



Kindness Farm Boundary Wall  
Image: VSPCA

## VSPCA's Kindness Farm: A Food Smart Animal Sanctuary

By Priya Tallam and Pradeep Kumar Nath

The Visakha Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (VSPCA) proposes that food-smart animal sanctuaries are an excellent model for environmental and social justice, building in food security and climate resilience across rural communities in tropical India. The design, workflows and principles of such a preserve, would be important to city planning as well. This thoughtful plan demonstrates successful, nature-positive outcomes representing an imaginative linking between city and countryside via animals that are being forced out of human-dominated spaces and food systems. These living spaces are often simultaneously contemplated upon in terms of access to fresh food, management of rural migrants

and informal workers and more recently, biodiversity losses. Creating healthy, opportunistic living spaces in rural regions through innovative practices, which provide fulfilling occupations for village residents can reduce rural migration to cities. Animals, the important residents in these sanctuaries, are key to influencing universal human values and instilling the value of the region's biodiversity.

### Background: The World to India to Visakhapatnam

A report from [The Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures \(TNFD\)](#) found that more than half of the world's economic output is dependent on mother nature. This implies that life on Earth is sustained through nature's biodiversity. TNFD

reports that humanity has wiped out 83% of all wild mammals and half of the world's plants. This has brought the living world to the brink of the climate crisis and inflicts food insecurity on more than a billion people.

Farmers in India are increasingly desperate. Deep cracks in food security coupled with disruptions in the supply chains of the agricultural sector have disproportionately affected rural communities and large numbers of informal sector workers. [For India's 303 million informal sector workers the consequences of food insecurity are dire.](#) The continuing waves of Covid-19 in India can push rural communities into transient poverty with a potential impact of plunging upwards of 4 million informal sector workers into poverty.

The same article breaks numbers down to the Visakhapatnam district: like the state of Andhra Pradesh, it is primarily an agrarian economy engaging a majority of its citizens in agriculture and allied industries. In Andhra Pradesh alone, around 100,000 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) provide employment to more than 1,000,000 people, while the state employs around 800,000 people in its management. The state, which was resplendent with good water reserves, now faces issues of severe water stress and exploitation as identified by the Jal shakti Abhiyan. There are nine districts of Andhra Pradesh, facing severe water stress, one of which is Visakhapatnam. Along with this challenge, is the double burden of being flood prone during the monsoons. This makes the region vulnerable to climate changes and monsoonal variability.

### The Kindness Trust

In this situation of great loss (of the world's biodiversity and nature) there is genuine opportunity to resurrect nature-positive outcomes by pursuing sustainable ecosystems, which involve local people and rescued animals while ensuring biodiversity retention. In the heart of rural Visakhapatnam, a food-smart animal haven is expanding possibilities for health and well-being of all. This is VSPCA's Kindness Farm.

In 2012, VSPCA procured land deemed "useless" in the Kuruvada region meant to house rescued animals from the city and countryside. Late actress Ms. Olive Walker, world-renowned animal activist, Mr. Philip Wollen of [The Kindness Trust](#), Mrs. Esther Geisser of NetAP and Mrs. Shobha Narayanan helped realize this project with VSPCA's Founder, Mr. Pradeep Kumar Nath. Calling it the "Kindness Farm," Pradeep

began his first task: carting truck-loads of water to wet the land and dig wells –planting many thousands of native fruit and shade saplings for animals, beginning the processes of soil regeneration. The aim: invite pollinators and the region's biodiversity to return to this region. VSPCA does not believe that any piece of land is useless or barren. Animals, birds, insects, reptiles, and microorganisms live everywhere – from deserts to ice-lands to deep down in the ocean where life is not expected to survive!

In 2019, VSPCA obtained a similar property in "Narsipatnam" that is being re-modelled after The Farm. Narsipatnam covers about 14 villages. The ultimate aim of these efforts by VSPCA is to influence a region of about 97 villages stretching from "Anakapalle" through "Nathavaram" by creating sanctuaries that provide both biodiversity sustenance and



Sridevi Goat Field Supervisor  
Image: VSPCA





self-reliance, offering livelihood to villagers in this region and influencing their compassion for rescued animals – so that every citizen internalizes the value of all the precious biodiversity that abounds this region.

Several dozen locals have joined hands in working with VSPCA, recognizing that an oasis was forming in their dry region. Today, VSPCA employs about 50 Kuruvadan residents to manage the Farm and renewable energy production, handle animals, and ensure the availability of year-round water while maintaining the regional watersheds. With their help, the Farm has evolved the best sustainable practices and living habits. Throughout this region, there now is heightened awareness of the incredible value of the biodiversity that exists here.

### Why is this Project necessary?

Food insecurity, climate change and urban sprawl threaten rural ecosystems with fragile economies and keystone species. Conventionally, such challenges are addressed via costly state/international interventions and aid, often with scientific complexities, at the expense of local participation and trust.

VSPCA has been evolving self-sustainable, ecosystem service-based, long-term, adaptive, replicable infrastructures. In all landscapes, whether coastline, city, or countryside, these include local and animal cultural ecologies, agency, and participation.

As VSPCA worked through its [sea turtle conservation program](#), the founder and staff learned of the true impacts of empowering ground-up conservation. In rural

Andhra Pradesh, through the Kindness Farm initiative, they continue to explore opportunities to expand their food-smart, food-shed, while continuing to work closely with all animals. Working with the Smart City Mission in the City of Visakhapatnam – the realization dawned that the countryside has great resources to be just as “smart” as any Smart City – because the rural countryside is in greater proximity to nature! And, what can be smarter than nature herself?

It’s seen that the Farm suffers drought and flooding in mirroring the story of Noah’s Ark. As soon as plants and animals began thriving in the Farm’s environment, the next steps were to build for climate resiliency and adaptive capacity in rural Andhra Pradesh. So, VSPCA began the construction of its Rain Water Harvesting Project. This best

management practice is training rural residents in the process of rain water harvesting. Certain farmers like Mr. Satyanarayana are observing this process keenly to bring such a system to their own farms and animal cooperatives in the region. Rains mean life in this region. Rain water harvesting addresses both drought and flooding. It channels the heavy coastal storm waters into rain water pits and wells, and the bio-gas-based energy pumps the water into overhead tanks – for year-round water availability. Precious rain water isn’t wasted and different crops can be rotated year-round. The animals and residents are guaranteed water in difficult times because of the storage capacity of the system. Animal dung keeps the soil healthy, which retains more moisture along with the nitrogen-fixing microorganisms for plant health, and prevents soil erosion.

Water attracts more biodiversity. Animal species are flocking to the Farm. A leopard, a mongoose and varieties of snakes are now seen at the Farm. There is overall prosperity with rain water harvesting.

VSPCA, an animal-protection organization, has ways to deter species who may attack the Farm’s animals, without employing lethal means, while attracting pollinators and birds to propagate the native trees throughout the region.

Important design elements in the Farm include a delightful “Community-Dog Park” and Cat House as model spaces for rescued dogs and cats. As VSPCA runs a shelter in the City of Visakhapatnam, they have the knowledge to build and train the locals on construction and management of an aviary, apiary, and a primate sanctuary

here. Several “Cattle-Shalas” exist inside the Farm. There is room to bring in liminal, stray, wild, and migratory animals – promoting compassion for all the biodiversity that saunters in, thereby fortifying long-term, the ecosystem services we receive from them.

### The Scope of Kindness Farm

When replicated across rural communities, the Farm has tremendous scope. It is a demonstrably self-reliant model – a much needed means of innovation and livelihood! People are able to learn to grow their own food by innovative means with the backing of evolving best practices. The soil is regenerated and well-fixed because there are a variety of animals who produce the best fresh fertilizer and support the vermicomposting needed. The Farm produces its own biogas

## Food-Smart, Food-Shed

The Kindness Farm is a model “food-smart food-shed,” demonstrating the following strategies:

- **Natural and Organic Farming combined with Agroforestry** regenerating soil health with native plants and trees, utilizing rescued-animal waste efficiently, and building self-sustaining practices throughout this region.
- **Rain Water Harvesting and Watershed Management** ensuring water availability year-round, in this drought-prone region, which receives limited yearly rainfall.
- **Interspecies Co-existence** is about inviting the region’s biodiversity back – to revitalize natural ecosystem services provided freely by Mother Nature. Animal sanctuary-management activities are key in this proposed food-smart, food-shed.
- **Awareness and Education Campaigns in Adjacent and Neighboring Villages and Townships** is the tactic for system multiplication and/or scaling up; and
- **Establishing the Relevant Concerned Network** of village panchayats, region’s farmers, market channels, relevant NGOs for scientific knowledge around seed and crop, animal rescue co-ops and universities - all, for the purposes of socio-economic growth of the selected regions, continued scientific needs/research, strategic & tactical planning, and change management.



for its energy needs such as pumping water, preparing food and medicine, surgical needs, etc. Here too, animal waste is effectively utilized. Beyond this, animal waste, such as cow urine, allows for the production of tons of ground cleaner. There is a high demand across cities in India for cow-based ground cleaners. Cow dung cakes and incense sticks are other hand-made products that the villages can sell in the markets, and which have export value due to the resurgence of the demand for natural products.

Applying rescued-animal waste in cultivation and energy management speaks to greater efficiencies and efficacious use of resources, especially in economically hard-hit regions. Importantly, it manifests compassion for the animal world. Apart from fruit and wood trees, people can plant crops and work towards the growing need for localized food – as through Farmers' Markets. When replicated across many thousands of villages, such food-smart, animal sanctuary-based food-sheds, promote healthy living.



Food transported over tens of thousands of miles using incredible transportation and energy resources, is one of the causes of food insecurity. Large amounts of money are redirected to bringing food to the masses, grown, packed and processed across oceans, which can actually be grown locally and freshly. The Farm seeks to demonstrate local food production and consumption.

Innovations in farming and the high demand for organic products across the world, provide opportunities for fulfilled employment of village youth, men and women at their very locations. As the Kindness Farm has proven, it can gainfully employ the village youth, men and women. This has prospects for reducing mass migrations from villages to cities. Most cities in India are struggling to provide healthy living for people migrating in large numbers, who often end up in slums and shanties.

### Conclusion

Native people are accountable to their land. The indigenous

are accountable to the lands and waters, which are their means to survival. They work closely with Mother Nature. Being close to nature, is being close to their survival. Nature and survival are often demanding and cruel. Animals and the native peoples know and live this.

When we work with animals and make their existence a part of ours, we begin to unravel the language of how to manage the land and waters for the betterment of the whole ecosystem.

In cities, as we tend to destroy natural lands or eliminate animals from urban spaces, we lose the special language that can only be learnt by observing biodiversity. Animal stories are always woven into the land and only become revealed when humans make efforts to retain all the biodiversity around them.

The Kindness Farm is such an experiment that perseveres in demonstrating how humans can make homes for various species and live effectively with nature. The Farm illustrates frameworks needed for healthy living, species-by-species.

Taking the example of the Dog Park: here might be the framework pathway: (1) ensure ample water for living; (2) make homes for dogs, as everyone needs a home on this planet to call their own {therefore, you will see references to “dog bungalows” in pictures/articles of Kindness Farm}; (3) plant trees sustaining the larger ecosystem; and (4) provide domesticated



Learning how cattle can be effective partners in farming!  
Image: VSPCA

urban dogs in such facilities, similar essentials and amenities needed by anyone for survival – e.g. food, water, vaccinations, health care, recreation, etc.

In conclusion, modern scientists work through established scientific methods that demand evidence. Therefore, indigenous sciences and animal cultures are considered “primitive,” unable to adhere to the modern scientific method. However, the scope of modern scientific method can often be puny in space, time and spirit. How do we emulate an entire ecosystem in the lab? Or, from a petri-dish? How can we traverse centuries in our experiment? Ecosystems have evolved over millennia to provide the ecosystem services needed for the survival of species. VSPCA in its work, recognizes indigenous methods of knowing, transmitted over centuries, and applies this to augment the

modern scientific methods.

It is also important to internalize that modern science is sanctioned through settler colonial power structures whose authority does not authentically tolerate questions because the evidence has been supplied. Basically, science tends to be authoritative, but hasn't evolved the scientific method to be questioned against the bigger scheme of things over centuries and across the cosmos. Modern science therefore, can go wrong – as compared with centuries of indigenous wisdom obtained directly from nature. We must think: – through all our technological advancements, is global warming a true sign of progress for all of humanity?

We must develop a deeper compassion for all animals. VSPCA's Kindness Farm brings animal and human cultures

together in a way that empowers both humans and nonhumans to live peaceful lives, while sustaining larger ecosystems with greater biodiversity.

### Resources:

VSPCA. <https://vspca.org>.

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