

# ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

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If 60 years of targeted anti poverty programmes fail to even dent the extent of poverty in a country, its time to look for answers. It is time to look for alternative solutions to the persistent poverty. My research does this with an added incentive- to look for possibilities of upscaling these alternative models of development.

Most rural development programmes in India fail as schemes are uniform and ignore ecosystem differences. My study highlights

- the need to recognize rural poverty as ecological poverty (not income poverty)
- redefine it as lack of access to resources
- how people have recognized the linkage between poverty and ecology and tried to fix their problems focusing on ecological regeneration
- the immense potential to upscale these 'simple' models

## Ideas That Worked

### Hiware Bazar

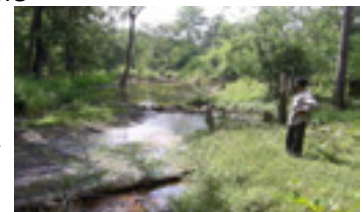
The village used government schemes to fund ecological regeneration but with community at the driving seat. It utilised local ecology for economic good by following an integrated model of development with water conservation as its core. A National Water Award winner for its efforts in water conservation and raising village productivity levels, the village is outstanding because:

- It uses water as the core of village development
- It constantly innovates to keep up with new challenges- water budgeting, renewable energy, bore well blasting, etc.
- Its village level resources planning is impeccable
- And it has thought out its future plans to make the initiative sustainable

### Mendha Lekha

This small tribal village in eastern Maharashtra demonstrates the benefits accruing from traditional, participatory forest management. It is a community initiative that could become a role model for implementation of government programmes like Joint Forest Management. The village is a microcosm of tribal life, managing to preserve its 18 sq km forest against all odds using an exemplary "self-rule" principle, central to its existence. It rests solidly on three pivotal rules,

- self study- analyse what is wrong, discuss potential solutions
- self governance – "in Mumbai and Delhi is our Government, in our village we ourselves are the government"
- participatory democracy (inclusive)- consensus approach, everyone has to agree



## Conclusion

Its an exercise to Broaden understanding, Seek alliance and Initiate change

The studies highlight that given the right approach (ecosystemic) every village in India has the resources to self-sustain (GDP to GNP- Gross Nature Product)

Due to simple principles that allow local modifications, these models have mass appeal. They have potential for local self-sufficiency in resources through ecological regeneration leading to the way out of chronic poverty- food security, employment and livelihood opportunities.

Rights based regimes with strong local institutions work best for people