

**Report: Aware the local stakeholders of the health of the
Saptalingi River in Sangameshwar block, Ratnagiri district,
Maharashtra**



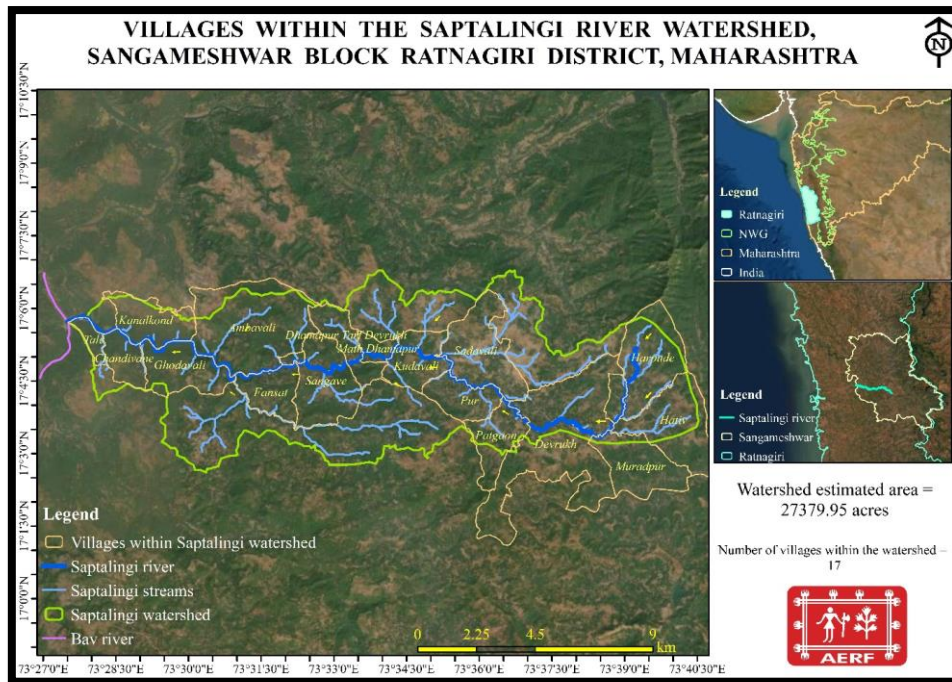
**Submitted by
Gunwant Mahajan**

I. Introduction-

The Western Ghats, also known as the Sahyadri mountains, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a well-known biodiversity hotspot. This mountain chain is a major watershed of numerous rivers of peninsular India. As far as Maharashtra is concerned rivers like Godavari, Krishna, and Bhima originate in this Sahyadri mountain. The main development focus is on these east-flowing rivers as they are bigger in catchments and length than the west-flowing rivers in the mountain and are the lifeline of city people in all southern states in India including Maharashtra. The west-flowing rivers are small and hence mostly neglected in the development process. This has had a positive impact so far on these rivers and their ecosystem. These rivers still hold the natural flows and provide crucial ecological services to the local communities. However, the development has reached other ways to threaten these rivers. These rivers are now facing threats of change in land use, pollution, a lifestyle change from the local people, and a lack of awareness among them.

II. Site Description-

The Saptalingi River is a small west-flowing river in the Sahyadri mountains. It is a tributary of the Bav River. It originates in Harpude village and hardly flows 33 km before it meets the Bav River near Tale village in Sangameshwar block. It has a watershed of 27693 acres and flows through 17 villages in the block (Map-1). It mainly flows on the laterite plateau of Devrukh town and surrounding villages. It faces several threats that impact the ecological health of the river. For example, there is a lot of deforestation in the catchment, it gets polluted when it passes through human settlements due to non-degradable plastic waste and loss of biodiversity due to littering, drying up or flooding seasonally. The rivers in Sangameshwar are rich in biodiversity as these rivers are home to endemic and threatened species like *Cryptocoryne cognata* (plant, Endangered), Smooth-coated Otters (Mammal, Vulnerable) and Asian Small-clawed Otter (Mammal, Vulnerable). These rivers provide important ecological services to the local people like recharge of groundwater and food. To date, groundwater is the main source of drinking water in the Sangameshwar block. The local fishermen (the Ghorpi community) are completely dependent on these rivers for their livelihoods. Fishing is the traditional business of this community. They have very good knowledge of freshwater fish in this area. They catch freshwater fish from these rivers throughout the year and sell it in the local markets.



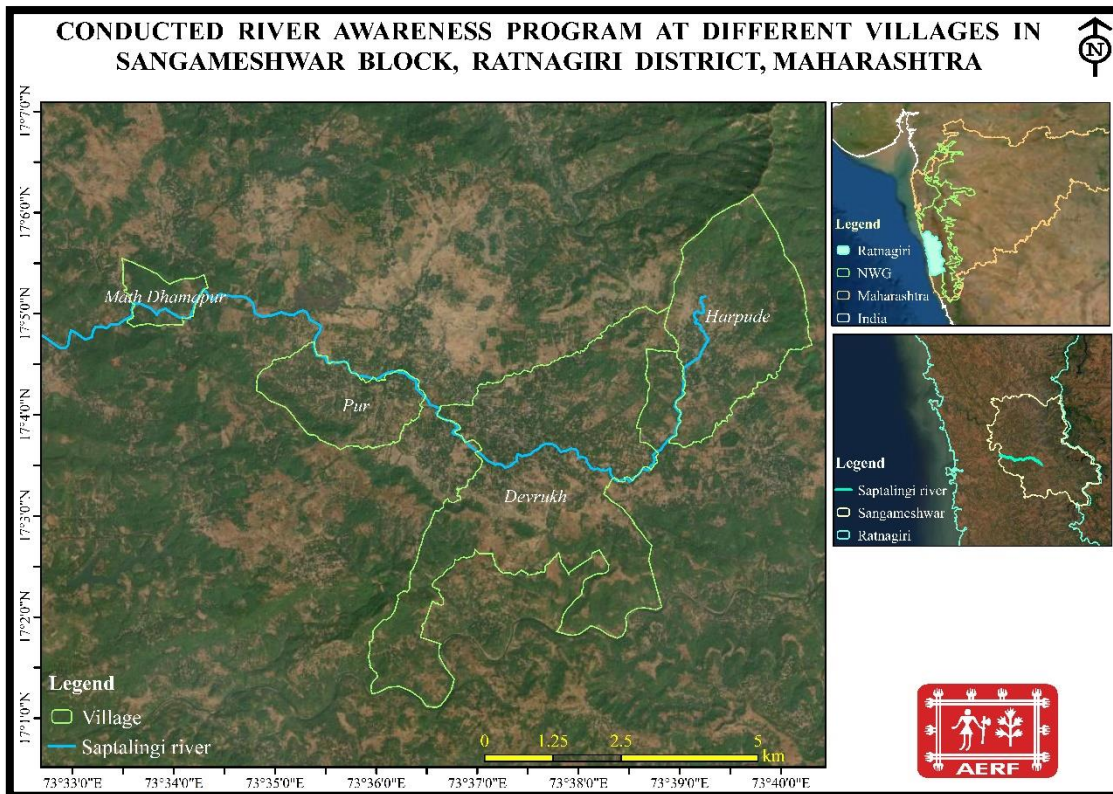
Map-1

III. Threats to the river-

Due to unprecedented development reaching the remote corners of the Sangameshwar block, the Saptalingi river is threatened. Regular deforestation, water pollution, and dumping of non-degradable waste aggravate the situation that results in the loss of valuable ecosystem services.

IV. Actions to conserve the river-

After identifying problems around the river's health and discussions with the AERF field team, I came up with a plan for generating awareness about the river and its health. I understand this is the first step towards its conservation and responsible efforts by the community in AERF collaboration. With the support of M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) and Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF), we as a small team for this purpose, organized awareness programs at Harpude, Devrukh, Pur and Math Dhamapur villages in Sangameshwar block, which form the catchment of Saptalingi.



Map-2

I visited these villages and had meetings with the village representatives and local leaders for planning awareness sessions. I prepared a PowerPoint presentation and posters for this awareness program in the local language Marathi. This PPT is about the availability of fresh water, its sources, the role of rivers in the distribution of freshwater in India, and the ecological health of the Saptalingi river. The objectives of this session were

- A. To generate awareness among the stakeholders of the current status of the river concerning its watershed forest, flow, river bank, threats from pollution, and the role of stakeholders to conserve the river.
- B. To explain different parameters that define the good or bad health of the river.
- C. To understand the people's knowledge about the river.
- D. To build their capacity to involve them in river restoration.

Stakeholders like the local authorities (Gram Panchayat and Town Council), farmers, students, traders, and teachers were present for these sessions. I conducted one session in each village. Because of heavy rainfall followed by a red alert in the block, I couldn't conduct outdoor sessions. I distributed banners displaying the current status of the river and the features of a healthy river.

The details of each session are as follows.

Sr. No.	Village	Stakeholders	Total number of participants	Date
1	Harpude	Sarpanch, Teachers, Gram Panchayat Members, Farmers, village president, students of 6 th and 7 th standard.	39	13 th July 2022
2	Devrukh	Chief Executive Officer, town president, Social Workers, corporators, members of local organizations, staff of Devrukh Nagar Panchayat, members of traders' association, Principal of Athale-Sapre College.	25	15 th July 2022
3	Math Dhamapur	Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Members, villages, teachers, farmers, and students.	50	19 th July 2022
4	Pur	Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat Members, teachers, and students of 6 th and 7 th standard.	19	20 th July 2022

Table-1

V. Conclusion & way forward-

I successfully conducted the Saptalingi river health awareness programme in four villages i.e., Harpude, Devrukh, Pur and Math Dhampaur of Sangameshwar. These villages are strategically important for conservation action in the future. Harpude is in the source region and has a highly degraded watershed. Devrukh is the headquarter of the Sangameshwar block and is a growing town. It has an impact on the river in the form of pollution both plastic litter and wastewater as the river flows through the town. Pur and Math Dhamapur face the impact of sedimentation and pollution. Ahead of Math Dhamapur, the river flows through the hilly terrain of Sangave, Fansat, Ambavali, and Tale villages.

A total of 133 stakeholders from these villages participated in this programme. The number was limited due to heavy rainfall and the season of peak paddy operations. All stakeholders appreciated these sessions and showed interest to work with AERF for river conservation. All of them agreed on the following issues during the discussions.

1. The river flow has been reduced.
2. Sediment in the river channel is affecting the flow.
3. Ground water level is declined.
4. Pollution is impacting the water quality.

The Chief Executive Officer of Devrukh Nagar Panchayat shared his experience on work done by the Panchayat in the channel of the Saptalingi river. The Panchayat has built a few bunds to store water in the channel. At that time, they came to know that it is not gazetted river like other big rivers in the area and they face technical problems whenever they try to get government funds for the river. He

has a keen interest to work in the conservation of this river and wants AERF's involvement to develop a river conservation plan. So, we had a separate meeting to discuss how to prepare the conservation plan at least for the part of the river that flows through the town. Likewise, the people in Math Damapur shared their experiences of plastic waste in the river and the impact of bunds that were built without technical knowledge of river bed and flow. They used to drink water from the river directly but not anymore.

I believe that this is an opportunity as well as a time to work for river conservation in Sangameshwar block before it gets too late. AERF presence will certainly be crucial to work on the ground. AERF is already working on forest conservation in the Sangameshwar block. AERF is protecting about 7000 acres of private forest in Sangameshwar. All of these are in the watershed of eight of the rivers in Sangameshwar. As far as the Saptalingi river is concerned, villages like Talawade tarf Devrukh, Patgaon, and Ambavali are in the watershed of the river where AERF is protecting more than 200 acres of private forest since 2007. We need to assess the impact of this forest conservation initiative on the health of the rivers in the Sangameshwar block and set a conservation goal for these rivers. In the coming days, I will work on coordinating with the rest of the villages in the watershed of the Saptalingi river, aware them of the river's health, and prepare a comprehensive river conservation plan with help of all stakeholders.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank MSSRF for providing me with valuable training on river health and financial support to carry out the Saptalingi River awareness program. I would like to thank Dr Anilkumar for inviting me to attend this 5 days national-level training program on River Health Monitoring and Restoration at Chengannur. Likewise, I am grateful to AERF Director, Dr Archana Godbole and Jayant Sarnaik for providing me with an opportunity to attend this training program, guiding and providing logistic support to conduct awareness sessions. My thanks and appreciation also go to my colleagues Sanjay Pashte, Pranav Panavalkar, Mahadev Sawant, Shruti Savla, Ruchi Bhadke, and Ganesh Shedge. I would like to thank Shri Yuyutse Arte, journalist and environment enthusiast, who is a well-wisher of AERF and accompanied me for these sessions. I also owe special thanks to Kajal Barman and Suchitra Naidu for providing their guidance and GIS data for the awareness session and this report.

Finally, I am sincerely thankful to the Sarpanch of Harpude, Pur, and Math Dhamapur as well as the president Municipal council of Devrukh who showed interest in river conservation and allow me to conduct this awareness program at their place. Finally, I would like to thank all the participants of the awareness sessions along the river Saptlingi.

Photos



Awareness session at Devrukh Nagar Panchayat



Awareness session in Math Dhamapur- Pranav explaining river fauna



Awareness session in Harpude- Mahadev explaining river flora



Awareness session in Pur- students going through posters



Awareness session- A teacher in Pur Primary School talking about the session



Awareness session in Math Dhampur- Mr Gurav second from the left is talking about the waste litter in the river



Distribution of river health awareness posters in schools

List of participants-

Devrukh

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गाव- नेगापंचायत देवदख कार्यालय

क्र.	उपस्थित सदस्याचे नाव	पद	सही
1)	ज्ञानिप सजय ठाणे	सहायक कार्यकर्ता	
2)	लिंगाबा वसुधा हळमणी	मुलादम	
3)	प्रमोद दत्तमण्य बायलू	शिपिक	
4)	गोशा फुलोराग ठाणे	व्यक्ति प्रतिनिधि	
5)	राजेश बांकर बेरे	City Co-ordinator	
6)	श्री. कुमार धोंडिराम सुर्वे	सहा. प्रमुख कार्यकर्ता	
7)	पद्मिनी पुकाबा कदम	सहायक कार्यकर्ता	
8)	निधीश वि. शिंदे	शिपिक	
9)	महेश अर्बाक कदम	शिपिक	
10)	आशिकांत शरद बांकी	शिपिक	
11)	विश्वजित अिकाने ठाणे	व्यक्ति प्रतिनिधि	
12)	निधीश बांकर पराराम	शिपिक	
13)	संतोष लामदेव कर्वे	मुदकी शिपिक	
14)	तेजस चंद्रकांत शेवठे	शिपिक	
15)	सजय अश्विन राजवडे	व्यापारी	
16)	अश्विन अश्विन गिते	व्यापारी	
17)	डा. सरदार आ. पीठान	Vice-Principal	
18)	सुशुभा शिंदे	सहायक कार्यकर्ता	
19)	संदीपा रंजना शिंदे	सहायक कार्यकर्ता	

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क्र.	उपस्थित सदस्याचे नाव	पद	सही
20)	विनायक गंगाराम कदम	सहायक कार्यकर्ता	
21)	प्रमोद सुशुभा कदम सुर्वे	सहायक कार्यकर्ता	
22)	आशा अश्विन	सहायक कार्यकर्ता	
23)	सुरेश चंद्रकांत शिंदे	City Engineer	
24)	चैतन्य सुधाकर विंभुते	मुख्याधिकारी	
25)	सुशुभा कदम सुर्वे	सहायक कार्यकर्ता	

Math Dhamapur

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क्र.	उपस्थित सदस्याचे नाव	पद	सही
1	श्री. ज्योती शिवाजी माई	अध्यक्ष	
2	श्री. सुनील विठ्ठल जाधव	उपाध्यक्ष	
3	श्री. चतुर्धा कुमारी		
4	श्री. विनायक जगदीश		
5	श्री. अश्लीत विठ्ठल		
6	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
7	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
8	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
9	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
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12	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
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17	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
18	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
19	श्री. सुनील सुनील		

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क्र.	उपस्थित सदस्याचे नाव	पद	सही
20	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
21	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
22	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
23	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
24	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
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36	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
37	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
38	श्री. सुनील सुनील		

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क्र.	उपस्थित सदस्याचे नाव	पद	सही
39	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
40	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
41	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
42	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
43	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
44	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
45	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
46	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
47	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
48	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
49	श्री. सुनील सुनील		
50	श्री. सुनील सुनील		

Harpude

Shot on note 1

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गाव- हारपुडे, ग्रामपंचायत

क्र.	उपस्थित सदस्याचे नाव	पद	सही
1)	सी. संतोषी संतोष शुरव	सरपंच	<i>[Signature]</i>
2)	सी. चारुता चंद्रशेखर उमानविकर	पदवीधर शिक्षिका	<i>[Signature]</i>
3)	सी. समिक्षा अमीर मोहिते	ग्रामसेवक	<i>[Signature]</i>
4)	सी. नितीशा जितेंद्र शेंभरते	ग्राम लक्ष्य	जितेंद्र शेंभरते
5)	कु. आशिकी संजय शिर्डे	ग्राम सहस्य	<i>[Signature]</i>
6)	सी. सुरेश राजराज शुरव	सहस्यप्रमुख	<i>[Signature]</i>
7)	सी. कोणाल शिवाजी कांबळे	पदाधिकाारी कांबळे	<i>[Signature]</i>
8)	पदाधिकाारी कांबळे	पदाधिकाारी कांबळे	<i>[Signature]</i>
9)	शिवतारा मंगेश शिर्डे	शिवतारा मंगेश शिर्डे	<i>[Signature]</i>
10)	तन्वी संतोष गोस्वते	तन्वी सं. गोस्वते	<i>[Signature]</i>
11)	वसुंधरा चंद्रकांत शुरव	वसुंधरा चं. शुरव	<i>[Signature]</i>
12)	दिना वसुंधरा शामणे	दिना व. शामणे	<i>[Signature]</i>
13)	संजना दिग्विजय आंबे	संजना दि. आंबे	<i>[Signature]</i>
14)	प्रायल प्रकाश पेडारी	प्रायल प्र. पेडारी	<i>[Signature]</i>
15)	प्रावली देवेंद्र कांबळे	प्रावली दे. कांबळे	<i>[Signature]</i>
16)	अर्पिता अंकुश शिर्डे	अर्पिता अं. शिर्डे	<i>[Signature]</i>

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क्र.	उपस्थित सदस्याचे नाव	पद	सही
17)	राजेशा पंडीत अनकुटे		रा.पं. अनकुटे
18)	विशाल विमल भागि		विशाल वि. भागि
19)	संग्राम गौतम कांबळे		संग्राम गौ. कांबळे
20)	सुधीक्षा शोभा कांबळे		सु. श. कांबळे
21)	भवण अंकुश शिर्डे		भवण अं. शिर्डे
22)	जय जयवंत शुरव		जय अं. शुरव
23)	तनिष्का लक्ष्मी शुरव		तनिष्का लक्ष्मी शुरव
24)	कोणाल सुनील धुडा		कोणाल सु. धुडा
25)	सावणी प्रकाश वाईता		सावणी प्र. वाईता
26)	अंजना अश्विनी शिर्डे		अंजना अ. शिर्डे
27)	मंगला मनिंद सावंत		मंगला म. सावंत
28)	तेजस्वीनी प्रदिप शिर्डे		तेजस्वीनी प्र. शिर्डे
29)	चैतुजा संतोष गोस्वते		चैतुजा सं. गोस्वते
30)	प्रणव प्रमोद रावठा		प्रणव प्र. रावठा
31)	स्वाती सुनील शुरव		स्वाती सु. शुरव

Pur

Shot on note 1

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गाव- सुप्र ग्रामपंचायत, पुर, छिंदवासा

क्र.	उपस्थित सदस्याचे नाव	पद	सही
1)	सी. संजना संतोष कांबळे	उपसरपंच	<i>[Signature]</i>
2)	सी. जयवंत शोभा कांबळे	सरपंच	<i>[Signature]</i>
3)	सी. सुनील विष्णू पाटील	ग्रामसेवक	<i>[Signature]</i>
4)	सी. गोपनी शिवाजी शिर्डे	सुध्या	<i>[Signature]</i>
5)	सी. शिवतारा शोभा शिर्डे	शिवतारा शिर्डे	<i>[Signature]</i>
6)	सी. संजय महादेव शिर्डे	साधरपंच	<i>[Signature]</i>
7)	सी. राजेश अश्विनी सावंत	सहस्य	<i>[Signature]</i>
8)	कु. दत्तप्रसाद अनंता शिर्डे	सहस्य	<i>[Signature]</i>
9)	श्याम प्रियंक नाईकाकर		Y.D. Namhakar
10)	अंजना देवेंद्र शिर्डे		S.L. Zepale
11)	अंजना विनायक शिर्डे		O.V. Bhalerao
12)	अंजना शिर्डे शिर्डे		अ. श. शिर्डे
13)	सौ. सुधीक्षा मोहिते		S. S. Mohite
14)	सौ. सुधीक्षा जाधव		S.U. Jadhav
15)	सौ. सुधीक्षा शिर्डे कांबळे		S.M. Kamble
16)	सौ. सुधीक्षा शिर्डे		सुधीक्षा शिर्डे
17)	सौ. सुधीक्षा शिर्डे कांबळे		M.N. Kamble
18)	सौ. सुधीक्षा शिर्डे		Y.S. Zepale
19)	सौ. सुधीक्षा शिर्डे कांबळे		B.R. Namhakar

Posters distributed in schools

Features of a healthy river



१. पाणलोट क्षेत्रात उत्तम जंगल
२. जिवंत पाण्याचे झरे/बारमाही पाणी
३. स्वच्छ वाहते पाणी

४. शेतीसाठी पाण्याचा वापर
५. पिण्यासाठी उपयोग
६. उत्तम जैवविविधता उदा. मासे

सुस्थितीतील नदी परिसंस्था

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Features of a degraded river



१. नदीपात्रात आणि काठावर बांधकाम असणे.
२. अनियंत्रित वाळू उपसा करणे.
३. नदी काठावर वनस्पती आच्छादन नसणे.

४. नदीत सांडपाणी आणि कचरा टाकणे.
५. साठलेले शेवाळयुक्त पाणी.
६. नदीपात्र गाळाने भरणे.

निकृष्ट स्थितीतील नदी परिसंस्था

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