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## ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION THROUGH THE PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL PEOPLE ALONG WITH NGO: A STUDY OF GOKAWADI VILLAGE

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### Abstract

**Preamble:** Everyone needs to understand environmental problems because environment belongs to all. If environment belongs to everyone, then systematic study of the environment and solving the problems and role of every individual and group become important. Hence, researcher decided to study the role of people's participation in the area of environment conservation.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To study an environment conservation activity in Gokawadi village with NGO
2. To study the nature of people participation in the Gokawadi village.
3. To study the impact of people's participation approach on the village in the area of environment conservation.
4. To study the outcome of people's participation activity.

**Methodology:** The present study is based on primary and secondary data. The interview and questionnaire techniques were used for obtaining information from the villagers and office staff of the NGO whereas the secondary sources of data include annual reports, newspaper. The Paper opens with a brief information of Gokawadi village and Vanrai NGO. In the next part, after presenting briefly the nature of activities the researcher has explained the nature of people's participation of Gokawadi villagers in NGO's activity. In the next part the researcher has attempted analysis of the impact of these activities because of the people participation. In the last section the paper will throw light on the qualitative and quantitative changes in the Gokawadi village. articles etc.

**Finding:** People's participation in environmental conservation is the need of the hour.

**Keywords:** Environment Conservation, NGO. People Participation, Participation in Preplanning Stage, Participation in Implementation Stage.

### Introduction

The impact of environmental issues on human beings is very serious particularly in rural areas because of high illiteracy rate, excessive use of pesticides, their high dependency directly on natural resources for their livelihood and lack of knowledge about environment conservation. In Pune district several NGOs are working in the area of environment conservation. One of them is "Vanrai", an NGO working with local people in the rural area for the environmental conservation.

Participation is an indispensable ingredient of development process. The UN economic and Social Council has recommended that government should adopt popular participation as a basic policy measure in national development strategy and should encourage widest possible active participation of all individuals such as women and youth organization in the development process in setting goals, formulating policies and implementing plans (Commission for Social Development Report,1975; UN Document). The Balwant Rai Mehta committee observed, "Rural development and Rural welfare are possible only with local initiative and local direction in the ultimate it must be an instrument of expression of local people's will taking in view the local development" In Pune district researcher selected sample of "Vanrai" NGO for the study purpose because this NGO works with local people in the rural area for the environment conservation.

### Vanarai Trust

Dr. Mohan Dharia formed Vanrai organisation in 1982 it was registered under the Charitable Trust Act in 1986. Since 2006, it has been converted into Vanrai Foundation. Vanrai Foundation is now recognized as one of the major Voluntary Organisations at both the state and national level. With the involvement of people Vanarai has now become a peoples' movement for Integrated Rural Development, afforestation and ideal Environment.

Vanrai in Pune district is working with many villages such as Gokawadi at Bhore Taluka, Gawdewadi and Chandoli in Ambegaon, Taluka, and Devdi in Purandar Taluka Koinkarwadi in Khed Taluka.  
Gokawadi Village:



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Location - South of Bhor city at a distance of 6 kms on Bhor-Wai Road surrounded by Kalubai hills in Pune district of Maharashtra. It lies at the foot hills of mountain range of Western Ghats covered with natural forests. Vanarai started its work in this village in 1994.

### Activities regarding environment conservation in the Gokawadi village.

The researcher has observed that Vanarai, is engaged in soil, water and energy conservation activity in rural areas with participation of local people. NGO Vanarai has set up a full-fledged unit of vermin-compost with the help and financial assistance of Counsel People's Action and rural technology (CAPART) at village Gokawadi. Vanarai invented erection of Vanarai bunds using empty cement or fertilizer bags to be filled with or sand in the nallaha or revolute. This has to prove to be the most effective simple technology.

During survey in Gokawadi village, the researcher observed that women are very happy to follow the energy conservation techniques because the traditional chulhas are very wasteful and it produce a lot of smoke, soot and unburnt volatile organic matter, which not only blackens the pots and they pollute indoor air and adversely affect the health of the households.

Vanrai is engaged in tree plantations and developing nurseries, greening cities, hills, institutions, corporations, etc. A point to note is that Vanarai set up a nursery exclusively for women. It shows that participation of women in environment conservation is remarkable. Social forestry department for production of 50,000 saplings accorded a sanction for nursery. For this nursery, 30 women were selected for training and carrying out production of 50,000 saplings. Thus, love for afforestation, protection of environment and ecology was instilled in women. They undertook the work of kitchen and backyard garden. In monsoon nearly 2000 saplings were planted in backyard of Grampanchayat of Gokawadi through shramadan, as an implementation of the above scheme. Under the scheme of 'Adarsha Gaon' plantation was done on the bunds of agricultural land. This plantation helps soil and water conservation and there is development of wastelands through tree-based farming systems.

### Other activities

Vanrai stated that they are also engaged with local people in other activities such as recycling of domestic solid wastes and waste water; eco-friendly farming, promotion of decentralized nurseries, production and promotion of bio -fertilizers, vermiculture, nursery techniques, plant tissue culture.

Thus, NGO utilized the agriculture waste for day-to-day life of rural people, keep the nature clean, and help for the environment conservation.

### JFM Joint Forestry Management

Joint Forest Management (JFM) and model village schemes are designed to improve the quality of life of rural people by providing them with opportunities of growth and development and to build up village level institutions for protection of natural resources, with a view of attaining sustainable development. To achieve these objectives, rural communities have to imbibe certain basic disciplines and change their attitude and behaviours with respect to natural resources. Special attention of forest protection committee coupled with self-imposed disciplines of ban on axe and stall-feeding practice for cattle adapted by the villages. In accordance with provisions of JFM scheme, a micro-plan is prepared jointly i.e. Forest Department official and Gokawadie's villagers. The duration of plan is 30 years commencing from 1997-98. It covers various aspects like resource base of village and infrastructure status developmental needs. This work resulted into afforestation and soil and moisture conservation, income generating short term, long-term benefits. The forest department initially gave Rs.1 lakh towards people's participation... The Gokawadie's gramasabha approved purchase of utensils, pendal material, loudspeaker, sintex tanks etc from these funds. These materials are given on hire and proceeds are deposited in account of FPC. It provides adequate employment and income to the participating families during the gestation period of the project. The income reaches a level to ensure a high standard of living for the participating families of Gokawadi.

### Awareness generation activity of NGOs regarding environmental conservation.

#### Training camps/Seminars/workshops.

Vanrai has organized training camps workshops in the Gokawadi village. Local people are encouraged to participate in the training programmes. Other awareness generation ways being followed are campaigning, exhibitions, lectures on environment-friendly rural technologies etc.



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Villagers also participated in study tour which was organized by NGO Vanrai to Mahatma Phule Agriculture University, Rahuri and Ralegaon Siddhi, which is developed by a well-known social worker Shri Anna Hazare. This study tour and Gramasabha meetings made people aware about their dependency on nature and importance of nature in their lives and aware about their environment potential of their village such as hilly area, forest etc. They also became aware about environmental issues, natural resources and limitations of the resources. The people realized how to solve the environment related problems and understand how they could preserve natural resources and thereby the beauty of their village. This study tour and meeting of Gramasabha helped to build a strong confidence amongst people that they could solve their problems and protect their natural surroundings.

NGO also arranges public meetings from time to time. This gives an opportunity for both NGO and local people for face-to face interaction. The frequent public meetings help Vanrai to a great extent in establishing a good rapport with the local people and this contact generates a great deal of enthusiasm among people to get involved in various activities undertaken by Vanrai.

Vanrai has organized rallies at village on various environment conservational issues with the help of school students and common people and have contributed in organizing people.

**Nature of People’s participation in Gokawadi Village.**

People’s participation is the direct involvement of people at various levels in the programme such as pre planning, planning, decision making, implementing, monitoring and evaluating. Such involvement integrates peoples experience, knowledge and commitment to the development process and improves its effectiveness. World Bank defines community participation as an active process by which beneficiary/client groups influence the direction and execution of development projects with a view to enhancing their well-being terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance and other values, which they cherish

In this section, data were obtained from villagers regarding the stages at which their participation existed in the programmes. In the present study, data were collected from two types of beneficiaries, one who were involved in field type of activity such as bandhara building etc. These results are shown in Table.1 Second types of beneficiaries were those, who were involved in awareness generation activity such as seminar, workshop etc. and data are shown in Table2.

**Participation in Programme: In fieldwork and awareness generated activity (Class room activity)**

Table no 1

Participation	Field work type of activity			Awareness generated activity		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Preplanning	20 (13.3%)	130 (86.67%)	150	10 (6.6%)	140 (93.33%)	150
Planning	32 (21.33%)	118 (78.67%)	150	32(21.33%)	118(78.67%)	150
Implementation	130 (86.67%)	20(13.3%)	150	130 (86.67%)	20(13.3%)	150
Evaluation	10(6.6 %)	140 (93.33%)	150	20(13.3%)	130(13.3%)	150

**Participation in preplanning stage**

Participation in preplanning stage means that people participate in gramsabha, study tours, surveys and meetings organized by NGO. The study reveals that about 19.9 percent (out of 300) the NGOs have obtained suggestions and ideas from people before initiating a project. They have gathered information and suggestions about the feasibility of the project from the local sources. The data shows that, only 13.3 percent participated in fieldwork activity. At the time of survey, villagers stated that sometimes NGOs organized a meeting only for grampanchayat members. They called gramsabha but not all villagers attended that meeting. The researcher observed that in preplanning stage NGOs organized a grand function or exhibition to build rapport with villagers.

The villagers gave specific information regarding their village. With this information, NGO staff made suitable programme for the village. For example, when NGO wanted to work on water and soil conservation issues, villagers showed the locations related to this area. The researcher observed that sometimes-local political influence was seen for the selection of the area for nala building etc. However, the researcher found that at time of gramsabha villagers talked about their economic problems. Hence, they are mostly interested in income generation activity; if the conservation related activity improved their crop quality and quantity, then they happily participate in the NGO’s activity.



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Before planning the projects NGO take a detailed of the watershed for planning soil and water conservation measures and do analysis of the priority needs of the community through the household level socio-economic survey hydrological and geo-hydrological surveys. The researcher observed that people participate in preplanning stage in rural area for showing the location for the soil and water conservation activity, household surveys, etc.

It means people participation in preplanning level is a giving and taking information regarding environment conservation programme they give the suggestion and ideas also. Hence, the role of beneficiaries in preplanning stage for the NGO is as helper for providing information of the village.

### Participation in planning levels

Planning consists of the following components for environment conservation. Planning for water resource development, land classification, documentation of the existing cropping pattern and planning for appropriate cropping system based on the land productivity, using locally available inputs and indigenous knowledge. Planning for off- farm activities by studying the local resources, indigenous skills, availability of inputs, market availability, infrastructure support, and special equipment required for alternate cropping patterns and processing of the produce. In this way detailed planning for environment conservation of the particular village, area, etc is done. Planning for educational activity consists topic of the seminar, resource persons, success of the seminar and workshop.

Study shows that only 21.3 percent participate in planning levels in field work types of activities. Thus, participation of beneficiaries is very low in the field work type of activities in rural area regarding environment conservation issues.

### Participation in implementation levels

Participation in implementation levels means active participation in various projects, activities carried by NGOs. Beneficiaries participate awareness gendered activity such as Krisha mela, Vanamohatsav, animal and human health check-up camp, wall painting and also making projects, Shramadan etc It is observed that majority (86.6 per cent) of the respondents to involved in the course of project implementation

In NGO's development activity, shramadan is an important concept, which the village people must contribute towards successful implementation of the project this brings about the active participation of the village people in making bunds, plantation and other activities.

The study shows that in the awareness generated activity participation of beneficiaries is at the implementation level as a listener, as a student. The researcher observed that participant intellectually participated in the seminars or workshops i.e. they actively participated in question- answer sessions, through discussions, making some suggestions etc.

### Participation in Evaluation.

It is observed that only 6.3 percent in rural area beneficiaries participated at evaluation level. The study shows that in rural area the rate of participation at evaluation stage is low. The researcher observed that in the class room activity NGOs give feedback form to the participants and participants filled up the forms very sincerely. It means in classroom activities; beneficiaries participate in the evaluation stage.

In the present study, it is revealed that over (24 percent) of the beneficiaries did not report participation at any stage in the programmes while the maximum participation (86.67percent) was reported at the implementation stage and the minimum at evaluation stage (6.3 per cent).

### Participation in project maintenance.

The real success of a project lies in its maintenance. After the completion of project, it needs to be sustained. The follow –up stage becomes very crucial as far as project impact is concerned. Therefore, the NGO emphasize proper maintenance of the projects that involve people in capacity –building. Various popular bodies such as Self –Help Groups, forest protection committees, pani panchayats, etc have been set up by the NGO to look after the projects after their withdrawal from the area. The NGO staffs also visits regularly to the project's sites. The study shows that NGO have taken the help of local people to maintain their projects.



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### Desired Level of participation of beneficiaries

It may be seen that over 90 per cent of the beneficiaries desired participation in the programmes right at the preplanning and implementation stages and also in the form of the desired level of participation in all areas was observed to be considerably higher than the actual level, thus it is an indicator to the NGO to increase beneficiaries' participation in their activities.

The figures reveal that beneficiary participation in each of these categories was rather low. During field visits, the investigator observed that the quality of participation was rather poor and the involvement of beneficiaries was primarily confined to receiving benefits from the programmes. About 62 per cent of the beneficiaries studied had not obtained the desirable degree of participation in the development programmes initiated and implemented for them. Apart from sharing the benefits of the programmes, the two principal forms of participation, the beneficiaries indicated a rather high level of participation that they desired.

### Type of participation in NGOs programme

The four common forms of beneficiary's participation were reported to be, discussing problems with the NGO, attending meeting of the organization, giving suggestions and assisting the organization in some manner. The beneficiaries' type of participation tabulated in table no2

Table No 2

Type of participation	Yes	No	Total
Discussion	150(50%)	150(50%)	300
Attend the meetings and do give suggestions	140 (47%)	160(53%)	300
Help with any possible ways	150(50%)	150(50%)	300

It was observed that at time of gramshbha or preplanning stage, 47 percent people gave suggestions. NGO organized the environmental conservation related seminar but because of the shyness or the lack of confidence, rural participants cannot speak in meeting or women cannot discuss in common meetings where males are also present.

### Impact of People 's participation

The researcher asked about effects of People 's participation at that, time beneficiaries' talked about their various experiences. All people said that they understand the importance of the common efforts, active participation for village development programme and always look for plantation, new information and knowledge about environmental conservation. Almost all (90 %) the beneficiaries stated that they were aware about environmental conservation and understand the importance of plantation, organic farming, maintaining SHGs and cleanliness in the surrounding area. Majority 60 percent told that they changed the view towards environmental conservation and they understood the new schemes regarding environment conservations and advanced agricultural techniques. (40 %) 120 beneficiaries reported that they became bold and acquired confidence to discuss in meetings. 150 (50 %) beneficiaries reported that now they came to know that yet many efforts are needed for the development of their surrounding area. Majority (60 %) beneficiaries said that concepts of environment conservation, garbage management are clear now. 35 percent reported change in lifestyle and goals. Villagers of the Gokawadi reported that they inspired for charai bandi,( Ban on grazing ) and kurhad bandi,( Ban on ax )because this maintains greenery and beauty of their village. 70 percent people said that they learnt methods of environmental conservation, started to love nature and accepted that they are students regarding environmental conservation issues. Thus, NGO's activity inspired people to work with unity and observed the positive impact on lifestyle and thoughts of beneficiaries, realization of reality and to get moral direction.

### Effect of People's participation on surrounding area

Villagers stated that due the efforts of local people and NGO, barren land become fertile, surroundings became green, farms became more productive, there was increase in production of paddy, increase in water level, increase income through farming, villagers came to know advanced farming, construction of toilets and gobar gas plants, plantation in the farms and there was increased awareness regarding environment conservation activity. Majority (70%) of Gokawadi village people reported that people started visiting their village and their village, experienced peace. All people became literate and self-dependant, more than half of the persons' stated that villages are inspired for networking, garbage management, less use of plastic, use of water as per need village and guide youth population, conservation of vegetation etc. 60 percent Gokawadi villagers mentioned that due to participation in NGO's activity our village becomes greener now there is ban on plastic; there is cleanliness in the surrounding areas.



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Thus, Villagers and NGO's work had positive effects on surrounding, they work with a holistic view on development of their target area. Due to the efforts of NGO's and local participants, surrounding area a green. Gokawadi villagers stated that their village became ideal.

70 percent villagers stated that all villagers support charai bandi,( Ban on grazing ) kurad bandi hence increased forestland, village became more green and beautiful.70 percent villagers of Gokawadi reported that each home is benefited with gobar gas, constructions of toilets, etc and these things become helpful for the cleanliness of the village and village become ideal. With the help of villagers Vanarai NGO constructed hall for training and other type of indoor activity. Hence, Gokawadi village has commonplace for organizing meeting etc. Majority (90 %) people told that now village is united for developmental activities, majority 60 percent villagers said that people from other villages visited their village.

Another important thing is that this unity of the villager's work has control on NGO.

Villagers of Gokawadi stated that Because of the JFM there are more indirect benefits, they are related to environment in which they live. These indirect benefits are of lasting nature and are accruable for common good e.g. soil and water conservation works. Forest is situated on mountain slopes in east of Gokawadi village. The rain during rainy season is very heavy causing erosion. Now, there are adequate size water absorption trenches (size 60x30 cm). The village agricultural lands are adjoining to forests. In the forest area, CCT works, water absorption trenches and afforestation works ensures absorption of rain water. These measures of water conservation ensure adequate water in village wells to enable farmers of village to Gokawadi undertake irrigated farming. Various benefits resulted from mixed plantation such as grass from reserve forest, fuel wood from collection of twigs from natural forest. With enrichment of forests resulting from proper care and protection, bio-diversity would also improve considerably. The villagers have reported increased in wildlife like deer, rabbits, wild bear, peacocks, etc.

Gokawadi villagers now understand the real meaning of wildlife. Earlier they thought only tiger, lion, or elephant as wildlife. Now they are aware about plants, smaller animals, and microbe's etc. i.e. holistic approach towards wildlife increased.

Gawadewadi is one of such villages where Vanarai 's initiative and people's participation have led to winning 'Indira Priyadarshani Vrukshamitra Award by the central Government in 1994 -95. The attempt has been made to show how the experiment of people's participation has led. Gawadewadi village from drought prone to green village, by the principle of optimum utilization of water and land.

The sarpanch and deputy sarpanch of village, Gawadewadi in Pune district was felicitated by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for their outstanding Contribution to rural uplift that have led to reverse migration. This village has taken up several successful activities to attract reverse migration. Activities taken up in this village includes afforestation, soil and water conservation through scientific watershed management, dairy development, horticulture, vermiculture, total literacy, no uncontrolled grazing, no illegal cutting of trees, no alcohol, family planning etc.

There is increased people participation. The schoolchildren are aware about various things related to environmental conservation. Thus, people's participation and NGO's work had positive effects on surrounding, they work with a holistic view on development of their target area. Due to the efforts of NGO and local participants, surrounding area a green.

With the help of villagers Vanarai NGO constructed hall for training and other type of indoor activity. Hence, Gokawadi village has commonplace for organizing meeting etc. Majority (90 %) people told that now village is united for developmental activities. Because of the participation of people and with the help of NGO villagers understood the importance of the common efforts, importance of environmental conservation activity and also the rate of the income generating activity has increased.

### Findings

1. Gokawadi, villagers consider the environment in its totality (natural, artificial, technological, social, economic, political, cultural, historical, and aesthetic)
2. Gokawadi Villager's actively participate in prevention and solution to environmental problems.
3. Villagers feel that they have a role in planning and provide an opportunity for making decisions and accepting their consequences.



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4. Usage of non-conventional energy sources such as of smokeless chulha, gobar gas has increased and hence this avoids the use of fuel wood. This results in decreased women's health hazards and increased health awareness.
5. Use of vermicompost, awareness about animal health is increased in Gokawadi villages. Villagers have organized Vanamahastav regularly.
6. All the people of the village were involved in various activities. Women were participating in making of plant nursery and other people were involved in making bunds and other conservative activity.

## Conclusion

The participation of people and with the help of NGO, village become green, clean, and ideal. Villagers understood the importance of the common efforts, importance of environmental conservation activity and also the rate of the income generating activity has increased. The researcher found that activities of NGO and people's participation regarding soil, water and energy conservation are very useful for the villagers in Gokawadi. With the help of government and NGO, local participants make great efforts in the area of environment conservation. Hence, the role of People's participation regarding fieldwork activity as well as awareness generation activity of soil and water, energy conservation, as planner, as implementer, as initiator is very important. The attempt has been made to show how the experiment of people's participation has led Gawadewadi village from drought prone to green village, by Thus, a People's participatory approach to environment conservation is the need of the hour. People's participation is a necessary pre-condition for the success of any programme

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