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Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan
Almora

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Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan (USNPSS)

Jakhan Devi, Mall Road

Almora 263601 (Uttarakhand)

Telephone : 05962-231100

Email: sevanidhi.almora@gmail.com

URL: <http://www.sevanidhi.org>

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Introduction

Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan (USNPSS) is registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860. It started as a nodal agency of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in Uttarakhand in 1987. From being the first to develop and mainstream textbooks on environment education in government schools and pre-primary education for rural children, USNPSS has also pioneered work with women's groups, adolescent girls, youth and community-based organizations (CBOs) in the mountains. The organization has also worked with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India as a regional resource agency for a programme called National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) and action research on National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS). Research projects with ICAR and ICSSR, Government of India has also been carried out. When the scheme under which USNPSS was receiving funding from the Government expired, we obtained support from the Tata Trust and other organisations. Currently the major support comes from the Micky and Vinita Pant Charitable Fund and the Rajeshwar Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust. In addition, individual donors provide valuable support.

This year marks a special phase as we commemorate 35 years of work in the fields of education, environment and development in Uttarakhand. This annual report describes thoughts and activities that guided our work in the villages during the year. It examines some of the changes occurring in rural areas that have created new opportunities for people, especially young women and girls, and also explores issues disturbing ecology and traditional livelihoods in the mountains. The shifting role of USNPSS and its partner organizations is elucidated in the light of changes occurring in communities.

In view of diverse opportunities opened up by steady improvements in girls' education and spread of transportation and communication facilities in villages, USNPSS continues to provide a forum to communities, including women and adolescent girls, to build confidence and deal with changes occurring in their own lives, and society at large. Creating a space where communities can learn, experiment, innovate and share experiences, USNPSS continues to nurture an enabling and yet challenging environment to develop analytical and practical skills of people as follows:

- 6-14 years old children-village learning centres
- 11-20 years old girls- adolescent girls' education and capacity building
- >20 years old men-youth groups
- >20 years old women-women's groups
- > 60 years old women and men-cooperate in conducting village-based activities

Village learning centres (VLCs) and computer centres offer multiple opportunities to rural children outside the confined settings of textbook learning to develop their mental, emotional and social skills in a holistic way. Further, USNPSS continued to work with

community-based organizations to form new adolescent girls' groups and strengthen women's groups, youth groups to build capacity to solve problems that they face in their communities and beyond.

Rural communities in Uttarakhand Himalayas are underserved in health, education, energy and transportation facilities and remain vulnerable to damage caused by climate induced disasters and extreme weather events. Frequent occurrences of short-term intense rainfall and floods lead to landslides and mud flows which cause disruption of roads, electricity etc. and make communities all the more susceptible to subsequent weather induced events. Need of health care facilities would aggravate many folds during adverse climate events. In addition, people facing climate induced disasters require new sources of livelihoods since the conventional sources prove inadequate to recover and cope with complex challenges. Therefore, efforts to build community resilience would require an integrated approach of improving infrastructure as well as building capacity of people. In this context, the efforts of USNPSS to build community resilience revolves around the ideas of supporting regeneration of village ecosystems (forest, agricultural fields, grasslands, water, animals, humans) and socio-economic systems taking into consideration the current changes happening in villages.

Different from the popular approach of focusing on resilience building in villages during and immediately after disasters, USNPSS works with people in all circumstances which may or may not fall under the definition of a disaster. In disaster-hit areas, USNPSS has offered support for infrastructure development such as provision of water, home-stay etc. whilst in normal circumstances support is offered to prepare and develop capacity to face stress and challenges in mundane life. For example, the organization facilitates a process of face-to-face discussions with women's groups, adolescent girls' groups and youth to develop knowledge and capability to respond proactively to small shocks emerging from extreme weather events which hardly catch any media attention but effect people's lives in remote areas.

Erratic rain and snowfall, temperature variations have an immediate impact in crop production which may contribute to growing disenchantment with agriculture. To better prepare for unexpected shocks and changes in village ecosystems, USNPSS has started promoting several non-farm activities with women, girls and youth. Since capacity building and social capital appear to be the most critical factors for disaster risk preparation, an effort is made to integrate these two themes with new livelihood choices. For example, women and girls who attend tailoring and knitting courses are exposed to ideas of building resilience in their own communities. Girls and young women who attend the beautician training course are also expected to understand and work on issues highlighting the importance of organic, home-grown food and beauty manifested in the form of inner strength of a person.

1. Village learning centres

Village learning centres (VLC) integrate diverse and inclusive learning approaches to help students attain overall development. After school, children come to the centre, work together and build confidence in a congenial environment to acquire proficiency in speaking, reading, writing and other skills that demonstrate their talent. In addition, they are exposed to and trained in safe hygiene and healthy living and food practices.

VLCs offer need-based education to individuals who lag behind in schools in reading and writing. For example, a majority of children find mathematics difficult and the facilitator instructs them for better understanding of concepts by adopting a variety of methods. Children trailing in writing Hindi receive regular exercises to fulfill this lacuna. Cultivating reading habits among children has meant that everyday fifteen minutes are devoted specifically for this purpose.

A variety of sources such as books, games, verbal stories, songs, newspapers and structured activities are used for learning. Further, socialization and ordinary life experiences are valued as important sources of learning. The role of the facilitator, in this regard, is to talk with children and encourage them to reflect on their experiences. Therefore, in the centres, the facilitators encourage children to speak up and narrate their experiences.

Village learning centres promote a process of social change through education. Values of transformative learning constitute the core of thoughts and practice in learning. Additive learning which refers to building on existing knowledge and skills is practiced. Above all, the VLC approach encompasses a broader perspective of education by challenging thoughts and practices that currently shape rural communities. All village residents are associated with the centres and collectively help in achieving the goals of transformative education. Each month, members of women's groups gather at the centre to hold their meetings. Adolescent girls' groups come to the centre on Sunday and participate in meetings. Elderly people visit the centre to read newspapers and sometimes talk with children. Retired army personnel share their life experiences and also motivate children to be brave and patriotic. Old women, some of them good story-tellers, are invited to narrate folk tales and songs. Government school teachers cooperate in organizing children's fairs in villages.

By taking children to the water sources, forests and agricultural fields, the facilitators encourage them to observe, explore, think and report their findings. While visiting the village, children and facilitators make elderly people talk about the history of the place. This involves learning about development of the settlement, demography, status of forests, water, farms, crops, livestock, climate etc. and changes occurring over time.

Practical demonstrations are carried out to help children understand various concepts of mathematics, environment, science etc. Understanding the concept of soil erosion and occurrence of landslides is a popular activity which children learn through demonstrations in the centre. Discussions on this particular activity cover issues of deforestation, loss of soil fertility, siltation in rivers and dams etc.



Figure 1. A village learning centre, Gogina Dhari, district Bageswar.

Children collect information on sports or other relevant subjects from newspapers and magazines and organize that to prepare charts. For example, charts showing pictures and small write ups about top sporting personnel of India are prepared and displayed. The exercise of knowing about the village is also followed either by preparing a village map or writing a detailed account of the changes occurring in the village and putting it up on the walls for everyone to see.

Story telling is another important means of enhancing language and communication skills among children. Pictures, flip charts, story cards, posters, masks portraying animals etc. are used in the centres to present stories. Further, children are encouraged to draw and paint.

Different types of games are played in the centres. Outdoor games include cricket,



Figure 2. A village learning centre Churasain, district Chamoli.

badminton, volleyball, football, race etc. Indoor games involve playing ludo, snakes and ladder, carom etc. Memory games, participation games, listening games etc. are played to encourage cooperation and critical thinking among children. The game of spoken messages (also called Chinese whispers) helps children learn how a spoken message would change and create misunderstandings in a

community. To make it interesting, facilitators ask sharp questions to initiate discussions on related themes.

Skits and role plays are held on relevant topics of interests in the centres to improve communication, group work and organizing skills among children. Further, short plays are popular in bal-melas too.

This year a total of 43 VLCs and 9 computer centres were functional. The centres offer each student suitable space and time to learn. All children attending VLCs are enrolled in schools. 88% attend government schools in villages. 53% of girls who attend schools also come to the centres in the evenings (Table 1).



Figure 3. "Time to read" in village learning centres.



Figure 4 a,b,c. Charts prepared by children are put on the walls of learning centres.

Table 1. All children attending VLCs are enrolled in schools.

| Serial number | Location | District | Number of children | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------|-----|-----------------|----|
| | | | Government schools | | Private schools | |
| | | | B | G | B | G |
| Cluster Ganai gangoli | | | | | | |
| 1 | Digarkoli | Pithoragarh | 8 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| 2 | Fadiyali | Pithoragarh | 9 | 17 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Gwari | Pithoragarh | 9 | 7 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | Kimtola | Pithoragarh | 10 | 17 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Bhanyani | Pithoragarh | 11 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Binta | | | | | | |
| 6 | Bhataura | Almora | 5 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | Matela | Almora | 10 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| 8 | Borkhola | Almora | 0 | 1 | 6 | 6 |
| 9 | Binta | Almora | 1 | 1 | 9 | 5 |
| 10 | Surna | Almora | 5 | 16 | 2 | 0 |
| Cluster Gopeswar | | | | | | |
| 11 | Koteswar | Chamoli | 8 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 | Gwar | Chamoli | 10 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | Mandal | Chamoli | 8 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| 14 | Teda khansal | Chamoli | 7 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| 15 | Khalla | Chamoli | 9 | 7 | 2 | 2 |
| 16 | Kathoor | Chamoli | 6 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| 17 | Siroli | Chamoli | 5 | 15 | 4 | 2 |
| 18 | Bandwara | Chamoli | 7 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| 19 | Kandei | Chamoli | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 20 | Bamiyala | Chamoli | 5 | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Badhani | | | | | | |
| 21 | Sundergaon | Chamoli | 14 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 22 | Jakh | Chamoli | 11 | 15 | 1 | 0 |
| 23 | Chaatoli | Chamoli | 4 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| 24 | Chaurasain | Chamoli | 14 | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| 25 | Chaundali | Chamoli | 13 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 26 | Badhani | Chamoli | 6 | 2 | 5 | 6 |
| 27 | Malai | Chamoli | 9 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| 28 | Koli | Chamoli | 14 | 16 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Maichun | | | | | | |
| 29 | Palyun | Almora | 10 | 15 | 1 | 2 |
| 30 | Mouni | Almora | 7 | 15 | 0 | 0 |
| 31 | Maniagar | Almora | 11 | 12 | 2 | 0 |
| 32 | Kasoon | Almora | 14 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 33 | Banthok | Almora | 10 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Pati | | | | | | |
| 34 | Pati | Champawat | 0 | 7 | 11 | 5 |
| 35 | Kamlekh | Champawat | 11 | 11 | 1 | 2 |
| 36 | Raulamel | Champawat | 13 | 15 | 0 | 2 |
| 37 | Toli | Champawat | 4 | 12 | 2 | 1 |
| 38 | Goom | Champawat | 9 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Cluster Shama | | | | | | |
| 39 | Malka dugarcha | Bageswar | 12 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| 40 | Gogina dhari | Bageswar | 7 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 41 | Hinari | Bageswar | 10 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| 42 | Malla Namik | Pithoragarh | 15 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| 43 | Talla Namik | Pithoragarh | 4 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | | 362 | 441 | 62 | 43 |

Table 2. Grade-wise distribution of children who attend village learning centres.

| S No. | Location | Children B=boy G=girl | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|----|
| | | < 6 years old | | Classes 1-5 | | Classes 6-8 | | Classes > 8 | |
| | | B | G | B | G | B | G | B | G |
| Cluster Ganai gangoli | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Digarkoli | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Fadiyali | 0 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Gwari | 0 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| 4 | Kimtola | 2 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Bhanyani | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Cluster Binta | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Bhataura | 0 | 0 | 5 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | Matela | 0 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | Borkhola | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | Binta | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | Surna | 0 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Gopeswar | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Koteswar | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 | Gwar | 1 | 0 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| 13 | Mandal | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | Teda khansal | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 15 | Khalla | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| 16 | Kathoor | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| 17 | Siroli | 1 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 6 |
| 18 | Bandwara | 1 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 19 | Kandei | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 20 | Bamiyala | 0 | 0 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Badhani | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | Sundergaon | 1 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| 22 | Jakh | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| 23 | Chaatoli | 0 | 0 | 9 | 7 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| 24 | Chaurasain | 0 | 0 | 9 | 11 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 25 | Chaundali | 1 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 26 | Badhani | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 27 | Malai | 0 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 28 | Koli | 0 | 3 | 14 | 8 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Maichun | | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | Palyun | 0 | 0 | 8 | 13 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 30 | Mouni | 2 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 31 | Maniagar | 1 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| 32 | Kasoon | 1 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 33 | Banthok | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 3 |
| Cluster Pati | | | | | | | | | |
| 34 | Pati | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| 35 | Kamlekh | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| 36 | Raulamel | 4 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 37 | Toli | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| 38 | Goom | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Cluster Shama | | | | | | | | | |
| 39 | Malka | 0 | 0 | 8 | 12 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| | dugarcha | | | | | | | | |
| 40 | Gogina dhari | 0 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 41 | Hinari | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 42 | Malla Namik | 0 | 0 | 15 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 43 | Talla Namik | 0 | 0 | 4 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 41 | 45 | 236 | 263 | 128 | 127 | 18 | 50 |

Table 2 exhibits class-wise distribution of children who attend VLCs on a regular basis. 83% children coming to the VLCs represent 6-14 years age group. 55% are enrolled in primary schools and 28% in middle level schools. Although, the centres aim at catering to the needs of 6-14 years age group, younger children (9.5%) also come with their siblings. In some villages children above the age of 14 years attend the centres (7.5%). Some of them are weak in mathematics and come to the centre if the shikshika is good in the subject. Some older children, especially boys, come to play games such as cricket, badminton, football etc.

Table 3 shows caste wise distribution of children attending VLCs. 28% children represent socially disadvantaged section of society.

Table 3. Caste-wise distribution of children attending VLCs.

| S No. | Location | Children B= Boy G= Girl | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|----|---------|----|----------------|----|----------------|---|------------------------|----|
| | | Total | | General | | Schedule Caste | | Schedule Tribe | | Other backward classes | |
| | | B | G | B | G | B | G | B | G | B | G |
| Cluster Ganai gangoli | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Digarkoli | 10 | 7 | 10 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Fadiyali | 9 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Gwari | 10 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Kimtola | 10 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Bhanyani | 11 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 11 |
| Cluster Binta | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Bhataura | 5 | 18 | 5 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | Matela | 11 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | Borkhola | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | Binta | 10 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | Surna | 7 | 16 | 7 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Gopeswar | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Koteswar | 8 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 | Gwar | 10 | 18 | 10 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | Mandal | 9 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | Teda khansal | 7 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 15 | Khalla | 11 | 9 | 10 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 16 | Kathoor | 6 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 17 | Siroli | 9 | 17 | 9 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 18 | Bandwara | 7 | 14 | 6 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 19 | Kandei | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 20 | Bamiyala | 5 | 13 | 5 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Badhani | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | Sundergaon | 14 | 10 | 14 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 22 | Jakh | 12 | 15 | 9 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 |
| 23 | Chaatoli | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 24 | Chaurasain | 14 | 13 | 14 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 25 | Chaundali | 13 | 5 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 26 | Badhani | 11 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 27 | Malai | 11 | 6 | 11 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 28 | Koli | 14 | 16 | 14 | 13 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Maichun | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | Palyun | 11 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 30 | Mouni | 7 | 15 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| S No. | Location | Children B= Boy G= Girl | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----|---------|-----|----------------|-----|----------------|---|------------------------|----|
| | | Total | | General | | Schedule Caste | | Schedule Tribe | | Other backward classes | |
| | | B | G | B | G | B | G | B | G | B | G |
| 31 | Maniagar | 13 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 32 | Kasoon | 14 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 33 | Banthok | 10 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Pati | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 34 | Pati | 11 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 35 | Kamlekh | 12 | 13 | 12 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 36 | Raulamel | 13 | 17 | 11 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| 37 | Toli | 6 | 13 | 6 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 38 | Goom | 10 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cluster Shama | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 39 | Malka dugarcha | 12 | 18 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 40 | Gogina Dhari | 7 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 41 | Hinari | 10 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 42 | Malla Namik | 15 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| 43 | Talla Namik | 4 | 12 | 4 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 423 | 485 | 305 | 346 | 99 | 120 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 18 |

1a. Library in the centre

Each centre hosts a variety of fiction and nonfiction books including dictionaries, autobiographies, biographies for children as well as adult learners. On an average about 400 books are kept in each centre. For smaller children picture books, board books which contain full color illustrations with small easy words and simple sentences are chosen. Children attending classes 1-2 in schools like to read out loud concept books focused on specific themes such as colors, alphabet, numbers, animals, fruits, flowers, vegetables, body parts, shapes etc. These books help children identify different items which they find around themselves and also cultivate concentration and reading habits. Slightly older children read short story books, poems and nonfiction which come with lots of illustrations. After primary stages of schooling, a majority of children prefer to learn chapter-books which are organized in different sections and may or may not have artwork. By the age of 10 years, children like to read complex plots in stories and also prefer to read prose and poetry.



Figure 5. Based on their age and interests, children read books in the centre.

Older children, especially adolescent boys and girls, also read nonfiction and autobiographies or biographies in the centre. Adolescent girls and young women show a lot of interest in reading about human anatomy and physiology. In addition, the library in the

centre contains books which older students can refer to prepare for their exams and competitions. Further, adult women borrow books from the centre to read and return them after some time.

1b. Educational material

Educational material is provided to support learning among children and others in the centres. Last year, Khel Khel Mein, a collection of activities was provided to the centres which facilitators could use as a guide. In addition, a copy each of the book on the birds of Uttarakhand titled Uttarakhand ke pakshi and Manavi Sanskrit-balopnayas was given to the centres.

The programme of village learning centres aims to enable children to attain proficiency in Hindi reading and writing, solving mathematical questions and conducting structured activities in science, environment, drawing-painting, crafts and sports. Learning material fulfills this requirement and enables shikshikas to conduct activities in the centres. Some of the shikshikas make their own learning materials either by themselves or by accessing content in the internet.

During training at Almora, shikshikas are exposed to various ways by which children are actively involved in displaying their work in the centre and also during Bal-melas. In a majority of cases, children are asked to choose a piece of their own work to be put on the walls of the centre. This approach gives them an opportunity to choose, select and assess their own work. In new centres, the shikshikas take decisions on what to put on the walls and how to decorate the room so that it looks attractive and yet leaves open space for children to do various activities.



Figure 6. Educational material made by shikshikas is used to conduct activities in the centre.

Materials provided to the centres viz. charts, sketch pens, crayons adhesive tape, stapler, push pins etc. come handy during the process of children making decisions and trying to display their work for everyone to see. Further, it is important that displays on the walls and in the rooms are changed on a regular basis to keep them fresh and attractive. Shikshikas as well as margdarshikas see that children's writing, paintings, charts, mud and paper artefacts which

are often exhibited do not look stale and continue to be relevant to activities held. Table 4. Educational material provided to the centres.

| S No. | Item | Distribution | |
|-------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| | | Purchased this year | From old stock |
| 1 | Chart paper | 420 | - |
| 2 | Sketch pen | 180 | 2 |
| 3 | Color pencils | 34 | - |
| 4 | Water color | 38 | 3 |
| 5 | Crayons (set of 24) | 42 | - |
| 6 | Fevicol | 50 | - |
| 7 | Stapler pin | 3 | 2 |
| 8 | Adhesive tape | 48 | - |
| 9 | White board (3x2 ft) | 3 | - |
| 10 | Registers | 34 | 8 |
| 11 | Pencils | 35 boxes | 14 boxes |
| 12 | Diary | - | 5 |
| 13 | Eraser | 260 | 40 |
| 14 | Paper reem | 8 | 12 |
| 15 | White board markers | 7 | 8 |
| 16 | Scissor | 10 | 3 |
| 17 | Pencil sharpener | 220 | 10 |
| 18 | Chalk | 13 | 5 |
| 19 | Map of Uttarakhand | 6 | - |
| 20 | Globe | 4 | 4 |
| 21 | Map of India | 3 | - |
| 22 | Steel scale (12 inches) | 5 | - |
| 23 | Duster | - | 2 |
| 24 | Copy (136 pages) | 23 | 12 |
| 25 | Wall clock | 9 | - |
| 26 | Plastic mats (6 x 9 ft) | 8 | 12 |
| 27 | School mats (1.5 x 9 ft) | - | - |
| 28 | Locks | 2 | - |
| 29 | Football pump | 16 | 2 |
| 30 | Carom board (26 x 26 inches) | 3 | 1 |
| 31 | Carom board powder | 1 | 2 |
| 32 | Carom coins with striker | 11 | 5 |
| 33 | Badminton set | 32 | 6 |
| 34 | Shuttle cock | 172 | - |
| 35 | Cricket bat | 5 | - |
| 36 | Cricket ball | 26 | 3 |
| 37 | Ludo set | 30 | - |
| 38 | Skipping ropes | 23 | 14 |
| 39 | Football (no.5) | 15 | 3 |
| 40 | Chess board | 10 | 1 |
| 41 | Ring ball | - | 8 |

1c. Visits to village learning centres by USNPSS staff

This year, a total of 98 visits were made by USNPSS staff to provide guidance and to monitor progress of village learning centres (Table 5). Mostly, children attending primary schools come in the evening to village learning centres. Irrespective of caste, gender and economic status, all children sit and learn together. During visits, USNPSS staff held

discussions with children re their progress and shortcomings of the programme. Feedback is sought from communities and the CBOs too. Further, some visits were made with a specific purpose of evaluating progress using a questionnaire.

Table 5. Visits to village learning centres.

| S N | Centre | Date of visit | Children present | | | Impressions re overall performance | | |
|-----|------------|---------------|------------------|------|-------|------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| | | | Total | Boys | Girls | Very good | Good | Satisfactory |
| 1 | Binta | 5.4.2022 | 11 | 6 | 5 | - | - | 1 |
| 2 | Surna | 5.4.2022 | 21 | 12 | 9 | 1 | - | - |
| 3 | Bhataura | 5.4.2022 | 13 | 7 | 6 | - | 1 | - |
| 4 | Banthok | 12.4.2022 | 18 | 9 | 9 | 1 | - | - |
| 5 | Kasoon | 12.4.2022 | 18 | 6 | 12 | - | 1 | - |
| 6 | Bhalugara | 15.4.2022 | 14 | 3 | 11 | - | 1 | - |
| 7 | Fadiyali | 15.4.2022 | 14 | 9 | 5 | 1 | - | - |
| 8 | Bhanyani | 15.4.2022 | 16 | 9 | 7 | 1 | - | - |
| 9 | Gwadi | 15.4.2022 | 19 | 8 | 11 | 1 | - | - |
| 10 | Kimtola | 16.4.2022 | 18 | 9 | 9 | - | 1 | - |
| 11 | Maniagar | 21.4.2022 | 19 | 12 | 7 | - | - | 1 |
| 12 | Pati | 31.5.2022 | 17 | 6 | 11 | 1 | - | - |
| 13 | Toli | 1.6.2022 | 17 | 8 | 9 | - | 1 | - |
| 14 | Kamlekh | 1.6.2022 | 15 | 8 | 7 | 1 | - | - |
| 15 | Chaurasain | 6.6.2022 | 25 | 16 | 9 | - | - | 1 |
| 16 | Malai | 6.6.2022 | 14 | 8 | 6 | 1 | - | - |
| 17 | Koli | 6.6.2022 | 26 | 14 | 12 | - | 1 | - |
| 18 | Chaatoli | 7.6.2022 | 13 | 6 | 7 | - | - | 1 |
| 19 | Sundergaon | 7.6.2022 | 10 | 5 | 5 | - | 1 | - |
| 20 | Chaundali | 7.6.2022 | 21 | 13 | 8 | 1 | - | - |
| 21 | Jakh | 7.6.2022 | 22 | 11 | 12 | 1 | - | - |
| 22 | Pudiyani | 7.6.2022 | | | | Meeting | | |
| 23 | Bandwara | 8.6.2022 | 14 | 6 | 8 | 1 | - | - |
| 24 | Koteswar | 8.6.2022 | 14 | 9 | 5 | - | 1 | - |
| 25 | Khalla | 8.6.2022 | 13 | 6 | 7 | - | - | 1 |
| 26 | Kathoor | 9.6.2022 | 16 | 9 | 7 | - | 1 | - |
| 27 | Bacher | 9.6.2022 | | | | Meeting | | |
| 28 | Bamiyala | 9.6.2022 | 20 | 13 | 7 | - | 1 | - |
| 29 | Kandai | 9.6.2022 | 13 | 6 | 7 | - | - | 1 |
| 30 | Gopeswar | 10.6.2022 | | | | Meeting | | |
| 31 | Gwar | 10.6.2022 | 13 | 7 | 6 | 1 | - | - |
| 32 | Binta | 5.7.2022 | 12 | 4 | 8 | - | - | 1 |
| 33 | Bhataura | 5.7.2022 | 14 | 5 | 9 | - | - | 1 |
| 34 | Borkhola | 5.7.2022 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 1 | - | - |
| 35 | Palyun | 19.7.2022 | 18 | 7 | 11 | 1 | - | - |
| 36 | Mouni | 23.7.2022 | 15 | 8 | 7 | 1 | - | 1 |
| 37 | Banthok | 23.7.2022 | 9 | 3 | 6 | - | 1 | - |
| 38 | Digarkoli | 5.8.2022 | 16 | 7 | 9 | - | - | 1 |
| 39 | Gwari | 6.8.2022 | 12 | 5 | 7 | - | 1 | - |
| 40 | Rolmel | 9.8.2022 | 24 | 15 | 9 | 1 | - | - |
| 41 | Pati | 10.8.2022 | 16 | 11 | 5 | - | 1 | - |
| 42 | Palyun | 16.8.2022 | | | | - | 1 | - |
| 43 | Chaurasain | 25.8.2022 | 17 | 9 | 8 | - | - | 1 |
| 44 | Chaatoli | 26.8.2022 | 20 | 12 | 8 | 1 | - | - |
| 45 | Jakh | 26.8.2022 | | | | Meeting | | |
| 46 | Bandwara | 26.8.2022 | 13 | 5 | 8 | 1 | - | - |
| 47 | Khalla | 26.8.2022 | 16 | 7 | 9 | - | - | 1 |
| 48 | Koteswar | 26.8.2022 | 12 | 7 | 5 | - | 1 | - |
| 49 | Mandal | 27.8.2022 | 12 | 5 | 7 | 1 | - | - |
| 50 | Siroli | 27.8.2022 | 19 | 8 | 11 | 1 | - | - |
| 51 | Gwad | 27.8.2022 | 25 | 14 | 11 | 1 | - | - |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|---------------|------------|----|----|----|---------|---|---|
| 52 | Badhani | 28.8.2022 | 16 | 9 | 7 | 1 | - | - |
| 53 | Jakh | 28.8.2022 | 18 | 11 | 7 | - | 1 | - |
| 54 | Koli | 28.8.2022 | 26 | 11 | 15 | - | 1 | - |
| 55 | Matela | 9.9.2022 | 15 | 9 | 6 | - | - | 1 |
| 56 | Surna | 9.9.2022 | 16 | 5 | 11 | 1 | - | - |
| 57 | Maniagar | 15.9.2022 | 13 | 7 | 6 | - | - | 1 |
| 58 | Hinari | 18.10.2022 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 1 | - | - |
| 59 | Gogina | 18.10.2022 | | | | Meeting | | |
| 60 | Gogina Dhari | 18.10.2022 | 13 | 9 | 4 | - | 1 | - |
| 61 | Gogina | 19.10.2022 | 11 | 8 | 3 | Meeting | | |
| 62 | Malkadugarcha | 19.10.2022 | 28 | 11 | 17 | 1 | - | - |
| 63 | Goom | 1.11.2022 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 1 | - | - |
| 64 | Rolmel | 1.11.2022 | 28 | 16 | 12 | - | - | 1 |
| 65 | Kamlekh | 2.11.2022 | 17 | 9 | 8 | 1 | - | - |
| 66 | Pati | 2.11.2022 | 13 | 5 | 8 | 1 | - | - |
| 67 | Toli | 2.11.2022 | 12 | 6 | 6 | - | 1 | - |
| 68 | Koli | 16.11.2022 | 26 | 12 | 14 | - | 1 | - |
| 69 | Jakh | 17.11.2022 | 25 | 11 | 14 | - | 1 | - |
| 70 | Kandei | 17.11.2022 | 12 | 6 | 6 | - | - | 1 |
| 71 | Bamiyala | 17.11.2022 | 26 | 17 | 9 | - | 1 | - |
| 72 | Kathoor | 18.11.2022 | 15 | 8 | 7 | - | - | 1 |
| 73 | Teda khanshal | 18.11.2022 | 10 | 4 | 6 | - | - | 1 |
| 74 | Malai | 19.11.2022 | 14 | 6 | 8 | - | 1 | - |
| 75 | Chaurasain | 19.11.2022 | 18 | 11 | 7 | - | - | 1 |
| 76 | Maniagar | 25.11.2022 | 9 | 6 | 3 | Meeting | | |
| 77 | Surna | 22.12.2022 | 11 | 4 | 7 | 1 | - | - |
| 78 | Sundergaon | 7.1.2023 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 1 | - | - |
| 79 | Badhani | 7.1.2023 | 16 | 10 | 6 | - | 1 | - |
| 80 | Chaundali | 10.1.2023 | 11 | 5 | 6 | - | - | 6 |
| 81 | Chaurasain | 11.1.2023 | 14 | 7 | 7 | - | - | 1 |
| 82 | Maniagar | 5.1.2023 | 22 | 10 | 12 | - | - | 1 |
| 83 | Matela | 28.1.2023 | 12 | 6 | 6 | 1 | - | - |
| 84 | Surna | 28.1.2023 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 1 | - | - |
| 85 | Toli | 1.2.2023 | 17 | 9 | 8 | - | 1 | - |
| 86 | Raulmel | 1.2.2023 | 17 | 7 | 10 | 1 | - | - |
| 87 | Goom | 1.2.2023 | 12 | 4 | 8 | 1 | - | - |
| 88 | Pati | 2.2.2023 | 15 | 8 | 7 | 1 | - | - |
| 89 | Kamlekh | 2.2.2023 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 1 | - | - |
| 90 | Pati | 12.2.2023 | | | | Meeting | | |
| 91 | Banthok | 21.2.2023 | 10 | 4 | 6 | 1 | - | - |
| 92 | Chaurasain | 26.2.2023 | | | | Meeting | - | - |
| 93 | Badhani | 27.2.2023 | 18 | 8 | 10 | 1 | - | - |
| 94 | Jakh | 27.2.2023 | 23 | 11 | 12 | 1 | - | - |
| 95 | Malkadugarcha | 14.3.2023 | 22 | 8 | 14 | 1 | - | - |
| 96 | Hinari | 14.3.2023 | 16 | 8 | 8 | 1 | - | - |
| 97 | Namik | 15.3.2023 | 25 | 12 | 13 | 1 | - | - |
| 98 | Gogina | 16.3.2023 | 10 | 5 | 5 | - | 1 | - |



Figure 7. Interaction with children during visits to villages.

1d. Computer centres

During the year, a total of 9 computer centres were functional. Computer centres run for 3 hours every day, except for Mondays. Since children are at home on Sunday and like to come to the centre, Monday is observed as a holiday. Children attend in three batches and three children can practice in each batch. During winters when days are short, some centres run in the mornings and others in the afternoon. In Pudiyani village, the shikshika ran the centre from 5 o'clock in the morning. In all centres priority is given to girls. In each batch, 60% seats are occupied by girls. Minimum age for learners is 12 years (6th class onwards). In some centres, young women also come to learn computers.

This year, a new course was designed and executed from May 2022. In this course, each child gets an hour per day to practice on computers for 75 days. A typing software is used to learn Hindi and English typing. Further, children practice on MS Word software. Each day two computer related terms and one windows command and one command of MS Word are taught.

At the end of the course a ninety minutes test is held. Successful candidates are given a certificate.



Figure 8. Computer centre at Pati, district Champawat.

Since a majority of children and their parents never get an opportunity to touch a computer but want to learn, this has become a popular activity in villages. Learners shed hesitation and grow confidence to operate computers, laptops, inverters and printers in the centres.

Table 6. Computer learning centres.

| S. No. | Name of the centre | Cluster | Number of computer sets | Number of children in each batch |
|--------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Namik | Shama | 3 | 9 |
| 2 | Gogina | Shama | 3 | 9 |
| 3 | Bachher | Gopeshwar | 4 | 12 |
| 4 | Bamiyala | Gopeshwar | 3 | 9 |
| 5 | Chaurasain | Karnprayag | 3 | 9 |
| 6 | Pudiyani | Karnprayag | 3 | 9 |
| 7 | Maniagar | Maichun | 4 | 12 |
| 8 | Pati | Pati | 3 | 9 |
| 9 | Bhanyadi | Ganaigangoli | 2 | 6 |

1e. Visits to computer centres by USNPSS staff

During visits to computer centres, it was felt that duration of learning must be increased so that children could get more time to practice. Accordingly, course duration was extended from two to three months. Further, condition of equipment, both hardware and software, was assessed and wherever possible repairs were done in the centre itself. Irreparable equipment was either replaced or brought to Almora for mending. Daily progress and planning in the centre were assessed and difficulties faced by shikshikas were solved in the centres.

Table 7. Visits to computer centres.

| Serial number | Date | Centre | Serial number | Date | Centre |
|---------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | 12-04-2022 | Maniagar | 15 | 27-08-2022 | Bachher |
| 2 | 31-05-2022 | Pati | 16 | 13-10-2022 | Bhanyani |
| 3 | 01-06-2022 | Pati | 17 | 18-10-2022 | Gogina |
| 4 | 06-06-2022 | Chaurasain | 18 | 02-11-2022 | Pati |
| 5 | 07-06-2022 | Pudiyani | 19 | 05-01-2023 | Maniagar |
| 6 | 09-06-2022 | Bacher | 20 | 10-01-2023 | Chaurasain |
| 7 | 19-07-2022 | Maniagar | 21 | 02-02-2023 | Pati |
| 8 | 21-07-2022 | Maniagar | 22 | 26-02-2023 | Chaurasain |
| 9 | 05-08-2022 | Bhanyani | 23 | 14-03-2023 | Shama |
| 10 | 09-08-2022 | Pati | 24 | 14-03-2023 | Gogina |
| 11 | 11-08-2022 | Pati | 25 | 15-03-2023 | Namik |
| 12 | 13-08-2022 | Maniagar | 26 | 19-03-2023 | Bhanyani |
| 13 | 25-08-2022 | Chaurasain | 27 | 26-11-2022 | Pati |
| 14 | 26-08-2022 | Pudiyani | | | |

1f. Training of VLC and computer facilitators

Training sessions were developed by integrating experiences of shikshikas and margdarshikas running VLCs, computer centres and USNPSS staff. During training,

participants shared their experiences of working with children and women's groups and insights were drawn to take it to the next level to improve different sessions.

This year, a major part of training sessions was devoted to understand concepts and practical exercises given in the manual "khel khel mein". This activity book was developed last year to offer a structured framework for learning in VLCs. It offers the learners (both shikshikas and children) methods to conduct activities and accept or debate various concepts and practical exercises and in the process develop their own abilities of thinking, criticizing and exercising their own choices.

Creation of an enabling environment for learning through training meant that both trainers and trainees value each other's experiences and share mutual respect and support. Developing confidence to articulate issues and to take action formed an integral part of training. This was achieved by focusing on developing a conducive atmosphere to raise awareness, build knowledge and skills of participants. Interactive exercises were integrated with practical sessions so that participants do not lose interest or get bored.

Participants prepared charts and drawings which they took back for use in centres. Shikshikas learnt origami during training and back in the centres taught children to make caps, baskets, paper toys and other artefacts. In addition, shikshikas learnt to create various artefacts such as, utensils, birds, homes, agricultural tools with clay. Back in the village, children enjoyed working with clay and generate many more shapes using their own imagination and creativity.



Figure 9. Shikshikas trying to understand khel khel mein during training.

Table 8. Training of facilitators running VLCs and computer centres.

| Serial number | Duration | Type | Number of participants | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|----------|------------------------|------|--------|
| | | | Total | Male | Female |
| 1 | 13-05-2022-17-05-2022 | VLC | 24 | - | 24 |
| | 13-05-2022-17-05-2022 | Computer | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 12-06-2022-13-06-2022 | VLC | 10 | 4 | 6 |
| 3 | 11-07-2022-15-07-2022 | VLC | 31 | - | 31 |
| 4 | 11-07-2022-15-07-2022 | Computer | 5 | - | 5 |
| | 06-11-2022-10-11-2022 | VLC | 28 | - | 28 |

Learning to sing songs and performing bhav-geets is another important part of training. Singing and performing together also emphasized the crucial role of social and emotional development in a child's life. Shikshikas learnt a variety of songs that help develop imagination, emotions, movement, speaking and listening skills of children in the centres.

Bhav-geet also help in improving motor skills, balance and coordination of different body parts and social skills in children.

In the morning, all participants did yoga and physical exercises. Evenings were kept for games and sporting activities. The whole process rests on the idea of offering opportunities to girls to play and enjoy various games in a supportive and safe environment.

Each day a different team took up the responsibility of writing a report of the work carried out during training. Next morning, the report was presented before the group and participants were asked to give feedback on content of the report, reading style etc.

During training, computer facilitators learnt about running a three months basic course, designed to teach elementary skills to children and others in villages. The facilitators learnt various methods of building knowledge and developing skills in computer operation and maintenance, both desktops and laptops. They learnt to



Figure 10. Training of VLC facilitators

operate the machine, its accessories (UPS, batteries, printer etc.) and different software programmes. Further, they practice on a Hindi typing software followed by English typing. The facilitators learnt and practiced seventy-five computer related terms along with twenty commands of MS word and twelve basic windows operations. They also learnt to use printers, internet, web browsers etc. with the aim of teaching the same to children and others in their respective villages.



Figure 11. Training of computer facilitators.

All participants were able to type Hindi sentences in five days. A test was conducted at the end of training to assess the competence of learners. All participants scored more than 80%.

1g. Workshop of CBOs

In June 2022, a two-days' workshop was organized for partner organizations to build knowledge and develop skills in relation to programmes that they have been executing in villages. Discussions were focused on issues of village learning centres, computer centres especially with regard to the criteria for identification and selection of facilitators, monitoring of centres, methods of assessing progress of children, strategies of getting cooperation from villages and personal and collective growth of shikshikas. Khel Khel Mein, an activity book developed by USNPSS for use in the centres was discussed during training.

A new method of evaluation of children attending VLCs was developed by USNPSS last year. It was discussed in detail with partner organizations and some changes were made to make it more effective. In addition, issues emerging from work with women's groups and adolescent girls' groups were discussed in view of changes occurring in villages.



Figure 12. A workshop of CBOs at USNPSS.

Programmes for bal-mela and women's congregations were discussed. The USNPSS staff stressed on the issue of observing these events to display what children, women and adolescent girls have learnt and what they would like to do next year. USNPSS staff reiterated that these events should be observed as educational programmes and not as melas. Cultural programme could be a small part of these events but focus must be on educational activities.

1h. Bal mela

Organizing bal-melas is a popular activity which children, shikshikas and the village residents look forward to and practice for it to give their best. This year, a total of eight bal-melas were organized. The aim was to work together and celebrate children's achievements in VLCs and computer centres. Irrespective of their caste, economic status, gender and educational background, all people/parents came to attend bal-melas in villages. Last year, there was an issue of people of all castes not mixing together in two villages but after seeing the performance of children



Figure 13. Children coming to participate in a Bal-mela at Gogina dhari, district Bageswar

during the event, now all parents send their children to the VLCs. As the issue has been resolved this year, all community members sat and ate together.

Bal-melas affirmed children's competency in various fields and instilled a sense of pride among parents. Children took part in essay writing, debates, good hand writing and computer typing competitions. In Ganaigangoli, district Pithoragarh, several new ideas



Figure 14. During a Bal-mela, children explain a chart made in the centre.

and activities were introduced which children liked a lot. In Bamiyala, district Chamoli,

everyone from the village came and helped in organizing the event. Similarly, in Chaundali village, district Chamoli, the event nurtured a sense of empathy and admiration for each other. Parents and other participants appreciated the work of children as well as CBOs and extended their support.

This year, an attempt was made to assess organizational skills of CBOs and shikshikas in villages. A total of 10 indicators were identified to track performance of children, innovative ideas in organizing and managing the event, participation of village residents and local schools, expenditure etc. Table 10 shows details of assessment of each bal-mela held during the year.

Table 9. Bal-melas were organized in different locations.

| S No. | Cluster | Date | Place | Number of participants (approximate) | | |
|-------|--------------|------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| | | | | Children | Others | Total |
| 1 | Badhani | 20.11.2022 | Government primary school Chaundali | 250 | 50 | 300 |
| 2 | Binta | 27.11.2022 | Bhataura village | 100 | 50 | 150 |
| 3 | Maichun | 4.12.2022 | Kasoon village panchayat ghar | 120 | 30 | 150 |
| 4 | Shama | 11.12.2022 | Government primary school, Gogina | 225 | 25 | 250 |
| 5 | Ganaigangoli | 18.12.2022 | Government Junior high school | 110 | 40 | 150 |
| 6 | Pati | 25.12.2022 | Toli village Sanstha bhavan | 240 | 60 | 300 |
| 7 | Gopeswar | 8.1.2023 | Village Bamiyala | 150 | 250 | 400 |
| 8 | | 9.1.2023 | Public school Siroli | 150 | 100 | 250 |

Table 10. Assessment of Bal melas.

| Cluster | Chaundali | Bhataura | Kasoon | Gogina | Digarkoli | Toli | Bamiyala | Siroli |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Date | 20-11-22 | 27-11-22 | 04-12-22 | 09-12-22 | 18-12-22 | 25-12-22 | 08-01-23 | 09-01-23 |
| Indicators | | | | | | | | |
| Originality | Charts exhibition | - | Debate topics | Story, general knowledge | Skits | Skits | Skits | self-written poems |
| Innovative ideas | Charts exhibition | - | - | - | Math competition | Formal clothing | - | Charts and clay work |
| People's cooperation | Awards to children | - | Good participation of people | Cooperation from adolescents | Women's cooperation | Participation of people | Participation of people | Participation of people |
| Message to villagers | Yes, through charts | - | - | - | Through skits | Through skits | - | - |
| Diversity in activities | yes | - | Yes | yes | Yes | yes | Yes | yes |
| Team spirit | High | Low | Low | High | Low | High | High | High |
| Awards to children | good | Not good | Not good | unorganized | Very good | unorganized | Very good | Very good |
| Food/ Snacks | Good | Good | Unorganized distribution | Unorganized distribution | Good | Good | Very good | Very good |
| Sports | Good | Bad | Not good | Good | Good | Not good | Not good | Not good |
| Sound system | Good | Good | Unorganized | normal | Normal | Not good | Good | Good |

The results of this assessment were discussed with all shikshikas, supervisors and CBOS during meetings at USNPSS Almora and in villages.

1i. Facilitators (shikshikas)

Table 11 exhibits a brief profile of shikshikas running VLCs and computer centres. A majority of shikshikas (58%) are graduates and post graduates and 37% have completed their intermediate schooling. 6% of women who dropped out after completing their high school belong to remote villages where facilities for further studies do not exist and students have to trudge long distances to reach an intermediate school in a different village. Average age of shikshikas is 23 years and 25% belong to scheduled caste and other backward class population.

Table 11. Profile of facilitators running VLCs and computer centres.

| Serial number | Centre | Facilitators | | | |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|-----|--------------|---------------|
| | | Name | Age | Education | Joining |
| 1 | Digarkoli | K Dasila | 19 | Intermediate | June 2022 |
| 2 | Fadiyali | M Mehra | 22 | MA | October 2019 |
| 3 | Gwari | K Pathni | 21 | BA | November 2021 |
| 4 | Kimtola | I Beri | 21 | MA | April 2020 |
| 5 | Bhanyani | A Bohra | 21 | BA | January 2022 |
| 6 | Bhataura | N Kaira | 22 | BA | May 2022 |
| 7 | Matela | S Rawat | 22 | BA | July 2022 |
| 8 | Borkhola | M Bora | 34 | BA | August 2014 |
| 9 | Binta | G Kaira | 24 | MA, ITI | June 2019 |
| 10 | Surna | D Rawat | 30 | Intermediate | May 2022 |
| 11 | Koteswar | P Bisht | 22 | MA | February 2017 |

| Serial number | Centre | Facilitators | | | |
|---------------|----------------|--------------|-----|--------------|----------------|
| | | Name | Age | Education | Joining |
| 12 | Gwar | N Bisht | 24 | BA | December 2018 |
| 13 | Mandal | S Bisht | 20 | Intermediate | July 2021 |
| 14 | Teda khanshal | J Rawat | 19 | Intermediate | November 2021 |
| 15 | Khalla | Chanda Bisht | 19 | Intermediate | May 2022 |
| 16 | Kathoor | M Bisht | 19 | Intermediate | April 2022 |
| 17 | Siroli | S Bisht | 19 | Intermediate | July 2022 |
| 18 | Bandwara | P Rawat | 21 | BA | November 2021 |
| 19 | Kandei | P Rawat | 26 | BA | June 2018 |
| 20 | Bamiyala | U Rawat | 29 | BA | July 2016 |
| 21 | Sundergaon | K Sagoi | 20 | Intermediate | April 2021 |
| 22 | Jakh | R Negi | 22 | MA | April 2018 |
| 23 | Chaatoli | R Negi | 20 | BA | July 2019 |
| 24 | Chaurasain | Kavitha | 24 | MA | July 2022 |
| 25 | Chaundali | R Rawat | 29 | MA | October 2014 |
| 26 | Badhani | S Arya | 23 | M Com | March 2021 |
| 27 | Malai | A Bhandari | 23 | BA | March 2021 |
| 28 | Koli | V Pawar | 20 | Intermediate | June 2022 |
| 29 | Palyun | R Arya | 19 | Intermediate | November 2022 |
| 30 | Mouni | G C Joshi | 58 | Intermediate | May 2012 |
| 31 | Maniagar | R Arya | 22 | BA | April 2021 |
| 32 | Kasoon | R Arya | 20 | Intermediate | April 2021 |
| 33 | Banthok | A Arya | 20 | Intermediate | May 2022 |
| 34 | Pati | P Pachauri | 19 | Intermediate | September 2022 |
| 35 | Kamlekh | K Bora | 19 | Intermediate | October 2021 |
| 36 | Raulamel | C Mouni | 20 | Intermediate | July 2022 |
| 37 | Toli | K Gahtori | 20 | Intermediate | April 2022 |
| 38 | Goom | M Bhatt | 23 | BA | November 2020 |
| 39 | Malka dugarcha | H Rautela | 20 | BA | September 2022 |
| 40 | Gogina Dhari | K Devi | 27 | Intermediate | April 2018 |
| 41 | Hinari | G Rautela | 30 | High School | April 2022 |
| 42 | Malla Namik | M Arya | 22 | High School | October 2019 |
| 43 | Talla Namik | G Kanyari | 19 | High School | April 2022 |
| 44 | Maniagar | D Arya | 28 | BA | January 2022 |
| 45 | Bamiyala | A Rawat | 22 | BA | April |
| 46 | Bacher | J Bisht | 21 | BA | May 2022 |
| 47 | Namik | S Arya | 27 | BA | June 2022 |
| 48 | Gogina | S Rautela | 19 | BA | December 2020 |
| 49 | Pudiyani | A Pawar | 19 | Intermediate | June 2022 |
| 50 | Chaurasaina | M Negi | 22 | BA | March 2022 |
| 51 | Pati | A Pangariya | 29 | MA | September 2022 |
| 52 | Bhanyani | M Bohra | 21 | BA | March 2021 |

1j. Assessment of children attending VLCs

A non-judgmental assessment form is designed by USNPSS to capture progress of children attending VLCs. This exercise is carried out twice a year to understand children's mental, emotional and social development. Inquiries are made regarding children's progress in subjects of mathematics, language, environment, science and general knowledge. In addition, overall upkeep of the place, children's health and hygiene, regular attendance

methods and types of activities (songs, skits, sports, stories, origami, mud work etc.) are taken as measures to determine progress in the centre.

During assessment, the USNPSS staff take observations and also administer a rapid question-based performance analysis to record children's strengths, skills and weaknesses. The aim is to inform practice and approach of running VLCs to make the whole programme more effective and add value to it. Assessment in VLCs helps in three ways:

- A data-base is developed which helps USNPSS and its partner organizations to make decisions about immediate and long-term programme interventions. This also helps in designing training programmes for facilitators and supervisors. Information also helps in developing activity-books and other educational material for children
- Learning outcomes of children are recorded and used for improvements in future
- Insights generated from data analysis are shared with parents and others in communities to seek their feedback. This measure involves communities in their children's learning and development and also creates a support system for the programme

During the course of its 56 visits to VLCs this year, the USNPSS staff attempted to assess performance of children. A total of 35 centres were evaluated for the first time and 21 centres for a second time. Table 12 exhibits that 76% centres showed improvement from the first to the second time. Improvements were reflected in cleanliness of children, expressions, planning of activities and maintenance of centres. Children also showed improvements in general knowledge, language, numerical ability and environmental aspects of learning. 5.4% centres scored more than 90 whilst 30.4% fell in 80-90 marks bracket. A majority of centres were in 60-70 bracket and just one centre exhibited 50-60% marks range.

It was observed that the idea of putting a compulsory time for reading a book in the centre has worked well. This has helped children to cultivate a habit of reading. It was also noticed that children who attend the centres on a regular basis are better readers than those who came on an irregular basis. Children like visits of USNPSS staff and welcome them. For example, a child who was absent on the day of the visit came to meet us and made a request to visit the centre next day also. In another village, without any hesitation, a child came out of the centre and invited us to come in.

Table 12. Assessment of VLCs.

| SI | Name of VLC | District | Cluster | Date | Assessment No | Centre display & maintenance | Children cleanliness | Centre planning | Children's expression | General knowledge | Language reading & writing | Numerical ability | Env & creative work | Maintenance of material | Attendance | Grand Total |
|----|--------------|-------------|----------|------------|---------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 1 | Bhatoura | Almora | Binta | 05-07-2022 | I | 9 | 9.4 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 7.5 | 4 | 5.6 | 9 | 4.1 | 62.6 |
| 2 | Binta | Almora | Binta | 05-04-2022 | I | 5 | 9.1 | 6 | 6.6 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 6.7 | 69.4 |
| 3 | Borkhola | Almora | Binta | 05-07-2022 | I | 8 | 8.6 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 6.5 | 8 | 8.3 | 8 | 6.4 | 76.8 |
| 4 | Matela | Almora | Binta | 09-09-2022 | I | 8 | 7.1 | 5 | 7.9 | 7 | 7.5 | 6 | 7.3 | 6 | 7.1 | 68.9 |
| 5 | Matela | Almora | Binta | 28-01-2023 | II | 9 | 10 | 9 | 5.8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 5.5 | 81.3 |
| 6 | Surna | Almora | Binta | 05-04-2022 | I | 6 | 9.4 | 3 | 10 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 7 | 6.8 | 6 | 8.7 | 69.9 |
| 7 | Surna | Almora | Binta | 28-01-2023 | II | 9 | 9.7 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 3.2 | 87.9 |
| 8 | Bhanyadi | Pithoragarh | Ganai | 15-04-2022 | I | 9 | 9.7 | 6 | 8.1 | 7 | 6.5 | 9 | 6.5 | 9.5 | 7.6 | 78.9 |
| 9 | Digarkoli | Pithoragarh | Ganai | 05-08-2022 | I | 3 | 10 | 6 | 8.8 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 3.5 | 8.8 | 72.1 |
| 10 | Fadiyali | Pithoragarh | Ganai | 15-04-2022 | I | 7 | 8.8 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 5.5 | 8.6 | 9 | 5.8 | 73.7 |
| 11 | Gwadi | Pithoragarh | Ganai | 16-04-2022 | I | 8.5 | 9.6 | 4 | 9.5 | 7 | 5.5 | 7 | 8.5 | 8 | 7.6 | 75.2 |
| 12 | Kimtola | Pithoragarh | Ganai | 16-04-2022 | I | 7 | 8.8 | 4 | 6.2 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 5.2 | 10 | 6.7 | 62.9 |
| 13 | Banthok | Almora | Maichun | 12-04-2022 | I | 9 | 10 | 4 | 7.5 | 4 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 9 | 7.5 | 2.1 | 62.1 |
| 14 | Banthok | Almora | Maichun | 23-07-2022 | I | 10 | 10 | 9 | 6.7 | 4.5 | 5.5 | 6 | 9.5 | 8 | 4.7 | 73.9 |
| 15 | Banthok | Almora | Maichun | 21-02-2023 | II | 9 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6.5 | 9 | 6.5 | 73 |
| 16 | Kasoon | Almora | Maichun | 12-04-2022 | I | 5.2 | 5.3 | 5 | 7.5 | 5 | 5 | 3.5 | 7.4 | 5.2 | 5 | 54.1 |
| 17 | Maniagar | Almora | Maichun | 21-04-2022 | I | 7 | 9.3 | 4 | 8.3 | 7 | 7.5 | 8 | 6.6 | 7 | 7.6 | 72.3 |
| 18 | Mouni | Almora | Maichun | 23-07-2022 | II | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 7.5 | 8 | 8.5 | 10 | 6.8 | 88.8 |
| 19 | Palyun | Almora | Maichun | 19-07-2022 | I | 8 | 9.6 | 6 | 8.2 | 7 | 6.5 | 5.5 | 5.3 | 9 | 6.6 | 71.7 |
| 20 | Bamiyala | Chamoli | NJMKS | 28-08-2022 | I | 7.5 | 8.4 | 10 | 7.5 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 8.6 | 9 | 7.3 | 84.3 |
| 21 | Bandwara | Chamoli | NJMKS | 28-08-2022 | I | 9 | 9 | 9 | 7.5 | 7.5 | 9.5 | 10 | 8.8 | 9 | 6.8 | 86.1 |
| 22 | Dogadi | Chamoli | NJMKS | 08-06-2022 | I | 6 | 7.9 | 10 | 6.8 | 6.5 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 5.4 | 72.6 |
| 23 | Gwad | Chamoli | NJMKS | 10-06-2022 | I | 10 | 7 | 7 | 7.5 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 4.5 | 70.0 |
| 24 | Kathyud | Chamoli | NJMKS | 09-06-2022 | I | 5.5 | 9.4 | 10 | 8.6 | 7 | 9 | 3 | 4.8 | 8 | 9.3 | 74.6 |
| 25 | Kathyud | Chamoli | NJMKS | 18-11-2022 | II | 9 | 10 | 6 | 4.5 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6.5 | 9 | 9.6 | 73.6 |
| 26 | Khalla | Chamoli | NJMKS | 09-06-2022 | I | 7 | 9 | 9 | 9.2 | 10 | 7.5 | 6.5 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 75.2 |
| 27 | Koteshwar | Chamoli | NJMKS | 26-08-2022 | I | 10 | 9.4 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 9.5 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 8.8 | 90.7 |
| 28 | Mandal | Chamoli | NJMKS | 27-08-2022 | I | 10 | 9.2 | 10 | 9.2 | 8 | 9 | 4.5 | 8.6 | 10 | 8.3 | 86.8 |
| 29 | Siroli | Chamoli | NJMKS | 28-08-2022 | I | 9 | 9.6 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 8.5 | 7.5 | 9.6 | 8 | 7.7 | 84.9 |
| 30 | Teda Khansal | Chamoli | NJMKS | 18-11-2022 | I | 7 | 6.2 | 6 | 6.8 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 7.5 | 64.5 |
| 31 | Goom | Champawat | PSS Pati | 01-02-2023 | II | 8 | 10 | 9 | 7.5 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 6.5 | 82 |
| 32 | Kamlekh | Champawat | PSS Pati | 01-06-2022 | I | 4 | 6.9 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 7.5 | 7.5 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 65.9 |
| 33 | Kamlekh | Champawat | PSS Pati | 02-02-2023 | II | 7 | 8.5 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 6.5 | 8 | 4 | 5.2 | 66.2 |
| 34 | Pati | Champawat | PSS Pati | 31-05-2022 | I | 6 | 9.8 | 3 | 10 | 5 | 9 | 9.5 | 8.6 | 8 | 6.3 | 75.2 |
| 35 | Pati | Champawat | PSS Pati | 02-02-2023 | II | 5 | 9.3 | 7 | 5.2 | 7 | 8.5 | 10 | 8 | 7 | 9.1 | 76.1 |

| Sl | Name of VLC | District | Cluster | Date | Assessment No | Centre display & maintenance | Children cleanliness | Centre planning | Children's expression | General knowledge | Language reading & writing | Numerical ability | Env & creative work | Maintenance of material | Attendance | Grand Total |
|----|-------------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 36 | Raulmel | Champawat | PSS Pati | 09-08-2022 | I | 8 | 7.1 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 7.5 | 7 | 6.7 | 7 | 7.5 | 67.8 |
| 37 | Raulmel | Champawat | PSS Pati | 01-02-2023 | II | 9 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 5.9 | 79.9 |
| 38 | Toli | Champawat | PSS Pati | 01-06-2022 | I | 9 | 10 | 4 | 10 | 6 | 8.5 | 9.5 | 9 | 7 | 6.6 | 79.6 |
| 39 | Toli | Champawat | PSS Pati | 01-02-2023 | II | 8 | 9.6 | 10 | 6.8 | 4.5 | 9 | 7.5 | 8 | 8 | 9.7 | 81.1 |
| 40 | Gogina | Bageshwar | PSS Shama | 16-03-2023 | II | 8.5 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 8.5 | 7.5 | 9.5 | 10 | 7 | 6.5 | 81.5 |
| 41 | Hinari | Bageshwar | PSS Shama | 18-10-2022 | I | 10 | 9.1 | 10 | 8.8 | 5 | 7.5 | 9 | 8.4 | 10 | 5.8 | 83.6 |
| 42 | Hinari | Bageshwar | PSS Shama | 14-03-2023 | II | 10 | 9.8 | 7 | 10 | 7 | 7.5 | 8 | 6.5 | 7 | 7.8 | 80.6 |
| 43 | Namilk | Bageshwar | PSS Shama | 15-03-2023 | II | 10 | 9.4 | 7 | 7.5 | 6 | 6.5 | 7.5 | 8.5 | 9 | 6.4 | 77.8 |
| 44 | Ratir-kethi | Bageshwar | PSS Shama | 14-03-2023 | II | 8.5 | 10 | 6 | 4.5 | 8.5 | 5.5 | 8 | 8.5 | 8 | 9.7 | 77.2 |
| 45 | Badhani | Chamoli | SHAPE | 07-01-2023 | II | 10 | 10 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 5.5 | 81.5 |
| 46 | Chaurasain | Chamoli | SHAPE | 25-08-2022 | I | 6 | 9.4 | 3 | 5.9 | 7 | 7.5 | 8.5 | 7 | 6 | 6.2 | 66.5 |
| 47 | Chaurasain | Chamoli | SHAPE | 11-01-2023 | II | 6 | 7.9 | 6 | 5.4 | 7 | 7.5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 62.8 |
| 48 | Chhatoli | Chamoli | SHAPE | 07-06-2022 | I | 9 | 8.6 | 10 | 9.1 | 7 | 7 | 7.5 | 8.4 | 10 | 6.9 | 83.5 |
| 49 | Choudali | Chamoli | SHAPE | 07-06-2022 | I | 7 | 9.5 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 9.5 | 9 | 8 | 8.6 | 89.6 |
| 50 | Choudali | Chamoli | SHAPE | 10-01-2023 | II | 10 | 8.2 | 10 | 6.2 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 6.6 | 80 |
| 51 | Jakh | Chamoli | SHAPE | 16-11-2022 | II | 10 | 9.9 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 9.5 | 10 | 9.5 | 9 | 8.7 | 93.6 |
| 52 | Koli | Chamoli | SHAPE | 06-06-2022 | I | 7 | 9.6 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 8.6 | 72.2 |
| 53 | Koli | Chamoli | SHAPE | 16-11-2022 | II | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8.4 | 7 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 9.5 | 10 | 6.8 | 88.7 |
| 54 | Malai | Chamoli | SHAPE | 06-06-2022 | I | 9 | 9.8 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 7.3 | 87.1 |
| 55 | Malai | Chamoli | SHAPE | 19-11-2022 | II | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8.3 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 8.3 | 90.6 |
| 56 | Sundargaon | Chamoli | SHAPE | 07-01-2023 | II | 10 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 4.2 | 78.2 |

1k. Certificates to children

The issue of providing a certificate to learners who had completed a three months course attracted a lot of attention, both in communities and at USNPSS. Since young women and children were keen to get certificates as a form of validation of their competence acquired through training, USNPSS agreed to meet this demand and formalized the process. However, on completion of the basic course, the learners were to pass a test to receive certificates. Children who could not pass the test at first go were offered a second chance. Usually, they worked for a fortnight or a month to acquire desirable skills and received certificates after passing tests.

Certificates were provided to 102 learners who completed their basic course of three months and passed their tests. 19% learners represented scheduled caste population and 10% were from other backward classes. It is interesting to note that more girls (60%) received certificates than boys. Provision of getting a certificate also ensures that learners come to the centre on a regular basis and complete their course in time.



Figure 15. Certificate distribution ceremony at Maniagar, 13 Aug 2023

Another offshoot of this initiative has been an advancement towards achieving gender and caste equality in communities. Recognition strengthens integration and authenticates one to exercise choices that may not be available to him/her due to social discrimination in certain fronts. In the centre, the criteria for validation and appreciation are not gender, caste or economic background but competency that the learners acquire and exercise to further their interests and choices.

Table 13. Children who received a certificate after completing their basic course on computers.

| Sl | Centre sl | Name of candidate | Sex | Caste | Father's name | Centre | Course starting date | End date |
|----|-----------|---------------------|-----|-------|---------------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 1 | Ishika Panwar | F | Gen | Kishan Singh Panwar | Bachher | 19 July 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 2 | 2 | Prarthana Maitthani | F | Gen | Shanti Prasad Maitthani | Bachher | 19 July 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 3 | 3 | Sadhana Rawat | F | Gen | Padmendra Singh Rawat | Bachher | 19 July 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 4 | 4 | Siddhi Rawat | F | Gen | Mahendra Singh Rawat | Bachher | 19 July 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 5 | 5 | Sumitra Panwar | F | Gen | Jai Singh Panwar | Bachher | 19 July 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 6 | 6 | Tanishika Panwar | F | Gen | Harshvardhan Singh Panwar | Bachher | 19 July 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 7 | 7 | Shakshi Rawat | F | Gen | Pushkar Singh | Bachher | 20 July 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 8 | 8 | Sidharth Rawat | M | Gen | Mahendra Singh Rawat | Bachher | 20 July 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 9 | 9 | Badri Kumar | M | SC | Vikram Lal | Bachher | 21 July 2022 | 21 December 2022 |
| 10 | 11 | Astha Rawat | F | Gen | Dalbir Singh Rawat | Bachher | 1 December 2022 | 28 March 2023 |
| 11 | 1 | Himanshi Rawat | F | Gen | Himmat Singh Rawat | Bamiyala | 1 June 2022 | 25 September 2022 |
| 12 | 2 | Diya Bisht | F | Gen | Sandeep Singh Bisht | Bamiyala | 2 June 2022 | 25 September 2022 |
| 13 | 3 | Kalpana Rawat | F | Gen | Baliram Singh Rawat | Bamiyala | 3 June 2022 | 25 September 2022 |
| 14 | 4 | Ayushi Rawat | M | Gen | Raghubir Singh Rawat | Bamiyala | 4 June 2022 | 25 September 2022 |
| 15 | 5 | Dipti Bisht | F | Gen | Sandeep Singh Bisht | Bamiyala | 5 June 2022 | 25 September 2022 |
| 16 | 6 | Partima Rawat | F | Gen | Baliram Singh Rawat | Bamiyala | 6 June 2022 | 25 September 2022 |
| 17 | 1 | Amisha | F | OBC | Harish Singh | Bhanyani | 1 May 2022 | 24 August 2022 |
| 18 | 2 | Raveena | F | OBC | Dalip Singh | Bhanyani | 2 May 2022 | 24 August 2022 |
| 19 | 3 | Ashine | F | SC | Harish Ram | Bhanyani | 3 May 2022 | 24 August 2022 |
| 20 | 4 | Diksha | F | SC | Vinod Kumar | Bhanyani | 4 May 2022 | 24 August 2022 |
| 21 | 5 | Rohit Singh | M | OBC | Darpan Singh | Bhanyani | 1 September 2022 | 5 December 2022 |
| 22 | 6 | Anshu Singh | M | OBC | Mahesh Singh | Bhanyani | 2 September 2022 | 5 December 2022 |
| 23 | 7 | Anushka | F | OBC | Arjun Singh | Bhanyani | 3 September 2022 | 5 December 2022 |
| 24 | 8 | Akshay Singh | M | OBC | Gulap Singh | Bhanyani | 4 September 2022 | 5 December 2022 |
| 25 | 9 | Rakesh Singh | M | OBC | Dalip Singh | Bhanyani | 5 September 2022 | 5 December 2022 |

| Sl | Centre sl | Name of candidate | Sex | Caste | Father's name | Centre | Course starting date | End date |
|----|-----------|-------------------|-----|-------|------------------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 26 | 10 | Soniya | F | SC | Harish Ram | Bhanyani | 6 September 2022 | 5 December 2022 |
| 27 | 11 | Priyanshu Singh | M | OBC | Heera Singh | Bhanyani | 11 November 2022 | 30 March 2023 |
| 28 | 12 | Aanchal | M | SC | Rajkumar | Bhanyani | 12 November 2022 | 30 March 2023 |
| 29 | 13 | Dayal Singh | M | OBC | Bahirav Singh | Bhanyani | 13 November 2022 | 30 March 2023 |
| 30 | 14 | Minakshi | F | SC | Rajendra Prasad | Bhanyani | 14 November 2022 | 30 March 2023 |
| 31 | 15 | Abhishek Singh | M | OBC | Kamal Singh | Bhanyani | 15 November 2022 | 30 March 2023 |
| 32 | 7 | Ayush Negi | M | Gen | Balveer Singh | Chaurasain | 1 June 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 33 | 8 | Isha Negi | F | Gen | Raghuvir Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 1 June 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 34 | 9 | Kashish Negi | F | Gen | Birendra Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 1 June 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 35 | 10 | Kavita | F | SC | Guddu Lal | Chaurasain | 1 June 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 36 | 11 | Kavita Negi | F | Gen | Jay Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 1 June 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 37 | 12 | Kumkun Negi | F | Gen | Mohan Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 1 June 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 38 | 13 | Prachi | F | Gen | Bijendra Singh | Chaurasain | 1 June 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 39 | 14 | Sanya Negi | F | Gen | Vinod Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 1 June 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 40 | 15 | Upasana Negi | F | Gen | Surendra Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 1 June 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 41 | 16 | Anchal Negi | M | Gen | Surendra Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 10 September 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 42 | 17 | Anuja Negi | F | Gen | Vinod Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 10 September 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 43 | 18 | Dharamveer Negi | M | Gen | Raghuvir Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 10 September 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 44 | 19 | Prashant negi | M | Gen | Kartik Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 10 September 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 45 | 20 | Shakshi Negi | F | Gen | Yashwant Singh | Chaurasain | 10 September 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 46 | 21 | Shriyanshi Negi | F | Gen | Narendra Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 10 September 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 47 | 22 | Tajvar Negi | M | Gen | Raghuvir Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 10 September 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 48 | 23 | Taniya Negi | F | Gen | Vinod Singh Negi | Chaurasain | 10 September 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 49 | 1 | Chandani Rautela | M | Gen | Pushkar Singh Rautela | Gogina | 1 June 2022 | 15 September 2022 |
| 50 | 2 | Chandani Rautela | M | Gen | Trilok Singh Rautela | Gogina | 1 June 2022 | 15 September 2022 |
| 51 | 3 | Gayatri Rautela | F | Gen | Balvant Singh Rautela | Gogina | 1 June 2022 | 15 September 2022 |
| 52 | 4 | Lala Rautela | F | Gen | Trilok Singh Rautela | Gogina | 1 June 2022 | 15 September 2022 |
| 53 | 5 | Yuvraj Rautela | M | Gen | Dinesh Singh Rautela | Gogina | 1 June 2022 | 15 September 2022 |
| 54 | 6 | Ayushi Rautela | F | Gen | Nandan Singh Rautela | Gogina | 1 November 2022 | 30 March 2023 |
| 55 | 7 | Bachuli Banaula | F | Gen | Diwan Banaula | Maniagar | 1 May 2022 | 31 July 2022 |
| 56 | 8 | Devendra Kumar | M | SC | Mohan Ram | Maniagar | 1 May 2022 | 31 July 2022 |
| 57 | 9 | Janki Bhatt | F | Gen | Bala Dutt Bhatt | Maniagar | 1 May 2022 | 31 July 2022 |
| 58 | 10 | Kamlesh Kumar | M | SC | Mohan Ram | Maniagar | 1 May 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 59 | 11 | Komal | F | SC | Prakash Lal | Maniagar | 1 May 2022 | 31 July 2022 |
| 60 | 12 | Neetu Banaula | F | Gen | Mohan Singh Banaula | Maniagar | 1 May 2022 | 31 July 2022 |
| 61 | 13 | Pooja | F | SC | Rajendra Prasad | Maniagar | 1 May 2022 | 10 September 2022 |
| 62 | 14 | Prema | F | SC | Diwan Ram | Maniagar | 1 May 2022 | 31 July 2022 |
| 63 | 15 | Shobha | F | SC | Diwan Ram | Maniagar | 1 May 2022 | 31 July 2022 |
| 64 | 16 | Garima | F | Gen | Prem Singh Mehra | Maniagar | 1 November 2022 | 22 February 2023 |
| 65 | 17 | Sushma | F | SC | Jiwan Ram | Maniagar | 1 November 2022 | 22 February 2023 |
| 66 | 1 | Chandan Ram | M | SC | Balwant Ram | Namik | 1 June 2022 | 19 October 2022 |
| 67 | 2 | Jeewan Kumar | M | SC | Kundan Ran | Namik | 1 June 2022 | 20 October 2022 |
| 68 | 3 | Sundar Kumar | M | SC | Khadak Ram | Namik | 1 June 2022 | 18 October 2022 |
| 69 | 1 | Asha Pangaria | F | Gen | W/o Subhash Chandra Pangaria | Pati | 1 May 2022 | 31 July 2022 |
| 70 | 2 | Mansi Gahtodi | F | Gen | Chandrakant Gahtodi | Pati | 1 July 2022 | 30 September 2022 |
| 71 | 3 | Divya Paneru | F | Gen | Harish Paneru | Pati | 1 August 2022 | 31 October 2022 |
| 72 | 4 | Mayank Paneru | M | Gen | Harish Paneru | Pati | 1 August 2022 | 31 October 2022 |
| 73 | 5 | Rekha | F | Gen | W/o Subhash Chandra | Pati | 1 September 2022 | 30 November 2022 |
| 74 | 6 | Ashish Mehta | M | Gen | Prem Singh Mehta | Pati | 1 October 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 75 | 7 | Gaurav Pachouli | M | Gen | Ramesh Chandra Pachouli | Pati | 1 October 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 76 | 8 | Priyanshu Gahtori | M | Gen | Bhuwan Chandra Gahtodi | Pati | 1 October 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 77 | 9 | Sundar Mehta | M | Gen | Prem Singh Mehta | Pati | 1 October 2022 | 31 December 2022 |
| 78 | 10 | Babita Bisht | F | Gen | Rajendra Singh Bisht | Pati | 1 November 2022 | 31 January 2023 |
| 79 | 11 | Mansi Ladwal | F | Gen | Ram Singh Ladwal | Pati | 1 November 2022 | 31 January 2023 |
| 80 | 12 | Mayank Chauhan | M | Gen | Bhupendra Singh Chauhan | Pati | 1 November 2022 | 31 January 2023 |
| 81 | 13 | Anchal Bharti | M | SC | Ram Ratan Bharti | Pati | 1 January 2023 | 31 March 2023 |
| 82 | 14 | Anmol Gahtori | M | Gen | Devaki Nandan Gahtori | Pati | 1 January 2023 | 31 March 2023 |

| Sl | Centre sl | Name of candidate | Sex | Caste | Father's name | Centre | Course starting date | End date |
|-----|-----------|-------------------|-----|-------|------------------------|----------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 83 | 15 | Chandani Patani | F | Gen | Deepak Singh Patani | Pati | 1 January 2023 | 31 March 2023 |
| 84 | 16 | Gaurav Joshi | M | Gen | Jeevan Chandra Joshi | Pati | 1 January 2023 | 31 March 2023 |
| 85 | 17 | Rahul Gahtori | M | Gen | Naveen Chandra Gahtori | Pati | 1 January 2023 | 31 March 2023 |
| 86 | 1 | Abhishek Negi | M | Gen | Vijender Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 1 August 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 87 | 2 | Deepika Panwar | F | Gen | Gajendra Singh Panwar | Pudiyani | 1 August 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 88 | 3 | Krishna Negi | M | Gen | Virendra Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 1 August 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 89 | 4 | Prins Negi | M | Gen | Kishan Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 1 August 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 90 | 5 | Richa Panwar | F | Gen | Dalveer Singh Panwar | Pudiyani | 1 August 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 91 | 6 | Sagar Panwar | M | Gen | Raghuveer Sing Panwar | Pudiyani | 1 August 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 92 | 7 | Sania Negi | F | Gen | Virendra Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 1 August 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 93 | 8 | Tania Negi | F | Gen | Ashad Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 1 August 2022 | 1 November 2022 |
| 94 | 9 | Devesh Negi | M | Gen | Mukesh Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 4 November 2022 | 5 February 2023 |
| 95 | 10 | Gaurav Negi | M | Gen | Khushal Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 4 November 2022 | 5 February 2023 |
| 96 | 11 | Kashish Negi | F | Gen | Bhawan Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 4 November 2022 | 5 February 2023 |
| 97 | 12 | Riya Panwar | F | Gen | Dalveer Singh Panwar | Pudiyani | 4 November 2022 | 5 February 2023 |
| 98 | 20 | Riya Raj | F | SC | Manoj Kumar | Pudiyani | 4 November 2022 | 5 February 2023 |
| 99 | 21 | Saraswati Negi | F | Gen | Bhawan Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 4 November 2022 | 5 February 2023 |
| 100 | 22 | Shivani Panwar | F | Gen | Suhdev Singh Panwar | Pudiyani | 4 November 2022 | 5 February 2023 |
| 101 | 23 | Shubham Negi | M | Gen | Ranveer Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 4 November 2022 | 5 February 2023 |
| 102 | 24 | Teena Negi | F | Gen | Tola Singh Negi | Pudiyani | 4 November 2022 | 5 February 2023 |

2. Uttarakhand Mahila Parishad

Uttarakhand Women's Federation (Uttarakhand Mahila Parishad or UMP) is a network of rural women's groups associated with USNPSS through various programmes, especially village learning centres. The network provides support to rural hill women to organize and develop capabilities to understand and take action for development and gender equality in communities. The network provides continuous support and opportunities for leadership building so that adult, young women and adolescent girls can make a difference in their own lives and in communities.

All women of the village are members of a single group called whole village group or WVG. This approach of having WVGs in communities is important in terms of building solidarity and capacity in the group. WVGs defy the mainstream practice of forming small groups in the community, for example self-help groups, and uphold solidarity as a matter of strength which encourages women to take development problems in their own hands and take action.

UMP promotes women's development through an educational approach. Awareness generation, knowledge and skill building activities focus on overall development of women of all ages and their communities. Training and workshops, held at various levels, create a wider understanding of gender and development issues and encourage women to find solutions to their own problems. Through group activities, women provide support to each other and develop a sense of community. In brief, the following activities were taken up by women's groups this year:

2a. Guidance and counselling to women and adolescent girls

USNPSS staff provides personal and group counselling to women and adolescent girls on a variety of issues and encourages them to take action to resolve problems. Adolescent girls

seek guidance on issues such as enrolment for higher studies, choice of subjects, marriage, career, vocational training facilities available in villages and nearby towns, off-farm livelihoods, health etc. Adult women talk of issues such as violence at home due to alcoholism among men, human-wildlife conflict, income generation through farming, confidence building, pregnancy, nutrition, health, disputes at home and quarrels in the women's group/village etc. However, these two categories are not exclusive and overlapping of issues is noticed both in separate meetings of women's groups and adolescent girls' groups and in joint meetings of women and girls.

2b. Improved farming and income

Problems related to agriculture, forests, water etc. were discussed during meetings in villages and at USNPSS to find methods towards higher efficiency and better yields. Increasing human-wildlife conflict is an issue that took centre-stage during such discussions. Since crops in agricultural fields are damaged by monkeys, wild boars, deer and other animals a sense of growing disenchantment towards agriculture is noticeable in communities. Increasing incidences of landslides, mud flows, land subsidence have also been reported from villages.

USNPSS is providing support to people to install polyhouses to protect their crops from grazing animals and also to grow off-season vegetables to generate income. Last years' annual report contains a detailed report of installing polyhouses in villages. Field visits made during the year showed that all polyhouses were functioning well and people have been able to grow and sell vegetables in nearby markets. Further, this year, a polyhouse was installed in Palyun village. This activity of growing cash crops for sale in nearby markets is augmented by making women realize the nutritional value of local food and the benefits it can bring to their own and family well-being. Women's groups are encouraged to use fresh homegrown vegetables, millets and pulses at home and it is only the surplus that should be sold in the market.

2c. Collective funds

Women's groups meet every month to share ideas and plan activities that they take up in their villages. Several groups have created their own collective funds by saving money on a monthly basis. Over time, deposits increase and women buy large cooking and serving vessels, tables, chairs mattresses, and other accessories for use in villages. They let anyone rent it for a minimal charge during weddings and other social events in their own and neighboring villages. The amount so collected is deposited in the collective fund. Further, group members take out loans from the fund when they require it. Mostly, loans are taken out for wedding and other family functions and sometimes to buy an animal or for travelling purposes. An amount of one rupee per month is charged as interest on hundred rupees. Interests on the loans are reinvested in the main fund.

2d. Nutrition, health and hygiene

Campaigns on personal hygiene and village cleanliness are organized on a regular basis by CBOs and women's groups. In the hilly terrain of Uttarakhand, health care facilities remain inadequate. Government health care facilities are understaffed and ill-equipped. Even from the towns and district head-quarters, patients get quickly referred to the hospitals in the plains. In such a situation, preventive health care education and support services play an important role in meeting practical needs of people, especially women and girls.

Several non-monetary assets that exist in communities are mobilized to promote knowledge of health care, nutrition and hygiene in communities. Since all women of the village participate in monthly meetings of groups, this becomes an important forum to address concerns of health and hygiene in the community. Further, women and girls are more likely to be affected by inadequate provisions of health care services, direct discussions with them can conduit flow of relevant information to raise awareness re community health. In addition, meetings with women's groups and adolescent girls' groups in Almora include discussions on nutrition, health and hygiene. Women share certain common interests and experiences which become the basis of generating discussions on health care issues. The aim is to understand that health care is not just limited to provision of facilities but more about accessing those services with informed choices.

Preventive health care choices can help people avoid various ailments and promote overall well-being. For example, inculcating the practice of safe drinking water would help communities minimize incidences of stomach ache, jaundice, typhoid, dysentery, diarrhea etc. Safe sanitation practices also help to avoid common diseases. Importance of taking nutritious food is crucial in terms of ensuring overall well-being of women and their communities.

2e. Water tanks at Pata-Sunakiya region

In Pata-Sunakiya area, district Nainital, 99 tanks were built this year. These tanks were in addition to hundreds of tanks built earlier in Galla, Pata villages. Since the region experiences shortage of water almost all through the year, plastic lined water tanks are installed to collect and store rain water in times of abundance for use in lean periods. Further, water from all other sources available in the area (ravines, springs etc.) is collected and distributed equally among all households to store in polythene-lined



Figure 16. Meeting of USNPSS staff with the residents of Gajaar village, district Nainital.

tanks. The runoff from springs and ravines is harvested using simple pipes.

USNPSS staff made a visit to the area on 16.6.2022 to see the possibility of expanding the work which the organization has done in Pata and its neighboring villages. Meetings were held with community members in Gajaar, Pata and Sunakiya villages. Whilst discussions with women's groups of Pata focused on reviewing the programme of installing water tanks for income generation, communities in Gajaar and Sunakiya villages were new groups that wanted to install water tanks.



Figure 17. A water tank in Sunakiya village, district Nainital.

Later, men and women of Sunakiya village showed much interest in the activity and began to install water tanks. USNPSS purchased sheets for the tanks and made it available to people through a small group of some active local men at Galla village. Slowly some interested farmers from Satbunga, Supi, Dutkanedhar, Lodh, Darima, Kokilabna, Sunderkhal and Kaafani also received sheets to install water tanks.

The USNPSS staff made another visit to the area on 27.3.2023 to see the tanks in Sunakiya village and to interact with farmers. Members of women's group of Pata village also came to Sunakiya to attend the meeting.

2f. Providing support to computer and village learning centres

Support provided by women's groups to VLCs, computer and tailoring centres is an important input which eventually ensures community ownership and accountability to the programme. Owing to the presence of a women's group in a village, it is easy to open a VLC and to select a shikshika from there. Further, members of women's groups make visits to the centres. This practice has a direct bearing in the functioning of the centre as it ensures that shikshikas open the centres on a regular basis. In case, the shikshika is on leave, she must inform the president of the women's group and the CBO in advance.

In many villages, members of women's groups gather at the centre to hold monthly meetings. Shikshikas and margdarshikas also attend the meetings and share their views of children's progress in VLCs and computer centres. They also urge all women of the village to send their children regularly to the centres. Discussions regarding preparation and hosting of Bal-melas and women's congregations are also held during such meetings.

2g. Meetings at Almora

Training and networking among WVGs include monthly meetings, inter-village meetings and congregations of a cluster of villages. During meetings, women share their experiences, reflect on group activities and develop strategies to solve their problems and experiences. Meetings at Almora provide such an opportunity at a larger scale as women from Kumaon and Garhwal meet and connect with each other.

Restoring land: making it clean and beautiful

This year, the land near tailoring and knitting centre at Mani agar, district Almora, was cleaned with local people's cooperation. This piece of land was owned by a widow from a poor scheduled caste family. Despite her repetitive requests to neighbors, people continued to use it as a waste disposal site. Household waste such as food, plastic, metal, paper etc. was thrown there on a regular basis despite a warning from a woman that it will attract flies during summer and cause diseases.

The matter was discussed with women and girls in the tailoring and knitting centre. The participants said that the land-owner quarrels with others and they do not want to talk with her. More meetings were held to solve the problem but nothing happened. Then, the USNPSS staff visited the lady at her home. She was very happy that someone has come to talk to her and suggested that she would also come to clean the area. One day, women, young men and boys, girls came together and cleaned it. Then, the land was prepared to plant flower saplings and to sow seeds. Slowly, the whole area was transformed from a waste dumping yard to a site full of flowers. The local people took care that grazing animals do not destroy it. The widow called it a satisfying experience and gained respect in the community.

In a subsequent meeting in the centre, Prema Arya from Jogyura village said that the same problem exists in her own village too. "Women's group has not been formed there and we do not know how to solve the problem. No body listens to us. If we say something people make fun of us", she said. Discussions continued and the USNPSS staff stressed upon the importance of women's solidarity in the village. The meeting ended with women sharing food that they had agreed earlier to bring from home. Deepa Arya and Garima Mehra had made chole curry, Neetu Arya and Mamata Banaula had brought prasad made of wheat flour, Nandi Banaula had made chutney and USNPSS staff had got tea and fruits. Irrespective of their caste, all participants sat in a circle and ate.

Similarly, in Pati, district Champawat, the room to run the village learning centre was located close to a site where people would throw their domestic waste. It was all covered by bushes, especially nettle plant. The CBO hired a man for a day to clean it up but the site needed more work. USNPSS also runs a tailoring centre and a computer centre near the village learning centre.

During a meeting with women and girls who come to learn tailoring and computers, the issue of cleaning of the area was raised (4 June 2022). The USNPSS staff was also present in the meeting. After much discussions, all participants agreed to clean it by themselves. During the meeting, two young women said that they had come to Pati bazaar from nearby villages. "We have not come here to collect garbage", said one of the women. The other woman was hesitant because she thought that the news will spread and reach her village too. "People will make fun of us. How can we do such a work in the bazaar", she said. Discussions continued the next day too. Slowly, women agreed to clean the site.

Next day, women, some young men, USNPSS staff and the CBO congregated near the site. Slowly, a total of 16 people came and started to clean it up. The next day was 5th June-the world environment day-and the local people gathered again to dig pits and to sow seeds. The whole area looked clean and attractive. In two months, the area was covered with flowers of different varieties. Now, people gather there on a regular basis and clean it up.

By tradition rural women get negligible opportunities to raise their voices on issues of public concerns. Their access to strategic resources is limited as discriminatory socio-economic norms govern the society and institutions therein. In mundane circumstances, opportunities to meet to discuss issues of development are negligible for women. Being a part of a women's group ensures that they begin to pay attention, understand and articulate issues and take action to solve problems in their own villages and beyond. This is

Kasoon village

In Kasoon village, a village learning centre is functional for the last three years. The village is inhabited by scheduled caste population. When the USNPSS staff began to visit the village to form a women's group and also to track progress of children attending the centre, the issue of community health and of village cleanliness came up. The USNPSS staff started organizing women's meetings in the village. During discussions, a woman said, "why should we cut nettle bushes which have grown all over the place? *Sarkaar karegi* (government should take care of this) was the popular response among the village residents, be it any issue of collective interest or of a personal problem.

After many rounds of discussions, the village residents were ready to put domestic waste including plastic/polythene bags at one place and not to spread it on the village paths and mountain slopes. Further, they also took notice of the cleanliness of the room where the VLC was operating. Slowly, the village paths were cleaned and the room also became better.

During a meeting held on 13.07.2022, women said that they have been cleaning the village path on a regular basis. Young women were of the view that some income generation activity should start in Kasoon. Renu said, the nearby village of Mani agar has become a vocational training centre. We also want something like that in our village." In addition, the women said that this year they would host a function such as a bal-mela in Kasoon.

A bal-mela was held in Kasoon on 04.12.2022. The village residents took up responsibility of making arrangements for the programme. They took out mattresses etc. from their homes, arranged drinking water and made other arrangements. It was a matter of pride for them because people from neighboring villages came to Kasoon to attend the function.

not an easy process. It requires time and continuous nurturing of women's groups. Women who are hesitant to speak up in public meetings are encouraged and trained to talk in small groups. Even then, many of them feel shy. The facilitators therefore make more of an effort to ask them direct questions regarding their children, home etc. to build confidence to speak up. Once the initial hesitation is gone, women begin to articulate their concerns and take control of their lives.

UMP provides a forum to women's groups to meet regularly and share experiences. Besides training and exposure to new ideas such meetings provide several opportunities to women to network and share activities that they undertook in different villages to solve their problems.

During meetings at Almora, all activities taken up in villages were briefly reviewed. A total of 108 women participated, 65% belonged to general caste and 35% represented socially disadvantaged sections of society.

The issue of training of elected women representatives (EWR) in panchayats was discussed. Members of women's groups emphasized the need of training of EWRs so that they gain the courage to speak up in panchayat meetings. They also said that women need orientation to become familiar with government policies and schemes currently operational through block offices including gram pradhans.

Table 14. Meetings of women's groups were held at Almora.

| Serial number | Duration | Number of villages women came from | Number of women | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------|----|----|-----|
| | | | Total | General | SC | ST | OBC |
| 1 | 01-09-2022 - 02-09-2022 | 17 | 40 | 26 | 13 | 0 | 1 |
| 2 | 30-11-2022 - 01-12-2022 | 9 | 26 | 15 | 9 | 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 20-12-2022 - 21-12-2022 | 16 | 42 | 29 | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | | 108 | 70 | 35 | 2 | 1 |

Owing to traditional socio-economic norms, rural women are more vulnerable to impacts of environmental deterioration (farming land and forest degradation, soil erosion, landslides, water shortage etc.) and climate change (erratic rain and snowfall, droughts, floods etc.). During meetings, women discuss such issues and learn from each other. Further, they think of and plan activities that can help them solve their problems. Alcoholism and violence against women, education and health, gender and caste biases, protection of natural resource and farms, human-wildlife conflicts, village learning centres, computer centres, income generation activities for women and girls, roles and responsibilities of women's groups and strategies to strengthen unity were also discussed during meetings at Almora.



Figure 18. Meetings of women's groups at Almora.

Village Surna

A meeting of women's group in Surna village, district Almora, held on 9.9.2022 was attended by 58 members. Some of them had also come to attend a women's groups meeting in Almora. The meeting began with women sharing their experiences of and learnings from Almora meeting. Shanti Rawat who had come to Almora to attend women's meeting said,

"Earlier when I used to attend meetings in the village, I thought that we women cannot do any good in the group. Although I used to attend meetings, I was skeptical of our capabilities. I thought, we just talk here, go home and forget about it. When I reached Almora, I saw that so many women are doing constructive work for their villages and for their own self. By taking up and executing small projects in their villages, they had developed confidence and were ready to talk in the meetings anytime. They were not scared, not hesitant. Then, I realized that the examples that our supervisor gave during village meetings were all very true. This has been a life changing experience for me. Now I say to others in the village to go out and learn something new. Now, I have learnt tailoring and can work as a beautician too. Now, I have started earning money which is a new thing for me."

A meeting held in December 2022 was attended by 56 women members. The issue of holding a women's congregation was discussed. The president of the women's group, Preeti Rawat, said that they would like to make some contribution to the congregation from women's side. "We have collected some money in our common fund. We can make arrangements for tea and biscuits and also hire a mike for a day", Preeti said. Other members agreed and said that they can bring fire wood, milk, ginger etc. from home to make tea for women who would come from nearby villages to attend the congregation". Accordingly, the women's group made all arrangements for the event. The USNPSS staff was surprised to see that women had even borrowed furniture and utensils to serve tea and snacks from the government school. The congregation was held in an environment of women celebrating solidarity and cooperation with each other.

2h. Visits to villages to attend meetings of women's groups

During the year, USNPSS staff made several visits to villages to attend meetings of women's groups. Women's groups hold a meeting every month in their respective villages to discuss their concerns and to plan and conduct activities. For USNPSS staff, this is an opportunity to connect with them, listen to their concerns and offer suggestions to solve problems. In addition, USNPSS staff shares anecdotes and experiences of visiting other women's groups in Uttarakhand which helps women realize their specific goals.

USNPSS staff shares new information with women's groups which enables them to understand issues well and participate in public affairs. For example, sharing information regarding roles and responsibilities of panchayat members instantly brings up issues of women's reservation in village committees, their right to take decisions, hesitations and prejudices among women themselves and so on. Further, regular village meetings provide a platform to women's groups to reflect on their own experiences and activities. During meetings women listen to others point of view and respect each other.

Table 15. Visits to villages by USNPSS staff to attend women's meetings.

| S N | Village | Date | Number of participants | | | Theme |
|-----|--------------|------------|------------------------|-------|-----|--|
| | | | Women | Girls | Men | |
| 1 | Surna | 7-4-2022 | 44 | 4 | 0 | Taking turns to sue away monkeys, putting a door in VLC room, women in panchayats |
| 2 | Bhataura | 24-5-2022 | 13 | 2 | 0 | Strength and works of WVGs, importance of regular meetings, menace of wild animals |
| 3 | Maichun | 27-5-2022 | 19 | 6 | 0 | Reviving contacts, maintenance of Bal bhavan |
| 4 | Kamlekh | 31-5-2022 | 14 | 3 | 1 | Income generation from vegetables, seeds |
| 5 | Pati | 4-6-2022 | 10 | 6 | 1 | Cleaning of vacant space outside VLC, cut nettle and other bushes, climate change |
| 6 | Banthok | 13-7-2022 | 27 | 2 | 0 | Growing potatoes in polyhouse, more demand |
| 7 | Kasoon | 13-7-2022 | 12 | 2 | 0 | Shram-daan to clean panchayat ghar, cutting bushes that had covered the village path |
| 8 | Bhanyani | 5-8-2022 | 5 | 1 | 0 | Difference between SHG and WVG. Strengthening WVG |
| 9 | Rungadi | 5-8-2022 | 30 | 0 | 0 | Role of women's group during Covid-19 lockdown, climate change, human wildlife conflict |
| 10 | Bhatyura | 9-8-2022 | 11 | 10 | 0 | Roles of WVGs, vegetable growing |
| 11 | Palyun | 16-8-2022 | 12 | 2 | 0 | Strengthening WVG, income generation from tailoring |
| 12 | Chaurasain | 25-8-2022 | 18 | 0 | 0 | Cleaning of panchayat ghar, starting a tailoring centre |
| 13 | Khalla | 26-8-2022 | 13 | 0 | 0 | Importance of VLC, a dispute between villages |
| 14 | Gwad | 27-8-2022 | 18 | 0 | 0 | Nutrition and health |
| 15 | Surna | 9-9-2022 | 46 | 3 | 0 | Rules in WVGs, use of women's collective money |
| 16 | Ratir | 19-10-2022 | 11 | 0 | 0 | Forming a WVG, role of women, computers |
| 17 | Bamiyala | 17-11-2022 | 7 | 0 | 0 | Regular meetings, VLC |
| 18 | Teda khashal | 18-11-2022 | 6 | 0 | 0 | Place for a VLC, strengthening WVG |
| 19 | Chaurasain | 19-11-2022 | 23 | 0 | 0 | Tailoring centre, role of WVG in development |
| 20 | Maichun | 6-12-2022 | 16 | 0 | 0 | Repair of Bal bhavan, women's congregation |
| 21 | Surna | 22-12-2022 | 18 | 0 | 0 | Preparations for women's congregation |
| 22 | Maniagar | 5-1-2023 | 25 | 0 | 0 | Forming a WVG, role in women's development |
| 23 | Chaurasain | 10-1-2023 | 18 | 0 | 0 | Importance of skill development for girls and women, climate change, human wild animal conflicts |
| 24 | Goom | 1-2-2023 | 18 | 3 | 0 | Computer, tailoring, preparation for women's congregation, climate change, VLCs |
| 25 | Kamlekh | 2-2-2023 | 11 | 0 | 0 | VLC, women's solidarity |
| 26 | Dhana | 10-2-2023 | 13 | 2 | 2 | Women Pradhan-taking her help to access government programmes, gender, tailoring |
| 27 | Lamudiyar | 11-2-2023 | 22 | 3 | 0 | Women's money- equal distribution |
| 28 | Kasoon | 21-2-2023 | 14 | 0 | 0 | Panchayat ghar, village cleanliness, community health and personal hygiene |
| 29 | Mouni | 21-2-2023 | 15 | 0 | 0 | Human wildlife conflict, VLC wall repairing |
| 30 | Banthok | 21-2-2023 | 15 | 2 | 0 | Unequal water distribution, polyhouse |
| 31 | Chaurasain | 25-2-2023 | 42 | 10 | 0 | Wild boars, village development, gender |
| 32 | Ratir | 14-3-2023 | 40 | 2 | 0 | Computer, tailoring, roles of WVGs |
| 33 | Namik | 15-3-2023 | 38 | 3 | 0 | Review of women's congregation, strengthening WVG, climate change |
| 34 | Gogina | 16-3-2023 | 13 | 0 | 0 | Inclusive participation in WVGs, grading of performance during a congregation |

2i. Women's congregations

This year, a total of 8 congregations were organized in different villages spread over five districts of the state. A total of 1620 women and men including panchayat representatives, school teachers and retired army personnel participated. Every year, congregations are organized in villages to encourage women to gain space in public domain and to showcase

their work. Further, members of women's groups learn to organize such an event in their own village and develop skills. Many women, especially in new groups, also say that they struggle to speak up in public meetings and need help to overcome hesitation and stage fright. Congregations provide an opportunity to participate and develop confidence.

Members of women's groups wait for the programme throughout the year and say that it is their day. During Covid-19 pandemic, congregations could not be held. Therefore, this year, women came in large numbers to attend the event. For example, in Gopeswar area, about 400 women came and many of them walked long distances to reach the venue.

Women shared their views on different issues and also shared their experiences during covid-19 pandemic and after. Issues of human-wildlife conflict continued to be a major part of speeches as well as skits and songs that women had prepared for the event. Women said that monkeys, wild boars, deer and other animals are damaging their crops and this is one of the major reasons that people do not want to do agriculture anymore.

Alcoholism among men also emerged as a major cause of worry. Women said that even young men are acquiring the habit of drinking alcohol and eating gutka which is detrimental to their own health and also effects the progress of their families. Owing to the presence of women's groups in villages, incidences of quarreling and use of abusive language in public places and of violence in the families have gone down from earlier but the number of people who drink on a regular basis has grown in recent times.

Women attending tailoring, knitting and beautician centres also shared their experiences. Some of them have started their own enterprise and earning income in their own localities. Others work from home and make women's apparels for their families, villages and beyond. Women who have been growing off-season vegetables for sale in the market also shared their experiences and encouraged others to start some activity of their own so that they can also generate income.

Methods of strengthening solidarity in women's group and between groups in a cluster of villages were discussed. Various groups had prepared their own songs on this issue. Further, the message of unity and cooperation among village residents was spread through skits and role plays.

Women who had come to Almora to attend meetings shared their views and encouraged others to go there to learn. Members of adolescent girls' groups also shared their experiences of attending workshops at Almora.



Figure 19. Mahila sammelan at Ratir village, district Bageswar.



Figure 20. Young women gain courage to speak-up in large meetings.



Figure 21. Women's congregation at Chaurasain village was attended by gram Pradhan, members of kshetriya and jila panchayat.

Table 16. Women's congregations

| S N | Date | Location | District | Place | Number of participants | | | |
|-------|------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-------|
| | | | | | Women | Adolescent girls and children | Men | Total |
| 1 | 10.12.2022 | Shama Gogina | Bageswar | Ratir Government Primary school field | 86 | 29 | 16 | 131 |
| 2 | 07.01.2023 | Binta | Almora | Surna Government primary school field | 124 | 35 | 3 | 162 |
| 3 | 12.02.2023 | Pati | Champawat | Pati | 154 | 46 | 7 | 207 |
| 4 | 25.02.2023 | Garhsera Mandal | Chamoli | Ramlila maidan | 380 | 19 | 17 | 416 |
| 5 | 26.02.2023 | Chaurasain | Chamoli | Government Primary school field | 157 | 38 | 28 | 223 |
| 6 | 27.02.2023 | Jakh | Chamoli | Jakh village | 181 | 53 | 15 | 249 |
| 7 | 01.03.2023 | Maichun | Almora | Sela village | 74 | 21 | 7 | 102 |
| 8 | 19.03.2023 | Ganai Gangoli | Pithoragarh | Rungadi village panchayat ghar field | 86 | 42 | 2 | 130 |
| Total | | | | | 1242 | 283 | 65 | 1620 |

3. Income generation for women and girls

As reported last year, labor productivity in farming is falling due to crop depredation by wild animals and erratic weather patterns. Further, small farmers are unable to market their products directly and remain dependent on the local middlemen. Small unirrigated terraced fields producing low marketable yield and its transportation from the village to the urban areas pose a major challenge preventing the farmers from coming out of the dependency network. In addition, young women's lives are now being shaped by formal education and exposure to cellphones, television and internet which provide easy access to information and the urban ways of living. As these reasons increasingly become the basis for a shift in aspirations of young women (and men), disinterest in agriculture and forest related activities is apparent. Today, educated young rural women aspire for a job in the cities and do not want to live in villages.

The rugged mountain terrain also throws many challenges in terms of off-farm work. There seems to be a limitation of prospects in non-farm employment also. Tailoring, knitting, horticulture, fisheries, vegetable growing and other income generation activities promote women's participation in diversification of livelihood choices. USNPSS encourages socio-economic inclusion of women by facilitating access to training, provision of material and services for activities, financial help and networking.

Through training on tailoring, knitting, vegetable growing etc. immediate needs are fulfilled as women acquire some skills and earn income. As entrepreneurs, they create a space for themselves in communities and exercise monetary advantage. USNPSS has been making continuous efforts to raise their knowledge on women's rights, development issues including gender equality to create opportunities for further growth and action.

This year, an attempt was made to collect information about women and girls who had learnt tailoring in centres supported by USNPSS. 28% women and girls represented socially disadvantaged sections of society whilst 72% were from general caste. Table 17 shows the numbers of those trainees who have completed a six months course.

Table 17. Caste-wise distribution of trainees attending stitching centres, 2017-2022.

| Serial number | Centre | District | Caste | | | | Total |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------|-------|------|------|-------|
| | | | General | SC | ST | OBC | |
| 1 | Maniagar | Almora | 161 | 128 | - | 1 | 289 |
| 2 | Gogina-Loharkuda | Bageswar | 58 | 38 | - | - | 96 |
| 3 | Namik | Pithoragarh | - | 47 | 2 | - | 49 |
| 4 | Binta | Almora | 67 | 13 | - | 1 | 81 |
| 5 | Galla | Nainital | 37 | 2 | - | - | 37 |
| 6 | Pati | Champawat | 245 | 20 | 1 | 1 | 249 |
| 7 | Jankande | Champawat | 55 | 7 | - | - | 55 |
| 8 | Bainoli | Chamoli | 45 | 25 | - | - | 70 |
| 9 | Dungari | Chamoli | 26 | 1 | - | - | 27 |
| 10 | Diyarkot | Chamoli | 61 | 14 | - | - | 75 |
| 11 | Jakh | Chamoli | 128 | 6 | - | - | 134 |
| 12 | Danya | Almora | 40 | 7 | - | - | 47 |
| 13 | Ukhimath | Rudraprayag | 48 | 12 | - | - | 60 |
| 14 | Palyun | Almora | 11 | 48 | - | - | 59 |
| 15 | Chaurasain | Chamoli | - | - | - | - | 28 |
| 16 | Maichun and nearby villages | Almora | 19 | 15 | - | - | 34 |
| Total | | | 1001 | 383 | 3 | 3 | 1390 |
| percentage | | | 72% | 27.6% | 0.2% | 0.2% | |

3a. Tailoring and knitting centres

In tailoring and knitting centres, women come in batches, especially during winter when agricultural work is negligible and free time is available. They initially start with hand-sewing followed by machine-sewing and later use pedal machines to stitch garments. Trainees take turns at the machines, if enough are not available.

This year, a total of 165 women and girls came from 52 villages to learn tailoring. Training on knitting was received by 17 women at Mani agar and Pati centres. Further, a young woman wanted to run a tailoring centre at Chaurasain village, district Chamoli. She had learnt stitching in Delhi but the family came back to the village during Covid-19 lockdown. An enthusiastic young woman, she started a tailoring center in her own house. Besides giving her machines and basic furniture to run the centre, USNPSS also offered her further training and exposure to other centres.

One of the criticisms of choosing tailoring, knitting and beautician training for women could be that engagement in such occupations would perpetuate feminine skills and not contribute to the process of challenging traditional gender roles and responsibilities in communities. The ground reality, however, is more complex. First, in a traditional setup women sew and knit for their families and do not earn money by selling products in the market. Second, demand for training on tailoring, knitting etc. came from women's groups

and adolescents themselves and USNPSS helped them pursue their aspirations. Third, these activities fall under the scope of what would be relevant to the local markets so that women can start earning some money immediately after completing their training. Since, traditionally, male tailors also used to stitch women's clothes in villages, delays in completing the job were common. Fourth, though young women and adolescent girls come up with new ideas for entrepreneurship, there is no supportive mechanism for that in villages. Finding a market is also a huge challenge.

Table 18. Tailoring centres during 2022-2023.

| S N | Location | Number of trainees | | | Age | | | Caste | | | villages covered |
|-------|------------|--------------------|---------|-------------|-------|-------|-----|---------|----|-----|------------------|
| | | Total | Married | Not married | 18-25 | 26-30 | >30 | General | SC | OBC | |
| 1 | Binta | 29 | 14 | 15 | 20 | 5 | 4 | 26 | 3 | 0 | 13 |
| 2 | Maniagar | 33 | 7 | 26 | 30 | 3 | 0 | 11 | 20 | 2 | 13 |
| 3 | Palyun | 16 | 5 | 11 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 13 | 0 | 2 |
| 4 | Gogina | 14 | 2 | 12 | 13 | 1 | 0 | 11 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 5 | Namik | 21 | 7 | 14 | 12 | 6 | 3 | 10 | 11 | 0 | 2 |
| 6 | Pati | 30 | 14 | 16 | 14 | 15 | 1 | 14 | 15 | 1 | 17 |
| 7 | Chaurasain | 22 | 8 | 14 | 15 | 5 | 2 | 15 | 7 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | | 165 | 57 | 108 | 115 | 38 | 12 | 90 | 72 | 3 | 52 |

This year, girls at tailoring centres have started enrolling themselves for computer and beautician training courses also. Akansha Arya, Shobha Arya, Prianka Arya and Minakshi Arya of Mani agar centre branched out to attend computers and beautician courses. All of them belong to poor, socially disadvantaged households. Minakshi earned income from tailoring and used that amount to pay fees of tailoring and beautician



Figure 22. Tailoring centre at Maniagar, district Almora.

courses. She also gave some money to her mother to meet household expenses. Shobha, Priyanka and Akansha said that they used their income from tailoring to buy cloth which they brought to the centre to stitch clothes for their mothers and grandmothers.

Another trend catching momentum is the tendency of trained girls wanting to open their own shops after marriage. Many girls are raising this issue when their marriage is being fixed and some of them have been successful in opening a shop of their own. For example, Pushpa Chamiyal learnt tailoring and knitting at Mani agar centre and started stitching clothes for college going girls, mostly her friends and relatives. After marriage, she opened a shop and sold sweaters in the neighborhood. In one season, she earned about 12,000

rupees from sale of woolens in her village and around it. Vidya Banaula showed her work to future in-laws and said that she would marry if they allow her to open a shop. She got married in Matela, Kasaar devi, village in 2023. She is looking for a place to open a tailoring shop.



Figure 23. Tailoring centre at Churasain village, district Chamoli.

Deepa Peinwal learnt stitching and knitting in Mani agar centre. First, she learnt knitting and started selling sweaters in Mani agar area. Since she did not have a machine at home, she came to the centre for about 2 years to knit woolens. During that time, she also learnt stitching. She moved to Nainital after marriage and opened a shop. Through tailoring and knitting she is earning and saving money for future.

A resident of Parkot village, Vinita Shah, learnt tailoring in Binta centre. She has completed her masters in science and teaches children in a local school. She comes to the centre for two hours every day. She is planning to open a tuition centre for children which she says will operate in the evenings. In the afternoon, she plans to run tailoring classes for women and girls.

Janaki Bhatt received training in Mani agar centre for six months. She started stitching clothes in her village Fulari and earned money. Currently, she is assisting a tailor in Barechhina. She earns 3,000 rupees per month by working in the shop. Her additional income comes from working at home.

Sonam Arya, a quick learner, attended tailoring classes in Chaurasain centre. Her father-in law came to the centre to pay fee for the first month. From second month onwards she started stitching petticoats for women in the village and paid fee on her own. She intends to open a tailoring shop in the village.

Table 19. Women who have started generating income from stitching clothes.

| Serial number | Location | Number of villages covered | Women started earning this year | Place of work | |
|---------------|------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Binta | 13 | 5 | Own shop-1 | Others home-based work |
| 2 | Maniagar | 13 | 9 | Own shop-1 | Others home-based work |
| 3 | Palyun | 2 | 6 | - | Home-based work |
| 4 | Gogina | 3 | 5 | - | Home-based work |
| 5 | Namik | 2 | 5 | - | Home-based work |
| 6 | Pati | 17 | 2 | - | Home-based work |
| 7 | Chaurasain | 2 | 1 | - | Home-based work |
| Total | | 52 | 33 | | |

3b. Beautician training centre

A beautician training centre is functional in Mani agar village, district Almora. The beauty parlor training programme focuses on basics of body care, make up and grooming. The trainees learn basic skills such as skin care, home-made remedies for body care and beauty, hair cutting and hair styling (different types of plaits, buns etc.), daily make up, bridal make up, threading, waxing, facials, nail paint etc.

Nutrition and health acquire a special attention during discussions in the centre. Use of fresh, organically grown millets and other food items, milk and related products is promoted in the centre. In addition, girls and women are encouraged to use naturally available products for body care. Further, trainees also learn about customer care and communication with clients.



Figure 24. Beautician training centre.

3c. Visits to tailoring, knitting and beautician training centres

A majority of women trainees feel that acquiring a new skill will increase their income and household productivity. Though, not all of them start a tailoring or knitting business, income earned from home-based work is equally important. At home, women work by finding time from household work which offers flexibility and greater control over resources. Further, after training women save money by stitching clothes of their families at home.

During visits to the centres, it was observed that the trainees acquire knowledge and develop skills for maintenance of sewing and knitting machines. They learn the names and

roles of different parts of machines and understand how it functions. A majority of women prefer to stitch their own clothes first but eventually learn to stitch children's garments too. Besides making simple outfits, trainees, especially young women and girls, show a lot of enthusiasm towards learning designs currently in fashion. For example, girls exhibit a keen interest in preparing different designs of salwars, blouses and kurtas with different necklines and stylish sleeves.

Table 20. Visits to tailoring, knitting and beautician training centres.

| S No. | Date | District | Location | People present in the centre | | |
|-------|------------|-----------|------------|------------------------------|----------|------------|
| | | | | Tailoring | Knitting | Beautician |
| 1 | 5-4-2022 | Almora | Binta | Centre Inauguration 18 | - | - |
| 2 | 6-4-2022 | Almora | Binta | 8 | - | - |
| 3 | 7-4-2022 | Almora | Binta | 11 | - | - |
| 4 | 8-4-2022 | Almora | Binta | 12 | - | - |
| 5 | 21-4-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 18 | 2 | 7 |
| 6 | 25-4-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 17 | 2 | 8 |
| 7 | 24-5-2022 | Almora | Binta | 14 | - | - |
| 8 | 25-5-2022 | Almora | Binta | 13 | - | - |
| 9 | 27-5-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 30 | 3 | On leave |
| 10 | 31-5-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 15 | 4 | - |
| 11 | 1-6-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 18 | 4 | - |
| 12 | 2-6-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 18 | 4 | - |
| 13 | 3-6-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 19 | 4 | - |
| 14 | 4-6-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 15 | 4 | - |
| 15 | 5-6-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 19 | 4 | - |
| 16 | 10-6-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 26 | 2 | 10 |
| 17 | 22-6-2022 | Almora | Palyun | 9 | - | - |
| 18 | 26-6-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 26 | 1 | 8 |
| 19 | 5-7-2022 | Almora | Binta | 7 | - | - |
| 20 | 19-7-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 22 | 1 | 3 |
| 21 | 19-7-2022 | Almora | Palyun | 6 | - | - |
| 22 | 26-7-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 30 | 2 | 8 |
| 23 | 9-8-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 19 | 2 | - |
| 24 | 10-8-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 18 | 2 | - |
| 25 | 11-8-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 15 | 2 | - |
| 26 | 13-8-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 32 | 2 | 7 |
| 27 | 16-8-2022 | Almora | Palyun | 7 | - | - |
| 28 | 22-8-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 25 | 2 | 7 |
| 29 | 9-9-2022 | Almora | Binta | 6 | - | - |
| 30 | 15-9-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 16 | - | Closed |
| 31 | 18-10-2022 | Bageswar | Gogina | 8 | - | - |
| 32 | 19-10-2022 | Bageswar | Gogina | 8 | - | - |
| 33 | 1-11-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 10 | - | - |
| 34 | 2-11-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 6 | - | - |
| 35 | 3-11-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 10 | - | - |
| 36 | 25-11-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 12 | 1 | - |
| 37 | 5-12-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 11 | 1 | 1 |
| 38 | 6-12-2022 | Almora | Maniagar | 13 | 1 | 2 |
| 39 | 22-12-2022 | Almora | Binta | 9 | - | - |
| 40 | 23-12-2022 | Almora | Binta | 10 | - | - |
| 41 | 26-12-2022 | Champawat | Pati | 8 | - | - |
| 42 | 5-1-2023 | Almora | Maniagar | 21 | - | 4 |
| 43 | 9-1-2023 | Chamoli | Chaurasain | 15 | - | - |
| 44 | 10-1-2023 | Chamoli | Chaurasain | 16 | - | - |
| 45 | 11-1-2023 | Chamoli | Chaurasain | 18 | - | - |
| 46 | 14-1-2023 | Almora | Maniagar | 16 | - | 9 |

| S No. | Date | District | Location | People present in the centre | | |
|-------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------------------------|----------|------------|
| | | | | Tailoring | Knitting | Beautician |
| 47 | 28-1-2023 | Almora | Binta | 8 | - | - |
| 48 | 31-1-2023 | Almora | Maniagar | 12 | - | 9 |
| 49 | 1-2-2023 | Champawat | Pati | 11 | - | - |
| 50 | 2-2-2023 | Champawat | Pati | 13 | - | - |
| 51 | 3-2-2023 | Champawat | Pati | 14 | - | - |
| 52 | 10-2-2023 | Almora | Maniagar | 12 | - | 7 |
| 53 | 17-2-2023 | Almora | Maniagar | 14 | - | 7 |
| 54 | 24-2-2023 | Chamoli | Chaurasain | 10 | - | - |
| 55 | 25-2-2023 | Chamoli | Chaurasain | 11 | - | - |
| 56 | 15-3-2023 | Bageswar | Namik | 14 | - | - |
| 57 | 27-3-2023 | Almora | Maniagar | 14 | - | 6 |
| 58 | 29-3-2023 | Almora | Maniagar | 15 | - | 7 |

3d. Agricultural produce processing and marketing centre, Badhani

Situated in Badhani, Karnaprayag, district Chamoli, the centre is to process millets and grains grown in surrounding villages to provide a facility to farmers. The centre contains



Figure 25. Agricultural produce processing and marketing centre, Badhani.

chakkis, grinders, cleaners, packaging equipment and other accessories. Farmers in nearby villages are requested to sell their extra produce to get better price and immediate payment from the centre. Instead of selling it in open market, farmers sell millets, grains and local pulses in the centre and also bring various items for grinding, processing etc.

Since surplus produce of millets, grains and local pulses is available in the valley, the centre is running well. Neatly packed

food items are sold locally. The buyers are urban people who prefer local grains, government employees including school teachers who commute to the cities every day.

4. Adolescent girls' group

Focusing on skill development for livelihoods generation, USNPSS has developed programmes relevant to the needs of mountain communities, especially women and girls. Each learner comes with her own experience and expectations from the programme but it is a common thread of inclusive education and innovation that runs through all programmes organized by USNPSS and its partner organizations. The programme for young women situates income generation activities at its core and integrates with it issues of personal

development and confidence building. Activities such as tailoring, knitting, computers, vegetable growing, horticulture etc. attract hundreds of women and girls from villages.

To receive training on multiple vocational skills such as stitching, beautician, origami, cooking and baking, library and computers, USNPSS has sent several girls in the 18-25 years age group to Delhi and Dehradun. These girls belong to remote villages of the state. After attending a residential vocational training programme, they become confident and also acquire skills to generate income in varied settings. This year, one girl was sent to Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi to attend a six months course on tailoring and computers.

Workshops with the university students could not be held for various reasons arising from the participants themselves. First, as we had reported last year, except for a few in the group, students kept changing and did not attend the workshops on a regular basis. Therefore, it was difficult to work with a control group and to measure progress especially because the aim was to change their attitudes towards the local environment and gender. Second, a majority of students were expecting that the workshop would somehow help them get a job, at the least, they would be offered a job by USNPSS. Though USNPSS offered a paid internship to students interested in field realities, they were not ready to go to villages and work with people. Third, the professors, though very interested in providing a platform to students to deepen their knowledge of environmental and gender issues, were facing problems of shortage of time. As a result, USNPSS had to discontinue this activity.

4a. Outcome of last years' work

Rural adolescent girls who attended the workshops last year were requested to hold meetings in their respective villages to share information and skills that they had learnt in Almora. This was to be conducted in cooperation with the local community-based organizations (CBOs). Subsequently, a total of 38 meetings were held exclusively for adolescent girls in nine villages (Table 21). This number excludes meetings held by women's groups which the adolescent girls also attended.



Figure 26. The head of the CBO and girls plan activities to be held in villages.

Meetings conducted by CBOs and adolescent girls in villages focused on issues of self-development, health, environment and livelihoods generation. Gender and caste being the cross-cutting themes, these meetings provided space for adolescents to think and critique their own ideas of roles and responsibilities held by women and men at home and in

communities. Animated discussions on gender and caste-based inequalities took place during these meetings because a lot many girls said that discrimination does not happen in their own families but they had seen it happening in other houses in the village and beyond. Challenging this mindset has been the first step in the process towards achieving equality in society.



Figure 27. A meeting of adolescent girls at Kamlekh village, District Champawat.

Table 21. Meetings held by CBOs and adolescent girls who attended workshops at Almora.

| Sl No. | Location | District | Number of workshops | | Themes |
|--------|------------------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| | | | Held by CBO | USNPSS staff also present | |
| 1 | Badhani Jakh | Chamoli | 5 | 1 | Self-development, confidence building Human-wildlife conflict and its impact on agriculture, loss of human and animal life Adolescent health and nutrition Livelihoods choices, computer and tailoring skills Confidence building -personal and collective |
| 2 | Badhani Diyarkot | Chamoli | 5 | - | Gender roles and relations at home and in the village How to earn money by staying in the village itself Adolescent girls' health and nutrition, local food Community health, personal hygiene, safe environment (village ecosystem, preventing forest fires, organic inorganic waste and disposal) |
| 3 | Badhani Pudiyani | Chamoli | 5 | | Human wildlife conflict Livelihoods generation Village ecosystem and how to be a resilient community Gender at home and in public domain, women and girls taking their own decisions |
| 4 | Ganai Gangoli Bhanyani | Pithoragarh | 5 | 1 | Girls saving money in a collective fund Tree plantation in village common land Livelihoods for young women Health and nutrition for adolescent girls Cleanliness and community health |
| 5 | Ganai Gangoli Gwadi | Pithoragarh | 4 | 1 | A total of 52 girls attended and discussed problems of adolescence Livelihoods choices, girls want to learn computers Cleaning of village paths and water sources (springs) was carried out. Women also joined to offer support to the girls Reproductive health of adolescent girls, |
| 6 | Binta Surna | Almora | 6 | 1 | Tailoring as a source of income for women Cleanliness of village Adolescent girls- self-development and confidence building Forest fires- women and girls went to the forest to extinguish fire Developing a habit of reading books |

| Sl No. | Location | District | Number of workshops | | Themes |
|--------|----------------|----------|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| | | | Held by CBO | USNPSS staff also present | |
| | | | | | Gender relations and its implication for adolescent girls |
| 7 | Binta Bhataura | Almora | 6 | - | Cleaning of village paths and water sources (springs) was carried out Village ecosystem and climate change Climate change Gender and choices available at adolescence stages Gender roles and responsibilities |
| 8 | Shama Ratir | Bageswar | 3 | - | Organizing women and adolescent girls to form groups Preparing for a women's congregation at Ratir village |
| 9 | Shama Gogina | Bageswar | 3 | 1 | Computer education for girls Tailoring and knitting to generate income Motiving girls to learn some vocational skill |
| | Total | | 38 | 5 | |

Adolescent girls took active part in organizing children's fair, women's congregations and other events in villages (Figure 28). Participation in community activities provide more visibility and improves decision making ability of girls. Further, during congregations, they shared their concerns and spoke about their problems in large gatherings.

With support from other girls in adolescent groups, young women are able to challenge discriminatory practices in communities. For example, Nikita Arya from Maniagar village, district Almora, said that adolescent girls are asking their parents to send them to college for higher studies.

In Gwadi village-Ganaigangoli, district Pithoragarh, adolescent girls and members of the women's group jointly



Figure 28. Adolescent girls shared their experiences of Almora workshops in villages.

undertook the responsibility of cleaning of the village path and water springs. Women brought out their sickles to cut bushes growing on both sides of the path. Since tall bushes had become an ideal habitat for wild boars and other animals to hide, at least one person came from each household to clean it up. Later, the water sources were also cleaned. This activity was followed by planting local broad-leaf tree species on the common land above the water spring and the local ravine that flows through the forest. This was to improve water recharging capacity of the soil in the region, since Gwadi and nearby villages still depend on water available in the spring and the ravine for domestic and agricultural purposes.

Similarly, women and adolescent girls' groups of Bhataura, Surna, Borkhola-Parkot, Kasoon and Paluyn villages in Almora district, Bhanyani in Pithoragarh district, Siroli, Bamiyala, Bacher and Mandal in Gopeshwar-district Chamoli, Goom, Poonakot,

"After completing their schooling, girls are expected to get married and work at home till their marriage is fixed, Nikita Arya said, but there are many girls who aspire to study further. They get good marks in exams and want to go to college. Parents may allow them to attend college if they have other girls from the village going with their own daughters. So, we need to form a group. Now that we know each other better because we have come to Almora together, we can seek help and pursue our dreams."

Kamlekh in Champawat district and Diyarkot, Chaundali, Pudiyani villages in Badhuni, district Chamoli, took actions to clean their villages and around. The aim was not just to gather at a point and hold a cleanliness drive but to build up knowledge and take action in the community. Several rounds of discussions were held in villages regarding current availability of natural resources and changes occurring in communities due to shifting demographics and also in view of climate change.

In Jakh village, district Chamoli, Rachna asked the local CBO members to hold meetings in her village to discuss problems emerging from human-wildlife conflict.

"During daytime monkeys damage our crops and wild boars come at night. Women spend the whole day either sowing, manuring or weeding their fields but animals take no time eating it up. We have organized several meetings in the village to solve the problem. Now, we guard our fields on a rotation basis. Small groups of women go out to the fields and sue away monkeys and wild boars. Since, Wild animals can come from any direction it is important that the neighboring villages also take the same measures. So, we have also organized inter-village meetings. In addition, we gave an application in writing to the local authorities to take action in this regard but nothing has happened so far": Rachna Negi, district Chamoli Garhwal.

4b. Visits to villages by USNPSS staff

The USNPSS staff made visits to villages to attend meetings, to clarify doubts and to provide hands on guidance to CBOs and others in communities. Such visits build capacity in girls, women and CBOs in an informal learning environment.

During these visits, the USNPSS staff resides in villages and interacts with everyone in the community. Such informal talks provide a real sense of change occurring in people's attitudes and practices at home and in communities. In addition, meetings are held to reflect on issues emerging in communities and solutions are sought in a collective manner. Table 22 exhibits details of visits and broader themes of discussions during the year.

During meetings with USNPSS staff, adolescent girls said that one of the reasons for wanting to migrate to the cities is the kind of work that women have to do in villages. They tend the crops in the fields or go to the forests after preparing breakfast in the morning but the next shift of household chores begins when they come back and



Figure 29. A meeting of adolescent girls at Chaurasen village, district Chamoli Garhwal

make lunch, feed everyone and again they go to the fields. In the evening cows are milked and dinner is made. *“All of this has a bearing on women’s health and our own development, said Kavita during a meeting at Pati, I did not realize it earlier because I never thought this way, but when I attended the meeting at Almora, I could see how it works”.*

Table 22. Visits made by USNPSS staff to villages to hold meetings with adolescent girls.

| S. N | Location | Date visit | of Number participants | | of Number villages | of Theme |
|------|---------------|------------|------------------------|--------|--------------------|--|
| | | | Girls | Others | | |
| 1 | Bhanyani | 5.8.2022 | 11 | 5 | 1 | Confidence building, human wildlife conflict, impact of mining on water and agriculture |
| 2 | Gwadi | 6.8.2022 | 7 | 00 | 2 | Importance of good nutrition for adolescents, local, organic foods, gender equality |
| 3 | Bhatyura | 9.8.2022 | 10 | 11 | 1 | Changes occurring in communities, menace of wild animals, skills and income generation for girls |
| 4 | Tyarson | 10.8.2022 | 8 | 7 | 1 | Education of adolescent girls and, self-development, health and nutrition |
| 5 | Chaurasain | 25.8.2022 | 15 | 4 | 1 | Personal hygiene, health, nutrition and confidence building, gender equality |
| 6 | Gwad Gopeswar | 27.8.2022 | 14 | 00 | 1 | Emotional development during adolescence, decision making ability |
| 7 | Jakh | 28.8.2022 | 28 | 00 | 3 | Mental and emotional health, gender and caste equality |
| 8 | Pudiyani | 28.8.2022 | 24 | 4 | 1 | Changes in agriculture and food habits, choosing the right kind of food to be healthy |
| 9 | Maniagar | 11.9.2022 | 30 | 00 | 1 | Environmental health, village ecosystem, human wildlife conflict and impact on communities |
| 10 | Chaurasain | 10.1.2023 | 12 | 00 | 1 | Skill development, income generation for young women, emotional and mental health |

4c. Workshops at Almora

This year, 3 residential workshops were held for rural adolescent girls at USNPSS Almora. A total of 112 girls from 40 villages spread over five districts of the state participated (Table 23). 99% of the girls were between the age of 15-21 years.

Each day began with all participants doing yoga and physical exercises. By facilitating an atmosphere of mutual respect, open communication and cooperation among all participants, USNPSS promoted a participatory approach to training. Long lectures were avoided and participants were encouraged to take part in various discussions designed to meet specific objectives. Girls were encouraged to speak up and articulate their own understanding of issues. Since a majority of girls had come to Almora for the first time, they were shy and hesitant in the beginning. Their experiences were valued and given due attention right from the beginning of the workshops so that they could feel comfortable and learn with a positive attitude during their stay at USNPSS.

The participatory mode of learning also involved taking part in activities outside classroom. Participants were divided into small teams and were given responsibilities to maintain serenity in the training area. For example, a team would help in preparing breakfast whilst the other team would clean the rooms



Figure 30. Yoga and physical exercises were held during morning sessions.

and dormitories. The next team would oversee cleanliness of bathrooms and regulate use of water. Another team would write a report of the daily proceedings of the workshop and present it the next morning. Since each team involved girls coming from different villages, working together would inculcate open communication and develop a sense of camaraderie among them.

Table 23. Details of workshops held at USNPSS Almora.

| S N | Location (Cluster of villages) | District | Number of villages girls came from | Number of participants | Age of participants (years) | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | | | | 11-14 | 15-17 | 18-20 | 20-21 |
| 05-07 May 2022 | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Shama Gogina | Bageswar | 3 | 6 | 00 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2 | Ganaigangoli | Pithoragarh | 3 | 7 | 00 | 00 | 5 | 2 |
| 3 | Gopeswar | Chamoli | 3 | 5 | 00 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | Binta | Almora | 3 | 5 | 00 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 5 | Maichun | Almora | 3 | 7 | 00 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 6 | Pati | Champawat | 4 | 6 | 00 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| 7 | Badhani | Chamoli | 2 | 5 | 00 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| 02-03 January 2023 | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Ganai gangoli | Pithoragarh | 2 | 8 | 00 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| 9 | Shama Gogina dhari | Bageswar | 2 | 9 | 00 | 1 | 1 | 7 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------|-----------|----|-----|----|----|----|----|
| 10 | Badhani | Chamoli | 3 | 10 | 00 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| 11 | Binta | Almora | 4 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| 18-19 January 2023 | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Maniagar | Almora | 1 | 9 | 00 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| 13 | Palyun | Almora | 1 | 6 | 00 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| 14 | Gopeswar | Chamoli | 3 | 10 | 00 | 0 | 6 | 4 |
| 15 | Pati | Champawat | 3 | 10 | 00 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | | | 40 | 112 | 1 | 34 | 35 | 42 |

Table 24. Educational Status of participants.

| SN | Location (Cluster of villages) | District | Number of villages girls came from | Number of girls | Educational status of participants | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|--|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| | | | | | 9-10 | 11-12 | graduate | post- graduate |
| 5-7 May 2022 | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Shama Gogina | Bageswar | 3 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| 2 | Ganai Gangoli | Pithoragarh | 3 | 7 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| 3 | Gopeswar | Chamoli | 3 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| 4 | Binta | Almora | 3 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Maichun | Almora | 3 | 7 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| 6 | Pati | Champawat | 4 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| 7 | Badhani | Chamoli | 2 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| 2-3 January 2023 | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Ganaigangoli | Pithoragarh | 2 | 8 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 |
| 9 | Shama Gogina | Bageswar | 2 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 0 |
| 10 | Badhani | Chamoli | 3 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| 11 | Binta | Almora | 4 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| 18-19 January 2023 | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Maniagar | Almora | 1 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| 13 | Palyun | Almora | 1 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | Gopeswar | Chamoli | 3 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| 15 | Pati | Champawat | 3 | 10 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 1 |
| Total | | | 40 | 112 | 8 | 52 | 46 | 6 |

Table 25. Caste of participants.

| Serial number | Location (Cluster of villages) | District | Number of villages participants came from | Number of participants | Caste of participants | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|----|----|-----|
| | | | | | General | SC | ST | OBC |
| 5-7 May 2022 | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Shama Gogina | Bageswar | 3 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Ganaigangoli | Pithoragarh | 3 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| 3 | Gopeswar | Chamoli | 3 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Binta | Almora | 3 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Maichun | Almora | 3 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | Pati | Champawat | 4 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 7 | Badhani | Chamoli | 2 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2-3 January 2023 | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Ganaigangoli | Pithoragarh | 2 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 9 | Shama Gogina | Bageswar | 2 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | Badhani | Chamoli | 3 | 10 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | Binta | Almora | 4 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 18-19 January 2023 | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Maniagar | Almora | 1 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 |

| Serial number | Location (Cluster of villages) | District | Number of villages participants came from | Number of participants | Caste of participants | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-----------|---|------------------------|-----------------------|-------|----|-----|
| | | | | | General | SC | ST | OBC |
| 13 | Palyun | Almora | 1 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | Gopeswar | Chamoli | 3 | 10 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 15 | Pati | Champawat | 3 | 10 | 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | | 40 | 112 | 72 | 34 | 0 | 6 |
| percentage | | | | | 64.3 | 30.76 | 0 | 5.4 |

All girls were enrolled either in schools or in colleges. Discussions during the workshop covered issues of whether girls feel safe in schools and colleges and what support system they think would be required to make learning more enriching in a formal educational setup.

Discussions were also held on issues of skill development and choices available to girls in this regard. A majority of girls reiterated that even if they do well in schools and colleges, chances of them getting a job in cities are minimal. Since good examination results hardly translate into getting better jobs or in gaining better life skills, it is important that young women are exposed to a wide variety of choices and opportunities are made available to them.

Caste disparity is an important determinant of access to institutions that enable girls to exercise choices and take advantage of opportunities available to them both through the government and the non-government sectors. Table 25 exhibits caste of participants who attended the workshops at USNPSS. 36% of girls represented socially disadvantaged sections of society.

4ci. Environment, biodiversity and community resilience

USNPSS has long been working with mountain communities on issues of environmental degradation that emerge from changes in village ecosystem and now also from climate change. Community education re climate resilience has involved sustained efforts by the organization to take in all members of the village in the programme.

A game called “the web of life” was played to understand various components of environment and their interrelationships with each other. Interdependence between non-living (sun, water, air, nutrients in soil) and living beings (flora and fauna) was discussed. The web also helped the girls understand interdependence between living being themselves. A healthy ecosystem is resilient and provides an enabling environment for diverse organisms to thrive.

Discussions on environment, biodiversity and community resilience were centered around importance of understanding these issues and capacity building of all people in a village to adapt to changes induced by climate change. The aim was to increase environment and climate knowledge of adolescent girls, so that they work with women’s groups and take up leadership roles in their own villages. Since USNPSS also supports adult women’s groups in

all villages where the girls had come from, it is visualized that all village residents will work together with a common aim of making their communities resilient.

The village ecosystem model designed by USNPSS was discussed to understand relationships between the land (forests, farms, grasslands, barren land etc.), animals, water and human beings. Further, the model helped the participants to understand the benefits of having a healthy village ecosystem and how it can help mitigate the problems of extreme weather events and disasters and make their communities resilient.

Building community resilience requires sustained efforts by all village residents to improve and to change their current social, economic and ecological practices to strengthen village ecosystems. For example, growing organic local varieties of food such as millets and vegetables would require sustained application of manure in agricultural fields. Domestic animals that provide manure need fodder which comes from the forest and grasslands. Hence, people would be required to maintain healthy forests and grasslands around their villages. The locals will also be required to consume millets at home and not to sell all their harvests in the market to earn some cash.

Rich in biodiversity, natural oak forests provide important ecosystem services such as of water recharging, creating humus to maintain soil fertility, pollination and growth of shrubs and herbs of vital importance, diverse wildlife etc. which effect agriculture either directly or indirectly. Further, an area rich in biodiversity will be more resilient to effects of climate change including natural disasters that keep happening in the Himalayas.



Figure 31. Group work was encouraged during workshops.



Figure 32. The village ecosystem model formed the basis of discussions on environment, climate change and community resilience.



Figure 33. Web of life-understanding a village ecosystem.

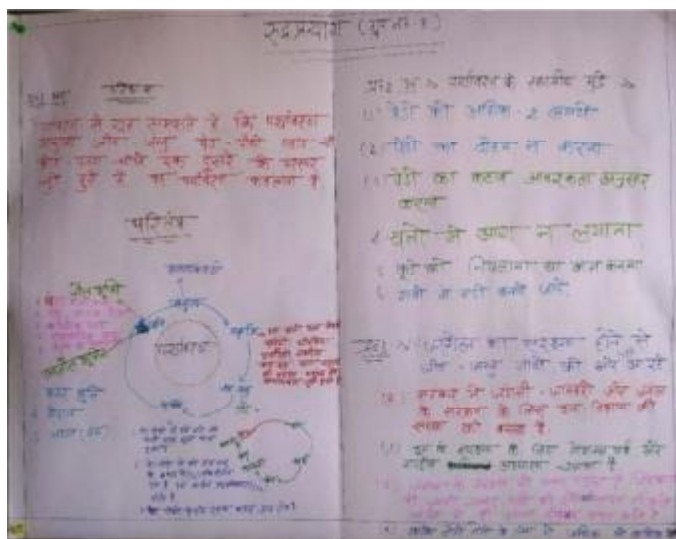
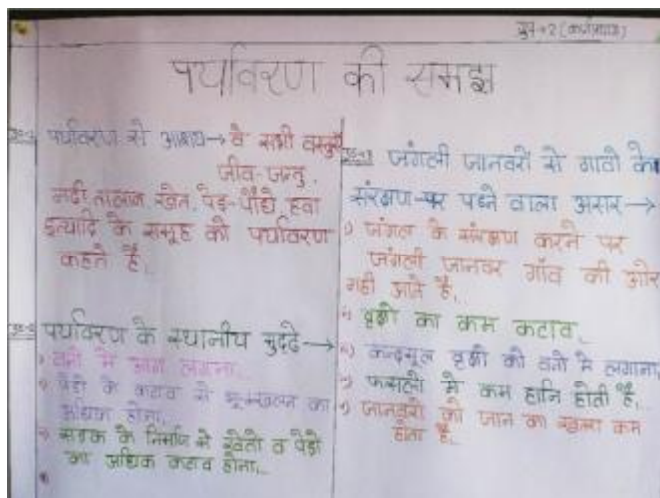


Figure 34 a,b. Participants made charts on environment.

Capacity building of people living in villages is necessary not only in view of the worsening effects of extreme weather events and disasters but also to achieve environmental sustainability. Specifically, four issues were discussed:

1. Owing to their traditional responsibilities of meeting household needs and providing care to families, women and girls are more vulnerable to climate change events. However, capacity building would mean that they come out of their position of victimhood and take charge of their lives by exercising choices in home settings
2. Promoting education of girls is one way of achieving the goal of capacity building for community resilience and to reduce vulnerability. However, continuous efforts are needed to build confidence among women and girls and to strengthen co-operation in the community.
3. Capacity building would also mean that the village residents are prepared for climate related changes by adapting and through introducing new/additional means of livelihoods choices in daily life
4. Despite being the least responsible for industrial and vehicular emissions, the Himalayan people constitute one of the most vulnerable categories effected by extreme weather events
5. Girls worked in small groups to discuss and prepare charts on what they understand by the term environment and the village ecosystem. They also discussed the issue of human-wildlife conflicts which in current times have attracted much attention in villages. Gist of discussions were written on charts and each group presented it during the workshop.

**Importance of forming adolescent girls' groups:
participants perceptions**

- Develop confidence, communication and income generation skills
- Improves decision making ability
- Provide visibility and leadership opportunities
- Forum for discussions and problem solving
- Inclusive-involves everyone in the village
- Career counselling
- Awareness re women's and girls' rights
- Develop knowledge of gender and caste inequalities, intergenerational changes in women's lives, environment, climate change, right age of marriage, violence against women and girls, health, nutrition and food
- Learning opportunities through a library in village learning centres
- Opportunity to develop writing skills-articles are published in an annual magazine called Nanda



Figure 35 a, b, c. After working in small groups, girls presented their findings and received feedback.

4cii. Gender

During the workshops discussions were held on importance of forming adolescent groups in villages. Adolescent girls said that that groups provide a platform to discuss their problems and find solutions. A majority of girls were of the view that groups provide them visibility in the village. Groups are also the means of addressing issues of gender inequality in society.

Discussions reinforced the idea of forming an inclusive group in the village. All girls are members of a single group. Efforts are made to ensure that all group members receive equal opportunities for self-development and collective well-being.

Adolescent girls said that social mobilization and formation of groups is an important step towards strengthening their position in communities. Things that they cannot do alone can be done in groups. For example, *“we save money on a monthly basis. It is a little amount but it is ours. We will go out for some excursion when enough is collected”*, Anushka from Bhanyani village, district Pithoragarh, said during discussions.

Discussions and activities centered around the theme of gender aimed at creating knowledge on the issue. Discussions were held in a participatory, transformative framework where collective mobilization and action leads to a process of gender sensitive change in society. Both, women’s groups as well as adolescent girls’ groups are formed in villages to raise their respective concerns and initiate action in this regard.

In a community, people have different needs and they work through different positions in their families and in public. Some people become more powerful due to their caste, others by gender and some others are influential because they are relatively richer. Women too are dissimilar and perform different roles depending on their age, caste, education, economic status etc. The participants were of the view that young women are expected to adhere to certain roles and responsibilities that isolate and situate them at home and in private realm of affairs whilst young men can freely occupy public places. This positional categorization has economic and political implications. Young women are seen as dependent on others and can easily be bypassed when decisions are made

The participants discussed the issue of whether they had faced any discrimination in their own lives either at home, in school or outside. They spoke about their own experiences and understood that gender discrimination takes multiple forms and experiences in everyday life. The aim of this exercise was to develop an understanding of and sensitivity towards such experiences. Subsequently this understanding would enable participants to see various forms of marginalization in mundane life situations and the process of discussions in villages would enable them take possible action to solve such problems.

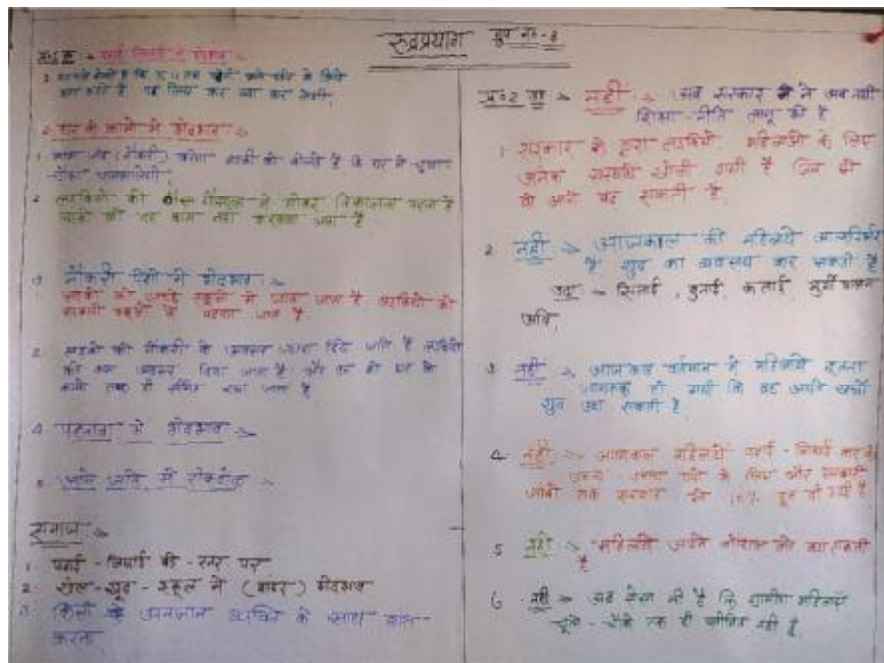
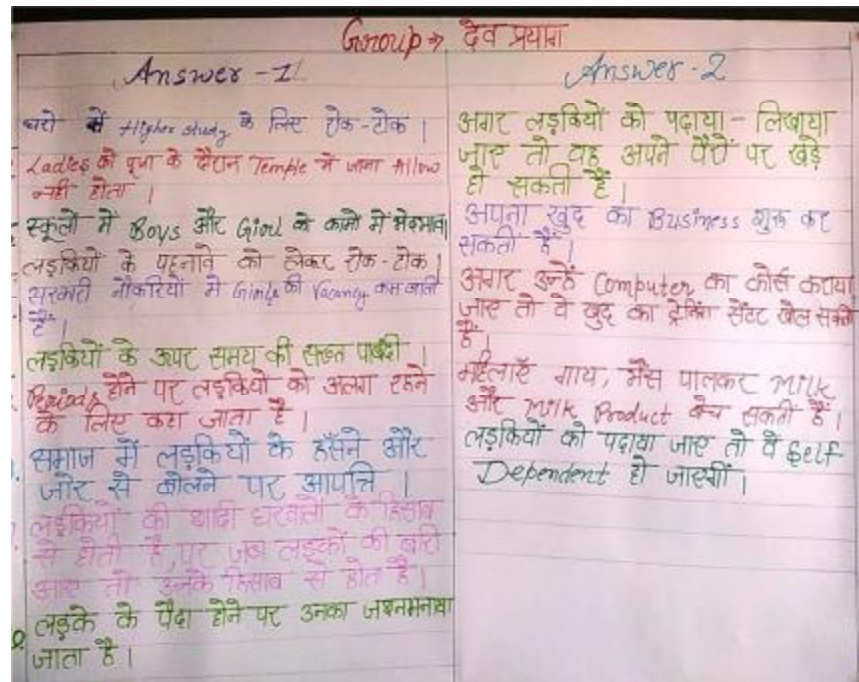


Figure 36 a, b. Charts on gender were prepared by participants.

4ciii. Health of adolescent girls

Sessions on health of adolescent girls were aimed at creating a comfortable space for them to share their problems and experiences regarding their own wellbeing at home, in the village and schools/colleges. A variety of reasons that limit access to health care were discussed. Adolescent girls occupy a vulnerable position at home and in society because

they find it difficult to talk about their health problems and prefer silence as long as the disease does not reach an acute stage and treatment becomes unavoidable.

Each session started with girls articulating their own understanding of adolescent health, its problems and implications in life. Girls talked about human physiology, anatomy of a female body especially of reproductive organs and their functions, taking care of one's own body and whom to seek in case one faces problems. Based on these interactions, the session was built further to clarify doubts and demystify myths that had surfaced during discussions. One of the myths that emerged many times during discussions was that men get scurvy disease in case touched by a menstruating woman. Another common belief was that menstruation is a dirty process in which impure blood comes out of the body.

Although formal education contributes to awareness and knowledge regarding types and reasons for common ailments, prevention from diseases and importance of nutrition in humans, it was interesting to note that a majority of girls had no idea of the ways body functions as a system. The session on human anatomy which elaborated upon location of various digestive organs and their specific functions built the synergy between nutrition, digestion and well-being at adolescence. Similarly, discussions on menstruation revolved around issues of the menstrual cycle, organs involved in the process and cleanliness of body parts. A focus on personal hygiene raised problems of privacy at home and difficult access to water in villages.

Aprons depicting human anatomy were used to generate discussion around issues of digestion of food. In addition, menstrual cycle was explained by the facilitators using a set of aprons.

Another important concern that has implications for planning and policies relates to the fact that lack of access to health care facilities in villages is one aspect of the problem. Equally important are the concerns of gender and economic positions of the households. Discussions on economic status of the households, however, highlighted the fact that better economic position does not necessarily translate into better access to modern health care facilities, especially for girls and women. In villages, people seek a variety of traditional methods such as physical isolation, reaching out to traditional healers to perform certain rituals to please the gods and goddesses, using homemade remedies etc. before going to a hospital for diagnosis and treatment. Further, quacks are popular because of their availability in and around villages.

Reasons for common ailments such as anemia, being underweight, blood pressure and stress, leg cramps, backache and stomachache were discussed. Girls were advised to eat locally grown, fresh food at home.



Figure 37. Understanding human anatomy-digestive system.

Table 26. Wellbeing as perceived by adolescent girls.

| Serial number | Physical | Mental | Emotional and social |
|---------------|--|---|---|
| 1 | Good immunity | No depression | Ability to control emotions |
| 2 | Proper height and weight-eating right food | Positive thoughts | No violent thoughts and action |
| 3 | No leg cramps | Happiness | Good behaviour with others in the village |
| 4 | No infectious diseases such as jaundice, dysentery, diarrhea, dehydration, pneumonia and typhoid | Ability to concentrate | Supporting others in the village |
| 5 | Decent energy levels, Bright face (skin) and good movement of limbs | Alert, no laziness | Not getting irritated in small things |
| 6 | Proper sleep | Ability to control thoughts of comparison (beauty, wealth etc.) with others | Cooperation and participation in community events |
| 7 | Regular periods-good menstrual cycle | Ability to control anger | Contentment |
| 8 | Proper bowel movement and urine excretion | Decision making capability | Interest in physical activities and less time spent in just sitting redundantly or watching television, using mobile phones all the time etc. |

4civ. Livelihoods for young women

Nonetheless, USNPSS has started and continues to nurture several skill development training centres in villages. Currently, girls and women learn tailoring, knitting, beautician and computer learning centres in different villages. Some girls who came to attend the workshops at Almora have been learning vocational skills in their villages. They shared their experiences with others in the workshops.



Figure 38. Participants shared their views on prospects of income generation activities. .

4cv. Feedback from participants

At the end of each workshop, trainees gave feedback on the structure, content and methodology of training. They also shared the gist of what they had learnt from the workshops and highlighted issues that they thought were difficult to understand.

Getting feedback from the participants was carried out with the aim of receiving inputs to improve future workshops and not because it needs to be done as part of a routine exercise. Feedback helped the USNPSS staff to find areas in which different sessions would need improvement to achieve the goals of the workshops. It also helped the trainers understand methods and content which worked well with adolescent girls.

Informal feedback was sought after completing each separate session by encouraging girls to ask questions and clarify doubts, if any. It was interesting to note that maximum queries came during discussions on human anatomy and reproductive health. This was followed by the number and types of questions asked during the session on environment and resilience building.

4cvi. Outcomes of the workshops

- Variations in perceptions and practices were apparent among girls living near the towns and in remote places. It was noticed that the setting in which a girl grows up may limit her ability to make choices about her own self. For example, traditional norms and practices

which consider a woman's body impure during menstruation and pregnancy were more rigid in remote areas than in urban settings. Girls who grew up in relatively close environment were more concerned about following those norms in the village. However, they showed no inclination towards following the same norms during their stay at Almora. In addition, girls in remote villages share a different relationship with their communities than in villages along the roads and near towns and cities.



Figure 39. Individual work during the workshops.



Figure 40. Participants gave feedback on the workshop.

- Continuous work with adolescent girls and young women have inspired them to think for themselves and develop confidence to raise their voices at home and in the community

- The process of holding kishori (adolescent girls) meetings in villages and in Almora have provided them an opportunity to reflect, analyze and understand gender issues with a new perspective. Such meetings are multifaceted and refrain from focusing on just one issue. An integrated approach is adopted because gender-based redistributive changes are interlinked issues
- Historically, young women have to seek approval of men in the family before stepping out of the house to travel to nearby towns and cities. Workshops at Almora provided an opportunity to them to come out of their village and travel alone. For many girls, this was the first time that they were travelling on their own and taking decisions. Back in the village many of them have become advocates of women's mobility and of gender equality
- Adolescent girls described how their attitudes towards environment, health and nutrition had changed. They said that eating junk food seemed an indicator of modernism in the village but it is the locally grown, fresh food that nourishes the body. Further, a majority of girls who were of the view that drinking milk was not a priority for them changed their stance by saying that if taking calcium is necessary in the adolescence stage, they would do it at home
- After conducting the workshops USNPSS made several visits to villages to provide help to adolescent girls to organize meetings and initiate discussions in the community. It was observed that young women and girls reverberate a different kind of leadership which is not about imposing rules but transforming views of their families and of communities to become knowledgeable and to progress as people who accept change. For example, young women from a cluster of villages gathered at a convenient point and travelled long distances to reach Almora to attend meetings. Men wanted to accompany them "for their safety" but girls were adamant. They did not confront but showed them that girls can travel on their own.
- Some facets of the workshops are hard to describe and can only be observed and identified over time. Girls shedding off hesitation, improved articulation of issues, progress in decision making, awareness of violence against women and girls etc. are some issues that need to be monitored over time to see whether change has occurred in the life of participants.

5. Mushroom Cultivation: Experiences of farmers in Almora District

A study on mushroom cultivation: Experiences of farmers in Almora District was carried out to understand the production, marketing and the economic viability of mushroom cultivation from a farmer's perspective. The study was carried out during the winter season when button mushrooms are harvested on a commercial scale. A total of 31 vendors of Almora town and 28 farmers of Almora district were interviewed. The study covered several aspects such as geographical distribution of mushroom cultivators in Almora district, incentives provided by government institutions, production, packaging, marketing and income of farmers. The study shows that a majority of the farmers were cultivating mushrooms for the first time as a project-based activity in 2022-23. The transportation cost of raw materials viz. compost, polybags, spawn, racks etc. continue to be a critical factor in determining the income of farmers. Since raw materials come from the plains, farmers

spend about 36% of their total investment in transportation to and from the market. In addition, demand is limited in small towns such as in Almora and the highly perishable nature of mushrooms makes the farmers sell their produce at lower prices during peak seasons.

5a. Introduction

A report of the World Food and Agriculture Organization suggests that 2327 species of naturally growing mushrooms are used by humans. Out of these, 1069 species are used for food, 470 for medicines and 29 species find other uses (Boa, 2004). Globally, just 8 species of mushrooms are grown on a commercial basis. In India, about 283 species of 'fungus' are used for food but only 5 species are cultivated for commercial purposes. (Adhikari, 2000; Purkayasta and Chandra, 1985). These include *Agaricus bisporus* (Button mushroom), *Volvorella volvaria* (Paddy straw mushroom), *Pleurotes spp.* (Oyster mushroom or Dhingri), *Calocybe indica* (Milky mushroom) and *Lentinus edodus* (Sitake mushroom).

Mushrooms are rich in proteins, vitamins and minerals. Being fat-free and low-sugar, mushrooms become a desirable food for people suffering from diabetes and hypertension. The medicinal properties of *Chhatrak* have also been mentioned in the famous Indian book *Charak Samhita*. Man had started using this gift of nature as food long ago, probably from the nomadic and hunter-gatherer stages. Connection of edible species of mushrooms with humans is found in Chile about 13,000 years ago (Boa, 2004). In China people have been using mushrooms for a long time and the tradition remains strong even today, as evident by massive collection, production and consumption of a wide variety of mushrooms in the country (Boa, 2004). China continues to be the largest producer of cultivated mushrooms in the world (FAO, 2009).

Mushrooms represent the family of fungus, plants that cannot make their own food but survive by feeding on dead organisms. They decompose bodies of dead animals and plants through a process called decomposition and the factor is called decomposer. In this way, fungi break down and mix the litter of dead organisms into the soil. If fungi were not there, the process of decomposition of organic matter in nature will slow down.

Button Mushroom (*Agaricus bisporus*) is the most popular variety grown and consumed all over the world. Cultivation of button mushrooms (*Agaricus bisporus*) started in the sixteenth century in France. In Europe, commercial cultivation of mushrooms started in the 17th Century. In India farming of *Volvorella volvaria* (Paddy straw mushroom) started at Coimbatore in 1943 (Joshi and Pathak, 2018), but commercial cultivation of mushroom was started recently in India in 1960 under the scheme named "Development of mushroom cultivation in Himachal Pradesh" (Kumara & Jaiswal, 2023). In Uttarakhand, mushrooms were grown on an experimental basis in 1965 at Chaubatia, Ranikhet, district Almora (Joshi and Pathak, 2018). Climate of Uttarakhand is suitable for cultivation of button mushrooms that can grow at an altitudinal range of 300-2500 m during October-March.

Fungi are mostly microscopic and cannot be seen with naked eyes. Some species are visible in the form of a cap or umbrella in the wild during monsoons. These are called charka or fungi in colloquial language. In Kumauni dialect, mushrooms are called "chyon".

"Chyon" is not a new food item for the residents of Uttarakhand. People have been using chyon for centuries. Another popular variety is gwal-gud which people pick from the ground and eat. Further, sai-chyo, gobari-chyon, dai-chyon, pil-chyon, til-chyon, and baldi-chyon are used as food items in Uttarakhand. Faskia-tumarh (*Geaster* sp.) is commonly used as a medicine for burns. Guchhi is an expensive mushroom which grows naturally in Uttarakhand. Keera Jadi or Yarsa-Gambu is a fungus that grows in Uttarakhand in the higher Himalayas. It is known for its use as an immunity booster and also finds its way in medicines to improve male potency. It is an expensive fungus.

A social stigma also prevails because some varieties of wild mushrooms are poisonous and may cause death in humans. Several myths have made their way into beliefs and attitudes towards consumption of mushrooms in Uttarakhand. One of the common myths is that all bright coloured mushrooms are poisonous and may cause hallucination or death. Many people shy away from touching mushrooms because the plant is sticky in appearance. Many believe that the reason for their being poisonous is that mushrooms are tasted by snakes. Many people do not understand mushrooms and perceive them as non-edible items. Another popular belief is that mushrooms emerge from the ground only when there is lightning in the sky.

Currently, the state government is promoting mushroom farming as an income generation activity under the Rural Livelihoods Programme promoted by the Government of India. In the hills, agriculture yields are low and non-farm activities limited. Studies have shown occurrence of malnourishment among women and children (Pant 2016). To some extent, growing mushrooms can supplement nutritional value of food of the local population. Some varieties of mushrooms can be dried, processed and stored for use throughout the year. Besides its use in vegetables, the culinary palate in the cities now contains a variety of soups and pickles which are also considered a delicacy.



Figure 41. A wild edible mushroom *Pil chyon* (*Cantharellus* sp.)

5b. Scope of this study

The present study attempts to pool information on cultivation, marketing and utilization of commercially grown mushrooms to map the current situation and to understand whether mushroom farming is a profitable endeavour for the farmer in Uttarakhand, especially in Almora district.

5c. Objective

The objective is to explore economic viability of mushroom cultivation in Almora district based on the experiences of farmers.

5d. Methodology

The study was conducted during December 2022 to February 2023. This time corresponds with cultivation of button mushrooms grown during winters for commercial purposes. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the following sources.

5di. Government institutions

The following departments were consulted to obtain information about farmers engaged in mushroom cultivation in Almora district.

- Department of Horticulture, Almora

Visits were made to the Horticulture Department, Almora to discuss processes of production, resources and marketing of mushrooms in Uttarakhand, both in the low lands and the hills. A list of beneficiaries of the farmers growing mushrooms in Almora district was obtained from the department. Currently, farmers receive a subsidy of Rs 8000/ton of compost for cultivation of button mushrooms. No other support is offered from the department to the farmers.

- Vivekanand Parvatiya Krishi Anusandhan Shaala (VPKAS-Indian Council of Agricultural Research-ICAR), Almora

VPKAS is involved in training of mushroom cultivators and also offers compost, spawn and casing soil to the farmers. A list of farmers who received training during 2022-23 and details of beneficiaries receiving compost were obtained from the institution.

- Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI), Hawalbag, Almora

RSETI imparts training on mushroom cultivation to farmers. Details of participants who had received training from RSETI were collected during the visit to the institute in February 2023.

5dii. Farmers

A set of questions (Annexure-I) was prepared to collect data during interactions with the farmers. Information regarding training, source of supply of compost and other raw materials, investment, production details and marketing was collected through telephonic interviews and by making visits to the farms.

5diii. Market survey

In order to estimate the current supply, procurement and sale of mushrooms, a survey of Almora bazar was carried out during December 2022-January 2023. Almost all the vendors in

the market were interviewed to understand daily and weekly procurement and sale of mushrooms.

5e Production and sale of mushrooms

Button mushrooms require 18 -25°C temperature during cropping period and the winter season is ideal for cultivation in the hills. Oysters and milky mushrooms grow in summer and rainy seasons (20-30°C). As mentioned earlier, farmers prefer to grow button mushrooms for their taste and sale value. A brief description of farming of button mushroom follows.

5ei. .Button mushrooms

Button mushrooms are grown in clean and properly ventilated rooms. It is desirable to have net covered windows to prevent any chance of insect/infection in the room. Concrete floors and stone walls are ideal which must be sterilized before putting spawns in the room. Farmers prefer to install racks in the room to make use of the space for optimal production. Spawn is kept in polythene bags each filled with about 10 kg of compost.

5eii. Oyster Mushroom

Oyster mushrooms grow during the summer and monsoon seasons. Cultivation of this variety is done on chemically sterilized, water-soaked wheat straws put in bags to stimulate growth of spawn and subsequent spread of mycelium. Oysters can be dried and used to make soup, pakoras and other edible items.

Demand for oysters is limited in the local markets. Therefore, farmers prefer to grow button mushrooms over oysters. Only a few farmers in Almora cultivate oysters in the summer seasons. The Himgiri Natural Food Cooperative founded by Preeti Bhandari is growing oysters in Almora. The district administration has provided a vacant building of an old primary school at Talaar village to the cooperative. Oyster mushrooms are being used to make pickles, soups, pakoras, burgers and other value-added products by the cooperative and sold through two outlets provided by the district administration of Almora. According to Preeti Bhandari, both shops are earning good profits. The cooperative has employed three people on a regular basis for running the business.

Production of button mushrooms requires procurement of compost, spawning, casing and harvesting.

- Compost

Currently, mushrooms are grown in synthetically prepared compost distinguished as the short and long span variety. Short span compost contains wheat straw, chicken manure, urea, gypsum, some insecticide and fungicide. It takes about 15-20 days to prepare this type of compost. Long span compost is made of wheat straw, calcium ammonium nitrate, super phosphate, urea, wheat bran, molasse, gypsum, fungicides and insecticides. Preparation of this type of compost requires about 28 days to complete. Both varieties are prepared by pasteurisation of raw material in specially designed tunnels.

Almost all farmers in Almora procure compost from nearby organizations. VPKAS Almora (ICAR), the horticulture department Unit at Jeolikote (district Nainital) and some private manufacturers in Haldwani supply compost to farmers of Almora. Private manufacturers in Haldwani supply compost mixed with spawn and the farmers need not spend time in preparation of bags.

- Spawn

Fungi do not produce seeds but spread by growing mycelium through spawn. For cultivation purposes, spawn is prepared in laboratories.

- Spawning

The process of mixing of spawn with pasteurised compost is called spawning. Compost mixed spawn is filled in poly-bags of 10 kg each and kept in sanitized racks in properly ventilated rooms.

- Casing

In about 20-25 days, mycelium spreads on the surface of the bags. Then, a mixture of sterilized soil and compost (2.5 cm thick) is put on it. This process is called casing. During casing, atmospheric humidity is maintained at around 80% by spraying water in the room at regular intervals.

- Production

Mushrooms start to grow at about 20 days of casing. Mushrooms grow in three flushes; each flush occurs at about 8-10 days interval. Harvested mushrooms are washed, air dried and put in small packets of 200 gm each for sale. Since mushrooms are highly perishable items and rot after 2-3 days, containers need to be transported to the local market immediately after packaging.

- Upkeep

Cleanliness of racks and rooms where mushrooms are grown is an important factor in the production process. Regular sprays of water and of fungicides is carried out especially during cropping period.

Button mushroom is also grown in the lowlands in Uttarakhand. In comparison to the hills, easy availability of raw material, low transportation costs and higher demands in the cities make production more viable in the plains. In Haridwar district, for example, fresh button mushrooms are sold in bulk at Rs 120/Kg in the market, while rates for the same quality of mushrooms in Almora bazar will be Rs 200/Kg.

5f. Challenges of mushroom farming in Almora

In Almora, a majority of the farmers grow button mushrooms during winter season. Since a majority of farmers lack infrastructure and resources required to prepare compost, they procure it from VPKAS or private compost suppliers in Haldwani. The Horticulture

Department also provides subsidy for purchase of compost but procurement is solely the responsibility of the farmer.

Except for the Himgiri Natural Products Cooperative Society, there exists no marketing agency in Almora to facilitate procurement and sale of produce. Most of the farmers sell their products by themselves. Several practical issues emerge:

- Mushroom cultivation is an indoor activity. One of the first requirements is the availability of a suitable room for production purposes. Traditional stone walls are ideal for insulation purposes but the problem with old houses is that they contain very low ceilings and small doors and windows. Use of concrete-based infrastructure is a common practice
- In case, a farmer decides to do vertical farming to maximize production, investment on racks made of iron or bamboo is required
- Private suppliers in Haldwani offer synthetic compost mixed with spawn in bags. The challenge is that bags get compressed during transportation by trucks which leads to poor spreading of mycelium and hence lower output. Further, mushrooms cultivated at one go mature together and farmers may suffer loss. On the contrary, farmers who propagate spawning at regular intervals get steady yield and are able to maintain a continuous supply to the market
- Mushroom farming is a technical task and for better results farmers need training and supervision on a regular basis

Interviews with farmers revealed various constraints that they experience on a daily basis. Most of the farmers were untrained and found it difficult to assess the quality of compost and spawn in the market. Preparation of casing soil and its application was another issue that the farmers required training on. Further, a majority of farmers were found to be using untreated water for spraying purposes. This was a major cause of spread of various types of infections during cropping stages.

5g. Demand of mushrooms in Almora market

A survey of Almora bazar was conducted during the last week of December and in February 2023 to understand demand and the average weekly sale of button mushrooms. A total of 31 vegetable vendors were interviewed. During interviews, the respondents shared their weekly sale records and named the sources where they get their supply from.

Data reveals that on an average 1405 packets (200 grams each) were purchased and sold every week during mid-December-end February 2023 in Almora bazar. This period coincides with the peak season of mushroom production in the region. In other words,



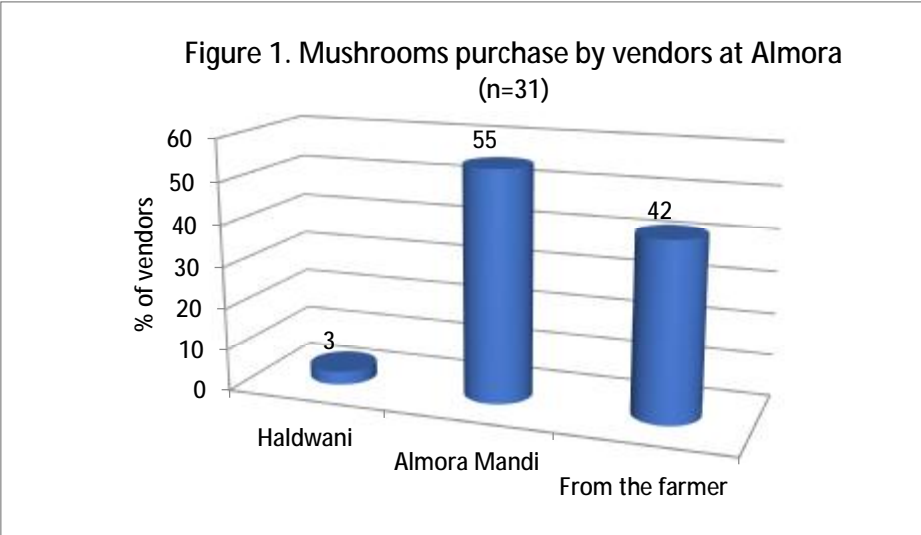
Figure 42. Button mushrooms in Almora market.

about 200 packets of 200 grams each (total 40 kg) of mushroom are sold every day during winters in Almora market. The lot would be a little more because some mushroom growers occasionally supply directly to the local restaurants and households in the town.

Vegetable retailers approach a variety of suppliers to maximize profits. 55% of them purchase mushrooms from *Almora mandi* (there are 3 wholesalers), 42% vendors get their supplies directly from the growers in and around Almora, whilst 3% receive supplies directly from the farmers in Haldwani (Figure 1).

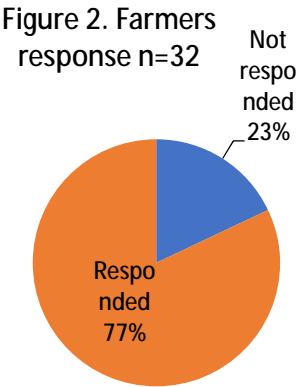
The nearby towns of Lamgara, Someshwar, Haldwani and a few growers in Almora itself send their produce to Almora mandi. The supplies are bought by the retailers in the mandi at the rates of Rs 140-145 per Kg. Packets of 200 gm each are bought at about 28-30 rupees.

From the mandi, vendors get mushrooms at the rate of Rs. 150-160/Kg or Rs. 30-32/packet of 200 gm. Subsequently, a kilo of mushrooms is sold at the price of 200 rupees in the market. Packets of 200 gram are sold at the price of 40 rupees each. Prices may vary a little depending on the supply and the season of the year.



5h. Perceptions and experiences of farmers

In February 2023, 39 farmers were interviewed telephonically to understand their experiences of mushroom farming (annexure-I). The list of farmers was obtained from the Department of Horticulture, Almora. Out of these 39 farmers, 32 (77%) agreed to participate in the survey but only 28 farmers shared data of production and investment; two farmers did not have any records of production and investment. Two farmers procured compost but gave it to others and were not cultivating mushrooms by themselves (Figure 2).



5hi. Block wise distribution of farmers

The block-wise distribution of 28 farmers in Almora district shows that a majority belong to Hawalbag block, followed by Salt. Farmers of Hawalbag, Lamgara, Bhaisiachhana and Takula blocks send mushrooms to Almora market. The rest sell their produce in the local market (Figure 3).

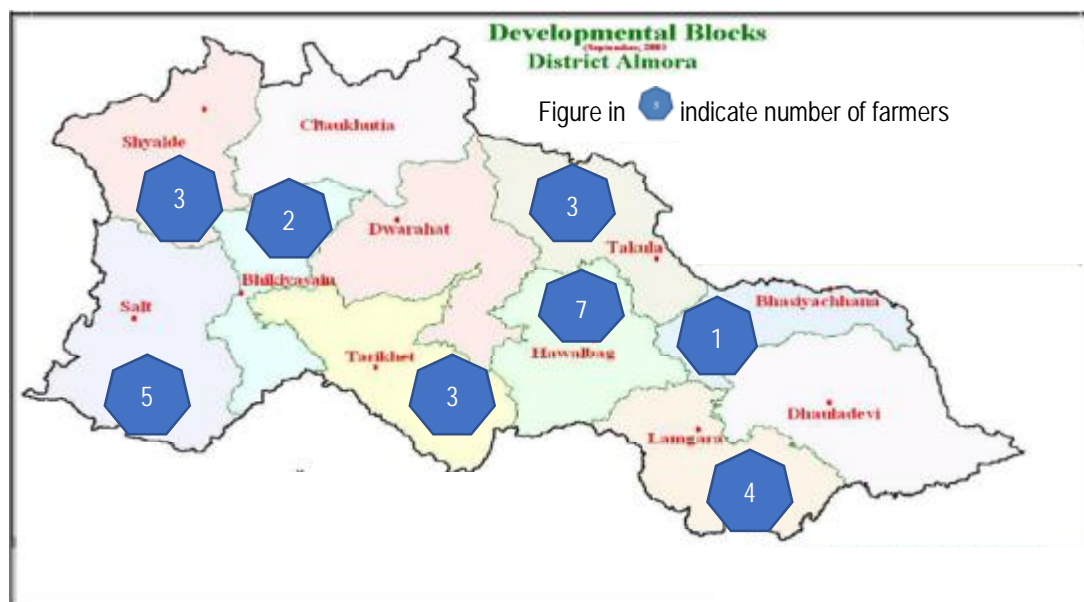
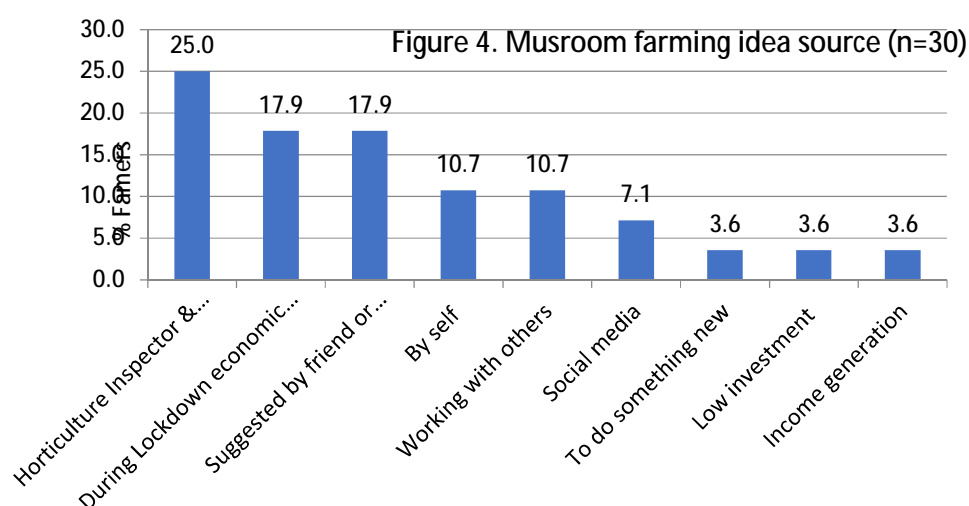


Figure 3. Block wise distribution of farmers in Almora district, 2022-23.

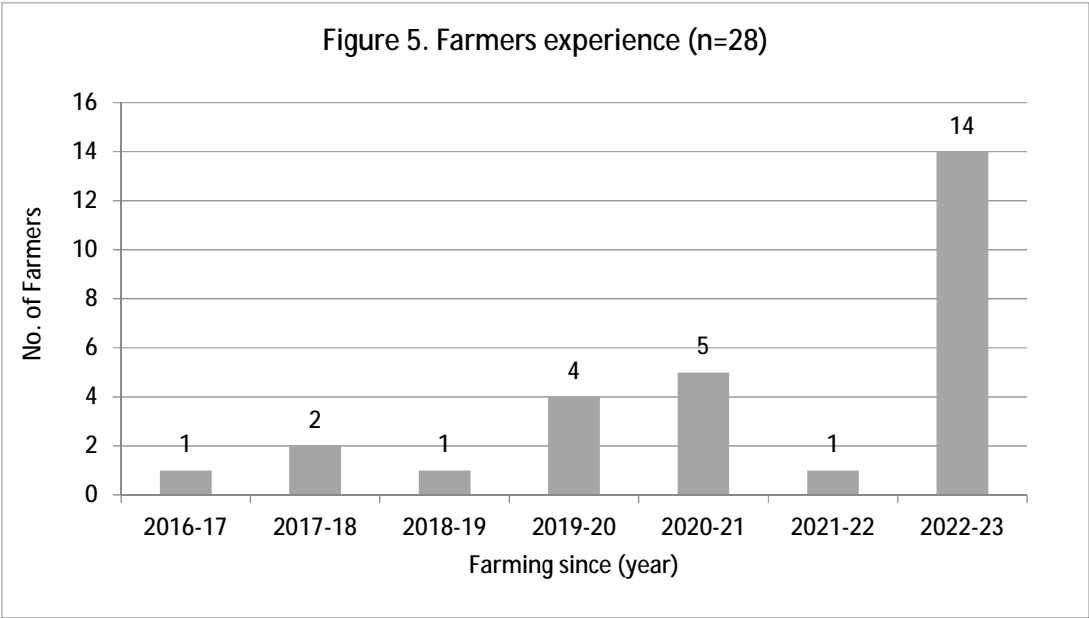
5hii. Genesis of the idea of mushroom farming (farmer's perceptions)

One fourth of the total farmers interviewed for this study received information from the block level officials and horticulture department inspectors. 17.9% farmers chose mushroom farming as an income generation activity during Covid-19 lockdown. 17% learnt about it from their relatives and friends. 7.1% became aware of the activity through news papers and social media. Another 3.6% opted for it because government was offering subsidy on the project (Figure 4).



5hiii. Compost application

Figure 5 exhibits that about half of the total farmers were growing mushrooms for the first time in 2022-2023. During interviews, a majority of them reiterated that initially they got



involved in mushroom farming to learn something new and had no idea whether it can be grown on a commercial scale.

During 2022-23, 80% of farmers did farming on 2 tons of compost while the rest of them used compost varying between 1-4 tons (Figure 6).

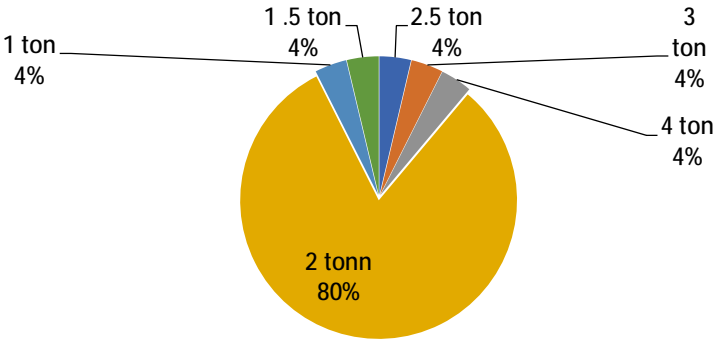
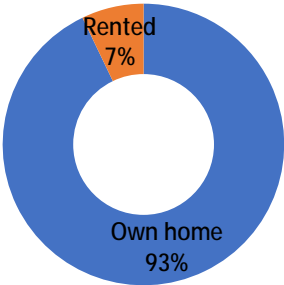


Figure 6. Compost in Ton (n=28)

5hiv. Space for Mushroom cultivation

Figure 7 shows that 93% farmers were growing mushrooms in their own houses and the rest had rented a space for production purposes.

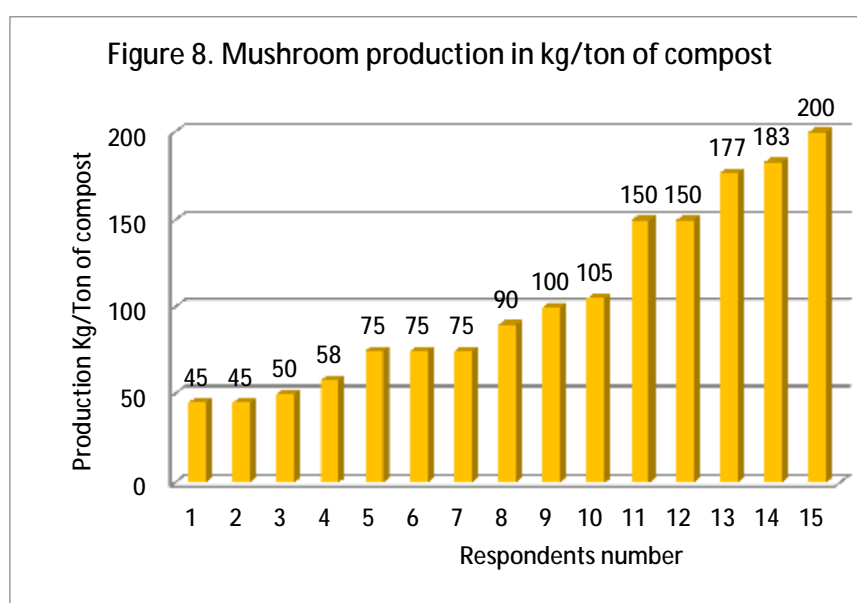
Figure 7. Space availability for mushroom farming n=28



5hiv. Production

A total of 15 farmers shared production data for the year 2022-2023 which revealed that just 5 farmers got a yield above 140 kg/ton. For the rest of the farmers' production (40-100 kg/ton) was much below the desired levels of outputs (Figure 8). This shows that a majority of farmers are not able to optimize yields to the maximum production levels. The quality of compost and spawn, lack of training and experience, and poor upkeep of the production area were cited as the major reasons for low production.

Out of a total of 32 farmers, 28 were growing button mushrooms during October-February and five farmers were also engaged in production of oysters which they sold after drying or in the form of pickles. Oysters are also used to prepare soups, momos, burgers and samosas.



5hvi. Training

Currently, the following institutions are providing training to mushroom cultivators in and around Almora:

- VPKAS (ICAR)
- RSETI, Hawalbag, Almora
- Department of Horticulture, Block units
- Department of Horticulture, Jeolikote
- Pantnagar University

A total of 69% farmers were trained on mushroom farming in Almora district (Figure 9). Out of these 32% received training in the Rural Self Employment Training Institute, 32% in the block office at Hawalbag and in the Department of Horticulture unit at Jeolikote. VPKAS (ICAR), Almora had trained 16% farmers (Figure 10).

Figure 9 .Training status of mushroom farmers (n=29)

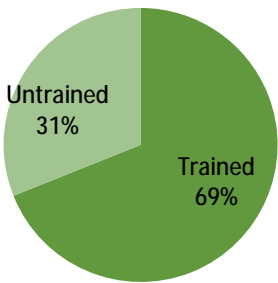
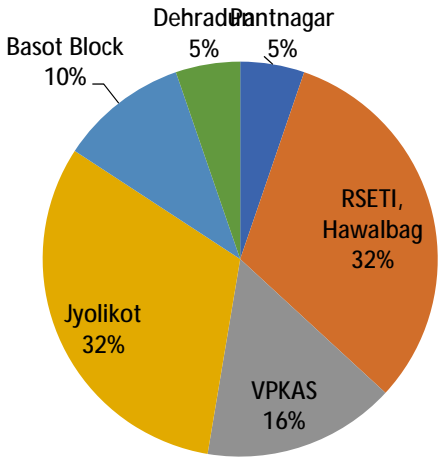
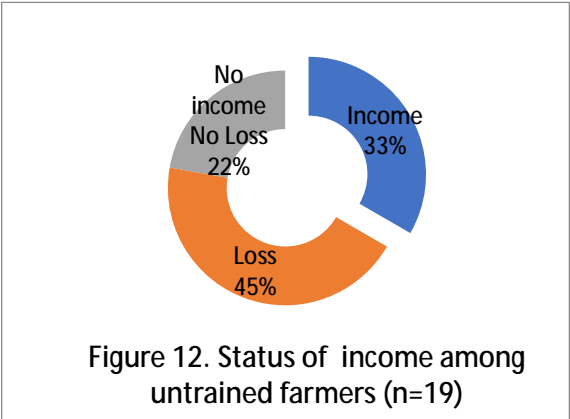
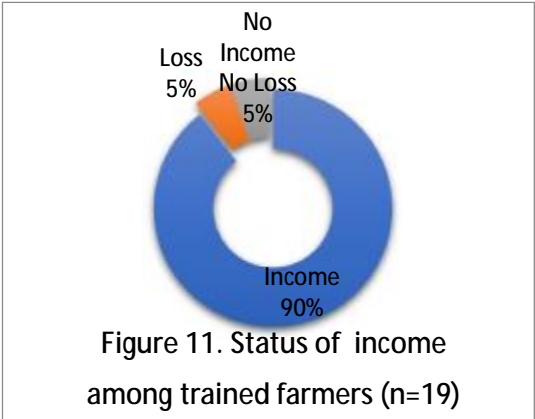


Figure 10. Training source of farmers (n=19)



Discussions with farmers revealed that training plays an important role in determining both the quality and quantity of production. Out of the 19 trained farmers, only one farmer incurred loss and one was in a break-even point as he had gained no profit and incurred no loss. In case of untrained farmers, just 33% were earning some income, while 45% suffered loss and 22% had no loss no income

(Figure 11 and 12).



5hvii. Income potential of button mushroom farming

Table 27 shows the potential of net income and income per month with subsidy and without subsidy depending upon the purchase of compost from VPKAS or from private retailers in Haldwani.

In case a farmer harvests 170 kg/ton of button mushrooms with subsidy and compost procured from VPKAS Almora, the average monthly income would be about Rs 8750 for about four months in a year. Income would be about Rs 4750 without subsidy.

In case of average production (150 kg/ton), the income would be about Rs 7250 per month. Without subsidy it would be about Rs 3250.

Similarly, compost purchased from Haldwani with subsidy would give monthly return of about Rs 9375 on good production and Rs 7220 on average production. Without subsidy, monthly returns would be Rs 5375 and Rs 3875 respectively.

Income figures in Table 27 do not include farmers' labour and time. On an average a farmer spends three to four hours each morning on a daily basis (5am–8am) during winters pre and post production activity. This includes taking care of bags, room sanitization, water sprays to maintain desired humidity, collection, washing and packing of mushrooms and transporting packets to the market.

Table 27. Estimated potential net and monthly income by button mushroom farming

| Source | Compost cost and spawn | Trans- portation | Fetching charges | Chemicals and packing material | Total investment for 2 Ton | Maximum mushroom production (in Kg) | Total income Selling rate 150/kg | Net income | Income per month Total crop time 4 months |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|---|
| With subsidy @8000/Ton | | | | | | | | | |
| VPKAS | 29000 | 1500 | 500 | 1000 | 16000 | 340 | 51000 | 35000 | 8750 |
| | 29000 | 1500 | 500 | 1000 | 16000 | 300 | 45000 | 29000 | 7250 |
| Without subsidy | | | | | | | | | |
| VPKAS | 29000 | 1500 | 500 | 1000 | 32000 | 340 | 51000 | 19000 | 4750 |
| | 29000 | 1500 | 500 | 1000 | 32000 | 300 | 45000 | 13000 | 3250 |
| With subsidy @8000/Ton | | | | | | | | | |
| Haldwani | 24000 | 4000 | 500 | 1000 | 13500 | 340 | 51000 | 37500 | 9375 |
| | 24000 | 4000 | 500 | 1000 | 13500 | 300 | 45000 | 31500 | 7250 |
| Without subsidy | | | | | | | | | |
| Haldwani | 24000 | 4000 | 500 | 1000 | 29500 | 340 | 51000 | 21500 | 5375 |
| | 24000 | 4000 | 500 | 1000 | 29500 | 300 | 45000 | 15500 | 3875 |

5hviii. Farmers income

Out of a total of 27 farmers 74% were in profit, 19% had suffered loss and 7% were in no profit no loss situation (Figure 13). The quality and volume of compost, fluctuating rates in the market were the major factors in determining profits. Farmers selling mushrooms at the rate of Rs 175-200 per kg earned better than the farmers selling it at about Rs 150 per kg or below.

Figure 14 exhibits monthly income of 15 farmers who shared their data. The highest income was reported to be about Rs 12,000, while the lowest was about Rs 1,500 per month for four months in a year.

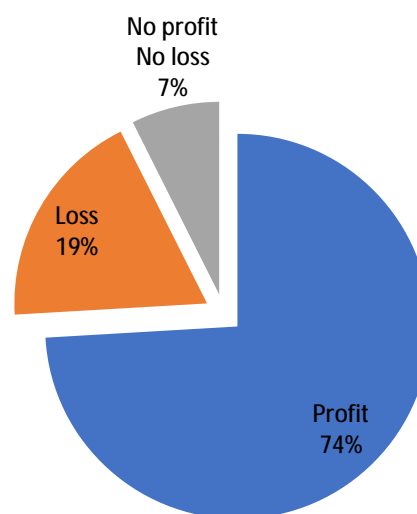


Figure 13. Profit-loss status n=27

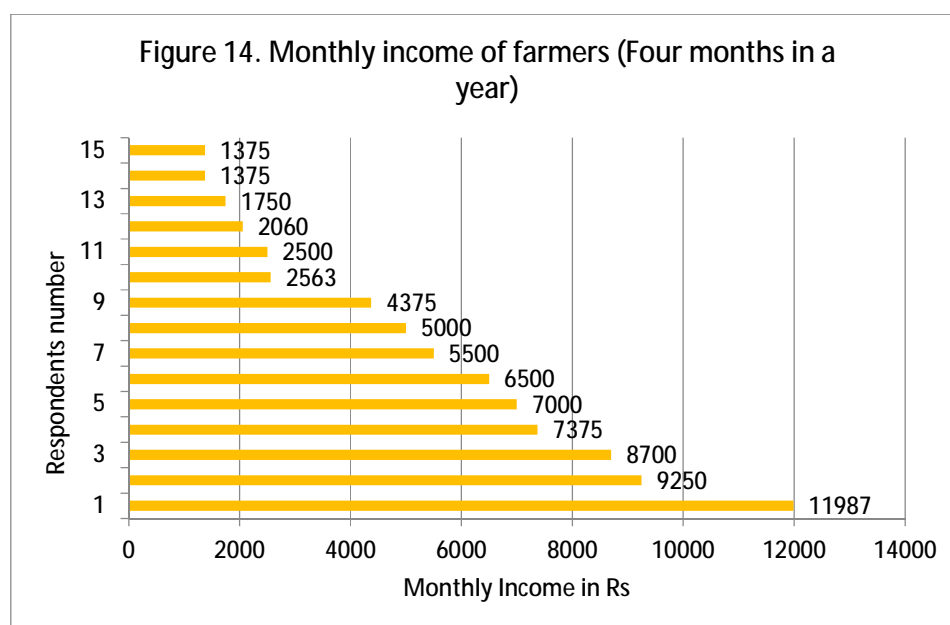
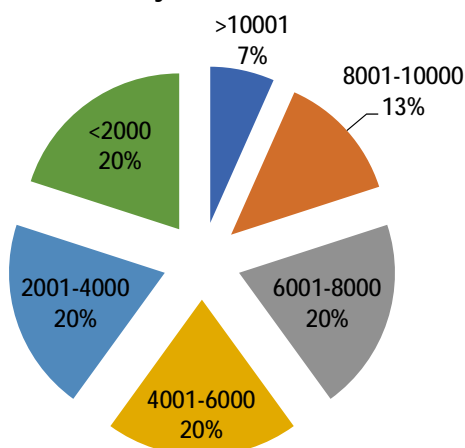
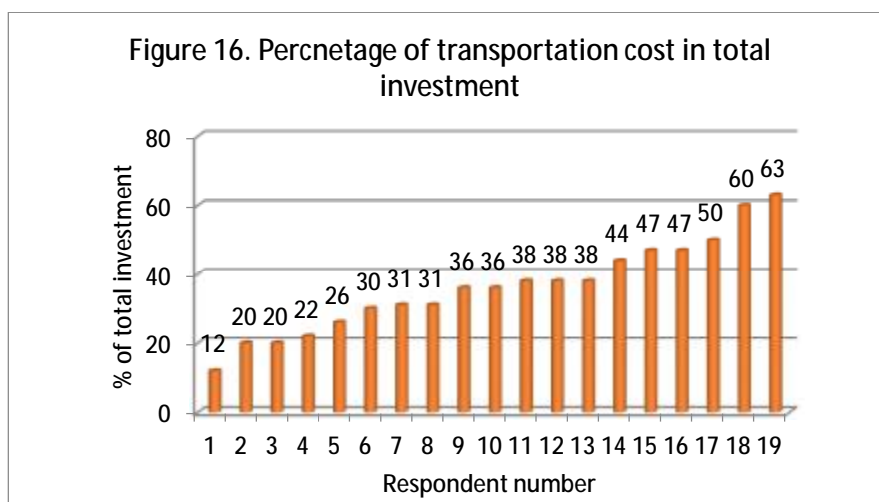


Figure 15 presents income range of farmers. The highest range of more than 10,000 rupees is achieved by 7% (one farmer), followed by 13% (2 farmers) attaining the range of Rs 8001-10000. 20 % (3 farmers) in Rs 6001-8000 income range, 20% (3 farmers) were in the range of Rs 2001-4000 and the next 20% (3 farmers) fell in the range of less than Rs 2000 per month.

Figure 14. Monthly income of farmers n=15



Most of the resources needed for mushroom farming in Almora are brought in from the plains. Figure 16 shows the percentage of transportation cost in total investment done by farmers in mushroom farming. The average figure is about 36 %.



The Himgiri Natural Food Products Cooperative in Almora, led by Smt Preeti Bhandari, a trained and seasoned entrepreneur, is purchasing button mushroom from the farmers at the rate of Rs 175/ Kg or Rs 35/per packet which is higher than the normal rate in the market. The cooperative sells mushrooms directly to the customers at the rate of Rs 200/kg.

5i. Limitations of this study

This study was carried out during the peak season of harvesting of button mushrooms. Hence, data corresponds to a particular variety of mushrooms during a specific period of the year. Some farmers were also cultivating oyster mushrooms but had kept no records of their business.

5j. Conclusion

Mushroom farming is being projected as one of the alternative sources of income in Uttarakhand. 80% subsidy (Rs 8000/ton of compost) is provided by the Department of Horticulture to beneficiaries in Almora district. Other government and non-government institutions are also involved in promotion of mushroom farming in the state.

This study reveals that out of 15 farmers in Almora district, 74% were earning profits from mushroom cultivation. However, just one farmer had earned more than 10,000 rupees per month for a period of four months in a year. Though the desired average income from this activity is about 9500 rupees per month, just three farmers were able to achieve it. Currently, farmers spend a lot of money in procuring and transporting compost bags from various sources to their farms.



Figure 43. Buttonmushrooms farming.

Mushroom farming is a technical craft. It needs scientific knowledge and skills. In addition, the activity depends on outside resources even for basic requirements such as compost, poly-bags, spawn etc. Further, in case of Oyster mushrooms, getting spawn for cultivation is a daunting task.

Marketing is another issue that affects income of farmers. In Almora, farmers of nearby villages bring their produce to the market or mandi by themselves which incurs expenses on transportation on a daily basis. The market, though expanding every year, is limited.



Figure 44. Oyster mushrooms fresh, dried and pickled.

6. Publications

6a. Nanda

1500 copies of Nanda were printed and distributed in villages. This year, the theme was human- wildlife conflict and articles focused on issues of damage to agricultural crops and fruits caused by monkeys, wild boars, deer and other animals and attacks of leopards on human beings.

6b. Muskaan

125 copies of Muskaan were made and provided to each centre for children and others to read.



Figure 45 a, b, c. Nanda is read by women, adolescent girls, CBOs and others in villages.

7. Resource centre

This year, the new building which is used for training, dining purposes was repaired. In early June 2022, the library was shifted downstairs and the room was rearranged for accommodation of more women and girls who come for training to Almora.

Mr. Aditya N Tarakant joined in June as an intern for about a month at USNPSS. He made visits to Galla, Sunkiya and Gajar villages in Naintal district and wrote about his experiences.

Chandra Arya joined in April 2022 for 4 months to document work in tailoring and knitting centres at Maniagar. She also participated in Training of adolescent girls and women's groups. Chandra made visits to Maichun, Pati, Karnaprayg clusters of villages to see village learning centres and income generation activities. She gave suggestions for improvements in the programme.

8. Meetings of the Governing Body

Meetings of the governing body were held on 19.5.2022 and 9.11.2022. Some of the members were physically present and others joined virtually.

9. Scholarships to girls

This year, Late Mrs. Alka Dhawan Chatrath Scholarship was given to Anjali Matiyani to pursue a course on ANM at government ANM training centre, Almora. Anjali is a resident of village Kasoon, Beh, district Almora. This is the 15th scholarship (total beneficiaries 11) under the programme.

Ms. Sakshi Kimothi, village Badhani, district Chamoli, received support to pursue her studies in B. Sc. Agriculture from Shri Guru Ram Rai University, Dehradun.

10. Vocational training for girls

Savitri Arya, age 20 years, a resident of Malka Dugarcha village in Bageswar district was working as a shikshika in the village learning centre. She had passed her intermediate examination in 2020 and wanted to go for vocational training. She was sent to the Sri Aurobindo Institute of Vocational Training (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch) to learn tailoring during April 2022- March 2023.

11. Sangosthi programme

The sangosthi programme continued with its 15th event organised on April 16, 2022 at USNPSS. Ashok Pande, an author and founder of the Kafal tree website, talked about his recently published book *Lapoojhanna*. His talk was followed by an open discussion on the book. About 40 participants attended the event.

12. Samvaad

The Samvaad programme has been organised annually since 2009 by *Padma-Vibhushan late B D Pande Smriti Samaaroh Samiti, Almora* at USNPSS. Held on March 25, 2023, this was

the 11th event in the series. The topic for discussions was *palayan aur grameen arthvyavastha* (migration and rural economy).



Figure 46. Samvaad programme at USNPSS.

Shri Ajay Tamta, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) and Shri Manoj Tiwari, Member of the State Legislative Assembly of Uttarakhand presided over the function. The workshop was attended by about 70 delegates including the chairman Municipality of Almora. Professors, teachers, scientists, advocates, social workers, journalists participated and gave suggestions for improvements in the situation. Mr. Niranjana Pant, formerly Dy. C & AG of India and Shri Indu Kumar Pande, former Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand and former Chairman of the State Finance Commission were present as special guests. Two members of Uttarakhand Palayan Nivaran Aayog shared their views on policies regarding migration and challenges that the government has faced in implementing the current policies on migration and rural economy. The Director of the G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development, Kosi-katarmal and the Director of the Vivekanand Parvatiya Krishi Anusandhan Sansthan (VPKAS-an ICAR institution) shared insights emerging from their work in agriculture and environment.

13. Visitors

The Trustees of the Dayal Trust, New Delhi visited USNPSS on 07.04.2022 and 6.10.2022
3 men from village Badhani, Karnaprayag, district Chamoli, came for a day on 11.04.2022
Ms. Chandra Arya, M Sc Pantnagar University visited on 25.04.2022
Mr. Tewari, New Delhi visited on 30.04.2022 to meet and discuss books in the library
Ms. Anu Upadhyay came from Jaipur on 09.05.2022
A group of 15 girls from Mani agar and surrounding villages visited on 11.05.2022 to discuss the tailoring programme and to see marketing of products in Almora town
Mr. Mahesh Galiya from Galla and Hemant Bora from Haldwani, district Nainital, visited on 18.05.2022
Mr. Kedar Singh Koranga, came on 07.06.2022 from Shama, district Bageswar and stayed for a day
A woman and her daughter came from Binta, district Almora, on 10.06.2022 to appear in an exam for selection in the police force
Mr. Aditya N. Tarakant came from Delhi on 11.06.2022 to intern for about a month at USNPSS
Ms. Kamla Bisht came from Ganaigangoli, district Pithoragarh, on 14.06.2022 to stay for a night
Mr. Bharat Bhushan and Ms. Rashmi Pant, New Delhi, visited on 25.06.2022. Ms. Rashmi Pant stayed for her research work till 02.07.2022
Ms. Tara Danu and Basanti Kapkoti, district Bageswar, visited on 27.06.2022
Mr. Suresh Nautiyal, Director, G B Pant Institute Kosi Katarmal, Almora came on 12.07.2022
Ms. Nisha Tamta and Ranjana Tamta, SSJ Almora University, visited to consult USNPSS library on 21.07.2022, 25.07.2022
Ms. Abha Negi, Almora University, visited to consult USNPSS library on 25.07.2022, 26.07.2022
Mr. Chandra Shekhar Tewari and Mr. Yogesh Dhasmana, Dehradun, visited during 26.07.2022-29.07.2022
Mr. Archismaan Chaudhary, Jindal University Sonipat, visited during 09.08.2022-19.08.2022. He made a visit to Mani agar centre on 13.08.2022 and Aaroahi on 16.08.2022
Mr. Manish Pande, Canada, came on 20.08.2022
Mr. Manish Khanna, Nainital, visited during 22.08.2022-23.08.2022
Mr. Niranjan Pant visited during 03.09.2022-04.09.2022 and 19.02.2023-20.02.2023
Ms. Mohini Gupta, Oxford University UK, visited during 14.9.2022 -16.9.2022. She made a visit to Mani agar centre on 15. 9.2022 and also talked with USNPSS staff about workbooks developed for schools and environmental education programme with communities
Ms. Poonam Arya came on 22.9.2022 to discuss tailoring and knitting programme at Palyun
Mr. M C Pant Retired Director Education and Chairman NIOS, New Delhi came on 7.10.2022 to discuss educational programmes developed by USNPSS
Mr. Rajesh Thadani, Director CEDAR, came on 27.10.2022
Prof Vinaya Pande, Allahabad University, Prof. Malbika Pande, BHU, Suparna and Kishmish came on 10.11.2022
Ms. Juhi Latwal, Kasaar Devi, visited on 16.11.2022, 23.11.2022
Ms. Sunita Gahtori, Pati-district Champawat, visited during 19.11.2022-20.11.2022
Mr. Bhopal Singh came from Badhani, district Chamoli, 19.12.2022-20.12.2022
Ms. Shanu Gupta and Jyoti Patel came on 2.1.2023
Ms. Suman Bisht and two other girls came from Gopeswar, district Chamoli to stay during 14.1.2023-15.1.2023 and 20.3.2023-22.3.2023
Mr. Richard Delacy USA came on 16.1.2023
Mr. Mohan Kandpal came from Sunadi, district Almora, 19.1.2023
Ms. Shivani Viswakarma and Payal, Almora University, came on 21.1.2023
Mr. Kishan Singh Danu Badiyakot, district Bageswar, came on 2.2.2023
Ms Kamla Bisht, Ganaigangoli, district Pithoragarh, visited on 2.2.2023
Mr. Vijay Fuloria and Harry, Haldwani, district Nainital, visited on 4.2.2023
Mr. Naveen Pangty, Almora, came on 10.3.2023

nnn

14. Members of the Governing Body

Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora

List of the Governing Body members for 2022-23

| Sl. | Name | Occupation | Address |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 1 | Dr. Lalit Pande (Chairman and Chief Executive) | Social work | Manorath Sadan, Champanaula, Almora 263601 |
| 2 | Dr. H. C. Pande (Member) | Former Vice Chancellor | 1/97 Vijay Khand Gomti Nagar, Lucknow |
| 3 | Dr. B. K. Joshi (Member) | Former Vice Chancellor | 217, Indira Nagar, Phase 1, P.O. New Forest, Dehradun |
| 4 | Ms. Ratna Sudarshan (Member) | Trustee & Former Director, ISST, New Delhi | C-96 (third Floor), Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 110017 |
| 5 | Mr Ranjan Joshi (Member) | Ex. Corporate Executive, Community Advisor | Belvedere, Brighton Corner, Almora 263601 |

Special Invitees:

| | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 6 | Shri Arun Singh | Former M.P. and Union Minister | MA 1/3-2D Garden Estate, MG Road, Gurgaon. |
| 7 | Ms. Manini Chatterjee | Editor | B-27, Press Enclave, New Delhi - 110017 |
| 8 | Sri Suman Dubey | Former Editor | N-125, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi 110017 |
| 9 | Dr. M.G. Jackson | Former Professor | Haldwani, Uttarakhand |
| 10 | Shri K.S. Mallick | Retd Civil Servant | Ganga Niwas, Kasar Devi, Almora 263601 |
| 11 | Smt. Anuradha Pande | Social worker | USNPSS, Almora |
| 12 | Shri Vikram Mehta | Brookings, Delhi | Binsar, Almora |
| 13 | Col C.S. Pant (Retd) | Consultant Radiologist | Green Park, New Delhi |
| 14 | Shri Deb Mukharji | IFS Retd, Former Ambassador | C-71 IFS Apartments, Mayur Vihar-1, Delhi -91 |
| 15 | Dr O.P. Yadava | CEO, National Heart Institute | Kasar Devi, Almora |
| 16 | Sri Kiran Joshi | Retd. Bank Manager | Tilakpur, Link Road, Almora |

15. Staff Profile

Staff 2022-23 USNPSS Almora

| Sl. | Name | Sex | Qualifications | Work experience in USNPSS |
|-----|----------------------------|-----|--|---------------------------|
| 1 | Dr Lalit Pande Director | M | Ph.D.in Mechanical Engineering, Purdue University S.M.in Mechanical Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. USA B. Tech (with distinction) Indian Institute of Technology Delhi Awarded <i>Padma Shri</i> by the President of India IIT Delhi Distinguished Alumni Award 2014 Outstanding Mechanical Engineer OME Award Purdue University (2017) | 37 years |
| 2 | Ms Anuradha Pande | F | M. Sc. (Geology), Kumaun University Nainital, Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Management, Lucknow | 31 |
| 3 | Dr G. P. Pande | M | M. Sc., Ph. D. (Botany), Kumaun University Nainital | 23 |
| 4 | Ms. Rama Joshi | F | Intermediate, U. P. Board | 30 |
| 5 | Sri Kamal K. Joshi | M | M. A. (History), Kumaon University, Almora campus | 30 |
| 6 | Sri Jeevan C Joshi | M | Inter science | 35 |
| 7 | Sri Suresh Bisht | M | Intermediate | 30 |
| 8 | Sri Kailash Papanai | M | MA (Education), MA (Political Science) Kumaun University | 16 |
| 9 | Sri D. S. Latwal | M | B.A. Kumaun University | 19 |
| 10 | Sri Divan Matiyani | M | Class 11 9 (left in November 2022) | 24 |
| 11 | Sri Mohan Singh | M | Class 8 | 15 |
| 12 | Sri Mohan Singh Jr. | M | Class 8 (joined in November 2022) | 5 months |

16. Accounts

An audited statement of accounts is attached.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To Members,

Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan

REPORT ON THE AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Opinion

We have audited the Balance sheet Income and Expenditure Account, and Receipts and Payments Accounts of Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan for the period ended 31 March 2023. In our opinion, and according to the information and explanations given to us, the accompanying said financial statement, including a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, give a true and fair view of the financial position and the financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the Accounting Standards issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI).

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with the Standards on Auditing (SAs) issued by ICAI. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the entity in accordance with the Code of Ethics issued by ICAI and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code of Ethics. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Key Audit Matter

We have determined there are no Key Audit Matters to communicate in our report

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation of these financial statements that give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the entity in accordance with the accounting principles generally accepted in India. This responsibility includes the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and presentation of the financial statements that give a true and fair view and are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so. Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about the entity's presentation and fair representation of the financial statements and that the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with SAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to



Influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements the entity's presentation and fair representation of the financial statements

As part of an audit in accordance with SAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.

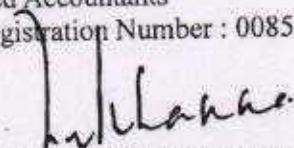
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion.

Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the entity to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit. We also provide those charged with governance with a statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.

For Manish Khanna & Co.
Chartered Accountants
Firm Registration Number : 008584C


Manish Khanna, FCA, DISA(ICAI)
Partner

Membership Nos- 077858

Place: Nainital

Dated: 16 September 2023

UDIN -23077858BGVNBX3795



Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora
Balance sheet as at 31 March 2023

| Sources of funds | | | |
|---|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| Corpus Fund | | Current Year | Previous Year |
| Opening balance | | 20,070,151.47 | 20,060,151.47 |
| Less: Surplus of earlier years included in corpus transferred to General Reserves | | -720,000.00 | |
| Add: Corpus donations | | - | 10,000.00 |
| Total corpus fund | | 19,350,151.47 | 20,070,151.47 |
| General Funds | | | |
| General Reserves | | | |
| Opening Balance | | 5,218,783.84 | 4,758,313.10 |
| Add: Transfer from Corpus Fund | | 720,000.00 | |
| Add: Current year's appropriation | | 2,316,562.36 | 460,470.74 |
| Total general reserves | | 8,255,346.20 | 5,218,783.84 |
| Designated Funds | | | |
| Specific Reserves | | | |
| Opening Balance | | 10,722,245.79 | 9,373,169.95 |
| Less: Expenditure met from reserves | | (1,556,959.00) | (1,260,258.34) |
| Add: Current year's appropriation | | 1,454,661.43 | 2,609,334.18 |
| Total Specific reserves (I) | | 10,619,948.22 | 10,722,245.79 |
| Restricted Funds | | | |
| Unspent grants in aid [Annexure A] | | 4,032,352.13 | 8,321,797.22 |
| Total grant obligations (II) | | 4,032,352.13 | 8,321,797.22 |
| Total sources of funds | | 42,257,798.02 | 44,332,978.32 |
| Utilization of funds | | | |
| Current assets | | | |
| Cash in hand | | 3,726,748.17 | 3,547,473.89 |
| Cash in bank | | 36,989,751.00 | 38,986,748.00 |
| Balance in bank in fixed deposits | | 827,812.04 | 913,670.62 |
| Accrued Interest | | 713,486.81 | 885,085.81 |
| Income tax deducted at source | | | |
| Total Current assets | | 42,257,798.02 | 44,332,978.32 |
| Total utilization of funds | | 42,257,798.02 | 44,332,978.32 |

Notes to accounts and significant accounting policies - Annexure - "B"

For Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan

Jeewan C. Joshi

Jeewan C. Joshi
Accountant

Dr. Lalit Pande

Dr. Lalit Pande
Chairman



This is the balance sheet referred
to in our report of even date
For Manish Khanna & Co.
ICAI FRN 008584C
Chartered Accountants

Manish Khanna
Manish Khanna, FCA, LL.M, DISA (ICAI)
Partner
Membership Nos 077858
Dated: 16 September 2023
Place : Nainital - 263001
UDIN: 23077858BGVNBX3795

Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora
Income and Expenditure Account
for year ended 31 March 2023

| <u>Income</u> | <u>Current Year Amount [Rs]</u> | <u>Previous Year Amount [Rs]</u> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Administrative charges | 195,000.00 | 245,000.00 |
| Training workshops | 343,800.00 | 142,500.00 |
| Donations | 1,443,222.00 | 612,500.00 |
| Interest on bank deposits | 2,095,250.00 | 2,162,236.56 |
| Miscellaneous income | 5,804.00 | 1,066.00 |
| Excess grant written back | | 16,010.00 |
| Income tax Refund- Sansthan | 13,596.00 | 20,492.00 |
| Income other than grants | 4,096,672.00 | 3,199,804.56 |
| Add: Grant funds (Schedule 1) | 11,347,077.09 | 15,638,063.70 |
| Total Income | 15,443,749.09 | 18,837,868.26 |

| <u>Expenditure</u> | <u>Current Year Amount [Rs]</u> | <u>Previous Year Amount [Rs]</u> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Bank Charges | 5,005.89 | 1,734.64 |
| Books | 1,694.00 | 6,324.00 |
| Electricity and water and municipal taxes | 10,007.00 | 29,229.00 |
| Insurance | 14,619.00 | 19,541.00 |
| Miscellaneous expenses | - | 2,350.00 |
| Postage and telephone | 6,337.00 | 12,864.00 |
| Society renewal fee | | 5,000.00 |
| Scholarship | 40,000.00 | 30,000.00 |
| Software updation | 4,248.00 | |
| Stationery | - | 252.00 |
| Boarding and Lodging | 194,580.32 | |
| Travel | 48,957.00 | 22,705.00 |
| Expenditure other than grant expenditure | 325,448.21 | 129,999.64 |
| Add: Grant Expenditure (Annexure 1) | 7,314,724.96 | 7,316,266.48 |
| Total Expenditure | 7,640,173.17 | 7,446,266.12 |

| | | |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|
| <u>Current year's surplus appropriated</u> | <u>7,803,575.92</u> | <u>11,391,602.14</u> |
| a) General Reserves | 2,316,562.36 | 460,470.74 |
| b) Grant obligations | 4,032,352.13 | 8,321,797.22 |
| c) Specific Reserves | 1,454,661.43 | 2,609,334.18 |
| | <u>7,803,575.92</u> | <u>11,391,602.14</u> |

This is the income and expenditure account referred to in our report of even date

For Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan

For Manish Khanna & Co.
 FRN : 008584C
 Chartered Accountants



Jeewan C. Joshi
 Jeewan C. Joshi
 Accountant

Dr. Lalit Pande
 Dr. Lalit Pande
 Chairman

Manish Khanna
 Manish Khanna, FCA, LL.M, DISA (ICAI)
 Partner

Membership Number 077858
 Dated: 16 September 2023
 Place : Nainital - 263001
 UDIN: 23077858 BG VNBX 3795

Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora
Receipts and Payments Account
for the year ended 31 March 2023

| Receipts | Current Year | Previous Year | Payments | Current Year | Previous Year |
|---|---------------|---------------|---|---------------|---------------|
| | Amounts [Rs.] | Amounts [Rs.] | | Amounts [Rs.] | Amounts [Rs.] |
| Opening balances | | | Utilization of grants | | |
| Cash in hand | - | - | Rajeshwar Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust | 2,690,319.56 | 2,587,842.24 |
| Cash in bank | 3,547,473.89 | 12,889,718.46 | Hari Krishna Kamla Trivedi Memorial Trust | 348,818.00 | 883,448.76 |
| Fixed Deposits | 38,986,748.00 | 30,839,349.00 | National Philanthropic Trust | 3,727,063.40 | 3,780,755.48 |
| Sub total | 42,534,221.89 | 43,729,067.46 | Association for India's Development | 548,524.00 | 68,210.00 |
| Grants received | | | Total utilization of grant | 7,314,724.96 | 7,300,256.48 |
| Rajeshwar Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust | 2,421,388.00 | 2,418,100.00 | | | |
| Hari Krishna Kamla Trivedi Memorial Trust | 334,045.87 | 772,353.00 | Revenue Payments related to Sansthan | | |
| National Philanthropic Trust | 269,846.00 | 99,461.00 | Bank Charges | 5,005.89 | 1,734.54 |
| Association for India's Development | - | 1,178,800.00 | Books | 1,694.00 | 6,324.00 |
| Total grants received | 3,025,279.87 | 4,468,714.00 | Electricity and water and municipal taxes | 10,007.00 | 29,229.00 |
| | | | Insurance | 14,619.00 | 19,541.00 |
| Revenue Receipts | | | Miscellaneous expenses | - | 2,350.00 |
| Administrative charges | 195,000.00 | 245,000.00 | Postage and telephone | 6,337.00 | 12,864.00 |
| Training workshops | 343,800.00 | 142,500.00 | Society renewal fee | - | 5,000.00 |
| Donations | 1,443,222.00 | 612,500.00 | Scholarship | 40,000.00 | 30,000.00 |
| Interest on bank deposits | 2,181,108.58 | 2,083,610.09 | Software updation | 4,248.00 | - |
| Miscellaneous income | 5,804.00 | 1,066.00 | Stationery | - | 252.00 |
| Interest Income tax refund | 13,596.00 | - | Boarding and Lodging | 194,580.32 | - |
| Total revenue receipts | 4,182,530.58 | 3,084,676.09 | Travel | 48,957.00 | 22,705.00 |
| | | | | 325,448.21 | 129,999.84 |
| Corpus donations | | 10,000.00 | Payment from reserves | | |
| | | | Fellowships | | 330,000.00 |
| Income tax refund | 374654 | 20,492.00 | Salary | 711,500.00 | 455,300.00 |
| | | | Training | | |
| | | | Rural development | 113,135.00 | - |
| | | | Boarding & Lodging | - | 90,329.34 |
| | | | Maintenance | 244,374.00 | 127,979.00 |
| | | | Donations | - | 100,000.00 |
| | | | Village Learning Center Program | 425,750.00 | 109,450.00 |
| | | | Auditor's remuneration | 47,200.00 | 47,200.00 |
| | | | Assets Purchased | 15,000.00 | - |
| | | | Total payments from reserves | 1,556,959.00 | 1,260,258.34 |
| | | | Income tax payments | 203,055.00 | 88,213.30 |
| | | | Closing balances | | |
| | | | Cash in hand | - | - |
| | | | Cash in banks | 3,726,748.17 | 3,547,473.89 |
| | | | Fixed Deposit receipts | 36,989,751.00 | 38,986,748.00 |
| | | | | 40,716,499.17 | 42,534,221.89 |
| | 50,116,686.34 | 51,312,949.55 | | 50,116,686.34 | 51,312,949.55 |

- This is the balance sheet referred to in our report of even date
For Manish Khanna & Co.
Chartered Accountants
(FRN 008584C)



For Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan

Jeewan C. Joshi

Jeewan C. Joshi

Accountant

Dr. Lalit Pande

Chairman

Manish Khanna

Manish Khanna, FCA, DISA(ICA)
[Membership Nos 077858]
Partner

Dated: 16 September 2023

Place : Nainital - 263001

UDIN: 23077858BGVNBX3795

Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Payavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora

Financial Year ended 31 March 2023

Annexure "I" to Balance sheet - Grants - in - aid

| Name of the grant | Balance as at 1.4.2022 | Receipt Current Year | | | Amount spent/ refunded/ adjusted | Balance as on 31.3.2023 |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | Amount received during the year | Interest credited to grant | Total grant funds available | | |
| Rajeshwar Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust | 384,122.57 | 2,400,000.00 | 21,388.00 | 2,805,510.57 | 2,690,319.56 | 115,191.01 |
| Hari Krishna Kamla Trivedi Memorial Trust | 14,772.13 | 332,365.87 | 1,680.00 | 348,818.00 | 348,818.00 | - |
| National Philanthropic Trust | 6,812,312.52 | | 269,846.00 | 7,082,158.52 | 3,727,063.40 | 3,355,095.12 |
| Association for India's Development | 1,110,590.00 | | | 1,110,590.00 | 548,524.00 | 562,066.00 |
| Total | 8,321,797.22 | 2,732,365.87 | 292,914.00 | 11,347,077.09 | 7,314,724.96 | 4,032,352.13 |

| Name of the grant | Balance as at 1.4.2021 | Receipts during previous year | | | Amount spent/ Adjusted | Balance as on 31.3.2022 |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | Amount received during the year | Interest credited to grant | Total grant funds available | | |
| Rajeshwar Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust | 547,114.81 | 2,400,000.00 | 24,850.00 | 2,971,964.81 | 2,587,842.24 | 384,122.57 |
| Hari Krishna Kamla Trivedi Memorial Trust | 105,867.89 | 764,250.00 | 8,103.00 | 878,220.89 | 863,448.76 | 14,772.13 |
| National Philanthropic Trust | 10,493,607.00 | | 99,461.00 | 10,593,068.00 | 3,780,755.48 | 6,812,312.52 |
| ONGC | 16,010.00 | | | 16,010.00 | 16,010.00 | - |
| Association for India's Development | | 1,178,800.00 | | 1,178,800.00 | 68,210.00 | 1,110,590.00 |
| Total | 11,162,599.70 | 4,343,050.00 | 132,414.00 | 15,638,063.70 | 7,316,266.48 | 8,321,797.22 |



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Seva Nidhi

UDIN - 23077858 844VN 0X2795

(a) SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1. Assets acquired by Sansthan out of surplus accumulated in earlier years for the purpose of purchase of capital assets are treated as utilization of reserves. Assets acquired out of current year surplus are treated as application of income for charitable purpose and charged to revenue in the year of acquisition. Assets acquired out of grant funds are treated as application of grant monies
2. Amounts received by way of Grants and their relative expenditure is considered as revenue items and routed through the Income & Expenditure Account. Amount of underutilized grant as at year end is transferred from the year's surplus to Unspent Grants Account which is reflected as a liability under "Restricted Funds" in the balance sheet.
3. Investments, if any, are stated at lower of cost or realizable value.
4. Interest on deposits with bank – Interest earned in deposits made out of non grant funds is considered as income to the extent credited by bank whether by accrual or otherwise by actual payment. Interest on deposits made out of grant funds is treated as income in the manner aforesaid if the terms of grant permit to so, and if terms require interest to be treated as part of grant funds, then the interest is treated as part of grant and accounted in the same way as grants received
5. Cash basis of accounting is followed in preparing the statements except interest on time deposits which is accounted in terms of paragraph 4 above

(b) NOTES TO ACCOUNTS

- (i) Assets acquired by Sansthan and in use as at 31 March 2023 out of grant funds and own funds are

| Description of asset | Amount |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Office Equipment | 6,46,174.96 |
| Vehicle (net of disposals) | 9,20,481.00 |
| Furniture and Furnishing | 1,05,505.00 |
| Library | 4,37,178.50 |
| Solar Water Heating System | 23,938.00 |
| Multifunction system | 88,200.00 |
| Portable hard drive | 5,600.00 |
| Inverter with battery | 29,900.00 |
| Computer, printer, scanner, projector | 2,35,923.00 |
| Total assets | 24,92,900.46 |



- (ii) There has been a change in accounting policy relating to grants. In earlier years grants that carried an obligation attached to them that they be spent strictly in accordance to the terms of sanction were treated as a liability and any unspent grant if not refundable was treated as an income. In the current year, grants and their relative expenditure is treated as items of revenue and routed through the Income & Expenditure. Because of change in accounting policy, the receipts increase by Rs 1,13,47,077.09 and the expenditure increases by 7,31,47,24.96 resulting in an increase of surplus by Rs 40,32,352.13.

- (iii) To make the financial statements comparable with changed accounting policy, previous year's figures are regrouped and rearranged

[Signature]

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