Project Title: "Promotion of Tree Plantation and Formation of children Eco Club in eight Government Schools of 7 villages in Kadur block, Chikmagalur district Karnataka."

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

(August 2021 – October 2024)

Implemented By:

Vikasana
Tarikere (Tq)
Chikmagalur (Dist.)

Supported By:

People for Progress in India
Seattle

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title	"Promotion of Tree Plantation and Formation of children Eco Club in eight Government Schools of 7 villages in Kadur block, Chikmagalur district Karnataka."
Project Location	Eight Government Schools of Seven Villages Kadur Block, Chikmagalur District, Karnataka
Project Duration	Three Years (August 2021 to July 2024)
Project Extended Period	Three Months (August 2024 to October 2024)
Project Implementing Organisation	VIKASANA (Organisation for Education and Social Development)
Project Donor Agency	People for Progress in India, Seattle

PROJECT SUMMARY

The School Tree Plantation Program in Kadur block, Chikmagalur district, Karnataka, aims to foster environmental awareness and responsibility among school children and local communities. The project aimed to promote sustainable environmental practices by encouraging tree plantation and creating environmental awareness in the school children of eight government schools in seven villages of Kadur Block and surrounding areas. The project emphasized the formation of Eco Clubs to cultivate a sense of environmental responsibility and protection among students and the community. This initiative is crucial in the drought-prone region, where reforestation can play a vital role in mitigating environmental degradation and promoting a sustainable future. The initiative also aimed at improving nutrition by promoting the cultivation of horticultural plants and establishing nutrition gardens.

Key activities include the formation of Eco clubs in each Government Schools, plantation of 5,000 agro-forestry trees and 1,500 horticultural trees in school grounds, Panchayats lands, and community areas. The project will also establish 30 nutrition gardens to improve food security and access to fresh produce. Alongside these efforts, training workshops will educate students, teachers, and local farmers on the importance of tree plantation, environmental protection, and sustainable agricultural practices. Exposure visits will further enhance participants' knowledge by showcasing successful environmental conservation models.

The project's desired outcomes include the establishment of seven active Eco Clubs in schools, increased environmental awareness among students and local communities, and significant contributions to reforestation in the region. The initiative is designed for a 92% survival rate of the planted trees, which will not only improve biodiversity but also help reduce carbon emissions, leading to a healthier environment. Furthermore, the promotion of nutrition gardens will enhance local food security and encourage the consumption of fresh, organic produce.

In the long term, the program aims to create a carbon-free, green environment and healthier living conditions for the local population. By engaging schoolchildren and communities in conservation efforts, the project will ensure that these environmental initiatives are sustained beyond the three-year implementation period. Eco Clubs will empower students to take active roles in protecting their environment, helping to build a generation committed to environmental stewardship and sustainability.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW AND ACHIVEMENTS

PROJECT ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY OVERVIEW	ACHIVMENTS
Awareness Workshops on Tree Plantation, Environmental Protection, and Eco Clubs	Over the three years, the project organized 14 workshops aimed at educating school children, teachers, parents, and community leaders on the importance of tree plantation and environmental protection. The workshops also focused on the formation and promotion of eco clubs, nurturing environmental stewardship among students. Participants were taught about their role in combating global warming, climate change, carbon credit generation, and pollution reduction.	• Formation of eight eco clubs in schools, engaging over 630 students, teachers, and community members in activities like tree planting and garden care. • Raised awareness about the importance of trees in ecosystems, air quality, and biodiversity conservation. • Empowered students as leaders in environmental protection, fostering a climate-conscious generation and contributing to climate change mitigation. • Facilitated hands-on activities, such as tree planting and nutrition garden management, helping participants apply environmental knowledge in practical ways.
Awareness Workshops on Promotion of Agro-forestry and Horticulture	14 workshops were held to promote agro-forestry and horticulture. These activities not only emphasized the ecological benefits of tree planting but also demonstrated the economic advantages for rural communities, particularly farmers. Participants learned about species selection, plantation management, and sustainable farming practices that integrate horticulture and forestry.	• Over 532 participants, including farmers, SHG members, and community leaders, attended workshops, significantly expanding the project's reach in local communities and agriculture. • Promotion of agro-forestry and horticultural species improved biodiversity, restored ecosystems, and supported climate-resilient farming practices. • Participants learned sustainable land use and plantation management for long-term environmental and economic benefits, with SDMC members ensuring tree protection on school grounds. • Agro-forestry and horticulture integration promoted sustainable agricultural practices, contributing to both environmental conservation and improved rural living standards.

Training on Aftercare and Management of Trees	05 training programs were conducted across the project period, focusing on the proper care and management of tree plants post-plantation. Topics included watering techniques, mulching, pruning, and protecting plants from pests and environmental stressors. Participants were taught practical skills to ensure the long-term survival and health of the planted trees.	• Approximately 195 participants, including school children, teachers, SDMC members, and farmers, gained practical skills in watering, pruning, pest protection, and tree care, ensuring long-term tree health and community-wide commitment. • The training instilled environmental responsibility, equipping participants to manage trees sustainably and protect them from stressors like drought and pests, fostering long-term environmental stewardship.
Exposure Visits for Students, Teachers, SDMC members and Small &Marginal Farmers and other Beneficiaries	02 exposure Visit to Children, Teachers and SDMC members and 02 exposure visit to Small &Marginal Farmers and other Beneficiaries were organized to enhance the practical understanding of environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture. Students, teachers, SDMC members, and small-scale farmers participated in field trips to observe successful models of tree plantation and organic farming practices.	• Exposure visits provided 128 participants with practical insights into successful tree plantation and organic farming models, enhancing their understanding of environmental conservation and agro-forestry. • The visits reinforced the importance of environmental protection and encouraged participants to apply tree plantation and nurturing concepts in their own communities. • Small and marginal farmers gained valuable knowledge on sustainable agriculture and agro-forestry, contributing to long-term environmental and economic benefits for rural areas.
Concept building training on Nutrition Garden and Herbal Plants (Promotion and Demonstration)	06 training programs were conducted as part of the project to educate the community on the importance of nutrition gardens and herbal plants. These sessions aimed to enhance understanding of the benefits of growing fresh, organic vegetables and maintaining a balanced diet. The training also emphasized the role of herbal plants in health and their integration into eco clubs, ensuring that environmental awareness was coupled with practical, health-related applications.	• Training sessions raised awareness among 66 participants about the benefits of organic farming and chemical-free vegetables, leading to the creation of ten nutrition gardens that provide fresh produce for local families. • The project promoted the cultivation of medicinal plants, such as mint, emphasizing traditional herbal knowledge and enhancing the community's ability to treat common ailments naturally. • Eco clubs in schools foster ongoing responsibility for maintaining nutrition gardens, strengthening community engagement, and laying the foundation for long-term environmental stewardship among the younger generation.

Plantation of Agro-forestry and Horticulture Trees	Over the three years, a total of 5,636 agro-forestry trees (teak, neem, Pongamia, silver oak, and others) were planted across school grounds and in the lands of selected beneficiaries. Additionally, 1,675 horticulture trees (mango, sapota, papaya, jackfruit, etc.) were planted to support local agriculture and provide nutritious fruit to the community.	• The planting of 5,636 agro-forestry trees and 1,675 horticulture trees significantly enhanced local biodiversity, aiding in ecosystem restoration and providing habitats for wildlife. • Strong community engagement in tree care resulted in high survival rates, ensuring the long-term sustainability and environmental benefits of the planted trees. • The cultivation of horticultural trees, such as mango and jackfruit, offered economic benefits to beneficiaries through fruit sales, contributing to household income and food security. • The project promoted sustainable agricultural practices, enhancing land productivity while empowering communities to take ownership of environmental conservation efforts.
Promotion of Nutrition Gardens	In each year of the project, 10 nutrition gardens were promoted in individual beneficiaries' land. In 2023-2024, an additional 04 gardens were created due to the overwhelming interest and support from the community. The gardens were designed to produce a variety of chemical-free vegetables, including brinjal, chilly, mint, and more.	• The establishment of 14 nutrition gardens improved community health by providing families with access to fresh, chemical-free vegetables, promoting better diets and self-sufficiency while also reducing reliance on market-bought produce. • The gardens fostered community engagement and empowerment, encouraging the adoption of organic farming practices and ensuring a lasting positive impact on food sustainability and overall well-being. • 14 families i.e. approximately 60 individuals are now able to access fresh vegetables with chemical free which is supporting as additional nutrition to the family members. The excess produced is shared with the neighboring families. • Each garden is planned with minimum 3 Horticulture plants mainly Papaya, Guava, Sapota and etc. the families are now protecting and nurturing theses plants and are able to enjoy fresh fruits.

Formation of Eco Clubs	08 eco clubs were established in each of the participating schools. These clubs empowered students to take leadership roles in environmental stewardship, organizing tree care, monitoring plantation survival, and maintaining school nutrition gardens.	• The establishment of seven eco clubs empowered students to take leadership roles in environmental stewardship, overseeing tree care, managing school nutrition gardens, and leading conservation initiatives, fostering a culture of sustainability within the schools and communities. • These eco clubs ensured sustained engagement in environmental activities, enhancing practical skills among students while strengthening collaboration between schools and local communities, promoting shared responsibility for environmental protection and conservation efforts.

OVERALL IMPACT AND OUTCOME OF THE PROJECT:

1. **Environmental Awareness and Education**: The project successfully raised environmental awareness among over 1,100 participants, including students, teachers, farmers, and community members. Workshops, eco clubs, and training sessions educated them on environmental protection, sustainable farming practices, tree care, and biodiversity conservation. This knowledge has empowered the community to actively engage in conservation efforts. Consequently, a more informed and environmentally conscious populace emerged from these initiatives.

2. **Formation and Empowerment of Eco Clubs**: Seven eco clubs are established, providing a platform for student leadership in environmental stewardship. These clubs actively engaged members in tree planting, garden maintenance, and broader conservation efforts. This sustained engagement ensured that environmental education became a core component of the school curriculum. The eco clubs have fostered a culture of sustainability, preparing students for future environmental challenges.

3. **Improved Biodiversity and Environmental Restoration**: The project planted 5,636 agro-forestry trees and 1,675 horticultural trees, significantly boosting local biodiversity. These efforts contributed to restoring ecosystems and providing essential habitats for wildlife. Enhanced soil stabilization and water conservation further supported long-term ecological balance. Overall, the project played a vital role in revitalizing the local environment.

4. **Climate Change Mitigation**: Large-scale tree plantation activities helped sequester carbon, thereby mitigating climate change effects. By reducing local carbon footprints, the project aligned with global climate action goals. This initiative educated participants on the importance of trees in combating climate change. The collective effort contributed to fostering a resilient community capable of facing climate-related challenges.

5. **Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Practices**: Farmers and SHG members received training in climate-resilient farming techniques and sustainable land management. This

education led to greater adoption of agro-forestry and organic farming practices within the community. By implementing these methods, farmers enhanced their productivity while promoting environmental health. As a result, sustainable agriculture became a central focus for local food production.

6. **Economic Benefits and Food Security**: The project's promotion of agro-forestry and horticulture brought significant economic benefits to rural communities. Families gained access to fresh, chemical-free vegetables through established nutrition gardens, reducing their reliance on market-bought produce. This increased food security contributed to improved dietary habits and overall community health. The production of fruits, timber, and fodder also supported local livelihoods.

7. **Youth Leadership and Long-Term Environmental Stewardship**: The project empowered students through eco clubs, fostering youth leadership in environmental conservation. Students engaged in hands-on experiences related to tree care, garden management, and environmental education. These opportunities laid the groundwork for sustained conservation efforts in the future. The youth-led initiatives ensure that environmental stewardship remains a priority for upcoming generations.

8. **Community Engagement and Long-Term Sustainability**: Active involvement from SDMC members, local leaders, and individual beneficiaries fostered a sense of community ownership over environmental conservation efforts. This collective responsibility ensured the successful nurturing and protection of planted trees, achieving survival rates of 86% for agro-forestry trees and 90% for horticultural plants. The integration of eco clubs and nutrition gardens guarantees the continuation of sustainable practices beyond the project's duration. Ultimately, strong community involvement will sustain these environmental initiatives for years to come.

CHALLENGES:

1. Climate and Rainfall Variability

- Limited Rainfall in Critical Periods: A major challenge throughout the project was the unpredictable rainfall patterns, which directly affected the ability to plant trees. For example, during the 2022-2023 year, there was no rainfall between June and August, which caused delays in initiating new plantation activities. Similarly, the 2023-2024 year also faced delays in plantation activities due to insufficient rain during the early months.
- Watering and Protection during Drought: In years of low rainfall, such as 2022-2023, alternative water sources had to be used to ensure the survival of plants. Watering activities were initiated multiple times per month to sustain the saplings during the summer.

2. COVID-19 Pandemic Restrictions

- School Closures and Delayed Activities**:** During the 2021-2022 periods, the pandemic greatly affected the initial phase of the project. Schools were closed, and there were strict government Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place that limited public activities in school

premises. This resulted in the delay of awareness programs, tree planting, and training sessions planned in the project.

- Impact on Community Engagement**:** As schools remained closed and physical meetings were restricted, it was difficult to engage children, teachers, and other stakeholders in the project's activities

3. Community Participation and Seasonal Agriculture

- Conflicts with Agricultural Schedules**:** In rural areas, many community members, including schoolchildren's families, were preoccupied with seasonal agricultural activities. This led to lower participation in some workshops and plantation drives as community members were busy with their agricultural commitments.
- Postponed Activities**:** In some years, planned activities like workshops and exposure visits could not be completed on time due to community members being unavailable or due to government restrictions during certain periods.

4. Plant Protection and Management

- Plant Survival Issues**:** With long dry spells, protecting the planted trees became a significant challenge. Lack of water and environmental threats put the survival of the trees at risk, especially during droughts.
- School and Community Ownership**:** Ensuring that the responsibility for tree care was adequately transferred to local schools and communities also posed a challenge. In some cases, engagement and cooperation levels varied across different villages and schools.

SUSTAINABLE MEASURES:

1. **The Need for Post-Planting Care**: The project acknowledges that planting trees alone is insufficient to achieve environmental goals. Newly planted trees are vulnerable to various risks such as: Destruction by animals (e.g., grazing), Environmental factors (lack of water or harsh weather), Neglect from the community due to a lack of ownership or understanding of their value. To address these risks, the project focuses heavily on aftercare, which is vital to ensure tree survival and to see them grow into maturity. Aftercare involves – (1) Watering**:** Regular access to water is critical, especially for young saplings that are less resilient to drought (2) Protection from Grazing**:** Fencing or monitoring to protect trees from being destroyed by grazing animals and (3) Weeding and Mulching**:** This helps retain moisture, regulate temperature, and promote healthy growth by reducing competition from other plants.

2. **Community Involvement and Capacity Building:** The long-term sustainability of the project depends on the community's ability to continue nurturing the trees even after external assistance ends. To ensure this, the project aims to build the capacity of several key community groups:

- **School Children and Teachers**: Children and teachers are targeted because they can become long-term stewards of the environment. By engaging them early, the project creates a sense of responsibility toward the environment in younger generations.

- **School Development and Management Committees (SDMCs)**: These committees are generally composed of parents, teachers, and local leaders. Involving them helps foster community ownership of the project as they are influential in local decision-making.
- **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**: SHGs, often formed by women, are community-based groups that focus on social and economic issues. Their involvement ensures that local women are actively participating in environmental protection, which can lead to more sustained care.
- **Villagers**: The broader community is also engaged to ensure that they understand the importance of tree care and that they actively participate in the maintenance of the trees.

3. **Project Ownership:** The sense of ownership is crucial for the community to remain engaged with the project beyond its formal duration. By involving the community from the start, the project fosters a feeling that the initiative is theirs, making them more likely to continue caring for the trees long after external support is withdrawn. Ownership is cultivated through:

   - **Initial Engagement**: The community is involved in the early stages of the project, from the planning phase to the planting process.
   - **Training and Empowerment**: Through training programs, community members learn about the importance of tree care, proper techniques for watering and pruning, and the broader environmental benefits of their work.

4. **Benefits of Tree Planting**: The project also highlights the benefits that the community will reap from tree planting – (1) Horticulture Trees**:** Beneficiaries who engage with horticultural tree planting (i.e., fruit-bearing trees) will enjoy fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables. This not only improves their diets but can also provide additional income if surplus produce is sold. (2) Green Environment and Oxygen**:** Tree planting contributes to a greener local environment, improving air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing fresh oxygen. (3) Reduction in Carbon Emissions**:** The project emphasizes that increased tree cover will help reduce carbon emissions by sequestering carbon dioxide, which is crucial for combating climate change.

5. **Long-Term Support from VIKASANA**, a long-established organization in the region, will provide continued support to the community after the project's completion. The organisation will **ensure next 06 months continued support** after the completion of the project in plant protection, nurturing and protecting. The organization will offer technical assistance to ensure that the community has the skills needed to manage the trees, Provide expertise to address any challenges that arise in maintaining the tree cover and Facilitate the transition from external support to self-reliance**,** ensuring that the changes are permanent.

MONITORING

The project incorporates a robust monitoring framework to track progress and ensure that the trees are thriving. The strategy operates on two levels: administrative oversight and field-level monitoring**.**

a. Administrative Level Monitoring: The Project Director will oversee the entire project, ensuring that all activities are carried out according to plan. This involves coordinating resources, guiding project staff, and liaising with stakeholders. Monthly reports will be generated, which will help assess the project's progress and identify areas that need improvement. These reports will focus on the

survival rates of trees, the effectiveness of community engagement, and the adherence to the project's timeline.

b. Field-Level Monitoring: The Village Animator is tasked with closely monitoring the field-level activities. Their role is to maintain regular communication with the key groups involved in tree care, such as school children, teachers, SDMC members, SHGs, and villagers. The animator will not only monitor the health and survival of the trees but also ensure that community members are following through with their responsibilities. This includes keeping records of who is caring for which trees and documenting any issues such as grazing damage or lack of watering. Regular interactions with stakeholders ensure that the tree survival rates are accurately tracked and that any challenges are addressed promptly.

c. Monthly Monitoring and Record-Keeping: Monthly monitoring system will be in place to track the progress of the trees. Each tree will be accounted for, and its health status will be recorded by the project's volunteer team. Detailed records will be kept, documenting the number of trees planted, the number that survive each month, and the specific activities carried out to maintain them (e.g., watering schedules, protection from grazing, etc.).

d. Supervision and Coordination: The organization's director will play a crucial role in overseeing the coordination of all activities, ensuring that the field staff, community members, and technical experts are working in harmony to meet project goals. This level of supervision helps to ensure that any potential issues are resolved quickly.

CONCLUSION

This report summarizes the comprehensive three-year implementation (August 2021 to October 2024) of the "Tree Plantation and Eco Club Formation" project, conducted in eight government schools across seven villages in Kadur Block, Chikmagalur district, Karnataka. The project, supported by People for Progress in India and implemented by VIKASANA. The project is aimed to foster environmental stewardship, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable practices through the strategic planting of trees, the establishment of nutrition gardens, and the formation of Eco Clubs. The project has made substantial strides toward environmental conservation and community engagement over its three-year duration. Through the establishment of Eco Clubs, the plantation of over 5,636 agro-forestry and 1,675 horticultural trees, and the creation of nutrition gardens, the project has empowered students, farmers, and local residents to adopt sustainable environmental practices. The active involvement of students and community members has led to increased environmental awareness, improved biodiversity, and enhanced food security through sustainable agriculture.

Despite challenges such as unpredictable rainfall and the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has shown resilience by adapting its strategies and ensuring a high survival rate of the planted trees. The Eco Clubs have served as a crucial platform for fostering environmental stewardship among the youth, preparing them to lead future conservation efforts. These efforts have not only enhanced biodiversity in a drought-prone region but also fostered environmental awareness among over 2000 students, teachers, and community members. The integration of agro forestry and nutrition gardens has improved food security, offering economic and health benefits to local communities. Furthermore, the empowerment of students through leadership roles in Eco Clubs signifies a generational shift towards

environmental stewardship, ensuring that the impact of the project will extend far beyond its original timeframe. Looking ahead, the long-term sustainability of this initiative is supported by the sense of ownership fostered within the community, particularly through the involvement of students, teachers, and local leaders in tree care and environmental activities. By building local capacity and promoting ongoing environmental education, this project not only contributes to immediate reforestation and climate resilience but also sets the stage for lasting environmental protection and community-driven stewardship in the region.

In conclusion, this initiative demonstrates how localized environmental action can lead to profound ecological, social, and economic improvements, setting a model for sustainable rural development. Through a combination of practical environmental education, community collaboration, and long-term planning, the project has established a resilient framework for a greener, healthier future.

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