



St. Vincent College
(Affiliated to Savtribai Phule Pune University)
Pune -411037

Title of the Event	Rural Immersion Program for AICUF students		
Date of the Event	29th to 31st August 2025	Place of the event	Hivre Korda, Ahmednagar District
Objectives of the Event	The Rural Immersion Program (Jeevika) aimed to expose AICUF students to successful grassroots models of watershed management and sustainable rural development. It sought to foster experiential learning about environmental conservation, community-led governance, and the integration of ecological and social values in village transformation.		
Name/s of the Resource Persons	Representatives of Hivre Korda Village		

A short narration of the program

Rural Immersion Program for AICUF students

From 29th to 31st August 2025, the All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF) unit of St. Vincent College, Pune, conducted a three-day Rural Immersion Program (Named Jeevika) for its student members in the villages of Hivre Korda and two other nearby villages in Ahmednagar district. The primary objective of the program was to provide students with firsthand exposure to grassroots-level environmental conservation, with a specific focus on studying the watershed management techniques implemented in these regions over the past decades.

The program was organized under the guidance of the AICUF faculty coordinators and supported by local contacts and community leaders in the region. A total of 12 AICUF students from various undergraduate programs participated in the immersion, staying in basic community accommodations to experience rural living conditions and foster deeper engagement with the local population.

The choice of Hivre Korda as a central site for the visit was deliberate, as the village is widely recognized for its successful and sustainable watershed development model. The village transformed from a drought-prone, economically distressed area into a self-reliant and green community through collective action and scientific water conservation methods.

During the visit, students were taken on guided field walks through the village landscape to observe key watershed structures such as percolation tanks, check dams, contour bunding, farm ponds, and afforestation



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zones. They interacted with farmers and village committee members who explained how rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge have revived agriculture, reduced soil erosion, and improved drinking water availability. The emphasis was on community ownership—how decisions about water use, crop patterns, and land management are made collectively, with strict rules against water-intensive crops and open grazing.

In the second village, the focus shifted to decentralized water storage systems and the role of women's self-help groups in managing water resources. Students learned how micro-level planning, supported by government schemes like MGNREGA, enabled the construction of small-scale water conservation structures that benefited individual hamlets. The third village highlighted the integration of watershed development with organic farming and soil health management, showcasing how water conservation contributes to long-term agricultural sustainability.

In addition to field visits, students attended informal sessions with local activists and retired development officers who provided historical context on the evolution of watershed programs in Maharashtra. They discussed the challenges faced—such as initial resistance from villagers, lack of funding, and bureaucratic delays—and how persistence and education led to behavioral change.

Students were encouraged to document their observations, conduct interviews, and reflect on the social, ecological, and economic dimensions of rural development. They noted the strong correlation between environmental restoration and social discipline, including bans on liquor, family planning initiatives, and equitable resource distribution.

The immersion also included discussions on the role of youth and educational institutions in supporting rural development. AICUF students reflected on how the values of solidarity, simplicity, and stewardship align with Catholic social teaching and how they can contribute to similar initiatives in their own communities.

At the end of the three days, the group held a debriefing session where each participant shared key takeaways. Many expressed a deeper appreciation for sustainable development and the power of collective



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action. The college plans to compile a student-led report on the findings and explore possibilities for future collaboration with rural development organizations in the region.

The Rural Immersion Program was not a formal training but an experiential learning initiative aimed at broadening students' perspectives beyond the classroom. It strengthened AICUF's commitment to social justice, environmental ethics, and community engagement. The program concluded on 31st August, and the students returned to Pune with a renewed sense of responsibility toward ecological sustainability and rural empowerment.

Name of the Collaborating Agency	AICUF unit of St. Vincent College
Learning Outcomes of the Event for the Participants	Students gained firsthand understanding of watershed structures, water conservation practices, and their socio-economic impacts through direct interaction with villagers and field observations. They also reflected on the ethical dimensions of sustainability, collective action, and their own role in promoting environmental and social justice.
Learning Outcomes for the Organizing team	The organizing team deepened their insight into designing meaningful experiential learning programs that connect academic values with real-world development challenges. They also identified potential avenues for ongoing collaboration with rural communities and development agencies, reinforcing AICUF's mission of social engagement and ecological stewardship.
No. of Participants	12 AICUF Students and a faculty member
Faculty in Charge	Dr. Gilbi John
Documents Attached	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Attendance Sheet2. Geotag photographs3. Resume of resource persons if any4. Copy of remuneration paid if any5. Notice of the event6. Thank you letter to the resource persons