

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL REPORT 2009 - 2010



Chirag

Central Himalayan Rural Action Group



Go to the people,
Live among them,
Learn from them,
Love them.
Start with what they know.
Build on what they have.
But of the best leaders,
When their task is accomplished,
Their work is done,
The people all remark,
'We have done it ourselves'.

Chinese proverb



Our vision

To be a catalyst for the creation of a society rooted firmly in the principles of dignity, justice and solidarity.

Our mission

Chirag's mission is to improve the quality of life of rural people – especially the poor and women – in the Central Himalaya. We try to do this through interventions in health, education and natural resource management, and by providing access to diversified livelihood options. We promote the sustainable ownership and management of common resources by the community.

THE YEAR IN RETROSPECT

The notion of Integrated Rural Development has lost its sheen. We live in an era when efficiency and scale require institutions to focus on one or two aspects, do them well, and on scale. Prima facie, this would make sense. By virtue of the fact that we work on diverse issues - scale is elusive. But if we knew of one thing that we could do, well and at scale, that could dramatically alter people's lives - we'd do it. However, people's lives are complex. Their relationships with others and even nature - more so. We simply do not have a single solution that would work for everyone. We then, are happy to remain relatively small and to try and make a significant difference to some families.

Expertise, on the other hand is not exclusive to large institutions and, not surprisingly, we do some things reasonably well. We learn, make mistakes and constantly correct ourselves. In the past year, all our programmes have gone through some introspection or have encountered new challenges. It has been a year not of growth, but of consolidation; a year of preparation, to launch new or improved initiatives.

If our impact on the learning of children in government schools is visible and yet there is no impact on the government per se, is it still worth pursuing? Can statutory health committees of Panchayats remain effective despite no significant interest of elected representatives or a supportive policy environment? If a significant portion of the recharge zones of water sources fall in private lands, what incentives are required to encourage soil and water conservation? What inhibits the adoption of improved practices with regard to agriculture and animal husbandry? What is the basket of employment options needed to create large scale employment? Some new questions, some old ones - but importantly, we continue to seek appropriate answers.

What has become clear is that in a complex environment collaboration and partnerships are not just crucial, but make strategic sense for an organisation like ours. We need to recognise our strengths as well as limitations and forge partnerships with other institutions. Kumaun Grameen Udyog's focus on livelihood enhancement in the region and in particular, its engagement with craft, enables Chirag to focus on agriculture and animal husbandry. During the course of the year, a partnership with B2R Technologies Pvt Limited - a start-up firm - has led to the employment of over 40 young people at Orakhan in a rural Business Process Outsourcing unit. A little more than half the young people are women. For Chirag alone to set this up would have been nigh impossible. Himjoli - another private enterprise, and partner of Kumaun Grameen Udyog - has been a source of support in our efforts to create employment opportunities for the region. The learning then, is that as an integrated development organisation, strategic partnerships and collaboration can provide us with the expertise and scale that we require, without our having to do it all on our own.

Our institutional structure was designed based on a certain programme mix as well as scale. With the nature of our activities as well as their intensity altering, as we move ahead, we need to review our structure to make it more responsive and effective.

V K Madhavan
August 2010



OVERVIEW

One hundred and seventy one villages, and nearly 14,500 households whose quality of life is to be improved by a team of 150 people administering six major programmes in seven area teams, a hospital and a school. We are often reminded of the tag-line for the advertisement for a large and well known Indian company that read, " We also make steel". A look at the major activities that we undertook during the year will illustrate this.

Our major activities during the year included:

- Work with 1,576 children in 49 government primary schools to improve the quality of their education.
- Scholarships to 115 girls from classes 7 to 12 to enable them to complete their education.
- Access to learning that is fun and relevant for 59 children at Chirag School.
- Provision of out-patient facilities to 4,275 patients at Chirag Hospital, including dental care to 245 patients through camps.
- Mobilisation and support of 511 members of 40 Village Health and Sanitation Committees in Gram Panchayats, and facilitation of the creation of health plans to leverage services from the government.
- Short-duration trainings to adolescent girls and an emphasis on facilitating employment opportunities for youth leading to the employment of 63 young people including 26 girls.
- Provision of an opportunity for 17 young graduates to spend a year living and working in a rural area as part of Swades ki Khoj.
- Community forestry on 242 hectares of land and the planting of 164,315 saplings and nursery stacking of 232,501 for plantation next year.

- Fodder yields of 2,518 quintals from common lands benefitting 780 households, and 1,496 quintals from private lands benefitting 531 households.
- Monitoring of the impact of our work on common lands using 184 permanent quadrats and mapping of 13 villages.
- Initiation of community mobilisation processes in 12 villages selected to recharge springs using hydro-geology.
- Vaccination and treatment of 2,590 livestock from 858 households as part of our Animal Husbandry programme and another 1,236 livestock from 592 households through the efforts of four community-based para-vets.
- Implementation of the watershed approach in three micro-watersheds in the region.
- Assistance to 212 farmers to market 78 metric tonnes of their fresh fruits and vegetables and to 262 farmers to market 8 metric tonnes of spices, pulses and food grains.
- Facilitation of trials on sustainable agriculture by 323 farmers in their own fields during Rabi 2010.
- Support to 2,698 families through 234 Self-Help Groups including special efforts to improve the quality of life of poor families in 41 villages of Bageshwar district in partnership with the Ajeevika programme.
- Establishment of two micro-enterprises by federations of Self-Help Groups - to produce cattle feed and home-remedies for livestock care.
- Continued support to the Shri Mahadev Self-reliant Cooperative in Bageshwar with 655 women members from 56 Self-Help Groups. Initiation of efforts to register the Shri Jagannath Self-reliant Cooperative with 523 women from 43 Self-Help Groups.
- Technical support to 4 organisations completing the treatment of micro-watersheds, 4 organisations treating catchments to enhance water recharge and to 3 organisations seeking to enhance availability of fodder from common and private lands.

We are presented with several major challenges that we need to address in the coming years.

In the past year, we withdrew our financial support to a bulk of the primary schools where we were attempting to improve the quality of education. In nearly all these, communities supported the *balshikshaks* teaching and running libraries in their schools. This was quite remarkable in itself. The efforts of the communities and Chirag, while reflecting improvements in the quality of education, did not have any impact whatsoever on the educational system per se. The question that was constantly being posed to us was whether this effort was 'sustainable'. The experience of the past five years clearly reveals the impact of our effort on the learning of children in these schools. Should we continue to support these, knowing that the impact will only be limited to the children in these schools? That it will have no impact on improving the government school system per se, and that the efforts will continue for only as long as we invest in these schools?

The Chirag School has 59 children in two pre-school classes and in classes 1 to 3. English continues to be a weak link and we need to find a long-term solution for this. Further, our inability to create adequate spaces for children to play in the schools has to be rectified since we are only engaging with the minds of children. The use of computers will need to be planned to demystify this technology and to use it as an aid for learning. We also need to strengthen our efforts with regard to music and other performing arts if our objective of focussing on the overall development of children is to be realised.

The proportion of patients accessing the out-patient facility at Sitla and Sargakhet rose during 2008-09 due largely to the presence of volunteer doctors from the United Kingdom. However, in the past year, the proportion of patients from Sitla was substantially lower than in Sargakhet. Should we focus our attention on the Hospital at Sargakhet? The absence of a second full-time doctor inhibits our ability to provide in-patient facilities or to commence minor surgeries since post-operative care will be limited. If the Hospital were recognised by the government as a first referral unit, we could offer women from our villages the option of accessing the hospital for deliveries and more

importantly support for ante-natal care check-ups and for treatment of tuberculosis. A second doctor remains our primary challenge.

For the second year, the Village Health and Sanitation Committees have created health plans that they are using to leverage services from the government.

Immunisation rates have improved in villages that have low immunisation. The proportion of institutional deliveries has increased. The provision of supplies to ASHAs at the request of the health committees has been streamlined.

Documentation of impact is an issue that we need to address. More importantly, the absence of a supportive policy environment that encourages Panchayats to focus on soft-developmental issues, makes our task difficult. Our persistence and the presence of a substantial number of community based institutions is leading to results in the Panchayats we work with, but the rest continue to languish. As with primary education, should we persist because of what we are able to achieve or should we worry about the sustainability of our efforts and ability to influence policy in a substantial manner?

For the first time in several years, no residential trainings were held as part of the Kishori Shikshan Kendra. Our focus shifted temporarily to finding a path for the employment of young people. The alternatives we had explored - electrical work, plumbing and the hospitality industry - were only for boys. The drop-out rate was high and the results did not match the effort. We needed to find solutions for both boys and girls and more importantly we needed options that would provide us with scale. Two have emerged during the year - employment for boys with industries in the *terai* region of the state and work with B2R Technologies in their rural Business Process Outsourcing unit. We continue to search for other options that can provide us with scale.

Community forestry is one of our oldest programmes and probably one of the best in the state. Yet, the poor and uncertain rainfall in the past two years has affected it adversely. Mortality in nurseries has risen. The average survival rate of saplings is only 60%. We need to find ways of altering our strategy to deal with this uncertainty. Despite our investment in the timely completion of engineering measures to increase water conservation, this is as yet inadequate.

When we commenced our effort at recharging springs using the principles of hydro-geology for identification of the recharge zone, we assumed that most of this would fall in common lands. The assumption has proved incorrect and a significant portion of the recharge zones lie in private lands. We need to increase soil and water retention in these fields, preferably alter the cropping pattern in favour of less water-intensive crops and/or use water more efficiently - all without leading to a loss in income from these lands.

It has become clear that it is possible for small and marginal farmers to get a better price for their horticulture and agricultural produce through simple efforts. Now that we have established this once again, we need to work towards an institutional arrangement that is owned and managed by communities to take the initiative forward. The monitoring of impact from sustainable agriculture trials on farmers' fields is poor. We need to address this.

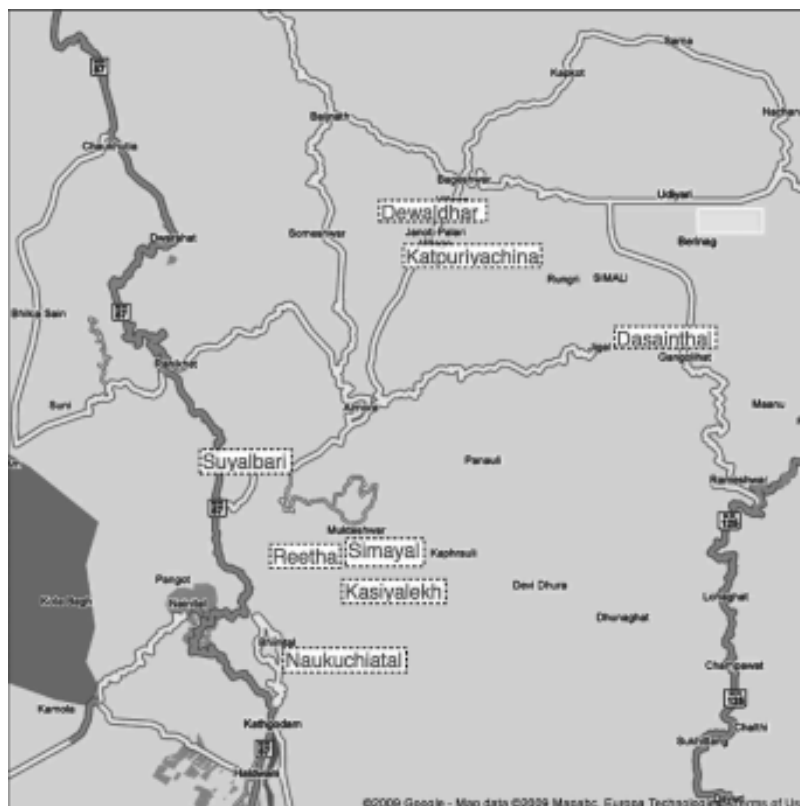
With nearly 2,700 members in Self-Help Groups and a cumulative saving of over Rs 5,207,000 the effective use of capital and increased off-take of credit from the groups requires focus. The federation at Bageshwar will require significant support in the first few years before it establishes itself as a viable entity - most importantly, it needs to identify a core activity around which it can create an enterprise.

Ninety-five percent of our team belongs to the state and this is a significant source of strength for us. In the past few years, there has been a slow but steady increase in the proportion of professionals returning to work in the region and we have been fortunate to attract several of them. Interestingly, the number of professionals in the organisation from other parts of the country has declined marginally. We had hoped that the revision in our scales that was implemented last year would stand the test of time. As inflation and the substantial increase in the prices of essential commodities were much higher than what our scales were designed to withstand, they needed an upward revision yet again.

The best news is the fact that the Bani Jagtiani Trust gave a Rs 3 crore corpus endowment for the Chirag Hospital and School during the year.

Where we work

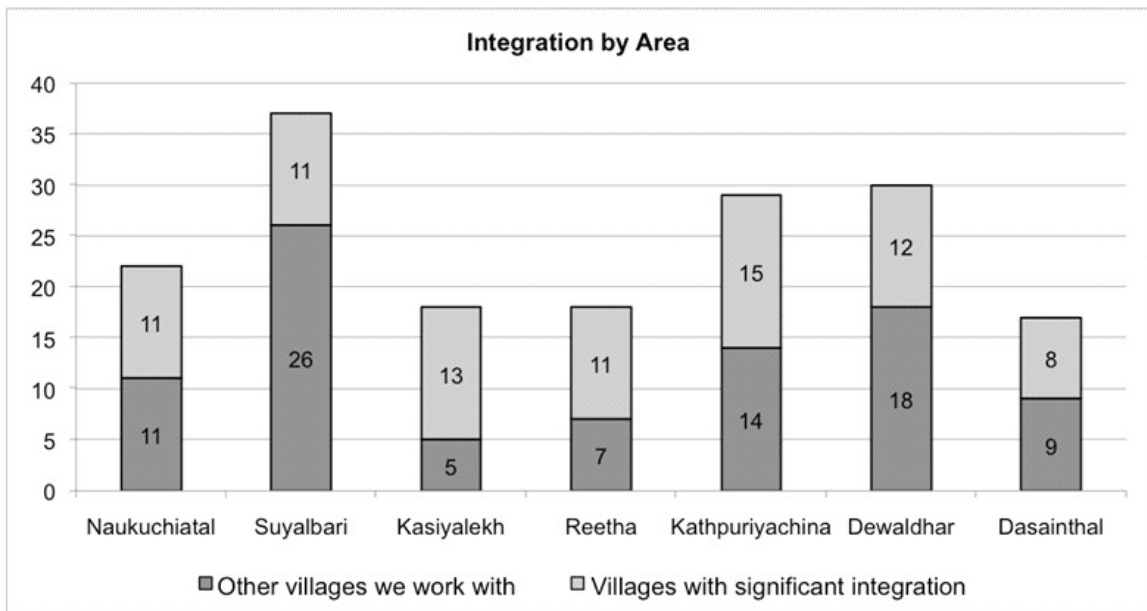
We have seven area teams, each headed by an area coordinator and consisting of specialists to support our initiatives as well as multi-purpose extension workers with responsibility for specific villages. The area teams are supported by programme coordinators, team leaders and an administration and finance team based at Simayal.



Area	No. of villages	No. of Households	Total Population
Suyalbari	37	1,705	9,423
Reetha	18	2,470	14,368
Kasiyalekh	18	2,279	16,214
Kathpuriyachina	29	1,691	9,613
Dewaldhar	30	1,630	8,436
Dasainthal	17	637	3,131
Naukuchiatal	22	4,004	22,299
Total	171	14,416	83,484

We currently work in 171 villages in 8 blocks and four districts of the Kumaun region. This does not include the area that our partner organisations - to whom we provide technical support - work in. The villages we are engaged in consist of 14,400 households and a population of just over 83,000 people. The number of villages has actually declined in the past two years and may do so further, albeit marginally.

As an integrated development organisation, we seek to provide families living in the villages with a minimum set of development services and choices. We are in the process of rationalising where we work, to ensure that the minimum portfolio of choices is available to a bulk of the villages. The actual choices may vary depending on the need of a particular village or even area.



The Suyalbari area has the largest number of villages at 37 and Dasainthal the least at 17. In Dasainthal, Kathpuriyachina and Naukuchiatal areas, in roughly half the villages a significant amount of integrated choices is provided. Suyabari has the least at a third; and in Dewaldhar in only two fifths of the villages we work in is there a minimum desirable mix of integration. Reetha and Kasiyalekh areas reflect significantly high integration in our work. This could also be because these are the oldest areas of our work and historically our efforts on education and health care were largely limited to these areas. Of the two areas

with the least amount of integration, Dewaldhar and Suyalbari - sectoral teams continue to be the norm and this could account for the relatively low integration. As these are also currently the largest areas, this could be a factor as well.

As we move ahead we have three major challenges from an institutional perspective:

1. To ensure that the less privileged are major participants in all our activities.
2. To enhance the extent of integrated choices that we are able to provide families with whom we work.
3. To ensure that our structure - without a substantial increase in staff - is appropriately re-designed to ensure effective and efficient programmes.



EDUCATION

Community Based Primary School Support

From October 2004, we have attempted to improve the quality of education in primary schools of the government and to inculcate a culture of reading. We have sought to do so through village youth - *bal shikshaks* - engaged by School Education Committees to work with children in classes 1 and 2 in their schools, and to run libraries for all the students. From an initial phase where the programme was limited to the Reetha and Kasiyalekh areas, the programme was expanded to cover 49 government primary schools in all other areas as well, except for Dasainthal. As of 2009-10 there were 1,576 children of whom 54% were girls, being taught by 49 *bal shikshaks*.

Each school had a library and a designated period for children to visit the library and to borrow books. Books are segregated according to levels of learning. On an average during the year a child in 1st grade borrowed 5 books during the year whereas a child in 5th grade borrowed 17. The programme encouraged a *Bal Sabha* every Saturday to facilitate improvements in the confidence of children and to provide them with an opportunity to display their talent. Monthly meetings with the School Education Committee kept them informed about the progress in their school. A summer camp was held in each area in June 2009 during the vacation to encourage children to participate in activities that were fun. 1,125 children participated in these. *Bal Melas* were held in each area. These were supported by the parents, and the children took responsibility for conducting the events. A training for *Bal Shikshaks*; workshop for members of the School Education Committee; and two meetings in Bageshwar with government school teachers were held during the year.

When the programme was initiated, the agreement with communities was that (a) they would engage the *Bal Shikshaks* to ensure local accountability and (b) that the community would contribute an increasing amount each year to support their *Bal Shikshak*, with Chirag's contribution proportionately decreasing. Chirag commenced withdrawing its support to these schools gradually and last year

only 9 schools were supported by us financially. However, communities largely continued to support their *bal shikshaks* with Chirag's role limited to the provision of training and monitoring of impact.

Community Contribution - per month (Rs.)

Area	Total Number of Schools	<250 Rs	251-500 Rs	>500 Rs
Reetha	11	4	4	3
Kasiyalekh	9	3	0	6
Suyalbari	1	1	0	0
Naukuchiatal	4	2	2	0
Bageshwar	24	9	8	7
	49	19	14	16

While the fact that the communities supported their schools was remarkable in itself, it brought to the fore several questions:

- How could such a minimal support per month - albeit for a few hours' work each day - be justified?
- If communities were willing to engage a youth to work with their children and to contribute financially, why were they unable to seek redressal for their problems from the state?
- Was this additional investment - despite the substantial amount being invested by the Government - justified?
- Was sustainability worth pursuing?

Quite evidently, even poor families of children studying in these schools were willing to pay. Yet, the *bal shikshaks*, unqualified as compared to the teachers, and with a pittance as honorarium, still inspired the confidence of the parents. Why? Was it because the difference the initiative made to their children was visible to them? The evidence seems to corroborate this.

Since 2004, we have conducted a test in three subjects for children in class 5. The test is based on the competency that children should possess at the end of class 3 as per the government's Minimum Levels of Learning. The following tables reveal the comparison by district, of children from schools that Chirag works with as compared to children from 'control' schools or schools that Chirag does not work with. The table reflects the proportion of children in class 5 who

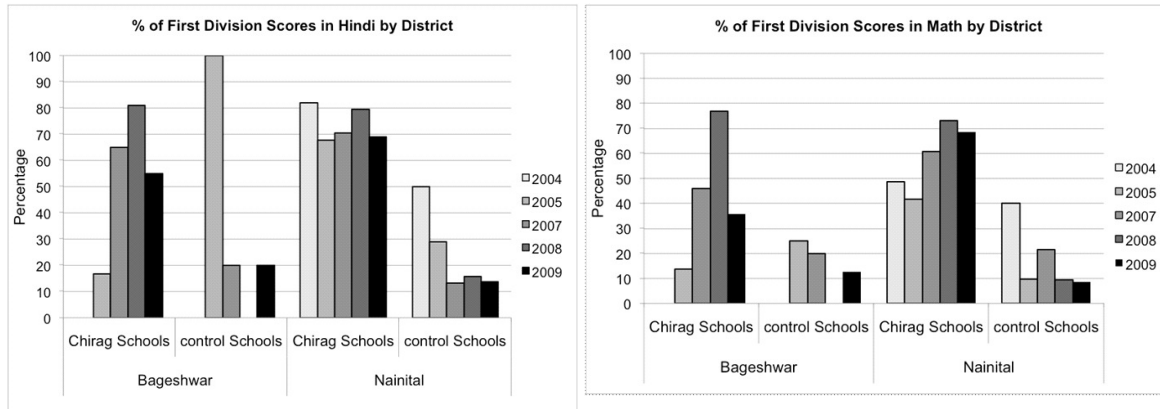
secured more than 60% in these tests. For purposes of uniformity, only schools that we worked with for a minimum of three years and control schools where tests were conducted for a minimum of two years have been considered. A total of 1,565 children were tested and children in control schools comprised 23% of the total.

Some general trends are visible:

- Maths is clearly the weakest subject for all children in these districts.
- Consistently across the subjects, children in Nainital district perform better than children in Bageshwar district.
- By and large in Nainital district the performance of children across subjects in schools that Chirag works with is 30-40% better than those in control schools.
- In Bageshwar district the difference is less stark: still on an average performance is 20% better in schools that Chirag works with as compared to control schools.
- What is of concern is the fact that even in the best control schools, on an average less than 30% of children in 5th grade can get a first division in any subject on a test based on the competency they should have possessed at the end of grade 3.
- The impact of Chirag's relative withdrawal from 40 of these schools in the past year is clearly visible in the fact that the results have dropped in all the schools and all the subjects as compared to the preceding year.
- 2008 was a good year for children in schools that Chirag works with in Bageshwar district. The fall in 2009 is more noticeable here than in Nainital district after Chirag's withdrawal.

This is what the data for tests in two subjects - Hindi and Maths reveals:

In Bageshwar, in 2005, children in control schools performed better than children in schools that Chirag worked with. This seems an aberration since in the subsequent years the difference is stark. Except for 2008, the children Chirag worked with from Nainital district have consistently performed better than those in Bageshwar district. Even in 2004, the year with the best performance of children from control schools, there were 30% more children securing a first division in schools that Chirag worked with.



Maths is clearly a weak subject across the districts. On an average, in control schools in Nainital district only 20% of children in class 5 can secure a first division in Maths as compared to nearly 60% in schools Chirag works with.

These results clearly reveal the difference in levels of learning among children in schools that we have worked with. In November and December 2009, three students from the University of Washington at Seattle - David, Haley and Katie - administered a test to students between classes 6 and 8 in two junior schools. They compared the performance of children from primary schools that we had worked with and those of other children. Consistently, children from the former primary schools performed better than other children. The probability of a good foundation resulting in consistent performance through junior school exists but will need to be verified.

Scholarships for Girls

The scholarship programme seeks to provide girls between class 6 and 12 with academic ability and from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds with the requisite support to complete their schooling. The programme covers the cost of uniforms, stationery, text books and examination fees; and more importantly provides them with tutorial support and health care. Increasingly, girls are also being provided with vocational skills.

In 2008-09, there were 121 girls receiving a scholarship. Of eight who appeared for the class 12 board exam, seven girls passed. During the year, one more girl scholar was added. The current girl scholars by class are as follows:

Girl Scholars by Area and Class - 2009-10

Area	Class 8	Class 9	Class 10	Class 11	Class 12	Total
Reetha	9	4	4	10	3	30
Kasiyalekh	5	4	6	7	7	29
Suyalbari	4	6	3	3	0	16
Naukuchiatal	8	6	3	2	1	20
Bageshwar	5	5	3	6	1	20
Total	31	25	19	28	12	115

During the year, girls were provided with either access to tuition at a cluster level, or individual inputs that were covered by the scholarship for a six-month period. In December 2009 and January 2010, all the girls received access to a residential tutorial support camp and vocational training. In March, academically weak students attended another residential tutorial camp.

In March 2010, 30 girls went on an exposure visit to Haldwani, Rudrapur and GB Pant University. They were hosted in Haldwani by the Suchetna Sansthan. In Rudrapur they visited factories of Parle and Britannia; and participated in a fair for farmers at the GB Pant University for Agriculture at Pant Nagar. During the year, girls could access specific inputs pertaining to stitching, embroidery and painting at the area level. A *balika diwas* was celebrated in each area on 21, September 2009 with 111 girl scholars and 150 other girls participating. In April 2009, a workshop was conducted to improve writing skills for 25 girls.

Quarterly meetings were held with parents and the girls received a health check up twice in the year. Those with serious ailments requiring specialised inputs and treatment were referred to other facilities and supported for the treatment. At the end of the academic year, 20 girl-scholars gave their books to other girls from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

Graduates from the scholarship programme

Bimla Bisht is from Sasbani and finished school in 2009. Bimla started receiving a scholarship when she was in class 8, since her mother was struggling to raise her children alone after the death of their father. The scholarship provided Bimla with the opportunity to focus on her studies and she learnt painting, a hobby that she continues with. Bimla is currently enrolled for a Bachelor's degree. During the year, she taught English as a tutor to three other girl scholars from her village. Bimla wants to become a model teacher.

Asha Bisht from Nathuwakhan also finished school in 2009. She has two brothers, and her mother, Hansi Bisht, is raising her family through a meagre income from agriculture. The residential camps that Asha participated in helped improve her confidence and she is now enrolled for a Bachelor's degree and supports her education by knitting with Kumaun Grameen Udyog.

Chirag School

With 30 girls and 29 boys in two pre-school groups and classes 1-3, an administrative block, pre-school block and primary school block, a school bus, seven teachers and two assistants- the Chirag School has emerged as an entity with its own identity. It now has its own unique uniform too.

The rooms of the primary school were converted into learning spaces for different subjects. Books and materials for each subject were organised according to levels of learning, and space was created for diverse activities within each room - activity corners, peer learning, improved access to materials. Volunteers helped to catalogue the books and the library was made more attractive and organised for children to utilise. A teachers' library was also created for resource and reference material and to improve their conceptual understanding.

The Maths curriculum received significant attention during the year and the pedagogy was evolved for areas like number sense and basic operations. Teaching modules were developed for classes 1 to 4 and are being integrated into term plans.

The teachers and children put up a series of four plays in English during the year - gaining confidence and shedding some inhibitions along the way. Informal interactions with volunteers and formal sessions to 'read together' led to an enhanced exposure to English in the school.

Workshops with parents have commenced becoming more specific as the school grows in experience. The themes for the workshops included stages in learning; how children learn from their environment; spending time creatively with young children; understanding numbers; and teaching Maths from real life situations. Further general interactions with parents continue to focus on health, evaluations and observations of parents and teachers alike to understand the academic needs of children and to address behavioural concerns of parents.

The school was fortunate to host several volunteers during the year, all of whom contributed substantially. Together with resource persons they focussed on English, Maths curriculum and pedagogy, craft, puppetry and story telling, workshops with parents and teachers, plays in English, setting up of the library, special needs, music, teaching the use of recycled materials, science and theatre and dance workshops.

Children from classes 1 to 3 went with their teachers to Nainital for a day, a first visit for many. They visited the zoo and saw some rare species including a snow leopard.

As the school has grown in confidence, it has now commenced sharing its experiences. During the year, teachers from the JBNS Society at Faizabad, the Harbor School at Bhimtal and the John Martyn Memorial School at Dehradun spent a few days each at the Chirag School. A two-day workshop on curriculum planning, school environment and class-room management, teaching maths and language was held for trainee nursery teachers from the Jan Shikshan Sansthan, Bhimtal. The Chirag School has also established a 'twinning' programme with the Woodsloke School in Suffolk, UK and children from each school have commenced corresponding with each other.

After evaluating various options for accreditation and recognition for the school, a decision was taken to seek recognition from the Uttarakhand State Board. The process has been initiated and we hope to secure recognition in the next academic year.

Children continue to grow in confidence. Parents, while appreciating their independence and openness, are also concerned about children asking too many questions. From the schools' perspective - a great sign!

Challenges

- With either no alternatives or the inability to afford them when they exist, children from less privileged families depend on government schools. Should we run private schools and cross-subsidise the poor?
- Should we accept that our emphasis is on children; and irrespective of whether it is the most efficient use of resources or not, continue to work in government primary schools for as long as we can raise the resources?

- Should we consider shifting our emphasis from working in the primary school during the formal session, to remedial education - either before or after school hours - in addition to continuing to support libraries?
- Irrespective of the community contribution, we believe that we should enhance the honorarium to *bal shikshaks* in recognition of their effort.
- The proportion of children with special needs in the Chirag School and in primary schools we work in is substantial. We haven't yet found a systematic approach to addressing the needs of such children and need to commence with the Chirag School.
- While we have finished with infrastructure creation in terms of large expenditures, we need to raise resources and create a play-ground for children in the Chirag School.
- English and the use of computers in the Chirag School are two major areas that will require attention in the coming year.





INVESTING IN YOUNG PEOPLE

It was an interesting year for our work with young people. For the first time in several years, no residential camp for adolescent girls - *Kishori Shikshan Kendra* - was held. We felt that we needed to step back and evolve a new strategy. Our efforts to provide employment for young people had run into several glitches - scale was non-existent, the choices were being created for boys and their drop-out rate was high. We were not sure whether we understood the needs of young people from our region. If we did not step back, we ran the risk of becoming cynical and disheartened.

The emphasis then was on:

1. Keeping alive existing components of our work with adolescents (girls and boys) to create a new generation of leaders for the region, without investing in long residential camps.
2. Trying to understand what young people in our region really wanted to do.
3. Evolving new opportunities for young people - girls and boys.
4. Continuing to invest in young graduates as part of *Swades ki Khoj*.
5. Creating a new strategy for our efforts with young people.

Our efforts with adolescent girls, to create a new generation of leaders provided us with the requisite continuity to keep our focus.

Creating a new generation of leaders

Several diverse and short workshops and trainings with adolescent girls were held during the year. In September, 23 girls were provided with a training over six days on maternal and child health. The idea was to provide resource persons at the community level who could assist health committees and ASHAs.

Between October and December, 9 girls learnt how to cycle in the Reetha area. A one-day training on gender was provided during an NSS camp at the Dhokane Inter College. Twelve girls learnt tailoring in camps held at Simayal in December

and in Kasiyalekh in March. Seventeen young people attended a workshop on publication of newsletters organised by Vimarsh in Nainital in March 2010.

The annual fair for youth - *Chail Chailiya Utsav* - was held on the 27th and 28th of December at Naukuchiatal. While 570 youth registered for the event, on the second day the number of young people present had exceeded 800. Community contributions covered 60 % of the total expenditure incurred in hosting this event. It included cycle races; high jump and long jump; a 200 metre race; a quiz; diverse competitions - *mehandi, aipan*, wearing a sari in 1 minute; and cultural events - drama and music.

Four issues of the newsletter for youth - *Yuva Sansar* - were published by an editorial committee consisting of 7 young people. Articles were contributed by youth from the region and each issue had a theme. The themes, selected by the editorial committee were female foeticide, unemployment, the absence of vision and focus amongst youth, and population growth. A thousand copies of each issue were printed and distributed by the youth.

In the preceding years, 144 boys attended the Kishor Shikshan Kendra - or residential camps for boys. Seventy three of them were met with during the year so as to follow up on the inputs they had received, the progress made against the goals they had set and to identify the new challenges that they were encountering. Interestingly, of the 41 who were clear on what they would like to do in the future, 14 wanted to join the army or police and 11 wanted to embark on professional courses. Agriculture and enterprises were the choice of only 3 each.

Youth - Realising their Dreams

Seema Chamial is from Umagadh, and belongs to a family that struggles to make ends meet. She received a scholarship as part of Chirag's educational programme and completed her schooling. Subsequently Seema enrolled for the Kishori Shikshan Kendra. Seema believes that the training has transformed her. It gave her confidence and developed the leadership potential in her. She caught the eye of her trainers from Chirag who saw in Seema the makings of a leader. Seema started providing tuitions to other girl scholars in classes 6, 7 and 8 in Maths, English and Science. Whenever Chirag needed a trainer to conduct a vocational course, Seema was the first to volunteer since she was interested in painting and this gave her the opportunity to develop her skills and to teach others. Today, Seema has turned into an experienced trainer and has become a role model for other adolescent girls. Seema saved the income she earned as a tutor and trainer, for her higher education as she

knew that her family would be hard-pressed to do so. She decided to apply for a course in office management offered by a polytechnic, was selected and has commenced her course in a government polytechnic in Almora district. Seema believes that she is fortunate to have secured admission in a government college or else her savings would have proved inadequate. She wants to get a job after the completion of her course and wants to improve the economic status of her family; she believes that this, more than anything else, gives a family confidence.

Creating employment opportunities for youth

To try and understand why young people from the area, when presented with opportunities, were dropping out or seemed to lack the will power to persevere, we decided to undertake two small exercises. First, 784 young people (including 365 girls) from Naukuchiatal, Reetha and Kasiyalekh areas were asked about their aspirations. Apart from hopes of government jobs and even self-employment, the young people expressed an interest in computer literacy, hospitality, tailoring, agriculture, floriculture and mushroom cultivation, and technical trainings including motor repair. Second, a group of 68 boys and girls from Dasainthal, Reetha and Kasiyalekh were asked specifically about their expectations from the government and from Chirag. Not surprisingly, the expectations from government included free vocational training, simplified procedures to access loans, scholarships and enhanced employment opportunities. The expectations from Chirag included computer literacy, local employment opportunities, skill development, financial support and counselling.

In the summer of 2009, serendipitously, two individuals who had acquired land in the region and were desirous of exploring opportunities to engage with when they relocated in the near future, got in touch with us. Both of them had worked in the Information Technology industry and one of them was managing a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) unit in Gurgaon. Over a telephone call, the idea of setting up a rural BPO in our area was born. They visited the area and interacted with groups of youth and were convinced about the potential. Within a month, we were visited by another individual from Bengaluru who had heard about Chirag through a common friend, and wanted to assist in the establishment of similar rural BPOs. We had two choices. The first involved the provision of support while the actual running of the enterprise would be undertaken by another entity. The second gave us access to training and inputs while the actual running of the BPO would be our responsibility. However, the

second was designed to work with individuals with low levels of literacy. After giving both models significant thought, we decided to go with the former option, recognising the fact that our competence did not extend to running a BPO whereas we could envisage undertaking the tasks required to support the actual enterprise.

In August 2009, B2R Technologies, a private company, was established by the two entrepreneurs who had met us. This involved a formal partnership between Chirag and B2R with clear responsibilities for each. The partnership specifically emphasises the desire to provide opportunities for young and educated girls from the region.

Between August and March, at Orakhan, 500 metres from our office, two batches of youth have been selected, trained and have commenced operations in the first rural BPO of this region.

Selection of youth- B2R Technologies - Batches 1 and 2

	Girls	Boys	Total
Registration	153	194	347
Appeared in the written tests	92	130	222
Selected for interviews	38	48	86
Successful candidates	26	18	44

Girls performed better than boys and 28% who appeared in the written test were eventually selected as compared to only 14% of boys.

The vision and plan of B2R Technologies is huge, and Chirag is committed to supporting them. For Chirag, rural BPOs offer the opportunity of absorbing some of the educated youth from within the area, and also partially addressing the issue of scale.

The contact established with Parle in Rudrapur, led to Chirag facilitating interviews for the company. Sixty youth appeared for interviews and 20 joined the Rudrapur facility on a contract to assist in packing. The terms and conditions for their hiring were discussed in a transparent manner between representatives from Parle, the contractor and Chirag. At the end of 2 years, those performing the best will be absorbed by Parle but in the interim, we have made sure that the basic norms and social security measures are in place.

We continued to hope that the handsome offer made by Neemrana Hotels would lead to a substantial number of youth being trained by them over a six-month period with the option for the successful ones being either absorbed by the group, or if not, to at least return as trained personnel. Only 5 youth out of the first batch of 13 actually completed six months. Two other batches stayed for between 48 and 72 hours and fled right back. After meeting the youth who returned abruptly, the following became clear: (a) the batch has to be homogeneous in terms of caste composition and economic status of the youth, (b) this is not an option for the average educated youth from the region and unless they are poor and need to work, they will not stay for the duration of the course.

Seven people were hired by Himjoli - a private enterprise that seeks to provide improved market access for social enterprises from Kumaun - and engaged to assist them with sales and marketing of the products from this region at Delhi.

After nearly three years, we finally managed to create opportunities for over 70 youth to find off-farm employment in a year. Hopefully, the next year will be an even better one.

Investing in young people for an inclusive India

The second cohort of Swades ki Khoj - our programme that seeks to provide young graduates an opportunity to spend a year living and working in a rural area - consisted of 15 young people. Of these, only 10 completed the course. The bulk of those who dropped out did so within the first month - simply because of their inability to adjust to new circumstances.

Swades ki Khoj 2007-10

Year	Foundation Course			Completed the Course			Drop-Out		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
2007-2008	9	5	14	9	5	14	0	0	0
2008-2009	11	4	15	6	4	10	5	0	5
2009-2010	12	5	17	8	5	13	4	0	4
Total	32	14	46	23	14	37	9	0	9

For the third cohort we received 72 applications and 17 finally joined the foundation course; only 13 were still with their host organisations at the end of March 2010.

Interestingly, while women comprised only a third of those who commenced the foundation course at Chirag, none of them dropped out. Whereas, while 70% of the initial cohort was men, 30% dropped out. Clearly, while the decision is a difficult one for women, once they have made up their mind, they hang in there - however difficult the circumstances may be.

The organisations that have hosted youth from the second and third cohorts have been ARTH, Ajeevika Bureau, Seva Mandir, Digantar and Bodh Shikshan Sansthan in Rajasthan, Eklavya and Samaj Pragati Sahyog from Madhya Pradesh, Jan Swasthya Sahyog from Chattisgarh, Sahjeevan from Gujarat and Sri Bhuvaneshwari Mahila Ashram and Chirag from Uttarakhand.

Our concerns with the first two cohorts pertained to the low proportion of young graduates that we were able to attract from outside Uttarakhand and in particular from large metropolitan cities. In the third cohort, this concern was addressed to some extent. Of those who appeared as though they would complete the year, nearly half were from outside the state and for the first time we had a significant representation from large metropolitan cities - Bengaluru and the National Capital Region in particular. It would seem that two things seemed to make a difference: (a) the fact that it was the third year had led to word getting out through previous alumni of the programme and through the interns and volunteers we had hosted during the past few years; (b) the internet was a powerful medium to reach out to the young people, and posters were not as effective.

We continued to be taken aback by the transformation that had taken place in the young people and this was reinforced when we met the second cohort in June 2009 for their final workshop. Sensitivity to the poor; new skills; a significant increase in confidence; new language abilities; an awareness of other cultures - the young people had them all. We were also struck by how many of them actually wanted to remain in the voluntary sector in the future.

Unlike the first year, in the third Foundation course, we had only two external resource persons - Ms Anjali Noronha from Eklavya and Mr Anwar Jafri from Samavesh. Most of the sessions were led by resource persons from Chirag. We decided to make a minor alteration in the programme based on feed-back that we had received in the first two years and held a mid-year workshop for the third cohort in December 2009. It was clear that all of them had adjusted to their new circumstances and were already worrying about what they would do after the year ended in June.

When we initiated the programme, we had not fully anticipated the change that we would see in the young people. Further, we were not completely clear about the extent of support that we would receive from other organisations. We have been pleasantly surprised by the involvement and support from host organisations that we have been fortunate to partner with.

Challenges

- In the coming year, we will re-initiate the Kishori Shikshan Kendra. While the broad objectives will remain the same, we may discontinue the optional inputs on agriculture, animal husbandry and health that we offered. Instead, we will need to find ways of enhancing communication skills, develop English language competency and computer literacy.
- We had hoped that after the recruitment of the first batch by B2R, we would be able to commence training of the youth in English and computer literacy. However, our inability to find personnel with the requisite English language skills to lead this initiative has proved problematic. We aim to find a solution in the coming year.
- We continue to believe that unless we can find ways of making on-farm activities exciting or economically attractive enough, we will not be able to provide large scale choices for young people. This is something that we have not been able to pursue in a systematic manner.
- With the third cohort of Swades ki Khoj due to end in a few months, we are likely to have resources to support a fourth cohort. Ideally, we should get the programme independently evaluated before we take a decision on whether or not to continue it.

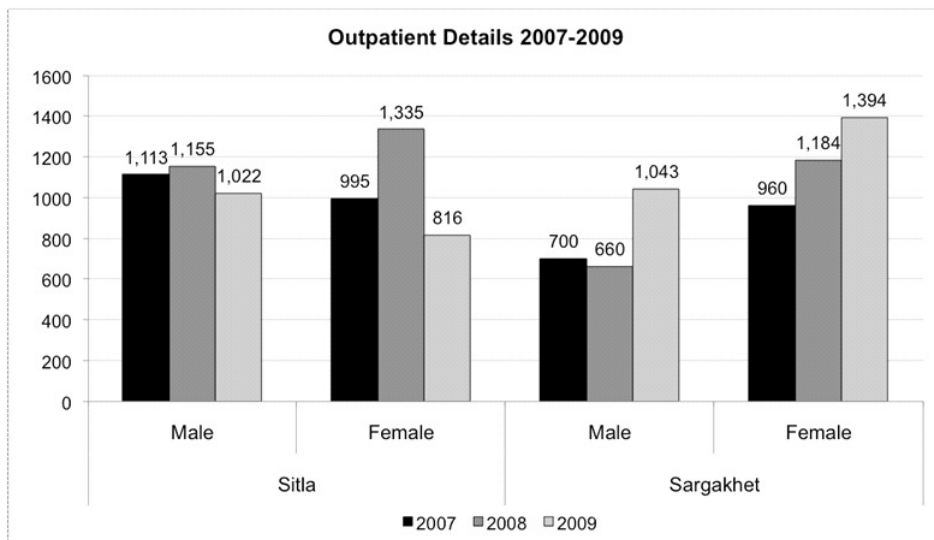


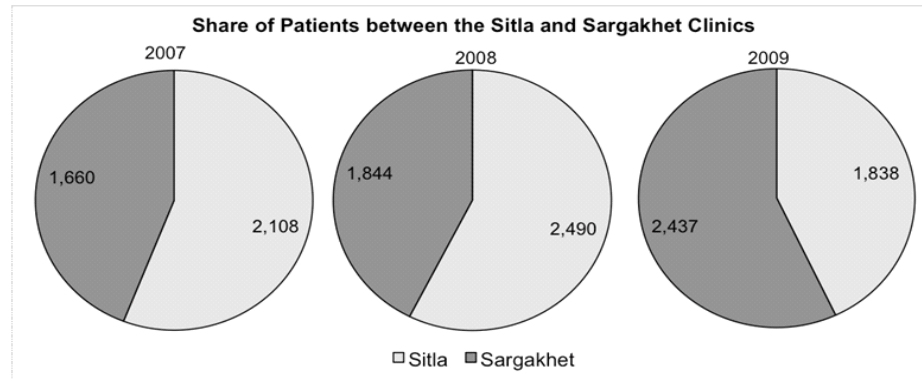
HEALTH CARE

The Chirag Hospital seeks to provide emergency health care services and would eventually like to focus on maternal and child health. Our preventive and promotive health strategy seeks to mobilise Village Health and Sanitation Committees (VHSCs) of the Gram Panchyats to create plans and to use these to leverage services from the government. We also support the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) to make them more effective. In the past few years, with access to water improving in our villages, our emphasis has shifted to improving the quality of water.

Curative Health

The inauguration of the Chirag Hospital in 2009 has led to a noticeable increase in the proportion of patients accessing healthcare. In the previous year, we were fortunate to have two volunteer women doctors from the United Kingdom for the better part of the year. We could ensure that there was a doctor available each day at both Sargakhet and Sitla and this led to a spurt in the proportion of women in particular, who accessed the Sitla clinic. In the past year, a total of 4,275 patients came to the Sitla clinic and Sargakhet hospital, half of whom were women.





It is possible that 2008-09 was an aberration, given the presence of two volunteer doctors. In the past year, the Hospital has accounted for 60% of the patients treated. As compared to a decade ago, there are several options available for patients in Sitla today and unless we can ensure the availability of a woman doctor, there seemed little point in continuing to try and run two facilities.

The presence of Dr Ruma Mukherjee continues to provide stability at the Chirag Hospital and another choice for families in the region. Over time, her credibility particularly among women has grown and during the year, she treated 1,125 patients. Seven deliveries were conducted at the Hospital during the year and our team assisted in another 8 home births. By virtue of the fact that Dr Bisht resides in the area, he often has to provide services at home; during the year 254 patients were seen by him at his residence. Interestingly, the proportion of patients opting for Ayurvedic treatment continues to increase and during the year 673 patients opted for this. By and large, patients opt for Ayurvedic treatment for ailments pertaining to the gastro-intestinal tract, skin, kidney stones and arthritis.

Support from the Rajeshwar and Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust led to our lab-facilities being upgraded. During the year our X-Ray machine was shifted from Sitla to the Hospital. This has led to a huge increase in the number of pathology tests and X-Rays. In the past year 2,365 pathology tests were conducted and, 17 ECGs and 237 X-Rays were carried out. Routine blood tests account for a significant proportion of the pathology tests.

Dental health and hygiene had emerged as a major concern in the past. Drs Amit and Jayati Diwan from Bareilly, filled this need during the year. Monthly camps at Sargakhet led to the treatment of 245 patients. A number of the cases required extractions. Dr Kumkum and Dr Avinash Kulkarni also held a camp for women and children at the Chirag Hospital and a total of 23 patients were treated. For a

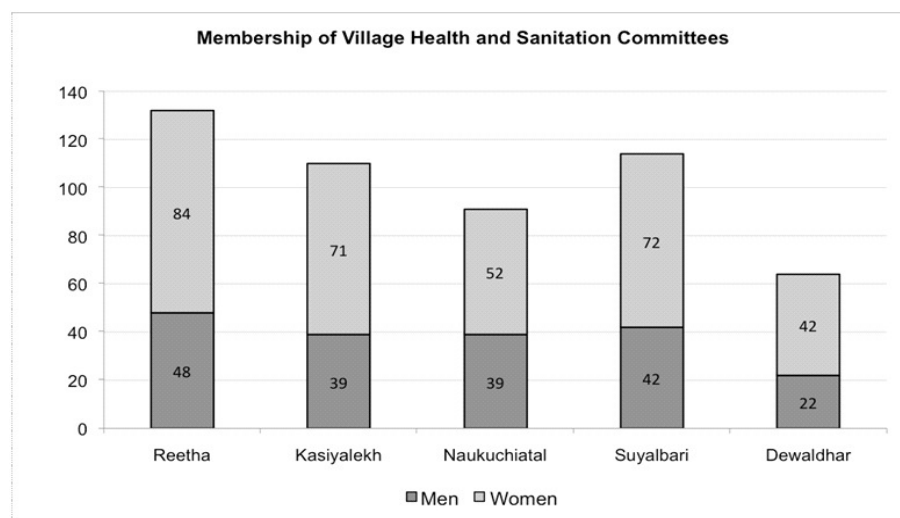
few months, a partnership with the mobile clinic of the Dena Hospital led to four camps being conducted in the area, in which 355 patients were treated. The mobile clinic with an ultra-sound machine and a basic pathology lab was a huge success and as many ultra-sound tests were conducted as pathology tests.

Preventive and Promotive Health

We work with the Village Health and Sanitation Committees (VHSCs) of 40 Gram Panchayats, and a population of 30,609 people. The total membership of the VHSCs is 511 and women comprise 63% of the members. Each VHSC creates an annual plan based on the prioritised needs of the families in their Gram Panchayat. In the plan, the responsibilities of the VHSC and the ASHA are fixed and expectations from the government and Chirag clearly articulated. The plan then serves as the basis for leveraging services from the government and from Chirag. The VHSC meets each month to review progress against the plans and to identify specific tasks for the coming month.

Village Health and Sanitation Committees

Area	Number of Gram Panchayats	Population
Reetha	11	6,270
Kasiyalekh	8	9,240
Naukuchiatal	7	6,384
Suyalbari	8	5,605
Dewaldhar	6	3,110
Total	40	30,609



The Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS -2006) clarify the minimum facilities to be provided at a government health sub-centre. In July 2009, the VHSCs led by the *Pradhans* visited their nearest sub-centre with a check-list based on the IPHS. Fifteen sub-centres in 4 blocks of Nainital district were visited and a report was sent by the VHSCs to the block with a copy to the Chief Medical Health Officer at the District headquarter. The survey revealed that in 11 sub-centres; facilities for sterilisation, equipment to test for haemoglobin, and chlorine tablets were not available and in 9, even blood-pressure could not be recorded. The process of conducting this survey was empowering for the VHSCs. For the first time, the team felt that they had the ability to influence health policy, and plans to repeat the survey each year to ensure that the sub-centres have basic minimum facilities.

Village-level workshops were conducted through the year with VHSC members, in schools and with other community based institutions. The Chirag health team supported the ASHAs in holding ante-natal care camps, camps to identify women with reproductive tract infections, and to identify women with anaemia for subsequent follow-up. In Reetha area alone, blood tests of 326 women were taken to identify their haemoglobin levels. A record of the haemoglobin levels of women is being maintained and the tests will definitely be repeated for these women to track changes if any. Similarly, the records of women with reproductive tract infections are being followed-up to ensure that they receive treatment.

Six workshops were held with 197 VHSC members and 1 workshop with 37 elected representatives. The workshops focussed on providing information about the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the VHSCs, for the members to present their plans, and to facilitate the sharing of experiences. A training on first-aid was provided to the VHSC members.

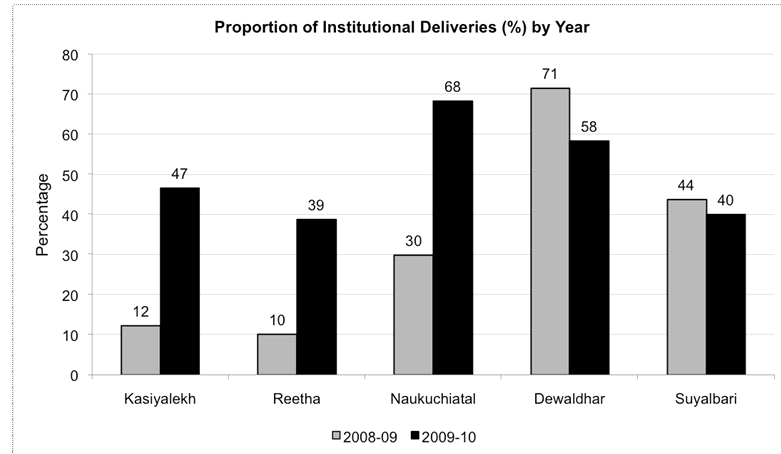
One training was held for 30 ASHAs on immunisation and safe deliveries. Chirag completed the task entrusted to it in the previous year to provide training to all the ASHAs in four blocks of Nainital district on the 5th module developed by NRHM. Three trainings were held and 79 ASHAs received training over a five-day period. The module focussed on leadership, community mobilisation, documentation, vision and goal setting and use of the ASHA kit. Ten exposure visits were held to enable 105 VHSC members to visit other Gram Panchayats to learn from them.

Three federations of ASHAs have been set up: one each in Kasiyalekh, Naukuchiatal and Suyalbari areas, with a total membership of 86 ASHAs. It was

felt that the ASHAs often encountered difficulties in their work and there was no forum to provide them with a voice. The ASHA federations met a total of 17 times during the year. Each federation has its own letterhead to create an independent identity for the federation and to enable the ASHAs to formally seek attention to their problems.

Building on small successes

- Water was tested from 8 sources from 4 villages of Kasiyalekh area. All the sources were cleaned and treated with bleaching powder, and the VHSCs launched a campaign to promote the consumption of boiled water.
- The VHSCs of Supi, Satbunga and Parbada used the discretionary funds provided by the government to build permanent structures for garbage collection in the common areas in their village.
- Supi is one of the largest villages in the region and is divided into multiple hamlets spread over a huge area. It was impossible for one ASHA to cover the entire village. The VHSC put up a proposal to the health administration and two new ASHAs have been selected.
- The VHSC of Mauna decided to focus on institutional deliveries and five deliveries were conducted at the sub-centre with the assistance of the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM).
- The ASHA of Gargaon has been campaigning for safe deliveries in her village. She has ensured that all pregnant women are registered within 12 weeks and receive regular ANC check-ups.
- The VHSC of Aagar was dysfunctional and participation of members poor. It seemed as if we would have no option but to withdraw our efforts from the village. During the year, the initiative of the *Pradhan*, Ms Pushpa Tamta, has led to a remarkable turn-around. Regular meetings are held, even if our team is not present. A cleanliness campaign was launched in the village and the discretionary funds were utilised to construct waste bins and to purchase a *doli* to transport patients in case of emergency..
- The maximum earned by an ASHA through incentives during the year was by Ms Kamla Arya of Pandegaon - Rs 16,300 followed, by Ms Munni Bisht of Buribana - Rs 9,880.
- 11 of the ASHAs we work with have been selected as supervisors to support other ASHAs. All of them will be relieved of their existing responsibilities and new ASHAs will be appointed in their villages.
- Except for Suyalbari and Dewaldhar areas, in all other areas the proportion of institutional deliveries has risen in the past year, with the most substantial increase being recorded in Kasiyalekh. In Naukuchiatal, 68% of the deliveries in the Panchayats we work with, were institutional. In Dewaldhar and Suyalbari, we suspect that the data in the first instance was incorrect and expect to get a better sense of the trend in a few months.



Drinking Water

During the year, substantial effort was made by two volunteers to convince communities about the importance of consuming safe drinking water and to facilitate use of a low-cost option for water treatment, since the consumption of boiled water is not a popular choice. Most families are aware of the relationship of the quality of water they consume with the incidence of water-borne diseases. Yet, since the burden of fetching both water and fuel-wood is with women, it is not reasonable to expect them to also boil the water, since this would involve a significant additional burden. Men on the other hand, don't seem to like the taste of boiled water! We seem to have failed where other popular brands of liquor or aerated drinks have succeeded.

Despite awareness about the importance of drinking safe water and the economic costs of water-borne diseases, the incentives to change behaviour are still low. We need to find a new way to communicate and to promote a low-cost solution that does not increase the burden on women and yet can become something that every 'progressive' family shall aspire to possess. Amidst the frustration, we continued to monitor the quality of water. This year, the water quality of 33 springs was tested across 4 areas, several of them twice during the year to track changes in quality. Reetha area continues to have the poorest quality of drinking water with 13 out of 15 water sources containing faecal coliform.

In the three micro-watersheds that we are developing - at Chiori, Pirna and Ghangal Kuluwa, we continued to focus on improving access to drinking water. One drinking water scheme was repaired, a new scheme implemented, 2 water storage tanks constructed, 2 rain-water harvesting tanks constructed and the

collection points of 5 springs consolidated and cleaned. These efforts led to 146 households benefiting.

Challenges

- We need to find another doctor willing to live and work with us. Without another trained specialist it would be foolhardy to commence offering in-patient facilities except in emergencies. Another doctor would make it possible for us to commence using the operation theatre with visiting surgeons.
- Ideally, we should design and roll-out a hospital-based health insurance scheme specifically for the poorest families in our area to provide them with access to care at a reasonable price for common ailments.
- To utilise the hospital effectively, we should consider supporting the government health care system, particularly with regard to treatment of tuberculosis, provision of ante-natal care and institutional deliveries for pregnant women, and immunisation.
- The monitoring of the impact of our preventive and promotive health work has commenced but is weak. We have identified some key indicators and the results should emerge in the next year. We need to also find ways of sharing this information in a structured manner with each VHSC so that they can improve their own monitoring and efforts.
- The ASHA federations have the potential of providing ASHAs with a platform to voice their grievances. These need to be strengthened.
- We need to find and promote an effective low-cost water purifying solution and more importantly need to launch a communication blitzkrieg to make it the most exciting thing to own.





NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Our initiatives in Natural Resource Management include:

- Conservation, development and management of common lands
- Recharge of springs using the principles of hydro-geology
- Watershed Development
- Agriculture and Horticulture - promotion of sustainable agriculture and in particular Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) through farmer-led trials, experiments and demonstration, and crop diversification
- Community-based animal husbandry
- Support and strengthening of village-level institutions for sustainable management of efforts

We seek to do all of the above in an integrated manner, mirroring the complex interplay between humans, livestock, forests, agriculture and water.

Conservation, development and management of common lands

Commons are an important source of sustenance, particularly for the poor. They provide fuel-wood, leaf litter and fodder. Through community based institutions we enhance soil and water conservation, protect and manage common lands, assist natural regeneration and reafforest degraded lands, and cultivate fodder to increase access to nutritive varieties of fodder.

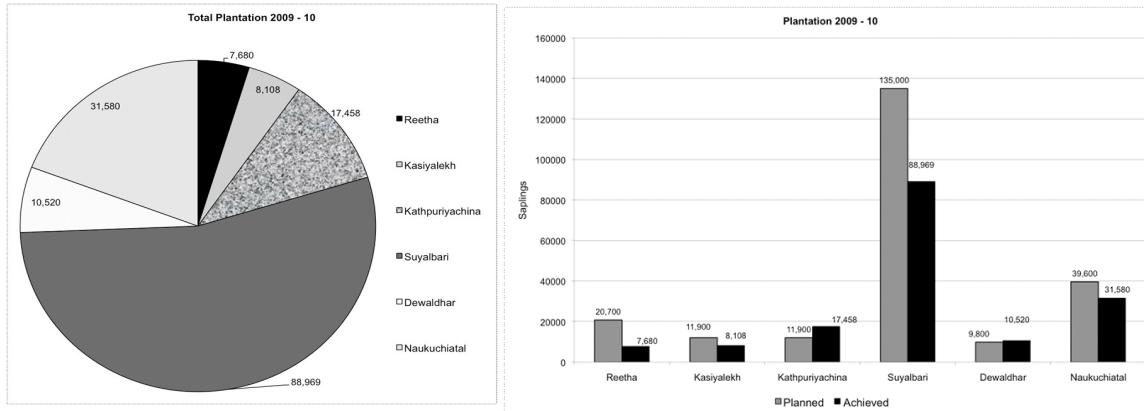
Soil and Water Conservation

With variations in the timing as well as quantum of rain, soil and water conservation through physical measures has become one of our most important tasks. Our strategy has altered based on the failure of winter rains and with precipitation in early spring. We try and complete our physical efforts to enhance soil and water conservation in winter to be able to store every subsequent drop of rain in the hope that this would improve the site conditions.

During the year we undertook preparatory work in 126 hectares of land. 5,460 running metres (rmt) of contour trenches; 52,403 rmt of contour terraces; 623 cubic metres of percolation ponds; 206 percolation pits; 366.8 rmt of loose boulder check-dams; 87 rmt of gabion check dams and 261 compost pits were constructed in these 126 hectares.

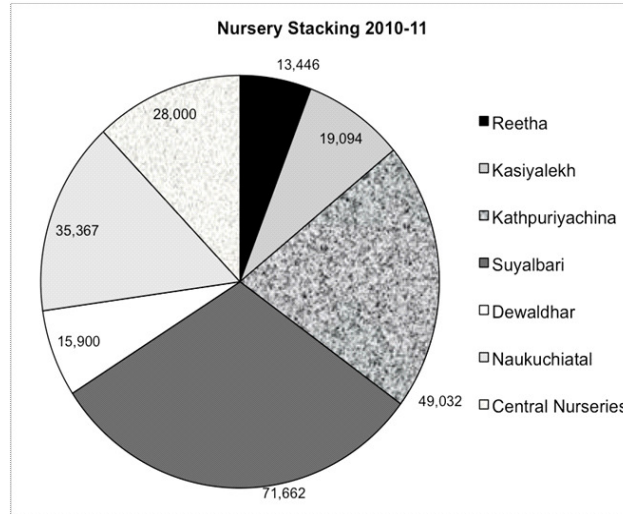
Community Forestry

After a hiatus of a year, significant plantation was resumed during 2009-10. We planned on planting 237,600 species on 241.7 hectares of land during the year. This included the total plantation, across all our natural resource management initiatives. Against the plan, we were able to plant only 164,315 saplings. *Bauhinia* sps, Oak and *Melia azadirachta* accounted for a significant proportion of the total. The progress in the Reetha area was the lowest at 37%, given their emphasis on symbolic plantations to facilitate protection. Dewaldhar and Kathpuriyachina made the most progress against their plans and Suyalbari despite an ambitious plan, still managed to achieve a commendable 68%.



The absence of rains through winter and long dry spells influenced the rate of growth of saplings in nurseries and led to a high mortality. For the first time, we found ourselves attempting to purchase saplings from government and other private nurseries to take advantage of rains during the monsoon.

For 2010-11, 232,501 saplings are being raised by 298 nursery persons including 226 women. The bulk of the saplings will be reared in Suyalbari, Kathpuriyachina and Naukuchiatal areas. This includes the balance from the previous year. As per the original plan for the coming year, our reforestation efforts will be focused on 155 hectares of land.

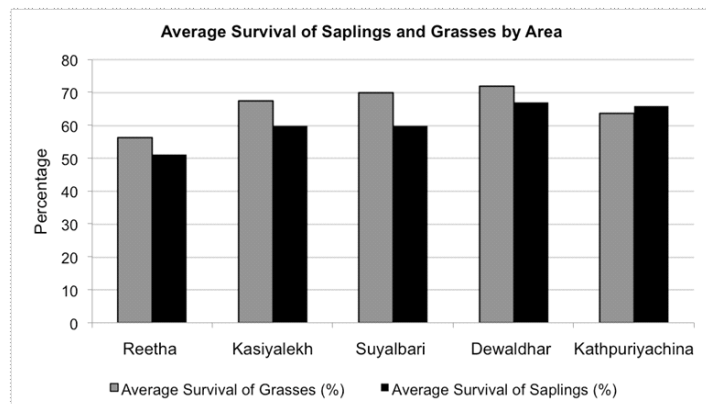


A substantial effort has been made during the year on inter-cultural operations like hoeing and mulching, and protection. With compost pits being dug in the forestry plots, 974 quintals of compost were produced and utilised in the plots - more than twice the amount applied last year. Existing walls and fences were repaired and new ones constructed - albeit to the bare minimum. In all, 3,660 rmt of wire fences and 5,986 rmt of walls were repaired or constructed. We continue to be wary of forest fires and 4,530 rmt of fire-lines were created.

Documentation of the growth and survival of grasses, shrubs and trees in the 184 permanent quadrats continued for the second year running. With only two years of data, we do not as yet expect any substantial analysis, however we hope to get some new insights and more

importantly verify whether there are any gaps or lacunae in our own information collection and documentation. The survival rate of planted species of grasses and saplings was a modest 66% and 61% respectively. The performance was the best in Dewaldhar followed

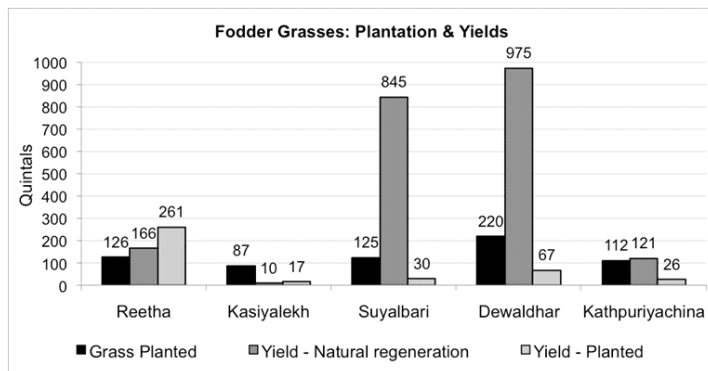
by Suyalbari, with Reetha trailing at the end. We need to alter our plantation strategy to compensate for irregularity in rainfall. Now more than ever, the importance of other physical works to enhance water conservation is becoming



clear. However, particularly in the sub-tropical areas, a bulk of the mortality is because of porcupines. While we haven't been able to find a solution to keep them at bay, we have discovered that their tastes are becoming rather diverse.

Fodder Development

Six hundred and sixty nine quintals of grasses were planted on common lands during the year leading to yields (from natural regeneration as well as planted species) of 2,518 quintals of fodder. In addition to this, another 9,300 quintals of fodder were available as a consequence of lopping. Seven hundred and eighty households benefited from the fodder that was produced. The plantation and production of fodder was assisted by 366 fodder nurseries that were established. These nurseries produced 13,960 kg of seed/rootstock and led to an income of over Rs 16,000. Tall Fescue, Perennial Rye, Napier, Cocksfoot and Brome are the major species that are being raised.



The yields from the natural regeneration of grasses in fodder plots exceed the yields from the planted species. This is a direct consequence of improved protection and soil and water conservation. The yields from the planted species are the highest in

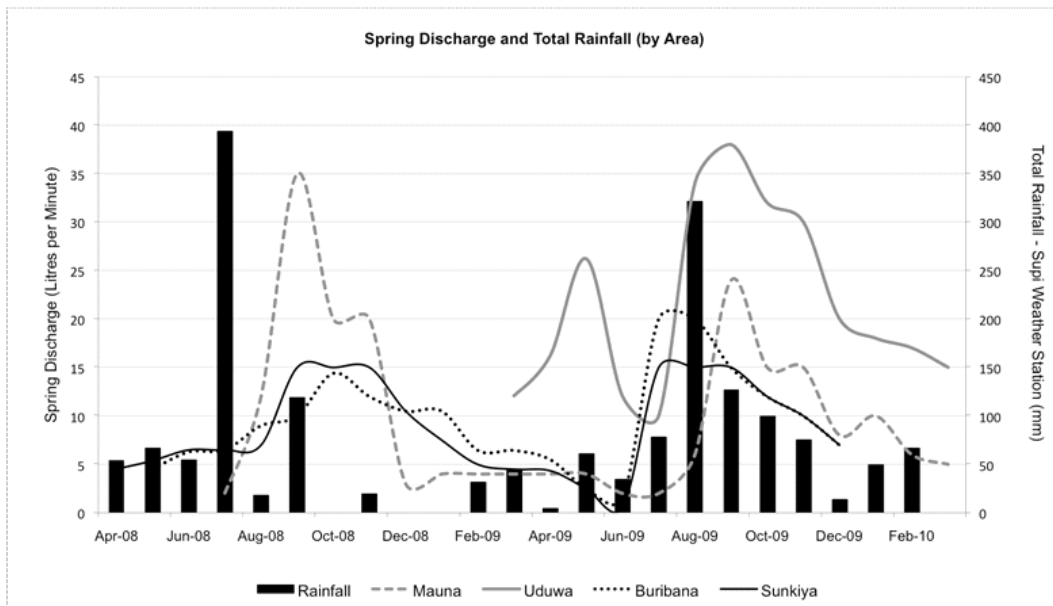
Reetha area and from natural regeneration in Dewaldhar area. Over the next few years, we expect to see the proportionate yields from the planted species rising.

Spring Recharge

After several years of planning, we finally commenced the recharge of a first set of 15 springs during the year. A twelve step process was created by our team. Ideally, after an assessment and prioritisation of need, springs should be identified and the twelve steps undertaken. Since this was our first attempt at translating into practice our learning from the past two years, we decided to keep the variables simple. We focussed on areas where the recharge zones fell within the same village rather than in another village. Following this preliminary identification of springs and their recharge zones, we commenced the formal process.

The process that we seek to adopt will follow these steps : 1. Community discussion and Resolutions, 2. Secondary data collection and analysis, 3. Water usage and spring history survey, 4. Traverse mapping, 5. Preparation of base maps, 6. Spring classification, 7. Creation of a detailed treatment plan, 8. Collection of no-objection certificates from the community for common and private lands, 9. Implementation, 10. Promotion of sustainable water use, 11. Monitoring and evaluation and finally, 12. Withdrawal.

Of the 15 springs that were identified, 29 community meetings and discussions were held in 12 villages with 353 people. In six villages, no-objection certificates were received and in 3 springs we commenced implementation. The progress though slow, is a conscious strategy. The results from the first few years are crucial - for us and for the communities we work with. As our teams gain in confidence and competency, we are certain that the pace will pick-up. The monitoring of discharge of springs has commenced in all the springs that we propose to treat. The following table reveals the discharge from four springs in Nainital district plotted on the rainfall data from one of our weather stations at Supi. There is clearly a lead time between the commencement of rain and an increased discharge and this could vary. In simple terms, if we could ensure that the dip visible, in this case between December 2008 and June 2009, is reduced, we would have made a beginning.



Watershed Development

We have been treating three micro-watersheds in the past year. The re-initiation of development of the Chiori watershed, after a hiatus, coincided with the completion of our efforts in the Ghangal Kuluwa watershed. In addition to the efforts on common lands that have been covered earlier, some of the significant efforts during the year in the Pirna and Chiori watersheds are as follows:

(a) The Pirna watershed in Bageshwar district includes 8 villages and 564.3 hectares of land. Implementation commenced in earnest during the year. Out of the 13 hectares to be covered as part of the forestry work, 5.5 hectares were covered. An irrigation tank with a capacity of 10,000 litres was constructed. Fodder cultivation and management are being emphasised, 2 bio-gas plants constructed and horticultural plants distributed. Six SHGs exist in these villages and a few more are being formed. A significant amount of investment in strengthening community-based institutions is being made. The community contributed Rs 46,064 during the year towards developmental work.

(b) The Chiori watershed in Nainital district covers six villages. An existing irrigation pipe-line 940 metres in length was repaired and an irrigation tank with 50,000 litre capacity constructed. Ninety five hectares of common land are under protection in the watershed. A significant investment in soil and water conservation has been made and 40 quintals of grasses and over 50,000 saplings were planted during the year. The community contributed Rs 315,640 towards development work in their watershed during the year.

Agriculture and Horticulture

If agriculture and horticulture were more remunerative, they would have remained attractive. For productivity to increase in a sustainable manner, especially for small and marginal farmers, we believe that the most appropriate strategy for hilly areas such as ours, is to invest in sustainable agriculture with low external inputs. Consequently, our strategies include; (a) The improvement of soil health and quality of planting material, (b) prevention of pests and disease to the extent possible and control, if necessary, without the use of synthetic pesticides, and (c) crop diversification to diversify the risk. To achieve these on a reasonable scale, farmers have been made the fulcrum of trials and the role of our experimental farms has shifted to plant propagation and to experiments that will prove to be of use in the future but are currently too expensive or un-tested in this region for small and marginal farmers to attempt.

Farmer-led trials

The efforts being promoted amongst farmers are fairly simple. Preparation of good quality compost to improve soil health, production of 'quality' planting material through nurseries, treatment of seeds and simple foliar sprays for growth promotion, and pest and disease control. To ensure that healthy planting materials are available, nursery beds are raised. Solarisation by covering the bed for a minimum of a month with a black plastic sheet is followed by the introduction of good compost and then treated seeds are planted. The seedlings are sprayed with organic growth promoters to encourage vigorous growth. The principle is simple, healthy seedlings when transplanted will be better equipped to withstand insect attacks and to cope with disease. All seeds, for nurseries or direct sowing are treated in low-cost and simple solutions. Roots of seedlings are also treated prior to transplanting. The inputs being utilised include effective micro-organisms, *panchagavya*, cow urine, neem oil and Pant Bio-Agent 3.

In the past two seasons, Kharif and Rabi, at a minimum, farmers attempted to produce improved compost. Most farmers opted for compost production and nursery raising for vegetable seedlings with an increasing number attempting a complete package of practices.

Number of farmers undertaking trials

Area	Kharif 2009	Rabi 2009
Reetha	15	55
Kasiyalekh	31	26
Suyalbari	24	33
Dewaldhar	17	32
Kathpuriyachina	10	16
Naukuchiatal	195	161
Total	292	323

The number of farmers undertaking trials is gradually increasing. The approach adopted in Naukuchiatal is one of saturation. A critical mass of farmers in each village are being worked with. In the other areas, the strategy is to work with a few farmers in each hamlet to see if other farmers adopt these practices, if they are successful.

For the Kharif season, compost was produced in 60 to 70 days in the Naukuchiatal area. For the Rabi crop, compost was produced the fastest in Dewaldhar. In Suyalbari, compost preparation took the longest. This could possibly be because of the high proportion of pine needles. The documentation of impact has been weak and the fact that the sites for each trial were not measured did not help. In the Kasiyalekh area, capsicum production had come to a stand-still. Successful trials during the Kharif season have led to a renewed interest in this crop in the area. Potato production was much lower than with conventional methods. However, the size was larger and keeping quality better. The crop was kept aside to be used as seed in the next season. Similarly, in the pea crop, the size and the number of pods were much higher. A noticeable reduction in powdery mildew was also found.

Experimental Farms

Both our experimental farms, at Simayal and Dewaldhar have largely been focussing on plant propagation and on providing a reliable source of supply of vegetables for our training centres. New trials will be initiated in the coming year.

The Simayal farm is in its final year of conversion to a fully certified organic farm. During the year, 942 seedlings and 2.5 kilogrammes of herb seeds were provided to farmers. Over two hundred kilogrammes of vegetables and 450 kilogrammes of fruit were produced and either supplied to the Chirag canteen or sold. Five hundred and ninety saplings and 14 quintals of fodder were provided for forestry and fodder cultivation in the Reetha and Kasiyalekh areas. Inputs for the trials undertaken by farmers were also supplied by the farm in the past year. The livestock population in the farm is slowly growing with the birth of two calves.

The Dewaldhar farm supplied 15 quintals of Napier grass in the Dewaldhar area. Vegetable production is diverse and the farm meets a bulk of the requirements of the canteen at the Dewaldhar training centre. Production of onion, french bean, garlic and tomato in particular was substantial during the year. The farm also produced 40.5 kilos of kiwi fruit. Production would have been much higher if the fruits had not been stolen. Since we commenced activities in the Dewaldhar farm, fruit trees have been planted regularly. Unfortunately, theft and grazing by livestock from neighbouring villages have taken their toll. The mortality rate amongst plum, pear and citrus fruit trees has been the highest at nearly 80% and the lowest in the case of peach at 28%.

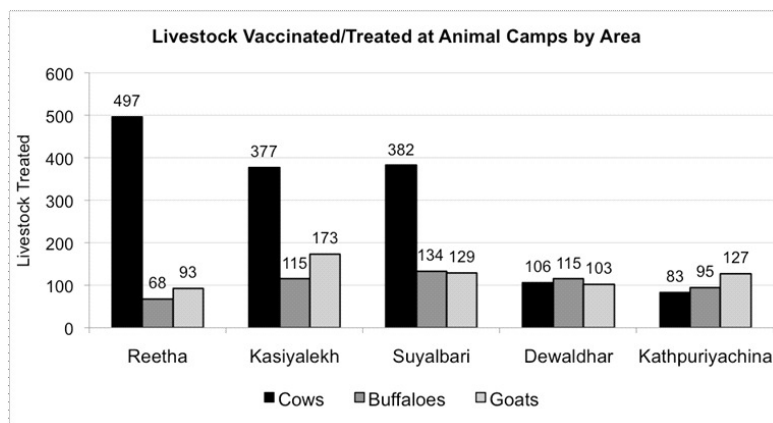
Crop Diversification

To help farmers diversify risk we have been promoting the cultivation of culinary herbs on marginal lands. Chirag's role is limited to mobilising farmers and providing them with technical assistance in cultivating these herbs. Kumaun Grameen Udyog (KGU) procures the herbs from them. We currently work with 230 women farmers from 67 villages. During the past year, these women sold 478 kilogrammes of dry herbs of 12 varieties and 1,056 kilogrammes of fresh herbs of 4 varieties to KGU. With the demand for fresh herbs increasing, we are slowly encouraging farmers to not just limit their cultivation to marginal lands but to expand the area under cultivation. We hope in the next two years to increase the volume of herbs cultivated from 10 quintals of fresh to 30 quintals of fresh herbs. We have commenced cultivation of lettuce and celery, with a commitment to purchase the produce from farmers.

Community-based Animal Husbandry

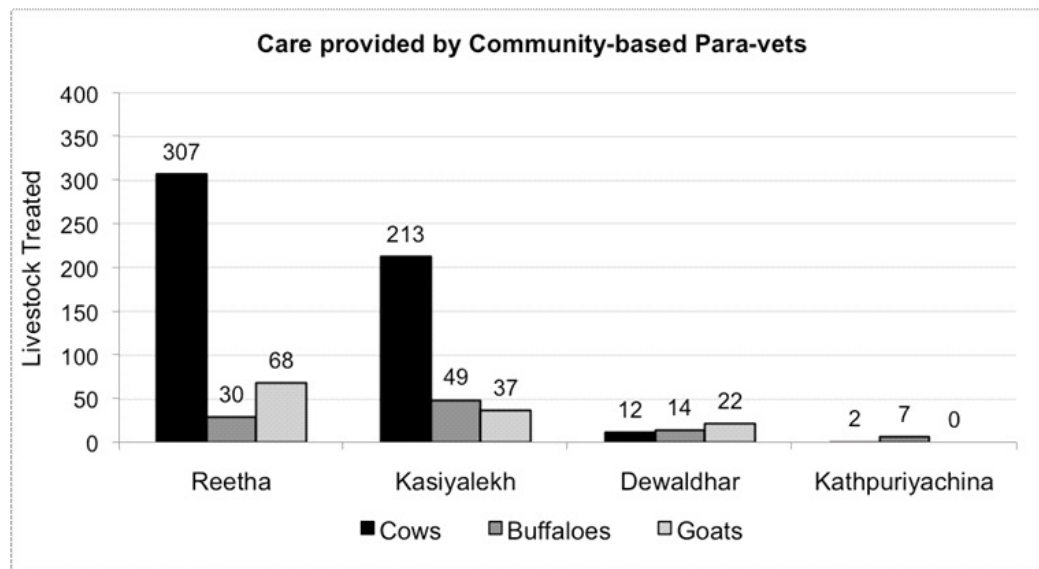
While commons can meet a substantial portion of the requirement for fodder, we have been encouraging farmers to cultivate fodder on private lands. The incentives are clear for families and more importantly it enables diversification of the fodder varieties and improves soil health too. In almost 20 hectares, fodder was cultivated on private lands and 531 households benefited from this increased availability of fodder. Forage crops such maize, *barsim* and *jai* were cultivated on 9 hectares of land by 512 farmers. The production of maize, not surprisingly, was good and 16.25 quintals of *barsim* were produced. However, the production of *jai* failed during the year.

Gradually, the emphasis of Chirag's own animal husbandry efforts are shifting to creating access to nutritive fodder and feed, improvement in management practices, diversification of the livestock base and risk mitigation. From the peak of the mid-90's when Chirag provided comprehensive veterinary care, we are now promoting the creation of a cadre of community-based para-vets for veterinary care.



In the past year, our animal husbandry programme supported almost 2,600 livestock from 858 households.

There are currently only four community-based para-vets. They were trained by the Uttarakhand Livestock Development Board and are currently providing artificial insemination services in the region and are using traditional medicines or home remedies for livestock care. During the year, 925 livestock from 510 households were treated by these community-based para-vets and they earned a cumulative of Rs. 75,000.



We continue to promote the use of cattle troughs for feeding and 46 were constructed during the year. Similarly, 23 chaff-cutters were provided to families. Five silo-towers were constructed and cattle-shed renovation was also supported.

Strengthening Village-Level Institutions

None of our work particularly on common lands or with micro-watersheds would be possible without the collective action of village-level institutions. We work with diverse institutions, Gram Panchayats, *Van Panchayats*, Watershed Development Committees, User-groups, *Van Suraksha Samitis*, SHGs and federations of SHGs. Leaving aside the watershed development committees, 633 members from 51 villages are involved with the management and regeneration of common lands.

Community institutions managing their common land

Area	Nature of Institution	Women	Men	Total Members
Reetha	Van Panchayat	26	40	66
	Van Suraksha Samiti	0	5	5
	SHG	2	5	7
Kasiyalekh	Van Panchayat	20	25	45
	Van Suraksha Samiti	121	0	121
Suyalbari	Van Panchayat	3	11	14
	Van Suraksha Samiti	39	13	52
	SHG	38	0	38
Dewaldhar	Van Panchayat	21	33	54
Kathpuriyachina	Van Panchayat	11	17	28
	Gram Panchayat	11	14	25
	SHG	103	0	103
Naukuchiatal	Van Panchayat	12	20	32
	Van Suraksha Samiti	11	32	43
		418	215	633

Note : Where a SHG or Van Suraksha Samiti manages the forest in partnership with the Van Panchayat, they have been given sole credit.

Challenges

- Two decades after we commenced, it now seems as if we work with a new generation of women in community forestry. We need to invest in capacity building on nursery raising and train women in all village level institutions on lopping.
- With uncertainty about the rains prevailing, soil and water conservation on common lands have become crucial. We need to ensure that these are completed well before the onset of spring. More importantly, we need to alter our plantation strategy, possibly by planting earlier.
- The next two years are crucial for the spring recharge initiative. The results are important for communities dependent on these for their drinking water needs and for our team which has backed the idea whole heartedly.
- Clear incentives to encourage farmers to increase soil and water conservation on their private lands will need to be developed. Increasing

the organic content in soil will lead to greater water retention. There is a potential to attempt using water more efficiently but in the long run we need to help farmers shift to less water intensive crops. A shift that will only be possible if it is economically beneficial.

- The proportionate contribution of cultivated varieties of fodder to total yield needs to grow. The increase thus far from natural regeneration has largely been a consequence of improved protection. While not bad in itself, since we seek to increase access to nutritive varieties, the yields of cultivated species must rise.
- Livestock diversification is also a crucial element that we have not done enough about in the recent past. Back-yard poultry and goats are two areas that we need to focus on. These are important for the poor.
- Using cattle troughs or chaff-cutters seems logical. Adoption by families is poor. We need to devise ways of increasing the adoption of improved animal husbandry practices.
- A similar challenge exists with regard to sustainable agriculture. While the number of farmers undertaking trials grows, adoption by others has to increase.
- Documentation of the impact of trials is weak and needs significant strengthening. In the absence of adequate documentation, the communication of the results is hindered and adoption by others too.
- Our crop diversification strategy needs to grow beyond culinary herbs. We need to expand to new horticultural crops, floriculture and even cultivation of traditional grains which are again fetching attractive prices. Our experimental farms will need to take the lead on this.
- For several years, we have been lamenting our inability to focus adequately on strengthening village-level institutions. We need to launch a programme exclusively to strengthen these if our initiatives are to succeed in the long run.

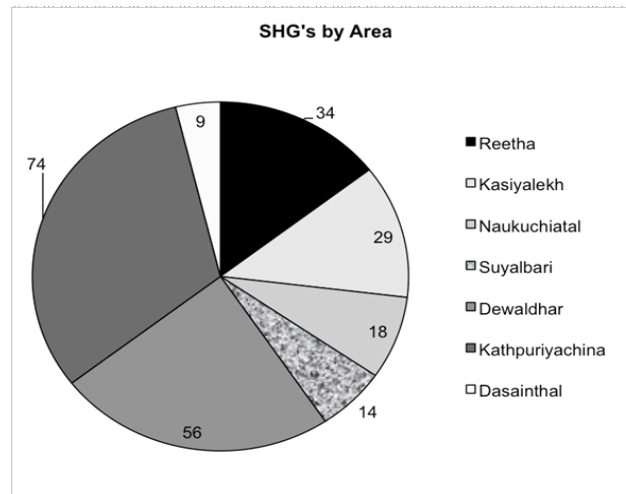


LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

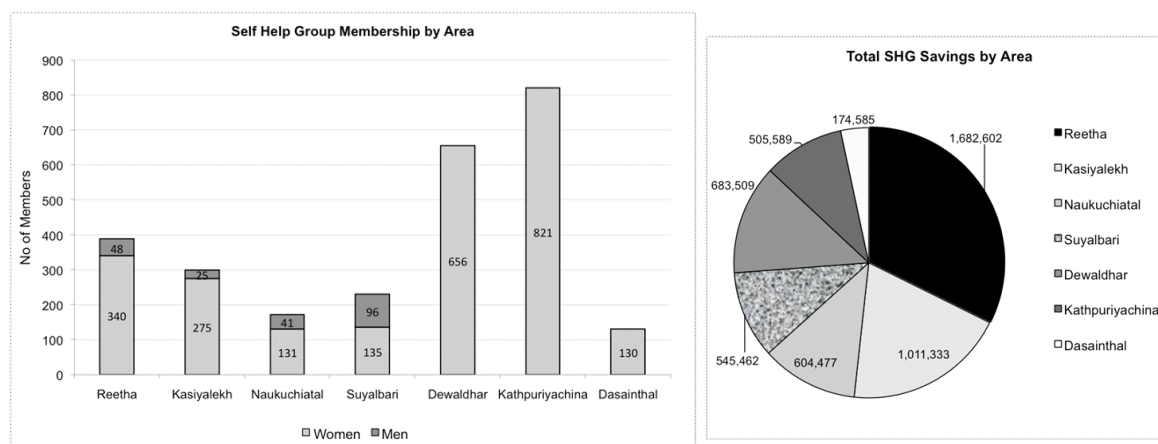
Our livelihood support activities are slowly and steadily growing, not just in scale but more importantly in diversity too. We need to try every trick in the book and create a few new ones as we go along, if agriculture and animal husbandry are to become more remunerative. The challenge clearly is to reduce the 'push' that compels people to migrate out of agriculture and animal husbandry in search of new opportunities. While improving productivity is of key importance, without value-addition and a greater share of the value chain, incomes are unlikely to grow.

Micro-credit and Livelihood Opportunities

We work with 234 SHGs with a total membership of 2,698, of whom 92% are women. The cumulative savings of these groups has reached a staggering Rs. 5,207,000. Loans taken by members are short of Rs 4,000,000. In other words, assuming that all members took loans during the year, the average would be Rs 1,460. This is a matter of concern, especially if one were to take into account the fact that several groups have a cash-credit limit with the bank against which loans have been taken as well. With only 75% of the total savings utilised and loans against cash-credit limits, the outflow of credit from savings is relatively low and must be increased.



The largest number of SHGs as well as members are in Kathpuriyachina and Dewaldhar areas where we work in 41 villages in partnership with the Uttarakhand Livelihood Improvement Project for the Himalayas (Ajeevika) - a Government of Uttarakhand initiative to improve the quality of life of the poorest families. A significant emphasis is on the reduction of drudgery amongst women. The activities that have been promoted to reduce the drudgery among women include improving fodder availability, the provision of agricultural tools for women and improved composting. In addition to this the emphasis is on capacity building and on facilitating livelihood improvement activities.



In Kathpuriyachina a federation of 523 women from 43 SHGs is being registered in the name of Jagannath Self-Reliant Cooperative. Till such a time that the federation is registered, other livelihood improvement activities are being supported by our team. The activities that were initiated during the year included the distribution of improved seed for paddy, pea and ginger. Two mushroom units were promoted and 20,000 aloe vera plants distributed in the area.

The Mahadev Self-Reliant Cooperative in Dewaldhar area was established last year and currently runs a shop in Kafligair which sells the produce of its members as well as other products that would be beneficial for its members. Improved seeds for pea and *masur* were made available to the members. Five mushroom units and two mother units for poultry were set up and 17,000 aloe vera plants distributed during the year. Two hundred and sixty eight women members bought a life insurance policy through their cooperative.

One of the most innovative efforts in this programme has been the leveraging of social-security benefits from the government. This year, the pension of 13

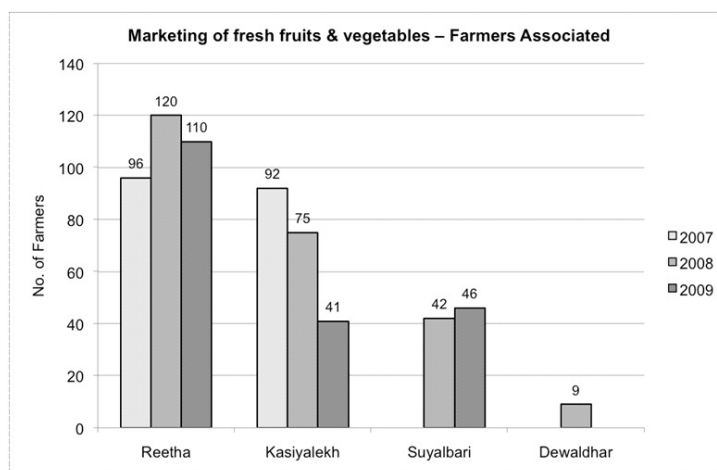
widows and 49 aged people commenced and 4 persons received a disability pension.

The highlight of the year was the initiation of two community based micro-enterprises. The Parvatiya Pashupalak Sangh in the Reetha area is a collective of 12 SHGs from five villages. The Sangh produces cattle feed using a significant proportion of local produce. The Sangh sold 23.18 quintals of feed during the year and their total sale was roughly Rs 37,000. The inputs procured from the area included maize, millets, pulses, wheat and oats. Currently, demand exceeds supply. While more expensive than its commercial variant, the feed works out to be viable since the quantity used is half the quantity of commercial feed. Further, anecdotal evidence would suggest that it leads to increase in productivity of milk. Most importantly - the livestock seem to love it!

The second micro-enterprise, Gaupalak Sangh, Suyalbari was formed by 4 SHGs from 4 villages. This micro-enterprise produces traditional medicines for veterinary care from local herbs and medicinal plants. The enterprise currently has six products that are sold through camps or are distributed by the community based para-vets. Their sale during the year was nearly Rs 15,000. Both the enterprises have in effect been in operation for only one quarter of the year and the next year promises to be quite exciting with a third enterprise waiting in the wings to emerge at Kasiyalekh.

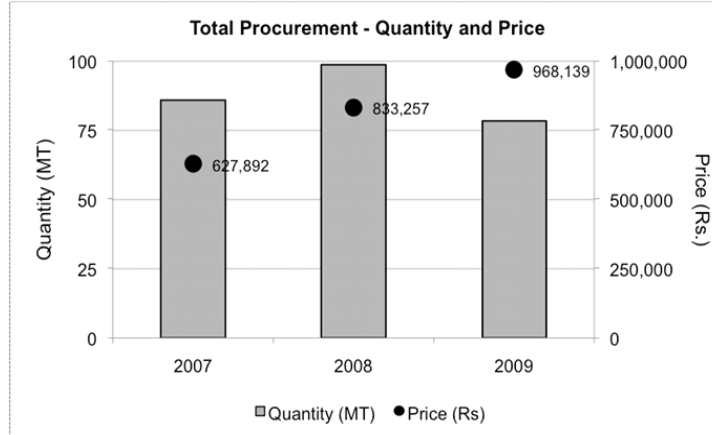
Market Access and Services

It is the third year since we commenced providing small and marginal farmers with access to marketing services for their fresh fruits and vegetables. For two years we have also been attempting to assist farmers market grains and spices produced by them without using any pesticides - Non Pesticide Management (NPM).



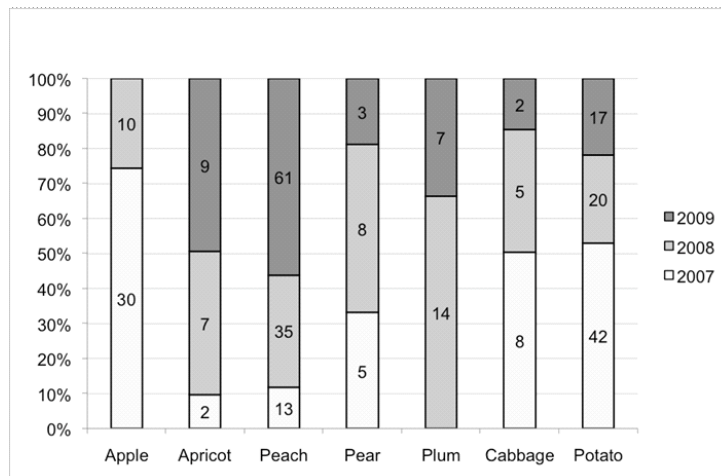
The number of farmers that we could procure fresh fruits and vegetables from during the year decreased from 246 to 197. Poor and untimely rainfall led to a significant drop in productivity. The fact that production was low not just in Uttarakhand but in neighbouring states led to a huge increase in prices and it did not make sense for us to attempt to intervene.

Despite procurement dropping from just short of 100 metric tonnes to at little over 75 metric tonnes, the price paid to farmers rose by Rs 130,000. Each year, the mix of crops that we are able to purchase and market varies depending on trends in the market and the



production of similar crops elsewhere. In the first year, apple, potato and peach were our major crops; in the second year it was - peach, potato and plum. However, last year peach comprised 60% of the total procurement with potato and apricot comprising the other major crops. Our biggest constraint has been our inability to procure large quantities of C grade produce. This compels farmers to continue to sell through existing channels lest they refuse to purchase their C grade produce. Despite the same produce being grown in multiple areas, their harvest times can vary and when they are available at the same time their size can vary. What would be A grade in one area is likely to be B grade in another. Setting a price that recognises variations in quality and size becomes difficult.

Proportionate procurement by product



In the past three years, we have established marketing channels and built up a relationship with traders in large markets like Delhi as well as large format retail stores. Our scale has remained relatively insignificant. Further, the improvements in grading and packing have not matched the efforts, and timely despatch remains a challenge. Lastly, the risk in the current model is clearly ours.

On the one hand, our experiences give us the confidence that this could be done at a much larger scale and more effectively. On the other, it is clear that if we are to grow and to become more effective, then we need to create institutions of small and marginal farmers. We need to shift our emphasis from procurement to facilitation and the provision of common services while the community institutions become the traders of their own produce. The probability of their being able to market all their produce will increase, since they would potentially lose or gain, a risk that they would be willing to take.

The demand for potato seed persisted and we procured 16 tonnes of seed from Manali for farmers in our area.

An analysis of the net benefit to farmers by selling through us rather than in the Haldwani *mandi* as a consequence of better prices offered by us, revealed that the benefit was of Rs 113, 298. In other words, if the farmers had sold their produce in the *mandi* rather than to us their earning would have decreased by this amount.

During the year, we facilitated the procurement by Kumaun Grameen Udyog of nearly 27 quintals of NPM *rajma*, chillies and *haldi* from 162 farmers. Further, to meet their requirements, an additional 74 quintals of grains and spices were procured from 100 farmers. The primary non-NPM produce being *rajma*, wheat and *dhaniya*.

Patal Bhuvaneshwar

It became apparent that our efforts to conserve the natural environment around the cave temple of Patal Bhuvaneshwar by linking tourism to rural livelihoods as well as sacred values had reached a dead-end. The presence of multiple stake-holders - government, the *mandir* committee and local institutions - often pulling in different directions, had created an impasse and it was not possible to add any more value. However, the initiatives to promote rural livelihoods and integrated natural resource management were showing promise and with the permission of our partner- The Ford Foundation - we decided to focus on these

for the remainder of the project. Since the decision to alter the focus was taken during the year, it would be pertinent to share some of the progress made even with regard to the cave temple during the year.

- The *mandir* committee with assistance from Chirag organised a *bal mela* in December and a *mahila sammelan* on March 8th, 2010.
- The shop-keepers' association has continued to hold monthly meetings and held two workshops to improve coordination amongst shop-keepers. Each shop-keeper continues to contribute Rs 20 per month towards a common fund.
- The 9 Self-Help Groups in the area have 130 members and their total savings has currently reached Rs 174,585.
- On six-occasions, the members of the SHGs voluntarily cleaned their water sources.
- Each SHG has picked an enterprise to focus on: vegetable cultivation, poultry and the production of fruit juice. Their cumulative net profit as on March 31st, was Rs 7,845.
- Eight new toilets were constructed in the area in the past year.
- During the year a total of 4,650 saplings were planted in 4 locations.
- A training on poultry-rearing was conducted and 1,025 chicks purchased to commence poultry-rearing.
- A three-day training on bee-keeping was organised for 31 people. Ten of those who were trained have commenced bee-keeping.
- Two fish-ponds have been created and the breeding of fish has commenced.
- Twenty-two farmers in the area adopted the system of rice intensification (SRI). The average yield per *nali* was 2 quintals, 50% higher than the conventional yield.
- Improved management practices of livestock and access to improved varieties of fodder are being promoted. Nine farmers have commenced fodder cultivation on their private land and 100 kg of napier grass has been planted.

Partnership with Kumaun Grameen Udyog (KGU)

Kumaun Grameen Udyog's steady growth over the past decade and their support to the Chirag School and Hospital in the last three years, has in a subtle way, altered the attitude towards livelihood support within Chirag. Suddenly, there is a confidence that it is possible to link small producers with markets.

For the first time, the Kumaun Grameen Udyog team set itself targets for the year that were not merely for total sales but for sales by channel and by product. These became the rallying point with everyone in the team tracking progress carefully through the year. The results were visible. The turnover at the end of the year was Rs 7,809,858 - a growth of 37.5% over the preceding year. Not surprisingly, the KGU team has a fresh target for the next year - a more ambitious one.

With over 140 artisans engaged in craft and 350 families from whom agricultural produce - culinary herbs, apricot seed, spices and other products - are sourced, the number of producers has increased. During the year, a new group of knitters at Sargakhet and three more looms were added. The store at Kasiyalekh was moved to Sargakhet. The two stores - Sitla and Sargakhet accounted for 26% of total sales. The size of the team remains the same with 10 full-time members.

On the basis of their performance in the previous year, KGU made an ex-gratia payment of Rs 134,000 to its producers and team members. Further, they donated Rs 800,000 towards the Chirag Hospital and to conduct a training for adolescent girls as part of the Kishori Shikshan Kendra. In the past three years, KGU has donated Rs 20 lakhs towards Chirag's initiatives making them one of the few institutions of their kind to be able to not just provide enhanced employment in a rural area but to contribute to other developmental needs as well.

Challenges

- Our SHGs have enormous potential. We simply do not devote adequate time and effort to help them use their savings more efficiently. This is an area that we need to strengthen.
- The community based micro-enterprises and federation at Dewaldhar will increasingly require inputs and the complexity of the inputs will grow. We need to increase the support that we provide to them and our own skills will need to grow for our support to be relevant.

- We need to establish community owned enterprises to help farmers realise a better price for their agricultural and horticultural produce. Our experiences of the past three years will enable us to provide the requisite support, but for the efforts to grow, we will need to let go. At least the groups that take the initiative will benefit. Currently, our systems are devised to provide farmers with an average price and do not recognise and reward better quality.
- The product range and volume of grains and spices that we help farmers market needs to grow exponentially. The fact that their produce is cultivated without any synthetic pesticides is an advantage that we need to push.
- Our focus on rural livelihoods in Patal Bhuvaneshwar should make it easier for us to document the impact of our efforts and this will require investment of time.





TECHNICAL SUPPORT

During the year, two significant components of our technical support function were completed. This is an opportune moment for us since it has provided us with the space to take stock of our own ability and to identify ways of improving the quality of support that we provide to other institutions.

Watershed Development - Support to Grassroots Development Organisations

This six-year effort to support the creation of micro-watershed development plans and monitoring and field-based support during the implementation of these plans, was finally completed during the year. The final batch of 4 organisations and Chirag - a late addition to the effort - completed their implementation phase. Each organisation was visited four times during the year by a multi-disciplinary team from Chirag consisting of a forester, civil engineer, agriculturist, accountant and a community mobiliser.

Grass-root development organisations - Completion

Name of Organisation	Name of Watershed	Location
Association for Rural Planning and Action (ARPAN)	Beragar	Kanalichina Block Pithoragarh District
Himalayan Seva Samiti (HSS)	Kandali-pali	Kanalichinna Block Pithoragarh District
Rural Initiative for Social Engineering (RISE)	Vird Jageshwar	Bhaisiyachana Block Almora District
Voluntary Association for the Development in Hills of Uttarakhand (VADHU)	Rioni	Dwarahat Block, Alomora District
Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG)	Ghanghal	Hawalbagh Block, Almora District

In October 2009, an independent evaluation of each organisation was undertaken. The evaluation team consisted of an expert on forestry and a civil engineer.

Evaluation

Name of Organisation	Evaluation Team
ARPAN	Dr Jeet Ram & Er. R K Arya
HSS	Dr Jeet Ram & Er. R K Arya
RISE	Dr Suresh Mathpal & Er. D K Rajput
CHIRAG	Dr Suresh Mathpal & Er. D K Rajput
VADHU	Dr. G C S Negi & Er. Dilip Agarwal

In the coming year, the potential of a second phase will need to be explored. Prior to doing so, we will need to assess our own efforts at providing support and will need to critically identify which of the partners from the first phase should be invited for any subsequent phase. The process of identification of needs, evolution of a strategy and creation of plans will need to follow suit.

Integrated Fodder and Livestock Development

Chirag has been supporting three organisations in Kumaun in the cultivation of fodder on common and private lands. The organisations together are attempting to promote the cultivation of fodder in 42 hectares of common lands and 11.2 hectares of private land in 14 villages. Each organisation was visited five times during the course of the year and field-based trainings were provided on survey of fodder plots, construction of contour terraces, plantation or transplantation of fodder and inter-cultural operations.

Partner Organisations 2009-10

Organisation	Number of Villages	Block	District	Area Covered (ha)	
				Common	Private
Himalayan Sewa Samiti	5	Kanalichinna	Pithoragarh	15	04
Himalayan Gram Vikas Samiti	2	Berinag	Pithoragarh	06	1.6
	3	Gangolihat	Pithoragarh	09	2.4
Chattrasal Sewa Sangh	4	Tarikhet	Almora	12	3.2

Protection and Treatment of Catchments

Chirag was asked to provide technical support to four organisations - two in Kumaun and two in Garhwal - who were implementing a water sanitation programme. Chirag's role was limited to the provision of technical inputs to

these organisations to implement catchment area treatment plans for the sources that they were tapping for water schemes and to monitor their progress. In all, these organisations were treating 182.5 hectares of land in 41 villages with a population of 12,834 dependent on these schemes.

Chirag visited two organisations who were completing their work once each and the remaining two twice each during the year. With the catchment area treatment complete, Chirag's technical support role has come to an end.

Challenges

- We need to review our own ability and to identify ways of improving the quality of support that we provide to other institutions.
- In the coming year, to a certain extent the expectations from Chirag will be determined by whether a second phase of the Himmothan Pariyojana in Kumaun will be supported; and more importantly by the expectations and plans of the organisations that comprise this phase.





CHIRAG AND ITS PARTNERS

Chirag's General Body comprises of 32 members and 8 of them form Chirag's Governing Body. The Governing Body consists of members with diverse backgrounds.

Chirag Governing Body

Mr Kanai Lall	Chairperson and Founder Geologist and retired corporate executive
Dr Madan Lal Dewan	Vice-chairperson Chairperson of HIMCON, formerly chief of FAO's regional bureau for Asia and the Pacific
Mr Morad Chowdhury	Member Architect and partner- Kanvinde Rai and Chowdhury Architects and Engineers
Ms Kamla Bhasin	Member Gender specialist, activist, founder-member of Jagori
Prof Bhushan K Joshi	Member Political Scientist, formerly Vice-Chancellor of Kumaun University
Dr Rajesh Thadani	Member Founder and Chief Executive of CEDAR, formerly Executive Director of Chirag, Independent consultant
Prof Malavika Karlekar	Member Editor, Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Centre for Women's Development Studies
Mr Radhesh Lall	Member Engineer and entrepreneur

Mr Radhesh Lall is the son of Mr Kanai Lall. None of the other members are related to each other.

STAFF

In March 2009, there were 150 people working full-time at Chirag. This included nine who were on secondment to Kumaun Grameen Udyog. Of the total 131 work on programmes, 8 are support staff and 11 work in administration and finance. Of the total, the proportion of women remains at 34%, the same as the previous year. The figure has been constant a for a while and needs to increase. We had hoped to commence a leadership programme to enhance the proportion of women in senior positions in the organisation but were unable to initiate it during the year. Women still comprise only a sixth of the leadership positions in the organisation - a continued matter of concern, that we have been unable to rectify. Interestingly, only two full-time colleagues left the organisation during the year - a record of sorts. Impact of the economic down-turn or improved social security benefits and work environment?

Staff Breakup

	Programmes	Support	Administration and Finance
Women	47	-	4
Men	84	8	7
Total	131	8	11

OUR PARTNERS

Our efforts are possible because of the support of numerous individuals and institutions.

Institutions

Indian

ACWADAM

Bani Jagtiani Trust

B2R Technologies Pvt Ltd

Council for Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Technology (CAPART)

GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology

Government of Uttarakhand through Gramin Utthan Samiti

Himjoli Pvt. Ltd.

Himmotthan Society

Kumaun Grameen Udyog

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)

Neemrana Hotels & Resorts Pvt. Ltd.
 Rajeshwar & Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust
 Sir Dorabji Tata Trust
 Sir Ratan Tata Trust
 Sri Govind Deoji Trust
 TARA Human Development and Facilitation Consultants Pvt. Ltd.
 Uttaranchal Livelihood Improvement Project for the Himalayas

International

Alstom Corporation Foundation
 Berkeley Reafforestation Trust - United Kingdom (UK)
 Canada India Village Aid - Canada
 Paul Hamlyn Foundation- UK Room to Read- USA
 Room to Read - USA
 The Ford Foundation- USA
 University of Washington at Seattle- USA
 Unniti Foundation

Individuals

From India

Ashish Arora - Satoli	Siddhartha Menon - Madanapalle
Jayati Dewan - Bareilly	Usha Menon - New Delhi
Amit Dewan - Bareilly	Ann Mukerjee- Satoli
Rina D'Souza - Bengaluru	Dr Ruma Mukherjee - Ramgarh
Gaurav - New Delhi	Usha Mukunda - Bengaluru
Maitri Gopalakrishna - Bengaluru	Ranjana Pandey - New Delhi
Sarath Guttikunda - New Delhi	Parita - Madanapalle
Sabiha Hashmi - Bengaluru	Mukul Priyadarshini - New Delhi
Oonita K Hiremath - New Delhi	Dinesh Rastogi - Bhimtal
Akshay Jaitly - New Delhi	Ruth Rastogi - Bhimtal
Puja Jawahar - New Delhi	Shabari Rao - Bengaluru
Deep Kalra - New Delhi	Shilpa Shah - Ahmedabad
Avinash Kulkarni - New Delhi	Tanuj Shah - Madanapalle
Kumkum - New Delhi	Ranu Sharma - New Delhi
Kanai Lall - Sitla	Ishita Swarup - New Delhi
Lakshmi Lall - Sitla	Vaibhav - New Delhi
Priyo Lall - Dehradun	Om Wadhwa - New Delhi
Radhesh Lall - Dehradun	Pankaj Wadhwa - Basgaon
	Mahendra C Watsa - Mumbai

From Abroad

Radhika Somany - USA
 Rosemarie Dubs-Weiss - Switzerland
 Elisabeth Weiss - Switzerland
 Michel Thill - Luxembourg
 Lakshmi Azad, Eva Shivdasani and
 friends - UK
 Eva Shivdasani - UK
 Angelina Kohli - UK
 Devin Kohli - UK
 Keith Goyden - USA
 Ranganathan Yogeshwar - Luxembourg

Interns and Volunteers

Why do we host interns and volunteers? Quite simply, because we believe that it is a worthy investment in our collective future. It is impossible to predict the impact of a month living and working in a rural area - on the mind of a young person. We believe that the probability of their being 'touched' by the experience is very high and this sensitivity and awareness to another reality is certain to bear fruit in the future.

We currently have partnerships with institutions - academic and those promoting voluntarism. During the past year we hosted young people from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences - Mumbai, GB Pant Social Science Institute - Allahabad, Nirmala Niketan - Mumbai, CAMVOL - UK, SP Jain Institute of Management and Research - Mumbai, I-Volunteer - New Delhi, Michigan State University - USA, Lady Irwin College - New Delhi and IndiCorps - Ahmedabad.

Several young people spent long stints with us during the year. They include - Gaurav Madan - IndiCorps USA; Gustavo Molina - Guatemala; Shruti, Prateek and Nishita - Swades ki Khoj; Devi Ramkissoon - USA; Samantha Ryder - USA; Ishank Gupta and Parth Reddy from I-Volunteer; Mayank Khandelwal - Mumbai and Rahul Jha - USA. We continue to miss them all!

During the year we were also fortunate to host several batches of young people from schools in different parts of India : Rajghat School - Varanasi and the

Mahindra United World College - Pune. Albeit of a shorter duration - it has been challenging for us to plan and host students from schools, though great fun if the team at Chirag that hosted them were asked.

Finally, our partnership with the University of Washington at Seattle continues. We hosted the Study Abroad programme in the Fall Semester of 2009. There were 17 students on the programme and the courses were led by Dr Rebecca Klenk while Keith Goyden coordinated the programme.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For an institution as dynamic as ours, the patience and tolerance of the families we work with in rural Kumaun is crucial. We would not exist without their support and affection. We are fortunate to have a Governing Body that is active and interested in the work we do and possesses the expertise to guide us. Individuals and institutions that supported us during the year – thank you. In particular we wish to acknowledge the support of Dr Ruma Mukherjee who volunteers at the Chirag Hospital for two days each week, Ms Ann Mukerjee – for her infectious enthusiasm, Ms Angelina Kohli – who was instrumental for Chirag School getting a bus, Laura and Freddie who gave us the impetus to update our website, Ranu Sharma for teaching us the basics of digital photography and for some of the images in this report and finally, Puja for her invaluable assistance with our website and this annual report.

ANNEXURE I: TRAINING

The training centres at Dhokane, Dewaldhar and Simayal were utilised for a total of 314 days in the year by 3,742 participants. With Kishori Shikshan Kendras not being held during the year, the utilisation has gone down marginally as compared to the previous year. However, the number of participants has increased by over 1,150. Programmes on health, water, micro-credit and watershed development led to a substantial increase in the use of the training centres as compared to the previous year. Each programme team - Health, Education, Young People and Natural Resource Management - meets regularly to review their programmes and to plan ahead.

Training Centre Utilisation – Simayal, Dewaldhar and Dhokane

Topic	Community Members		Other Institutions		Chirag Staff		Total	
	Days	Participants	Days	Participants	Days	Participants	Days	Participants
Young People	44	164	0	1	1	41	45	206
Agriculture/Horticulture	3	89	1	37	13	85	17	211
Education	35	325	0	19	3	50	38	394
Exposure Visits	14	187	31	293	0	0	45	480
Fodder and Forestry	8	162	4	47	4	55	16	264
Water	2	60	0	0	17	172	19	232
Village Level Institutions	3	72	0	2	0	13	3	87
Health	32	538	0	0	2	114	34	652
Micro-credit	14	383	0	0	0	0	14	383
Chirag Staff- Miscellaneous	0	0	0	2	15	180	15	182
Watershed Development	12	267	2	62	0	0	14	329
Planning and Review	0	0	0	3	52	290	52	293
Animal Husbandry	0	8	0	0	2	21	2	29
	167	2,255	38	466	109	1,021	314	3,742

ANNEXURE II

VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE

In the spirit of transparency, Chirag seeks to disclose the following information

Governance

- At least two-thirds of the members of the Governing Body are unrelated to each other by blood or marriage.
- The Executive Director is not related to any member of the Governing Body by blood or marriage.
- No rotation policy is practised for the Governing Body. However, elections are held as per the rules governing the Society.
- No members of the Governing Body received any remuneration or reimbursement from Chirag during the year.
- The Governing Body met more than twice in the last year with the requisite quorum.
- Minutes of the meeting were documented, read out and approved in the subsequent meeting but were not circulated in advance.
- The General Body of the Society approved the Annual Report and the audited financial statements.

Benefits to Staff

Gross Salary and Benefits	Men	Women	Total
(Rupees per month)			
Less than 5,000	41	29	70
5,000 - 10,000	38	19	57
10,000 - 15,000	14	03	17
15,000 - 25,000	05	-	05
more than 25,000	01	-	01

Note: Gross salary includes all benefits payable by the organisation.

Staff Remuneration (Gross monthly salary+Benefits) in Rupees per annum

Head of the organisation	Rs. NIL
Highest paid full time regular staff	Rs. 299,587/- per year
Lowest paid full time regular staff	Rs. 47,034/- per year

Note: This includes basic salary, cost of living allowance, provident fund (including Chirag's contribution), medical benefits, medical and accident insurance and scholarship. All figures are correct as on 31st March 2010.

Cost of Travel

Total cost of international travel incurred by Chirag during the year- NIL
 Total cost of national travel incurred by Chirag during the year - Rs 134,159

Our Statutory Auditor

R Balasubramanian
 Partner
 S Ramanand Aiyar and Co.
 708 Surya Kiran Building,
 19 Kasturba Gandhi Marg,
 New Delhi-110001

Our Bankers

- State Bank of India
- Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation of India Ltd.
- Nainital Almora Kshetriya Grameen Bank
- Almora District Cooperative Bank Ltd.
- Nainital District Cooperative Bank Ltd.

Registration Details

- The Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (Chirag) is a Society registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act of 1860. Registration No. 16928, dated 29th July 1986.
- The Central Himalayan Himalayan Rural Action Group (Chirag) is authorized to receive foreign contributions as per the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 1976. Registration No. 231650446, dated 5th July 1987.
- Chirag is registered under Sections 12A and 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
 - Section 12A - No. CIT-VI/TE (276)/86/1292 dated 9/1/1987
 - Section 80G-No. DIT (E) 2007-2008/C245/1918 dated 21/09/2007

ANNEXURE III : ACCOUNTS

Central Himalayan Rural Action Group
Balance Sheet as on 31st March 2010

	Current Year (Rs)	Previous Year (Rs)
Liabilities		
Corpus Fund	45,806,931	15,617,312
Fixed Assets Utilisation Fund	27,875,648	26,472,300
Reserve Fund	172,613	3,496,851
Transport Fund	526,144	517,644
Chirag Hospital Project Fund	6,575	505,178
Reafforestation Fund	1,270,847	1,020,703
Chirag Education Fund	3,166,201	3,798,957
Current Liabilities	4,930,365	11,922,772
	83,755,324	63,351,717
Assets		
Fixed Assets	27,875,648	26,472,300
Investments	16,525,945	18,157,221
<u>Current Assets, Loans and Advances</u>		
Cash, Bank Balance and Term Deposit	38,902,901	17,985,296
Loans and Advances	446,830	732,900
Security Deposit (endorsed in favour of Government Authorities)	4,000	4,000
	83,755,324	63,351,717

Signed on behalf of Chirag

Chairman: Kanai Lal

Member: Madan Lal Dewan

Member: Bhushan K Joshi

Executive Director: V K Madhavan

Manager Accounts and Administration: B K Kabdwal

In terms of our report of even date annexed

For S Ramanand Aiyar and Co.

Chartered Accountant

Registration No. 000990N

R Balasubramanian

Partner

Central Himalayan Rural Action Group
Receipts and Payments Accounts for the year ended as on 31st March 2010

Receipts	Current Year (Rs)	Previous Year (Rs)
Balance as on 1st April 2009	17,876,052	19,153,779
Project Funding		
Foreign Contribution	14,249,489	14,126,557
Local Contribution	4,168,386	13,206,715
Corpus Fund	30,000,000	–
Rural Health Services	402,867	333,086
Donations	1,732,891	1,237,600
Interest	907,077	797,061
Others	2,722,848	4,280,620
	72,059,610	53,135,418
Payments		
Canada India Village Aid (CIVA)	1,180,362	1,256,375
Berkeley Reafforestation Trust	1,977,075	713,870
Ford Foundation	10,042,730	8,627,163
Room to Read	1,820,408	2,193,538
People's Commission on Environment and Development India (PCED)	–	621,535
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	1,133,632	908,823
Annapurna Indian Women's Association	–	20,186
Alstom Corporation Foundation	550,269	–
Give2Asia	–	1,425,051
Unniti Foundation	56,588	–
Other Payments (FCRA)	2,142,370	2,536,057
CAPART (WS)	1,886,703	25
Sir Ratan Tata Trust	852,289	2,834,331
NABARD	864,991	1,108,053
Uttaranchal Livelihood Improvement Project for Himalayas	1,124,436	1,086,889
Peoples' Science Institute (Himmothan Cell)	1,012	76,505
Himmothan Society (IFLDP)	1,660,487	1,261,832
Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT)	295,744	4,121,951
Rajeshwar & Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust	289,017	522,392
Chirag Hospital Project	1,550,140	1,328,089
Rural Health Services	405,392	378,074
Chirag School	770,824	919,997
Other Payments	4,651,072	3,318,630
Balance on 31st March 2010	38,804,069	17,876,052
	72,059,610	53,135,418

Central Himalayan Rural Action Group
Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended as on 31st March 2010

Income	Current Year (Rs)	Previous Year (Rs)
Project Funding		
Foreign Contribution	11,736,228	12,887,588
Local Contribution	4,168,386	13,206,715
Rural Health Services	402,867	333,086
Donations	632,891	37,600
Interest	718,934	742,861
Others	1,864,099	4,185,774
Projects in Progress	11,922,772	12,152,194
	31,446,177	43,545,818
Expenditure		
Canada India Village Aid (CIVA)	1,180,362	1,256,375
Berkeley Reafforestation Trust	1,977,075	713,870
Ford Foundation	10,121,675	8,362,429
Room to Read	1,820,408	2,193,538
People's Commission on Environment and Development India (PCED)	—	621,535
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	1,133,632	908,823
Annapurna Indian Women's Association	—	20,186
Give2Asia	—	5,159
Alstom Corporation Foundation	503,630	—
Unniti Foundation	56,588	—
Other Payments (FCRA)	503,467	124,483
CAPART (WS)	1,886,703	25
Sir Ratan Tata Trust	852,289	2,850,663
NABARD	864,991	1,108,053
Uttaranchal Livelihood Improvement Project for Himalayas	1,124,436	1,086,889
Peoples' Science Institute (Himmothan Cell)	1,012	79,229
Himmothan Society (IFLDP)	1,660,487	1,261,832
Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT)	295,744	2,123,403
Rajeshwar & Susheela Dayal Charitable Trus	26,059	503,100
CHIRAG Hospital Project	140	1,759
Rural Health Services	415,804	382,080
Chirag School	473,826	—
Other Payments	6,504,865	5,315,098
Total Expenditure	31,403,193	28,918,529
Available Funds	42,984	14,627,289
	31,446,117	43,545,818

Ajay Singh Bisht
Alka Mer
Aloka J Hiremath
Anand Singh Bisht
Anil Chandra Binwal
Anil Kesari
Anoop Singh
Arjun Singh
Asha Sah
Bahadur Singh Mehra
Basanti Bisht
Bhagat Singh Thapliyal
Bharti Jalal
Bhaskaranand Joshi
Bhim Singh Negi
Bhupal Singh Bisht
Bhupal Singh Jeena
Bhuwan Chandra Pant
Bhuwan Singh Negi
Bimla Bisht
Binod Kumar Pandey
Bipin Kumar Kabdwal
Bipin Kumar Negi
Champa Pandey
Chandan Singh Bisht
Chandan Singh Chamiyal
Chandan Singh Mehta
Chandrakala
Deepa Bhagat
Deepa Joshi
Deepa Palariya
Deepika Verma
Devendra Singh Nayal
Dharmendra Singh
Dinesh Pandey
Diwan Chandra Arya
Diwan Ram
Diwan Singh
Diwan Singh Mehta
Dungar Singh Negi
Durga Bisht
Ganesh Singh
Ganesh Singh Aswal
Ganga Joshi
Geeta Bisht
Geeta Bisht (Rautela)
Girish Chandra Budhani
Govind Singh Bisht
Harendra Singh Nayal
Harish Chandra Arya
Hema Bisht

Jagdish Mishra
Janki Bisht
Jaswant Singh Bisht
Jitendra Singh
Kailash Chandra Joshi
Kalawati Pandey
Kamla Bisht
Kanchan Arya
Keshav Dutt Joshi
Khasti Mer
Khushal Singh
Krishan Chandra Bhandari
Krishan Kumar Nayal
Kuldeep Kumar Thapliyal
Kundan Singh Latwal
Kunti Bisht
Kusum Rawat
Kusum Tiwari
Lakhan Singh Rautela
Lal Singh Dangwal
Lalit Mohan Tiwari
Lalit Mohan Tiwari
Lata Harbola
Leela Joshi
Leela Pandey
Leela Raikwal
Madhavi Dangwal
Mahendra Singh Bisht
Mahendra Singh Bisht
Mahendra Singh Raikwal
Mamta Mer
Manish Kumar
Manju Palaria
Manju Rautela
Manoj Kumar Mishra
Manoj Kumar Pandey
Mariam Bhatt
Maya Bisht
Maya Pandey
Meera Bisht
Mohammad Shehfar Rasool
Mohan Singh Bisht
Mohan Singh Bisht
Mohan Singh Sambhal
Munni Bisht
Munni Tamta
Murli Dhar Bhatt
Nandan Singh
Naveen Bhatt
Neema Arya
Neetu Mehra

Neomi Pal Singh
Nirmala Mehra
Om Prakash Pandey
Pan Singh Bisht
Pan Singh Mehta
Pankaj Singh Shahi
Pooran Chandra Joshi
Pooran Singh Raikwal
Prakash Chandra
Pramod Kumar
Prema Janoti
Prema Tiwari
Pritam Singh
Rajani Bisht
Rajendra Singh Bisht
Rajendra Singh Dangwal
Rajendra Singh Jeena
Rajendra Singh Negi
Rajesh Singh Nayal
Ram Singh Bisht
Ramesh Chandra Gutholia
Ramesh Chandra Joshi
Ramesh Chandra Palariya
Rekha Rani
S Shylaja
Sandeep Bhatt
Sangeeta Rani
Sanjay Tewari
Satish Kumar Tamta
Shailesh Kumar Pant
Shamsher Singh Mehta
Shankar Singh
Suman Dass
Sundar Lal
Sundar Singh Nayal
Sunil Kumar Tamta
Sunita Arya
Surendra Singh Negi
Suresh Kumar
Tej Singh Adhikari
Thakur Singh
Trilok Singh
Triveni Sati
Tulsi Negi
Umakant Sharma
Uttam Singh
V Rajiv
Vijay Bhatt
Vikram Kaushal
VK Madhavan



Chirag

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