

Maharashtra Rural-Urban exchange programme

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THE RURAL-URBAN GOOD FOOD, PROJECT AREAS

In the state of Maharashtra, four organisations partnered to ensure food security and farming livelihood. Anthra, Academy of Development Science (ADS), Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA), and Swayam Sikshan Prayog (SSP), carried forward a rural-urban linkage project with Misereor. The initial meeting at the Yuva office in Mumbai had- Nitya Ghotge from Anthra, Anil Ingle and Roshini Nugehalli from Yuva, Prema Gopalan from SSP along with Nasreen, Rajeev Khedkar from ADS, and Anja Mertinet from Misereor (fund-supporting organisation); the meeting officials sat together to discuss the Good Food for All rural-urban linkage proposal for developing a mechanism for marketing good food produce that had been mapped and listed from the project locations. The GFFA project provided a common space for rural and urban groups where - understanding of the change in consumption pattern amongst urban poor and identifying means in which their nutritive value can be enhanced through products available with rural groups. This process involved preparing of seasonality charts of food products and measuring quantities of surplus produce to work collectively and shaping the GFFA pilot programme. Introducing the collectives from the four organisations, in Maharashtra- the Ratnagiri Collective who hail from Ratnagiri district, Kashede GP raigadh collective, Sindhu Durg collective and Osmanabad collective. We can see through the screen images of the mapped locations of the three rural collectives and one urban collective from Yuva.

[ANTHRA- COLLECTIVELY WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES](#)

Anthra, founded in 1992 in Pune, is a resource centre that offers support in the areas of livestock, biodiversity, and livelihood to communities.

Nitya Ghotge, the Director at Anthra, who is also a senior researcher and veterinarian surgeon, spearheaded the Maharashtra Good Food For All programme. The GFFA programme is an inter-connected process and through which an effective linking of rural farming communities and the urban migrant communities is being addressed to counter malnutrition, while creating income generation spaces leading towards sustainability.

Creating linkages and establishing a market for good food producers through the rural collectives which are from Ratnagiri, Karjat, Osmanabad to make the produce/product available for poor-urban consumers through the collectives of hawkers and street vendors within the happenings of the pilot project has been the motive through the multi-processes of the programme.

In the month of August 2016, at YUVA, Khargarh, groups were introduced to each other and planning details of project activities was shared. Creating the space for continued discussion on nutritive and good food was part of the objective of the meeting involving rural and urban groups.

RATNAGIRI COLLECTIVE

At the resource center of Anthra in Pune, the women from Ratnagiri gathered and spoke about the different foods and recipes, starting a discussion on traditional foods like rice and wheat, tuber roots, millets, ramdana, toor daal, sesame, sweet potato, yam, and mangoes.

Women from Ratnagiri district, Village Tarval, Machivalewadi, have very small farms, much less than an acre. They grow enough vegetables for themselves and also cultivate raagi. They also grow rice but it is not enough, they need to buy from the ration (fair price/PDS shop) shop to meet their needs.

On November 2016, a group of 12 project participants from SSP and Yuva visited Ratnagiri. Mapping of food produce and products was one of the activities that took place. Ratnagiri collective, a group of women from Tarwar Machiwale Wadi, learnt how to market and what they gained from the sharing was the practice to collect food from the forest. The women from Ratnagiri collective think the most nutritious food is raagi (millets) which is made into a flour for roti, and ladu. Another interesting product they make are mangoes preserved in salt which can last for a year.

(See [more photos](#))

The Ratnagiri collective are producers of millets, rice, mangoes, kharvanda (indian berry rich in iron), kokum, jackfruit and many other fruits. The women in the collective voice out that these fruits are available in large quantities in their respective areas and the women are motivated to make various products out of these fruits in form of juices, preserves, and different savoury items. The women from the collective exactly knew who they would be marketing their products to, in the urban poor regions of Mumbai and it is because of the exchanges that has taken place through the rural-urban programme.

Sibangi Machiwale from the collective mentions that the exposure to marketing of local produce has been something they have learnt through the GFFA programme. It was at the Yuva Center where Sibangi and her collective interacted with the three collectives participating in the Good Food For All programme. She mentioned about the Osmanabad collective, and their process of producing and marketing which has got the Ratnagiri collective confident to establish their own process of product making, processing and marketing. As Sibangi has made a mind note of the several products brought by the Osmanabad collective to the Yuva center which she spontaneously lists out- "toor daal (pigeon pea), peanut laddu, moong daal (mung bean), urad daal (black bean), mirchi powder, chutney, methi ladu and Mirchi ka theela. While the entrepreneurs themselves- the Ratnagiri collective had taken savoury fruit bars made of mango, and jackfruit, along with raggi ladoos (millet sweets). All of these produce was sold at the Yuva Center. The Ratnagiri women say they are excited and in the process of making more products.

At Ratnagiri, transporting has been a challenge to help create the supply chain, mentions Sangeeta, who has worked alongside Nitya and the team since the inception of Anthra.

In the images you will see, foods and grains, along with a farm land that belongs to Sunil Khapre. Sunil has a 2 acre of segregated farm land with 70 divisions in the land area along with an area for water catchment. Sunil's farm produces rice, pulses, chillies, all kinds of vegetables and leaves, and spices. It is at Sunil's place that the Ratnagiri women gathered for their initial GFFA meetings.

[MAKING OF BEATEN RICE](#)

The Process of making beaten rice or 'chewra' needs rice grains to be fried hot, and here at Ratnagiri, the two women, make use of a wooden mortal-pestle to pound the rice grain. Watch how the Ratnagiri collective shows us their way of flattening rice into flakes.

ADS, KARJAT

Academy of Development Science (ADS), founded in 1979 in Raigad, is concerned primarily with problems faced by village communities; particularly tribals, landless and small and marginal farmers. ADS is actively involved in a wide range of rural development activities aimed at addressing problems faced by tribal communities in Raigad and Thane districts.

A leading farmer called Parsheram has been at the center of the good food project in Mohsul Gaon, Karjat. Anil Harpure, the GFFA project coordinator, at ADS, along with village members organised a program at Lalwadi.

Through the Lalwadi program, a group of 7 farmers got together, to share cultivating practices, methods and necessary agriculture inputs. At Parsheram's farm land seasonal produce are cultivated - a variety of pulses and vegetables. A conversation with both Anil Harpure and Parsheram tells us the produce of vegetables, pulses and oil seeds are in surplus, and this is exchanged and sold in the local markets of Karjat. Linking the produce of farmers from Lalwadi, Karjat can only be possible if a substantial demand from the urban good food project is created, mentions Anil.

Anil Harpure, mentions the continued progress of the GFFA programme at Karjat. While the exchanges took place there has been a vitally interesting sharing of farming practice, foods and recipes, forest produce and its related benefits to health, through the exchange of the four farmer- entrepreneurs' collectives. Parsheram had demonstrated vegetable garden techniques along with growing food with gunny bags at the exchange that got the collectives together at Osmanabad.

Parsheram discussed how the exchanges have been important, while different regions have seasonal foods and methods of cooking, for him it was a delight to know how "Good Food" is being defined through the rural urban exchange. He mentions that, forest produce in the form of roots, vegetables, fruits and nutritive leaves are traditional food savoured by all ages- elders, men & women and children in his village.

ANAJ KHOJ YOJNA, AVARD

YUVA- YOUTH FOR UNITY AND VOLUNTARY ACTION

"Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) is a non-profit development organisation committed to enabling vulnerable groups to access their rights. YUVA encourages the formation of people's collectives that engage in the discourse on development, thereby ensuring self-determined and sustained collective action in communities" YUVA gave way for the urban connect in the GFFA programme by connecting hawkers, and domestic workers group to the rural collectives. Anil Ingle, at Yuva, the GFFA project coordinator, talks about the GFFA programme- "a platform for partnership was created a year ago where several ideas and thoughts were shared. Listing was done and how can it be transported was the question, domestic workers also agreed to sell and supply to households. Community building program, seed exchange and cooking of traditional and wild foods was part of the gathering at Yuva. Food was cooked by different groups and identified". Farming Demonstrations- the visit to Osmanabad took place in the village of Asuguda, where SSP works with farming communities comprising of women farming entrepreneurs. Farming demonstration was done by women farmers for the urban group comprised of officials from Yuva and representatives from domestic workers community. This exchange was vital for the urban group to see how farming has been carried out for pulses like channa, toor daal, and grains like bajri, jowari, sesame, and sunflower. It was also mentioned that the exposure to growing multiple vegetables and greens like chillies, sweet potatoes, garlic, fruit trees and many other vegetable plants within a single farming area (1 acre model). At Yuva, the canteen which is run by Shakuntala Kale with Swati Kale, part of the Matrutwa, a people's collective, says she has the capacity to create a demand through the urban poor consumers which will require a supply of 50 kgs of pulses. Another people's group emerging from Yuva which will focus on the marketing of the GFFA supply is an organisation called Shrunkhala where Ashmita Sharma and Indumati Nirmal Kumar emphasise on the packaging and branding of the food produce.

SWAYAM SIKHSHAN PRAYOG, ANNA SURAKSHA (FOOD SECURITY)

At Swayam Sikhsha prayog, Osmanabad, Naseem Shaikh, the project coordinator said the focus of the GFFA programme through the Osmanabad collective (a group of women entrepreneurs) was scaling up nutritive value within the consumption of everyday food for urban groups in Mumbai where Yuva has the outreach.

Osmanabad and Latur, a drought prone region with low rainfall, has a thriving community of small and marginal farmers that are associated with SSP. Naseem mentions the success of 1 acre food security model by women farmers in a region in contrast to the commercial plantation of sugar cane and soy occupies a large area. The women entrepreneurs are taking measures for climate inclusive impacts on land and water.

In the picture below you will see Yogita Mane, Rekha Mane, Kishkinda Dokhe, Monisha Powar, Rupali Mane, Archana Mane, Rajyeshi Mane, Mandakini Mane, Pallavi Mane, Anusaya Mane. These women are leaders- they practice and advocate 'poison free food security ' through farming and marketing of their produce. The good food exchange has been vital, the women are ensuring food security and nutrition value of the food. The exchange also became a medium of sharing of the different foods that many were unaware of.

Parvati Shankar Vibhuti, part of SSP, tells that she came to know bamboo as a food item along tubers which are absent from her food culture but these foods are seasonal produce for communities at Ratnagiri and Karjat. While Parvati on the other hand has occupied multiple roles for her livelihood supporting the family and children's education.

1 acre model- Seema, who works at SSP, and has been leading the Good Food program with the Osmanabad collective explains the study that was conducted with the women farmer's group where health issues were studied. Through the study, low haemoglobin count within mothers and family members was revealed. "Majority of time and labour is dedicated at the field by women, while men join in during the time of weeding", says Seema.

Swayam Shikshan Prayog has enabled more than 60,000 rural women entrepreneurs to start businesses in high-social-impact sectors

1 ACRE FARMING WITH MIXED CROPPING

"We farm using bulls, and we had to mention why we don't use tractors to the GFFA partner groups. We have to practice mix cropping, through planting of varieties of seeds spaced out within a plot, and this method protects the plants from pests", shared the women from Osmanabad collective.

After the drought, one woman speaks about the leadership under SSP- "the one acre model is vital for our families". The surplus food grains and plants produced is marketed. The 1 acre model of farming has been an important shift from chemical farming to agro-ecological farming practice.

It required the women to bring about a transformation through the 1 acre model of farming and having the men agree and understand was a challenge. Cultivating 1 acre of soil area with food crops and vegetables, and applying agro-ecological methods of farming, the women farmers noticed an important shift in agriculture practice where chemical intensive inputs were completely given away with, and this brought about a saving of Rs.5000 to Rs.6000. The crops and vegetables planted within the one acre model of farming by the women gave way to nutritious and healthy plants for consumption with a surplus produce that could be sold in the market.

There are 15 women who are now part of the one acre model in the village of Ansurda, Osmanabad. The women are entrepreneurs, they have received training from SSP- soil testing and water testing was understood along with the use of natural pesticides made out of neem. The crop diversity has multiplied bringing nutritive food at the homes of the women, and the expenditure on pharma-medicines for health has diminished.

The requirement of food processing units such as the one in the photo where SSP provided Anusaya Mani with a food processor, where she can now make flour out of Jowar, is a help for food producers.

At the Ratnagiri collective, women mention the need for processing units for their produce. While, the Osmanabad collective is also looking into eco-friendly packaging out of cotton materials for the supply of their vital food products. The process of exchange of food products has been going on between SSP and YUVA where the demand for listed food items was received in the month of November 2017, mentions Naseem at SSP. The response from the project coordinators and the women from different collectives has brought food producers together to establish a supply chain for nutrition rich food and introduce new food items in dietary habits of the urban group. The seed exchange got the women to explore seed grains and include these grains within their farming system.

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