

Junglescapes Charitable Trust, Bangalore, India

Report on Activities: 2007-2011



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Introduction



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1. Introduction

Junglescapes Charitable Trust is a Bangalore based NGO that works on grass root level project activities for the benefit of the communities who live close to the forest areas in Karnataka State. These communities consist mainly of tribals and traditional forest dwellers. Most of these forest dwellers are below the poverty line and subsist on wages earned as temporary farm labourers in nearby farms and estates. They do not get employment throughout the year and hence are in a financially disadvantaged position.

Some of them own small pieces of land near the forests that they are unable to cultivate since there is very little irrigation / water availability and the crops are often raided and destroyed by wild animals like elephants.

The objective of our project activities is to provide alternate employment and income opportunities for these forest dwellers by getting them involved in a number of sustainable eco-based occupations and conservation activities. In turn, these activities also help preserve the ecology and health of the forests and thus provide a number of benefits to these communities like

- more forests from which they can collect forest produce
- better water table which can help their agriculture
- better availability of fodder for their livestock
- lesser human-animal conflict

The NGO has been in operation since 2007 as a registered charitable trust. Registration under section 12A of the Income Tax Act has also been obtained.



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Details of Project Villages/Locations



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2. Details of Villages where project activities are undertaken

Demographic and Economic Profile

The project activities of Junglescapes Charitable Trust are currently carried out in the Gundulpet Taluk in Chamrajnagar District in Karnataka State. The project activities cover 3 village communities who live close to the Lokkere reserve forests bordering Bandipur national park. These villages are:

- a. Lokkere village – this is a small village of about 25 families who belong to the Kurubas, a backward community. They own small pieces of land but a majority of the land is lying uncultivated. They also work as daily labourers in nearby agricultural farms. This village has a primary school up to 4th standard.
- b. Chik Yel Chetti – this is a tiny hamlet consisting of about 25 families consisting of Solega tribals. All of them are below the poverty line. Even though they own a few acres of land, they are unable to cultivate these due to crop raids by elephants. This village has a primary school up to 4th standard.
- c. Guddukere village – this is also a tiny hamlet of about 25 families belonging to the Jenu Kuruba tribals. All of them are below the poverty line. These are tribals who collect honey from the forest. However, with the formation of the national park, they are not allowed to venture into the Bandipur national park for honey collection. The reserve forests have been degraded in many places and availability of honey is very low. Very few have land and they mainly work as daily labourers in nearby farms and resorts. This village has no school and most children do not attend school.

It is important to note that both men and women in these villages go to work as daily labourers due to their economic condition.

Lokkere and Guddukere jointly have a Village Forest Committee (VFC) formed under the Joint Forest Management Program of the Government of India. The Forest department has allotted about 200 acres of land to this VFC for afforestation. This land is being afforested by the Lokkere-Guddukere community and some of the important Junglescapes project activities are aimed at helping the villagers and the VFC in improving the tree and vegetation quality in this afforested VFC land.

Socio-economic and ecological issues in the area

Unviable Agriculture

Traditional occupations like agriculture are not viable in these areas due to frequent crop raids by animals like elephants and wild boar and the low water table/availability. As a result, most land allotted to these forest dwellers lie uncultivated. Most of them work as daily labourers in nearby resorts and large farms that are owned by urban people. Another outcome of this is a high incidence of distress sale of land. As a result, most forest dwellers in this area live under severe economic hardships, with average monthly earnings of families below Rs 2000 (below the poverty line).

Human-Animal conflict

The area lies in a prime elephant migratory corridor. There is significant human-animal conflict as a result. People are constantly concerned about elephant attacks on crops and humans. Also, the area serves as a buffer zone for tigers that spill over from the adjacent Bandipur NP. Attacks by tigers on the villagers' cattle are common.

Location Map

A map showing the location of Lokkere village cluster is given below.





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Lantana Furniture Craft Training Project



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3. Lantana Furniture Craft Training Project

Lantana is an invasive and non-native species of plants that adversely affect our forests. Every year the Forest departments spend a huge amount of money and resources in removing the lantana shrubs. ATREE, a Bangalore based research NGO, has come up with a novel method of making furniture from lantana branches. This is similar to cane furniture, but the cost of lantana furniture is less than 50% of cane furniture.

As lantana grows in the forest areas, ATREE has promoted the craft of lantana furniture making among a number of tribal communities near MM Hills in Karnataka. With technical support from ATREE, Junglescapes conducted a lantana craft training course at Chik Yel Chetti village during 2008. This project was run for a period of 4 months from July to October 2008.

The highlights of the lantana training program conducted by Junglescapes are as below

- A total of 12 villagers from Chik Yel Chetti village were trained in making furniture articles from lantana. All of them were Solega tribals who are below the poverty line.
- The trainees included 6 women.
- The training was conducted by Master Craftsmen from MM Hills in Karnataka.
- The tribals were trained in making articles like chairs, book shelves, TV stands, stools, etc. from lantana
- Junglescapes provided the tools and raw materials required for the workshop.
- Junglescapes also paid the fees of the Master Craftsmen who came to train the tribals.
- A stipend of Rs 25 per day was also paid to the trainees.
- The training has enabled the tribals to learn a vocational skill that they can use to supplement their income in a self-sustainable manner.

The total amount spent on the lantana furniture training project is as below:

2008-09: Rs 101,794

2009-10: Rs 32,470

Pictures of lantana training activity



Lantana Furniture Training Inauguration at Chik Yel Chetti village on 26.7.2008 – Mr Ramesh Kannan of ATREE addressing the villagers



Lantana tool kit handed over to Chamamma, Mahila Sangha President of Chik Yel Chetti village by Sri Mahadevappa, President of Lokkere Village Forest Committee

Pictures of lantana training activity



Master Craftsmen from MM Hills who stayed at Chik Yel Chetti for 3 months to conduct the training, in discussion with Mr Kannan of ATREE



Lantana craft training in progress for men and women from Chik Yel Chetti tribal village



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Eco Chulha (Firewood Stove) Project

4. Eco-Chuha Project

Eco-Chulhas

Most village homes in these areas use traditional chulhas made of mud as they cannot afford cooking gas. These chulhas emit a huge amount of smoke and pose a serious health hazard to the women and children (as they keep the small children in their arms while cooking).

Junglescapes has been encouraging the use of eco-chulhas by the villagers. These chulhas have been designed by Philips under their CSR project called Philanthropy by Design. Until now, these eco-chulhas have been installed in 60 homes. A picture of the eco-chulha is given below.



First chulha to be installed in Lokkere on 20 June 2009

Advantages of the eco-chulha

The main advantages of the eco-chulha are as below:

- These chulhas are smokeless and a great health benefit for the women.
- Cooking time has come down by half. So against 2 hours earlier, they cook for 1 hour. Normally the main meal cooked is dinner, after they return from the fields. So the one hour saving means the women have less work after a hard day's work.

- Reduced cooking time means greater emancipation of the women in more ways than one. They get more time to take care of the children. They are also able to get more rest after their hard work schedule, and this should improve their health.
- These chulhas consume only around 30% of the firewood that is used by a traditional chulha. Therefore the villagers have to spend much less time and effort in collecting firewood from the forests. As against two visits to the forest a week to collect firewood, they make one trip a fortnight. This also reduces human-animal conflict. This benefit is appreciated by the men as they are the ones who generally go to collect firewood.
- As the firewood consumption is lower, the quantity of wood saved per family per year is about 3.5 tonnes. This means protection of the forests and better environment for the villagers.
- Most of the people live in single room houses roughly 10x8 feet. The single room has all the belongings + the cooking area. Less firewood automatically means more space available in a small home.

Local Fabrication of chulhas

One of the challenges facing Junglescapes was the availability of chulhas. Transportation of chulhas from Bangalore was an expensive proposition. In line with its objective of promoting eco-friendly employment to forest dwellers, Junglescapes provided training to two local youth in fabricating the chulhas. The training took place in June 2010, and was conducted by Mr Praveen Mareguddi of Philips design along with volunteers from Junglescapes. The training involved all aspects of fabrication, curing and finishing. Two sets of moulds have been provided **free of cost** by Philips to the two local entrepreneurs. Some images of the local fabrication are given below.



Fabricated chulha parts in the curing tank at Lakkere



Chulha fabricated by Nagendra at Lakkere

Local Fabricators' profile and experience

It is important to note here that the two youth selected for training had no prior experience in any form of manufacturing activity. They were exclusively farmers. Nagendra had studied up to 10th standard (high school) while Ravi had studied only up to 6th standard. They had no prior manufacturing experience but had worked on minor civil repair works in their homes. However, they were able to learn the technical aspects quite well and in the next 6 months each of them had successfully fabricated and installed over 30 chulhas each.

All raw materials for the chulha are procured locally. So the chulha is 100% made and installed locally.



Ravi, eco-preneur at Chik Yel Chetti, explaining the chulhas to Forest department officials during World Wildlife Week 2010

Profile of chulha users

The eco-chulhas have been installed in 56 homes in four villages in and around Lakkere – these are Lakkere, Chik Yel Chetti, Belawadi and Guddukere. Most of these are small hamlets with around 20-25 homes each. Prior to this, all these houses were using the traditional chulha made of bricks. The profile of the families is as below:

- They belong to a mix of tribal and non-tribal communities
- **45 of 56 families are below the poverty line** and work in nearby resorts and farms as daily wage earners. Both men and women work in the nearby farms. As a result, most of them cannot afford expensive alternatives like coking gas.
- Their homes are typically small, with the tribal homes being less than 100 square feet each, including the cooking area.

- Firewood is collected from the nearby forests. This activity is done both by men and women, depending on who has the time.
- The villages do not have running water. They draw water either from a hand pump or from the village storage tank.
- Many of them are illiterate.
- Medical help is around 25 kms away.



Kamakshamma and husband – chulha users in Chik Yel Chetti village belonging to Solega tribe

Impact Study

In January 2009, a MOU was entered into between Philips and Junglescapes for carrying out an impact study at 40 homes where the chulhas were installed, to study the health and social benefits. The Environmental Studies department of Mysore University in India agreed to carry out the analysis for the impact study. The impact study covered both pre and post installation of the chulha, and covered 40 houses.

Economic Benefits of the Eco-chulha

The economic benefits of the chulha are as below

- Improved health of the women means better health and longer life, which means better earning ability. This also means lower medical expenses.
- The Government has been trying to convert the villagers to cooking gas. The connection + stove costs Rs 2000. Apart from there is the recurring cost of cylinders of Rs 450 each per month, which they cannot afford. By providing them eco-chulhas, we give them a healthy and eco-friendly alternative that is inexpensive.

- The eco-preneurs involved in the activity are able to earn an average of Rs 3000 per month as supplementary income through this activity.



The eco chulha in a Chik Yel Chetti home – note the absence of any smoke

Subsidy

The cost of fabricating the chulha is Rs 1200 including the cost of the materials and labour charges for the local eco-preneurs. The users pay Rs 300 for a chulha and Rs 900 is subsidized by Junglescapes. The subsidy is given from donations and contributions received from donors. The total amount of subsidy given till now is about Rs 50,000. In addition, free cookers worth Rs 12000 have been distributed along with one model of chulha. Also, Junglescapes has borne the cost of providing training to the two village youth for manufacture of the chulhas of around Rs 20000.

Further Plans

There is significant potential for the chulha. There are over 100 hamlets in the area that could benefit from the chulha, and this works out to around 2500 homes. We are planning to install around 400 chulhas in 2011.



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Community-based afforestation activities



5. Community-based afforestation activities

Details of the Activity

Most villages in these areas are adjacent to reserve forest lands. A number of these reserve forest lands are badly degraded due to a number of reasons like cattle grazing, deforestation, etc. Junglescapes has been working in reforesting these forest areas through the involvement of the village communities.

Importance of the afforestation activity

These forests are a vital resource for these villagers for a number of reasons:

- The forests help capture and store rain water during monsoons. As these villages are in regions with no irrigation facilities, rain water is the only source of water.
- The forests help increase the water table. Due to degradation of the forests, the water table has reduced over the years and water is available at depths of over 300 feet. Restoring the forests is critical to improving the water table.
- Forests help prevent floods during monsoons and washing away of valuable top soil and manure.
- The forests provide valuable non-timber forest produce to the villagers like medicinal herbs, honey, firewood, etc.
- Good forest vegetation and water availability ensures that wild animals do not come into the villages looking for food and water.

Community economic benefits from the afforestation activity

The afforestation activity is carried out through the Village Forest Committees that are registered with the Forest department. All activities in the afforestation are carried out through the village communities and they get an alternate livelihood by their involvement in these activities.

The nature of activities that the villagers are engaged in are as below:

- Growing of saplings in home nurseries
- Digging of pits and trenches for water harvesting
- Planting of saplings
- Post-planting care like watching, deweeding, mulching, etc.
- Digging of ponds

Afforestation activity in 2009-10

During 2009-10 a total of 8000 saplings were planted in an area of about 30 acres. This project was run through ATREE as the technical partner NGO and sponsorship from GE. Junglescapes carried out the field co-ordination. The total earnings for the community through this activity was around Rs 120,000 spread over families from two villages.

Afforestation Plans in 2011

A total of 300 acres is planned to be afforested in 2011 covering two villages – Lokkere and Chik Yel Chetti. A total of 600 root trainers have been distributed to the villagers to enable them to grow saplings and make these available for planting post the monsoon in June 2011. Junglescapes plans to bring more sponsors to fund this activity so that the Village Forest Committees get the required funds for afforestation.

Pictures of Afforestation Activity



Sri Nagarajaswamy, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Kollegal Forest Division, inaugurating the afforestation drive at Lokkere in July 2010



Dr Siddappa Setty of ATREE welcoming the gathering and Forest department officials and GE volunteers at the inauguration of afforestation drive at Lokkere in July 2010



Mr Ravindra Kumar, Range Forest Officer, Gundulpet addressing the gathering
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Tel- +91 80 25295788 Email- info@junglescapes.org www.junglescapes.org



A Junglescapes volunteer planting a sapling with the help of the villagers



Picture taken in September 2010 of a sapling planted in July 2010 (after 3 months)



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Naturalist Training Project



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6. Naturalist Training Project

Description of Project

This is a free vocational training project for training the village and tribal youth in the following activities:

- Basics of Ecology
- Bird watching
- Identifying forest trees, plants and life forms
- Conducting nature trails

Benefits

This project would equip these village and tribal youth in getting employment with:

- Forest department as watchers and guards
- Wildlife research NGOs and Institutions as field workers
- Wildlife resorts as nature and bird watching guides

Training Conducted

The first batch of training was conducted from 11th to 14th February 2011 at Chik Yel Chetti village. Details of the training are as below:

- A total of 5 village youth in the age group of 18-25 were trained.
- The training was conducted by Mr Sudarshan, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Attiveri Bird Sanctuary, Karnataka. Mr Sudarshan has developed a curriculum in Kannada and has trained about 20 village youth in Attiveri Bird sanctuary in the last 5 years. Some of these youth have now been employed by the Attiveri Bird sanctuary.
- Mr Sudarshan was assisted by Mr Mahesh, a tribal youth from Attiveri.
- The training programme will be conducted over 3 months, with three workshops of 4 days each. In between the workshops, the students will practice the lessons taught to them.
- Junglescapes has provided training equipment like field binoculars, T shirts, caps and bird books to the trainees free of cost.
- The fees to the two trainers and their travel and stay costs are also borne by Junglescapes. The students do not have to pay anything.
- At the end of the training, the students will be evaluated for their learning and certificates will be awarded.

- Junglescapes will be providing detailed of successful trainees to agencies like Jungle Lodges and Resorts Limited (a Government of Karnataka enterprise) and the local Forest departments to encourage them to employ these youngsters.

Pictures of Naturalist Training



Mr Sudarshan (extreme right) with the trainees of the Naturalist training programme at Chik Yel Chetti village

Project Cost and future plans

This is a totally Free programme and the students do not have to pay anything for the training. All costs are met by Junglescapes. The estimated cost of one training programme of 3 months is approximately Rs 30000. This is met from contributions from donors.

Junglescapes plans to train two batches of 5 students each every year. So we would be giving eco-based employment skills to 10 village youth every year.



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World Wildlife Week Activities



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7. World Wildlife Week Activities

Description of Activity

Junglescapes has been conducting activities for the villagers during the World Wildlife Week of 2009 and 2010 (week of October 1-7). The activities include:

- Seedball making by village women
- Drawing competitions for village children
- Animal mask making activity for village children
- Environmental education talks by Forest department officials
- “Open-house” interactions between villagers and the forest department officials

Benefits

These activities are aimed at creating better awareness among the villagers for their environment and the advantages that they get by protecting the forests. The main advantages to the villagers from protecting the forests are as below:

- Improvement in water table and hydrology of the area as the forests help to retain rain water during monsoons and then gradually releases the water in summer. This means better water available for the people, their crops and their domestic animals like cattle.
- Improved forestry also means better availability to the villagers of non-timber forest produce (NTFP) that they can utilize e.g. honey, medicinal herbs, etc.
- Improved forests also mean lesser animal-human conflicts as the animals will get their food and water needs within the forests, and there will be less chances of their coming into the villages looking for food or water.
- By creating awareness among young children, we also hope that when they grow up they will appreciate their natural heritage.

Activities like seedball making also provide the village women an opportunity to earn additional income through an eco-based activity.

Pictures from World Wildlife Week 2010 celebrations at Chik Yel Chetti village



World Wildlife week 2010 at Chik Yel Chetti school inaugurated by Sri KM Narayanaswamy, Divisional Conservator of Forests, Kollegal Forest Division (in the picture)



Sri KM Narayanaswamy, Divisional Conservator of Forests, Kollegal Forest Division giving a talk on wildlife to the villagers

Pictures from World Wildlife Week 2009 celebrations at Lokkere village



Children of Lokkere village with the animal masks made by them during the mask making workshop conducted by Junglescapes volunteers



Junglescapes volunteer training villagers in making seedballs



Villager women making seedballs for distribution in the forest



Junglescapes volunteer explaining the seedball concept to the President of the Lokkere Village Forest Committee



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Community-managed eco-tourism



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8. Community-managed eco-tourism

Description of Activity

Junglescapes has been helping the villagers start and run community-managed eco-tourism activities. The activities include:

- Starting and running village home stays
- Starting and running village nature camps
- Training village youth for working in wildlife resorts
- Training village youth in conducting bird watching and nature trails

Benefits

These activities are aimed at creating an alternate earning capability for the villagers with minimum changes to their homes or lifestyle. The main advantages to the villagers from these activities are as below:

- Building of skills and capabilities among villagers for grass root level tourism.
- Building capabilities within the local community for starting and running eco-tourism initiatives on their own.
- Linking the villagers with resource persons who can train them for eco-tourism.
- Helping publicise the village eco-tourism concept with target audiences.
- Help community based eco-tourism as an alternate model for “responsible tourism” where there is no or minimum damage to the environment or ecology or local culture. This way the grass root people will be able to participate in the eco-tourism economy and not get left out.
- Link the community with funding and marketing agencies.

Junglescapes involvement and training on the above activity is completely free and voluntary. Junglescapes does not charge or receive any consulting fees or revenues from these activities. All revenues from the eco-tourism go directly to the community.

Projects completed

Village Home Stay

In this model, guests go and stay in a basic village home as the guest of the villager. They live and eat just as the villager does, and there are no additional facilities. They learn to experience the village way of life and the nature. The village host is able to earn about Rs 3000 per month on an average. The pilot has been successful.



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Community-managed nature camps

Based on the success of the village home stay pilot, we plan to empower the community to set up and run tented nature camps. These will be run by the Self Help Groups in the community on a collective basis. This concept has the ability to generate revenues of about Rs 1000 per family per month.

A detailed study on a Community-run Tented Camp was carried out by a student intern from Lyon 2 University, France, in 2010. The intern is a post-graduate student of tourism with Lyon 2 University France who worked with Junglescapes for 3 months and has prepared a detailed report with infrastructure details and financial viability. Junglescapes has shared the report with other NGOs also for implementation. Copies can be had from the Junglescapes website.



Guests enjoy traditional village food



Guests enjoy a nature walk in the fields



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Other Community Development Activities



9. Other Community Development Activities

a. Construction of Village Toilets

The villagers at Lokkere requested Junglescapes to construct two toilets for the village community as going out into the fields after dark was risky due to movement of animals, especially elephants. In particular, women and children found it difficult after dark.

Junglescapes constructed two simple toilets for the community with soak pit technology.

b. Medical Camps

Two medical camps were organized in 2007 and 2008 for the villagers of Chik Yel Chetti village with the help of the Government Medical Officer, Gundulpet. The Medical Officer carried out general health checks for the villagers.

c. Distribution of Note Books and Stationery

Note books and stationery were distributed to the children of Guddukere village who attend the primary school. Stationery was also distributed to the school children of Lokkere village.

d. Desilting of village pond

The villagers of Lokkere village have requested desilting and deepening of their village pond. This is planned in March 2011 when the pond gets dry. This is planned to be completed before the monsoons in June 2011. Once completed, this will provide more water storage for the villagers and their cattle.

e. Eco-friendly guidelines for wildlife resorts

Junglescapes has developed a model eco-charter for wildlife resorts. This was prepared by an intern from Lyon 2 University France and comprises global good practices in eco-friendly management of resorts. The charter is available as a free download on the website under 'Reports'.



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