



review

2006-2007



Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation
www.grassrootsindia.com



About Us

The Pan Himalayan **Grassroots** Development Foundation is established as a non-profit voluntary organization under the Societies Registration Act (1860) at the office of the Registrar of Societies, Delhi since November 1992.

The primary aim of **Grassroots** is to initiate peoples action at the grassroots for restoration of languishing river basins through holistic mountain development programmes in order to improve the quality of life.

Broadly, **Grassroots** works to:

- Promote self-reliant local community organizations and assist them in the preparation and implementation of natural resources management plans, keeping in view the gender issues
- Research, promote and propagate ideas and choices regarding sustainable development in cross cutting sectors like drinking water, environmental sanitation, renewable energy, catchment area treatment, rainwater harvesting, landuse and animal husbandry
- Collaborate with other voluntary organizations regarding the potential for spearheading the concept of holistic mountain development and the role of appropriate technologies in improving the quality of life of communities, here and now, and thereby enabling a long term engagement in natural resources management
- Promote livelihoods improvement efforts and micro enterprises in order to add value to local produce and thereby enable marginalized families to supplement incomes in a sustainable fashion
- Initiate appropriate capacity building exercises for community organizations, self-help groups, voluntary organizations and other change makers
- Develop and maintain data bases for holistic mountain development in order to make relevant information available to policy makers, development institutions, community organizations and the media

- And, encourage the formation of relevant multi stakeholder platforms to bring forth change and development at the grassroots.

Over the past fourteen years, **Grassroots** has been able to evolve a holistic intervention strategy which channels resources - managerial, technical and financial - directly to people and associations of the communities, working at the village/watershed level. The emphasis is on self-help participation and the belief that average villagers have the desire, the right and the capability to promote their own welfare and prosperity and to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Also implied in the mandate of Grassroots and incorporated in its approach and methodology is promotion of the entrepreneurial spirit - the belief that people can determine their own destiny, establish goals, take risks and invest their time and energy to achieve their aspirations for a better life.

Grassroots continues to be a lean and independent organization, which reaches out to far-flung micro watersheds in the central and western Himalaya through **Outreach Programme Offices** located in the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

During the period under review, **Grassroots** continued programmes on improving the quality of life of mountain communities through sustainable community development strategies, training and technology transfer, micro enterprises and marketing by strengthening the capacity of selected voluntary organizations, including **Kumaon Artisans Guild** and **Mahila Umang Samiti** – which are being promoted as *new forms of organizations*.



Relevance of Appropriate Technology

Environmental degradation has led to significant decline in the quality of life of mountain communities. Chronic water and other essential biomass shortages are being experienced by people and women and children have to suffer the indignity of trudging few miles each day for meeting these basic requirements.

Appropriate technology applications in cross cutting sectors like drinking water, environmental sanitation, renewable energy and rainwater harvesting assists in improving the quality of life for mountain communities, here and now, and thereby enables a long term engagement in restoration of ecosystems.

Grassroots field experiences of promoting appropriate technology applications has led to the creation of a dedicated team of over fifty barefoot engineers, registered as a voluntary organization, Kumaon Artisans Guild. During the period under review, the Guild has been able to consolidate its operations as an independent organization and Grassroots is viewed as a shadow organization, with the primary task of strengthening the managerial capacity of the Guild.

Over the year, processes have been set in motion to enable the Guild to emerge as the key player in promoting appropriate technologies in the central Himalaya.

Drinking Water

Significant denudation of vegetal cover in the immediate catchment areas has resulted in poor recharge of primary water resources and along with increasing population, it is a common story to hear most communities say that springs have been slowly, but steadily, drying-up.

Grassroots has found it relevant to introduce an appropriate technology application in the form of an Infiltration Well, which is based on the primary water resource of the village. These “wells” act as a protected intake structure for subterranean water capillaries, and then fitted with a handpump or submersible pump, to enable the drawing of water.

These interventions have not only provided access to enhanced quantities of safe drinking water, but communities have also been empowered to operate and maintain such facilities without dependence on external agencies. Communities have also been positive about contributing 10 to 20 percent of the capital cost of such drinking water facilities.

Alongside, it is also significant to note that communities are able to address issues of equity in a manner which is demonstrating the potential of local self governance within the framework of the *gram sabha* and *panchayat*. Monitoring of water quality is also being done through trained local youth equipped with simple field kits.

Environmental Sanitation

Communities are encouraged to view the need to mobilize cent percent households to invest in appropriate sanitation facilities as an *a priori* condition for investing in community managed drinking water programs. Such community sanitation strategies not only ensure that water quality would be satisfactory and free from contamination through fecal matter but also lead to a cleaner environment, besides providing an iota of dignity to womenfolk.

Local artisans are trained to construct twin-pit water-seal toilets adjacent to homesteads. Quite often, joint families build more than one such facility. It is significant to note that individual households invest more than Rs. 5,000 for such facilities, in addition to a small grant of less than Rs. 2,000.

Grassroots also encourages communities to adopt alternate building materials, viz., random rubble concrete blocks and micro concrete roofing tiles.

Renewable Energy

In most river basins firewood availability is so poor that it is viewed as a crisis by the communities. Women and children have to trudge for four to five hours, foraging for scarce firewood – basically for cooking.

In a situation where the peoples daily firewood requirements outstrip the annual incremental biomass growth in the support/forest areas, the only logical ‘solution’ seems to be the provision of an alternate source of energy.

Over the past fourteen years, Grassroots has been able to demonstrate the viability of an alternate renewable energy option through installation of household level biogas units, which provides clean smokeless cooking gas and thereby impacts on the family health, besides reducing the biotic pressure on forest resources.

In spite of the fact that the state governments of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have recognized the benefits of spreading this appropriate technology in the renewable energy sector, specifically through recognition of Grassroots as a ‘turnkey agency’ for the past few years, the release of subsidy (amounting to less than 30 percent of the total cost of an unit, which is typically Rs.14,000) by the National Biogas Program being managed by the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources, Government of India is in an abysmal state.

It is ironic that even though provision of clean domestic energy for rural communities is a top priority in the Millennium Development Goals of the national government, in reality the ‘message to the states’ have been to ‘get out’ of this so called subsidy driven

program. Even though the subsidy for conventional cooking energy, like bottled liquefied petroleum gas, continues to spiral upto Rs.100 crores per day!

Grassroots has been driven to look at other options, like soliciting support of the civil society and forging alliances for carbon trading mechanisms, in order to continue with this renewable energy program. During the period under review, Grassroots has not only been able to solicit fresh avenues of support but also settled substantial dues of the government to the farmers, through its internal resources. However, a long term funding mechanism/policy for this renewable energy program is still far from being resolved, at the level of the national government.

Roof Run-Off Rainwater Harvesting

Grassroots had been involved with the demonstration of rainwater harvesting mechanisms in Kumaon for over a decade. Basically, the idea is to harness rainwater from the rooftops of village homes and store the water in an underground tank adjacent to the house. Stored rainwater enables households to access increased quantities of water for various domestic chores and thereby reduces the drudgery for women and children to headload water up to their homes from distant springs and at the same time reduces the pressure on dwindling springs.

With an annual precipitation of around 1200 mm, typically a household benefits from easier access to about 100 litres of stored rainwater each day of the year.

During the period under review, Grassroots continued the collaboration with Global Rainwater Harvesting Collective and Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India to demonstrate the benefits of rainwater harvesting through public schools in rural areas. Grassroots is in the process of demonstrating the benefits of rainwater harvesting in thirty schools in the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

Spread of Appropriate Technology in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh

• Drinking Water	297 villages	47,000 people
• Environmental Sanitation	2,611 households	
• Renewable Energy	1,009 households	
• Rainwater Harvesting	212 locations	

As mentioned earlier, Grassroots has been supporting Kumaon Artisans Guild to reach the benefits of appropriate technologies which improve the quality of life for far-flung mountain communities. During the period under review, Grassroots has also been

involved with forging an alliance with other selected voluntary organizations in the state of Uttarakhand to further the spread of similar initiatives through a ‘technology transfer’ program.

The success of this strategy would be measured in future through the depth and spread of appropriate technologies through the active participation of such voluntary organizations. Of course, Grassroots would continue to strengthen the platform of *barefoot engineers*, as change makers, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Livelihoods & Micro Enterprise Development

In fragile ecosystems in the Himalaya, forests play a pivotal role in supporting mountain farming systems. Since colonial times rapacious state policies have led to degradation of such essential support systems which, in turn, has affected the traditional food security. To find a fresh balance in the quality of lives for such marginalized farming communities, Grassroots has been involved with creating a platform for establishment of pro poor business ventures, with farming families as the primary stakeholder.

Efforts over the past few years have led to the creation of a network of over 1000 women who are involved with various viable business activities, with an annual turnover of over Rs.4.00 million, which provide small yet significant incomes on a sustainable basis:

- Fruit growers are involved with adding value to local soft fruits like apricots and plums through production and marketing of natural fruit preserves
- Bee keepers are involved with the processing and sale of seasonal natural honey
- Farm women are involved with the production and sale of hand-knitted woolen and cotton garments
- A SHG earns regular incomes through production and sale of eco-friendly roofing tiles
- Free range backyard poultry business enhances family nutrition levels as well as incomes

This network of hill women in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand state is being managed by a nascent voluntary organization, **Mahila Umang Samiti**, which was formed in 2001, by women spearhead team members of Grassroots who ‘hived-out’ to establish a collective of several self-help groups.

All products are marketed under the brand name **Kumaoni** and it is Umang’s belief that

those who purchase these products are directly assisting resource poor households through trade and not aid.

However, the most significant aspect of these local efforts in promoting the spirit of enterprise is a concern of the *institutional framework at the grassroots*. Each and every business activity is directly controlled by the producer-groups. They own the assets and all are equal shareholders of the business. This arrangement enables the greatest portion of the consumer's rupee to reach the producer.

During the period under review, Umang was able to distribute Rs. 1.00 lakh as bonus to fruit growers and knitters in proportion to individual participation in the total business. It is also significant to note that for three years in a row, Umang has been able to function as a business enterprise, without any grant-in-aid, even though the organization invested in building upon the capacity of people and enabled the formation of a social platform, aspects which are usually not within the mandate of a regular business enterprise.

Grassroots feels that the lessons of these enterprise development programmes ought to be documented and discussed widely, especially in a fast changing global economy which is pushing ahead with neo-liberal ideologies that may further marginalize resource poor farmers. Value addition and marketing of local produce ought to be organized on behalf of farmers in a manner which enables and empowers them to participate in the process and gain from the benefits of modern processing facilities.

It is a fallacy to expect the corporate sector to resolve the crisis of chronic poverty; its very structure would always need to work towards maximizing profits for the sake of urban middle class share holders. With the growing trend of urbanization (and therefore demand for processed farm products) within the country, the current decade actually provides us with an opportunity to create large numbers of pro-poor enterprises, which would take care of economics , ecology and equity.

It is envisaged that Grassroots would continue to provide critical support to Umang for the next few years, mainly with managerial skills. Umang would need to equip itself to the extent that the existing network of women continue to grow as an institution and expand the scope of the micro enterprises to Rs.10.00 million annually.

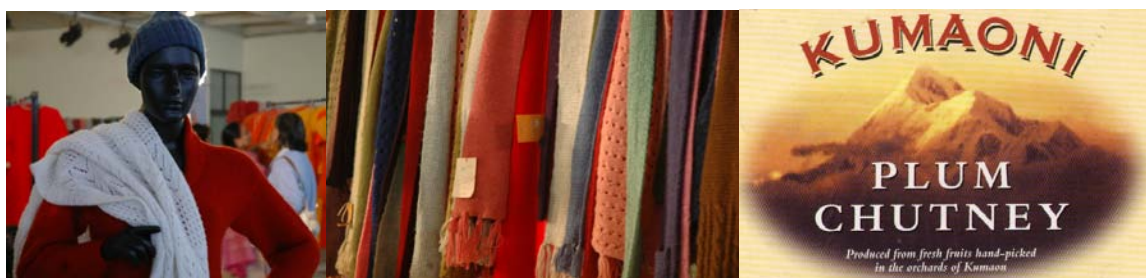
During the period under review, Grassroots spearheaded a new venture, tentatively named, **HimKhadya**. The objective of this initiative is to provide a platform for intra-regional trade in farm products, especially with the following focus areas:

- promote trade of grains between watersheds which produce a surplus and those which suffer a deficit, through the institutional mechanism of self help groups
- increase the production of traditional millets, through improved processing and value addition
- market walnuts, pomegranates, oranges and other farm produce, and, alongside,

initiate the process of organic certification.

This pilot initiative has been able to generate a turnover of Rs.2.00 lakhs within the span of few months. Based on this small experience, Grassroots is in the process of enabling Umang to take this concept forward in the future. However, in the long run, the idea would be to promote community owned companies and strengthen such organizations with adequate forward linkages to markets, both within and outside the central Himalayan region.

<u>Enterprise Development & Livelihoods</u>		
	<u>Rs.in lakhs</u>	
	<u>Cumulative</u>	<u>This Year</u>
Hand-Knitted Products	64.40	16.40
Fruit Preserves & Pickles	20.97	5.97
Natural Honey & Spices	17.40	5.40
Beeswax Candles	1.06	0.06
Country Hens	24.47	11.00
Roofing Tiles	24.50	1.00
HimKhadya	--	1.95
	<u>Rs.152.80 lakhs</u>	<u>Rs. 41.78 lakhs</u>





Eco-restoration of River Basins

The interface between man and nature is a necessary condition for survival of mountain farming systems, which depends upon adequate flow of a stream, biomass supplies from the forest support area in terms of tree leaf-fodder and tree leaf-litter for organic compost - which may or may not have a market value.

The prevalent perspective, for over a century, of viewing forests as a natural resource of the state which could be harvested in terms of ancient trees and thereby provide an impetus to economic growth has been the single most important reason for creating the 'tragedy of the commons'. Economic growth at the cost of ecological security has certainly led to bullish market reforms which benefit millions of urban middle class people, but such policies have also led to the impoverishment of marginal mountain farmers who have been dependent upon forests as support areas for their livelihood.

The loss or lack of title to environmental assets is viewed, by Grassroots, as an additional component of poverty, leading to the conclusion that environmental conservation is actually a necessary fundamental to poverty alleviation. The poor are often forced to over-exploit limited local natural resources in order to satisfy immediate household necessities, and in a way, the poor are actually both victims and agents of environmental destruction and that policies addressing these issues ought to consciously consider both.

Briefly, concepts like sustainable mountain development are more like a mirage in the desert unless forest ecosystems are restored for adequate hydrological and nutrient recycling functions. At the same time, it ought to be understood that farming families occupy less than ten percent of the total land in a hill state like Uttarakhand. The critical catchment areas adjacent to farm lands, defined locally as *gadheras*, would form another ten percent of the land. Thus, it is largely upon the state government and specifically the forest officials to mount effective programmes to restore the ecological support areas under their direct control.

So it seems that the order of the day would be for organizations like Grassroots to establish a coalition between various stakeholders. And, to this effect, during the year under review, activities in the two river basins in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have been as follows:

A. Palor River Basin in Himachal Pradesh

The Pidyadhar micro watershed (in the Palor river basin) development programme continued to make progress in the hands of the five self help groups, in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh. Of a target of 90 hectares of common land, the communities have been able to protect close to 80 hectares.

During the monsoon and winter planting seasons, the communities managed to plant-out 16,500 mature saplings of a dozen native species of shrubs and trees, which were raised in two small village-level nurseries.

At the completion of a small effort spread over three monsoons, these communities have been able to plant and protect 50,000 saplings of various native species.

Fifty percent of the households in the micro watershed invested in installation of biogas units as a renewable energy option for cooking and thereby reduced the biotic pressure on scarce forest resources. It is unfortunate that the spread of more biogas units, as a renewable energy option, has reduced significantly due to the apathy of the MNES, GOI regarding the National Biogas Programme.

During the year, attempts were intensified to strengthen the coalition between all participating village communities, specifically to resolve matters regarding protection of commons from indiscriminate grazing. This has led to the formation of an apex management committee with representatives from each of the participating villages.

Study tours were also conducted for groups of farmers to understand and adopt upland irrigation systems as well as the benefits of vermi-composting. Detailed project reports for upland irrigation systems have been prepared and it is envisaged that implementation would follow in the year ahead.

B. Restoration of Gagas river basin

The Gagas river originates in the sacred forests of Pandokholi in Almora district, of the Kumaon region in the state of Uttarakhand. The river evolves largely through the flow of over fourteen major streams or *gadheras* on both banks, and flows for about 50 kms prior to merging with Ramganga (West) river. Gagas river basin is spread over 500 square kms with a population of over 120,000 spread in 350 villages.

During the period under review, dialogues regarding eco-restoration were consolidated with residents of two major *gadheras* – Dusad and Kanari, as the idea is to spread similar initiatives across the other drainage basins in a phased manner over the next few years.

The institutional pattern at the grassroots has been established in both these *gadheras* in the following manner:

- Each and every family has participated as members of *self help groups* and typically, a village has 1-2 such groups. These groups form the bedrock of change and development.
- After the formation and consolidation of such group activities, the next tier has been formed, which is the village level *gadhera bachao samiti*, wherein each family subscribes as a member with a contribution of Rs. 100 as an annual *gram kosh*.
- Finally, all these village level *gadhera bachao samities* have led to the formation of an apex body, called the *Gadhera Bachao Manch*.

During the period under review, such processes were being consolidated in two major *gadheras*, but the entire process has actually been consolidated in one of them. So, the first apex body has started functioning and it is called the *Dusad Gadhera Bachao Manch*. This Manch is beginning to shoulder several responsibilities (which have been with Grassroots) and it is envisaged that over the next year, the Manch would play a significant role and Grassroots could pay attention to the needs of communities in other adjacent *gadheras* in the river basin.

The Manch organized a phenomenal gathering of several hundred residents from the entire Dusad *gadhera* to mark the occasion of World Water Day and several resolutions regarding the renewal of the hydrological cycle were discussed and adopted. The tradition of maintaining *khals* as an essential annual feature has been sought to be revived alongside the need to spread a renewable energy option like biogas units and more significantly to work towards total community sanitation.

The formation of the Manch has also led to focusing upon the vital livelihoods improvement issue and the following steps have been taken:

- Training of paravets in order to improve local livestock at Uttarakhand Livestock Development Board
- Training of other youth for setting up small businesses at the KVIC
- Training of farmers regarding Bee Keeping
- Orientation of farmers regarding Organic Farming Systems and Certification
- Promotion of Horticulture

Side by side, Grassroots has been able to seek the active participation and cooperation of the state forest department (to work in tandem with the communities) regarding the restoration of appropriate vegetal cover and revival of traditional systems of *khals* in catchment areas under their direct control; which actually happens to be almost fifty percent of the total area of the Gagag river basin. Thus, without soliciting the active participation of the forest department it would be like chasing a mirage in the desert as far as restoration of the hydrological cycle of the river basin is concerned.

The strategy is to create an effective multi stakeholder platform of key players in the river basin – communities, state government line departments, local administration and NGOs.

Through the entire course of the effort, Grassroots would attempt to ‘put the villagers first’ so that in the multi stakeholder platform in the Gagas river basin it is clear to all players that the community is the primary stakeholder.

To this effect, it is to the credit of the state government of Uttarakhand that the First Multi Stakeholder Meeting was organized jointly between the Forest Department and Grassroots, with the Principal Secretary (Forests & Rural Development) as the Chair. It is envisaged that this platform would enable swiftness in achieving the aspirations of the residents of the river basin regarding a better quality of life.

The institutional structure at the grassroots has so far evolved as follows:

1. Number of SHGs formed	84
2. Number of SHG members	1,259
3. SHG funds	Rs. 4.15 lakhs
4. Number of <i>Gadhera Bachao Samitis</i> formed	26
5. Gram Kosh	Rs. 2.37 lakhs
6. Village Commons under protection	350 hectares
7. Village Nurseries	14
8. Species in village nurseries	35
9. Number of saplings being raised in nurseries	1.30 lakhs
10. Number of mature saplings planted-out	60,000

The Gagas river basin plan has been endorsed by HELP, UNESCO as part of its global efforts for restoration of languishing river systems. The collaboration with UNESCO would lead to transfer of scientific knowledge/tools, especially related to hydrology/forests/weather, to communities through Grassroots.

Capacity Building

During the period under review, concerted efforts have been made regarding building upon the capacities of various stakeholders, viz., core team of Grassroots, Kumaon Artisans Guild, Mahila Umang Samiti, Partners-in-Change, SHGs, Gadhera Bachao Samitis and other CBOs.

The themes have been varied and as per the needs of various outreach programme components. However, the main focus has been on the following:

- Community-Based Conservation
- Appropriate Technology
- Organisation Development Processes

- Logical Framework Analysis
- Management of SHGs
- Right to Information
- Mainstreaming Gender
- Livelihoods Improvement
- Management of CBOs

A summary of various capacity building workshops attended by staff members of various organizations and other stakeholders is provided below:

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>No.of CapBuild Workshops</u>
1. Grassroots	26
2. Mahila Umang Samiti	18
3. Kumaon Artisans Guild	24
4. Partners-in-Change	14
5. Other NGOs from Kumaon & Garhwal	4
6. Self Help Groups	13
7. Gadhera Bachao Samitis	10

	109

Partners-in-Change

During the period under review, a total of 14 NGOs participated in the program – eight from the Kumaon region and six from the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand. The partnership was strengthened through regular workshops and consolidation of processes involved with transfer of appropriate technology. The following issues regarding the partnership need mention:

- NGO leaders felt that field experiences regarding spread of appropriate technology and its impact on improving the quality of life, has led to creating positive energies vis-à-vis the identity of their organizations in the minds of the communities and other stakeholders, including donor organizations.

Vimarsh in Nainital district has been able to secure a small grant from a philanthropic organization in Delhi regarding conservation of primary water resources. **Adopt** in Dehradun district has been able to secure a major grant from the Government of Uttarakhand regarding the spread of Biogas Units and Sauchalayas. **Chaesta** in Nainital district has been recognized by the district administration as a partner agency in the water and health sector. **Surya** in Tehri Garhwal district has been able to secure funds from the district administration regarding installation of infiltration wells/handpumps as community managed drinking water systems.

- NGO leaders also expressed that a measure of success of this partnership could be the extent each organization is finally enabled to mainstream the spread of benefits related to appropriate technologies as an integral strategy of change and development, within a specific area of influence.
- It was also felt that the partnership process ought to include opportunities for deliberating and learning organizational development methodologies, specifically to gain a holistic view about mountain development strategies and the role of voluntary organizations.
- Partners also expressed the need to organize this platform in a manner which could lead to impacting changes in policies, viz., the recent decision of the central government to withdraw support for biogas units as a renewable energy option in the mountains.
- In order to draw upon the strength of each partner, a mechanism for sharing and learning between organizations has been set in motion. For example, Vimarsh has been providing knowledge, through small workshops, regarding *panchayati raj* systems. Aman has been able to highlight issues regarding the changes in the *van panchayat* system. Umang has been regularly providing inputs for livelihoods improvement efforts through self help groups by organizing study tours and training workshops.

Finally, it is also significant to note that the partners-in-change efforts are spread over a wide region, as detailed below:

<u>Districts in the Kumaon Region</u>	<u>Partner-NGOs</u>
Almora	4
Nainital	4
Pithoragarh	3
<u>Districts in the Garhwal Region</u>	<u>Partner-NGOs</u>
Chamoli	1
Dehradun	1
Tehri Garhwal	1

Briefly, this partnership seems to be developing in the fashion it ought to, notwithstanding the need to strengthen it further through the induction of some resource persons and institutions in the near future. Especially as this task is probably the way forward for reaching out to more and more communities in the central Himalaya. The lessons of this partnership would be significant, for taking similar steps in the western and eastern Himalaya.



Council of Governors

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Mr Ganesh Pangare Mr Naren Karunakaran

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Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation, India
Terre doc Creations, France
Uttarakhand Organic Commodity Board
Foundation for Ecological Security

**The financial records of Grassroots are a matter of public
record and as such are available**

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