STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP REPORT WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS, BHAMINI MANDAL, ANDHRA PRADESH



Venue: Function Hall of Singidi Village of Bhamini Mandal

Date: 5th November 2025





Strategic Planning Workshop Report COMMUNITY LEADERS FROM 15 GRAM PANCHAYATS, BHAMINI MANDAL, ANDHRA PRADESH

A REPORT ON STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP HELD WITH

COMMUNITY LEADERS FROM 15 GRAM PANCHAYATS, BHAMINI MANDAL, ANDHRA PRADESH

Date: 5th November 2025 **Venue:** Function Hall of Singidi Village, Bhamini Mandal

CONTEXT OF THE MEETING

The Bhamini Mandal has been identified as one of the Aspirational Blocks by the NITI Aayog Committee in 2025. Following this, Mr. Shyam Prasad, IAS, District Collector, Manyam District, Andhra Pradesh held discussions with the WASSAN team and requested that special preference be given to Bhamini Mandal for WASSAN's pilot initiatives, pooling resources to benefit the tribal communities of the region.



In response, WASSAN mobilized financial support from the HDFC Parivartan Program to initiate pilot interventions, and the program was formally launched in September 2025. Baseline data has been collected, and 15 Gram Panchayats with significant tribal habitations have been prioritized under this initiative.

As part of the project launch, a one-day multi-stakeholder meeting was organized, bringing together Gram Panchayat leaders, FPO leaders, VO representatives, and SERP officials.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

- To engage key stakeholders in the program design process.
- To facilitate discussions on the current food and agriculture scenario.
- To invite expressions of interest from respective GPs to collaborate with WASSAN in promoting **Ecological Intensification** and fostering a **Circular Economy**.

Mr. A. Ravindra and Dr. ML Sanyasi Rao (Sunny) from WASSAN facilitated the meeting.

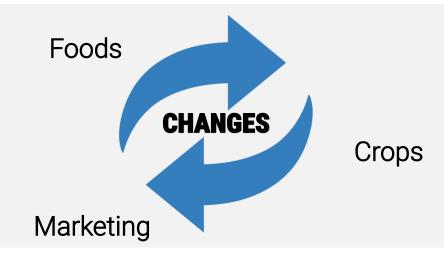
The meeting commenced at 10:3 0 a.m. with around 40 participants in attendance. Mr. Sugreevulu, WASSAN's Community Resource Person (CRP) from Bhamini, welcomed all participants. The session began with a local song performed by [name], followed by selfintroductions from each participant.

Dr. Sunny provided an overview of WASSAN's activities in the region and its long-standing collaboration with the District and ITDA administration over the past 10 years in Manyam District. He highlighted the importance participatory planning—a core approach of WASSAN in all its project areas-and emphasized the organization's



commitment to focusing efforts in Bhamini Mandal to strengthen ecosystem services and tribal livelihoods.

To deepen the discussion, participants were divided into three groups and given 45 minutes to deliberate and present their insights. The Community Resource Persons (CRPs) from WASSAN facilitated the group discussions on the following themes:



Each group actively engaged in sharing experiences and perspectives related to these topics

Discussion points are noted on CHART PAPERS.

TOPIC: CHANGES IN FOOD SYSTEMS

Group-1	Group-2	Group-3
 Previously used to get natural food without any chemicals and the food is also cooked in clay pots on wood burning stoves. But these days most of the 	 In olden days crops are grown with cow dung, so everyone used to be healthy, and they used to live longer. In previous days everyone used to be healthy because of their eating 	 In olden days everyone used to take ragi java, porridge rice etc. No masala items were used in the food those days. People were used to eat the food which were

Group-1 Group-2 Group-3

foods grown with pesticides and for cooking using aluminium vessels. nonstick vessels on Gas stoves.

- Previously they used to eat hand pounded rice but now people in the villages are using polished rice.
- Previously people used to eat ragi java, ragi sangati, porridge rice etc., but these days people eating processed foods like noodles eggs, Maggie etc.,
- Previously people used eat fresh food on time to time, but these busy days people not eating on time and eating frozen foods.

- habits, so they were not used to pay more amount for their health issues and medicines.
- In olden days people used to eat the rice which is processed by them (pounded-rice)
- Everyone used to eat unadulterated food.
- Every family used to grow poultry, cows and goats at their home. So, they used to get fertilizer from their waste.
- In olden days everyone used to eat the food which was cooked at home only.
- In those days only clay pots were used for cooking but now a days aluminium vessels are being using.
- In olden days, everyone used to eat their food in time. Now it's not possible to take food in time for various reasons.

- properly boiled. So, they were used to be healthy in those days.
- In present days people are eating fast foods, biryanis, broiler chicken, pesticides used vegetables and foods. So automatically their health has been affecting.



TOPIC: CHANGES IN CROPS OVERTIME

Group-1	Group-2	Group-3
• In previous days farmers used to grow crops with cow dung, plant and animal waste. They also used bullocks for agriculture purposes. In those days farmers used the indigenous seeds available with them, now they are focusing on hybrids rather than indigenous ones. Previously farmers raised crops like ragi, horse gram, barnyard millet, foxtail millet, red gram and millets. But now to get the crop n short time and to get good amount of money farmers shifted to crops like cotton, maize, watermelon, sugarcane, dragon fruits and hybrid varieties in paddy. Farmers are using chemical fertilisers and pesticides in order to get high yields.	 In olden days farmers used indigenous seeds but now hybrid seeds usage has been increased. In olden days cow dung and organic materials used but now fertilizer and pesticides usage have been increased. In olden days everyone used to eat millets which grown with organic fertilizers, so they were lived healthy. Now a days farmers changing their crop pattern from millets to commercial crops like cotton, paddy, maize. In those days crop yield was very low but these days it has been increased a lot. Previously with the only use of cow dung and lack of knowledge on crop diversity, yields were comparatively very low. In olden days crop duration was very high. Now a days, because of use of hybrids, the crop duration is reduced. 	 In olden days people lived healthy because of their eating habits. Soil health was also very good at that time. They used to eat the foods like paddy and millets like ragi, korra, sama, gantelu, etc. Now a days farmers are using high pesticides in the crops. As we are consuming that food, our health is getting worse and new diseases also coming into our lives. Our life span also decreased because of taking this food. Soil health also detoriated because of usage of the pesticides. Several changes occurred in environment also.

TOPIC: CHANGES IN MARKETING STRATEGIES OVERTIME

Group-1	Group-2	Group-3
In olden days investment is low, and they used to get good yields. Now a days investment becomes high, and the yield is also decreasing day by day (investment become high for machinery)	 Because of using indigenous seeds in the past, they used to get low yield and low income. So farmers changed to the usage of hybrid seeds. In olden days marketing facilities were very low, but now a days marketing facilities improved compared to past. In those days farmers used to hire labours for different works in the field. So, labour cost was more at that time. Now many farmers shifted to mechanization, so cost of labour decreased drastically. So, investment decreased. 	 In olden days we used to have barter system. As the yield was very low middlemen were used to diploid the farmers. In current situation also farmers not getting good amount for their yield. Middlemen deploying the farmers till now. Because of the environmental factors like rains farmers not getting good yields.

Soon after completion of the group work, presented their points in the plenary session and clarified few of the points raised by other participants in this session. Facilitator announced lunch break.



FACILITATOR SUMMARISED THE GROUP WORK

• Changes in food systems: In earlier days, people consumed naturally grown, chemical-free, unadulterated foods cooked in clay pots over wood stoves. They ate traditional, home-cooked meals like handpounded rice, ragi java, ragi sangati, and porridge rice made from crops grown using cow dung as fertilizer. Every family raised livestock such as cows, goats, and poultry, ensuring self-sufficiency in food and natural manure. People ate on time, avoided masalas and processed foods, and maintained good health with minimal medical expenses.

In contrast, today's lifestyle has shifted toward pesticidegrown crops, polished rice, and processed or fast foods like noodles, Maggi, biryani, and broiler chicken. Cooking is done in aluminium and non-stick vessels on gas stoves. and people often eat frozen or untimely meals. As a result, health and longevity have declined compared to the past.



Changes in Cropping Systems: In the past, farmers practiced traditional and sustainable agriculture using cow dung, plant residues, and animal waste as fertilizers, and relied on bullocks for fieldwork. They cultivated indigenous crops such as ragi, foxtail millet, barnyard millet, horse gram, and red gram, which supported both human and soil health. Crop yields were lower, but the food was natural, and people enjoyed better health and longevity.

Today, farming has shifted toward hybrid and commercial crops like cotton, maize, sugarcane, watermelon, and dragon fruit to gain higher yields and quicker profits. The use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and hybrid seeds has increased, reducing crop duration but harming soil fertility, the environment, and human health. As a result, traditional diets and soil quality have declined, leading to new health issues and a shorter lifespan.

Changes in Market systems: Today, agriculture has become more mechanized, reducing labor costs but increasing overall investment due to machinery and input expenses. Though marketing facilities have improved, farmers still face challenges such as high costs, unstable yields due to environmental factors, and continued exploitation by intermediaries, resulting in limited profits despite modernization.

The facilitator then posed a reflective question to the participants, noting that many of the observed changes have not been favorable to their lives. He emphasized that since these changes are happening within their own villages, it is time to take collective action to prevent further losses, protect and restore soil health, revive traditional food crops, and strengthen the local village economy.

The facilitator further engaged the participants by asking, "What would an ideal village look like?" and encouraged them to reflect on and identify the key elements that are essential to envision such a village.

The responses are noted on the cards and further grouped them into thematic wise.

Clean and Hygiene	Chemical Free Farming and nutritious food	Water for irrigation and drink	Livestock	Farm Enterprise	Marketing
No plastic usage Village should be clean	Farmers emphasized the need to shift from excessive pesticide use to natural farming practices for sustainable high yields. They suggested raising field bunds with trap crops, establishing village-level seed banks, and reviving intercropping systems. Participants also highlighted the importance of passing traditional recipes to youth and ensuring healthy soils for future generations.	Participants stressed the importance of effective water management, recommending the construction and maintenance of rainwater harvesting pits for every household and farm ponds. They emphasized the need for proper upkeep of irrigation facilities and judicious use and management of natural and water resources.	Participants highlighted the need to ensure healthy livestock management through well-maintained and hygienic animal sheds. They noted environmental changes in villages leading to a decline in animal feed availability and stressed the importance of providing adequate and nutritious food for animals.	Participants suggested that agricultural machinery should be readily available within villages, vermicompost should be produced using plant and animal residues, and local crop processing facilities should be established to add value and support farmers.	Marketing of vegetables and other farm produce should be carried out collectively by farmers to ensure better prices and stronger market linkages.

Mr. Ravindra concluded the session by summarizing the key outcomes of the exercise. He observed that tribal areas possess greater natural resource wealth compared to other rainfed regions in India. He underscored importance of establishing a community-based resource



management system, supported by good governance, strong leadership, and collective commitment to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

He further highlighted the HDFC Parivarthan program's support to Gram Panchayats in addressing these challenges and advancing toward the vision of an ideal village.

The SERP team emphasized that Natural Farming is the most viable solution, while FPO leaders advocated for collective marketing and value addition of agricultural produce. They also proposed including additional Gram Panchayats that were not part of the initial selection.

Mr. Sunny concluded the meeting by urging all GP and VO leaders to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to formally collaborate with WASSAN. He emphasized that the partnership could proceed only after receiving these letters. The GP leaders present agreed to return with their letters of expression soon.

Ms. Rajyalakshmi, DPM-Livelihoods (SERP), highlighted that an FPO already exists in Bhamini Mandal and holds its own capital of about Rs 60 lakhs. She reiterated that Natural Farming remains the most sustainable pathway for improving yields, community health, and long-term resilience. She appreciated the ongoing collaboration between SERP and WASSAN and emphasized the need to further strengthen this partnership for better outcomes in the Mandal.

Mr. Damodhar, one of the Board Members of Bhamini Fed Farmers Company Limited, shared that their FPO has over 1,000 farmers. He expressed strong interest in joining this initiative on Natural Farming and emphasized the need for supportive systems to strengthen natural farming practices in the region.

"What we are giving to the next generations are more important than how much we are giving (if we give many acres of infertile land, what the next generation farmer do with it? Even we give less acres of land with fertility then it will be more useful to him)—said by one farmer (Simhadri) - Vaddengi village"

From Biddaguda village, Roja and her group-Manyam Millet Ruchulu-set up a stall for participants to purchase millet-based home snacks. During the workshop, Roja also shared their experiences from the millet kitchen initiative. She expressed that earlier, families lived healthier lives with naturally grown crops and traditional millet foods. Today, however, farming costs have increased, soils are weakening, and markets continue to exploit farmers. Through the Manyam Ruchule initiative, they are rediscovering the value of traditional foods and natural farming. She emphasized that by working together, communities can rebuild healthy villages with good soils, nutritious food, and fair market opportunities.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Mr. Sugreevulu, Community Resource Person (CRP), Bhamini Mandal.



SOME ACTION POINTS GENERATED DURING THE WORKSHOP

WASSAN expressed its commitment to work in long-term collaboration with SERP-AP in Bhamini Mandal, with a focus on strengthening livelihoods, natural resources, and the FPO ecosystem. With the ongoing support of the HDFC-Parivarthan Program, WASSAN aims to deepen work in agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and local enterprises, ensuring that institutional strengths are pooled for collective impact.

1. Non-Financial Collaboration with SERP Institutions (FPOS)

To ensure convergence and community-led development, WASSAN proposed a non-financial partnership with SERP structures in the Mandal.

This includes:

- Joint orientations on program components to FPO leaders.
- Institutional support in identifying issues, potential entrepreneurs, and investment opportunities.
- Mobilizing investment proposals through community organisations.

WASSAN will provide technical backstopping, deploy necessary human resources, and invest in priority initiatives. Loan-linked proposals, if required, can be explored within existing SERP systems.

A formal collaboration framework will be developed with PD-DRDA, DPM & APM (SERP), FPO representatives, and a nominee from the SERP head office.

2. Inclusion of Bhamini FPO in WASSAN's FPO Strengthening Program

WASSAN requested that the existing Bhamini FPO, which currently has a corpus of about RS 60 lakhs, be included under the set of FPOs assigned to WASSAN. This will enable stronger governance systems, improved value chains, and collective marketing.

This collaboration will not require any financial commitment from SERP.

WAY FORWARD

- GP, FPO and VO leaders agreed to submit Expressions of Interest (EOIs) to formally initiate collaboration with WASSAN.
- Common action plans developed soon after receiving EoIs from respective villages.

Annexure 1 | List of Participants

DAT	TE:- 5th November 2025.		INING WORKSHOP			
PRO	DJECT HEAD:- HDFC Bank Parivarthan Progra	am		VANUE:-Kalyan Mandapam, Main Road,	Singidi, Bhai	mini Mandalam, Manyam Dist
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22 B. Roja	Former	Bhamini	Boddaguda	F	8500894793
23 B. Rajini	V.O.,8	Bhenni roi	Pasulcudi	F	6304543281
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3 B. Bhargavanayudu	Sanpanco	Dhu'r	Dusundi	In	8500588668
4 S. Seshagiri Rao	FPO CC	Mawmi	Bhaum	N	800880391
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P. Chowdary	FRP	Phonné	Vaddeng Gy	m	814331880
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G. Mani Kumar	FRP	Shamigi	Livieri	M	9708904299,
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65	A. Sampatt	F.R.P	Bhamini	Ghanasara.	M	9182664953
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WATERSHED SUPPORT SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES NETWORK (WASSAN)

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