



## Self Help Group Formation Under Central Himalayan Environment Association Chea (NGO)

□ DR. NAVAL

**Abstract-** *The Central Himalayan Environment Association (CHEA) is a non-profit, independent body, founded on Oct 02, 1981, registered under the societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 on May 1982. In the course of about four decade time, CHEA has contributed to creating conditions that enable village communities to manage natural resources and benefit from them on a sustainable basis. The association is committed to the cause of sustainable development.*

*In its initial years CHEA operated from Botany Department, D.S.B. Campus, Kumaun University, Nainital. In 2003 active office was shifted to 09 Waldorf Compound, Mallital, Nainital. Since then CHEA is operating its operations from this new office with new initiatives like Livelihood & Sustainable Development Programme (LSDP), focused on action and outreach activities, integrating livelihood perspectives with environment and development that promise to yield income generating options, such as eco-tourism and markets for organic products for strengthening livelihood security of the marginalized hill population.*

CHEA (NGO) conducts various programmes according to their prominence in environment, human resource development, livelihood and sustainable development, infrastructure development social development, research and development. Their four Programmes of SHG formation of rural women in Kumaun Region have been studied. Their Programmes details, methodology, way of working, activities undertaken and results are mentioned. Four Programmes are:

1. Kosi Valley Action Research Project
2. Strengthening community managed institution (Van Panchayat) for enhancing livelihood options in Lamgara Development Block,

Mallital, Nainital (Uttarakhand) India

Almora.

3. Aajeevika: An IFAD assisted Project in Kapkot Development Block, Bageshwar.

4. SHG Formation and Linkages Programme under NABARD in Tarikhet Development Block, Almora.

### Number of Women SHG & Women Members

Project	SHG No.	Women SHG	Total Members	Women Members
Kosi Valley Action research project	-	13 (MMD/WWA)	-	191
Aajeevika: IFAD	79	59	921	882
Van Panchayat: SDTT	-	43	-	398
SHG Formation & Linkages: NABARD	30	11	338	179

Kosi Valley Action Research Project

**Project background (Khulgad watershed and adjoining villages):**

Infused with a spirit of idealism and a sense of deep devotion, the members of CHEA (NGO) worked together for more than a decade for bringing the benefits of development to the villages that are located near the district headquarters and block development office but remain deprived of the gains of progress. Twelve villages of the catchment of a stream that joins the Kosi River-a tributary of the River Ganga, were taken up for experimenting with an idea of development through active participation of villagers themselves, and managing common assets by village institutions. Resorting to a farming systems approach, CHEA (NGO) integrated programmes of crop production, horticulture, vegetable growing and livestock development with incentive efforts of social forestry and agro-forestry and protection of natural forests and springs and other water bodies. The involved villagers under the project contributed 10 to 25% of the project cost in the form of labour and managed the common assets created through village level institutions such as Gram Sansadhan Prabandh Samiti, Pani Panchayat and Mahila Mangal Dal.

According to J.S. Mehta, Project coordinator of KOVARP in Uttarakhand, of 16000 villages about 13000 are located in the hills, which are still not well developed. There are 5 Js (Jangal, Jamin, Jan, Jal, Janwar) which are responsible for an ecosystem, and forests are the most vital for all other resources. The development is based on watershed, and village is the unit of development and is also a micro watershed. In an area of 32 kms, 34 villages contribute under Khulgad watershed and 12 are

being undertaken for project activities.

According to him all the families have homestead gardens, which include fruits, vegetables, bee keeping etc. Further the cultivable land is also divided into two parts: One that could be monitored and visible from home while another is located in valleys or a different side of the hill and not visible from home. Forestry turns soil rich while continuous agriculture turns soil fertility poor, and thus affects ecosystem adversely.

Throughout the three phases of the project from 1986 to 1997 and from 01.10.1999 to 31-03-2002 after receipt of the generous Corpus fund from Ford Foundation main weightage or the thrust has been given for the Development Of A Replicable Methodology For Sustainable Development of the villages of Central Himalayas. A proper methodology is developed to manage the CPR and adjoining private land. CHEA (NGO) a group of scientists, foresters, geologists, academicians, social workers, woman workers and administrators have been trying and are still trying to evolve a proper methodology for managing such natural resources in Central Himalayas. In agricultural development also people's participation and local institutions play an important role. In changed ways of cropping patterns, agro forestry, social forestry, agro horticulture, growing vegetables and medicinal plants, post harvest open grazing by domestic cattle 'MOUNSAAR' in agricultural land as well as common land should necessarily be closed. For last 40 years, to find the solutions of these problems and compulsions CHEA (NGO) has been working on an Action Research Project in the 12 villages of Khulgad Micro Water-shed.

During the land settlement of 1960-66

it was found that the forest, cultivable and cultivable waste, civil benap (unmeasured) has been the largest land use of land. In addition to this it has been found by CHEA (NGO) that main priorities of the rural people are: water, fuel and fodder in addition to food. Main profession of these people is agriculture. It is to be noted very importantly that hill agriculture is primarily BIO MASS BASED. This bio-mass, about 95%, is mainly produced in the forests of the village eco system; reserve, civil, community or private forests. A very small percentage of this biomass, about 5% is collected from the agricultural land and homestead. Thus, development of forestry, agro forestry, water, agriculture, horticulture, agro horticulture, vegetable growing and growing of medicinal plants have been given the priority. As these are integrated with each other, their development converges towards the sustainable development of the village eco system in particular and environmental stability and security to the Himalayas and the countries to the south of Himalayas in general.

For the development of forestry, Gram Sansadhan Prabandhan Samitis (GSPS) have been formed in the project villages. Forestry works have been done in Panchayat forests, waste land, abandoned agricultural fields, grazing land and spring (water) sanctuaries. Mahila Mangal Dals (MMDs) or Women Welfare Association (WWA) have also been formed. They help GSPS and PPs (Water Management Committees). In the form of an active institution they help in planting the seedlings. They carry out hoeing and weeding around the plants in autumn after harvesting kharif crops (paddy, maize, soya beans and coarse grains) and protected grass to be distributed on permit basis. They spread FYM

(Farm Yard Manure) around the plants. In addition to this they help in protecting and managing the forests thus developed by people's participation.

During the year 2007-2008 under report due to the decision of council of CHEA on 29th April 2007 to close KOVARP on 31.03.2008 and to find a new watershed in new geographical area in Kosi Valley toned down the activities. Yet, efforts have been made to gear up the programmes of development and management of Common Property Resources (CPRs) and other connected eco friendly and income generating occupations in the project villages. The approach followed has always been 'Eco Friendly Farming System Approach' in the village eco system taking watershed as a unit of development. Within the watershed village eco system is taken as a unit of development and managed on the principles of watershed management. The main activities and programmes implemented are summarized as under:-

**1. SOCIAL FORESTRY CUM FARM FORESTRY-** The programme of Social Forestry and Farm Forestry is a very important programme in the livelihood of the rural people, particularly women. Women have to traverse long distances in the rugged hilly terrain in Central Himalayas to fetch the fodder and fuel for daily use in the villages of Central Himalayas. According to a study women have to walk about ten kilometre per day all the year round in collecting fuel, fodder, bedding material for cattle, timber, looking after children and cattle, bringing water, agricultural and vegetable growing operations, hoeing and weeding of plants, cooking food, washing clothes, grinding flour, carrying and spreading manure, carrying

building material and many such other strenuous house hold and outdoor works.

It will be a great service to the poor village women if fuel, fodder, bedding material timber and water is brought nearer, right in the village eco system preferably in the inner core area. With this about 40% of their work load is reduced. CHEA (NGO) has attempted to solve this problem by planting fuel, fodder timber trees in the village eco system with people's participation in all the project villages during all the phases of the project.

A weightage has been given over all the years to broadleaved species over the coniferous species because broadleaved species, specially oaks, have the advantages e.g. conserves more soil as the root system is more fibrous, hairy, broad, spread, threaded and meshy, surface run off rate is slower due to crown, stem, branches, and leaves of the trees, leaf litter, humus, shrubs and other ground flora as compared to coniferous forest with clean ground. This results in more infiltration of water steadily, persistently and for longer time of year. Direct exposure of the ground to the sun is also quite less throughout the year. Thus, water retaining power and water table and water discharge increases for a longer period of time of the year. Oaks and other broadleaved species are mostly good fodder for the cattle and fuel for the villagers for cooking and room heating. All the broadleaved species form excellent and thick layer of leaf litter and humus on the floor of the community forest to form the soft and cosy bedding material for the wildlife in forest and domestic cattle in the cow sheds which ultimately leads to the formation of the excellent, well decomposed, high quality and highly nutritious FYM (Farm Yard Manure) for organic farming. This humus, in addition to the

help provided in augmentation of water table, has, helped in accelerating the regeneration of different forest species of ground flora, herbs, shrubs, climbers, and trees of lower storey, middle storey and upper storey which otherwise would not have regenerated. Wild fowls are noticed in the community forest (1993 and 1994) of village Jolswar.

**HOME NURSERY-** Oak acorns are distributed amongst the farmers to make the home nursery of oak seedlings for planting in their farm or the social forestry area. They are planted at an age of 18 months when seedlings become 30 to 45 cm. height in the month of July. Women of the farmers have taken this work. Men help them. This is an income generating programme. They were given polythene bags and oak acorns (seeds). They raise these seedlings in their homes where they grow vegetables. Technique of raising these seedlings has been taught to them. They are not paid for filling the bags, watering, weeding, and planting.

**2. AGRO HORTICULTURE AND GROWING OF VEGETABLES AND MEDICINAL PLANTS-** Horticulture development is one of the most important integral of the integrated development of the village eco system. To form a fruit belt in the Khulgad Micro Watershed, a programme of introduction of new species of horticulture plants in the project villages has been launched in the project since the inception of the project. Initially the fruit plants were introduced in the homestead of the farmers. But at later stage they were introduced as the agro horticultural practice. In such cases generally the planting of fruit plants have been done on the inner side of the agricultural field where soil depth and moisture is more than the outer edge of the terraced field.

Various fruit plants were planted during the winter and rainy season in the project villages. In August 2007 orange and kagzi niboo were distributed to 46 families while in February, 2008 in all 18 families were facilitated to plant walnut and pears. In addition to this been and cucumber seeds were distributed to 16 farmers including 5 women. Capsicum plants were raised in nursery for free distribution. They are developing Tajpat plants themselves now and distributing amongst themselves. In Villages Harara Maulekhi, Dhulai and Chaura fruit plants have also started producing fruits like Malta, Almond, Kagji niboo etc.

**3. WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT-** In whole of Uttarakhand and so in Kumaun region there is acute shortage of even drinking water, particularly in summers. It is to be clearly understood that water source in the catchment is non snow fed. The water table in pervious or semi pervious rocks is influenced by the nature of ground and vegetation above. It has been proved by a study that broadleaved forests particularly oaks, alders etc. help more in infiltration, retention and discharge for a longer duration in a year than pine, barren, rocky areas and cultivated fields. This absorbed water in the rocks, soil and soil in the root system emerges out on the ground from a visible source through crevices, pervious/ semi pervious rocks and soils. At places this water is collected in a 'naula', a traditional collecting masonry tank, covered by a roof of flat stones of size 1 metre x 1.5 metre and 25 mm. thick. All around the 'naula' generally a stone pavement is made for strength and cleanliness to the structure. Frontage is a little broad and open. All this is done to get clean drinking water. Speciality of such water collecting tanks (naula) is that there is no wastage

of water. On the inner side generally a small statue of Lord Vishnu (God of the sacred water) is traditionally fixed. Surplus is used in irrigating vegetables and other plants and also in washing clothes. In Jolswar village nala water has emerged due to afforestation and small check dams. Afforestation works and checks damming and khal making has been done in subsequent years. It has conserved soil and water. This nala was otherwise dry.

Second type of water source is where the water emerges from a source having no collecting tank (naula). Water flows continuously day and night and gets wasted twenty four hours except in summers when every drop is used. Thus, process of water wastage and acute shortage of water continues in the summer season.

CHEA, as a facilitator, has formed Water User's Association/ Pani Panchayat (WUA/PP) in the following villages to conserve water and optimum utilisation of water:-

**STATUS OF PANI PANCHAYATS OF KHULGAD MICROWATERSHED**

Village	Pani Panchayat	Particulars
Kaphalkot	1	Infiltration well & hand pump, functioning satisfactorily for drinking purposes. Swejal has not been successful.
Deolikhan	1	R.C.C tank, Infiltration well and lift pump, functioning satisfactorily for drinking and irrigation purposes.
Salla Rautela (W)	1	R.C.C tank, for irrigation, functioning satisfactorily, three varieties of fish have been introduced in this tank.
Dhamus	1	R.C.C tank, for irrigation purposes. Failed due to large village and lack of leadership.
Khunt (Valla)	1	Infiltration well and two hand pumps for drinking purposes. One got out of order many years back. It has been repaired.
Khunt (Bichla)	1	R.C.C tank for irrigation purposes, functioning well
Dhari	1	R.C.C tank, for irrigation, failed due to selfish leader
Latwelgaon	1	R.C.C tank and ferro cement tank for drinking purposes. Working very well for last 14 years. As regards ferro cement tank now, due to shift of source, system is not working.
Jolswar	1	Ferro cement tank for drinking purposes, functioning satisfactorily

These PPs perform the work of maintenance of their water systems also. All the water systems were cleaned and painted by blue, green and white paints. All the tanks were painted by white lime. On the road side boards were painted by green and white showing activity of the project. This was done on the rocks also. A roof water harvesting system with a ferro cement tank is working well at field office of the project for demonstration purposes. Other water conservation systems in Khunt, Jolswar and Tani are working well. This may be used for drinking purposes also. The capacity of this tank is about 1000 litres. So by the effort of CHEA (NGO) team member water problem is solved to satisfactory extent.

**4. FARMING SYSTEM-** Farming system approach has been followed all through the period under report in the village eco system. In this system all components have been integrated at farm level, ultimately to increase the quality of life of the farmers. Even, support area development i.e. forestry, horticulture, soil and water development is also integrated with this approach. They are dealt under separate heads.

HYV of agriculture seeds released by Vivekanand Parvatiya Krishi Anusandhan Sansthan, Almora possess special quality. They increase the agricultural yield by about 25 to 40 % in the same rain fed conditions needed for the normal seed. Moreover, this output is without introducing any extra input of chemical fertilizers and irrigation.

HYV seeds from VPKAS have been distributed amongst the farmers of the villages of the project. A total of 60 kgs Wheat VL 738 seed was distributed to 23 farmers while 17 farmers were supplied with 10 kgs of Pea VL 42

gm seed.

All operations are carried according to the instructions of VPKAS, Almora. Some of the progressive farmers are preparing their own seed for their own use and distribution to others by sale or exchange. Thus CHEA (NGO) is taking the results of laboratory to field. HYV of the seeds have been adopted by the farmers in a large scale. In addition to this KOVARP has devised an economic size light trap to reduce the menace of Kurmula grub.

#### **5. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER ISSUE-**

Human resource in village was motivated to be engaged in social works, constructive works and other creative activities for their own benefit and benefit of the society as a whole. The activities are afforestation, horticulture, water harnessing and conservation, helping their counterpart 'women', in agriculture and day to day activities, protection and development of CPRs. Though, women folk are constitutionally weak, yet, the burden of all activities of rural life falls on the shoulders of women. Society in the project area, like other parts of India, is also patriarchal. Female child is not given that importance as the male child. Female child is not sent for schooling. If at all, she is sent to school, she is dropped at primary stage. Few fortunate girls reach the stage of Secondary education. Right from the childhood, she is trained in such a fashion in household and agriculture works that she has to do all this ultimately, in her in-law's house also. With all this over burden she is under fed, uneducated, lives in unhygienic conditions and under the grip of superstitions. According to a study about 75% of rural women do not have the facility of close toilets and bathing enclosures. This leads women to suffer from

leucorrhoea, pulmonary and other ailments. CHEA (NGO) has tried to bridge the gender gap by reducing their burden of work load, educating them, constructing close toilets and by developing the whole village eco system.

Women development worker arranges a meeting every month in which all guardians of Balwari (nurseries of preschool going children) children discuss and inter act on their various problems, gender issues and environmental problems. CHEA has facilitated to form the village level institutions viz. MMDs, GSPSs and PPs to address all sorts of problems and conflict resolutions through proper human resource management.

#### 6. INSTITUTION BUILDING-

CHEA (NGO) has tried to establish village level institutions through people's participation to bring viability & sustainability to harmonious and balance development. The other very important purpose is to bridge the gender gap so that both the wheels of a cart (male and female) move smoothly and adding development/snow like a snow ball process and developing and managing the CPRs judiciously. A watershed approach has been recommended by the policy makers and development agencies. This is so because watershed is a natural geo hydrological unit and an eco system in itself. This unit can further be divided into sub, mini and micro watersheds for management purposes. Technically, watershed approach is a top down approach whereas bottom up socio-economic and human centric approach is more appropriate. For all practical purposes a village level approach is considered to be the most relevant. A village is a subsystem of the watershed eco system and forms a ground level unit. Here the environmental, technological, human

engineering and socio economic aspects can be integrated in the efforts to make a Village Eco Development really a success.

**Following main institutions have been established in the project villages:-**

- (i) GSPS(Gram Sansadhan Prabandhan Samiti)/ VRMC (Village Resource Management Committee)
- (ii) PP (Pani Panchayat)/WUA (Water User's Association)
- (iii) MMD (Mahila Mangal Dal)/ WWA (Women Welfare Association)
- (iv) SPSS ( School Paryawaran Sudhar Samiti)

General body of the village elects the President, Vice President, Treasurer and minimum two members of the executive committee. These office bearers are elected by general consensus. It is the duty of the President to call the meeting of the executive committee, once in every month and general body once a year. The publicity of the agenda is done well in advance in writing or by mouth. Emergency meeting is called by short notice.

The amount is used in inter-loaning by women for different purposes viz. house repair, childbirth, sickness and purchase of buffalo etc.

#### 7. TRAINING OF WOMEN-

Institutions like MMDs, PPs and GSPSs and youth organizations of villages and schools have to be strengthened further. It is greatly felt that women should be very clearly aware of the problems of the weaker group of the whole watershed. Women should know about, in addition to their own village, the issues and problems of women group of other villages. There should be a forum to interact and resolve the issues. For this confederation of all MMDs of the project area, called core group of MMDs

the one third height of the tree from the base. In the community forests of Kafalkote, Dewlikhan, Latwalgaon, Dhamas and Salla villagers have done pruning in past years.

**8. ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS PROGRAMME-** CHEA (NGO) lays great emphasis on environmental awareness amongst the masses, whether they are men, women, boys, girls or children. If awareness is not there, with present pace of increase of human and cattle population the environment will degrade very fast and so also the common property resource in the village eco system. Ultimately, human race will suffer due to paucity of CPRs. So the knowledge of urgent need of development, protection and importance of CPRs has been imparted and disseminated amongst the masses. Pamphlets were distributed amongst the villagers, students, women and men about the forest fire hazard. These were pasted in the shops, schools, office and other important places. CHEA (NGO) staff always in their regular visits explained the villagers about the damages by forest fire hazards and advantages of environmental protection.

**9. CHILDREN'S EDUCATION PROGRAMME (BALWARI SHIKSHA)-** The harmonious and all round development of children is a very important aspect of the holistic village eco development. One cannot ignore the lot of preschool going children in any of the project village. These children are taught about the personnel hygiene, cleanliness of nails, nose, teeth, eye, ears and other body parts. They are taught to prepare toys from paper, clay, stones, waste news paper, wood, dry grass, cotton, torn and old clothes and wool and many such other items. They are also imparted some knowledge about their own environment, viz. plants, animals

agricultural fields, implements, forests, rivers, rocks, clouds, sun, water sources, plantation, plantation walls and many such other things existing around them. They are also made familiar about the geometrical designs e.g. straight lines, triangle, square, circle and rectangle on the ground. All this knowledge is transmitted to these children by Play Way Method through songs, games, play, excursions etc.

**10. ANIMAL HUSBANDRY-** Though, animal husbandry is a very important component in the development of a village eco system, yet, only motivational part has been touched so far in this area. CHEA (NGO) has motivated to keep less number of cows and buffaloes of good breed. They give more milk than local cows and buffaloes. Stall feeding of cattle is very important to save the CPRs and allow the CPRs to produce more fodder, fuel and bedding material. This depends absolutely on the development of agro forestry, agro horticulture and social forestry. It ultimately develops the Animal Husbandry of the village eco system.

Main work of CHEA (NGO) has been the development of support area of the village to give way to produce more grass, more bedding material of better quality and more fuel for production of milk products. A great deal of development of animal husbandry can be done, if 'mounsar band or mukshar band' and rotational grazing in the forests is very seriously practiced.

**11. RURAL MEDICAL HEALTH-** Health of the rural people is very poor as analyzed in earlier medical camps in the project area. The reasons for this are multifarious. Some of them are: Malnutrition- People are underfed. More than this, the daily diet is not at all balance. There is dearth of milk, pulses, fat, vegetables



and other minerals needed for the development of human body. Women are more underfed, quality wise as well as quantity wise, than men; over burdened with work. This, added with malnutrition, they become most anaemic and are store house of diseases. CHEA has attempted to address these constrains in the project areas.

**12. SOME FINDING-** Jolswar: Mrs. Bhawani Kunjwal who looks after the activities at field level told that during 1992-93 the slopes and land were barren but after the initiation of project the forest area has increased. Adding to Ms. Kunjwal, coordinator told that while planting forest species the chir pine was planted in tough terrain, while broad leaved species in moist areas.

**Kafalkot:** At Kafalkot, the plantation of banj oak developed by the community of Kafalkot in 1986 by replacing pine forest. This was one of the best experiences where the role of community in improving the status of the van panchayat by replacing inferior or un-economic species by superior ones.

**Dewalikhan:** The chairman of the MMD, Ms Pushpa Devi on behalf of the MMD shared the working of the group. She briefed that group consists of 21 women members, each member deposits Rs 20.00 (rupees twenty). The group also sponsors loaning facility to members, on each Rs 100.00 (rupees hundred) the group charges an interest of Rs 1.0 (rupee one). The due date for the return of the loan is 5th of each month. If the loan is returned after 5th day of the month the person has to deposit a fine of Rs 2.0 (rupees two).

The plantation of Utis and Banj oak and formation of trenches that have been carried out above the water source in order to conserve water. It was also briefed by the coordinator that

the study carried out has shown that the activities like plantation and trenches have helped in recharging the water sources which was supported by the villagers as in past they have to go to the traditional water source (naula) for portable water but after the construction of the water scheme the villagers are getting water at their doorstep.

**Champa:** The unique feature of this model was that it has been developed on community farms. This kind of model is generally lacking in Uttarakhand. The fruit orchards established during 1994 could be seen in fruiting. The community had given the orchards to the contractor of the nearby village Naula. It is the responsibility of the contractor to pick the fruit from the trees and to pay the individuals according to the number of trees and production from it. The current yield of plum from the farm was 80 cases an approximate 1.20 ton. The farmers are now much aware about integrated farming system, water conservation and forestry practices. Due to the project they now have availability of green fodder year round. The production of fruits in the vicinity has also reduced malnutrition in the region. Other activities under the Khulgad project were mukshar bandi, stall feeding, rotational grazing, plantation of forest species, portable water schemes, etc.

**Strengthening Rural Community Managed Institution (Van Panchayats):** For enhancing livelihood options in Lamgara Development Block, Almora.

**Introduction-** Improving marginal community's access to natural resources from VPs to fulfill their basic needs of fodder, fuel and water has been a key challenge in mountainous regions, such as Uttarakhand state. Further sustaining the

existing resources is also vital for the sustainability. To respond to these challenges, it is prerequisite to strengthen the community based mechanism of natural resource management with specific attention to women by adoption participatory approaches.

However, the livelihood options of the poor and marginalized farmers are shrinking due to the enforcement of forest conservation laws. Environmental damage caused by water and soil pollution, land degradation, deforestation and desertification affects millions of people. The direct human and economic costs are extremely hard to quantify but it has established that the degradation of the environment has a detrimental impact on poverty. This often results into unsustainable exploitation of the natural resources by poor. Further the functioning and efficiency of VPs is not up to mark. Thus, to take the advantage of collective strengths of communities and VPs there is need to perform a coordinated role, conflict resolution efforts and financial resource mobilization related tasks with active involvement of women.

Thus, management of natural resources by the community becomes more evident keeping in minds its utility value and benefits to the communities. Uttarakhand Forests are huge natural resource that could be tapped to eradicate rural poverty on local level and also contribute in mitigating the climate change at regional and global levels.

The community forests represent an appropriate example of an institution involved in "prevention of deforestation and managing their common forestry resources." Van Panchayats (VPs) are one of the major and oldest institutions of participatory management of natural resources in the world.

Considering the vast potential for linking management of natural resources with rural livelihoods, CHEA (NGO) undertake a Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) funded project entitled Strengthening Community Managed Institutions (Van Panchayat) for Enhancing Livelihood Options in Uttarakhand in fifteen Van Panchayat of Lamgarah block, Almora.

**Purpose of the project-** The purpose of the project is to develop replicable models at village level that advocates for a clear linkage between rural livelihood and management of natural resources. This would also contribute in reducing the exploitation of resources in VPs and enhancing active role to perform their duties and responsibilities. Communities are being encouraged towards maintaining a balance among their traditional rights over natural resources, forest conservation and income generation.

**Project Area-** The project is being implemented in fifteen VPs i.e., Adita, Anariyakot, Asota-Silkhora, Bijarkhiya, Dhaili, Dhaura, Dhura-Sangroli, Guna-Chutra, Joshidhura, Kherda, Satyon, Sirsora, That, Toli and Ujjaula representing 13 villages in Lamagara development block of Almora district.

**Methodology- In brief the methodology has been described as under:**

- a. Informal talks with the community in different villages for conducting different activities,
- b. Transit walk and PRA
- c. Monthly meeting of VPs, SHGs at village level
- d. Ensuring involvement of women in project activities
- e. Formation of Village Level Coordination Committee (VLCC) for implementing project jointly with SHGs and VP council
- f. Formation of Van Sansadhan Prabandhan

Samiti (VSPS) and its strengthening as an umbrella organisation to involve stakeholders in planning, implementation and evaluation of project activities

g. Dovetailing with different institutes and organizations.

**Objective of the Project :** The purpose of the project is to demonstrate that a more active role of Van Panchayat in performing their duties and responsibilities by their capacity building at grassroots level that can result in a positive linkage between forest conservation and income generation. The objectives of the project are given as under:

- a. To strengthen the VPs with an integrated approach to developing income generating activities in villages so as to demonstrate an ideal model of livelihood based management of natural resources.
- b. To develop a road map for strengthening community based natural resource institutions (VPs).
- c. To conserve globally significant biodiversity of forests in managed VPs for sustainable use and enterprise development.
- d. To reduce women's drudgery.
- e. To enhance natural resource based rural livelihoods.

**Implementation Mechanism-** A participatory, down-top approach has been adopted for efficient implementation of the project activities. The Van Sansadhan Prabandhan Samiti (VSPS) is the core body for project management formed through representation of participating Panchayats. CHEA (NGO), Networking Institutions/ organisations and SDTT are in a role of a facilitator while major decisions are taken by the VSPS and concerned VPs.

**Project Activities:** Activities were undertaken as per the proposal and the log frame of the project proposal. The component wise activities are detailed as under:

a. **Baseline Survey:** To evaluate the impact of project intervention, usage pattern of natural resources and status of VPs, collection of baseline data was carried out at the end of the project on the similar format as developed for VP survey before project intervention. The baseline indicates significant change in status of VPs on some particular components.

The source of income in fewer VPs has enhanced by exporting lichen (Asota, Guna and Adeta) and collection of fees for fodder (Adeta and Asota) that was planted under project.

The impact of plantation has gradually increased and women are assisting VPs (Adeta, Guna and Asota) to control the illicit removal of available material from forest and open grazing. Control fire has been attempted by the community in Bijarkhiya, Ujolla and Dhaura and epidemic of fire is absent in all VPs.

The discharge of water has also been recorded for natural springs and water sources during different seasons in all the VPs to assess the impact of plantation and micro reservoirs on water discharge and soil conservation.

b. **Community Mobilization and Capacity Building:** Various methods were adopted for community mobilization and capacity building purposes. The details of the activities undertaken during the project implementation are given as under:

**(i) Village Consultation Workshops:**

During second year 07 village consultation/ workshops on livestock management through treatment camps was organised in each of the VP. In the workshops organised in seven VPs

the women participation was reported 78% that remained much higher than of male participation. In addition a mega village consultation workshop was also organised at CHEA's regional office of Lamgarah to share the project activities in the region.

**(ii) Capacity Building/Training:**

During second year of project implementation, 10 capacity building and training programmes were organised at different venues with concerned subjects. The training were conducted on Nursery raising of forest species and their management; Value addition of grapes and apple through their preservation; Field level training for bee box making their maintenance and management of advanced wall hives; Livestock improvement through improved breeds and their significant management; Usage of locally available commodities for enrichment of rural livelihood; Value addition of citrus fruits and vegetables through their preservation; Training on community forestry, dairy and market linkages; Training on propagation method of bamboo; Capacity building of SHG and Poly house construction and organic composting.

**c. Publicity and Extension Material:**

Appropriate extension literature in accordance with the needs of the beneficiaries has been identified after discussion with VPs. Concerned institutions along with experts was consulted to identify the theme and subject matter and following leaflets and booklets:

- \* Establishment of micro enterprise for livelihood improvement
  - \* Artificial insemination (AI): benefits and precaution for its success
  - \* Mangers: Benefits and importance of structure for management of livestock and fodder
- For popularising the project a calendar was

designed, keeping in view the objectives of the project. Wall writing and boards have been established in and around the project area. Slogans were also written for sensitising the community towards sustainable development of VPs.

**d. Sustainable Forestry Model**

**(Plantation):** The communities were motivated to take initiatives for selection of sites to conduct various activities, in order to follow bottom up approach, and develop ownership amongst them.

**(i) Nursery Establishment:** To raise quality seedlings 04 nurseries have been established and only experienced farmers were allotted nurseries. Establishment and maintenance of nurseries: Seven (7) forest plant nurseries were established for the supply of healthy and high demand quality planting material. Out of them 3 nurseries have supplied 7200 plants of 5 different species and generated Rs. 21,600.00 as an income.

**(ii) Plantation of Appropriate Species and its Maintenance:** Plantation in an area of 43.1 ha has been carried out in different VPs. However, the area includes plantation made in fields of individuals, community land and VPs.

The impact of extra efforts of SHG members and village representative has shown some positive impact in restoring the plantation of different species.

**(iii) Introduction of Sustainable Agro Forestry Models:** Details of area covered under rootstock/cuttings and seed was finalised in consultation with the village communities. Through Rootstock and cuttings 10.5 ha and using grass seeds 2.00 ha area was covered during the year.

The results of promotion of perennial fodder grasses are encouraging as been indicated by the views expressed by women in different VPs.

**e. Construction of micro reservoirs:**

A total of 5000 cubic meter micro reservoirs were created during the period. Motivation of community to develop sense of ownership resulted into maintenance of 1840 cubic meters micro reservoirs, which were created during the first phase of project in 7 VPs. It is found that micro reservoir had positive impact on retaining moisture content and old micro reservoir has increased the water level in natural springs. Skill upgradation of 30 members on the site selection, layout and design has been initiated.

**f. Marketing Linkages (Enterprise Related):** Livestock Improvement: Following the first phase of implementation the community was inspired and encouraged to adopt improved practices of animal husbandry.

**Promotion of Stall-Feeding:** In order to protect the forest from destruction, stall-feeding is being promoted under the project and 23 more stall-feeding structures were constructed during second year in 07 VPs.

**(i) Vegetable Cultivation and Floriculture:** 38 new families (total 127 families adopted) has adopted the activity of which 10 generated (total 39 families generated income) income by selling vegetables and spices. Similarly, 08 families generated income by selling marigold, gladiolus and ilium.

**(ii) Vermi Composting:** The concept of vermin composting is well known to at least 55 families due to project intervention and its use on crops been well appreciated by the community.

**(iii) Women SHGs Formation:** Women SHGs formed in each of the VP are actively participating in the project for sustaining activities. Each group has its own account, operated by the President and the Secretary of

the SHG. The women groups are contributing an amount on monthly basis and also utilise the deposit amount in sustaining the activities.

Beside, the assistance of five thousand rupees were given to each SHG to continue the livelihood promotion activities those based on natural resources i.e. bee keeping, fruit processing, vermi composting, etc.

**(iv) Promotion Activities for Bamboo Handicrafts:** Bamboo handicrafts have been carried out to encourage the community towards adoption of bamboo cultivation, and create awareness for its multiple uses in different activities. To achieve the aforesaid goal, four day training was conducted for the selected members from different VPs. To provide exposure along with training and to concentrate on learning, the programme was organized at Shama.

**g. VSPS: Participatory approach for implementation and evaluation of project:** The Van Sansadhan Prabandhan Samiti (Forest Council Management Society: VSPS) is enthusiastically participating to conduct various project activities as it offers a collective voice of all seven Van Panchayats. For the second year project activates, VSPS documented several issues and proposals which provided guidelines for implementing project in the VPs.

**h. Community Bio diversity Register:** The recording of species and other data for developing bio diversity register has been completed in all VPs by organizing a group meeting of young generation (up to 40 years age) and old generation (above 40 years of age) separately. The groups were represented by women to diversify the status of knowledge among different stakeholders.

**i. Tree vegetation parameters and C-sequestration:** For estimation of tree vegetation

parameters and C-sequestration rate in forests of seven VPs (Adeta, Anariakot, Asota, Bijarkhiya, Dhaura, Guna, and Ujjola) in project area, tree marked and measured for circumference in permanent plots during March, 2007 and re-measured for their biomass re-estimation during March, 2008 using allometric equation developed by Rawat and Singh (1998).

**j. Monitoring and evaluation:** The monitoring and evaluation were conducted for the project by Mr. Bhaskar Mitra, Programme Officer from SDTT on 13-14th September, 07. The external monitoring at the end of two years project period was again carried out from February 27 to March 01 by Dr. Rajeev Semwal. Following the satisfactory monitoring a follow up project has been submitted to SDTT.

**k. Research works:** Its include development of ecological inventory of all VPs along with tree layer analysis, creation of bio diversity register etc.

**Aajeevika:** Uttarakhand Livelihood Improvement Project for the Himalaya (ULIPH) An initiative for Sustainability through Livelihood Interventions The International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) assisted Uttarakhand Livelihood Improvement Project for the Himalaya is being implemented in 05 Districts of Uttarakhand including Bageshwar. The primary objective of the project is to improve the livelihood of target groups along with improvement of livelihood opportunities and capacity building of the local institutions concerned with livelihood improvements. The first phase of the project was initiated in Uttarakhand in the year 2005 and in March 2005 CHEA (NGO) was assigned the responsibility

of facilitating NGO in Kapkot Development Block for Bageshwar district. CHEA (NGO) is one of the implementing agencies working in 32 revenue villages under 18 Gram Panchayat of Dharamghar cluster in Bageshwar district.

**Selected Village:** After conducting zoning exercise in association with District Management Unit (DMU) 02 Nyay Panchayats namely Simgari and Horali were selected for the initiation of project. In Simgari Nyay Panchayat 12 gram panchayats and 23 revenue villages and in Horali Nyay Panchayat 06 gram panchayats and 09 revenue villages were selected. The assignment was initiated with base line survey, formation of self-help groups (SHGs) and community mobilization.

**Numbers of Covered Targets House Hold**

Total House Hold	No. of BPL Families (Govt. Records)	No. of poor families (WBR)	Covered Targets HH
1912	69	1108	1238

**Methodology-** Following the selection of villages intensive visits were made in the entire project villages by the team of orient and sensitize the communities about the Aajeevika Project as well as to make a suitable environment for conducting PRA exercise. The participatory tools adopted were formal and informal meetings, personal interviews, observations, transit walk, etc. The methodology adopted was based on three major sources of information for understanding the socio-economic status and resource availability in the villages. It included collection and analysis of secondary information, primary data using participatory method and consultation with local resource persons, public representatives and target groups.

SHG formation: In all 79 SHGs were formed during the project period. These SHGs contain 921 members including 882 females and

190 SC representatives. The total saving of SHGs during the period was Rs.12,34,671.00 sum of amount Rs. 40, 96,670.00 was being interloaned among the members for various income generation activities. All the SHGs have been linked to lead banks and their cash credit limit has also been sanctioned.

**Introduction of Napier, Broom Grass:** In order to reduce women drudgery fodder grasses have been introduced in the project area. Before the extension of the grasses, five small nurseries were prepared. After preparation of the root stock extension activities were carried out in 30 villages. In all 1500, families were benefited and 35,958 rootstocks were planted. Of the 1500 families, 410 were SC and 1090 were General.

**Vermi Composting:** In order to introduce quality composting, 862 vermi pits were introduced in 27 villages. 382 SC families and 480 General families were benefited from the activity.

**Agriculture Equipments:** Equipments such as Sickles (252), Fans (34), Kutli (13) and Rake (36) were provided to the farmers for enhancing agriculture practices. In all 15 Schedule Cast and 21 families were benefited from this.

**Training/Exposure visits:** A total of 2504 trainings were conducted for SHG members in all 702 SC, 25 ST and 1777 General SHG Members were trained. On the demand of the villagers an exposure visit for 72 livestock owners was conducted to Veterinary department of Pantnagar University.

**Plantation of Fruit Species-** Winter Season: Plantation activities were carried out during the winter season and in all 1503 fruit plant, seedlings were provided to the farmers.

Digging of plantation pits, compost was taken as farmer contribution. In all 28 villages were benefited comprising of 56 Scheduled Caste families and 205 form General category.

**Rainy Season:** Citrus plantation of orange and malta was promoted during rainy season. 150 malta seedling and 58 orange seedling were provided to 36 farmers.

**Vegetable Production:** Under vegetable cultivation cabbage, capsicum, tomato and radish were promoted by providing seeds to the farmers. Farmer contribution was also ensured. In all 181 families were benefited under vegetable cultivation of which 111 were general and 70 were form SC.

**Spices:** Cultivation of spices was also promoted under the project and 27 families from Below Poverty Line were benefited. A total 41 Kg. of seed was distributed in which farmer contribution was also insured.

**Wheat Seed:** Under the experiment programme wheat seed no. VL-832, VL- 829 was provided to 64 farmers. A total 2000 Kg. seed was provided to the farmers. All the beneficiaries belonged to 195 General categories and the rest 37 to SC.

**Poly tunnels:** In order to raise quality seedling farmers were provided poly tunnels. A total of 40 poly tunnels were provided under the project.

**SHG Formation and Linkages** programme under NABARD in Tarikhet Development Block The collective approach is prime need for livelihood improvement of marginalized community in rural hills. The various projects are been implemented through formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) to strengthen the capacities of isolated and weaker section of society and to bring them in the

mainstream of development. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is engaged since last two decades through capacity building, financial aids as well as various infrastructural supports to SHGs.

With CHEA's past experiences of working with Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) in Tarikhet development block the conversion of FIGs into SHGs has been targeted under NABARD programme from May, 07.

**Objectives:**

- a) Conversion of FIGs into SHGs for sustaining the formed groups;
- b) SHGs having sound financial status for promoting livelihood generation activities through savings and inter loaning;
- c) Institutional building of SHGs for developing linkages with banks and development agencies and Entrepreneur and leadership development in a cluster of SHGs for generating additional funds towards developmental activities.

**Achievements-** The project was initiated in May 2007 with a target of formation of 30 SHGs.

In all 30 SHGs has been formed till March 10 of which 11 SHG are of women. The total members in these SHGs are 338 and women members are 179 and the aggregate savings stands at 3.43 lakhs.

Cash credit limit of 6 SHGs were ensured. The repayment performance is 80% among SHGs. The detail of SHGs is given as under:

**Details of SHG formation and linkages programmes under NABARD in Tarikhet Development Area:**

Sl.	Name of SHG	No. of members			Total savings (Rs.)	Amount of inter loaning (Rs.)
		Male	Female	Total		
1.	Bajol	3	8	11	9802.00	5000.00
2.	Jai Golu Dev, Chapar	10	-	10	2776.00	1500.00
3.	Dhan Kuber, Chapar	13	-	13	3358.00	-
4.	Laxmi, Chapar	-	10	10	8780.00	5000.00
5.	Nav Jagriti, Sukoli	3	10	13	10345.00	8000.00
6.	Jaikisan, Khusalkot	8	12	20	7953.00	-
7.	Mahabir, Khusalkot	13	2	15	7126.00	500.00
8.	Mahalaxmi, Kotkhusal	-	20	20	10336.00	3450.00
9.	Bhumiyani, Bamsuyn	-	20	20	10256.00	3459.00
10.	Bhagwati, Malona	-	16	16	9861.00	4000.00
11.	Durga, Malona	-	15	15	9097.00	500.00
12.	Syon, Malona	-	14	14	7126.00	5000.00
13.	Tipola	10	-	10	2656.00	-
14.	Jiakrishna, Tipola	-	11	11	1636.00	-
15.	Adarsh, Bajina	12	-	12	1080.00	-
16.	Jagriti, Bajina	-	10	10	300	-
17.	Madurga, Ghingari	-	17	17	25883.00	-
18.	Bhawani, Kunelakhet	7	4	11	3850.00	-
19.	Jiadurga, Phakura	12	-	12	2520.00	-
20.	Ekta, Malla Patli	12	2	14	700.00	-
21.	Saim Devta, Daurab	-	10	10	300.00	-
22.	Adarsh, Daurab	16	-	16	480.00	-
23.	Jaisem Devta, Bajol	-	13	13	650.00	-
24.	Jaijawan, Kotkushal	10	-	10	500.00	-

**CONCLUSION:** This all project activities show that CHEA (NGO) has done an exemplary job in empowering our rural women both politically as well as economically by forming various institutions like SHG, Mahila Mangal Dal - Women Welfare Association (MMD), Pani Panchayats (Water Managed Association), Gram Sansadhan Prabandhan Samiti (GSPS) who carried out various activities under the guidance and technical support of CHEA (NGO).

**REFERENCES**

- 1. CHEA (NGO) Publication like Books/ Booklets, Training Manual, CHEA Bulletin, Research Papers, Events and Workshop reports and Case Studies on rural livelihoods, climate change adaptation, art handicraft and culture etc.
- 2. <https://www.cheaindia.org>

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