

SETU – Bridging Gaps

1.1 Introduction

Unbalanced regional development is one of the major challenges of India, the fastest growing major economy of the world. However regional development cannot be the responsibility solely of Government or Policy makers. Individuals and organizations can contribute in different ways. Understanding need of time, PTVAIM's Centre of Entrepreneurship & Innovation, an incubation center run by a management institute and Learning Space Foundation, a non profit organization that strives hard to improve quality of life of adivasi community are coming forward to undertake a joint project 'SETU – Bridging Gaps'. The project is for adivasi villages of the Tansa River Valley situated at Thane, (the outskirts of Mumbai). Primary objective of the project is skill and entrepreneurship development among rural youth through sustainable agro-based activities. Secondary objective is to create a model of regional development that can be replicated at different places.

PTVAIM's Centre of Entrepreneurship & Innovation (COEI): Centre of Entrepreneurship and Innovation; started in academic year 2015-16; is the Incubation Centre of Parle Tilak Vidyalaya Association's Institute of Management. The dual role that this centre plays is to incubate promising business ideas predominantly of student community and help them translate first into a business and then help them launch. COEI also aims to develop entrepreneurial skills among youth of society.

Learning Space Foundation (LSF): a Public Charitable Trust, founded in 2006, has served the villages of the Tansa River Valley with many game changers in the field of education. LSF has been developing keen interest to draw attention of the local communities towards the environment, with a specific focus on co-existing with animal and plant life in villages and in nature (relating to the areas of forest land). This interest has been kindled over the last few years, when many of the team members have witnessed the need for doing some active intervention in the sphere of children & adults perception and attitude towards animal and plant life.

Both entities are joining hands, for locating knowledge, skill and opportunity gaps due which adivasis of the area are leading low quality life and often adivasi youth is uprooted and forced to



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shift to urban areas in search of jobs and better quality of life. Through different joint activities under project 'SETU', both entities will strive hard to bridge these gaps forever.

1.2 Current Status Assessment, Gap Analysis and probable solutions

- 1) There are around 700 families (5570 persons) living in the 10 km. radius area from LSF Center. Farming is the main occupation of 80% families which mainly happens during monsoon. Very few farmers take summer crop that too are mainly vegetables.

It is Tansa River Valley area that gets good amount of rains. **Better water management is most needed.** Well water is the only source of water for these villages and it is not sustainable. Stored water option needs to be exploited.

- 2) The villages have considerably good amount of farm land, however **due to lack of knowledge regarding farming technologies/practices, water management and marketing**, farming is not commercially viable. Doddhade farm of 4 acres is unable to support a family of 8 members. It is observed that advasi youth is compelled to go out of village in search of job though sufficient natural resources are available, people do not have skills to use those resources for their benefit.

This gap can be bridged if the villagers get connected with natural farming experts, experts in the area of water management, wet waste & input management as well as dairy farming. All these activities are complementary to each other. A well designed natural farm becomes destination for Eco-tourism. All activities taken together, the farms will become not only self sufficient but also profitable.

- 3) Adivasis belong to 'Warli' community, whose "warli" art is famous among urbanites and can fetch good financial returns. However these artists are unable to reach to such customers who would be ready to pay them well.

So connectivity between rural artisans and urban customers need to be established by creating a market base in urban areas for rural handicraft items. What is needed is expert advice and hand holding in the areas of branding, physical as well as digital marketing. Rural youth can get trained and engaged in these areas. Well developed market base will be beneficial for all occupations of the villages, be it agricultural produce, handicraft items or agro-based food products.



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- 4) Each village has approx. 7 to 10 women self help groups. Each self-help group has 15 to 20 women. Majority women are less educated or illiterate. Every month each group saves around Rs. 2000-3000. They get loan as business capital, however none of the self help group could get engaged in sustainable business activity. There are self help groups of men too. SO villages has huge amount of untapped human resource. It has remaining untapped due to lack of specific skills, ideas and strong urban market base.

By tapping skill sets already existing as well as providing training for new skills, these men and women can be involved in agro processing as well as handicraft units. If the produce gets marketed well, it will enhance income of each family of these villages.

1.3 Feasibility Assessment of the Concept

Ideas that look good and brighter on paper always have risk of ‘remaining good’ only on paper if they are not implemented effectively. So practical feasibility of the idea need to be tested.

However if project SETU is implemented jointly by two like minded entities, the project becomes self sustainable.

PTVAIM’s incubation center, COEI has access to experts from diverse fields like farm designing, farming, branding, marketing, financial planning & technology. COEI can bring these experts to the project. At the same COEI being a part of Parle Tilak Vidyalaya Association, has access to a large pool of young urban college students getting trained in different areas like, research, finance, marketing, HR. These group of students under the supervision of different experts will work with rural students and get enegaged in joint market research, branding, logistics management and develop market for agro-based products and handicraft items made by villagers.

Learning Space Foundation has strong foothold in the entire Tansa River Valley area for more than 12 years. They have built strong good will among adivasi villagers by doing huge work in the space of skill development and education of localities. They already have started project ‘JeevaMitra’ where school children are training in the area of kitchen gardening. They had been



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connecting rural population with urban through various activities and have large group of motivated adivasi youth who would take interest in different entrepreneurial activities.

If COEI gets connected with LSF, the gaps between urban and rural youth, producers and consumers, resource availability and utilization will be bridged effectively.

1.4 Road Map of the project

‘SETU’ will be planned and executed jointly by PTVAIM’s Centre of Entrepreneurship & Innovation (COEI) and Learning Space Foundation (LSF). Dr. Sucheta Pawar, head of COEI and Mr. Nitin Orayan, founder of LSF will be project heads. There will be many other partners in the project, working in different areas like, wet waste management, water management, dairy farming, logistics management etc. Entire project will be subdivided in different areas and departments, with its own head and a small team of rural and urban youths and students will be working together.

COEI will be bringing, research, farm designing, farming, skill development, branding, marketing and logistics management experts to the project and also will train urban as well as rural youth in these areas. COEI will start experimental marketing of rural products at Vile Parle east in the first phase and later help rural youth to expand the market further.

LSF will be engaged in starting and supervising dairy farm, water management, waste management projects. At the same it will bring adivasis together for this project and also will be supervising their work.

Huge amount of fund will be required to be invested in this project. Both COEI and LSF will be involved in fund raising activities.

The time line of the project is three years, divided into three phases.

Phase –wise division of the project

Phase I

Will involve two activities –

- 1) **Ecological activities** - where Daddhade Farm will be the base of the activities which already has animal shelter. The land will be used in creating food forest and start eco



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–tourism activities. One part of the farm will be used to create dairy farm. Doddhade farm will be a model farm where farmers , research can come and learn.

- 2) **Skill and Entrepreneurship Development** – The activity will start from survey of male and female members of self help groups of three villages – Doddhade, Gorad and . Through the survey level of unemployment and underemployment will be located, financial need to the people will be analyzed. The survey further targets to find out existing as well as required skill sets to start food processing and handicraft units which will have B to B as well as B to C business.

On the basis of situation analysis, micro units will be planned, brand will be created, logistics will be worked out and these products will be marketed at Vile Parle east to start with and later in neighboring areas of Vile Parle.

Phase I may take one and half year approximately.

Phase II

- 1) Back yards and other farms of villages will be designed by trained students of the villages and more farms will get converted into food forest
- 2) Micro units will start processing chemical free food grown in the villages and another product line of chemical free food will be brought in the market. Phase two will be bringing more villages under its umbrella and will also start getting economies of scale and thus can launch the brand into more competitive markets.

Phase II may take one year.

Phase III – Exit stage

Learning of first two phases will be aggregated, business models will be revised and in this phase, experts will majorly have supervisory role to play and will be assessing how far the project is sustainable. More training may be given in case the need is found. Entire project will be handed over to the villages and COEI and LSF will exit the project.

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