department of Fisheries
Workshop on food based business for women

Watershed -

Data collection & Awareness camps
3D Model of the Landscape

Mental health -

Awareness on World Disability Day
Inauguration of Counseling Centre



Raintree Family wishes you a very Happy Diwali & Prosperous New Year!

The art on this card is about 'Save Environment'. This is created by Karan Renuse, class 7, under our project Sustainable Landscape Management in Velhe Taluka, Pune.