

## Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of Skills Training Advancement in Rural Societies (STARS FORUM) 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012, “LAKAKI” hall, MCCIA, Pune.

STARS Conference convened by STARS Forum and hosted by Sevavardhini, was held at Pune, on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012. The venue of the conference was at the “LAKAKI” hall of the Maharashtra Chambers of Commerce Industries & Agriculture, Pune.

**Shri Pramod Kulkarni**, Chief Executive Officer of Sevavardhini, welcomed all the guests and the participants.

The conference was inaugurated by **D. Kshama Metre** and **Dr. Sudhir Prabhu** by lighting the traditional lamp (*Deep*).



In his introductory speech **Dr. Sudhir Prabhu** explained the aims of the Forum. He stated “The aim of the conference is to provide a common platform for the like-minded institutions and individuals engaged in skills training, and share their experiences in understanding the needs, the new techniques in teaching skills, the problems and constraints

therein and strive to cooperate and find effective solutions. Deep faith and dedicated work is needed for taking this task ahead”.

He expressed his happiness over the presence of new institutions and individual participants attending the conference. He introduced the steering committee of STARS forum to the audience which was then followed by self introduction by all participants.

**Dr. Yogesh Kulkarni**, STARS Forum Coordinator took a review of the progress of the forum.

- Presently 26 institutions are members of the forum. The forum will be a common platform for various government and nongovernmental voluntary organizations, industries as well as private entrepreneurs. The forum will address ways and means for skill training to rural population, accreditation, economic problems and societal problems and decide the general direction of the skills training in rural / industrial sector. The Forum envisages expanding its work to state and further to the nationwide level.
- The present goals before the forum are: encouraging youth, vocational training, advocacy and providing skill teaching facilities.

### **Action plan:**

- Awareness creation,
- Publishing,
- Resource generation,
- Creation of dignity for manual labor,
- Opportunities creation
- Partnership with government /NGO/industry.
- Experts' visits.
- Initiative to create workable economic model.

The first plenary session started with the speech of **Dr. Narendra Sakhalkar** on the subject: **“Current economic scenario and possible livelihood options in rural areas.”**

- He said that the world has changed a lot after the fall of Communist Russia. All the governments in the world are taking role in shaping their national economies. It has become important to study the societal needs in the economy of a nation. With the evaporation of communist Russia, the water tight compartmentalization between communist and capitalist economies has vanished. Now there has to be a common platform and sharing of ideas for the eradication of poverty.
- He stressed that all countries including USA, have survived poverty and adversities, now surviving and sustaining the prosperity will be the challenge.
- Market is an instrument and it cannot challenge the MAN. The government should rule the banks and make them responsible for their business.
- He also narrated the afforestation efforts done by his voluntary organization in Sindhudurg district. Their experience shows that flora of foreign origin does not environmentally suits in our indigenous conditions.

The post lunch session was devoted to the theme viz. **“Livelihood opportunities in Modern Agricultural practices”**. The session was chaired by **Dr. Kshma Metre**.

- The first speaker **Dr. K.Pillai** of Vivekanand Kendra, Kanyakumari, presented his new research work on Azolla, a very fast growing, floating fern having high Protein (Nitrogen) contents.

- This vegetation can be incorporated in the animal and poultry feed to augment their production.
- This very simple and village based technology has been beneficially been replicated in many states of India and has been recognized by the various state governments and the universities.
- It has been proved to be tool of livelihood for rural families due to its low cost high benefit technology.

**Mrs. Jyoti Dashrathi**, Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, narrated her experiences of the plight of rural farmer in the absence of modern know-how, technology, resources and the market facilities and further stressed that if skills and resources are provided, the migration of rural youth to the urban areas can be checked with assured respectable income in their homestead.

- She specially stressed that one has to have love and intimacy with one's land and intuition for doing agriculture to be a lifelong successful farmer.
- According to her, awareness, motivation, skills training, infrastructure & market facility availability are the main challenges before the rural farmer.
- According to her observations, lack of means of livelihood, modern facilities, amenities and entertainment in villages is one of the basic reasons for the migration of rural youth towards the towns and cities.



The next presentation of the session was by **Shri Dnyaneshwar Bodke** and his colleague from Pune.

- His voluntary organization the Abhinav Farmers' Club has a membership of more than 50,000 farmers, and is run commercially.
- The member farmers deal in various farm activities like agriculture, floriculture, dairy & poultry farming, SHG and other allied jobs. Job opportunities are also offered in packaging, transport and marketing of farm products.
- They have perfected the modern techniques in post harvest processing and marketing.
- This has resulted in respectable earning for farmers doing organic farming.
- Teaching of modern agriculture skills is an important aspect of the club.

- Shri Bodake emphasized that Indian farmer should and is capable of meeting the global challenges. In his confident and assertive talk Dnyaneshwarji said, their main task is to create awareness among farmers about the needs. Up to date knowledge of backward and forward linkages, planning, market study and analysis, financial operation with banks etc. are the basic skills necessary to be successful in agriculture.

Concluding address was delivered by **Dr. Kshmadidi Metre** emphasizing on needs identification of skill training in Agriculture and networking with likeminded organisations.

After the tea break, the first talk was delivered by **Shri Sunil Kulkarni**. His company is developing machinery and equipment for post harvest processing of vegetables, fruits, milk, etc.

- The main processes include dehydration and extraction of flavors and fragrances of food crops /fruits, like turmeric, ginger, custard apple, bibba (marking nut) etc.
- He has also developed a device for production of fodder crops at low cost.
- A film on how the rural youth can educate and sustain himself /herself by availing of “Learn while earning” program of Yashasvini Institute of Technology, was shown.

The next session viz. **“Livelihood challenges & SHG movement”** was chaired by **Dr. Sudhatai Kothari**.

- **Dr. T. K. Sini**, Branch Manager- SHG branch of Maharashtra Bank, took a review of the helpless conditions of the poor, slum area and rural women folk twenty years back and how the Self Help Group movement started by Dr. Mohammad Yunus in BanglaDesh has caught roots in Indian rural societies. Today this movement has given respectable social and financial status to women folk and kindled confidence and entrepreneurship in them.
- She also narrated the training and credit facilities provided by the bank and how the NGOs can come forward to invigorate efforts to diversify the entrepreneurship models with skills training and forward linkage for sustainability.
- Major hurdles before these groups are literacy, training in account keeping, financial management, need identification, project formulation and further processing and marketing of the products.
- It is these areas where voluntary organizations can help them. She also made a mention of political pressurizing of some of these groups which need to be taken care of.

- She also took note of some of the constraints of SHG groups like, limited financial strength, uneven distribution, dishonesty, internal disputes, inadequate knowledge, political pressure, lack of market knowledge etc.



**Shri Ram Subramaniam** of National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) expressed his views on the SHG movement and its further development.

- He also reiterated the need for training of the SHG

group members in various banking and technical skills and strengthen the mature SHG groups by repeated financing to their needs. Sustainability of the SHG groups and their joining together to form federation and create more powerful and enterprising group is desired.

- He informed the audience about the SHG -2 scheme that will be introduced shortly, which will further strengthen the groups by multiple refinancing.

**Dr. Kothari**, in her chairperson's address stressed the need for support service for sustainability of the SHGs, clustering of the SHG groups and said that training in various aspects of financial, technical and managerial skills as well value addition and successful marketing of their products is very essential for the success of the group's survival and progress.

- She, referring to CMRC (Community Managed Resource Centre), stressed upon supporting SHG members by helping them in "Family & Personal level planning of Livelihood" and use of MNREGA & Watershed for the same.

**The Second Day** of the conference, 4<sup>th</sup> December, was given for discussions on **"Technology Interventions for Livelihood generation"**.

The session was chaired by **Dr. A.B.Pande**, Vice-President of BAIF Development Research Foundation.

**Shri Santosh Gondhalekar**, in his presentation on Employment opportunities in Bio-energy sector took a quick review of the present day situation and availability of solid, liquid and gaseous fuel and its increasing shortages.



- The ever increasing demand for energy for industry and domestic purpose has to be made good by diverting to biomass.
- This source has tremendous but until now untapped potential. The biomass can be from grass to well grown trees or their waste material.
- He gave an example of the energy which can be produced from Napier (Gajraj) grass. Likewise, methane from animal droppings and waste food can also be converted to energy by use of suitable technology.
- Methane from gas can be purified in liquid form and can be used for industrial or domestic use and can also be used for electric power generation.
- The criteria for sustainable energy from biomass are: technical feasibility, economic and social acceptability and sustainability.
- The energy from biomass is more “clean” than coal, oil and liquefied natural gas. Thus biomass energy can be safer for environment and getting carbon credit too.
- Pelleting of dry biomass and gasifying for energy production is also possible.

**Shri T.N. (Anna)Limaye**, a teacher by profession and keenly interested in rural development, put his ideas before the audience. He gave special emphasis on innovative technology use in rural area. Vocations suggested by him for rural youth, need small



capital, need simple skills, are sustainable financially. These vocations include, simple food processing, making of alcohol, wine, vinegar etc.

- In animal industry, poultry, duck keeping, turkey rearing are some simple vocations that can be done by rural men and women.
- Honey bee keeping (Apiculture) is another business that can be done with little training and small capital. This has multiple uses like increase in crop production, income from honey and bee-wax selling.

- In conclusion he expressed his doubt that: 1) whether rural folk are really in need of any vocation or business and 2) have the voluntary organizations gone so self-satisfied and lethargic that they have forgotten motivating the rural people?

**Shri Milind Wakode**, Director, Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC) showed a documentary film on training in honey collection and bee keeping to tribal in Melghat area Amravati district of Maharashtra.

- This vocation has given not only a sustainable means of livelihood to tribal, but also checked their migration to towns and cities.
- Very interesting information on community life of bees and medicinal values of bee-venom was given by him.



**Dr.A.B.Pande**, in his speech gave a message of “Think globally and act locally.”

- Choosing an appropriate technology, testing, modifying to our local needs and then giving it to people are the workable strategy, he said.
- Building of the confidence in people, training them, providing forward and

backward linkages gives success. This can then be replicated at other places.

- He also mentioned the organic agriculture and milk production with attention on health of the soil by enriching it with organic matter.

The next session was on **“Vocational& Skill Training – Current scenario, Issues and areas of mutual cooperation”**.

**Shri Vivek Sinare**, Chief Manager, MITCON delivered speech on his experiences about skills training.

- Need assessment of the rural youth and industry is the first requirement, followed by the identification of opportunities for training and post training support in the form of job and further technical support.

- Presently there is shortage of “skilled” man power in all sorts of industry. The skilled man power, though a little costlier, proves to be economic and cost saving in long run.
- Manufacturers of machinery and equipment as well as service sector are in need of skilled men and women. The skills include both technical as well as soft skills, and value addition.
- Follow up of training and trainees are essential to update their skill, knowledge, problems and to find out solutions for them.

**Mrs. Mrunalini Kher** of Yuva Parivartan presented on current situation of employability in India and efforts of Yuva Parivartan.

- Though India is shining in some fields, there is another dark side too.
- There is lack of employment among rural and slums youth. There is no motivation, proper guidance and training in various vocational and soft skills. Increasing school drop-outs is also a problem.
- Reaching this young generation at various levels is also a great task. The boys’ attitude is generally skeptical but girls have attitude of sharing the sorrows and distresses of their mothers and have inclination to take training in vocational or other skill for livelihood earning.
- Industry and other sectors are also in search of vocationally, as well as soft skilled man power but are reluctant to pay handsome salaries.
- This attitude needs a change. Voluntary organizations, government agencies, and industry should come together on a common platform and find out the solution and, ways and means to impart training to such aspirant rural youth.

**Shri Pradeep Tupe** of Yashaswini Institute of Technology told about the efforts of their Institution to empower rural drop outs or unprivileged students by offering them a chance to learn while earning.

**Shri Chintan Mokashi**– AGM, Non Farm Sector, NABARD, put his remarks.

NABARD’s experience of working with NGOs is mixed. There are NGOs working with great integrity, at the same time there are some other NGOs searching for funding only.





After pouring some crores of rupees through various schemes n programs of various departments, the situation in rural as well as urban areas is still disappointing. Often it's seen that the skill & vocational training courses selected do not match with the local situation; also these courses are too fancy and have least relevance with the local needs. Looking to this scenario, NABARD has now changed its policy from total grant support to loan based projects. Here after NABARD will not provide full grant support to any project. There will be a partial component of loan/ credit linkage in support to any project. This provision, we hope, will make the concerned NGOs more answerable and performing.

Before going for the last session of the conference, some of the participants were given opportunity to express their institution's role in skills training.

- **Shri Milind Joshi** of Swami Vivekanand Samaj Prabodhan Sanstha, Sillod apprised the audience about his experiences in upliftment of rural tribal women through Bibba nut processing project. Value addition, experimentation, education and replication are essential for the success of the project.
- **Shri rajesh Shirodkar** of Atharv Foundation in his short remarks observed that 97% of the people do not have any fixed goal before them. Once a goal is selected it is not difficult to achieve with proper knowledge, skill, attitude and right action. Any training is incomplete without practical, and back up training and evaluation.
- **Shri Satish Chauhan**, a dairy consultant gave detailed information about starting a dairy project and assured of all support for the same.
- **Shri B.K.Mane**, Chairman, Vegetables & Fruit Growers Federation, emphasized the need for training to fruits & vegetable growers. As per his observation, though India stands on 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> rank in fruit production, there is 40% loss of fruits & vegetables due to infrastructure unavailability. The schemes of central & state governments do not reach to the farmers and agriculture as well as other universities are not reaching to the farmer and delivering the practical training.

At present there seems to be no institution in Maharashtra which gives training in vegetable and fruit processing.

**Shri Milind Thatte** summed up the activities of the 2days sessions and requested all the participants to give feedback on this conference and suggest new ideas if any. He thanked all the guest lecturers and the participants of behalf of the STRAS FORUM.

## Concluding Session:

Shri Yogesh Kulkarni, Coordinator of the Forum opened the session with the remark that the two days sessions were informative, constructive and lively.

He invited remarks and suggestions from the participants for the further progress of the forum.

Some of the suggestions received from the attendees are as follows:

- *More stress is needed on agriculture based skills training.*
- *Regional conferences should be organized pertaining to the problems of that region.*
- *Involvement of rural / slum area worker is needed to understand their problems.*
- *The lectures / discussions should be focused on the subject. Personal experiences/ remarks may be avoided.*
- *Printed material of the lectures may be distributed to the participants.*
- *The use of print and soft media as well as institutional/ personal contacts may be used for dissemination of the work of the Forum.*
- *A concrete program may be prepared by the forum for skills development.*
- *The participant institutions should publish the success stories in their domain and also comment on the success rate and causes of shortfalls.*
- *The Forum should arrange exhibition /stalls for the participating institutions.*
- *The Forum should set goal in various activities.*
- Dr. Kulkarni in his concluding speech took review of the last two conferences and added that the response is ever increasing. It has been decided that the forum's work sphere should be escalated to the state and further to nationwide level.
- NABARD has agreed to publish the conference report and supply copies to all concerned.
- STARS Forum will supply soft copy of the proceeding to all members and participants.



- It has been observed that three types of institutions are participating in the forum
- As on this day 26 organizations have accepted the membership of the forum. Participants are requested to become member and inspire other institutions to join the Forum.
- The present member institutions are of three types:
  - Institutions giving training
  - Institutions working as linkages
  - Institutions providing finance & infrastructure.
- STARS Forum will not have any program of its own, but will only coordinate the programs of other organizations. Other member organization will cooperate.
- Last year the Forum decided to undertake some work, which has to be completed next year. These include:
  - To prepare a website,
  - To start a quarterly e-news letter,
  - Prepare members list.
- It has been unanimously decided that the Steering Committee, will henceforth be known as Executive Board of the Forum and Dr. Yogesh Kulkarni, now coordinator, will work as Chairman of the Executive Board of the Forum.
- The Forum will be registered under societies registration act.
- In addition to the current members, three more members were nominated and unanimously accepted on the Executive Body. They are:
  - Shri B.K.Mane
  - Shri Vilas Kirote
  - Shri Nene.
- It has also been decided that the host institution, topic of discussions and the guest lecturers for the coming conference shall be decided in advance.
- Yashaswini Institute of Technology, Pune has volunteered for hosting the conference of the year 2013.

- The financial support for the conference was provided by **Bank of Maharashtra** and **Janaseva Sahakari Bank Ltd. Pune**. Bank of Maharashtra provided sponsorship for the conference material while Janaseva Sahakari Bank provided general sponsorship.
- The food arrangement was provided by **Mr. Natu of Ashwamedh Hall** free of charge.
- Dr. Yogesh Kulkarni proposed a vote of thanks to all those who contributed to the successful organisation of this 3<sup>rd</sup> annual conference.



## STARS Forum Executive Board- 2013

1. Dr. Yogesh Kulkarni- Chairman Vigyan Ashram, Pabal, Pune Dist. <a href="mailto:vabal@gmail.com">vabal@gmail.com</a> , 973 000 5016	2. Dr. Sudhir Prabhu STARS Forum, SOW, Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, <a href="mailto:Slprabhu1@yahoo.com">Slprabhu1@yahoo.com</a> 01 904 731 3245;
3. Mr. Milind Thatte Vayam, Nashik <a href="mailto:milindthatte@gmail.com">milindthatte@gmail.com</a> 942 156 4330; 902 800 4330	4. Mr. Kiran Inamdar Hemendra Kothari Foundation <a href="mailto:kiraninamdar@gmail.com">kiraninamdar@gmail.com</a> 998 731 5556
5. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi Sheti Udyog Bhandar, Swargate, Pune <a href="mailto:rajugandhi07@gmail.com">rajugandhi07@gmail.com</a> 982 205 2586	6. Dr. Kshma Metre CORD (Chinmaya Organisation for Rural Development), Sidhbari, HP <a href="mailto:cordsidhbari@gmail.com">cordsidhbari@gmail.com</a> ; +91-1892-234322/236987: Delhi H.O. 91 11 24616291;989910773
7. Mrs. Pallavi Shanbhagh Vigyan Ashram, Pabal, Dist Pune <a href="mailto:pallavi19f@rediffmail.com">pallavi19f@rediffmail.com</a> , 937 069 2300	8. Mr. Pramod Kulkarni Seva Vardhini, Pune <a href="mailto:sevavardhini@gmail.com">sevavardhini@gmail.com</a> 942 358 0535; 020 24433606
9. Shri Vilas Khirete Vishwa Foundation , Sasane nagar, Hadpasar, Pune. <a href="mailto:vilaskhirete@yahoo.in">vilaskhirete@yahoo.in</a> , 9822254575	10. Shri Vasant Nene Lend AHand India, Jeeva Vihar colony, Off S.B.Road, Pune-16. <a href="mailto:lahi@lend-a-hand-india.org">lahi@lend-a-hand-india.org</a> , 9421015873.
11. Shri B.K.Mane President, Fruits n Vegetables Processing Federation, Pune. <a href="mailto:byk@rediffmail.com">byk@rediffmail.com</a> 9890642442	