

Abstract

The Kaigal Education and Environment Program was conceptualized and initiated in 2002 as an integrated approach combining education, conservation and sustainable livelihoods, rooted in social ecological principles. The program works in Chittoor district, along the fringes of the Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary. The communities here are marginalized mixed communities; many being scheduled castes/tribes. The Yanadi tribal community is the predominant tribal group in this area. The underlying theory of change is that human communities are an interwoven part of the local ecology and sustainable interventions must evolve with and include the local communities - whose right and responsibility it becomes to protect and conserve the local ecology they are a part of.

The presentation here attempts to describe this through the three distinct areas of our work – conservation, education and livelihood programs with involvement of the local communities; however, it must be remembered that these are not independent. Cultural stability, economic independence and societal acceptance of these communities are dependent on all these three interventions working together.

Over the period of the intervention the program has improved the conservation status of local ecosystems, touching people across 60 villages. Over 300 tribal households have been directly impacted through these initiatives. Kaigal Trust, the community enterprise set up as part of this program is supporting rural and forest based livelihoods. The education programs - Schools, Learning Centres and Environment Education programs reach out to a larger section of the community. The most important outcome that emerges, is that

changing the relationship of the human being to the environment is the cornerstone for sustainable development.