

Forsyth Lodge, Satpura Bringing Economic Benefits to Local Women and Communities



Village kitchen serving traditional cuisine at the lodge, a local women's enterprise. Photo credit: Vaibhav Mehta



Model organic farm to encourage villagers to grow and supply produce.

Local women also benefit from the lodge's model organic garden, an initiative to teach organic farming techniques, demonstrate that vegetables can be grown with existing water resources, a previous barrier in perception, and create a revenue stream from sales to the lodge community and forest department. A further project is teaching local women the lost traditional technique of macramé knotting with new products - plant hangers and handbags - now on sale to guests and through city retail outlets.

A broader spectrum of the local community is sharing in the benefits of the multiplier effects of tourism. All fresh fruit, vegetables, poultry, meat and fruits are purchased within 15 kms. Milk is purchased from a local farmer in the neighbouring villages of Sarangpur. A local villager encouraged by the lodge to start a cab service for guest transfer to Bhopal is given first refusal for business.



Training in bee keeping.

Forsyth Lodge is also one of a range of lodges working in partnership with Under The Mango Tree, a Mumbai NGO, to improve the cultivation of sustainable crops and in the process, is creating another revenue stream through the sale of honey.



Training local women in macramé knotting and reviving a lost craft skill.



Local cab service catalysed by the lodge.

Forsyth Lodge has a strong ethos of local procurement and employment with 90% of its staff employed from neighbouring villages. An active policy of bringing economic benefits to local women forms part of the equation, too, despite local conservatism.

Between six to eight local women are employed each year after the monsoon rains to maintain the lodge's cottages built from mud, hay and cow dung, traditional local materials, and the wildlife-friendly thicket fence.

Given confidence by Sae Gundawar, the lodge's female naturalist from Pune, local women are also learning new skills and involved in enterprises to earn revenue. One such initiative, the lodge's village lunch serving local cuisine on a traditional wood and cow dung fire, is empowering four local women besides giving guests a positive insight into local culture.



Inspiring local women, lodge naturalist Sae Gundawar.