

Village Botanist Program, a Website to Showcase the Para-Taxonomists

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Abstract:

Traditionally, biological resources have been used extensively for health care, healing practices and livelihoods. Ethno-biographical accounts narrate their widespread and informed use among various populations and cultures. Knowledge related to their use is specific. Local communities play a crucial role for linking knowledge on characterization of biological resources and conservation, utilization and health-related knowledge.

For proper harnessing and management of the Biodiversity, the Indian Biological Diversity Act, 2002 was enacted to promote community participation in conservation, sustainable use, discretionary access and equitable sharing of benefits flowing from commercial utilization of the biodiversity and associated knowledge which the people possess. This act envisages establishment of village level Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC). It elucidates that the BMC's are responsible for conservation sustainable use and documentation of biological diversity and benefit sharing arising with utilization of their resources. To fulfill their roles and responsibilities, the capacities of the BMC's and local communities need to be built on their aspects. Therefore FRLHT has designed a skill based Village Botanist course on identification and documentation of biodiversity components to build a cadre of Para-taxonomists for conservation and management of biodiversity.

There are more than 300 members from 12 states have successfully completed the course. A website is design for sharing knowledge about course and it is ready to upload. The need of this site is for anyone to utilize their services and for them to share their findings and achievement.

Key words: Village Botanist, FRLHT, Para taxonomists.

Introduction:

Village Botanists course is for people who like to identify and document their resource and sustainably use for their health and livelihood. So far, skills of more than 300 community members have been developed through this course. This has resulted in a network of Para- taxonomists across 12 states. The course has helped them in augmenting their skills in terms of scientific identification of plants and local resources, the threatened plants and its conservation needs, documentation of traditional knowledge and benefit sharing regimes. They have been engaged as field guides for ecotourism activities, in forest surveys, in developing working plans and also as resource persons by local Biodiversity Management Committees for ethno botanical documentation.

The network of Para-taxonomists is gradually growing and creating a visible impact at the grass root level. The course gives balanced teaching using theory, practical and self-learning processes. The syllabus has a strong coverage of field botany that empowers the participants to take up activities related to the subject, herbarium preparation, vegetation monitoring, conservation and sustainable collection of medicinal plants, nursery and propagation techniques, ethno-botanical documentation, access to benefit sharing, etc. This course has constantly evolved and improved over the years through feedbacks of participants. This has also resulted in developing a

certificate course on Ethno botany by the Institute of Trans-Disciplinary Health Science and Technology (A state Private University) promoted by FRLHT.

The purposes of developing site are as follows:

1. To prepare the list of village botanists who have completed the course.
2. Exchange the field experience and innovation among themselves.
3. Utilize their services if required.

Methodology:

There are two modules of this website. First is the public interface for displaying the data about Village Botanists and searchable access to the database to search Village Botanists in a particular area or state (Fig. 1). Second module is the administrative interface to manage the backend database and feed in data into the website.

A web based module was developed, to communicate with the participants of Village Botanists program. On Login page a slide show with some images of program are shown (Fig. 2). The photo gallery tab shows program's photos of different states. First the participants have to register with their personal and educational details. After that they will be able to visit the Home page (Fig. 3). On home page they can share a post, images as well as video publicly. There is a facility to comment for posts, images and videos. They can also able to change or update their profile.

On the Admin site, Admin can manage the all registered people. He will be able to add new people to the website and also see the feedback of users. Also download the people's profile in CSV format.

We have developed a Web module, the scripts were developed in PHP (Gutmans, Lerdorf, Suraski, & Boerger, 2015) and backend stored in MySQL database (MySQL AB, 2015). The module is ready for hosting and can be accessed by Village Botanist program people.

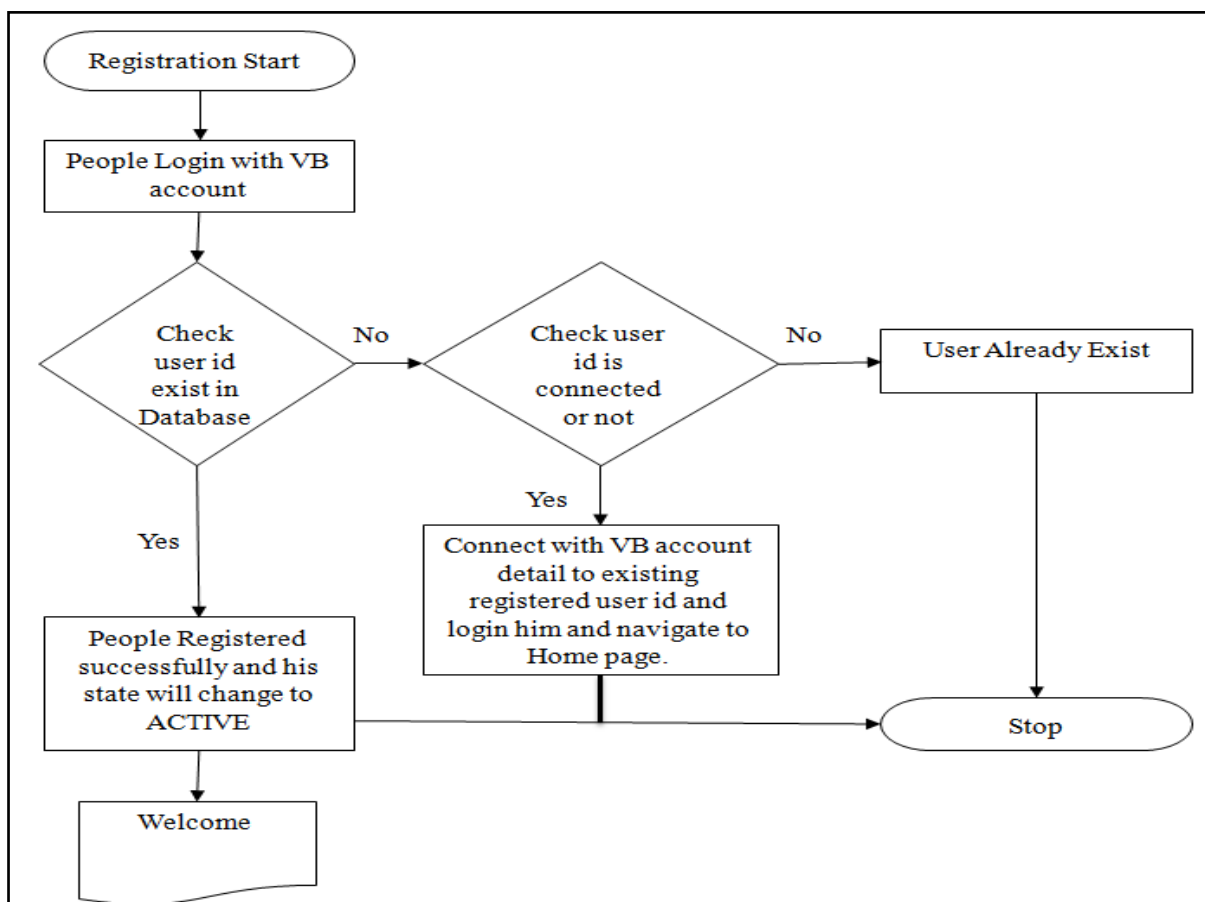


Fig. 1 Flow of User Registration.

Results:

Participants involved in program would share knowledge about course using a sharing posts, images and videos. They also able to comment for their posts.

Conclusion:

This website is useful for the people who are involved in Village Botanist program, State Biodiversity Boards, Forest Departments, Scientists and so on. This website is a platform for networking the biodiversity conservation programs carried across various Indian states. This enables the people to build their capabilities through communicating to conservation experts.

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MySQL AB. (2015). MySQL.
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Fig. 2 Login Page



Fig. 3 Home Page