

IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE 'KHUSHALI' PROJECT

**An Executive Summary
2023**

BACKGROUND

Prisons possess a multifaceted role in society, extending beyond surface functions. While intended to rehabilitate, protect, and administer justice, many prisons today demand vital reforms due to concerns about effectiveness. Historical focus on isolation and punishment over rehabilitation underlines the need for change. A shift is required, viewing prisons as both containment and rehabilitation centers. This shift promotes inmate introspection, skills acquisition, and successful reintegration. Enhanced education, vocational training, and mental health support are pivotal, aiding inmates in rebuilding their lives post-release, lowering recidivism, and fostering community safety. By embracing a holistic approach that addresses the underlying factors contributing to criminal behavior, prisons can transform into catalysts for lasting societal change.

India Vision Foundation

The India Vision Foundation (IVF), founded by Dr. Kiran Bedi, focuses on prison reform and offers convicts a second chance through activities like music, dance, art, meditation, and gardening. IVF aims to create a crime-free society that values human life. Operating in Indian prisons, it also helps inmates' children with school admissions. The Gurugram prison's 'Nirmaan Bhavan' exemplifies IVF's dedication to transforming prisons for personal growth. IVF stresses both institutional reforms and psychological interventions for prisoner well-being.

To be Nurtured through Nature

The India Vision Foundation initiated the Khushali project, focusing on the positive influence of gardening on inmates' mental, physical health, relationships, and emotional expression. Inmates collaborated on creating gardens, guided by a leader, resulting in successful cultivation of plants and vegetables. The project explored gardening's deep impact on well-being, especially in correctional settings. By empowering inmates to tend their gardens, Khushali fostered personal growth, therapeutic engagement, and a sense of accomplishment. It provided a unique opportunity for inmates to connect with nature, nurture life, and experience a renewed sense of purpose within the prison environment.



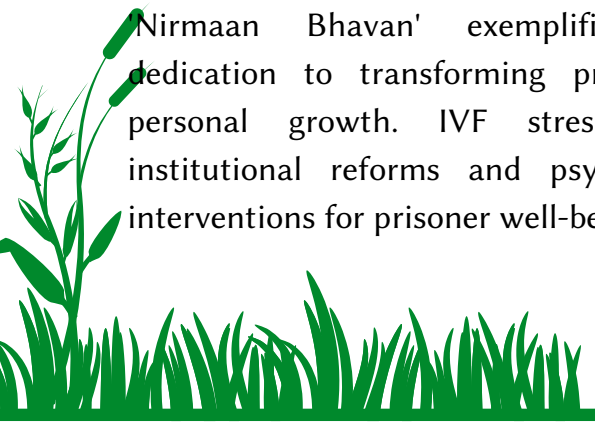
Objectives of Khushali Project

The objectives of the Khushali Project were to engage the inmates in gardening by tasking them to care for their own gardens, in order to:


- Understand the impact of gardening on their emotions.
- Improve their mental and physical well-being.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to gauge the impact of the Khushali project on the above-stated objectives through qualitative and quantitative analysis.



METHODOLOGY



The 'Khushali' project employed a qualitative design utilizing thematic analysis technique for which, in-depth interviews were conducted with the participants. As part of gathering the subjective feedback, participants were asked to express their emotions following the intervention. They were requested to rate their experience of emotions such as interest, distress, excitement, irritability, and inspiration on a scale ranging from 'the most' to 'very less or not at all'.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The information collected via in-depth interviews with the participants underwent a comprehensive thematic analysis (which involves thoroughly examining a dataset to identify meaningful patterns and themes that emerge from the data, thereby enhancing our understanding of the participants' gardening experience), leading to the identification of two prominent themes explained below.

THEMES



Reaching Beyond: Living a Wholesome Life

- Concept of extending one's boundaries for a more fulfilling existence

From Loneliness to 'Sukoon': Gardening as a Fundamental Source of Happiness and Psychological Equilibrium

- How gardening transformed feelings of isolation into a profound sense of contentment and mental balance.

FINDINGS

Reaching Beyond: Living a Wholesome Life



The 'Khushali' program's findings highlight cognitive benefits for participants by minimizing prison distractions and improving focus.



Gardening curbed unnecessary thoughts and fostered positive thinking, fulfilling their desire for new experiences.



It played a pivotal role in self-development and effective time utilization, extending beyond physical well-being.

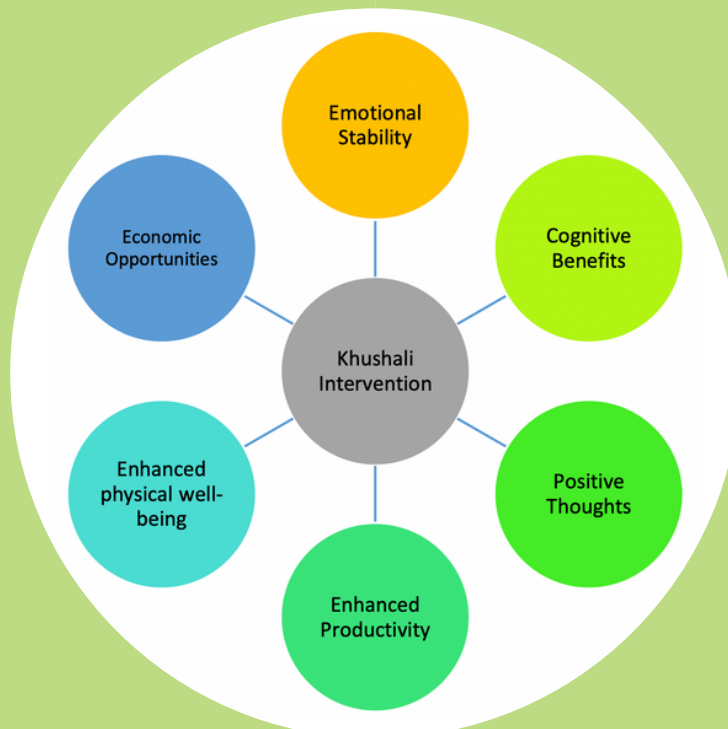


Cultivating plants offered tangible rewards, aiding anger management, self-understanding, and reducing addictive behaviors.



Gardening's societal impact aligned with its goals, enhancing the atmosphere and potential livelihood options beyond prison.

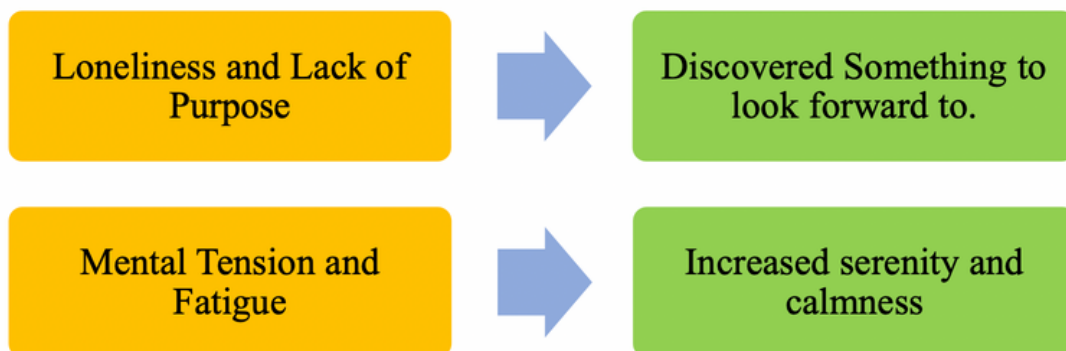
This multifaceted process enhanced economic, cognitive, and emotional stability, contributing to a holistic and fulfilling life.



From Loneliness to 'Sukoon': Gardening as a Fundamental Source of Happiness and Psychological Equilibrium.

The program's positive impact on participants' mental states became evident. Initially experiencing loneliness and a lack of purpose, engagement with 'Khushali' transformed their outlook.

- Plants became like cherished children, reducing mental tension and fatigue while increasing serenity.
- Many participants entered a state of "flow" during gardening, recognized for heightened focus and enjoyment. Remarkably, they discovered a deep sense of "sukoon" (tranquillity) within prison, a rarity.

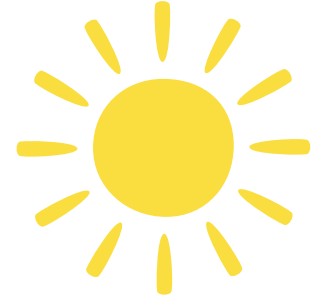


The program's ability to initiate this mental balance and relaxation was particularly noteworthy.

EMOTIONAL FEEDBACK

Findings from interviews show that the Khushali intervention had mostly positive outcomes. It sparked curiosity and encouraged participants to break from their routines.

Though a few felt distressed, this was often linked to their usual life patterns, seen by some as a chance for personal growth. Participants were enthusiastic, using Khushali for self-expression and growth.



CONCLUSION

“Khushali” lived by its name of spreading happiness around as the participants found the activity relaxing and soothing. It encouraged them to work hard and also enjoy the reward associated with the work – the growth of plants themselves. Fully understanding the environmental and psychological impact of the gardening process – the program contributed to uplifting the mental and physical environment of the inmates as they were able to concentrate more, avoid distractions and also reduce aggression and mental tension. It further opened a channel for economic well-being by adding a source of income both inside and outside the prison ultimately leading to empowerment. The program should continue in other available spaces with more participants for the amplified impact of this project.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Khushali's success in balancing inmates' well-being prompted suggestions for enhancement. These include:

- Introduction of workshops and info-sessions on medicinal plants and vegetables to empower inmates with self-care tools for everyday issues like colds and muscle pains, promotion of self-reliance and economic gains.
- Boost motivation and involvement of inmates by introducing new seeds for kitchen gardening and enabling means for large scale production.
- Implementation of routine well-being checks by a dedicated team from Khushali, to promote motivation and enhance productivity.
- Promote awareness with a "Plant of the Month" program, educating inmates about the benefits of specific crops and encouraging knowledge sharing.
- Incorporation of modern gardening techniques and technologies to keep inmates informed and prepared for future advancements.



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