



Promoting Pollinator-Friendly Landscapes in Rural India

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Theme:
Pollination
and Bee Flora

Sub-theme:
Pollinator-
Friendly Rural
Landscapes

Introduction

Pollination is crucial for food security in India, yet pollinator populations are under severe threat from habitat loss, agrochemicals,



deforestation, and unsustainable farming practices. The decline in natural habitats results in diminished pollinator services, negatively impacting biodiversity and agriculture.

Objectives

- **Promote** pollinator-friendly rural landscapes.
- **Reduce** unsustainable honey-hunting practices.
- **Integrate** sustainable beekeeping into smallholder agriculture.
- **Enhance** biodiversity and rural livelihoods.

Result



- **70%** reduction in unsustainable honey-hunting practices.
- **90%** of beekeepers report an increase in local pollinators.
- Average income increase: **Rs. 27,000** (\$315) per beekeeper annually.
- **15%** improvement in green cover through fallow land cultivation.
- Crop yield improvement for vegetables, oilseeds, pulses, and fruits.
- **86%** of smallholders found the initiative highly beneficial.

Conclusion

Pollinator conservation can coexist with poverty reduction. Sustainable beekeeping strengthens ecosystems, boosts crop productivity, and improves rural incomes—demonstrating a scalable model for environmental and economic sustainability.



Methodology



Implemented the **Bees for Poverty Reduction Programme** across 282 villages.

Community sensitisation on pollinator importance and sustainable practices.



Distribution of **pollinator-friendly seeds and saplings** (e.g., sunhemp, pigeon pea, sesame, mango, moringa).

Training farmers to maintain indigenous bee colonies and leverage traditional knowledge.



"Rural women need local, accessible, low investment interventions that align with our daily activities. Beekeeping is the perfect fit. It helped me adapt to climate challenges"

– Sonali Mukane
27-year-old beekeeper in Palghar



Keywords

#Pollinators #Beekeeping
#Biodiversity #SustainableFarming



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Pollination is vital for food security in India, yet habitat loss, agrochemicals, deforestation, and intensive farming threaten pollinators. When natural habitats decline, pollinators and their essential services diminish.

Under The Mango Tree Society (UTMT Society) India, through its Bees for Poverty Reduction Programme (operational in 282 villages), promotes pollinator-friendly rural landscapes by integrating sustainable beekeeping into smallholder agriculture. The initiative raises awareness in indigenous communities about the need to shift away from unsustainable honey-hunting practices and adopt sustainable beekeeping methods, ensuring that local pollinator populations are conserved and thrive. Sensitization campaigns have led to a 70% reduction in unsustainable honey-hunting and agricultural practices, improved pollinator presence (with almost 90% of beekeepers reporting an increase in local bees and pollinators), enhanced crop yields (for vegetables, oilseeds, pulses, fruits, and forests), supported biodiversity, and created supplementary income opportunities (with an average annual income increase of \$315 per beekeeper from pollination-related activities).

Harnessing local knowledge, UTMT Society revives and leverages traditional understanding of indigenous bee species, helping build resilient agricultural ecosystems. This enables smallholders to maintain bee colonies that enhance natural pollination, reducing the reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides. In turn, this improves soil health, supports forest regeneration, and promotes growth of local flora.

Additionally, pollinator-friendly flora is promoted through the distribution and planting of seeds (sunhemp, pigeon pea, sesame, mustard, etc.) and saplings (mango, coconut, cashew, moringa, lemon, apple jujube, etc.), ensuring year-round forage availability for local bees. This boosts honey production, enhances and strengthens local ecosystems by supporting a diverse range of pollinators. Resource-poor smallholders (86% of whom find the initiative beneficial) benefit from harvesting readily available produce for self-consumption, while surplus crops are sold in local markets, improving food security and nutrition. The intervention also encourages beekeepers to cultivate fallow land, improving the green cover of the area by approximately 15%.

UTMT Society fosters a self-sustaining model, empowering rural communities to become stewards of their landscapes. The program demonstrates that pollinator conservation and rural livelihoods can go hand in hand, positioning beekeeping as a powerful tool for poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability.