

‘Aaplé Pathardi’ आपले पाथर्डी |

Multi-stakeholder event organised as part of the APC project

6th December 2019 to 10th December 2019 | Pathardi, Jawhar

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This report captures the field visit related to the five-days of multi-stakeholder event 'Aaplé Pathardi Pathardi' undertaken from 6th Dec 2019 (day zero) till 10th Dec 2019 (day four). This report is presented in the form of pictures and notes to make the report easily readable and short.

More information about this event can be found in the following weblink <http://homepages.iitb.ac.in/~sarbanielur/pathardi/>

After the deployment of the online and offline network in Pathardi, Jawhar, we organised the multi-stakeholder event at Pathardi. Invitations to participate in the workshop was sent out to Palghar Collector, CEO Zilla Parishad, Project Officer Jawhar, Block Development Officer and other government officials in Palghar and Jawhar. This event marked an important milestone in the APC project funded to Gram Marg, IIT Bombay and BAIF Development Research Foundation, Pune. The reasons to hold this event was twofold. The first being to showcase to the district administration how online and offline connectivity can coexist and how people can make good utilisation of the connectivity in their day to day lives. The second reason was to get feedback from the community in Pathardi, government officials, academia and researchers about how such a model of connectivity can be replicated in various other villages in resource-constrained conditions.

In order to give a context to the Network Architecture in Pathardi, please refer to Fig.1 below.

NETWORK ARCHITECTURE: IN PATHARDI VILLAGE

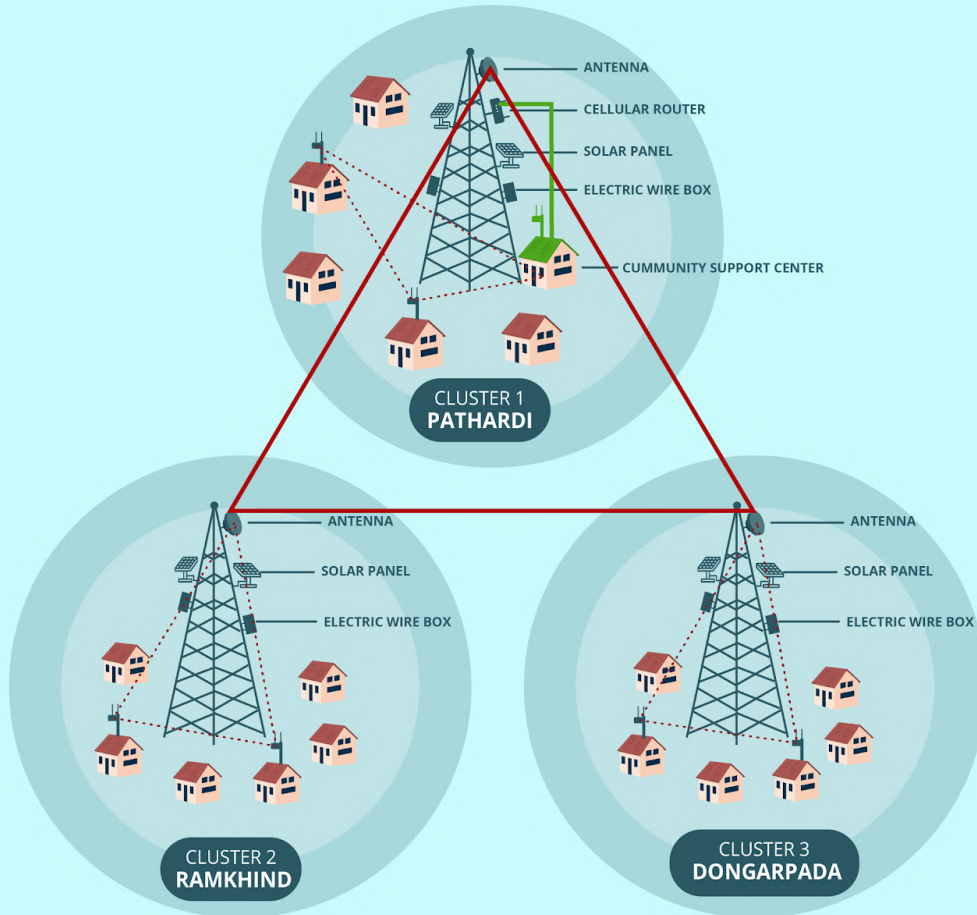


Figure 1: Network architecture of Pathardi village

Fig 2 and 3 depicts the online connectivity uses and the offline connectivity uses respectively.

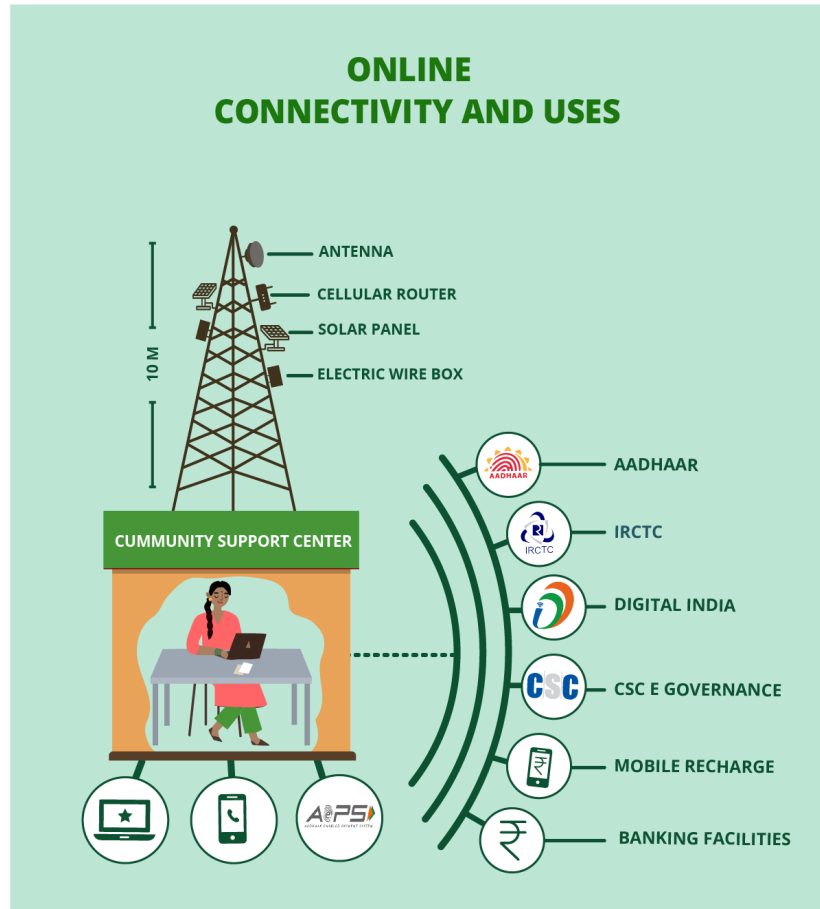


Figure 2: Online connectivity and its uses in Pathardi

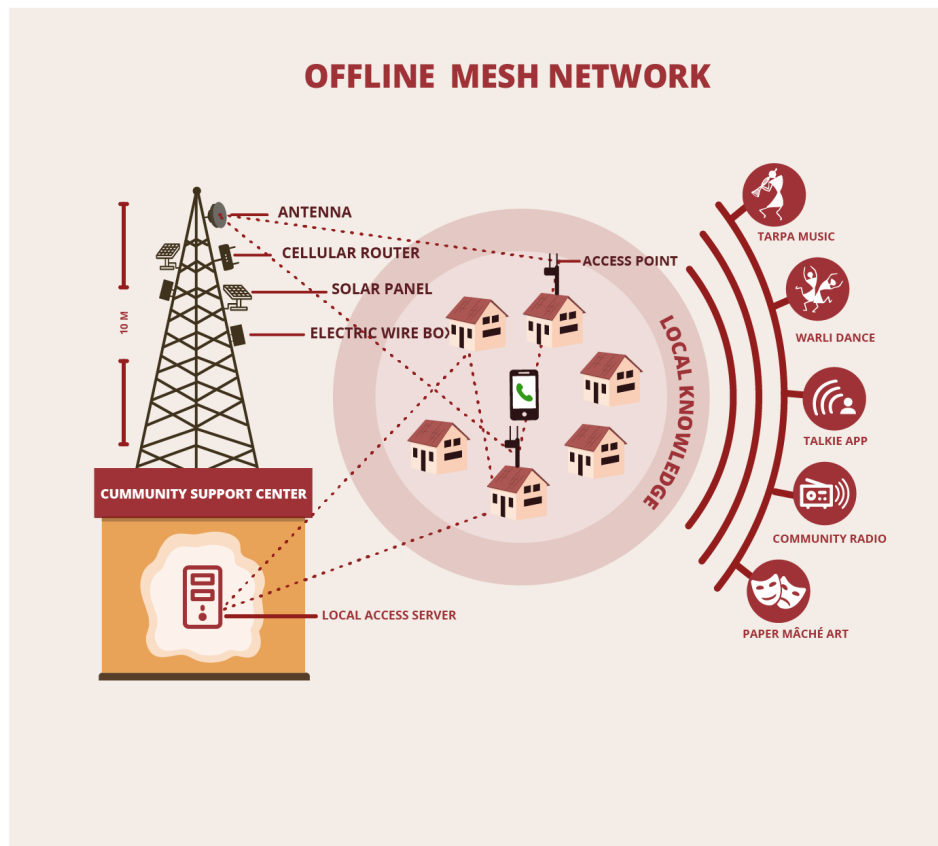


Figure 3: Offline mesh network in Pathardi and its uses

Day 0: 06 December 2019

On the 6th of December 2019, our primary task was to undertake preparations for the main public meeting planned on the next day. Mr Gorakshanath Bhor, Mr Ramprasad V and team members from Jawhar and Pathardi undertook discussions with the local entrepreneurs and groups for installing temporary structures for the event. The Project Officer (PO) of the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) and the Block Development Officer (BDO) of Jawhar were also personally invited for the event. The Ms Shalini from Servalots also accompanied Dr Sarbani Belur to Jawhar. She connected the Local Access Server, checked the other devices. Others who were present in Pathardi on 6th December were Mr Amol, Mr Gorakshanath, Mr Nachiket, Mr Nitin, all CRPs i.e Ganesh, Akash, Ujwala. We checked the working condition of the devices and also discussed the plan of action for the event the next day. In Figure 1, we are sitting in the Anganwadi at Pathardi to discuss the event on 07/08 December 2019.



Figure 1: Preparation with electronic gadgets for the multi-stakeholder event.

Day 1: 07 December 2019

The main programme of the multi-stakeholder event was planned on 07 December 2019. On this day a grand event was planned inviting several stakeholders and there were about 50 participants. This included the Project Officer Jawhar, BAIF team from Jawhar and Pune, Gram Marg representative Sarbani Banerjee Belur, Tata Motors representative Mr Pawan Soni, Mr Kiran Kadav, PhD student from CTARA, IIT Bombay, Community representatives of Pathardi Gram Panchayat, eDosts working in Pathardi.

The event began with a welcome song by the students of the Zilla Parishad school in Pathardi (Figure 2). After the welcome song, we welcomed the chief guest for the event, Mr Prajit Nair, to the dais. Others who were invited to the dais were Mr Sandip Kakre from BAIF Jawhar, Mr Pawan Soni from Tata Motors, Gram Panchayat Representative of Pathardi and Dr Sarbani Banerjee Belur from Gram Marg, IIT Bombay.



Figure 2: Welcome song by the students of Pathardi Zilla Parishad school.

The Project Officer also witnessed the exhibits on display keenly. This included wild foods, different rice varieties, Warli art, paper mache art, etc.



Figure 3: Project Officer keenly witnessing the exhibits on display during the event.

We welcomed the guests with coconut and flowers and there was a formal lamp lighting to mark the beginning of the event. The formal introduction to each of the guests was made by Mr Nachiket from BAIF Jawhar.



Figure 4: Dr Sarbani Belur lighting the lamp and welcoming Ms Pooja with coconut and flowers

Dr Sarbani Banerjee Belur made the opening remarks to the event by giving a brief description of the project, the activities that were conducted in Pathardi, the network deployment, the mix of online and offline network and the uses of each of them. It was a vivid description in which the importance was given to the fact that 'the connectivity has been tailor-made for the needs of the community'. People in Pathardi were of the opinion that the network set up would enable them mobile connectivity. This was made clear to the community that the online connectivity was only to enable the people in Pathardi to avail the banking and eGovernance services in the village itself and not travel to the city.



Figure 5: Dr Sarbani Belur addressing the gathering.

The talk also discussed the online and offline uses of the connectivity which can be helpful for the community. In offline usage, Dr Belur spoke about the importance of local knowledge and how the community can create and share the local knowledge in an offline mesh network. The ways by which such a sharing can happen is through an application which can enable the community to share videos, audios and photographs with the help of a smartphone. Dr Belur also spoke about the importance of local knowledge and what are the different types of local knowledge that the community can share. Some examples were given by her and explained how such type of knowledge can be made into tangible products and these products can be

marketed for creating livelihoods. The example of Warli painting was given as a product that is a product of the local knowledge about the culture of Warli tribes. These paintings are then sold in the eCommerce platform made by BAIF as part of the Catalytic Intervention grant.



Figure 6: The participants at the multi-stakeholder event listening to the speech by Dr Sarbani Belur.

After Dr Belur, Mr Ramprasad from BAIF gave a presentation on the digital ecosystem vision of BAIF. He also stressed on the eDost model founded by BAIF as part of the APC project. He mentioned that for any digital ecosystem to thrive in the village, the most important thing is to develop 'eDosts'. These eDosts are digital catalysts, mostly the youth in the village who offer digital services to the people in the village and in turn earn a livelihood from it. He mentioned about Ms Anjali Vazare being nominated as the eDost in Pathardi enabling banking services to the people. Ramprasad also made a point that a women-first approach in eDost model is given priority by BAIF. His talk also highlighted about the different uses of online and offline connectivity such as the community radio, Raspberry Pi-based access points, SIM card-based cellular router and local access server. This gave a good overview of the project and its implementation on the field.

During the course of the presentation the field-coordinators and community resource persons working as part of the APC project demonstrated the working of Raspberry Pi-based community radio and local Pi offline hotspot. Mr Amol Kakade who worked as a field coordinator in the project demonstrated the community radio and its working to the people present in the event (Figure 7). Mr Amol spoke about the uses of community radio and how the community radio can be used within the community. He demonstrated the working of community radio and people were able to access the radio from the local access server on their smartphone. This was a good demonstration of how offline technology solutions contribute to the development and progress of communities in remote rural areas.



Figure 7: Mr Amol Kakade, a field coordinator explaining his explorations with Raspberry Pi based community radio.

Akash, who actively took part in the project as a community resource person demonstrated how local knowledge can be created and shared through a simple Raspberry Pi device. He demonstrated how the device works and appealed to people how to create and share information related to art and culture, biodiversity, indigenous seeds and vegetables. He mentioned that such type of information was necessary for passing on to the next generation. It was enlightening for the people who attended the event to see it.

After this, Mr Prajit Nair the Project Officer of Jawhar gave a talk formally opening the network in Pathardi. His talk was recorded in the community radio for later circulation in the community. Mr Nair appreciated the efforts put in by BAIF and Gram Marg and appealed to the community to use the network. He analysed the online and offline network and the usage that such a network can provide to the people in Pathardi. He stressed on the fact that 'community ownership of the network is very essential for the network to thrive and grow'. The offline mesh network was mentioned by him as an important value addition to the connectivity journey of Pathardi. The online connectivity through the sim card based cellular router which enabled connectivity only in the Community Support Center will be able to help the community tremendously.



Figure 8: Mr Prajit Nair, Project Officer ITDP, addressing the gathering wearing the Raspberry Pi based community radio.

Mr Nair spoke about the various programmes and schemes that the government has formulated for the people. These programmes are unable to reach the remote villages due to lack of connectivity. However, in such a scenario as in Pathardi, the sim card based cellular router can make a difference. Mr Nair also spoke about the relevance of local knowledge and the necessity of such knowledge to be stored in a repository. In this way, the knowledge is not only stored but also a cue for the later generations to use it and replicate the same. He gave examples of various tribal cultural traditions of agriculture given a GI tag. In a similar way, paintings and other products made by the tribal people can be patented and given a GI tag. He appreciated the community efforts and community involvement put in by the people in Pathardi for both the online and offline network deployment. He mentioned that without community cooperation and support, this would not have been possible. He thanked one and all for their efforts and encouraged the youth in the village to become the torchbearers of this innovative connectivity approach called Community Network to other such remote rural villages. After this, there was a vote of thanks given by Mr Gorakshanath Bhor who led the project from Jawhar.



Figure 9: Mr Gorakshanath Bhor presenting the vote of thanks.

After the vote of thanks, there was lunch which was prepared by a women-group of Pathardi. The community joined hands in serving lunch. Post lunch there was a film screening on environmental sensitivity for children.



Figure 10: Participants enjoying lunch and children during the film-screening on environmental sensitivity.

The colleagues from Common Room, Indonesia Mr Gustaff, Ms Reina and Ms Talitha also joined, who came to Pathardi as part of the peer exchange as well as being a part of Gram Marg and BAIF multi-stakeholder event. and witnessed the network deployment at Pathardi and also saw the Warli art paintings at the house of the local artist at Pathardi.



Figure 11: The colleagues from Common Room, Indonesia witnessing the deployments and the Warli paintings.

Day 2: 08 December 2019

Along with the colleagues from Common Room, Indonesia we went on a trek to a nearby waterfall. This was done to give an idea about the community, the remoteness of the location and the terrain conditions that act as a challenge for connectivity. We left early in the morning and began our trek to the Dabhosa waterfall. It was an arduous journey climbing down the rocky terrain. It was a lovely adventure and was appreciated by all. The trek lasted for 3 hours.



Figure 12: Participants of the Dabhosa waterfall trek.



Figure 13: Before and during the trek to the Dabhosa waterfall.

The trek helped in transcending various barriers - language, nation, age, gender, etc. Some of them also undertook photography and some of them rafting near the waterfalls.



Figure 14: The Dabhosa waterfall and rafting by the participants.

Next, we visited Cherichapada wherein we witnessed a community seed bank. The seed conservator had samples of different types of rice and millets (Figure 15). This is part of agro-biodiversity conservation initiative taken up by BAIF as part of preserving the traditional regional gene bank.

The participants also witnessed the separation of black lentil gram using bullocks. The team also had a good time enjoying nature - different types of crops, pet animals, etc (Figures 17 and 18). We were also joined by Mr Michael and Ms Mary from ASORCOM, Myanmar. We then had a sit-down traditional lunch made from the local produce (Figure 16). After lunch, we witnessed the vermicompost making unit, herbal manure making process, farm pond, agricultural plots, etc.



Figure 15: Different types of rice and millet varieties.



Figure 16: Participants savouring the traditional food and trying locally made rain-shield.



Figure 17: Participants enjoying nature and getting a hang of local hand tools.



Figure 18: The participants after the experience at community seed bank at Cherichapada.

Next we visited Ramkhind hamlet of Pathardi where Mr Michael climbed one of the towers and noted down the device specifications of the network deployment undertaken. Later we witnessed the paper mache mask making by Mr Sudam Ramkhind hamlet of Pathardi.



Figure 19: Mr Michael noting down the device specifications of our network deployment in Ramkhind.



Figure 20: Mr Gustaff trying out a paper mache mask and participants witnessing the making of the paper mache art.

We further visited the Wanganpada hamlet of Pathardi in the evening and met the Khushi women's group who make finger millet (Nachni/Nagli/Ragi) sweets (ladoos).

Finally, in the same hamlet, everyone, men and women of the hamlet including us joined in for the tribal dance. Mr Michael even tried his hand at the Tarpa which is the traditional musical instrument which is locally made and played during the tribal dance.



Figure 21: Ms Reina purchasing a pack of millet sweets from women's group and Mr Michael trying out the Tarpa.



Figure 22: Participants after the tribal dance in Wanganapada hamlet of Pathardi.

Day 3: 09 December 2019

On the fourth day of the multistakeholder event, we came along with the colleagues from Myanmar to Pathardi and recorded some messages for the community in the Raspberry Pi based community radio. The colleagues from Myanmar also witnessed the local access server for offline intranet deployed in Pathardi.



Figure 23: Participants cherishing the time with animals and recording on the Raspberry Pi based community radio.

For an immersive experience in the local art forms, a Warli painting workshop was organised at Pathardi. The workshop was conducted with support from the local artisan Mr Sitaram Bujad. The participants spent time trying with white paint using a small brush on a red-brown canvas, different animals, dance forms, etc. Finally they presented the painting they made to the artist couple. Mr Gustaff had a message of 'Happy Pathardi'.



Figure 24: Participants deeply involved in their Warli art paintings, guided by Mr Sitaram Bujad.



Figure 25: Mr Gustaff presenting his Warli painting themed 'Happy Pathardi' to the artist couple.

We moved to BAIF campus in Jawhar where we had lunch. Post lunch there was a presentation for prospective eDosts (women-first digital village catalysts) to orient them towards the services which could be offered. The video on Ms Anjali Vazare the first eDost was also screened. The preparations to be undertaken and the necessities while undertaking the role of eDosts were elaborated by Mr Gorakshanath Bhor and Mr Ramprasad V (Figure 26).



Figure 26: Mr Gorakshanath Bhor explaining the role of an eDost.

The colleagues from Indonesia and Myanmar were interested in biodiversity conservation and hence, BAIF's work on conservation of genetic diversity was presented. The conservation of different rice, millet and other seed varieties, different livestock breeds, non-timber forest produce, etc. undertaken under Maharashtra Gene Bank project of which BAIF is also a part were shared with colleagues. We also saw the seed bank at BAIF Jawhar campus and one of the seed conservators himself Mr Manavanji, showed some of the seed varieties.



Figure 27: The participants at the seed bank in BAIF campus at Jawhar.

Finally, towards the evening we visited the sunset viewpoint at Jawhar. Also, we visited the Jawhar Palace which used to be the place where the king of Jawhar used to stay.



Figure 28: The sunset from the sunset viewpoint in Jawhar.



Figure 29: The Jawhar Palace.

Day 4: 10 December 2019

Early morning on the last day of the multi-stakeholder event, we went to visit the Mogra (Jasmine) farm of Mr Chandrakant Andher in Shiroshi village where we interacted with farmers practising the floriculture introduced by BAIF. It was slightly dark, but the farmers were collecting flowers with head-torches on. These flowers are weighed as contributed by each farmer and aggregated and transported to Mumbai market for sale.



Figure 30: Mogra flowers during collection and aggregation.

Next we visited the farm of Mr Laxman who has a model farm (Figure 32) on agro-horti-forestry another concept developed by BAIF for tribal farmers. In his farm, we saw horticulture crops mango trees, cashew trees, jasmine bushes, forestry species like teak as well as agriculture comprising of lentils, etc. All in all different diversity in crop varieties ensures a formidable shield against the vagaries of nature and market.

Finally the peer colleagues left to Mumbai to participate in the Community Networks Exchange (CNX) 2019 at Servalots/Janastu base camp in Devarayanadurga hills near Bengaluru. All in all it was a beautiful end to the hectic days of the multi-stakeholder event in Pathardi organised by Gram Marg and BAIF as part of the APC 'Community Networks Learning Grant'.



Figure 31: Peer colleagues at the Mogra (Jasmine) farm.



Figure 32: Agri-horti-forestry in action: mango, cashew, jasmine, teak etc. all on the same farm.



Figure 33: The APC Asia peer colleagues with the tribal farmer - indeed routing for the community!