Imprints of Ecological Footprints ...
A compilation of Ecologically Sensible Good Practices

IFHD

WASSAN
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Aug 2016

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I am very happy to present "Imprints of Ecological Footprints .... A compilation of Ecologically Sensible Good Practices".

I take this opportunity to thank all organizations and individuals who contributed to the process of documenting these good practices. They were kind to frankly share with us their experiences, thoughts, challenges and achievements. They also shared relevant data to substantiate any critical point from their experiences. Some of them even prepared the first drafts of these case studies. They also revised them, based on our feedback. All the organizations/individuals happily gave consent for publishing these case studies and using them for learning purposes under "Leaders for Nature" program of IFHD, IUCN, CII, Hivos and Wild Life Trust of India. The entire process of producing this compilation was an enriching and fruitful experience. It is also a humbling experience for us to learn several lessons from these interactions and visits to several villages/sites. We genuinely believe that this compilation truly enriches the learning processes of "Leaders for Nature" program.

The Writeshop was one of the important events of this process. We got guidance and feedback on the '0' drafts from the participants of the writeshop. This was useful in refining the initial drafts. The participants of writeshop also made important suggestions on the presentation and utility of these case studies. From their busy schedules, they spared few days for refining these case studies, which is a very kind gesture. I thank everyone who participated in the writeshop. Their inputs are invaluable.

I thank Ms. Aruna Rangachar Pohl, IFHD for having faith in WASSAN and entrusting us the responsibility of compiling these case studies. She is an active team member at all critical stages of the project and guided us on choice of case studies, structure/framework, presentation, etc. The partnership with IFHD is really cherished by all of us, at WASSAN.
I also thank the family of artists of Cheriyal - Shri D Vaikuntam, Mrs D Vanaja, Mr D Vinay and D Rakesh, who visualized these experiences in their own unique style.

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MV Rama Chandrudu

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Foreword

It is almost three decades back, the threats to "Our Common Future" were formally identified and deliberations started gaining more steam and support from governments too... (Our Common Future, Gro Harlem Brundtland, 1987). Climate Change and its implications were also slowly getting recognized during this period. The need for "producing more with less" was also part of this thinking process, as a means to address the challenges of the future. Over a period of time, the world witnessed more economic distress, unemployment, political turmoil and ecological disasters across different countries and regions of world. Those early predictions seemed to be less threatening than the current reality. The global gloom got predictable companions - unscrupulous industrial growth, irresponsible urbanization, careless global politics, dishonest governments, self-centric citizenship, which tried to glorify the current trends as achievements and inevitable solutions.

In the middle of such despair and misery, there is a hope. "Imprints of Ecological Footprints - A Compilation of Ecologically Sensible Good Practices" is a compendium of good practices that brings the efforts made by relentless civil society organizations, citizens and community based organizations, to change the direction of this trend. These experiences bring cheer and hope in the lives of thousands of rural, tribal and urban citizens in India, who are part of these experiences. They were able to take a different path that is less travelled and troublesome. There were several challenges, at each step and milestone. But they continued their journey and proved that "producing more with less" is possible. They also ensured that the ecological and environmentally sustainable processes are feasible for improving economic standards and quality of life of poor communities.

These case studies give a hope and confidence that we can face the cruel world and transform the same into a comfortable place for all - including endangered species, poor and marginalized communities. While Corporate Social Responsibility is gaining more support
from governments, corporate agencies and development agencies, these experiences provide guidance and help them to think about alternatives. These experiences help the willing and discerning development agencies and investors in social change, to transcend the mundane "photo stories" of majority of current CSR interventions. They provide an array of options, strategies and ideas that proved themselves in different parts of the country.

I thank all the organizations and agencies who shared their stories - highs and lows of it, with us frankly and completely. I thank them for providing leadership on the chosen theme - promoting biodiversity; conservation and governance of natural resources; promoting ecologically sensitive production processes; enhancing livelihoods by developing environmentally harmonious economic models and several others. These experiences are invaluable and are certainly useful for provoking thoughts in the minds of participants of "Leaders for Nature" programs, which are jointly organized by IFHD, IUCN, CII, Wild Life Trust of India, HIVOS and other like-minded organizations. I thank WASSAN for producing this compilation of case studies and supporting us in this endeavor.

Aruna Rangachar Pohl
IFHD, Bengaluru
Aug 2016
Imprints of Ecological Footprints...
A first step into the wild....

That innocent panda captured the imagination of the world for generations together... You feel that this innocent panda is questioning you about your position on conservation of nature and promoting biodiversity. Since decades, this panda is sensitizing the world about the importance of conservation and ecological balance in the survival of the planet earth. It also challenges the governments, people’s representatives, industries, traders, farmers and urban citizens about their own role in sustaining life and co-existence of human beings with other forms of life - wild flora, fauna and natural resources....

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), symbolized by Giant Panda, is synonymous with knowledge, commitment and concern for conservation of nature and promoting biodiversity. The main mission of the organization is to conserve the world’s biological diversity; ensure that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable and promote the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. This agency is able to unite the world on issues related to conservation and biodiversity and demonstrate processes that could ensure sustainable life. Though WWF is a global organization, it
has several regional/country offices that focus attention on local issues, with a global perspective. WWF-India was established as a Charitable Trust on 27 November 1969 to ensure that India's wildlife and natural habitats are conserved. As a constructive and science-based organization, WWF-India, in alignment with its parent WWF's principles, addresses issues such as species and habitat survival, climate change and environmental education. The organization has broadened its viewpoint over the years to reflect a more holistic understanding of conservation issues in India. WWF-India's Hyderabad office is responsible for both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states.

With growing population and economic development, there is always a tension between economic development and ecological well-being. The challenges for a developing country like India are more pronounced as a large section of population is very poor. It is interesting to find out how WWF Hyderabad is able to contribute to various aspects of conservation and biodiversity, as a knowledge based organization. This particular story highlights the partnerships between WWF, governments and corporate agencies in pursuing a common goal - conservation and biodiversity. These experiences highlight the processes followed, achievements and challenges on the path of conservation of biological resources and promoting biodiversity.

To advance its mission, WWF-Hyderabad collaborates closely with individuals and institutions across various sectors of society, including corporate organizations (e.g., multinational corporations, public sector units, financial institutions, and businesses) and the governments. Some of these partnerships provided path breaking knowledge products/outputs on issues related to conservation and biodiversity.
Converting Tourism into Eco-Tourism and Responsible Tourism - Araku Valley and Nallamala Forests.....

The beautiful Araku Valley and Nallamala forests always attracted the tourists for its serene natural beauty and enjoyable climate. These places are also rich in biodiversity and wildlife. A common tourist is generally oblivious of these important dimensions... Till 2009, the tourism sector also ignored this. However, the partnership between WWF and AP Tourism Development Corporation changed this. Knowledge products with specific focus on biodiversity and wildlife were to be developed for these two locations. For WWF this was a golden

Araku Valley, a serene beauty...

The Araku Valley, spread over 36 sq. km within the Eastern Ghats in Visakhapatnam District, is a hilly and forested region rising over 3000 feet above mean sea level. Receiving heavy rainfall annually, the valley forms the source of the River Gosthani. Araku Valley is also home to 19 hill tribes, including the Valmiki, Bagata, Khond and Rotia, known for their unique culture and folk dances.

Nallamala, deep dark forests...

The Nallamala Hills comprise a large section of the South-Eastern Ghats, stretching over Kurnool, Mahabubnagar, Guntur, Prakasam, and Kadapa districts. Reaching an average elevation of about 1700 feet, they consist of a continuous range of unbroken, rugged, and steep hills. These include deep and narrow valleys rich in natural springs and wildlife; and dry, deciduous forests. The area has several wild life sanctuaries - Nagarjunsagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve, Gundla Brahmeshwaram Wildlife Sanctuary and Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary. The Nallamalas are home to the forest-dwelling hunter-gatherer Chenchu tribe, which has mostly remained disconnected from modern society.

A first step into the wild....
opportunity to expand the horizons of knowledge on biodiversity. Though local population is sparse in these localities, the human interface with nature is very high due to heavy inflow of tourists. It is also an opportunity to educate them on importance of conserving wildlife and increase their awareness on issues related to conservation. APTDC and WWF Hyderabad felt that the literature on the biodiversity would effectively bring rich floral and faunal diversity of these places to public attention, thus helping in conservation.

"Guidebooks" on these two regions, covering various aspects were to be developed. Focus was also on promoting ecotourism to spread awareness on nature. WWF Hyderabad also looked to stimulate an interest in wildlife in the context of forest degradation, human intrusion into the wilderness, and the danger of extinction/ extermination of plant and animal species.

WWF Hyderabad deployed expert biologists to conduct field studies in Araku Valley and Nallamala Hills and the rich diversity of plant and animal species was compiled. For three seasons, the biologists collected primary and secondary data from sample areas and cross-checked it with secondary data from earlier investigations. Ultimately final checklists were prepared. The biologists faced challenges in conducting the field research due to the dangerous terrain. These studies also aimed to highlight the importance of Araku Valley's biodiversity for tourists and amateur naturalists.

These studies resulted in the first-ever published guidebooks on specific wildlife areas of AP. These tourist guidebooks, each about 200 pages, serve as comprehensive biodiversity field identification guides for a wide range of audience, from eco-tourists to amateur naturalists. The guidebooks include
a pictorial field identification key to plant/animal species of Araku Valley and the Nallamala Hills. Real photographs were used along with interesting design/illustrations developed by a team of experienced wildlife artists. The "identification key", with icons of the species, describes size, plumage, coloration, feeding habits, breeding ecology, distribution, and special characteristics. The guidebooks also indicate the most likely seasons and areas within Araku Valley and the Nallamala Hills for locating the plant/animal species.

While hill stations and forests have inherent natural resources including wildlife, what about urban localities? Is there any biodiversity in the middle of a sprawling city like Hyderabad? Can cities also engage in biodiversity and conservation? The answer is "Yes", for WWF. WWF, Hyderabad demonstrated this by developing "Campus Biodiversity Inventory and Interpretation" for Indian Immunologicals Ltd (IIL) campus in Hyderabad city.

IIL, located in northwest part, was established in a sprawling 30-sq. km campus to protect Hyderabad's unique natural wealth. Its climate is semi-arid and features boulders and hillocks interspersed with flat lands, which are typical to the Deccan Plateau. Though the hillocks are slowly being removed to allow for new construction, the IIL campus is a conservation zone. It serves as a good representative and has potentiality to support high biological diversity. But, how to understand this biodiversity in an urban context? How to interpret it? These questions are to be answered if one has to conserve and protect such oases of rich biodiversity in urban regions. WWF Hyderabad took up this challenge of developing biodiversity inventory and interpretation of IIL's campus. The IIL campus exemplifies excellent biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management within
urban areas. However, a complete inventory of its floral and faunal diversity was not taken up until this initiative in 2015.

WWF Hyderabad and a group of consultants conducted the study using floral and faunal sampling procedures. While studying birds and mammals, for example, they conducted 'distance sampling' using transects, a widely used method for estimating animal density or abundance. The team compiled the data into a comprehensive scientific report with a complete inventory of the campus' floral and faunal species to serve as a baseline for future studies and research papers. The team also developed a comprehensive field guide describing the campus' biological wealth/hotspots. IIL involved its employees during the study and awareness activities.

This initiative is unique in several ways. Apart from the comprehensive field guide, it also provided management options, strategies and guidelines for conserving the biodiversity of the campus. It also improved the awareness and sensitivity of employees on the need for conservation and biodiversity. It helped in identifying potential threats to the biodiversity of the campus.

During 2013-15, WWF Hyderabad conducted similar study on Godrej Vikhroli Campus along with CII-GBC and developed an interesting tool for measuring biodiversity of urban localities - "City Biodiversity Index". Large share of world's population currently lives in cities. This percentage is expected to rise at an unprecedented rate in the next few years and biodiversity would also be threatened. This poses significant consequences for ecosystem services, thus requiring interventions at the local level.

The City Biodiversity Index was the first of its kind to measure cities' biodiversity conservation efforts in India. It would serve as a self-assessment monitoring tool to assess changes in biodiversity over the years. The model

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developed in Singapore was contextualized for India. The index consists of scores calculated for 23 indicators in two 'components' measuring various aspects of biodiversity. WWF-India collected/analyzed data from the Godrej Vikhroli Campus for eight indicators and provided indirect support for the rest. Based on this, scores (0-4 points) were assigned for each indicator. Such tools could be meaningful in assessing the health of urban localities on biodiversity and eventually help them to develop necessary action plans for improving the biodiversity. The Godrej Vikhroli campus revealed the following potentials of this tool:

- Provide a baseline on biodiversity
- Enable the citizens and local governments to actively improve its score and monitor improvements, resulting in an improved urban environment
- Plan for more sustainable future development
- Enable mainstreaming biodiversity into day-to-day activities of citizens/municipalities and promote environmental conservation

Our urban institutions (industries, academic institutions and homes) and citizens seem to be constantly "extracting" resources from oceans, forests, deserts and rural areas, without giving anything back to nature. While perpetuating this exploitative life style and growth processes, these urban localities also "preach" rural and tribal citizens on importance of conservation and biodiversity. Cities like Hyderabad have several industries and campuses of academic institutions (universities, collages, research institutions, central and state government officers and others). However, they do not even know the status of biodiversity in their campuses and do not really care for conserving the same.

A first step into the wild....
Given this background and general apathy, efforts made by WWF Hyderabad for Araku valley, Nallamala forests, IIL campus and Godrej Vikhroli Campus are to be appreciated. WWF Hyderabad made systematic efforts to document local biodiversity reserves and developed base lines. It also contextualized existing tools such as City Biodiversity Index, for planning for improvement and monitoring the change. These are important first steps to overcome this ignorance of one's surroundings in urban localities. Urban citizens, industrial groups, government agencies and Institutions of knowledge in urban areas could pick up a lesson from WWF and demonstrate their commitment towards biodiversity and conservation. There is always the first step... WWF Hyderabad already made it. Several cities and citizens have to take their first step...

Benita Mahanta and MV Rama Chandrudu, Wassan based on interactions with Ms Farida Tampal and Mr Deepak, WWF Hyderabad
About Cheriyal Paintings

Shri D Vaikuntam and his family members Mrs. D Vanaja (wife); D Vinay and D Rakesh (sons) are keeping the tradition of Cheriyal Paintings of Telangana state, for generations. All members of the family are engaged in protecting and conserving this rare art form, that is not likely to survive for long. This is the only family in the country that is still engaged in this traditional art form. The Cheriyal Art has a unique character - red color background; vivid presentation of figures (men, women, animals, flowers, plants and others) with unique strokes and style. This art form belongs to "nakashi" form of paintings in India. But Cheriyal paintings contextualized this nakashi format to local Telangana and improvised it, with their unique styles. Apart from paintings and scrolls, Cheriyal Masks are also very attractive and unique with their bright colors and large eyes. D Vaikuntam received several awards from Central/ State governments, for his unique contribution to Cheriyal Art.

D Vaikuntam and his family members agreed to present the key messages of these case studies. They spent time with us to understand the essence of each case study and presented it in their own style. These pictures further enriched the experiences, which are already exemplary in several ways. WASSAN thanks the family of artists of Cheriyal for their support in visualising these case studies.

Pictures of some of the paintings/scrolls and masks could be seen on this blog:
http://vaikuntamnakash.blogspot.in/
".....In the middle of such despair and misery, there is a hope. "Imprints of Ecological Footprints - A Compilation of Ecologically Sensible Good Practices" is a compendium of good practices that brings the efforts made by relentless civil society organizations, citizens and community based organizations, to change the direction of the trend. These experiences brought cheer and hope in the lives of thousands of rural, tribal and urban citizens in India, who are part of these experiences. They took a different path that is less travelled and troublesome. There were several challenges, at each step and milestone. But they continued their journey and proved that "producing more with less" is possible. They also ensured that the ecological and environmentally sustainable processes are feasible for improving economic standards and quality of life of poor communities..."Aruna Rangachar Pohl, IFHD, Bangaluru.

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