

REBUILDING TOLERANCE IN TIMES OF SCARCITY THINKING – CASE OF BAMBOO SCHOOL VILLAGE (ASSAM – INDIA)

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ABSTRACT

Intolerance is once again tearing the world and much faster than foresighted by many experts. In this paper, we are going to investigate how the inspiration economy project in Assam - India, helped to build tolerance in the Dehingkalghar community. The case shows how the community life has been transformed from being only dependent on the riverside life, to being focused on exploiting the intrinsic powers that lead to further harmony and socioeconomic development for the whole village.

The paper presents the Bamboo School case study that targeted to create a better quality of life model for many villages in Assam, where the number of unemployed youths and untapped natural resources increases. The authors illustrated how some of the SDG's goals as youth migration, poverty elimination, unemployment, family stability and eco-villages, were addressed. The case study could be further developed as a model for self-sufficiency in times of scarcity thinking.

Key words: Tolerance, Scarcity Thinking, Bamboo, Assam, Resilient Communities

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1. INTRODUCTION

Near the bank of The Dehing River, lies the village of Dehingkalghar. The village is inhabited by some wonderful people who, for generations, have lived a rather simple and easy-going life and are involved in farming, fishing, etc. Even though they live in poverty, they clearly did not have enough guidance to face the immense hardships of their life. Buheji (2020a)

My project brought awareness among the villagers as they saw the daily tasks that were conducted in the village. It made them familiar with the changes going around them, and eventually, they felt more comfortable and welcoming toward these changes. The kind villagers showered love on me and almost made me a part of their community. Slowly and gradually, they developed a vision about how to bring a series of progress to the village.

The speciality about Dehingkalghar village is that money power doesn't work here unless people are kind and warm. In order to do a project here, one needs to gain the trust of people as the villagers often become offended regarding various issues. Hence, one needs to be calm and patient.

The bamboo industry thus will thrive, and the people can be given proper skill development training in the Bamboo School that we have established in the village

Here they will not only be provided skills but also can benefit economically from the craft they produce. An Eco camp has also been established in the village, which will attract a lot of tourists who can visit the Bamboo industry. The ultimate ambition of the international inspiration economy project (IIEP), which is the entity supervising this project, is to bring about socioeconomic development in the village and conduct research on how we can develop a model village from the grassroots where every individual has the opportunity to be empowered! Irrespective of their age, gender or position in the society.

Research can thus be conducted on how economic development can be brought about with minimal resources. We have provided a passage for international exposure for this village. This will result in economic and social awareness. The villagers would become more responsible and vigilant regarding their surroundings and will boost the entrepreneurial expectations of the people. This will not only help the people to improve their socioeconomic scenario in the present but also provide a better life for the generations to come.

The inspiration lab was run by the second author, with the support of the first author. To meet the village spirit, the lab called the 'inspiration camp' was organised to collect a vivid picture of the major obstacles to the village's present status. Since the villagers accepted the project proposal and visions, they decided to utilise their intrinsic power and followed the ideology of IIE and SFN

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Defining Community Tolerance

Tolerance can be defined as an individual's willingness to extend economic, political, and social rights to different community members. This type of tolerance was found to be related to certain paradigms that could only be changed through frequent involvement of the different community people with a diversified backgrounds. Through attendance and intense involvement in projects, intolerant attitudes can be either eliminated, or alleviated. This should help to rebuild the approaches towards changing the attitude that push towards a new tolerance mindset. Buheji (2020c)

COVID-19 pandemic and its spillovers brought a need for new forms of tolerance that help the communities build better resilience towards any type of challenge, Buheji (2020c). Thus, in order to build tolerance, more projects that would address socioeconomic stability are needed. Thus, any community that has no clear conflicting goals may lead to the development of intergroup hostility, and reduce its internal tolerance. Buheji (2020b)

2.2. Role of Community Projects in Promoting Tolerance

Targeting socioeconomic cohesion and tolerance would help to strengthen any community's economy and would lead to social development. In order to rebuild their social identity, community groups need to go through meaningful challenges that help to refine their attitudes and beliefs about their intergroup relations. Buheji (2020c)

Hornsey and Hogg (2000) found that subgroup identity threat can be the source of social conflicts, and when there are only plain social arrangements that threaten social identity, defensive reactions occur. In order to bring social harmony to any community, Hornsey and

Hogg advised maintaining subgroup identities, and locating them within the context of a binding superordinate identity.

2.3. Inspiration Economy Role in Addressing Communities Tolerance

Inspiration economy considers multicultural community as part of feels the necessity of a new worldview aimed at integration of cultures. The formation of human culture is a creative personality capable of active and productive life in a multicultural environment. Buheji and Ahmed (2017)

Buheji (2020c) mentioned that resilient communities need multicultural education and projects that bring tolerance through unique forms of socio-cultural space. In the current world social and cultural situation, after the pandemic, communities need carefully designed labs that increase the intensity of interaction between the community members. Here is where inspiration economy labs play a role in bringing in such interaction that helps in the end manage the different psychological needs of the community while addressing common life and/or livelihood issues.

2.4. Psychology of Communities Tolerance

Intolerance is a mental attitude characterized by a lack of ability to recognize and respect differences in beliefs and opinions within the communities. Thus, in order to build communities tolerance, the people of the community need to realise, and respect each other. The intolerance is determined by community in-group, or by the influence of out-group polarization. This can come from feelings of being threatened, competed, or from the mentality of scarcity thinking. Hence, more work or projects should work on building abundant thinking that shows there are many opportunities that are yet to be discovered. Verkuyten et al. (2020), Buheji (2018b)

One of the physiological players that impact tolerance is religion. The determination of religiosity was found to lead to further community polarization. This led to further attitudes of alienation or discrimination among community members, where intolerance would be more of a habit among the community. This can influence how people see the religion of the other part of the community and even look down on their style of life, i.e. even the way they dress, eat, and practice their livelihood. If this type of psychology persists in the community, intolerant factors will influence fanaticism, further ethnicity, and distrust among the different polarised groups. Buheji (2020c)

2.5. History of Tolerance in East Asia & India

India is one of the world's most diverse countries, where Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Sikhs live in a high number populations. Despite what happened in the last decade, India was and still is one of the main referenced countries when it comes to ethnic tolerance. However, in India, this tolerance never been linked to the country capacity in eliminating poverty and what happens if this tolerance, for any reason gone. Neha et al. (2021), Buheji and Ahmed (2019)

Milligan (2012) saw that still literature is scarce in identifying factors causing intolerant practices in South East Asia so that effective solutions can be provided. Also, not enough case studies in this area on how tolerance can be built or rebuilt.

3. CASE STUDY

3.1. Introduction to Dehingkalghar Village

On the bank of the Dehing River, lies the village of Dehingkalghar in Assam, India. It is not only a perfect paradise of rich untapped resources with fertile land but is also inhabited by some

of the most wonderful people who are the epitome of generosity and kindness, despite their economic hardships. Buheji and Korze (2020)

For generations, these villagers, comprising almost 80 families, who belong to various castes and tribes, have lived a rather simple and easy-going life with little expectations. Most of these villagers have been involved in farming, and fishing for the sustenance of their day today. Even though the Dehingkalghar villagers faced immense hardships economically and socially; which made seeing the life of few necessities. Most of the residents in the village are unaware about the minimum level of comfort and security that they deserve compared to the village potential.

Initially, the villagers were sceptical about changes in their community and wanted to keep to maintain the status quo of the way they have been running their livelihood. After gaining their initial trust, the community leader justified their preservation of any external change due to the repeated failed promises of various NGOs who they trusted for doing realised development in the village, but left without ever completing their commitments. The feeling of being abandoned with false hopes and failed expectations reduced the morals of the community and made them very careful with any new development initiatives.

Similar to other villages with low literacy rates among its members, the Dehingkalghar community, also was unaware of the different government schemes which could benefit them and improve their living standards.

3.2. Initiation of Inspiration Economy Project in Dehingkalghar Village

In the end of December 2019, an exploratory visit was conducted by the inspiration economy team, led by the authors, to assess the socioeconomic challenges of the Dehingkalghar community. Similar to the established inspiration economy approach, the visit focused on exploring the link between unexploited opportunities, the intrinsic wealth or the financial assets of the village, and its current challenges. Many hidden opportunities were illustrated by the inspiration economy team, which established a need for a workshop or an inspiration lab. Buheji (2019c).

3.3. Observations Collected on Dehingkalghar Village from Exploratory Visit

The Dehingkalghar village is established in front of the riverside of the Dehing River and is located in the Dimow subdivision of the Sivasagar district in Assam, India. The village is made of 120 houses, where about 700 people live in it. Their professions in the village are fishing, farming and dairy.

The village was found to lack proper sanitation, and with illiteracy being high, no proper education system could be traced. This raised the ignorance regarding the value of the resources possessed within the village, or those that could be discovered.

The Dehingkalghar lacked knowledge about their legal and social rights, especially among the elderly generations. The village suffered frequent power cuts, which drowned it in absolute darkness most of the nights. The lack of proper connectivity, bad roads and transportation problems even made access to the village not easy. Lack of appreciation of their rich natural and social assets made the Dehingkalghar village feel they were a poor or unfortunate village. The youth are not aware of their role in marketing the opportunities of their village to both domestic and international markets. Benamer (2022), Buheji (2019c).

Dehingkalghar has many untapped opportunities, yet the village's main income source comes only from fishing, that is suitable best during the months of June to October. The other more important resource of the village is the young generation (13 till 35 years old) which is more than 30% of the total Dehingkalghar population. However, there are many school

dropouts, and many migrate to work as labour only. The majority of the population has education below 10th grade. Youth usually migrate to Kerala, Chennai and Bangalore. Buheji (2018a)

Dehingkalghar village has generous and kind-hearted people with great willpower and fast learning capacity. The village had an eco-friendly, sustainable lifestyle, but could not capitalise on it to attract sustainable tourism. Many skilful carpentry and fishing people, in every household approximately. Village near the river bank also brings fertile soil. Besides the river, the village has other important resources that are yet not fully exploited or commercialised, such as bamboo related production, organic agriculture, water hyacinth and eco-sustainable tourism.



Figure 1 Data Collection and Observations on the Dehingkalghar Village Needs

3.4. Inspiration Lab Carried on Dehingkalghar Village

The inspiration lab was carried out by the second author, under the supervision, and mentorship of the first author. The lab started with visualizing a sustainable basic facility for the Bamboo School that can be upgraded, gradually, every year through a collaboration between the youth and villagers. The leaders donated the land for the bamboo school, which eased the initiation process. The delivery of the lab was designed to be in four main stages to establish an effective tolerance-driven inspiring project that would tackle both life and livelihood development in the Dehingkalghar community:



Figure 2 Collection of Agreements from the Village Leaders for Starting the Inspiration Economy ‘Bamboo School’

1st stage- focused on building a type of social agreement between the village leaders on the goals of the project.

2nd stage- focused on awareness training workshop for the villagers, village leaders, the dropouts students and the unemployed youth. The idea of this workshop is to build cohesion between the different backgrounds and start an engagement process with the inspiration project.



Figure 3 Resembles some of the workshop activities carried out by the Inspiration Economy Mentor (2nd Author) where all the concerned village members attended to understand the importance of the aim and the stages of the project.

3rd stage- based on defining the project participants, the assignments for the responsibilities were defined.



Figure 4 Kick of the Workshop and the Inspiration Camp that set the Pillars of the ‘Bamboo School’.

4th stage – starting the main building of the bamboo school where all the activities would be initiated from. Since this is a collaborative, driven project, every household in the village voluntarily provided Bamboo and hay, with each household giving around 5-10 bamboo for the bamboo school building.



Figure 5 Construction of the Bamboo School House by the Village Youth

3.5. Setting Main Goals and Scope of the Bamboo School Project

In order to benchmark achievement and milestones to be achieved, specific goals were set for this tolerance-driven project. The authors agreed that the value of the invested time in the project should be equal to that desired by the villagers. Thus, a clear plan 18 months of action activities were set to be implemented by both the villagers and the youth, with close mentorship and the support of the inspiration economy expert (Assam chapter).

The main goal was to eliminate poverty, and improve the quality of life of Dehingkalghar community through delivering products or eco-tourism services that come from the Bamboo School. The project target to improve and then sustain the life of the families or the collaborating villagers, besides being a centre, or model for eco-tourism. This means the village or the school would be a hub for better types of bamboo crafting skills that can stay with the villagers permanently or come share their experience during competitions or tourism seasons. Buheji (2019a)

The other main goal was to register the Bamboo School among the tourist attraction sites in the Assam region. The plan even discussed the way the Bamboo School could be presented to the visitors, or the students, or the camping tourists. The detailed action plan even discusses the posters or brochures to be presented to the visitors with a map about the Bamboo trees importance in Assam, besides the purpose of this project.

The other part of the plan covered the ‘communication model’ of how the project delivery would be sustained, i.e. what type of contacts need to be done by the authors to be in touch with all the project stakeholders in the 18 months.

3.6. Improving the Products and Sales of the Bamboo School

During the last part of the 18 months, the focus shifted to reviewing, and evaluating the type of products that are expected in order that the villagers and the youth build in this talent and capacity so that competitive finishing is done compared to the targeted differentiation approaches in relevant to specifications, value proposition and prices.

The inspiration mentor managed to put a small team from the school dropout and the non-employed youth who targeted to get sponsorships for the Bamboo School, or buy their products. The other responsibility of this team was to ensure that the Bamboo School had visitors around the year, who would come and learn about Bamboo and handcrafting, and do nature camping. For example, tourists would be charged US\$2 per visitor; for a school visit donation of US\$2 is expected for the one-day visits. This price can grow up gradually once the demand or the flow is too high.

3.7. Bamboo School and Sustainable Development Goals

The Dehingkalghar village and bamboo school project was planned by the inspiration economy to address 8 out of 17 United Nations sustainable development goals (UN-SDGs). These SDGs could be summarised as follows:

SDG 1 – No Poverty

The bamboo school provide employment and empowerment to the people of the village to break the vicious cycle of poverty that has been holding them back for generations, despite their rich natural and social assets. The profit margin of the villagers will rise to give them a better opportunity to improve their lives.

SDG 5 – Gender Equality

The bamboo school provide a platform for people of any gender. The project promotes gender equality, and provides an opportunity for women to empower themselves by acquiring skills and giving them financial freedom.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

The school will also work towards achieving SDG 8 by providing decent work opportunities and economic growth for the villagers while improving their tolerance. The number of unemployed youth in the village will reduce through the spread of the spirit of entrepreneurship. This would lead to sustained economic growth.

SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

The bamboo school harbour in it a small-scale industry that creates various bamboo products used in different fields ranging from hospitality, tourism, interior design and many more.

SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

The school provide a platform that will work toward reducing the inequality prevalent in society. It will give an opportunity to the poorest strata to gain skills and improve their socioeconomic conditions.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

The bamboo school is based on the sustainable product and approaches that lead to eco-tourism. The visitors to Dehingkalghar village would learn and use products and services that are recycled or more sustainable, which can replace various anthropogenic materials like plastic, and help create sustainable cities and communities, reducing pollution and carbon footprint.

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production

Bamboo products are biodegradable, and in itself, can help reduce the ‘carbon footprint’ and lead to responsible consumption and production; the Dehingkalghar village would have

seasonal programs about social responsibility where artist would be invited to thrive on the attitudes of being responsible to the global and local environment.

SDG 13 – Climate Action

Bamboo products are environmentally friendly. They will not only help in reducing plastic pollution and consumption, they will also lead to a better and sustainable society. The tourism camp was planned to depend on clear energy and a zero-waste approach.

3.8. Managing and Mitigating the Risks of the Project during Pandemic

Due to the unprecedented occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became a challenge to visit the project site in 2020 and 2021, due to lockdowns that demotivated the villagers to some extent. However, the inspiration mentor kept visiting the village despite the circumstances of the different pandemic waves, in order to retain the excitement that the people had regarding the changes going on in their village when the inspiration lab and camp were done. Buheji et al. (2021)

Despite the pandemic, and to show the commitment of the inspiration economy to the project, a relief program was launched to support the village during flood seasons. Also, to maintain the spirit of transformation, the inspiration economy mentor initiated an awareness program regarding sanitary napkins for the girls and women in the village, as they were completely unenlightened regarding the importance of hygiene during Periods. Sinha et al. (2021), Buheji et al. (2020), Goswami (2019)

Along with the project, in order to build and expand their vision and make them aware of the various ideas going around in the world, various videos were presented and discussed to illustrate the opportunities of home-stay tourism trend, the exciting market and the future of Bamboo and how the village can earn profit from such projects, including hospitality-driven projects.

3.9. Inauguration of the Bamboo School

With the establishment of the Bamboo School, people from both the Assam region and even from India started visiting it, despite the limitation of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic waves of virus in 2021. Irrespective of their age, people showed their enthusiasm regarding learning the skills that they go through during the visit. Many people said that this project created a drastic shift in their mindset regarding becoming social entrepreneurs, or establishing eco-friendly villages that focused on self-sufficiency. People started recognising the importance of the resources present in the villages and saw new opportunities within the village.



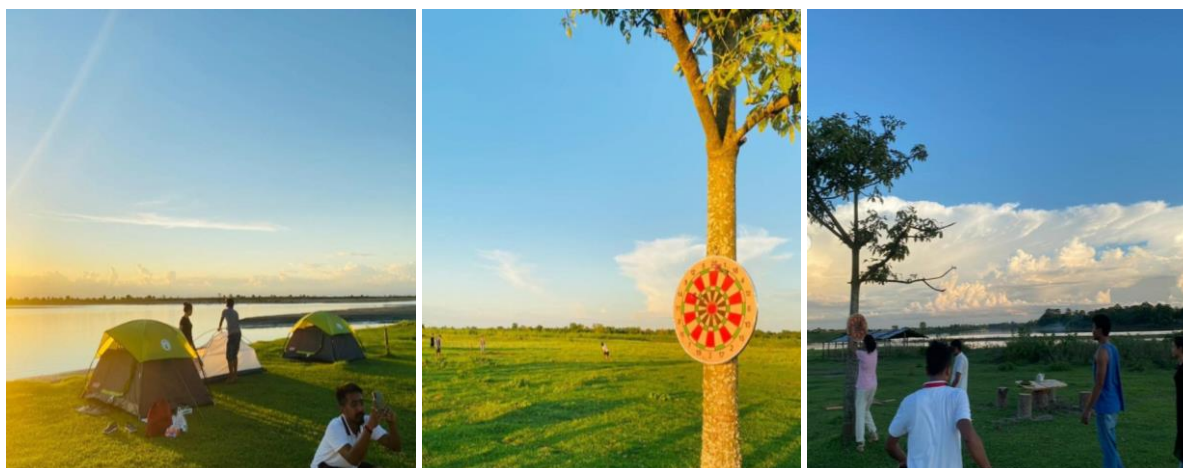


Figure 6 Bamboo School Opens for Visitors during the COVID-19 Pandemic

3.10. Bamboo School Competition

In order to enhance the participation of people from different nearby villages, or from the youth of the village, various series of competitions were organised. The main competition was focused on bamboo craft, but also there were various sports, and cleaning the surroundings competition with small prizes valued at US\$13. This played a major role in increasing people's participation and making the villagers more enthusiastic.

The bamboo school competition brought many surrounding communities in Sivasagar district in Assam, India, to raise their confidence on the eco-system and the green world, for raising their resilience capacity, Buheji (2018b). The case showed that both community engagement and effective approaches could enhance the outcomes on the socioeconomic development and thus exploit more hidden opportunities. Buheji (2020c)

3.11. Bamboo School Products

Starting unique bamboo products in a rural village based school; during a global emergency was not an easy decision. However, as per Buheji (2016), inspiration currency comes when there are challenges or trying to bring a breakthrough during challenging times.

As the inspiration lab managed to equip the village youth with selected handcraft skills, selected bamboo products were defined. The case focused on the type of products that bring a high return to the villager and improve their confidence. 75 pieces of Bamboo, each of length 8 feet, were donated by the village community as an investment in their youth and to support the village school startup.

A treatment tank has been constructed, which is of the dimensions of Length = 8 feet,

Breadth = 2.5 feet, Height = 4 feet and which has a total capacity of 1000 litre of water. The idea is that the 75 pieces of Bamboo, each of length 8 feet, can be treated in one batch every time. The Bamboo was kept submerged in a solution containing Borax (7kg), and Boric (5kg) for 40 days.

After that, the bamboo were taken out of the tank and dried in the sun and shade alternatively for 10 days which eliminates starch content in Bamboo, thus drastically improving their longevity up to 50 - 80 years. This way, pests cannot attack the Bamboo after the treatment, and they become a perfect material to make various objects like furniture, handicraft items, etc.

The production of bamboo light holders was one of the early products that school youth worked on. Fifty bamboo holders were given in order to decorate the village and the visitors

have expressed their interest in such products. A website was established for the bamboo school products where sales started to pick up after just 3 months from launching.



Figure 7 Starting the Production by the Village Youth from the Bamboo School supervised by volunteering artisan and example from the Website Launched to support a global sale.

Ref: for more details on the products by the Bamboo School, please visit <http://weaverscottage.in/>

3.12. Handloom Project Complementing the Bamboo School Products

In the Bamboo school campus, the inspiration economy mentor initiated another project that would help to differentiate the products from the village and provide more opportunities for the youth, that is the Handloom project. The older generation of the villagers already had the skill of making beautiful handloom, and was using it for their personal or religious use and had never commercialised it.

In order to empower the women and girls, the inspiration economy ensured they get the proper training from the Handloom Training Centre of Rajmai where IIIE sponsored their training completely. Two main leading girls (Maina Pegu and Mansi Doley) were taught to use new machines and technology. Then one handloom instrument was installed in the village, where the leading girls began to train other women. This encourages also the elderly women to bring out their traditional bamboo handlooms for production and start producing products faster for the benefit of participating in planned products from the village. Three handlooms instruments donate to be part of the village school, and a house with hay was constructed for them. Sinha et al. (2021), Goswami (2019).

The lights in that production house are made of Bamboo. The women volunteered their time to support the bamboo school project and asked that the silk threads be brought for them and instantly started producing. As sales started both the village women and the girls started to be paid per piece of cloth production. The project set an example of how women's development could help to bring successful family stability.



Figure 7 Handloom Workshop Carried by Inspiration Economy Mentor and the Traditional Handloom Women Working to Support the Bamboo School Initiative

4. LEARNING COMMUNITY TOLERANCE FRAMEWORK FROM THE CASE

4.1. Observations on the Dehingkalghar Community after Two Years

Through the variety of means and approaches Dehingkalghar villagers, especially youth, became fully engaged and started vesting their trust and faith in inspiration economy projects, as they experienced it brought positive change to their life and livelihood.

Along with all these positive milestones, the rise in trust brought with it also challenges as villagers' expectations began to be more than the bamboo school. Many families approached the inspiration mentor to share their personal problems, or household issues, or requested scholarships to ensure their children go to school, or complained about the need for a better quality of life facilities, including issues of bad roads. Despite the fact that such issues were beyond the scope of the bamboo school project, the inspiration economy team thought that these issues needed to be tackled directly after the bamboo school products and services were launched, to ensure the sustainability of the projects and the community's wellbeing.

In order to tackle this over expectation challenge, one of the authors began re-exploiting the possibilities through competition programs. For instance, in order to provide books to the children, or provide them scholarships which does not cost much, one of the family members needs to volunteer diligently to the project for a month. Last year the inspiration economy helped the villagers in constructing the road and field. This builds a type of social contract where the bamboo school would be committed to helping them with a few social activities per year, and the village youth would support the sustenance of the project without any interruption throughout the year.

4.2. Community Tolerance Framework Learned from Dehingkalghar Community Project

The project managed to reduce the intolerance between the villagers, and reduce the generation gap between youth and the elderly. One could say that the inspiration economy field mentor, in this case, the second author, with the close supervision of the first author, managed to avoid the easy road of change approaches. The authors did not follow the 'traditional community

development’ project, which led to a culture where the source of inspiration comes from all the village leaders. i.e. This is an approach that involves the community, but does not necessarily engage them in each step.

The learning from the two years project journey shows that tolerance could be built among communities, and even could be more generalised to be between a variety of non-homogenous communities; if the sources of inspiration shifted to be from the different levels of the community, the different genders, and those of different level of educational. Therefore, this project proposes indirectly an inspiration economy driven cooperative and collaborative framework that creates a culture where the inspiration sources come from all the villages horizontally and vertically. The journey in this approach might, most of the time, be longer and more challenging, but it brings in sustained tolerance, where all the sources of inspiration would come from a variety of community members. Figure (8) illustrates the difference between the traditional community development approaches and the inspiration economy cooperative or collaborative, driven approaches which were established in Dehingkalghar village.

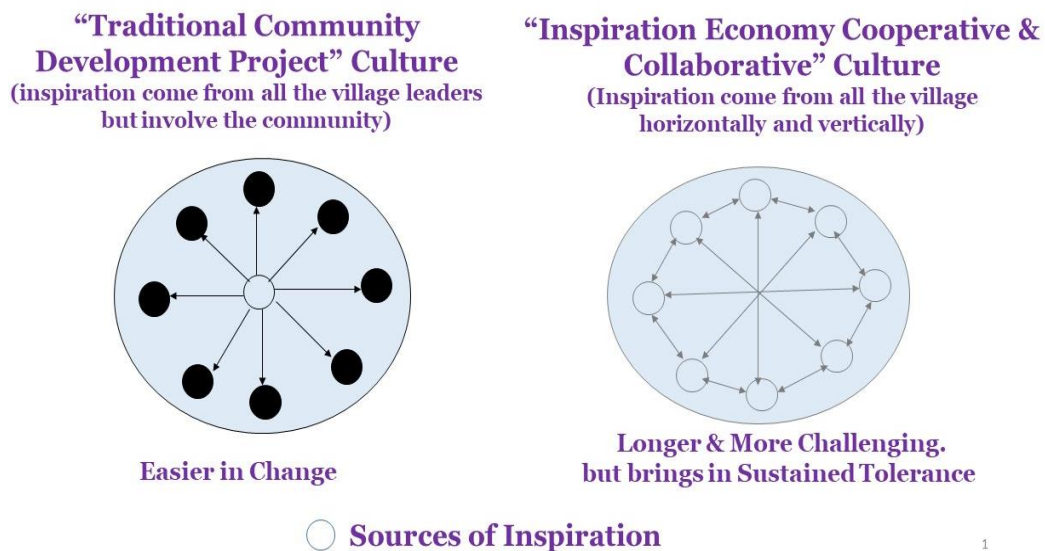


Figure 8 Traditional Community Development approaches vs. Dehingkalghar village Framework Done through Inspiration Economy Cooperative/Collaborative Approaches.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Collaborative & Community Engagement Project

This project managed to build a collaborative culture framework, which has stronger tolerance approaches with little financial investment. The community were satisfied with the systematic approach, and became even very excited to participate or engage in the different inspiration lab camps, or competition events. This helped the project to be established in a proper way. Even the usual security issues in remote areas, became less worrying in this village and nearby villages due to the frequency of tourists or visitors to the bamboo school by other elementary and high schools in the region. Thus, the project can be sustainable with its more organic foundation where great tolerance, understanding and cooperation between the villagers could be seen and experienced by the visitor to the community, or reflected in the product quality of the bamboo school.

5.2. Implications of this Case Study

Because the fight against community intolerance is a constant struggle, especially in these unprecedented times where the many communities suffered from pandemic lockdowns, social distancing and the man-made conflicts spillovers started to be clearly experienced with inflation of livelihood products and the challenge of food security. Because other more complex challenges lie ahead, this paper brings in new implications for the importance of spreading more collaborative projects similar to this case study which need to be initiated in different communities around the world to improve their resilience and tolerance in these times where scarcity thinking is controlled overabundant thinking.

The case study of Dehingkalghar village shows that applied total community engagement changes in approach and changes in attitude are needed in equal measure. Further paper, is needed on this project that would illustrate how tolerance and resilience improved the socioeconomic development of the community and what type of financial returns.

5.3. Self Sufficiency Vision

As COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were being relaxed from September 2021, Dehingkalghar village people saw a new ray of hope with the Bamboo School Project. However, the pandemic also taught the community many valuable lessons regarding the importance of self-sufficiency that would be the subject of the next inspiration lab.

The youth of the village who earlier had to migrate to cities for job opportunities began to see the opportunities of staying in the village, as they understand the potential of the non-financial Dehingkalghar resources that can be turned their life into more flourishing, rather than working as labour far away from their loved ones. The people began to experience the uncertainty that loomed in the unorganised sector, especially in cities and felt rather safe in their own village.

With the self-sufficiency program done, more employment, and opportunities to the village migrants could be sourced, and thus more village men could come back and live with their families, and this would improve the families and the community's wellbeing.

5.4. Role of Inspiration Labs and Camps in Raising Youth Tolerance and Wellbeing during the Unprecedented Times

The presence of the bamboo school that came as a result of inspiration labs and different competitions, or camps in the village, during the time of the pandemic managed to absorb the sudden loss of jobs and serious economic hardships that the village youth suddenly faced in the shadow of lockdown. This enhances their tolerance capacity, and helps them to absorb further the negative impact on the wellbeing of their mental health.

The experience of the authors, in the case of bamboo school, confirms that the world could improve the youth's wellbeing and avoid them going through depression, anxiety and constant hopelessness; they are engaged in similar community projects. Different village people who earlier used to work as watchmen, or housekeepers in cities began to get involved in the project and started taking classes in the bamboo school, seeing alternative livelihood hope. On a weekly basis, teachers are invited to the bamboo school, where skills are imparted. The focus at this stage is to help youth attain a vision that complements the tolerance spirit built by the school by focusing, for example, on homestay and hospitality alternatives. Sustainable and rural tourism, specifically selected farming, handicraft, and handloom, is now popular again among the village youth.

What is encouraging is that village people of different backgrounds and ages are diligently attending the bamboo and handloom workshops that show that the bamboo school has become

part of their lives. By empowering the dropouts of the village youth, this inspiration economy project successfully managed to reduce direct or indirect migration.

5.5. The Journey Continues

The program in Dehingkalghar village aims now to raise the profit margins of the products or from the eco-tourism, so that more economic development is realised.

Creating sustainable tourism in the village was one of our major goals, however, the foundations of such an initiative need to be laid down more till this dream will turn into a reality. One could say 60% of the project goals in the first two have been fulfilled, but what comes next is the most difficult.

The next milestone is built on the hope to see one day some of these village youth become social entrepreneurs where their tolerance of life and project challenges would bring laurels to their village. The hope is that such a program would make such poor communities eliminate poverty and know how to exploit and use their resources. The continuation of the project in Dehingkalghar village would make many nearby villages ask to join the inspiration economy poverty elimination program. Many would start seeing and acting on their intrinsic power, and how it could re-invent the community tolerance, and capacity to become more resilient.

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Figure 9 Youth who Built the 'Bamboo School' and Managing it Today

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