

## GVNML Laporiya values the role of rodents in the eco-chain

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Unlike the mythical pied piper who lured rats from the city of Hamelin to a waterhole, where they all drowned, the households in Laporiya village



in Rajasthan, capture the rodents only to release them in their new habitat. Chuha Ghar, a four-acre patch of common land inside the village, located some 85 km from the tourist capital of Jaipur, is a unique home for rats and perhaps the only such open but protected space.

The reasons for protecting the rat have been ecological. The villagers had long resolved to protect all forms of birds and animals, but the rat was not among them. Until, at one village meeting a common understanding was reached on the role of rats in the food chain. Birds and serpents feed on it, so the population of these mutually dependent species remain under control.

A quick survey of 190 households in the village showed that rats were no longer a menace; the rodents are occasional visitors, presumably

to tantalize their taste buds. If the number of burrows at Chuha Ghar is any indication, rodents have adapted to the ecosystem, which strikes a balance between the host and predator. Some 200 types of birds now frequent the village, helping greatly in seed dispersal and pollination.

Such ecosystem services are critical to a village located on the edge of the Thar desert, with less than 300mm annual rainfall. Though the village, under the leadership of the Laxman Singh-led Gram Vikas Navyuvak Mandal Laporiya, has revived its wells and ponds, it soon realised the need for a perfect ecological balance for improved crop harvests.

Laporiya village's wisdom is in marked contrast to the prevailing official thinking, which counts rats and birds as a menace to stored food grains. A



recent communiqué from the agriculture ministry indicates that of the estimated 227.3 million tonnes of crop harvested this year (ending June 30) as much as 20 million tonnes, the equivalent of Canada's annual wheat crop, has been eaten by rats and birds.

Laporiya village would certainly disagree!



Interestingly, it doesn't cost a penny to manage the Chuha Ghar. The birds, serpents and rats have struck an interdependent accord among themselves. Open below link for news in The Hindu as recognition of our work.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/features/rats-left-to-race-in-peace/article7383594.ece>

