

Water Harvesting, conservation and spring shed development initiatives

In the Henva River catchment villages

A Completion Report

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Submitted By

Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan

Supported by

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Me & My Charity Foundation

UJJS is happy to have successfully completed a project supported by “Me & My charity Foundation” through our longtime friends and partners at the Himalaya resources. The Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan-UJJS team together with the friends of Himalaya Resources and the mountain communities in the Henva river valley spring sheds has been able to revive and rejuvenate a few springs generating a lot of hope and positivity in the region. This project has strengthened our ongoing initiatives for land, water and forest conservation with positive results inspiring us and the mountain communities at large. We could outreach to some of the really needy communities and people facing acute water scarcity. The little efforts of rain / roof water harvesting, successful spring shed revival initiatives has given a lot of relief to those we could cover through this intervention. A lot more needs to be done in this difficult mountainous region to address the water issues of the communities.

An effort was made by UJJS volunteers to reach the poor and marginalized groups from the *Dalit* and backward caste communities who had to negotiate long distances for their day to day water needs. Conscious effort was also made to help some of the single women families that badly needed supports from outside initiative as they could not afford on their own to get water harvesting structures constructed at their house hold level.

Several women and youth groups were involved who participated to strengthen and implement this program of water harvesting and conservation in the villages of Henva river valley which is part of the Tehri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand Himalayas. Several meetings and campaigns were organized among school children, women groups and village communities for a bigger impact of this initiative.



UJJS Team interacting with School Children at Govt. Inter College, Kharsada

Construction of Rain/Roof Water harvesting Tanks

The Henva river valley villages have been facing acute water shortage due to the drying up of springs as the spring sheds have been badly effected due to massive deforestation and faulty development policies that promoted commercial forestry instead of strengthening or protecting bio-diverse forests that used to conserve and protect spring sheds. UJS has been constantly working with the communities of this region to address this issue and in fact came into existence as a result of the famous Chipko Movement (Hugging the trees Movement) initiated in the early 1970s by the communities of this region. Through this project we have tried to reach out to some of the badly affected people of the region. We constructed 10 Rain / roof water harvesting Ferro-cement tanks the details which is given below providing much needed relief to the suffering families and community.

Most of the families and communities benefitted by this project had to travel long distances for collecting portable water for their day to day needs. Kumla devi an 80 year old *dalit* women from Ghargoun village who is one of the beneficiary of this project had to negotiate more than 300 meter steep climb to get a small bucket of water can now easily get portable water through the rain / roof water harvesting tank constructed. Pramila devi from Chidiyali village who is a single woman and the only bread earner for a big family with small children was facing lot of difficulties collecting water for the family need got a big relief after the construction of a water harvesting tank in front of her house. The 80 girl student residents of the Kasturba Gandhi Girls Resident School who were suffering acute water shortage also got a big relief from the 2 tanks constructed at their place. In short all the beneficiaries selected were greatly relieved as a result of this intervention.

Beneficiary's list of Rain/Roof Water Harvesting Tanks

Sl. No.	Beneficiary Name	Village Name	Family Background	Number of Tanks
1.	Kumla Devi	Ghargoun	Dalit Family	1
2.	Kalam Das	Ghargoun	Dalit family	1
3.	Pramila Devi	Chidiyali	Single Women Headed family	1
4.	Rekha Devi	Chidiyali	Below Poverty Line family	1
5.	Urmila Devi	Chidiyali	Below Poverty Line family	1
6.	Tumi Singh	Sunarkot	Dalit Family	1
7.	Balwan Singh	Sunarkot	Dalit Family	1
8.	Jona Devi	Aampata	Single Women Headed family	1
9.	Kasturba Gandhi Girls Residential School	Aampata	All girls residing in the hostel belong to poor and marginalized families. Covering approx. 80 residents.	2
			Total tanks constructed	10



Rain / Roof Water Harvesting Tank at Kasturba Gandhi Girls Residential School



Bio - Water filter Unit being installed on top of the Water tank

Development of Plant Nursery and Plantation

As mentioned earlier the spring sheds of this region have badly suffered due to the forest policies pursued over a period of time which promoted commercial forestry planting only fast growing timber varieties. This resulted in the depletion of water conserving plant species. Through this project we have attempted to grow and plant trees, bushes and shrubs that are water conserving like Oaks, *Kujju*, *sinsyali* and *senvali*. UJJS will take up the plantation of oak saplings prepared at our nursery during the winter plantation period. This initiative is expected to revive some of the springs that we have been working on with the support of Himalaya Resources. UJJS has been receiving positive reports from Chidiyali, Pipleth, Koti, Kathiya and Tipali villages where we have planted water conserving saplings of different varieties resulting in better and increased water flows / discharge from the springs.



Children participating in seed sowing

Through this project we have developed a good plant nursery of Oaks, *kachnaar* and *Reetha* that will be planted during the winter rains in the coming months. We have around 1500 saplings ready to be planted in the spring shed areas identified by UJJS together with village communities of our project area.

UJJS also involved school children along with the nursery experts while preparing the

plant nursery. The plantation of prepared sapling in the stressed spring sheds would be done involving women and youth groups of the project area.



Volunteers finishing plant beds after sowing



UJJS Volunteer working in the Plant Nursery



Healthy Oak Saplings in the UJJS Nursery

Construction of Water Percolation Tanks

Ten (10) water harvesting percolation tanks have been constructed in the spring shed catchment areas of 5 villages in our project through this project. UJJS had selected some stressed spring sheds where the water discharge flows had dried up. In the spring shed of village Sunarkot 4 percolation tanks locally called Chahal have been constructed to positively impact the springs of that region. With the positive story of Chidiyali village where the spring discharge flows have considerably improved UJJS is trying to replicate this learning in other spring sheds where the community response is encouraging. In village Chidiyali the water discharge flows used to drop during the peak summer season and often the spring used to dry up causing huge problems to the villagers and they had to walk more than 1.5 kilometers for their day to day water needs. With interventions made by UJJS through this program the stressed springs revived and spring discharge continued even during the peak summer season making people happy bringing us the positive stories.

Sl. No.	Village Name	Number of Chahal	Number of women participated
1.	Sunarkot	4	25
2.	Khankar	2	18
3.	Kumali	2	15
4.	Chidiyali	1	20
5.	Than / Jaurasi	1	12
	Total	10	90



Women group working for the construction of a percolation tank at Sunarkot.



Women group members finalizing the percolation tank construction work



Animation work by the UJS volunteers and activists to get these tasks implemented

People's connection and bonds with their rivers, streams, springs, forests and commons has been deep rooted and also gets reflected in the day to day life of communities living along the Himalayan Rivers.

A series of journeys, meetings, get-togethers and long consultative sessions with people from diverse backgrounds and skills has helped us in weaving a constructive cultural program for the communities of the project area. It has strengthened the ongoing efforts made by voluntary organizations Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan and Himalaya Seva Sangh that were engaging women groups, environmental and social activists, youth groups and school children.

Himalayas have many forest fed rivers feeding them all along the mountains and Hernal River is one such forest fed river contributing to its discharge flows. Hernal Valley and its people are remembered world over for their contribution to save forests through the well-known Chipko Movement that took place in the early 1970s. For a long time efforts have been made by the communities of Hernal Valley through cultural initiatives to sensitize the youth and women groups for protecting and conserving their rich diversities of land, water and forest cultures and values that saved them for centuries.

During our campaigns we interacted with around 1500 students and teachers of 12 Intermediate Colleges and 2 Degree Colleges of Uttarakashi, Tehri Garhwal, Chamoli districts and Rishikesh. Students and teachers of these educational institutions have been involved and encouraged to start documenting and reviving their water bodies and spring sheds while rejuvenating their diverse cultural traditions and spread the messages of conservation. It was realized during our journeys that springs and forests which contributed to the all Himalayan Rivers in a big way were in a critical stage and required the attention of communities living there. An assessment form was designed for the school students to understand the status of their spring sheds, forests and rivers and they were encouraged to document the folk songs, stories and cultural diversity of their society in relation to them.

The intermediate colleges and schools we visited during this journey are from village *Jajal, Bhainsyarau, Dabarkhal, Kharsada, Kandikhal, Nagani, Nagarjadhar, Baghi, Khankar, Chamba, Bharat Mandir Inter College Rishikesh, Kasturba Gandhi Residential Girls Hostel Aampata, Government Degree College- Gopeshwar, and Omkaranand Degree College- Devprayag.*

Capturing the mood of School Children during this journey to learn and share on springs, forests and Riverine Culture in the Garhwal Himalayas through some pictures



Kasturba Residential Girls School meeting



Kasturba Residential Girls School meeting



Meeting with School Children at Govt. Inter College Baghi



Meeting with School Children at Govt. Inter College Dabarkhal



Meeting with School Children at Govt. Degree College Devprayag



Young women expressing her view in Meeting at Banas

School and college students, teachers and the organizations like Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan, Himalaya Seva Sangh, also cultural groups like Pragya Arts, Jagriti Theater Group along with several folk artists have generated a lot of positive energy. They are together bringing out an immense potential for steering a cultural movement to strengthen a campaign for conserving the springs, rivers, forests and the entire ecology around the Himalayan Rivers.

During all these interactions it has come out clearly that a strong and continuous cultural movement is essential for sustaining the spirit to conserve the ecology and environment and for that matter along any Himalayan river system. Creation of folk songs, music, tales and myths has helped the mountain communities in conserving nature by setting up traditions for people to follow. There is a need to create and intervene through different art forms whenever and wherever necessary.

Jagriti Theater Group together with Pragya Arts has already taken a few steps to involve the young minds in these mountain communities through theater, music, dance, stories and research studies. A fifteen day residential theater workshop “Theater with Nature” attended by 45 school students was organized at Jagriti Bhawan, Khadi by Pragya Arts and supported by UJJS-Jagriti Sansthan under the leadership of Ms. Laxmi Rawat, Director, Pragya Arts. This has generated a lot of energy among the young children and they have with their own initiative started a group meeting at regular intervals. This has given a fresh hope for developing a core team for a possible cultural and ecological movement to conserve the Himalayan waters in the region.



Theater Group performing in front of the Communities

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