

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2019-2020

Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan  
Almora

## Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the support, trust and cooperation of the following:

Project Grants:

Rajeshwar Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust, New Delhi

Association for India's Development (AID) Washington

Hari Krishna Kamla Trivedi Memorial Trust, New Delhi

GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development, Kosi-Katarmal (National Mission on Himalayan Studies NMHS, MoEFCC, Govt of India)

---

Donations were received from:

Yuka and Tomoki Hashimoto

K. J. S. Chatrath

Anand & Sujata Jagota

Geeta Pande

Rajiv Patange

Vandita Pant

Sudhir Kumar

Niranjan Pant

Geeta Pant

Total: Rs 2, 10,000=00 (Indian donation); Rs 4, 20,064=00 (Foreign donation)

Gratefully acknowledge generous corpus donation of Rs 8, 88, 274/- from the Jaspar Foundation, UK

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## Introduction

This annual report commemorates printing of the 32<sup>nd</sup> edition and 33 years of work carried out by Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan (USNPSS) in the state of Uttarakhand. A registered non-government organization, USNPSS has pioneered and nurtured educational programmes for schools and communities. The environment education programme for schools and the balwadi programme for pre-school children, both mainstreamed in the government system, have brought about educational reforms in the state.

In March and June 2019 two projects were successfully completed, funded by the Eric and Leila da Costa Fund (SVCF) and the NMHS (Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change). There was thus a reduction in activities during the year under review.

Currently, USNPSS is working with a network of nine community-based organizations (CBOs) spread over five districts of Uttarakhand. Village learning centres offer educational opportunities to 5-14 years old children, adolescent girls and women to think, innovate and initiate action for change in villages. The women's groups federate at regional level to form a wider network called Uttarakhand Mahila Parishad (Uttarakhand Women's Federation).

The village learning centres offer a work place to ordinary rural girls to work as supervisors and shikshikas (facilitators) and provide leadership in their communities. In addition, the shikshikas explore what they are passionate about, what they would like to do at present and in future. In a supportive environment, communities appreciate the importance of their role in shaping the contours of learning in young minds. In addition, the facilitators develop confidence in themselves. Some of them continue to work in the centre whilst others find alternative paths to learn and develop.

In this context, each learning center acts as a source for transformation. The centre not only encourages ordinary rural citizens to seek change but also offers backup by providing a common framework to think and act. The insights generated from this transformation in communities are reflected upon and fed back into communities and into USNPSS for further planning and sharing in wider networks of the government and other institutions. In this model, common perceptions and assumptions are questioned; development thoughts and practices are constantly examined to learn from and reflected upon to move further. The process maintains fluidity, not stagnation, both in ideas and action.

The village learning centres bring together a diverse set of people including children, adolescents, women, men and elderly who broadly share a common goal for education and action for change. The programme strives to increase both participation and power of mountain people including women, girls and socially disadvantaged sections of society for equality and change. The notion of achieving equality involves both the process (social and political equality) and the outcome (which basically refers to the costs and sharing of other benefits). The issue of costs examines both financial as well as the opportunity costs of women working as volunteers in various programmes in villages. For example, the projects in dairying (led by the state as well as big non-government organizations) entirely depend on the free labour provided by women in activities of fetching fodder from the forests and the fields,

cleaning the cowshed, milking, taking care of cattle, walking long distances to reach the road to pour milk at the collection point etc.

Over the last three decades of its direct association with rural communities, USNPSS has developed a deep understanding of people's lives and their roles in the broader social structure. The example mentioned in the paragraph above would, therefore, prompt us to raise and to make women's voices heard by policy makers both in the government and the large funding organizations. The process has implications in terms of equality concerns because it requires USNPSS to enable rural women and men to think and raise issues of access to decision making, unfair allocation of funds in supply chain systems with the producer/farmer getting the least, women's representation in decision making bodies and the prospects to actually influence decisions to bring about change. We take up the issue of income generation activities in detail to illustrate these concerns. In particular, the report offers lessons from our own experience of running tailoring and knitting centres for women and girls to generate some cash income. In view of the concerns raised earlier, the programme has taken a very different trajectory from the mainstream projects for women in Uttarakhand.

By the third week of March 2020, the country went into lockdown. Since Uttarakhand shares its borders with Nepal, Tibet and China, the state witnessed a strict lockdown. As people stayed at home, the work in villages had to be stopped from March 22, 2020. Amidst these changes, USNPSS has really different priorities now that feed our thoughts for the future. However, the following sections offer detailed description and analysis of activities carried out during 2019-2020.

## **1. Village Learning Centres**

This year, a total of 59 village learning centres were run in cooperation with our partner organizations spread over 5 districts in the mountains. With a total of 1365 children attending on a regular basis, VLCs run after school in the evenings. However, during long school holidays in the summer and winter, children prefer to spend more time in the centre. Accordingly, the timings are adjusted to suit their needs. VLCs are functional in empty rooms provided by the village residents, panchayat ghar and in government school buildings. Out of the 1365 children 52% are girls. The caste-wise breakup reveals that 33.2% children attending the centres represent socially disadvantaged sections of society (Table 1).

Keeping an open mind to learning has helped to develop a flexible environment in the centres. The facilitators are trained to systematically direct learning among children but at the same time they know that learning is not just about mastering a subject. As children continually learn about interconnections among living and non-living elements delving deep in to the subjects of how and why things work and behave the way they do; the facilitators emphasize that learning is a process. The mountains, agricultural fields, forests, rivers, markets, animals and people together set a context for growing up and experiencing life in the village. In order to nurture their lived awareness of the place, children are encouraged to look at their own village with a different eye. For example, activities that focus on issues of understanding the status of the land, water and other resources in the village bring about a different view of looking at the environment. For the first time in their lives, children take a measuring tape to a field and try to estimate its length and width. Later, this exercise is

followed by taking measurements to understand the concepts and practicality of calculating area, volume etc. The complexity of understanding interconnections among natural resources and also between human beings and various elements of nature are brought to the fore as children and facilitators begin to observe, think and reflect together.

One of the most noticeable changes in children and shikshika's lives has been their ability to face situations of trouble and distress. For example, many children who had lost their father, siblings and friends during the floods in Kedarnath disaster in June 2013 seem to have recovered now after much informal talks with them and their mothers. Interactions that weave personal, community and regional impacts of disaster and offer hope for the future are deeply relational. The VLCs have and continue to offer sympathetic support to children and women who have been traumatized by large number of deaths in their communities.

Table 1. An overview of information regarding VLCs.

Sl no.	Feature	Numbers	Percentage
1	Total number of VLCs	59	-
2	Total number of children	1365	-
3	Average number enrolled in each VLC	23	-
4	Average number of books in each VLC	309	-
5	Girls	714	52
6	SC children	355	26
7	ST children	2	0.1
8	OBC children	51	3.74
9	General Caste children	912	66.8
10	Religious Minority children	45	3.3
11	Children enrolled in government schools	1049	76.8
12	Children less than 6 years of age	165	12
13	Children at primary level of schooling (classes 1-5)	679	49.7
14	Children enrolled in classes 6-8	396	29
15	Children enrolled in classes above 8 <sup>th</sup>	125	9.1

Table 2 exhibits the profile of children attending centres. On an average each centre caters to 23 children. Each centre hosts a library containing children's books (for different age groups) and books for others in the village. While adolescent children sitting for competitive exams prefer books and magazines on current affairs and logical reasoning, young educated women and girls also want to read books on gender and development. Books on the life of famous

leaders, both male and female, are popular as people like to read about their struggles. Young girls also like to read about the life of local women celebrities such as mountaineers, singers etc. This year the average number of books per centre has been 309.



Figure 1. In a village learning centre, children show their favorite books.



Figure 2. Girls get an opportunity to read stories and other books in the centre.



Table 2. Profile of Children.

Sl.	Centre	Place	Total		< 6 years		Classes 1-5		Classes 6-8		9th and above		SC		Gen caste		Govt School		Private School		No. of books
			G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	
Ganai Gangoli (Development Block Gangolihat, District Pithoragarh)-5																					
1	Gwadi	Panchayat ghar	11	16	2	1	3	8	6	7	0	0	2	0	9	16	10	10	1	6	357
2	Kakra	Govt Primary School	6	10	0	1	1	2	2	2	3	5	0	0	6	10	6	9	0	1	307
3	Fadiyali	Private house	15	5	0	0	11	3	3	2	1	0	15	5	0	0	15	5	0	0	232
4	Bhanyani	Private house	7	13	0	4	3	0	0	3	4	6	7*	13*	0	0	7	13	0	0	415
5	Bhalugara	Private house	10	11	0	0	1	3	6	6	3	2	0	0	10	11	10	10	0	1	362
SHAPE Badhani (Development Block Karnprayag and Gairsain, District Chamoli)- 10																					
6	Bainoli	Panchayat ghar	9	15	0	0	6	7	3	8	0	0	0	0	9	15	8	14	1	1	540
7	Sutar Gwar	Private house	26	19	6	4	11	11	6	4	3	0	26*	19*	0	0	25	19	1	0	322
8	Kafandi	Panchayat ghar	11	11	1	1	6	10	4	0	0	0	0	1+1	11	9	5	3	6	8	310
9	Chumdali	Panchayat ghar	5	15	1	1	2	7	2	5	0	2	1	3	4	12	5	15	0	0	357
10	Joshi	Panchayat ghar	16	11	0	0	12	7	4	4	0	0	2+2	5*	12	6	5	5	11	6	505
11	Sunder Gaon	Panchayat ghar	11	16	1	1	3	5	3	6	4	4	0	0	11	16	11	16	0	0	316
12	Pudiyani	Panchayat ghar	18	4	0	0	10	4	8	0	0	0	0	0	18	4	8	0	10	4	330
13	Chotoli	Panchayat ghar	13	14	1	3	12	7	0	4	0	0	0	0	13	14	8	3	5	11	310
14	Badhani	Panchayat ghar	12	19	0	0	7	10	5	9	0	0	5	8	7	11	9	11	3	8	310
15	Kukdai	Panchayat ghar	9	15	4	2	2	6	3	7	0	0	0	0	9	15	9	14	0	1	410
Paryavaran Chetna Manch, Maichun (Development Block Dhauladevi and Bhainsiyachana, Almora)-6																					
16	Banzok	Panchayat ghar	13	8	0	0	5	5	6	0	2	3	12	6	1	2	13	8	0	0	333
17	Manigar	Panchayat ghar	12	9	0	0	5	5	7	4	0	0	12	9	0	0	11	6	1	3	235
18	Moum	Panchayat ghar	14	10	0	0	7	4	7	6	0	0	7	5	7	5	14	10	0	0	333
19	Kaaron	Panchayat ghar	10	18	4	3	5	13	0	1	1	1	10	18	0	0	10	18	0	0	65
20	Dhara	Private house	14	8	1	0	7	5	3	3	3	0	14	8	0	0	13	7	1	1	134
21	Patyun	Barot ghar	11	13	0	0	8	11	3	2	0	0	11	13	0	0	11	13	0	0	374
Navjyoti Mahila Kalyan Sansthan Gopeshwar (Development Block Dasauli, District Chamoli)-10																					
22	Koteswar	Panchayat ghar	6	10	0	0	3	8	3	0	1	1	2	2	6	6	6	10	0	0	430
23	Bamiyalu	Panchayat ghar	15	15	3	3	9	4	2	2	1	6	0	0	15	15	15	15	0	0	510
24	Kandai	Panchayat ghar	16	8	3	0	3	5	5	3	5	0	0	0	16	8	16	8	0	0	620
25	Bardwara	Panchayat ghar	20	17	7	6	7	3	5	4	6	4	3	4	17	13	20	17	0	0	360
26	Devaldhar	Panchayat ghar	13	19	7	2	4	14	2	3	0	0	0	0	13	19	12	14	1	5	385
27	Kholla	Panchayat ghar	13	23	2	4	4	6	5	11	2	2	4	4	9	19	4	13	9	10	310
28	Kachur	Panchayat ghar	17	11	4	2	4	1	6	5	3	3	5	3	12	8	17	11	0	0	405
29	Sirouli	Panchayat ghar	11	12	3	4	3	5	3	3	2	0	0	0	11	12	11	8	0	4	331
30	Mandal	Panchayat ghar	11	15	0	1	8	10	3	4	0	0	5	7	6	8	9	11	2	4	365
31	Gwar	Panchayat ghar	18	12	5	1	8	4	1	3	4	4	0	0	18	12	11	8	7	4	500
Paryavaran Evam Shiksha Samiti Shama (Development Block Kapkot, District. Bageswar and Block Munsiyari District Pithoragarh)-5																					
32	Malla Namik	Panchayat ghar	13	11	1	2	9	2	4	6	0	0	12+18	10+18	0	0	13	11	0	0	294
33	Talka Namik	Panchayat ghar	16	7	3	1	6	4	7	2	0	0	16*	7*	0	0	16	7	0	0	360
34	Malka Dugarcha	Govt School	17	8	1	1	12	5	4	2	0	0	17	8	0	0	17	8	0	0	295
35	Dhari	Uja bhawan	10	7	2	4	4	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	10	7	10	7	0	0	295
36	Hinari	private house	7	8	1	2	3	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	7	8	7	8	0	0	295
Paryavaran Sanrakshan Samiti Pati (Development Block Pati, District Champawat)-5																					
37	Harodi	Private house	6	9	0	0	2	6	3	3	1	0	0	0	6	9	5	4	1	5	360
38	Jankande	Panchayat ghar	10	9	1	2	4	5	2	2	3	0	4	7	6	2	9	8	1	1	323



39	Lakhanpur	Private house	6	6	0	2	2	2	1	2	3	0	2	2	4	4	6	6	0	0	310
40	Dhunaghat	Govt Primary School	18	12	0	1	10	6	6	5	2	0	0	0	18	12	13	11	5	1	260
41	Kamlekh	Temple premises	15	7	4	2	8	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	15	7	13	6	2	1	300
Binta (Development Block Dwarahat, District Almora)-5																					
42	Gorgaon	Private house	12	5	6	1	5	1	1	5	0	0	0	0	12	5	9	1	3	4	362
43	Binta	Panchayat ghar	7	16	1	3	2	4	2	6	2	3	3	8	4	8	2	7	5	9	260
44	Bhounara	Panchayat ghar	13	8	2	1	9	7	2	0	0	0	3	2	10	6	7	3	6	5	314
45	Sunni	Panchayat ghar	14	7	2	2	12	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	14	7	7	2	7	5	295
46	Boekhola	Panchayat ghar	11	9	2	2	5	1	3	4	1	2	0	0	11	9	6	2	5	7	304
Shiva Shakri Samiti Danya (Development Block Dhauladevi, District Almora)-7																					
47	Bassan	Govt School	8	11	0	0	6	8	3	2	1	1	6	4	2	7	7	8	1	3	244
48	Gadli	Private house	10	14	1	0	1	6	8	6	0	2	0	0	10	14	5	1	5	13	-
49	Muoli	Private house	14	6	0	0	12	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	14	6	12	2	2	4	264
50	Dasali	Bal Bhawan	13	12	0	0	6	5	6	6	1	1	0	0	13	12	5	8	8	4	274
51	Dharaga	Panchayat ghar	14	13	0	0	7	7	7	5	0	1	5	2	9	11	7	7	7	6	204
52	Roval	Bal Bhawan	17	7	0	0	14	6	3	1	0	0	0	0	17	7	2	1	15	6	364
53	Tikoli	Panchayat ghar	9	9	0	0	5	5	4	4	0	0	0	0	9	9	8	5	1	4	274
Himalaya Gramin Vikas Sanstha Ukhimath (Development Block Ukhimath, District Rudraprayag)-6																					
54	Dungar	Panchayat ghar	16	10	3	2	10	6	2	1	1	1	16	10	0	0	16	10	0	0	230
55	Huddu-Kandhar	Panchayat ghar	5	6	0	0	3	5	2	1	0	0	5	6	0	0	2	1	3	5	202
56	Saei	Panchayat ghar	13	8	1	0	8	4	2	2	2	2	3	11	5	13	4	4	0	300	
57	Usadi	Panchayat ghar	7	12	0	4	4	4	3	4	0	0	0	0	7	12	7	8	2	2	200
58	Kirana	Panchayat ghar	10	10	3	1	5	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	4	5	7	4	150
59	Byolda	Private house	10	2	2	2	5	0	3	0	0	0	10	2	0	0	10	2	0	0	225
Total			714	651	86	19	387	322	297	189	68	57	247	219	463	443	572	477	149	167	18272

\*OBC (51)

#ST (2)

\*\* Religious Minorities (45)

G=Girls

B=Boys

Expression through art is encouraged at multiple levels. For example, drawing and coloring is a preferred medium of expression for children yet to learn to read and write. Art is a medium of expression which goes beyond words and unfolds deep feelings that children experience at home and in the community. Children attending primary schools and higher are encouraged to draw and paint in the centres. One of the challenges in villages is the unavailability of crayons and other coloring materials, paper etc. Therefore, USNPSS provides stationary in all centres (Table 3).

Expression through art is not just about making a drawing or painting but it also incorporates poetry, composing a song, singing, dance, skits etc. All artful expressions are encouraged in the centre. Children create small artefacts using mud and decorate those with colors. Paper mâché is a popular exercise and so is origami. Children use old newspapers to create art and also learn to make daily use items such as baskets of different size and design.

### 1a. Educational material provided to the centres

This year, the CBOs were requested to send a list of materials that they need in the centres. In addition, during their visits to the centres the USNPSS staff had also prepared a list of materials required in the centres. On the basis of this information, 49 centres were given educational materials. The remaining 10 centres had enough materials for the time being. The following table exhibits the details of the materials given to the centres.

Table 3. Material given to the centres during 2019-2020.

Sl.	Item	Total material	Material /centre
1	Paper ream- A4 size	49	1
2	Charts	490	10
3	Sketch pens	196	4 packets
4	Crayon (pack of 24 colors)	98	2 packets
5	Fevicol (100 gram)	49	1
6	Register	49	1
7	Copy	49	1
8	Packet of pencils	49	1
9	Color chalk	245	
10	Football (No.5)	49	1
11	Skipping ropes	98	2
12	Ring balls	49	1
13	Badminton set	5	Centers in Ganai Gangoli
14	Chess set	7	Centers in Binta and Ganai Gangoli
15	Football pump	5	Centers in Ganai Gangoli
16	White board marker	20	Binta, Shama and Pati
17	Jute mattress	20	
18	Books	120 books-78 titles (Sasta Sahitya mandal)	In Danya, Badhani, Gopeswar, Maichun 78 for each cluster
		170 titles (NBT)	In 5 centers at Ganai Gangoli-34 books per centre
		A and A publishers	In Binta, Shama, Pati 10 /centre
		32 Books on science	In Danya, Gopeswar, Badhani Maichun



Figure 3. Children in Palyun village learning centre, district Almora. A majority of children come from scheduled caste families.



Figure 4. Village learning centre at Sari village-Devariya-tal, Ukhimath, district Rudraprayag.



Figure 5. Children in a village learning centre Jankande, District Champawat.

After much effort, the CBO at Badhani was successful in opening a center in Sunargwad village, district Chamoli. This village is inhabited by a Muslim community. In the mountains, not many villages have families from religious minority communities and inclusion of this village in the programme is a part of our vision for integration of all peoples.

This year, efforts were made to ensure that VLCs function in community centers such as panchayat ghar, baraat ghar or space provided by schools. About 20% of the centres are in rooms provided by people. This was to deter tendency of shikshikas to run a centre from their own houses or space provided by their close relatives. No rent is paid for the centres.

A positive aspect which has gained momentum this year is the exercise of shikshikas taking the children from their village to neighboring villages to encourage interactions among children. While visiting the center, children also learn some activity from the hosting centre.

It has been observed and also confirmed by teachers that children attending the centres have better comprehension than the rest of students in schools. School teachers have noted

improvements in both reading and writing abilities. In addition, children attending the centres are more confident and take part in other extra-curricular activities in schools.

Sports are an integral part of activities carried out in centres. Both boys and girls are encouraged to play outdoor as well as indoor games. This focus on children taking part in sports has led to parents allowing adolescent girls to go out to play. Earlier, adolescent girls were not allowed to jump, run or perform other athletic activities. USNPSS has provided volleyball, football, cricket set, badminton set, carom boards, chessboard, ludo etc. to facilitate the process of children engaging in sporting activities.

In remote villages, still not connected by roads, a learning centre is considered a boon to children and their parents. For example, in Namik village, mothers take much interest in activities carried out in the evenings. The village residents keep visiting the centre and interact with shikshikas regarding the performance of their children. The school teachers also encourage children to attend the centre on a regular basis.

The village residents prefer to celebrate national festivals such as independence-day, children's day, republic day etc. with children in the centre. Often the gram Pradhan or a retired pensioner bears the costs of sweets/refreshments which are distributed after the function. An initiative of the people themselves, this activity has helped in strengthening solidarity in villages.

Meetings of the kishori sangathan (adolescent girls' groups) are held on Sundays. Since girls are at home on Sunday and do not have to go to school, meetings with them are possible. Issues of self-development, reproductive health are discussed. Many girls need information on specific issues such as choices of subjects to take in school, filling up forms to sit for competitive exams, use of mobile phones for educational purposes, incentives provided to girls by the government and issues relating to accessibility of such facilities and so on, these meetings have proven very useful in villages.

Monthly meetings of women's groups are held in the centre. All women sit together and discuss various issues ranging from building up solidarity to taking up some activity for improvements in the village.

## **1b. Computer Centres**

This year, a total of 9 computer centres were functional in different locations. Besides school-going children, young men and women also come to learn to work on the computers. The children are asked to pay a minimum amount about 25-50 rupees per month as fees. This money is used to pay the rent/electricity of the room and the rest is utilized for maintenance of computers.

In Badhani village, district Chamoli, the centre is functional in a room offered by the nagar panchayat Karnaprayag. Children from ten villages are benefitted from this facility. In Chaundali village, saturation point is approaching as all children and adolescents have learnt to work on the computers. The centre will now be shifted to some other village in the vicinity.



Table 4. Number of children in computer learning centres.

Sl.	Village	Children attending the centres									
		Age of children						Adults		Total	
		6-10		11-14		15-19					
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1	Maniagar	2	2	8	7	19	15	3	0	32	24
2	Danya	6	5	1	3	0	5	2	0	9	13
3	Gogina	-	-	6	5	-	12	-	-	6	17
4	Pati	12	6	18	9	5	11	0	0	35	26
5	Bamiyala	9	5	7	6	9	9	1	1	26	21
6	Gangolgaon	9	7	6	12	2	3	1	1	18	23
7	Badhani	8	8	7	4	2	2	2	0	19	14
8	Chaundali	1	3	2	6	1	3	3	3	7	15
9	Bhanyani	0	1	1	3	5	9	4	2	10	15
Total		47	37	56	55	43	69	16	7	162	168

Two computer centers were functional in Pati, district Champawat. A total of 60 children completed their course re computer typing in Hindi and English and also learning to work on different programmes such as excel. Few young women also attended the centres. Earlier they had to go to Lohaghat to learn to work on computers but with the availability of the facility in their own village, adolescents and youth are expressing a keen interest in learning.

The women of Bamiyala village near Gopeswar, district Chamoli, were asking for computers for a long time. Children wanting to learn computers had to go to Gopeswar (about 20 km away) which was an expensive and time taking task. This year, three computers were kept in Bamiyala. Along with the children, young women and adolescent girls are also attending the centre.

The center at Danya, district Almora was shifted from Gauli to Danya village. Being at an appropriate location, the centre at Danya is able to serve many more children from around the villages.



Figure 6. The computer centre at Pati, district Champawat.



Figure 7 and 8. The computer centre at Maniagar village.



### 1c. Profile of shikshikas running the computer centres

The shikshikas or the facilitators are the residents of the same village and run the centre in the evenings. Out of the nine facilitators, eight are young, unmarried girls. All of them are enrolled in college/schools and improving their educational qualifications while also working in the centres. The girl at the centre in Gogina-Shama is the youngest. She is very enthusiastic and regular at her work. She is the only girl in the village who is trained in working on the computers. In Bhanyani village Mamta has also been selected as a gram Pradhan this year.

The computer centre at Binta was closed this year. The same set of computers was put up in Bhanyani village. Inhabited by OBC families, Bhanyani village has a long association with USNPSS and women were requesting for a centre for quite a long time now. The village residents are very happy to have a centre because children had to go to Ganai gangoli town to



learn computers. Travelling by jeep to Ganai and back to the village in the evening was expensive and not many people could afford it.

The centre at Gogina village, district Bageswar, is attended by a large number of children and young men. Gogina is a very remote village, near the India- China border. Owing to their remote location, the village residents exhibit a keen interest in learning new skills and building up knowledge. The centre opens on a regular basis and even during the holidays.

The centre at Maniagar is the oldest among the clusters functional at present. Owing to its convenient location for children from many villages, the centre runs well. In addition to children, many women have learnt to work on computers. The computer systems are put in a room next to the tailoring and knitting centre. Young women, who wait for their turn to work on knitting machines, also learn computers.

Table 5. Shikshikas running the computer centres.

Sl.	Village	Name of the shikshika	Date of birth	Experience in computer learning centre	Educational background	Regular student in college	Marital status
1	Maniagar	Deepa Arya	08.07.1994	From June 2018	BA	No	Not married
2	Danya	Garima Pandey	10.03.1997	March 2018- April 2019, November 2019-present	BA	Yes	Not married
3	Gogina	Rajni	28.02.2003	July 2019	High School	Yes	Not married
4	Pati	Vibha Gehtori	02.07.1997	December 2018	BA	Yes	Not married
5	Bhanyani	Mamta	04.10.94	November 2019	Intermediate	No	Not married
6	Badhani	Deepak Gusain	10.05.1997	October 2018	B. Sc	Yes	Not married
7	Chaundali	Rekha Rawat	14.07.1993	April 2017	MA	No	Not married
8	Bamiyala	Anuj Singh Bisht	28.03.2000	July 2018	BA	Yes	Not married
9	Gangolgaon	Monika Rawat	24.06.1995	January 2017	BA	No	Not married

#### 1d. Training of shikshikas

This year, 2 training programmes were held for shikshikas running the centers in villages. Each group includes a mix of the new and the old-experienced shikshikas to facilitate learning outside the training timings too. For example, being a residential programme, all shikshikas share common facilities and live together for about a week. Informal talks during evenings not only develop friendship but also become an important source of learning. In addition, learning is facilitated by supervisors who share their experiences of working with communities.



Figure 9. Training at USNPSS is participatory and highly interactive.

The second training was scheduled for five days from 18 March to 22 March 2020. However, owing to the proposed lockdown on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, the participants were sent home on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020.



Figure 10. Learning to use a tape measure.

Table 6 Training of shikshikas and supervisors

Sl.	Duration	Number of participants	Type of participants		
			Old experienced shikshikas	New shikshikas	Supervisors
1	10.11.2019-14.11.2019	35	17	12	6
2	18.3.2020-20.3.2020	34	19	10	5



Figure 11. Understanding the concept of volume.

### 1e. Children's Fair (Bal mela)

This year, 8 bal-melas were held with a total of 1840 participants attending the programmes. A bal-mela is visualized as an annual display day for children attending the centres. Children display their creations regarding art and crafts, take part in various competitions, recite poems, sing and dance before their parents and other guests from nearby villages and towns.

Bal-melas are held either in the premises of government schools or in courtyards/empty fields in villages. In all villages, the local residents take an active role in organizing the fair. Young men help in putting up a tent and arrange chairs and mattresses for the guests to sit on during the event. The village residents decorate the venue and make arrangements for refreshments etc. The whole atmosphere is like an annual day for children. Representatives from panchayats, school teachers, head teachers/principals, retired army personnel and other retired people residing in the village, all come to attend the event.

The village residents take pride in hosting a mela and exhibit much enthusiasm in organizing it. Very often-especially in Chamoli Garhwal, parents and other guests give some money as an award to appreciate performance of children. Such donations come in two forms. Individuals may receive a small token of money or it is given as a collective award to a centre or the local organization. This is purely a voluntary effort and despite the organizations discouraging such a move, the level of enthusiasm is so high that the village residents do not comply.





Figure 12. All village residents come to see their children's performance.



Figure 13. Bal-mela in Ukhimath, district Rudraprayag.



Figure 14. Besides providing space to hold the mela, school teachers attend the event.

The collective awards are later used in the centre itself to purchase new material such as crayons, water colors or to repair some sporting equipment etc.-something that is needed in the centre itself.

Members of women's groups attend in large numbers. They share their experiences and encourage children to shed their inhibitions and be confident. Problems, if any, also come up during discussions and the CBOs take up such matters with a view of solving those.

Participation in a quiz competition is one of the most popular activities during the bal mela. To make it more interesting, audio clips of some celebrities are played and the children are asked to guess the speaker's name. This year, audio clips of Gandhiji and Dr. Kalam were played. This activity also generated a good discussion on their contribution in building up the nation.

During a mela, various types of objects were exhibited for the guests to see and appreciate creative work. In Danya and Pati, children had made small samples of various types of utensils using mud. In all villages, various types of items were developed using waste-paper. Herbarium collection and an assortment of the local seeds and grains was a point of discussions in almost all villages.

The topic for the speech was *mere Jeevan mein mobile aur internet ki Bhoomika* (role of mobile and internet in my life). Both boys and girls exhibited interest in delivering a talk on the issue.

To strengthen mathematical skills, competitions on estimation of length, weight and volume were held. In addition, the cluster in Ganai-gangoli, district Pithoragarh, organized a competition on writing a cheque and filling up a form to withdraw/deposit money in the banks.



Figure 15. Making connections between various parts of a computer. For the first time, children have got an opportunity to work on computers and the level of enthusiasm is high.

Raising awareness on health-related issues has been an important part of the event. This year, the CBO at Badhani, district Chamoli, had invited a medical doctor to talk with children. He emphasized the need for personal and community hygiene and gave several new ideas to children to inculcate good hygienic practices in their daily lives. In many villages nutrition related issues were discussed. Weight of all children attending the event was taken in the beginning of the bal-mela and related issues were discussed during the event.

Since children come early in the morning from their villages to attend the bal-mela, some hot refreshment is served in the afternoon. Often, this includes a simple dish made from locally grown vegetables or cereal. Freshly cooked aaloo and halwa are popular items but the CBO in Ukhimath offered hot dal and rice to children. Aaloo poori is another popular item. Refreshment was served on *pattals* or broad leaves of a local tree called *timil* to discourage the use of plastic.

Table 7. Bal-melas during 2019-2020.

Sl.	Location	District	Venue	Date	Number of participants	Participation from USNPSS
1	Badhani	Chamoli	Government Primary School Jakh	3.1.2020	300	Kailash, Rama
2	Gopeswar	Chamoli	Village Bandwara	5.1.2020	400	Kailash, Rama
3	Ukhimath	Rudraprayag	Government Primary School Dungar	6.1.2020	250	Kailash, Rama
4	Danya	Almora	Sanstha Bhavan, Chalmodigada	12.1.2020	325	Kailash, Rama, Kamal
5	Maichun	Almora	Government Primary School Sela	31.1.2020	250	Kailash, Rama,
6	Ganai Gangoli	Pithoragarh	Government Primary School Kakda	9.2.2020	170	Kailash, Kamal
7	Pati	Champawat	Sanstha Bhavan Toli	4.3.2020	170	Kailash, Rama, Anuradha
8	Palyun	Almora	Government Primary School, Palyun	17.2.2020	200	Kailash, Rama, Anuradha
<b>Total</b>					<b>2065</b>	



Figure 16. Communities are encouraged to avoid plastic and use biodegradable material. A mela offers space to spread this message. Children are given refreshments on broad leaves.





Figure 17. Exhibition in Jakh village, Karnaprayag, district Chamoli.



Figure 18. Exhibition in Gwar village, Ganai Gangoli, district Chamoli.



Figure 19. Children's creations in Danya, district Almora.

## 1f. Profile of shikshikas

The primary criteria for selection of shikshikas or the facilitators is her interest in working with children. In addition, she should be above 18 years of age and must have finished her schooling. Out of 59 facilitators, 56 are women and 3 are young men. 73% of these facilitators represent 18-25 years of age, 29% are 18-20 years old, and 15% are more than 30 years old.

Breakup of the educational profile of shikshikas shows that 98% have finished their high school and 86% have passed intermediate. A shikshika (from a family representing other backward class (OBC) in Bhanyani village) has done her schooling till class 8, but being a deserted woman, she is poor and needs support. Above all, she is interested in running a centre and association with this work has brought a lot of change in her own self. Further, 32% of shikshikas are doing their undergraduate college degree (one girl in BSc.) and 5.8% are enrolled in post-graduate classes. About 36% of girls are enrolled as regular students in college whilst the others study as “private” students.

Table 8. Profile of shikshikas.

Sl.	Village	Shikshika	Date of birth	Association with VLC	Educational qualification	Married	Regular student
<b>Ganai Gangoli (Pithoragarh)</b>							
1	Gwadi	Priyanka Pathani	26-08-2000	July 2018	Intermediate	No	Yes
2	Kakra	Km. Sapna Bisht	25-03-2003	Sept 2019	High School	No	Yes
3	Fadiyali	Km. Manisha Mehra	25-04-2002	Sept 2019	BA	No	No
4	Bhanyani	Uma Bora	15-02-1989	Feb 2013	8 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	No
5	Bhalugara	Purnima Mishra	13-02-2000	April 2019	BA	No	Yes
<b>Pati (Champawat)</b>							
6	Harodi	Renu Mehra	02-04-1999	April 2017	Inter	No	Yes
7	Jankande	Krishna Bohra	27-08-1998	July 2017	BA	No	Yes
8	Lakhanpur	Geeta Arya	05-07-2001	April 2018	Intermediate	No	Yes
9	Dhunaghat	Seema Bohra	01-08-2001	June 2019	Intermediate	No	No
10	Kamlekh	Jyoti Bohra	28-12-2001	June 2019	Intermediate	No	Yes
<b>Badhani (Chamoli)</b>							
11	Bainoli	Santoshi Choudhary	05-04-2001	Nov 2018	BA	No	Yes
12	Sunargwar	Sonam	27-07-1999	Sept 2019	Inter	Yes	Yes
13	Kaflodi	Shubham Juyal	20-03-2002	Aug 2018	Intermediate	No	Yes
14	Chaundali	Rekha Rawat	14-07-1993	Sept 2014	MA	No	No
15	Jakh	Rachna Negi	08-07-1999	April 2018	Intermediate	No	Yes
16	Sundergoun	Neema Sagoi	05-07-1996	Aug 2014	MA	No	No
17	Chatoli	Ritu Negi		July 2019	Intermediate	No	Yes
18	Badhani	Deepak Gusain	10-05-1997	July 2019	B. Sc., DCA	No	Yes
19	Kukdai	Kareena Bisht	07-07-2000	July 2018	Intermediate	No	No
20	Pudyani	Smt. Pooja Negi	05-08-1997	Aug 2017		Yes	No
<b>Maichun (Almora)</b>							
21	Banthok	Puja Suyal	02-07-1999	Dec 2018	Intermediate	No	No
22	Mani agar	Chandra Arya	20-08-1996	July 2018	BA	No	No

23	Mouni	Girish Chandra Joshi	13-09-1964	May 2012	Intermediate	Yes	No
24	Kasun	Poonam Arya	03-05-1999	June 2019	Intermediate	No	No
25	Dhana	Hema Arya	30-06-2001	June 2019	Intermediate	No	No
26	Palyun	Smt. Jeewanti Arya	29-11-1979	Feb 2017	Intermediate	Yes	No
<b>Gopeswar (Chamoli)</b>							
27	Koteswer	Payal Bisht	12-06-2000	Feb 2017	Intermediate	No	Yes
28	Bamiyala	Smt. Urmila Devi	30-06-1994	July 2015	BA	Yes	No
29	Kandai	Smt. Poonam Rawat	03-05-1996	June 2018	MA	Yes	Yes
30	Bandwara	Divya	19-08-1997	April 2017	Intermediate	No	Yes
31	Dewaldhar	Smt. Kusum Bisht	12-06-1996		Intermediate	Yes	No
32	Khalla	Sundari Bisht	02-07-1978	Nov 2013	MA	Yes	No
33	Kathur	Asha Bisht	05-07-2002	Jan 2018	High School	No	Yes
34	Siroli	Aarti Bisht	05-06-1996	Jan 2018	BA	No	No
35	Mandal	Smt. Pushpa Bisht	20-05-1979		Intermediate	Yes	No
36	Gwar	Neeta Bisht	16-06-1998	Dec 2017	Intermediate	No	Yes
<b>Shama (Bageshwar)</b>							
37	Malla Namik	Sunita	10-08-1994	May 2015	BA	No	No
38	Talla Namik	Neera Kandari	07-03-2001	April 2018	High School	No	No
39	Malka Dugarcha	Savitri Arya	12-03-2002	June 2018	High School	No	Yes
40	Dhari	Smt Kausalya Devi	01-03-1995	April 2018	Intermediate	Yes	No
41	Hinari	Nandita	02-01-1998	Nov 2017	Intermediate	No	No
<b>Binta (Almora)</b>							
42	Gorgaon	Smt. Pushpa Bisht	07-05-1989	Aug 2017	Intermediate	Yes	No
43	Binta	Gayatri Kaira	29-01-1998	June 2018	BA	No	Yes
44	Bhatoura	Nirmala Kaira	12-01-1999	Aug 2018	BA	No	Yes
45	Borkhola	Smt. Maya Bora	05-06-1989	Aug 2014	MA	Yes	No
46	Surna	Smt. Shanti	10-07-1987	Mar 2018	High School	Yes	
<b>Danya (Almora)</b>							
47	Basaan	Smt. Bimla Pandey	18-03-1996	June 2016	Intermediate	Yes	No
48	Gauli	Pooja Bhatt	20-06-1996	May 2018	Intermediate	No	No
49	Munoli	Smt. Tara Sanwal	20-05-1993	June 2018	BA	Yes	No
50	Dasili	Smt. Kavita Dasila	19-06-1997	Dec 2017	Intermediate	Yes	No
51	Dharagar	Lalita Pandey	01-01-2001	Dec 2018	Intermediate	No	Yes
52	Ruwal	Kanchana Joshi	25-07-2000	June 2018	Intermediate	No	No
53	Takoli	Smt. Kavita Devi	20-06-1996	Dec 2018	Intermediate	Yes	No
<b>Ukhimath (Rudraprayag)</b>							
54	Dungar	Km Neelam	15-07-1998	April 2019	BA	No	No
55	Huddu-Karndhar	Km Reena Ringwal	10-07-2000	Nov 2018	Intermediate	No	No
56	Saari	Km Anusuya Bhatt	01-12-2001	July 2018	Intermediate	No	No
57	Ushada	Smt. Anju	25-07-1994	April 2019	BA	Yes	No
58	Kimana	Smt Sandhya Devi	04-09-1987	July 2019	Intermediate	Yes	No
59	Byolda	Km Pooja Bharti	25-12-1999	Nov 2017	Intermediate	No	Yes

## 1g. Visits to the centres

The USNPSS staff made visits to the centres to provide hands on assistance to the facilitators, to clarify doubts and to monitor progress of children. Meetings with the women's groups and informal interactions in communities are also held during such visits to villages.

During the visits, the USNPSS staff stayed in villages and spent time with people in communities to understand problems and to assess the impact of the centres among children and their parents. An assessment form has also been developed by the USNPSS staff to record their impressions during the visit. Table 9 exhibits details of the visits. Some broader points are as follows:

- i. Depending on their age and ability, children are divided into smaller groups. The facilitator moves from one group to the next helping children to work and complete the task at hand
- ii. Many school going children have learnt to read and write in the centre. Upon joining, many children though enrolled in government schools cannot read fluently while many find it difficult to write properly. In a friendly, non-threatening environment in the centre, children gain confidence and also learn to read and write
- iii. In rural areas where the reach of books is almost negligible, children have got an opportunity to read literature written by the most popular writers for children in the country and from abroad. Each centre hosts a library and children are exposed to literary work based on their age and ability of comprehension. In addition to children, adolescent girls and young women take books home to read
- iv. Provision of newspapers has helped in strengthening reading habit among children. In remote villages, elderly men, especially retired army personnel and teachers, take newspapers to read
- v. Since, the facilitators themselves are weak in solving mathematical problems, the subject continues to be an area that requires much attention during training
- vi. In some villages, the facilitators were able to hold meetings with women's groups. In addition, meetings with adolescent girls were organized. Since a majority of the facilitators are young girls, they find it difficult to hold meetings on their own. The supervisors, therefore, visit the villages and organize meetings
- vii. Many centres have cultivated good rapport with government schools and maintain regular contact with staff. School teachers also encourage children to attend the centres in the evenings
- viii. This year, in Koteswar village-Gopeswar, district Chamoli, a retired teacher, visited the centre to tell stories to children. He also shares his experiences of the world outside the village to generate awareness among children. He is a regular visitor to the centre and often takes literary books home to read
- ix. In Gogina village, Shama-district Bageswar, the facilitator took an initiative to regularly share children's work with their parents during meetings in the village, an effort much appreciated by the community
- x. Uma, an OBC girl from Bhanyani village, district Pithoragarh, continued to show a progressive improvement in her performance as a shikshika and also in the public sphere. On her initiative, the village has received assistance from USNPSS to install computers for children to learn in the village itself on a regular basis

Table 9. Visits to centres by USNPSS staff.

Sl.	Centre	District	Date of visit	Number of children present on the day of visit		Impressions on progress		
				boys	Girls	good	Very good	Satisfactory
1	Ganai	Pithoragarh	21.5.2019	Meeting with VLC staff				
2	Palyun	Almora	21.5.2019	6	5	0	0	1
3	Mouni	Almora	3.6.2019	5	9	1	0	0
4	Palyun	Almora	18.6.2019	11	7	0	0	1
5	Fadiyali	Pithoragarh	3.7.2019	7	10	1	0	0
6	Gwadi	Pithoragarh	3.7.2019	10	5	1	0	0
7	Kakra	Pithoragarh	4.7.2019	6	6	0	0	1
8	Bhanyani	Pithoragarh	4.7.2019	Meeting with VLC staff				
9	Bhalugara	Pithoragarh	4.7.2019	5	5	0	0	1
10	Chaundali	Chamoli	12.7.2019	10	5	1	0	0
11	Jakh	Chamoli	12.7.2019	10	12	1	0	0
12	Dungri	Chamoli	13.7.2019	4	4	0	0	1
13	Kaflori	Chamoli	13.7.2019	13	8	1	0	0
14	Bainoli	Chamoli	13.7.2019	9	11	0	1	0
15	Kukdai	Chamoli	14.7.2019	7	8	0	0	1
16	Sundergaon	Chamoli	14.7.2019	7	8	1	0	0
17	Chaatoli	Chamoli	14.7.2019	11	11	0	0	1
18	Badhani	Chamoli	15.7.2019	10	8	0	1	0
19	Harodi	Champawat	31.7.2019	4	6	0	0	1
20	Pati computer	Champawat	31.7.2019	3	3	1	0	0
21	Kamlekh	Champawat	1.8.2019	5	5	0	0	1
22	Lakhanpur	Champawat	1.8.2019	4	5	1	0	0
23	Bhataura	Almora	1.8.2019	Closed on the day of visit				
24	Borkhola	Almora	13.8.2019	8	5	0	1	0
25	Gorgaon	Almora	13.8.2019	4	4	0	0	1
26	Palyun	Almora	20.8.2019	6	11	0	0	1
27	Danya	Almora	22.8.2019	Meeting with VLC staff				
28	Fadiyali	Pithoragarh	26.9.2019	11	9	1	0	0
29	Bhalugara	Pithoragarh	26.11.2019	Closed on the day of visit				
30	Gwari	Pithoragarh	27.9.2019	Meeting with VLC staff				
31	Bhanyani	Pithoragarh	27.9.2019	10	7	1	0	0
32	Dasili	Almora	11.10.2019	7	9	0	0	1
33	Gauli	Almora	11.10.2019	10	7	1	0	0
34	Ruval	Almora	12.10.2019	8	13	1	0	0
35	Takoli	Almora	12.10.2019	Activities with shikshika to train her				
36	Surna	Almora	16.10.2019	6	4	1	0	0
37	Binta	Almora	16.10.2019	4	4	0	0	1
38	Gorgaon	Almora	16.10.2019	6	7	1	0	0
39	Danya comp	Almora	31.10.2019	Starting the computer centre				
40	Takoli	Almora	31.10.2019	6	4	0	0	1
41	Dharagar	Almora	4.11.2019	Meeting with VLC staff				
42	Dhunaghat	Champawat	5.11.2019	6	5	0	0	1
43	Jankande	Champawat	5.11.2019	5	6	1	0	0
44	Harodi	Champawat	5.11.2019	4	3	0	0	1
45	Lakhanpur	Champawat	6.11.2019	5	5	1	0	0
46	Ratirkethi	Bageswar	18.11.2019	11	9	1	0	0
47	Hinari	Bageswar	18.11.2019	5	5	1	0	0
48	Namik	Bageswar	19.11.2019	15	13	1	0	0
49	Gogina	Bageswar	19.11.2019	5	5	1	0	0

50	Dasili	Almora	5.12.2019	Meeting with VLC staff				
51	Maniagar	Almora	5.12.2019	6	7	1	0	0
52	Banthok	Almora	18.12.2019	10	8	0	0	1
53	Bhanyani computer	Pithoragarh	27.12.2019	2	4	1	0	0
54	Fadiyali	Pithoragarh	27.12.2019	12	10	1	0	0
55	Kakra	Pithoragarh	27.12.2019	3	2	0	0	1
56	Sunargwar	Chamoli	2.1.2020	6	17	0	0	1
57	Bandwara	Chamoli	4.1.2020	8	12	1	0	0
58	Khalla	Chamoli	4.1.2020	12	16	0	1	0
59	Mandal	Chamoli	4.1.2020	5	7	1	0	0
60	Usaara	Rudraprayag	11.2.2020	9	11	0	1	0
61	Sari	Rudraprayag	11.2.2020	12	14	0	1	0
62	Huddu Karndhar	Rudraprayag	11.2.2020	Closed on the day of visit				
63	Dhunaghat	Champawat	3.3.2020	6	7	1	0	0
64	Kamlekh	Champawat	3.3.2020	7	12	1	0	0

In addition to visiting the centres, the USNPSS staff attended meetings with shikshikas, supervisors and the head of the CBOs to review progress of the work with children and women. Such meetings were either conducted after visiting the centres or separately.

### 1h. Assessment of children

To assess performance of children attending centres, USNPSS has developed special grading sheets which need to be filled twice a year. The objective of carrying out regular assessment is to overcome shortages and to appraise the facilitators and the partner CBOs re the impact on children. Children are monitored over a set of eight indicators covering various aspects of their development. In addition, the USNPSS staff keeps its own record of performance after visiting the centres every year.

This year, on a random basis, performance assessment of 704 children was carried out by shikshikas and the supervisors together. The assessment form was developed at Almora and sent to all centres to record information. The filled-up forms were collected at the end of the year and brought back to Almora for computation and analysis. Table 10 exhibits performance during the year.

### 1i. Comments of parents regarding progress of children

In addition to the formal assessment carried out by shikshikas and the CBOs, communities are encouraged to express their views regarding performance of children, shikshikas and also about the whole programme. Visits were made to children's homes to record the views of parents and other community members. This exercise was carried out in addition to discussions held during meetings of women's groups. In private, parents feel free and in an informal set up sometimes do express views different than those they would have put out in a village meeting. For example, problems related to reading and writing are best captured during informal conversations. Parents also appreciate the fact that the facilitators take interest in understanding their concerns and visit them at home.



Table 10. Assessment of children attending village learning centres.

Sl.	Village	Total	Performance criteria for assessment							
		children	Language	Math	Art	Environment	GK	Games	Socialization	cleanliness
1	Basaan	18	6	13	1	5	2	0	0	0
2	Takoli	17	4	5	1	0	3	3	7	7
3	Gauli	20	19	20	0	0	2	0	0	3
4	Munoli	20	7	13	3	6	4	2	0	4
5	Dharagarh	10	4	4	1	1	3	0	0	0
6	Borkhola	20	12	6	5	2	6	0	1	0
7	Binta	20	5	10	4	4	6	4	8	2
8	Surna	17	9	10	7	1	4	3	4	2
9	Bhataura	20	6	9	5	2	2	3	7	6
10	Gorgaon	16	12	4	3	2	1	1	1	4
11	Jankande	12	3	4	2	1	4	0	1	4
12	Lakhanpur	15	2	4	2	1	1	0	3	5
13	Harodi	11	3	6	1	1	0	0	1	2
14	Dhunaghat	18	6	5	1	0	2	3	11	5
15	Kaflori	17	9	7	5	0	6	2	0	0
16	Chaundali	20	14	13	1	5	6	0	2	0
17	Jakh	20	4	6	5	3	4	8	3	7
18	Sundergaon	20	18	16	0	0	3	0	0	2
19	Badhani	20	14	11	2	6	7	0	0	0
20	Pudiyani	20	16	7	3	2	3	1	3	5
21	Bainoli	19	14	9	0	3	5	0	0	2
22	Chaatoli	19	8	5	4	2	5	2	6	3
23	Sunargwar	20	10	10	4	4	6	2	1	3
24	Kukdai	18	7	11	1	7	4	1	2	3
25	Khalla	20	16	6	3	2	5	5	2	1
26	Devaldhar	15	9	6	0	0	4	5	3	2
27	Bamiyala	12	4	1	4	0	2	2	3	1
28	Kathur	19	10	8	0	3	4	0	2	2
29	Gwar	17	4	7	1	2	0	5	0	2
30	Kandei	15	8	5	3	4	3	1	1	3
31	Koteswar	16	12	5	5	1	1	1	4	1
32	Mandal	20	14	9	3	1	3	1	3	6
33	Siroli	17	11	6	3	0	4	2	5	3
34	Bhanyani	19	7	6	3	4	3	3	5	4
35	Gwari	20	20	10	1	0	7	0	1	7
36	Fadiyali	19	10	13	1	3	2	3	1	2
37	Bhalugara	13	6	4	1	3	2	1	5	4
38	Mouni	20	10	9	0	2	2	0	1	4
39	Palyun	20	20	14	0	3	0	1	2	6
40	Banthok	15	1	3	3	3	4	2	3	5

Table 11. Comments by parents regarding performance of children.

Sl.	Village	District	Comment	Respondent
1	Bhalugara	Pithoragarh	My daughter Sheela learns stories, songs and poems in the centre and then enacts them at home.	Hema Devi
2	Bhanyani	Pithoragarh	My son does not listen to anyone. He does whatever he thinks is okay. But he likes going to the centre evening.	Geeta Bora
3	Siroli	Gopeswar, Chamoli	Every evening my son insists on going to the centre. We also go to the centre to see the activities. It is good to spend some time there listening to what children talk about.	Jagdish Singh
4	Sunar gwad	Badhani, Chamoli	My Daughter Aliya goes to the centre every day. She is focusing on her studies. Her habits regarding cleanliness and personal hygiene have improved a lot.	Muraad Baksh
5	Khalla	Gopeswar, Chamoli	Now I know in which subject my child is struggling and we focus on improving that. Children like to go to the centre.	Bina Prakash
6	Sunar gwad	Badhani, Chamoli	Ujma has learnt a lot. Her personal habits and behavior towards others have changed.	Akeel Miyan
7	Lakhanppur	Champawat	Our children have improved a lot. The shikshikas are well trained and teach the children carefully and on a regular basis.	Heera Devi
8	Chaundali	Badhani, Chamoli	Mayank used to make a lot of mistakes in writing sentences in Hindi. The shikshika noticed this and worked with him. His writing ability is improving now.	Prem Singh
9	Jankande	Champawat	Vinay likes to go to the centre. He keeps his homework complete. He has begun to show interest in telling stories.	Babita Bohra
10	Jakh	Badhani, Chamoli	Pranjal likes to take part in athletics. He is fond of reading. He brings books back home and we also get a chance to read.	Deepa Devi

## 2. Uttarakhand Mahila Parishad

A network of rural women's groups associated with USNPSS and its partner CBOs, Uttarakhand Mahila Parishad (UMP) is functional in seven districts of kumaon and Garhwal regions. The UMP is represented by about 450 WVGs working on issues of education, environment and development in Uttarakhand.

The women's development programme works with a twin objective of (i) attaining parity in socio-economic field and (ii) achieving practical equality in daily life. The first aspect relates to issues of equal opportunities to formal education, equal participation in sporting activities, equal share of nutrition at home, equal representation in panchayats and other village committees, equal remuneration for labor in development schemes etc. The second objective of ensuring practical equality in daily life relates to issues of developing capabilities both at personal and the community levels. While personal and community capabilities are mutually inclusive issues owing to a huge overlap in terms of providing essential support to women, some distinction is mandatory.

Personal capabilities are individualistic and depend on discrete choices, preferences and aspirations. Addressing such a competence would not only enrich the process of development but it is this understanding of specific individual struggles that offer real benefits to women and girls. For example, within a community, women might struggle with diverse issues of achieving the fundamental functions of human dignity. To some alcoholism among men and related violence is a pressing issue while the woman next door might be suffering from tuberculosis, anemia or leucorrhea. A girl might be asked by her parents to discontinue her education or some other girl wanting to learn tailoring may have no means to pursue her dreams. While some issues may get resolved in meetings of women's groups, many problems require personal attention and some intervention from the organization. It is this support as offered to each and every woman that nurtures capabilities and enables them to pursue their dreams.

Developing capabilities at the community and the regional level relate with activities of organizing women and creating an enabling environment for them to express themselves, understand their problems and solve those in a collective manner. Problems of female farmers take centre stage because the programme covers villages of Kumaon and Garhwal regions where women still tend to their fields. All women in the village are a part of the same group as UMP does not promote the idea of creating several groups within a community. Irrespective of their caste, age, marital status, education and economic situation, all women are members of a whole village group (WVG).

While responding to women's needs and preferences, UMP goes beyond the welfare approach to address several fundamental issues that shape the way rural women think and act. A sense of neglect and isolation, non-availability of basic amenities at home and in the village, struggles in meeting daily needs and other background conditions affect people's aspirations and choices in mundane life situations. While a popular approach is to put money in people's accounts and to provide subsidy in many fronts, it does not necessarily translate into narrowing down gender gaps. Through continuing dialogue with rural women, UMP provides a common educational platform enabling women to think critically and to question and solve their problems. By providing information, counselling and other support, UMP facilitates a discourse where women feel safe and develop confidence to address issues that bother them the most.



Figure 20. In villages women's groups are valued the most. One can see posters developed by women and girls on the walls.



Figure 21. A poster prepared by women at Danya, district Almora.

## 2a. Meetings with women at Almora

This year, 4 meetings were organized for members of women's groups at USNPSS, Almora. A total of 173 women and 9 men from villages of Kumaon and Garhwal came to attend the workshops in 4 different batches (Table 8). Listening to experiences of old women's groups and to the new members is one of the most important aspects of learning in UMPs programmes. It is from these voices and experiences that the whole picture of the process of change becomes evident for women attending the meetings.

An atmosphere of having a candid dialogue and curious enquiry enables women to learn from each other. Women who have come for the first time to Almora learn from observing others talk and share responsibilities. Observation, as a practice of learning, is however qualified with women beginning to participate in the workshops- they absorb experiences and insights from others and also get absorbed in the group.

Table 12. Meetings with members of women's groups at Almora.

Sl.	Duration	Partner CBOs represented	Number of clusters	Districts	Number of participants		
					Female	Male	Total
1	7-8.8. 2019	5	5	4	45	2	47
2	1-2.9. 2019	6	7	4	45	5	50
3	21-22.12.2019	5	5	4	44	1	45
4	24-25.12.2019	6	6	4	39	1	40
<b>Total</b>					<b>173</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>182</b>

Issues discussed during the meetings are as follows-

### 2ai. Livelihoods generation

This year, much discussion revolved around issues of generating and sustaining livelihoods for women. Many projects started during the last three years under the NMHS programme had a focus on livelihoods for women. Besides strengthening income, livelihood activities were visualized as opportunities for women to take better control of their lives. Ideas, such as opening a women-run restaurant in Danya (district Almora) did challenge gender stereotypes rather directly. A lot of turbulence was observed in the community as men from upper caste households reiterated that women from their families would not serve food to strangers. Another example of community resistance to change came in from Pati, district Champawat, where women had requested for a water pipeline to ensure regular supply to their hamlet. However, men in the neighboring village made objections to this plan as they felt that sharing of water would cause difficulties in their own village.

Experiences from these two examples of resistance by men and the strategy used to overcome these challenges serve as lessons to understand underpinnings of the processes that could feed into large development programmes on livelihoods generation. For vegetable production to be a successful option for income generation, water insecurity concerns must be addressed. A good crop brings in better income and more residue/waste that is fed to cattle at home. This will ensure better milk production and also women spending less time and energy in collecting fodder. Resolving conflicts on sharing of water is as important a task as is the income generated through the initiative. In Pati women and men of the village resisting the plan were surprised to see that by including the older pipeline in to the new installation, the work was completed at nearly one-fourth cost of government projects.

Tailoring and knitting centres continued to be a reliable source of income for women. This year, 7 centres were functional in Chamoli, Champawat, Bageshwar, Rudraprayag and Almora districts. A total of 271 women and girls are learning sewing and knitting on a regular basis. While new centres were opened in Badhani (Chamoli district) and Pati (Champawat district), centres in Binta (Almora district) and Galla (Nainital district) were closed. Sewing and knitting machines, furniture (tables, chairs, chowki etc.) and other accessories (mats, scissors, green board, almirah, wall clock, stationary etc.) were brought back from Binta and Galla to Almora in March and June 2019. The room for the centre is provided by the community. This could either be the panchayat ghar or baraat ghar or an empty room in somebodies house. More details are given in the following sections under the head of the tailoring and knitting centres.

Apiculture (honey bees for production of honey) is carried out in Pati, district Champawat by 8 farmers. About 10 kg of pure honey is produced every season. It is sold at the rate of 800 rupees per kilogram in the market.

Horticulture and agriculture are encouraged at Pati, Galla, Gopeswar, Badhani, Shama and Ukhimath regions. Plums, peaches, guava, apples, apricot, avocado, kiwi and citrus fruit trees are planted in villages. The farmers at Pati have started to get fruits on the trees of kiwi, peaches, plums and apples.

During the last two years, USNPSS had encouraged vegetable production under the NMHS programme. The project had completed in 2018 but the activity continued in villages. Women's groups took a lot of interest in producing vegetables for sale in nearby markets. In Galla, district Nainital, availability of plastic-lined water tanks has encouraged the cultivation of peas and cabbage on a large scale. In Pati, district Champawat, the village residents are cultivating cabbage, potatoes, tomatoes, capsicum, beans and other vegetables on a large scale and sending their produce to the mandi at Haldwani. In Gopeswar and Badhani, district Chamoli, vegetables are sent to the local markets for sale.



Figure 22. The food processing and marketing centre at Badhani, district Chamoli.

The residents of village Karnadhar, district Rudraprayag, make baskets of different size and sell those locally. Made of ringaal (a variety of bamboo), these baskets are in high demand due to their durability and the quality of weaving. The people use these baskets to collect fodder and to carry manure from the cowsheds to the fields.





Figure 23. women make baskets from ringaal (a variety of bamboo) and sell locally, photo from Karnadhar village, Ukhimath, district Rudraprayag.

### **2a. Representation in Panchayats**

Panchayat elections in Uttarakhand were held in October 2019. Since, the state has made it mandatory to have fifty percent reservation for women at all levels of panchayats; women contest the elections in large numbers. However, lack of correct information leads to a lot of confusion in villages. In addition, the party workers/powerful rich men in villages also spread misinformation to win the seats. To prevent women falling from such situations, preparatory workshops were held with members of women's groups.

During the workshops, women who had served as panchayat leaders shared their experiences. In addition, the process of getting a ticket, registration, campaigning for elections was also discussed. The roles and responsibilities of the elected women representatives were discussed in view of activities already carried out by women in their groups. Based on these discussions and from our earlier experiences, UMP had developed pamphlets for distribution in villages. Women used these pamphlets during the campaign in villages.

One of the outstanding features of the panchayat elections this year is that many members of the women's groups were elected unanimously as gram-pradhans and ward members in their communities. Hema Negi, a poor woman, was chosen for the second consecutive term as a gram Pradhan in Shiling village.

UMP developed and printed a pamphlet to raise awareness regarding panchayat elections. The pamphlet was distributed in all villages associated with UMP. The CBOs used it to initiate discussions in village meetings. In many villages, women put it up on the walls so that everyone could read it.



Figure 24. Preparation meeting for panchayat elections at USNPSS.



Figure 25. Meeting at USNPSS after the panchayat elections.

### **Women safeguard democratic practice in panchayats**

Chandra Dalakoti was unanimously elected as the gram pradhan for two consecutive terms in Sela village, district Almora. This year, too, the village residents requested her to be the gram Pradhan for the third term. Chandra, however, was of the opinion that someone else should get the opportunity to be the next leader in Sela village.

Chandra has a long association with USNPSS. She joined as a shikshika for the balwadi programme. After closing of balwadis Chandra continued to be in touch and volunteered to form women's groups in nearby villages of Nagarkhan and Doula. Owing to this work of hers, Chandra enjoys an undisputed leadership position in Sela and its neighboring villages.

Last year, Chandra began a campaign in the village requesting the residents to unanimously elect the panchayat representatives. This year, the pradhan's seat in her gram-sabha was reserved for women. Chandra suggested the name of a young woman. Several meetings were held in the village to build consensus. Chandra said that she would help her out in executing activities in the village. She stressed the importance of changing the gram pradhans to ensure a democratic way of functioning in the village.

### **Women's group and panchayat elections in Palyun village**

Palyun village is mostly inhabited by the scheduled caste families. When the USNPSS staff began to form a women's group in Palyun, men were apprehensive about the whole idea of gender and development. Alcoholism among men and related violence in the families was an important issue in the village. Men did not want any intervention in this regard but women sought some solution to the problem. Several protests were made as women got united and provided support to each other. Slowly, several liquor outlets in and around the village were closed. Incidents of violence against women and children at home were also brought down. In such a situation, men did not exhibit any interest in women's work.

This year, during their visit to Palyun in September 2019, the USNPSS staff was surprised to see that men were greeting them and making efforts to start a conversation. Some elderly men came forward and said that they needed our help in resolving conflicts regarding the candidature for the upcoming panchayat elections. An old man said, "we seek your guidance. In our village 4-5 men have stood for the position of gram Pradhan. 2 men are from the same family. They are all quarreling among themselves and no one is listening to anyone. Now you tell us how do we resolve this issue."

The USNPSS staff made visits to each household in the village and talked about the issue with whoever was available at home. Informal discussions were held with men, women, youth, elderly people at home and in the agricultural fields. This was followed by the next visit to the village when a meeting of women's group was held in the tailoring centre. The focus of discussions was to build up consensus to avoid fractionalization in the village. Inspiring stories from other parts of Uttarakhand were shared with the participants. Everyone was encouraged to speak up.

Elections were held in a peaceful atmosphere though some families continued to be annoyed about the whole process of candidature and winning of seats in panchayats. As USNPSS staff continued making its efforts to resolve the problems, several rounds of discussions were held in the village and at Almora.

One of the initiatives of the women's group in Palyun was women sharing the responsibility of protecting their crops from monkeys. By rotation, two women would go to the fields and shoo away monkeys. The arrangement broke down due to the conflict during panchayat elections. The USNPSS staff raised this issue again and women agreed to come together. Women themselves made the plan for rotation of chowkidars in the village. Now after about six months of upheaval in the village, the situation is coming to normal.

In Dasili village, Danya, the women's group broke down due to a quarrel in the community during the panchayat elections in 2019. Women stopped coming for the monthly meetings, a practice that they have observed for many years. The president of the women's group was upset and refused to talk with other women in the village.

During the winter holidays a workshop for adolescent girls was to be organized in Danya. The USNPSS staff and the CBO at Danya made a decision to hold the workshop in Dasili itself. Adolescent girls from all neighboring villages were invited to attend the workshop at Dasili. The women's group was also invited. Just ten women came to the venue. The



USNPSS staff and the CBO representatives had informal talks with women. After much persuasion the president of the women's group came and women started to talk with each other. Now, after many meetings at Dasili and in Almora, the women's group has resumed its activities.

### **Panchayat elections in Dhana village**

The women's group of Dhana village was formed in 2016. Dhana is totally inhabited by the scheduled caste families. A small village of 14 households, Dhana forms a part of gram-sabha Jogyura in Almora district. Comparatively larger than Dhana, Jogyura has a larger population and during voting for panchayats it would be easier for the residents of Jogyura to have a gram pradhan from their own community.

The situation continued for many terms in panchayats until the women's group was formed in Dhana. Building up solidarity in Dhana itself was also a challenge. Women talked about quarrels within the community and sought solutions to the problems. In addition, women began to raise the issue of representation from their own community in panchayats. Some of them attended meetings at Almora and got an opportunity to talk to many experienced women from Kumaon and Garhwal regions.

In the panchayat elections of 2019, the seat for the gram pradhan was declared as reserved for a scheduled caste woman. Several meetings of the women's group were held in Dhana. Men also came to participate in some meetings. Women said that they wish to have a unanimous selection. The gram vikas adhikari and other officials from the block head-quarters visited the village and women repeated their desire to have an unanimous selection. With consensus in the community, Smt. Sita Arya was chosen as the gram Pradhan. She says, "I would never have become a gram pradhan if we had not organized to form a women's group in Dhana. now that I have become a pradhan, I will construct a panchayat ghar in our village. We will use it to hold meetings of women's group in future."



Figure 26. The newly elected gram Pradhan is learning to articulate her ideas during a congregation at Pati, district Champawat.

### **2aiii. Resilience**

Our understanding of the concept of resilience has developed over the last five-six years both by reading scholarly work from all over the world on the subject and implementation of activities with communities. We reported a detailed account of this understanding in our last year's annual report. This year, we continued to enrich those thoughts in our discussions and activities with women and others in communities. Direct dialogues with women, adolescents, youth and men offer several insights into ways of thinking and relating in the organization with a shared objective for change.

As communities, CBOs and USNPSS come together to strengthen resilience at individual and collective levels, they reflect, share experiences and new information to facilitate a process of change that serves the well-being of all. Insights generated from this effort are then applied to generate new ideas and practice, thus continually expanding the scope of work.

### **2aiv. Health and nutrition**

During meetings, women and girls are trained to think and develop solutions to the problems they face in communities. Preventive health care, nutrition, cleanliness and personal hygiene are issues that influence individual as well as collective development.

During meetings at Almora, women and the USNPSS staff does Yoga which is followed by a session on preventive health care issues. Discussions on water-borne diseases, reproductive health, hygienic practices during menstruation, pregnancy and after child-birth are held.

Awareness on personal and community hygiene has improved in villages. Still, a lot needs to be done. In addition to understanding the work that women's groups can do on their own, efforts are made to involve the panchayats in the process. For example, women's groups raise the issue of access to funds that come to the gram-sabha to improve cleanliness in the village. Similarly, adolescent girls are able to access information and the provisions that come to the village under various government schemes. The discrepancy regarding the costs of provisions in government schemes, however, continues to be an issue that needs constant probing.

### **2av. Jal-jungle-jameen and jaanvar**

Protection, conservation and regeneration of forests, grasslands, agricultural fields are activities that the women's groups have been doing for a long time. As part of the village ecosystem all these elements sustain life in villages. A network of about 400 water tanks that was installed during the last two years at Pata-Galla area is functioning well. The village residents take good care of the tanks and generate income by growing vegetables. In Pati, a network of poly-houses was created to facilitate growing of off-season vegetables which is also functioning well.

In Badhani-Karnprayag, Ukhimath and Gopeshwar regions plant-nurseries were developed to facilitate the process of plantation of fruit trees as well as trees for fodder and some herbs. All these nurseries are put in use and seedlings are being distributed in villages. In Chaundali and its neighboring villages in Chamoli district, the women's group has taken up the responsibility of developing a patch of mulberry trees plantation. Mulberry is a good source of fodder for cattle and mature trees could also be used for rearing the silkworms. This year, replenishment of trees was carried out as some trees planted last year had failed to survive.

The older women prefer the traditional methods hence use of home-made manure has continued as a priority for enrichment of the soil in the fields. In this regard, one cannot undermine the importance of forests, grasslands and water. However, a deeper look into the community/village ecosystem brings to light a new perspective.

While rural women do perceive agriculture as an important source for survival of their families, it is no longer perceived to be the most feasible livelihood option. Several reasons feed into this perspective. First, with the construction of roads and growing focus of the state on making food available to everyone, the PDS system is improving. Since people can get food from the ration shop, the urgency of growing cereals in fields is declining. Menace caused by wild animals to crops, vegetables and fruits is an equally important reason for growing disenchantment towards agriculture. Women say that the whole day they tend to the crops but monkeys and wild boars take no time in destroying the ripening produce. Increasing variability in climate conditions is also put forward as an important reason for declining interest in agriculture. Above all, the youth aspire to earn their livelihoods in the cities and not in villages.

Intergenerational changes in perspectives regarding natural resources are noteworthy. As compared to the older generation, the young women are more mobile, educated and exposed to the outer world through easy access to television and mobile phones. In addition, construction of roads and expansion of markets has facilitated availability of diverse goods and items in shops bringing about change in perspectives related to women's labour. All this change occurring in communities is eroding the relevance of the intangible values associated with forests.



Figure 27. Chatting freely in an informal environment is a source of learning for women.



Figure 28. Irrespective of their caste and age, all women sit and eat together.

## 2avi. Medical support

In view of the Ayushman Bharat Pariyojna being implemented by the government for poor citizens, USNPSS is encouraging women to access support from there. This year, financial support of twenty thousand rupees was given to the head of the CBO at Badhani village. While ploughing his fields, he fell down the cliff and broke his ribs. Since the facility for treatment was not available in the nearby town, he had to travel to Srinagar Garhwal hospital several times.

Awareness on health issues especially on preventive health care is an integral part of discussions with women's groups, kishori sangathan and the others in the communities. During meetings with women, both in villages and at Almora, health and nutrition related issues are discussed in details. Water-borne diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery, jaundice etc. are common in villages, especially during the summer season. Causes, symptoms and treatment of common ailments is discussed to raise awareness and ensure overall well-being. Simple efforts such as boiling of water, washing hands after using a toilet, care during taking out water and food from pots, cleaning the rooms on a regular basis can reduce spread of common diseases to a large extent.

Building knowledge on nutrition is an important part of ensuring better health for women and girls. In schools, adolescent girls get to learn about essential nutrients but lack the capacity to relate this understanding with the food that they eat at home. Since eating food which is sourced from outside is considered a symbol of modernity, young girls and boys tend to prefer noodles, wheat flour chapatis and resist eating locally grown food such as chapatis made from ragi and so on.

Members of women's groups take up village cleanliness measures on a regular basis. Keeping the paths clean, cutting bushes and appropriate disposal of waste are some of the activities taken up by women. Awareness regarding safe disposal of plastic is also growing in villages.



Women take a lot of interest in discussions on issues related to menstruation and pregnancy. Ensuring hygienic practices during menstruation is an important part of discussions with adolescent girls. However, many girls experience difficulties as they feel hesitant to talk about and receive appropriate information on the issue. Girls suffering from experiences of irregular periods or women having any difficulty during her pregnancy are taken for consultation to a lady doctor in Almora as the health care facilities in villages continue to be poor.



Figure 29. Meetings with women at USNPSS.



Figure 30. Meetings with women at USNPSS.

## **2b. Mahila Sammelan (Women's congregations)**

This year, six mahila sammelans were held in five different districts of the state (Table 9). Sammelan in Maichun and Shama were planned for the end of the month in March 2020 but the lockdown was announced and the events had to be cancelled.

Women attend with a lot of enthusiasm. They walk long distances to participate in the annual event that they say is “our own work”. Women from 14 villages gathered at Bacher, district Chamoli. The congregation at Badhani was attended by about 400 women participants.



Figure 31. Women of different generations coming to attend the congregation, Ukhimath, district Rudraprayag.



Figure 32. Women walk long distances to participate in a congregation.

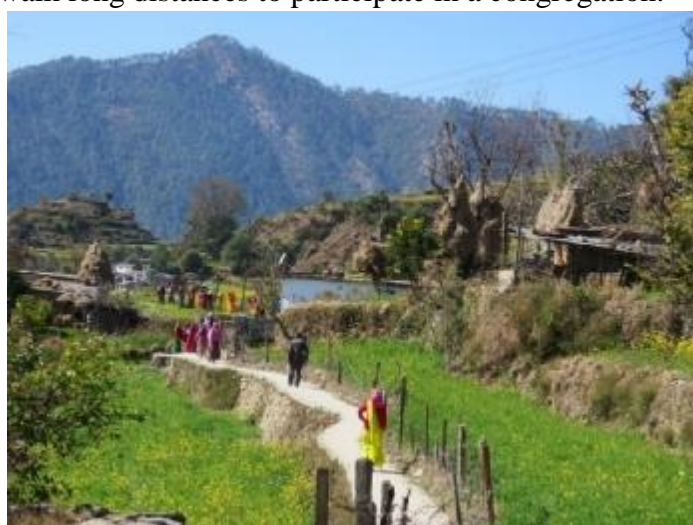


Figure 33. Irrespective of their caste, age, economic background, all village residents especially women attend the congregation.



Over time, congregations have become a popular platform for women's groups to share their experiences and the work carried out during the year. New ideas and activities are shared through the event and women's groups wait for their work to be appreciated in the public. Men, retired army personnel and other government officials, school teachers, panchayat representatives also attend the event and appreciate efforts carried out by women in villages. Such words of appreciation go a long way as "trouble makers" do apprehend the importance of women's groups and the work carried out by them.

The event is highly participatory. It is a matter of pride for the hosting village to organize the event and all village residents extend support to make it successful. Extending hospitality to all people in surrounding villages is a matter of much significance in communities and the hosting community take care that everyone feels welcome in coming to their village. Young men help in putting up a chandani and shamiyana and make seating arrangements. Chai and snacks are prepared and the hosting community takes care that it is simple and tasty.



Figure 34. Men extend their support to make congregations successful.

In many villages, a drive to avoid the use of plastic was observed. Besides avoiding the use of plastic in daily life, women's groups made it a point to use broad tree leaves to serve snacks with chai to the guests. This initiative was received well in communities because it was not long ago that people used to eat on broad leaves in auspicious occasions in villages.



Figure 35. Women and the gram Pradhan decorate the venue at Sundergaon, district Chamoli.

This year, women talked about issues of panchayat elections, village learning centres, computer centres, livelihood generation through knitting and tailoring centres. Since women gather at large numbers, the CBOs take up this opportunity to disseminate information on new government schemes and programmes that could benefit women and their communities. For example, currently, the rural poor is eligible to receive a lot of equipment from the labour department. The process of obtaining such a benefit has been a point of deliberation in sammelans for the last 3 years. As a result, hundreds of households have been able to receive the benefit from the state.

Skits were held on issues of female feticide, domestic violence, alcoholism among men etc. Besides being a popular medium to spread messages of change in many social practices, skits and role plays are highly entertaining. Women had kept crisp dialogues in skits so that the message is not lost and people talk about it later also.



Figure 36. Despite the cold weather due to snowfall, women attended in large numbers. Photo from Bacher village, Gopeswar, district Chamoli.



Figure 37. After a day-long congregation, participants from different villages gather for chai and snacks.

In Gwadi village, district Pithoragarh, Mrs. Meena Gangola, MLA (Gangolihaat SC constituency) was invited to listen to the concerns of women's groups in the region. Elected women gram Pradhans and ward members were also present. The MLA shared her journey

starting from being the president of the women's group of Tuproli village to rise to the position of the Member of the Legislative Assembly from Gangolihaat constituency. She said that she learnt to articulate women's concerns by attending and organizing meetings of the women's group in her own village and in surrounding villages. Women from Bhanolisera-Rampur villages, raised the issue of cremation of dead bodies in the river banks at Sheraghat. Mamta Arya, who had also attended the congregation last year, said-we are in the process of forming a new sangathan in the village. This is the reason for me to come here. I want to learn from women who have experience in this field. Since hundreds of women and men from this region have gathered, I would like to raise the issue of cremation on the banks of the Saryu river. I would request everyone to observe complete burning of the pyre. In many cases people do not wait for the whole body to burn. Later, animals bring the body parts to our agricultural fields to eat. I would also request the MLA to do something about this issue."

In Kimana village, Ukhimath district Rudraprayag, the MLA Mr. Manoj Rawat (Kedarnath constituency) attended the congregation. He responded to problems raised by women's groups regarding development of the region. The elected women representatives raised several issues of access to government schemes through Panchayati raj. In particular, women raised the problem of crop-depredation by wild animals. Many women complained of increasing attacks on human beings by leopards and wild boar. Recently, a wild bear came to Badhani village and a young man was injured. In another incident a woman was attacked by a wild bear in the forest in Ukhimath area. The Himalayan bear is also seen in the region and the women said that they are scared of going to the jungle in the evenings, especially during winters when the wild animals approach the human habitations in search of food.

Table 13. Women's congregations during 2019-2020.

Sl.	Location	District	Hosting village	Date	Number of participants (approx.)	Participation from USNPSS
1	Gopeswar	Chamoli	Bacher	8.2.2020	330	Anuradha, Rama
2	Badhani	Chamoli	Sundergaon	9.2.2020	350	Anuradha, Rama
3	Ukhimath	Rudraprayag	Kimana	10.2.2020	300	Anuradha, Rama
4	Ganaigangoli	Pithoragarh	Gwadi	19.2.2020	250	Anuradha, Rama, Kailash, Dharam Singh
5	Pati	Champawat	Toli	4.3.2020	175	Anuradha, Rama, Kailash, Dharam Singh
6	Danya	Almora	Chalmorigara	15.3.2020	200	Anuradha, Rama
7	Maichun	Almora	Mouni	Cancelled due to lockdown in March		
8	Shama	Bageswar	Namik	Cancelled due to lockdown in March		
			Gogina	Cancelled due to lockdown in March		
Total					1605	





Figure 38. The MLA, Mrs. Meena Gangola, attended the congregation at Gwadi village, district Pithoragarh.



Figure 39. The MLA, Mr. Manoj Rawat, attended the women's congregation at Kimana village, Ukhimath, district Rudrapur.

## 2c. Meetings in villages

Visits to villages were made by USNPSS staff to hold meetings with women's groups. Table 10 shows the details of meetings held during 2019-2020. In all villages, women meet once every month on a date chosen by them. They talk about their problems and find solutions through collective action. Besides offering guidance generated from the experience of working in hundreds of villages, the USNPSS staff provides encouragement and confidence to women. Issues of environment, education, health and nutrition, alcoholism and gambling among men, cleanliness, agriculture, livelihoods generation, inter-generational change in women's perspectives re livelihoods and life in the community etc. are discussed. This year, many meetings focused on building up consensus on the choice of a suitable candidate for gram Pradhan and election of the ward members for panchayats.

Table 14. Visits made by USNPSS staff to villages to hold meetings with women's groups.

Sl.	Village	District	Date	Participants			
				Total	Female	Male	Young men
1	Malla Kamlekh	Champawat	9.4.2019	31	26	3	2
2	Palyun	Almora	4.5.2019	27	22	5	0
3	Aati	Almora	20.5.2019	20	20	0	0
4	Banthok	Almora	3.6.2019	22	18	4	0
5	Kasoon	Almora	3.6.2019	10	8	1	1
6	Mouni	Almora	3.6.2019	15	14	1	0
7	Dhana	Almora	3.6.2019	06	6	0	0
8	Palyun	Almora	18.6.2019	18	14	2	0
9	Aati	Almora	25.6.2019	14	14	0	0
10	Aati	Almora	26.6.2019	30	30	0	0
11	Rungadi	Pithoragarh	3.7.2019	62	62	0	0
12	Bhanyani	Pithoragarh	4.7.2019	20	17	3	0
13	Gorgaon	Almora	9.7.2019	10	9	1	0
14	Dungari	Chamoli	13.7.2019	13	10	3	0
15	Jankande	Champawat	31.7.2019	22	14	8	0
16	Ladhaun	Champawat	1.8.2019	36	20	8	8
16	Lakhanpur	Champawat	1.8.2019	16	11	5	0
17	Munoli	Almora	16.8.2019	22	18	4	0
18	Lamudiyar	Almora	21.8.2019	14	14	0	0
19	Palyun	Almora	28.9.2019	26	11	15	0
20	Bhanyani	Pithoragarh	24.10.2019	10	6	4	0
21	Kamlekh	Champawat	5.11.2019	36	30	6	0
22	Bisari	Champawat	6.11.2019	15	11	4	0
23	Lakhanpur	Champawat	6.11.2019	10	6	4	0
24	Ratir	Bageswar	18.11.2019	16	11	5	0
25	Gogina	Bageswar	19.11.2019	12	11	1	0
26	Palyun	Almora	29.11.2019	12	12	0	0
27	Banthok	Almora	18.12.2019	22	18	4	0
28	Bhanyani	Pithoragarh	27.12.2019	13	10	3	0
29	Fadiyali	Pithoragarh	28.12.2019	17	16	1	0
30	Palyun	Almora	13.1.2020	30	28	2	0
31	Sela	Almora	22.1.2020	13	13	0	0
32	Munoli	Almora	23.1.2020	21	18	2	1
33	Rampur	Almora	24.1.2020	24	22	2	0
34	Gauli	Almora	25.1.2020	31	28	3	0
35	Dasili	Almora	26.1.2020	47	37	10	0
36	Usara	Rudraprayag	11.2.2020	12	10	2	0
37	Karndhar	Rudraprayag	11.2.2020	13	9	4	0
38	Huddu	Rudraprayag	11.2.2020	17	17	0	0
39	Sari	Rudraprayag	11.2.2020	19	17	0	2
40	Lamudiyar	Almora	22.2.2020	24	24	0	0
41	Dhana	Almora	25.2.2020	10	8	0	2
42	Maichun	Almora	26.2.2020	26	26	0	0
43	Banthok	Almora	27.2.2020	27	23	4	0
44	Kasoon	Almora	27.2.2020	17	16	-	1
45	Mouni	Almora	27.2.2020	22	16	6	0
46	Sela	Almora	27.2.2020	12	12		0
47	Toli-Pati	Champawat	2.3.2020	28	18	5	5
48	Goom	Champawat	2.3.2020	22	17	5	0
49	Jankande	Champawat	3.3.2020	8	6	0	2



Figure 40. A meeting with women's group and adolescent girls at Jankande village, Pati-district Champawat.



Figure 41. Children from socially disadvantaged sections of society talk about their problems in Bacher village, district Chamoli.

The USNPSS staff made a visit to Ladhaun village, district Champawat on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 to talk with the community and to see the growth of fruit plants that USNPSS had supplied in 2018 under the NMHS programme. The village is inhabited by families of iron-smiths having a long tradition of making utensils and agricultural tools in the region. Besides supplying iron artefacts to some old utensil shops in Almora bazar, the village residents take orders from nearby areas. Some of them are regular suppliers to shops in nearby villages. In addition, they sell their products in Devidhura-bagwal in Champawat and Uttarayani mela in Bageswar and Haldwani.





Figure 42 a, b and c. The ironsmiths at Ladhaun village, district Champawat.

## 2d. Monitoring and evaluation

USNPSS has an inbuilt system of supervision and monitoring of programmes conducted in villages. UMP has developed a list of 8 indicators for monitoring of women's work. The work is organized in ways that correspond to the items on the list of indicators.

This year, the earlier version of grading and computation was replaced by a fresh system of instructing a mix of the qualitative and the quantitative information to analyze the data in a more comprehensive manner. As we sharpen our focus re monitoring of activities, we realize that whilst our earlier system of grading had made a distinction between well-being and agency through specified indicators, confusion prevailed owing to the limited understanding of interlinkages of issues among the supervisors and the CBOs. As a result, indicators were getting mixed-up and we were not achieving much information in terms of making distinctions between welfare of women and their ability to exercise choices both at personal and the collective level.

This year, we have changed the framework to capture issues relating to capabilities of women and what can they actually do in view of the experiences in their daily lives. Since, ability to exercise choices is also determined by the situation around, the new monitoring system avoids making a distinction between welfare and agency, though UMP continues to inculcate the idea that just offering money to women through various government and non-government schemes is not the way to move forward. As the emphasis on achieving practical equality takes a sharper focus, the monitoring system emphasizes capturing more qualitative information giving us a better view of the progress in villages.

The new framework has its own limitations too because practically the process of capturing the qualitative information entails a tendency to use anecdotes as a proxy to show the process of change. In addition, qualitative data involves information which is experiential. Since experiences of women transform over time, it becomes difficult to trace the causal effects of the trajectory of change. Nevertheless, the positive point is that the process-based monitoring method offers space to women and the UMP to engage with gender issues in a focused manner. It is a relief that the programme does not insist on log-frame or/and a target-based, quantitative result-oriented evaluation methods. The flexible approach has kept its educational focus intact over time.

One more dimension of change that must be emphasized here is our vision for involving men, youth and adolescents in the process of monitoring. A WVG functions under the leadership of women but it is also located within a community. Gender equality cannot be achieved in isolation as it requires continuous exchange of ideas and action with other members of the community and the society at large. CBOs, the field workers all contribute towards making the group a vibrant and dynamic unit. Hence, involvement of other village residents is necessary to stimulate the process of change. In view of this reality, the monitoring framework relates with communities too and takes feedback from schools, men, youth, adolescents and CBOs.

Data collected this year shows that in a village on an average 31 women attend the meetings of women's groups on a regular basis. A majority of women are 26-40-year-old, a figure closely followed by the age group 41-60 years old. Table 16 shows that 21% women represent the scheduled caste households. There were no ST families in villages covered by



the survey. The OBC population is found only in Bhanyani village of Ganaigangoli cluster in Pithoragarh district. In Badhani cluster, a small population of Muslim community that resides in a village is involved in the programme.

Table 15. Average number of women attending WVG meetings regularly.

Sl.	Village cluster	Number of villages	Average number of women	Average age of women attending meetings				Average of caste break-up of women attending meetings			
				18-25	26-40	41-60	>60	General	SC	ST	OBC
1	Danya	10	28.3	3.5	11.8	9	3.9	22.2	6.3	na	na
2	Pati	10	25	5.5	10.1	6.4	2.71	21	4.0	na	na
3	Ganai	6	31	6.2	11.7	10.1	2.9	19.9	6.2	na	4.8
4	Maichun	5	20	2.9	9.7	6.9	0.55	6.9	13.1	na	na
5	Badhani	10	53	8	20.4	20.1	4.3	43.9	8.6	na	0.9
6	Gopeswar	11	38	10.5	15.5	11.5	0.75	38.3	00	na	na
7	Shama	5	21	4	9.09	6.8	0.85	9.55	10.9	na	na
<b>Total</b>		<b>57</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>12.62</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>23.09</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>0.8</b>

na: not applicable-No ST and OBC population in villages.

Table 16. Percentage of age and caste-wise break up of women attending meetings on a regular basis.

Sl.	Cluster	Total number of villages	Number of women	Percentage-age of women attending meetings				Caste wise break up of women attending meetings			
				18-25	26-40	41-60	>60	General	SC	ST	OBC
1	Danya	10	1131	12.37	42.17	31.83	13.61	77.63	22.36	na	na
2	Pati	10	763	22.14	40.76	25.95	11.14	84.4	15.59	na	na
3	Ganai	6	510	20.19	38.23	32.15	9.41	61.56	16.07	na	22.35
4	Maichun	5	329	12.46	50.15	34.04	3.34	41.94	58.05	na	na
5	Badhani	10	2069	16.09	39.24	36.49	8.16	82.16	16.62	na	1.21
6	Gopeswar	11	1441	28.73	38.51	29.7	3.05	89.65	10.34	na	na
7	Shama	5	452	19.69	44.24	31.63	4.42	46.9	53.09	na	na
<b>Total</b>		<b>57</b>	<b>6695</b>	<b>19.25</b>	<b>40.55</b>	<b>32.26</b>	<b>7.93</b>	<b>77.34</b>	<b>20.58</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>

na: not applicable-No ST and OBC population in villages.

### 3. Adolescent Girls Education

Workshops with adolescent girls were held in villages. This year, the adolescent girls' education programme reached out to 33 villages. A total of 759 girls participated in meetings and workshops focused on issues of adolescence. Out of these, 68% represented the general caste population, 29% belonged to the scheduled caste and 3% girls were from OBC households.

The age break-up of girls who volunteer to attend the workshops on adolescent education shows that 44% were 15-20 years old. However, some girls of the age 9-10 years and above 20 years old also showed willingness to attend the workshops in villages.

Issues of reproductive health take centre-stage during discussions with adolescent girls. Since not much information regarding menstruation, pregnancy and body changes during adolescence is available in villages, girls as well as boys exhibit a keen interest in the subject. In addition, developing self-confidence among girls is an issue that attains much attention during the workshops.

As we have described in our earlier annual reports, adolescent girls and young women are showing a lot of interest in tailoring and knitting. The next section describes the activities taken up this year in different locations.

Table 17. Adolescent girls involved in the programme.

Sl.	Village cluster	Number of villages involved	Number of girls	Caste				Age		
				General	SC	ST	OBC	9-14	15-20	21-22
1	Danya	7	103	81	22	na	Na	40	53	10
2	Pati	3	64	61	00	na	3	26	32	6
3	Maichun	4	117	19	98	na	Na	33	72	12
4	Gopeswar	10	138	126	12	na	Na	69	49	20
5	Badhani	9	337	232	87	na	18	124	129	84
Total		33	759	519	219	na	21	292	335	132

na: not applicable - No ST and OBC population in villages.

#### 4. Tailoring and knitting centres

The genesis of this description on non-farm livelihoods for women is rooted in the findings of three separate research and action projects carried out by Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan (USNPSS) during 2011-2018. One of the common themes studied under these three projects was the changing aspirations of youth and intergenerational differences in women's lives in Uttarakhand.<sup>1</sup> Analyses is enriched with experiences of working with women's groups and adolescent girls in the mountains. Interest shown by rural women in acquiring knowledge and skills for village-based livelihoods has been an inspiration for starting this work.

Over the last decade, USNPSS has promoted various income-generation activities with communities which include installation of green-houses to grow off-season vegetables for sale, installation of water tanks to facilitate irrigation of vegetables and plant nurseries, developing orchards, apiculture, fisheries, a women-run eco-friendly restaurant, tailoring and knitting centres, home stay for tourists etc. The present article has a key focus on documenting work around the tailoring and knitting initiative developed by local women focusing on ways in which societal innovations can secure some income in villages. In this model, economic benefits that women gain from producing clothing and woollens are central but equally important is the ability of the community of learners to develop themselves as trainers taking the work to new villages where they spread the same ethos of transformation

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<sup>1</sup> USNPSS 2014. Community Driven Climate Resilient Hill Farming in Village Ecosystems of NW Himalayas (Uttarakhand). Study supported under the National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) by Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture, ICAR, Government of India, 2011-2014

USNPSS 2017. Reframing Discourse of Gender and Disaster: Pahari Narratives of Change from Rural Uttarakhand, Study supported under the project titled Gender Issues in the Development of Ecologically Fragile Zones: A Case Study of Village Communities in Uttarakhand by the ICSSR, Government of India, 2014-2017

USNPSS 2019. Creating Communities of Practice and Resilient village Ecosystems in the Mountain Regions of Uttarakhand, National Mission on Himalayan Studies, Ministry of Environment. Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, 2017-2019

in women's lives by building on earlier experiences and by altering, adapting to new situations.

The beginning of the programme on tailoring activities illustrates this point. In one of the meetings of women's groups in Maichun-Maniagar area of Almora district, young women and girls made a request to USNPSS to open a tailoring centre. Out of the seven sewing machines available in Maichun itself, three were functional. Two women offered to give rooms in their houses for free. The members of the women's group were ready to give about 200 rupees per month as fee. Subsequently, a girl from the nearby village of Banthok was selected as the instructor. She had learnt sewing and ran the centre for about three months, imparting training to women on stitching clothes. She asked one of her friends to accompany her as the path from Maichun to Banthok village cut through a forest and during winters leopards would prowl in the evenings. However, her own understanding of making clothes was limited and she began to find it difficult to satisfy the growing demand for more varieties of clothes. For example, young girls wanted to learn new trending designs of salwar kameez and blouses which the instructor was unable to do.

In the mean-time many other girls took inspiration from this initiative and offered to run centres in their own villages. Similar to Maichun, the village residents offered their own sewing machines, mattresses, fee to pay an honorarium to the instructor and rooms for free to start the tailoring centres. Uma Gailakoti in Banthok, Neetu Banoula in Girchola, Tanuja Joshi in Sela, Kiran Arya in Dhana village ran tailoring centres as informal set-ups organized by women themselves. All these centres ran for 3-4 months until the point came when the instructors, who themselves were learning in the process of training the others, began to realize their own limitations. However, by then USNPSS as well as the women in villages had gained some experience on running the centres. In none of these villages, the instructors and the women wanted to discontinue the activity. On the contrary, a dialogue was initiated to better organize and formalize training. Both, the instructors and the learners began to think of more skilled trainers to run the centres. Later, a new centre was opened at Maniagar village.

During June 2017-June 2020, a total of 835 women, 27% representing the socially disadvantaged sections of communities (scheduled caste and other backward caste) have been trained for six months each. After training, 15 girls have opened their own stores either independently or in partnership with other women. In addition, 7 girls have opened independent tailoring shops after marriage. 44 girls and women who work from home are stitching and knitting for their own communities and the villages nearby. 21 women come to the Maniagar centre to stitch clothes and sell them on their own. Being poor, they are yet to buy sewing and knitting machines for themselves and plan to do so by saving money from their own earnings. The number of women wanting to learn tailoring and knitting is growing as centres continue to function and demand for more is coming from villages.

Calling attention to the issue of creating and strengthening non-farm livelihoods for rural girls and women, this work intends to set up new mechanisms for transformation in communities. A shift from home-based chores to centre-based work does enable greater mobility and a sense of purpose in life for women. More household income has also led the family members sharing responsibilities such as child care and agricultural work. A more nuanced account of changes in gender relations both at home and in communities is shown by profiling the lives of women in



Figure 43. In a village-based work centre, women sit out in the sun during winters and learn to knit.

later sections of this article. Here, let us first explore the issue of collective transformation which has emerged by generating an equilibrium between issues of social change and economic gains.

#### **4b. Collective transformation**

The community or the collectivist dimension of learning is apparent as everyday mundane action and the livelihoods activity unite to generate a new set of outcomes for women. Irrespective of their caste, age, education and economic status everyone is free to attend and learn. Together, the learners create a way to talk and develop relationships between the more skilled women and the new comers. The barriers of age, education and of caste are weakened as learning achievements are configured through the course of becoming a skilled tailor, knitter or both.

More importantly, learning takes place in a participatory environment where knowledge and skills are upgraded among the co-learners. Women representing diverse individual backgrounds bring in different perspectives to the centre and learning is settled through a course of dialogue and experience sharing among them. While the narrow focus would be on becoming a skilled crafts-person, it is the change in oneself and the community that is visualized as a locus of learning in this programme. Such a locus underscores an inclusive method that counts on the perspectives and aspirations of co-participants and not just rely on experts or instructors in the centres. This aspect of learning being located in everyday life of

the participants, has much potential to acknowledge change in varying forms of relations at home and in the community.

Moving further from the issue of pedagogy in the centre, this model of collective transformation has a bearing on the structure of socio-cultural hierarchy in villages. An example will illustrate the issue. Since Mani-agar village is inhabited by scheduled caste families, women from other castes were apprehensive about attending the centre. The problem was, however, resolved by continuous dialogue in meetings with communities as well as by visiting them at home, a process facilitated by USNPSS and the partner organizations. The conflicting issue of caste was kept at focus while discussing skill and knowledge-building for women and change in society. This process for change had an emphasis on the merger of the caste dimension of knowledge (that one internalizes by everyday practice-also called active knowledge) with instructional knowledge (developing new skills). The process threw a challenge to conventional norms but also created an enabling environment to think and pursue work for all women in communities. Another example from

the same centre will make this point clearer to the readers.



Figure 44. The new comers observe and get a first time estimate of measurements in stitching a garment. district Champawat.

In Mani-agar village, women came to learn sewing. When asked to learn knitting too, they simply refused. USNPSS had kept some knitting machines in the centre but nobody was forced to use them. After about a fortnight, a young girl exhibited some curiosity and began to unwrap the machines. Soon, an elderly woman who herself was a good knitter asked USNPSS for permission to use the machines. Using a machine, she could finish a sweater in two days. This was the tipping point in the centre. Women enrolled for sewing classes began to express their desire to use knitting

machines. Just by word of mouth, the number of women grew exponentially. Initially the centre was catering to women from 5 villages of Maichun, Maniagar, Sela, Mouni and Girchola. Currently, women come from 26 villages. Two women travel about 20 km every day from Panuanaula to Maniagar to attend the classes. Many women walk about 7-8 km every day to learn sewing and knitting.

In view of offering more services to women and girls, USNPSS has also put computers in the centre. Currently a total of three computer sets are in use in Maniagar. While waiting for their turn in the tailoring/knitting classes, young girls learn to work on the computers. Besides, young children come after school to work on computers.





Figure 45. The village-based work centre at Binta-district Almora.

Table 17. The village-based work centres-tailoring and knitting.

Sl.	Location	Duration	Type of centre	Villages covered	Caste of women learners			
					Total	General	SC	OBC
1	Binta (district Almora)	1 November 2017-April 2019	Tailoring	12	81	67	13	1
2	Galla (district Nainital)	1 May 2018-March 2019	Tailoring and knitting	5	29	27	2	00
3	Maichun (district Almora)	19 June 2017-continuing)	Tailoring	26	198	108	89	1
			Knitting	16	65	51	13	1
4	Pati (district Champawat)	2 April 2018-continuing	Tailoring	16	115	105	10	00
			Knitting	5	24	23	01	00
5	Badhani (district Chamoli)	September 2018-continuing	Tailoring	4 in Bainoli-	70	45	25	00
			Tailoring	5 in Diyarkot Jakh	75	61	14	00
6	Ukhimath (district Rudraprayag)	May 2014-March 2019	Tailoring	7	60	48	12	00
			Knitting	4	20	17	3	00
7	Palyun (district Almora)	5 January 2019-continuing	Tailoring	1	25	8	17	00
8	Shama (district Bageswar)	5 November 2019-continung	Tailoring in Loharkura	7	33	19	14	00
9	Danya	29 June 2020-continuing	Tailoring knitting	12	40	40	7	00
<b>Total</b>				<b>120</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>3</b>



Figure 46. The village-based work centre at Pati-district Champawat.

#### 4c. General trends in income generation activities in the hills

Over the past two decades, the non-government sector (NGO) in Uttarakhand has shown a speedy adoption and implementation of income-generation activities in rural areas. Mostly executed as projects on entrepreneurship development, livelihoods generation, self-employment, skill India etc., a majority of these projects emphasize benefits to women. Both farm-based and non-farm activities are financed to develop entrepreneurship at different levels and scale by NGOs and also by the government, business houses and private donors catering to the local and the international markets.

Income generation projects for women cover a large field ranging from hand weaving (carpets, shawls, stoles, tweed etc.), knitting (sweaters, mufflers, gloves, socks, tea-cozy etc.) tailoring, dairying, fruit and food processing, preparing spices and their mixtures, ringaal-based (a local variety of bamboo) crafts to production and sale of herbs and vegetables etc. While all these activities have a focus on income generation, implications in practice are more nuanced.

Currently, growing interest of organizations of different kinds in income-generation activities in Uttarakhand has added a new meaning to the value of local produce. Such interventions not only increase the price of the produce but also expose the customers outside to “traditions and culture” of the mountains. Two issues arise. The first issue relates to the debate of who benefits and how from income generation activities. Take the example of making woolen garments for sale outside, both in India and abroad. The prices would rise proportionately depending on the markets that the income-generation projects are catering to. While a hand-knitted sweater can locally be purchased in less than a thousand rupees, the same piece is sold anywhere double-triple this price in nearby touristy towns and so on. The issue of how much money a woman knitting sweaters receives is an area that demands attention. Related to this aspect is the question of the cost involved in the middle of the supply-chain which includes

design, grading, logistics and delivery. Product design, packaging, transportation and sale are activities invariably done by professionals including designers, marketing specialists and consultants either through NGOs or the government. Invariably, this part would add up to the major component of the total costs incurred in income generation for rural people. It is widely believed that rural women (and men) producers lack necessary skills for marketing and operations and therefore continue to be the bottom of the profit-sharing chain and receiving the smallest shares.

The second issue which is at tandem with the first has a bearing on empowerment and gender equality concerns. Since income generation projects for women invariably focus on twin objectives of economic and social development/change, it is important to understand the interlinkages and challenges in achieving these two goals.

Many organizations engaged in income generation activities for women are registered as social enterprises such as the mutual benefit trusts, self-reliant cooperatives, not for profit companies etc. In general, salaries of the core staff, management team and other costs (maintenance of equipment, rent, procurement of material, design, production etc.) are to be realized from the sales. Often, the members are also supposed to receive bonus from the profit made. In some projects, the profits generated are to be used for funding of other activities carried out by NGOs. Providing support for schooling of children, running libraries, scholarships to girls are popular activities under this domain. Pressure, therefore, is high on the workers as well as the management staff. In most cases, payment to women workers is made on a job basis. As everyone wants to make the best use of time and resources available, the workers tend to focus on completing the piece they are working on and (are able to) devote very little time in interacting with others in the group. In addition, in many projects, based on their skills and the quality of work, women are graded and paid accordingly which often leads to intra-group conflicts about work allocation.

The mainstream practice of making garments in voluntary sector starts with screening workers for their skills and aptitude. With a clear business orientation, training is then provided to selected people to upgrade knowledge and skills. Besides material, design of clothes and ornate patterns provided by professionals are copied by women within tight time schedules. There often is an assumption that enabling women to earn some income will translate into them being socially empowered too. Rooted in a belief that improving capability of women re income generation is all that is required for change to transpire, this assumption has become a driving force for income generation activities for women in villages.

Such practices have huge implications for social change. While imitating designs and patterns by following instructions from others would have limited effects on broadening the understanding of gender and development concerns, the activity may increase income of women. The point in questioning the assumption mentioned above is to bring some clarity on whether social and economic change go hand in hand or economic gains take precedence over issues of social change. The question then to be asked is whether increasing mobility and cash in hand are enough stimulus for social change in women. Of course, there is no requirement for a particular size of the group of workers for social change to occur but if the

projects on livelihoods generation identify both social and economic change as achievable goals, then the issue of understanding and building knowledge of the workers would become critical. Without a customized effort for dealing with individual and collective problems of women, it is difficult to achieve change in the social front. A small percentage of women who may already have the capacity and resources for the required change will advance, whilst most others will either resist change and be the late adopters or do not change at all.

Although projects on income generation do benefit women, they also reinforce traditional roles as homemakers and farmers. For example, a majority of income-generation programmes advocate home-based work such as dairying, food-processing, vegetable growing, cultivation of herbs etc. which fall under the traditional domain of “women’s work” (or *ghar ka karobaar*-as it is called locally) and rely on their free labor. For example, in dairying projects in Uttarakhand, fetching fodder from the forests/fields, taking care of cattle (feeding, bathing, cleaning the shelter), taking milk to the collection point etc. are responsibilities that traditionally come from the labor of women. Even more troubling is to hear from managers/organizational heads that a woman who had no cash in hand has at least been able to earn 1000-1500 rupees per month as a justification for large scale income generating activities such as of herbs, fruit processing etc. Unfortunately, literature on income generation projects in rural areas of Uttarakhand does not shed any light on such issues of seeing poverty as a benefit, use of free labor and certainly none or minimum labor rights to women.

This is an important concern in the process of social change and stems from the fact that the kind of resources and opportunities that rural women can access and have control over are uneven in different regions even within the same geographical area. Accordingly, the process of social change will vary though the workers may be earning more or less the same amount under the project.

Social change may come both from outside and within the group of women engaged in income generation activities. Whilst change that happens from sources located outside the village, for example the content shown in television or through mobile phones, is a zone where rural people have almost no control over, they too are influenced by it. The change inside the group of workers, for example-change in aspirations, often leads to a shift in power dynamics. This change could disrupt the conventional flow of power and control which comes through formal authority and position. How this process unfolds in an organization is an issue about which not much work has been done in Uttarakhand. Such an analysis is vital from the perspective of understanding different forms of power, its distribution and use by people involved in income generation activities, especially because a majority of the NGOs operate as social enterprises and aim to benefit the poor the most.

USNPSS has therefore chosen to facilitate training and entrepreneurship building among women with a focus on local markets or family networks, and not by building supply chains to cater to more distant markets. The approach that USNPSS has adopted to bring about simultaneous change in both social and economic front is about collective transformation, where change becomes evident in the life of the community and not of individual families alone. The following section describes issues of organizing work in centres.

#### 4d. Organizing work in the village-based centre

The centre could be an empty house or a community place (*panchayat ghar, baraat ghar*) in the village and the participants take up the responsibility of its cleanliness and maintenance. In case a room is rented, the requisite amount is paid through the fees that the learners give to the instructor. In some cases, a small amount is paid by USNPSS for the room and electricity charges. All records are maintained by the instructor. By and large, operating a village-based work centre would involve the following steps:

- Begin conversation in communities on livelihoods activities that members of women's groups aspire for and show willingness to manage
- Encourage women and girls to push the boundaries of socio-economic stigma and show that they can generate income while still rooted to their communities
- Find a local girl/woman instructor, interact with her and facilitate orientation
- Open tailoring or knitting centres or both owned by communities-especially by women
- Establish processes for transparency and accountability in maintaining records, especially money

The centre opens for four hours every day, except on Sunday. Women prefer to come in the morning when children are in school and leave in the afternoon. Sometimes two batches are formed to accommodate more women and to ensure that everyone has a machine to stitch/knit garments. The organization of the centre is carried out by a skilled instructor.

It has been noticed that the new comers begin with sewing by hand. They observe the others and get a first-time idea of measurements of garments. They continue practicing

on making different types of stitches and learn to attach buttons and hooks on garments. The new comers prefer to stitch for themselves and then move on to make clothing for their family members. It is only when they have practiced a lot, confidence to take up orders from the community is gained. Here too, some sort of gradation is noticed. Initially the newly trained tailors make clothes for the poorest sections of the community and charge less but over time they begin to receive orders from others in the village itself and also from nearby areas. A lot of demand, especially for woollens, comes from relatives settled in towns in different parts of the hills.



Figure 47. New arrivals learn to make stitches and



New arrivals as well as women who knew sewing and knitting but remained invisible due to lack of any opportunity earlier come to the centres. Accordingly, the programme gives value to women's knowledge and also enables them to build on known skills. As we shall see in this article, over time many women have been able to take on new roles such as of instructors, leaders, mobilizers establishing similar new centres in other districts of the state with USNPSS support and as small entrepreneurs setting up independent shops for themselves.



Figure 48. New arrivals practice on paper.



Figure 49. The learners maintain records of measurements for future use.

USNPSS staff makes regular visits to the centres to provide guidance and to clarify doubts of instructors and the learners. With adequate provisioning of machines and other accessories,

all centres function smoothly. Small repair work possible in villages is carried out there itself, otherwise the USNPSS staff bring back machines to Almora for repair and maintenance.

Over time, the list of garments that women are stitching has become quite comprehensive. As a newcomer or a trainee, they begin with making simple garments such as petticoats, simple frocks for infants, blouses and salwar kameez for themselves. However, soon this process turns them into wanting to make different designs of salwar-kameez (about 8-9 types have become the norm) and blouses. Many of them make other things as well. Artefacts for home-decoration, table cloth, baskets from pine leaves etc. are made using embroidery and lace making.

What is the situation regarding competition in the centres? This question is hard to answer in a simple way because the relational aspects, as mentioned above, require a multilayered view and analysis. In daily life relations of power, caste, education, economic background and gender all play a part in determining the way individuals conduct themselves in a community. Besides physical space, each centre offers innumerable situations through dialogue, experience-sharing, knowledge and skill development for the empowerment of women. Most importantly, such interchanges build-up understanding, or at least a perspective, for perceiving and articulating change in communities. The contrast-as individuals compete to become better skilled than the others and at the same time try to be like the ones in the group- is mediated through the richness of their conversations and a collective desire for change re women's position in society.

An example would add an additional dimension to the issue of collective desire for change and yet competing with others in the group

to be the best tailors. A young daughter in-law whose family owned the largest cloth store in the local market joined the centre to learn sewing. Besides cloth, the family sold readymade garments for women and other items of daily use such as cloth-flags which by tradition are offered to the local deities. The woman's family asked her to stitch flags in the centre as a major festival was approaching. Whilst all other learners agreed to the fact that flags were needed in large numbers, no one came forward to stitch any. The young daughter in-law made several requests to the group but all in vain. The others were not ready to waste their time in meeting this demand which the family, business oriented as they were, thought women could do for free as a part of their apprenticeship in the centre. This anecdote reflects an interplay of how desire for personal gain subsumes with the collective and the way competition discloses itself from the undercurrent in the group.



Figure 50. Working on a pedal machine, district Champawat.

#### 4e. Local sale

In the concept of local sale that USNPSS has been developing, the 'local' ranges from within the village to road-side hamlets and nearby towns. As women become entrepreneurs, they take on different setups to conduct activities:

- a. Own individual shops in the market
- b. Own shops in partnership with other girls
- c. Working from home
- d. Working from the village-based centre

#### Own shop

A total of 15 girls/women have opened their own shops in different locations in Kumaon and Garhwal. In addition, 7 girls have opened shops after marriage (Table 3). Majority of shops are in the main markets that cater to many villages in the neighborhoods. The shops open six days a week from 10 am to 5 pm. The shop premises either belong to the families of the girls or have been taken up on rent. In some cases, the sewing machines were provided by USNPSS whilst the girls managed the rest. All decisions regarding the shops are taken by the girls.

Table 18. Women and girls running their own shops after training.

Sl.	Name	Type of shop	Village
1	Mrs. Basanti Arya	Own shop	Maniagar
2	Soni Bisht	Own shop	Nagarkhan
3	Chandra Aagri	Joint venture	Maniagar-closed after two years-two girls got married and one has been diagnosed with an eye problem
4	Puja Arya		
5	Deepa Arya		
6	Bhagwati Arya	Joint venture	New shop opened in Mani agar
7	Anjali Arya		
8	Poonam Arya		
9	Mrs. Daya Bisht	Own shop	Binta- Gagrighol
10	Mrs. Munni Molly	Own shop	Pati Bazar
11	Mrs. Durga Mandal	Own shop	Pati Bazar
12	Mrs. Munni Devi	Own shop	Pati Bazar
13	Vidya Patni	Own shop	Pati Bazar
14	Mrs. Renu Adhikari	Own shop	Binta Bazar
15	Mrs. Laxmi Puspwan	Own shop	Ukhimath Bazar
16	Poonam Arya	Own shop	Chami -after marriage
17	Hira Gailakoti	Own shop	Taani-after marriage
18	Neetu Banaula	Own shop	Haldwani-after marriage
19	Gita Joshi	Own shop	Maalgaon-after marriage
20	Abha Banaula	Own shop	Dungari-after marriage
21	Uma Gailakoti	Own shop	Biroda-after marriage
22	Tanuja Tewari	Own shop	Bageswar-after marriage

Durga Mandal and her husband own and run a shop in Pati bazar, district Champawat. As happens in small towns and villages the shop contains a wide variety of daily use items catering to several villages around. Durga has a specific task at hand. Women and girls are her primary clients and the network has grown stronger since she joined the tailoring classes to add more skills and experience to her profile. “I learnt sewing to become more professional. Women from nearby villages come to me to buy cosmetics and decorative items. During wedding season, I become very busy. I thought that since I am catering to the needs of women and girls, it would help if I sew their clothes too. I have put a sewing machine in my shop and take orders”.



Figure 51. Durga in her shop at Pati bazar, district Champawat.

### **Own shop in partnership among girls**

Chandra Aagri, Pooja Arya and Deepa Arya are three young girls who learnt tailoring in the centre at Maniagar. After completing a six months course, the three of them got together and decided to open a shop (Table 21). The shop ran well as they continued to get orders from about 15 villages around. They got orders for female apparel all through the year but the income increased many folds during the wedding seasons and festivals like Diwali.

The shop was closed after running for three years. Two of the partners got married and one was diagnosed with an eye problem. Taking a cue from this initiative, three other girls, Bhagwati Arya, Anjali Arya and Poonam Arya have now decided to open a tailoring shop from an empty house in Mani agar bazar.

### **Working from home**

Many women and girls prefer to work from home. In Pati, Deepa stitches a wide range of clothes from home. She says, “Besides stitching daily apparel for women and girls, I have now started to make lehenga-blouses for weddings. I earn at least 10,000 rupees per month from tailoring. During wedding and festive seasons, income increases to about 15,000-20,000 rupees per month.”



Garima Mehra, Neetu Arya also earn about rupees 10,000-15,000 each per month working from home. Both of them come to Maniagar centre to offer training to others but also work from home.

Many other girls who work from home are in different stages of receiving orders to stitch women's clothes. On an average, a woman working from home can earn about rupees 2500-3000 per month. Some girls who just got trained and relatively new in this field are earning about 800-1000 rupees but the experienced women can get a business of about 5000 rupees per month by catering to neighboring communities. Table 3 and 4 show the names of girls who have been receiving orders from their own villages and surrounding communities and stitching clothes for women in Mani agar village.



Figure 52. Working from home in Pati, district Champawat.

Table 19. Stitching women's clothes for nearby villages.

Sl.	Name of the entrepreneur	Villages served
1	Renu Arya	Jageswar, Iswardhar, Pokhari
2	Kiran Arya	Chami, Kasoon, Siroliya, Gwar, Bamanswal, Chauna
3	Neetu Banaula	Maichun, Panuanaula, Bartoli, Haldwani
4	Maya Bisht	Kweti, Khaspar, Artola, Baghari
5	Geeta Joshi	Berinag, Jogyura, Champawat, Fulari, Simkhaliya, Kumoli
6	Garima Mehra	Dhaulcheena, Sela, Toli, Jalbagari, Chanoli, Dhana
7	Puja Suyal	Banthok, Kasoon, Dhamera, Gwar
8	Sapna Suyal	Banthok, Gwar
9	Jyoti Goswami	Nakot, Chapar, Gwar, Mouni
10	Neetu Arya	Supai, Ootiya, Supyola
11	Nandi Banaula	Garudabaanj, Gairad, Jaalbagari, chanoli, Sela
12	Deepa Penwal	Simkhaliya, fulari, Barecheena, Dhaulcheena, Kanchula
13	Rita Banula	Girchola, Sela, Mouni
14	Kala Bagadwal	Sirmoli, Girchola
15	Vidya Patni	Patan gaon, Toli, Goom
16	Deepa Bhatt	Pati
17	Munni Moni	Chorakot Pati





Figure 53. Geeta tries to sell clothes during a congregation of rural women's groups.

Table 20. Stitching clothes for women and girls of their own village.

Sl.	Name of the entrepreneur	Village served
1	Jeevanti Arya	Maniagar
2	Mamta Arya	Maniagar
3	Reema Banaula	Girchola
4	Prema Mehta	Panuanaula bazar
5	Ganga Bisht	Panuanaula bazar
6	Mamta Banaula	Banthok
7	Pushpa Nagarkoti	Panuanaula bazar
8	Jyoti Joshi	Sela
9	Uma Arya	Girchola
10	Pushpa Chamiyal	Chanoli
11	Anjali Arya	Banthok
12	Uma Banaula	Maichun
13	Laxmi Devi	Dhunaghat
14	Rajni Gahtori	Gahtora
15	Seema Rawat	Moolakot
16	Bhawna Ladwal	Rolmel
17	Durga Arya	Ranichaur
18	Suman Arya	Ranichar
19	Anita Mehta	Joulari
20	Priyanka Bharti	Pati

Table 21 shows the list of women who bought knitting machines after learning to knit in the centres. They sell the finished sweaters, caps, mufflers, woolen frocks etc. directly and where ever feasible keep their products in shops in market areas.

Table 21. Women who have bought machines after learning knitting in the center.

Sl.	Name	Village	District
1	Nandi Banaula	Maniagar	Almora
2	Bhagwati Banaula	Jaalbagar	Almora
3	Ganga Chamiyal	Maniagar	Almora
4	Niharika Bisht	Barecheena	Almora
5	Heera Banaula	Jaalbagar	Almora
6	Nisha Suyal	Supai	Almora
7	Chandra Jaraut	Supai	Almora
8	Pushpa Chamiyal	Chanoli	Almora
9	Babita	Pati	Champawat
10	Maya Bisht	Kwiti, Panuanaula	Almora
11	Pushpa Penwal	Simkhalya	Almora
12	Bhagwati Bisht	Panuanaula	Almora
13	Asha Bhatt	Naini Jageswar	Almora
14	Janaki Bisht	Kwerali Khaspar	Almora
15	Geeta Joshi	Jogyura	Almora
16	Neetu Banaula after marriage	Haldwani	Nainital
17	Preeti Bisht after marriage	Haldwani	Nainital
18	Dolly Joshi after marriage	Rudrapur	Nainital



Figure 54. Girls learning to knit at Maniagar, district Almora.



Figure 55. working together.

### Working from the village-based centre

Table 22 exhibits the list of 21 women who had not yet bought the machines and come to the centre at Maniagar to knit and earn some income. About half of the total women coming to earn a livelihood from the training centre represent the scheduled caste households.

Table 22. Women who come to the centres to knit sweaters and other products for sale.

Sl.	Name	Caste	Village
1	Poonam Arya	Scheduled caste	Maniagar
2	Puja Arya	Scheduled caste	Maniagar
3	Chandra Aagri	Scheduled caste	Maniagar
4	Poonam Arya	Scheduled caste	Maniagar
5	Prabha Arya	Scheduled caste	Maniagar
6	Reshma Arya	Scheduled caste	Maniagar
7	Jyoti Goswami	Scheduled caste	Nakot
8	Deepa Arya	Scheduled caste	Maniagar
9	Garima Mehra	General	Maniagar
10	Neetu Banaula	General	Maichun
11	Deepa Penwal	General	Simkalya
12	Prabha Mehta	General	Panuanaula
13	Kala Bagarwal	General	Girchola
14	Sapna Banaula	General	Banthok
15	Puja Supiyal	General	Banthok
16	Heera Gailakoti	General	Banthok
17	Soni Bisht	General	Nagarkhan
18	Mamta Banaula	General	Jaalbagar
19	Geeta Joshi	General	Sela
20	Neetu Arya	Scheduled caste	Barecheena
21	Anjali Banaula	General	Maichun

#### **4f. Social protection**

Women trainees are helped by USNPSS staff and the CBOs to sort out procedural problems in accessing government schemes and benefits. This may include making job cards, updating and linking ration cards with Aadhar, maintaining bank accounts, Ayushman health cards, cooking gas from Ujjwala scheme, old age pension, pensions for widow, deserted women and for differently abled people including children.

An additional dimension to activities carried out by USNPSS has emerged with many women joining the network. Mostly, such women come from villages not covered by any prior programmes of USNPSS. The tailoring and knitting centres accept and train them to become skilled tailors and knitters. For such women the centres act as conduits bringing them out from isolation to be a part of a large network of women's groups and to learn from them.

#### **4g. Challenges**

While mobilizing women to attend and to learn a new skill has not been a problem, organizing the centre is a task that requires time and sustained efforts by USNPSS and its partner CBOs. Women turn up in large numbers-especially when they are free from their farming responsibilities during the long winter season. Different batches are made to accommodate as many women as possible to ensure that the centre does not deny anyone wanting to learn.

Although the centres charge a minimum amount of fee (75-200 rupees per month), the possibility of running a self-reliant unit is unclear. The amount collected as fee is used to pay the room rent and bills for electricity and USNPSS does not have to make any payments towards this end. Money that is left is also used for repair and maintenance of machines and to buy material such as needles, threads, buttons etc. The learners bring cloth from home. Old sarees are used to practice cutting and stitching garments. Besides providing tailoring and knitting machines and furniture, USNPSS pays an honorarium to the instructor.

Being young, the learners seldom complain of weakening eye-sight, back ache, neck pain etc. USNPSS is sensitive towards this issue as it can crop up any time. As a preventive measure, care is taken to ensure that the room has good ventilation and lighting facilities. During winters, women sit outside in the sun and stitch.

#### **4h. Visits to the centres**

USNPSS staff makes regular visits to the centres to provide guidance and to clarify doubts of instructors and the learners. With adequate provisioning of machines and other accessories, all centres function smoothly. Small repair work possible in villages is carried out there itself, otherwise the USNPSS staff would bring back machines to Almora for repair and maintenance. The following table offers a glimpse of visits made to the centres during 2019-2020.

Table 23. Visits made by USNPSS staff to the tailoring and knitting centres in 2019-2020.

Sl.	Village	Date of visit	District	Learners present in the Centre
1	Maniagar	3.4.2019	Almora	20
2	Binta	5.4.2019	Almora	15
3	Pati	9.4.2019	Champawat	18
4	Palyun	12.4.2019	Almora	16
5	Maniagar	24.4.2019	Almora	16
6	Maniagar	1.5.2019	Almora	18
7	Palyun	4.5.2019	Almora	16
8	Palyun	20.5.2019	Almora	17
9	Binta	28.5.2019	Almora	10
10	Maniagar	5.6.2019	Almora	16
11	Palyun	18.6.2019	Almora	14
12	Diyarkot	12.7.2019	Chamoli	14
13	Bainoli	13.7.2019	Chamoli	10
14	Diyarkot	14.7.2019	Chamoli	16
15	Diyarkot	15.7.2019	Chamoli	15
16	Palyun	22.7.2019	Almora	12
17	Pati	31.7.2019	Champawat	17
18	Pati	1.8.2019	Champawat	15
19	Maniagar	10.8.2019	Almora	17
20	Palyun	20.8.2019	Almora	12
21	Maniagar	21.9.2019	Almora	12
22	Maniagar	30.9.2019	Almora	10
23	Pati	5.11.2019	Champawat	14
24	Maniagar	11.11.2019	Almora	16
25	Loharkuda- Shama	18.11.2019	Bageswar	15
26	Loharkuda- Shama	19.11.2019	Bageswar	33
27	Loharkuda- Shama	20.11.2019	Bageswar	33
28	Maniagar	29.11.2019	Almora	18
29	Palyun	29.11.2019	Almora	22
30	Maniagar	18.12.2019	Almora	19
31	Maniagar	31.12.2019	Almora	14
32	Dungari	2.1.2019	Chamoli	13
33	Diyarkot	3.1.2019	Chamoli	12
34	Diyarkot	4.1.2019	Chamoli	13
35	Palyun	13.1.2019	Almora	11
36	Maniagar	22.1.2019	Almora	16
37	Maniagar	27.1.2019	Almora	18
38	Maniagar	25.2.2019	Almora	19
39	Maniagar	14.3.2019	Almora	19



#### 4i. Conclusion

Introducing and nurturing balance between social change and economic gains is one more step forward towards building resilient communities capable of responding to the rapid changes occurring in villages of Uttarakhand. A perceptible rise in education, communication and transportation facilities has ensured better mobility and exposure for youth. As educated women and girls aspire for non-farm livelihoods, the rugged terrain and lack of any vocational training pose a sense of confusion and vulnerability. The major “take away” from the work described in this article could be summarized as the following:

- The USNPSS approach to bring about simultaneous change in social and economic front is of collective transformation, where change becomes evident in the life of the community, in perceptions and attitudes towards women and girls, in gender relations at home; and not of individual families alone
- Learning multiple skills such as tailoring, knitting and use of internet/computers helps in meeting the seasonality of demand and ensures better income
- This work has explored and used the local markets for selling garments and woolens. The ‘local’ ranges from within the village to road-side hamlets and nearby towns. Women also use their family networks to sell woolens
- Better skilled women and who put in more time have been earning about 8-10,000 rupees/month. Average income for others varies between 1000-5000 rupees/month.
- Women are able to learn and generate income in various settings such as by opening their own shops, working from home and as many find it difficult to buy a machine of their own, come to the centre to stitch/knit and sell the product on their own. Many women have carried this work forward by opening shops in new villages after marriage
- The cost of setting up centres is covered by USNPSS, women retain their full earnings.
- Apart from the financial contribution and guidance on managing the work, USNPSS and its partner organizations do need to actively facilitate the process of change. The examples given, one of overcoming caste prejudice, and the other of the restrictions placed on widows and so on are the social norms that do not change on their own

The following section shows the impact of running the programme with women and girls.

#### Chandra Aagri

Born in a scheduled caste family in Maniagar village, Chandra Aagri is 22 years old. She has four sisters and one brother. Her father works as a mason and mother keeps goats for sale. Chandra and her younger sister have a good academic record. Chandra completed her graduation in 2019. Her sister passed the high school exam with 92% marks and receives a scholarship in the intermediate level. Her brother has migrated to the city for work. His income is low and it is rare that he would send money home. His wife and two children live in the village with Chandra’s parents.

Hardship at home drove Chandra to learn tailoring. Her father has become alcoholic and sister-in-law does not like to tend the fields. Chandra joined the center in August 2017, a quick learner, she became excellent in stitching a variety of clothes for women. In January 2018, a discussion on opening a tailoring shop at Maniagar Bazar began in the centre. Chandra expressed her willingness to be one of the girls in that shop. In addition to tailoring she also began to learn knitting.

In 2018, USNPSS staff was looking for some trainers who could establish tailoring centres at Galla village, district Nainital, and in Pati, district Champawat. Chandra expressed her willingness to take up the responsibility of opening the centres in both places. Her only concern was that the USNPSS staff should take permission from home. When the USNPSS staff approached her parents, both of them refused. Her father said that he would not send a young girl to some other place. Chandra began to persuade her mother to take permission from her father. In addition, the USNPSS staff continued talking to the parents until her father agreed to send Chandra to Pati as a trainer. The opportunity of going out of her village and working as a trainer opened a wide world for Chandra. She began to express herself and gained confidence to impart training to a group of women.

Back at home parents were busy fixing her marriage. One day, a boy came with his parents to see her at home. He said to Chandra, “you speak to my friend. I will marry you, if he agrees.” He dialed his friend and gave the mobile phone to Chandra. She says, “at that very moment I remembered what I had learnt in the workshops at Almora. I refused to take his phone by saying, “why should I talk to your friend? Am I getting married to you or him? I can also refuse to marry you. The boy and her parents became very angry and left immediately.” However, this move was received as a negative step in the family and the community. She began to face hostility at home and in her neighborhood. The people would taunt her by saying that educated girls become stubborn and rigid and that nobody would take her as a bride now.

Resident- Maniagar  
District Almora  
Age-22 years  
Centre attended- Maniagar  
Average income earned- 8000 rupees per month



Along with two other girls from the community, Chandra opened a tailoring shop at Maniagar. She began to make reasonable income from her business of tailoring and knitting. With the help of the USNPSS staff, she opened an account in the bank. However, savings were not easy as her alcoholic father would take money from her. By then, she was also supporting her family from the income made in the shop. During workshops, she was

regularly told by the USNPSS staff that she must save something for her own needs. Now, after about a year, she saved some money for her own use in future. Her marriage has also been fixed. She said to her future father-in-law that she would only agree to marry if they would allow her to work to which he has agreed.

### **Sunita Arya**

For Sunita Arya, learning a vocational skill such as tailoring is an issue of endurance. Born and brought up in Namik village, Sunita lost her mother at a very young age. Married again, her father works as a daily wage laborer. Sunita was raised by her stepmother whom she fears a lot. However, it is in her grandmother that she finds solace and constant encouragement. Being a poor, scheduled caste girl in a remote village, Sunita has learnt to live with very little opportunities and resources at hand. Her village is situated near the Namik glacier, close to the border with China in Bageswar district. Not connected with a motorable road, one has to walk down to the river and then uphill on an arduous path to reach Namik.

Sunita completed her schooling from the town of Munsiyari in Pithoragarh district in 2014 with a good academic record. This success made her aspire for a college degree. Munsiyari is about 40 kms walk from Namik village. Sunita got herself

enrolled in college and continued studying from home. Commuting was not possible and the family was too poor to rent a room in the town of Munsiyari. In addition, Sunita's college degree was not of any value to the family and the community at Namik. The village residents would cultivate their fields and migrate to the high-altitude green pastures in the Himalayas during the summer months taking along large herds of sheep and goats for grazing. Sunita completed her graduation by staying in a relative's house during the time when exams were held in college.

While doing her graduation, Sunita was selected as a facilitator to run a children's library in Namik village. The library was started by one of the partner CBOs of USNPSS and Sunita being the most educated girl in the village, was the unanimous choice in the community. A

Resident- Namik village  
Current- Loharkuda- Gogina village  
District Bageswar  
Age-26 years  
Training- Sri Aurobindo Ashram, New Delhi  
Average income earned- 7000 rupees per month



Sunita in Namik Village

new door was opened to her. She came to Almora for training. This was the first time she had traveled such a long distance and this made her sick. Nauseated for two days, she finally began to talk and learnt the nuances of running a centre in the village.

Back at Namik, Sunita ran a good library programme. For the first time in their lives, children and other residents in the village saw story books with beautiful illustrations in them. Everyone in the village would visit the library to learn something new. As a guide and a leader, Sunita gained a lot of respect from the community.

In one of the meetings at Almora, Sunita expressed her desire to go to the Aurobindo Ashram, New Delhi to learn tailoring under the institute's vocational training programme. She was selected for a six months course during 2018-2019. Her mother and maternal uncle made several calls to USNPSS to know where she was going and why she would need a training on tailoring. After much cajoling at home, Sunita went to Delhi and learnt tailoring. After finishing her training, and inspired by her attitude and achievements the Ashram staff asked her to get enrolled in a B.Ed. programme so that she could work as a teacher in their network of schools. Sunita's mother refused to send her again and she had to come home. Back in the village she ran a village learning centre.

Sometime later, Sunita expressed her desire to open a tailoring centre in the village. The need for such a centre should not be undermined in a remote area where people have to travel long distances to get their clothes stitched.

Currently, women and girls are learning to stitch women's apparel in the centre run by Sunita in the hamlet of Loharkuda. Close to Namik village, Loharkuda is her maternal home. It is a village of ironsmiths inhabited by scheduled caste families. Being at a central location, the centre caters to women of about ten villages. For Sunita, it is a source of income and way out of poverty.



Sunita participating in a training programme at USNPSS, Almora.

## Neetu Banaula

Just after finishing her schooling in April 2018, Neetu went to Mani agar village to enquire about the possibility of her joining the tailoring programme. She was asked to come in June. Neetu learnt to stitch clothes from June to September until the centre was closed for a month for harvesting in villages. She joined the group again in November and showed the clothes that she had stitched during the holidays to others. In particular, the design of kurtas that she had invented all by herself at home received much appreciation in the centre. Neetu recalls that was a big booster to her self-esteem. Everyone wanted to copy her design.

Neetu lives in Maichun village, district Almora. Her father is a contractor and mother a farmer. Neetu is the eldest among her three siblings. Two of her sisters' study in the intermediate college in Panuanaula. Neetu stitched their school uniform. She gave a different cut in the neck piece of her sister's frock. All her friends in school wanted to have the same design in their uniform too. Neetu began to receive orders from the school and earned a good amount which she put in her saving account in the bank.

She says, "I like to make different designs of clothes. In the centre, I learnt to stitch blouses with lining inside. Besides blouses, I could stitch salwar kameez, kurtas, frocks and children's clothes but I was not yet satisfied with my work. I wanted to be better and better. So, I decided to go to Almora bazar to buy some decorative items which I could use in my stitching work. I bought readymade accessories in Almora and began to stitch blouses of different designs. Now, everyone likes to have a blouse stitched by me. I finish my pieces by doing some additional work such as tying colorful dories and small replicas of stars, bells etc. on the sleeves and the back side of blouses which the customers like a lot. In addition, I taught everyone in the centre to stitch blouses with chains stitched on the sides. This was a totally new thing in the village. I received a lot of orders because young women and girls wanted to wear such blouses during weddings and other family functions.

Enthusiastic as she is, Neetu thought of learning to work on a knitting machine too. She gifted her first sweater to her mother. Soon, she was innovating new designs of sweaters and

Resident-Village Maichun

District-Almora

Age- 21 years old

Centre attended- Maniagar village

Average income earned-8000-9,000 rupees per month

Stitching of masks during lockdown - received 12,000 rupees as payment for material and stitching



Neetu in Maichun village.



socks which brought in a lot of variety in the centre too. She would bring hand knitted sweaters to the centre. All trainees would discuss ways of copying the pattern through the machine and practice until perfection. She says the instructor, Nandi Banula, helped her to understand the intricacies of knitting with machines. Besides copying patterns from hand-knitted sweaters to the machine, they also invented several designs of their own.

Neetu wants to open a store of her own. She has visited Panuanaula market several times to survey the trends and the intricacies of running the businesses. In Panuanaula four male tailors stitch clothes for women and men. Neetu thought of opening a shop with two other girls. She asked her relative to search for a place which she could take on rent. As soon as she found a suitable place, she asked her parents. However, her father disapproved saying that being the eldest she should think of getting married. Neetu was disappointed but continued her work from home and in the centre. She says, “I am determined to open a store of my own. If not now, I will do this later.”

Neetu says she likes to give money to her mother. When her mother goes to attend social functions in the family or the community, she asks Neetu. “That is the moment when I feel proud of myself, says Neetu. Currently, I earn about 8000 rupees per month. I put my money in the bank but I will never deny giving some to my mother. She asks for small amounts such as hundred, five hundred rupees only. She knows that it is my money and I need to save as much as I can”.

During the corona virus pandemic when the country was under lockdown, Neetu was asked by a local NGO to stitch masks for them. Soon, USNPSS asked the group at Maniagar to prepare masks for distribution in Almora town and also in villages. The group stitched about 2000 masks for distribution.

Neetu says that one should learn both tailoring and knitting to earn a decent amount on a regular basis. Tailoring is in demand during wedding seasons and festivals. Knitting is useful during winters. By combining the two, any skilled girl can earn an average of about 8-9000 rupees per month by living in the village itself.



Neetu shows a sweater knit by her in the centre at Maniagar, district Almora.

## Hema Koli

At first glance Hema Koli could be passed off as any other young woman but a deeper gaze would reflect determination and wit that she carries with her. Hema lives in Dungari village in Karnaprayag block, district Chamoli. Dungari is a mixed-caste village. Hema's mother was elected as the member of the kshatriyas panchayat in 2014 on the seat reserved for scheduled caste women. Her father is a daily wage laborer. Hema says, "my mother cultivates the fields but the wild animals damage the crops in no time. The scheduled caste families own smaller plots of land than the others in the village. Cereals grown in the fields last for about three-four months. For the rest of the year, people survive on rations made available through the PDS and from the market in Karnaprayag town."

Situated on the gorge of the Pinder river in Nauti-Badhani ridge, Dungari village has a relatively warmer climate. The village residents have planted mango trees which the contractors come to collect and transport to the plains to make mango pickle, chutney etc. In addition, seasonal vegetables are sent to nearby roadside shops for sale.

After completing her graduation, Hema thought of joining some vocational training course. However, there was no facility available nearby and her parents could not afford her commuting to Karnaprayg every day. Hema and many others in the village requested the local organization, SHAPE and USNPSS to open a tailoring centre in the village.

Responding to this request, a tailoring centre was opened in Dungari in 2019. The centre catered to women and girls of Dungari and Gwad villages.

A fast learner, Hema learnt to stitch simple clothes for women within a few months. She says, "I had a plan in my mind. I used to get old cloth from home and practice cutting it in the centre. In the evenings I would practice cutting on my mother's old sarees. Moreover, I would volunteer to teach the new girls in the centre. I would pick up a piece of chalk and put the required marks on the cloth and then ask the instructor whether it was marked rightly or not. Learning to cut a piece of garment is the most important skill. Of course, I must learn to stitch straight and maintenance of the machine too but with very little training one can operate a sewing machine. It is the cut of the garment that makes a cloth special. So, I focused on

Resident- Dungari village  
District Chamoli  
Age-22 years  
Centre attended- Dungari  
Average income earned- 5000 rupees per month



Hema in Bainoli village, district Chamoli.

learning that. A majority of girls do not know this fact and think that learning to operate a machine is what they need to learn.”

Soon, Hema was getting orders to stitch women’s clothing from her own and the neighboring villages. She says that she received her first orders from Gwar village and getting the first payment and holding it in her fist was a memorable moment.

As women began to appreciate her work, Hema thought of diversifying designs of clothes made by her. The most popular demand was for a different design of the neck in blouses, kameez and kurtas for girls. Hema asked the instructor who told her that some readymade designs are available in the market. She purchased new neck designs from Karnaprayag and copied those. This initiative made her work popular in villages around and she began to receive more and more orders for stitching.

### **Neetu Arya**

After completing her high school from Baracheena Neetu learnt sewing. About 20 years ago her father migrated from his ancestral home in Galai village, district Bageswar, to Barecheena, and constructed a house there. She has two sisters both working in anganwadis. Her elder brother and father work in a resin factory whilst the younger brother is a school teacher.

Neetu got married at the age of 18 years and stayed with her in-laws for some time. Her husband works in Bhimtal, district Nainital, and father-in-law is a mason. She moved to Barecheena in 2014 to enroll her two children in a private school. Neetu says, “when children were in school, I had some free time during the day. So, I thought of stitching clothes. My clientele was totally local. I used to make women’s apparel and that was more than enough work for me. Then, a non-government organization approached me. They were looking for an instructor. I ran a training course on tailoring but girls were inconsistent in attending. Some came for two-three months whilst others continued to learn for six-seven months.”

Later, USNPSS took her as an instructor for the tailoring and knitting centre at Maniagar village. Hard

working as she is, Neetu commutes every day from Barecheena to Maniagar, about 7 km

Resident- Baracheena  
Centre-Maniagar  
District Almora  
Age-28 years  
Average income earned- 10,000 rupees per month



Neetu in Maniagar centre.

apart. The centre at Maniagar was inaugurated on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Considering the large number of women wanting to learn tailoring Neetu made two separate batches and began to impart training on making women's clothing.

Young women and girls were just not content in making simple salwar-kameez but wanted to learn more. Neetu taught them stitching about eight types of salwar and many varieties of kurtas. There was no end to design preferences for blouses and enthusiastic young women would experiment with a variety of cuts and designs of women's wear. The trainees would also learn to stitch a variety of children's clothing. Frocks of different designs were made and decorated with lace, fancy buttons and linings of different colors and materials. In addition, a few girls, good at embroidery began to make fancy items including table cloth, bed covers, bags, wall hangings and baskets from pine leaves.

Soon Neetu and a few other girls began to download designs from the internet and would make clothing of the latest designs. She could earn a good income from this work. This was in addition to her regular income for the instructor's honorarium from USNPSS. Sometimes she would outsource work, otherwise she stitched clothes all by herself at home.

In 2018, Neetu was sent to Pati in district Champawat and Galla village in Nainital district to start and set up tailoring centres. She asked her mother-in-law to look after the children when she was busy. Since she earns a good amount of money every month, her family supports and respects her decisions. To improve her skills, Neetu has also learnt to knit on machines installed in the centre. She says, "knitting and tailoring are connected. By learning both, one can earn good money staying at home. Since our centre offers facilities to learn both tailoring and knitting, I have upgraded my skills in both the fields. My family and other people in villages respect me because I can do the work that they need."

### **Nandi Banaula-The knitting master**

"My husband passed away when I was 25 years old. As a young widow, I observed all the rituals such as covering my head with a towel or a simple piece of cloth. I believed that not doing so will turn the social equilibrium upside down and eventually bring curse to my family", Nandi says with a sense of self-assurance and modesty. In 1997, she was married at the age of 15 years and came to Maichun village from Gairar village in Almora district. Her husband was a contractor and father-in-law ran a tea shop at Mani agar village.

Her father earned his livelihood by processing grains and cereals in a flour mill providing service to all neighboring villages. As a child Nandi attended the balwadi programme run by USNPSS. Later, she would walk about three km every day to attend primary school in Ganghut village. After marriage, Nandi became a member of the women's group in Maichun village. Her mother in-law, Basanti Banaula, an active member of the group, became a source of inspiration to her. Nandi recalls, "my mother in-law would attend the women's meeting and, in the evening, she would try to recapitulate the main points with us two daughters-in-law. She was very serious about it. Women's groups from Garhwal and other districts of Kumaon used to visit our village to see the work that women had done. That used to be a moment of pride for my mother in-law and her friends in the village. Sometimes, the visiting group would sit in our house for lunch or tea. We used to cook meals for the visitors with

great care. We thought that it was our collective responsibility to look after them. In turn we would go to Garhwal and other places to see the work that women's groups had done there. My mother in-law would prepare her own songs on development and women's empowerment and sing during meetings. We organized large demonstrations against alcoholism among men and improper cutting of agricultural fields for laying down roads. In 2003 my daughter was born. We celebrated her birth with great fanfare. My in-laws were of a different mind- they believed in gender equality. Coming of a daughter was an auspicious occasion for them. Suddenly my husband passed away in 2006. My mother in-law could never recover from this shock and she too passed away in 2012. However, she would encourage me to do some work that will bring income to the family. One of our relatives was visiting us during the summer holidays. She knew knitting and had received training on working a knitting machine. I asked her to teach me that. Within a week, I bought a machine for myself and started practicing on it. Soon, I began to sell sweaters in nearby villages."

In 2017, USNPSS staff requested Nandi to be an instructor in the centre at Maniagar. Being a widow, Nandi was very hesitant. She refused many times but finally agreed to run the knitting unit for three months. Upon joining the centre, everyone had noticed that Nandi was very quiet. While other women would wear bright clothes and jewelry, Nandi preferred simple saree with a towel covering her head. The USNPSS staff took on this issue and began to chat with her informally for a long time until she threw away the towel by saying "this is not what I want. Let me have a normal life like others". Following this incident, she began to talk freely with other women in the centre. Nandi has the quality of keeping her cool and encouraging each and every girl to learn to knit with perfection. Not only had she gained confidence but her desire to learn more has also grown. Along with knitting she has learnt tailoring in the centre.

As a member of a team of master trainers, Nandi made a visit to Pati village in Champawat district and helped the local CBO establish a knitting centre. She knows her machine well. Often, people from nearby villages call her to repair their machines. Confident, as she has become, Nandi travels alone and makes visits to other villages for repair of machines. She has gained popularity and maintains contacts with the women of about 25-30 villages from whom she receives regular orders to knit sweaters, mufflers, socks, caps and woolen frocks for girls. Her average income from knitting and tailoring is about 9,000 rupees per month.

Resident- Maichun village  
Centre-Maniagar Knitting centre  
District-Almora  
Age-40 years  
Average income earned- 9,000 rupees per month



Nandi at the centre in Maniagar.



In July 2020, Neetu Arya and Poonam Arya from Maniagar were invited as trainers to establish a new centre in Danya. Nandi was the unanimous choice for the position of the instructor in Maniagar centre. She ran the centre for about six months taking up responsibility of both tailoring and knitting.

### **Priyanka Bharti**

As a cleaner and garbage collector, Priyanka's father receives rupees 30 per month from each shop in Pati Bazar. This adds up to about 2500-2800 rupees. Her mother also works as a cleaner in the hospital, as and when called upon. Priyanka has two brothers and a sister. She left school after studying up to class 10<sup>th</sup>.

Being the eldest child, Priyanka thought of improving her family income by stitching clothes. She joined the centre at Pati and learnt tailoring and knitting for seven months. As a regular attendee, Priyanka learnt fast and became good in stitching women's garments. In addition to stitching clothes of daily use, Priyanka learnt to make lehenga and other accessories for brides. Owing to this skill that she has developed on her own, Priyanka is able to earn more during wedding seasons.

She says, I want to open my own shop but renting a place in the market is not easy. The owners ask for about 2000-2500 rupees per month which is difficult for me. From my current earnings, I have started to save some amount in the bank. One day, I will have enough to rent a place in the main bazar.

Resident- Pati  
Centre- Pati  
District-Champawat  
Age-21 years old  
Average income earned- 4,000 rupees per month



Priyanka Bharti in Pati.

Priyanka has also learnt to operate knitting machine. She comes to the centre to knit sweaters for sale. Buying her own machine is difficult due to lack of money at present but she has plans to have a machine of her own so that she can work from home until she takes a place on rent in the market. She says, "After leaving school, I wanted to do something. But there was no facility. I did not know what to do, where to go to earn some money. Then I learnt about this centre. The next day, I came to enquire about the procedure for enrolling myself here. It was like a godsend and I wanted to learn as much as I could. My family is very happy with this facility. There were so many other girls like me who wanted to learn some skill by being at home. Now we all have got a direction and purpose in life. Some of us will open shops and cater to villages around whilst the young girls would go to other places after marriage and open shops there. I am telling you; this work has multiple effect in society. I am happy to be a part of this change in women's lives in remote areas where we hardly had any such facilities ever".

## Bhagwati Bisht

Bhagwati says, “I used to knit at home for my family and relatives. It used to take me about 15 days to complete a sweater. My neighbor told me about the tailoring and knitting centre at Mani agar village. It is about ten km from Panuanaula where I live. I thought commuting every day to the centre would be a waste of money. One day I just thought of visiting the centre to see what happens there.

I was impressed to see the speed with which women were knitting sweaters in the centre. The quality of patterns was neat. I decided to learn to use the machine and began to attend the centre on a regular basis. There were three sets of machines in the center but we were nine women wanting to use those. Everyone had to wait for her turn to come.

On completing my first sweater in four days I was very happy. It was looking very nice! I showed it around and began to get orders. I saved some money from this income and soon bought a machine for myself. It was good that I bought a machine for myself. I began to practice at home and soon attained a

level of expertise in knitting. Earlier I used to make hand knit items but this new method was quick and easy. I learnt to put complex patterns in sweaters and this also generated a lot of demand for my work. I also learnt to fix and repair small faults in my machine.

Now, I have gained a lot of confidence. Now I do not go to the centre every day. Whenever I need to learn something new, I visit them. Otherwise I work from home. I sell my sweaters locally but now am also getting demand from nearby towns. I have sent some sweaters to Haldwani also. A sweater can fetch me anything between 400- 800 rupees”.

Resident- Panuanaula

District Almora

Age-62 years

Centre attended- Maniagar

Average income earned- 4000 rupees per month



Bhagwati at her home in Panuanaula.

## Ganga Chamiyal

Ganga is from Chanoli village, district Almora. Her husband runs a small tea shop at Maniagar. Ganga keeps goats at home that she sells for meat. The family has rented a small house in Maniagar to facilitate schooling of two children about 12-14 years old. Ganga takes her goats to the forest for open grazing. Keeping an eye on the tribe, she continues to knit by hand.

In July 2017, the knitting centre at Maniagar was opened. Ganga was the first to join. For six months she learnt to work on the machine. Soon, she started to sell her sweaters in the village. She invested her earnings in buying a knitting machine for herself. During the day, Ganga would take her goats and knit by hand. In the evenings, she began to knit in her own machine.

Soon, Ganga got a big order from the local school and made sweaters for children. She began to earn 9000-10,000 rupees per month by selling sweaters, woolen socks, mufflers, woolen frocks etc.

In August 2018, a tailoring shop was opened in partnership by a group of three girls who had received their training in the centre at Maniagar. Ganga asked them to sell her products too. The girls refused by saying that it would diffuse the focus of their own shop as it was opened for tailoring.

Later, Ganga displayed her products during the children's fair and a women's congregation. This proved to be a rewarding attempt and she managed to sell sweaters during these events. She says, "We are economically poor-my husband earns a little by selling tea. Some additional income comes from the goats. This skill of knitting is quite rewarding. I generate some income by selling woolens which goes a long way in sustaining my family. I keep myself busy and this is a reward in itself. I use the material judiciously. Left over from sweaters is used to make socks and to put patterns of different colours in woolens."

Resident- village Chanoli  
Current residence -Maniagar  
District Almora  
Age- 40 years old  
Centre attended- Maniagar  
Average income earned- Earlier getting orders from schools and from sale in villages - 9000-10,000 rupees per month  
Now about 7000-8000 rupees per month



Ganga Chamiyal trying to sell a sweater during a congregation of women at Sela village.

## Laxmi Puspwan

Laxmi's ancestors, moved from Lala bazaar-Almora to Garhwal during late 1930s-early 1940s. Her grandfather, opened a sweet shop in Karnaprayag, in Chamoli district. His son Gobind Lal Shah became a contractor. Laxmi recalls, "since the family continued to maintain relations in Kumaon, Gobind's marriage was fixed to a girl, Godavari, in Chaukhutiya, district Almora. The marriage party started on foot from Karnprayag to Chaukhutiya, stopping on the way at Gairsain and Aadi-badri. It took them four days to reach home, says Laxmi. Fourth among her seven siblings, Laxmi was born in 1962. Two of the siblings died as infants whilst the remaining five grew up in Karnprayag".

Laxmi's father sent all his children to school. A rare occurrence during those times when girls were not educated. After finishing her schooling, she joined college as a private student, studying from home. Her father encouraged Laxmi to learn typing. She was about to join classes when her father died suddenly. Laxmi abandoned the idea of learning short hand and began to think of doing something to earn money. On the recommendation of her aunt,

Laxmi joined a voluntary organization. She was trained to run a balwadi. As a facilitator she earned rupees 800 per month and gave it to her mother to support her sibling's education.

While working in the voluntary sector, Laxmi and her colleagues were asked to go to Lucknow to attend a training programme. All of them were familiar with small buses which ran on the mountain roads but none had any experience of boarding a train. Someone asked them to buy tickets and make reservations for the journey. A man from the village was going to town and Laxmi requested him to buy tickets. On the required day Laxmi and her colleagues reached the railway station. They showed the tickets to an employee in the railway station. He said that they could not board the train because the date of journey printed on the ticket was the 6<sup>th</sup>, and not 9<sup>th</sup>. After much discussions, it became evident that the man who bought the tickets got it all wrong and had confused the number 9 with 6. Telling the story,

Resident- village Kimana  
District Rudraprayag  
Age- 58 years old  
Centre-Ukhimath  
Average income-8000-9000 rupees per month



Laxmi During a meeting at Ukhimath, Rudraprayag.

Laxmi laughs, “my life is full of such sweet-bitter experiences. Those were the days when people were witty and yet compassionate. Today everyone is sitting in front of a computer or a mobile phone. They are connected with the world and yet not connected with anyone because they do not even have time to talk with their own family, let alone the others in the community.”

After marriage, Laxmi began to live in Kimana village, Ukhimath, district Rudraprayag. For six years, she worked as a teacher in a private school. During that time, she learnt to stitch clothes. Her husband had no regular job. Laxmi continued to earn money by sewing women’s clothes and slowly earned a good name for herself as a tailor. She would supplement income by knitting and selling sweaters among her relatives and friends.

In 2010, Laxmi was associated with USNPSS as a supervisor for village libraries. She continued imparting training on stitching in Ukhimath market. She rented a place in the market and ran a centre as a professional tailor. She earned a decent amount by training girls on tailoring and knitting. Her husband who was by then working in a shop en-route to Kedarnath, came home after the floods in the area in 2013. Now, Laxmi began to live again in Kimana village, walking every day to Ukhimath to run the tailoring centre and visiting the libraries. She made several visits to USNPSS to attend training programmes.

After the Kedarnath floods in 2013, many local women wished to learn sewing and knitting to generate some income working from home. Laxmi was appointed as a trainer and began to teach tailoring in different batches to women from surrounding villages. Soon, the programme was expanded to many more villages as the trained women took up the responsibility of starting centres in new areas. Faced some difficulty, Laxmi would visit and guide them. Forty trained women bought their own machines and began to sell their produce on the Kedarnath yatra route. The pilgrimage site offered a rewarding venue for women producers who would knit woolen garments at home and sell those to tourists and the pilgrims, many of whom came unprepared for such cold weather conditions as are experienced in Kedarnath.

This has not been an easy journey for Laxmi. For example, her decision to rent a place in the town of Ukhimath was received with much resentment in the family. Her cousin father in-law rebuked her by saying that she was not allowed to go and live in the bazaar. Facing hostility yet composed in herself, Laxmi did not change her decision. She says, “I have to run the household. People who rebuke me say that it is not right for a woman to work as a tailor. But I am not afraid of all this. No one will support us, if I close this work. How are we going to survive then? So, let people say what they want, I continue doing work that I think is good for me.”



## Rohit Arya

Rohit is studying in the Government Intermediate College in Dhaulcheena, district Almora. He is 20 years old and completing his schooling this year. His father works as a daily wage labor and rears goats to supplement income.

On the day of the inauguration of the tailoring centre in Palyun, Rohit expressed his desire to attend. As soon as he said so, people around began to laugh. A girl said, “this centre is for women. You are not a girl, are you?”

The USNPSS staff intervened by saying that the centre is open for everyone. Men can also come. Irrespective of their caste, age, education, all people who wish to enroll can come to the centre. Rohit got himself enrolled for the six months training course.

The next day, an elderly woman came to the centre. She wanted to learn tailoring. She was from a poor family but had an old sewing machine at home. Her children had grown up. She said, “we give our clothes to the tailor. If I learn this work, we would save some money. My machine will be put to some use.” She was illiterate and showed a lot of hesitation in using a tape. Along with the instructor, Rohit took

up the responsibility of helping and training her. Since she was reluctant to use tape measures, he gave her the idea of using the traditional methods of measurements. She understood the technique of using fingers and arms to measure the length of the cloth. Soon, she began to stitch blouses, petticoats etc. for herself and family.

Rohit has been the only male in a group of 22 attendees in the centre. He is already assisting professional tailors in Dhualcheena bazar and earning money. More recently, he stitched face covers/masks and sold for rupees 15 each in Dhualcheena bazar. In addition, he visited all households in his own village to sell masks.

He says, “during winter vacations in school, I came to the centre every day and practiced at home too. Now, I have gained confidence. I have utilized my time well. My friends who laugh at me waste their time in mobile phones but I practice and practice to be a good tailor. I ask my friends what will they do after finishing their schooling. They say that they will get some job. I find it difficult to understand. Millions of young people are unemployed and I do not see where my friends will get jobs from.”

Residnet-Village Palyun

District Almora

Age- 20 years old

Centre attended- Palyun village

Average income earned- 800-1000 rupees/ month



Rohit in the centre at Palyun village.

## Garima Mehra

Garima believes that educationally and economically able women gain respect in society and this is the most desirable step towards gender equality. She herself has done her masters in sociology. Her father works as a wholesaler and supplies provisions to nearby villages of Nagarkhan, Banthok, Girchola, Gwar, Mouni etc. Garima has two elder married sisters and two younger brothers doing their graduations in college. Until recently, the part of the village where she lives was not connected with roads and the retailers from neighboring villages used to take goods and provisions on mules. The family owns a relatively large piece of land tended by her mother and grandmother.

Garima wants to join the police force. She runs every morning to keep herself fit. “I will sit for the exam as soon as the police department opens its recruitment process” she says.

Garima had enrolled herself as a private candidate for graduation degree. In that connection, she was visiting her sister in the town of Haldwani. Women in the neighborhood used to attend tailoring classes in the evening. Garima thought of joining the classes to better utilize her time in Haldwani. She learnt to make salwar-kameez during her stay in the town.

Back in Maniagar, Garima began to stitch her own clothes. People were surprised to see her making clothes because no one in the village had thought about it earlier. Soon, Garima’s relatives began to ask her to stitch their clothes too. Young married women owned sewing machines but none of them had the skill to operate it. Garima’s work was in much demand because the male tailor of the village, overburdened with work, would take a long time to stitch women’s wear.

Resident-Village Maniagar  
District Almora  
Age- 24 years old  
Centre attended- Maniagar village  
Skill- Tailoring and knitting  
Average income earned- 10,000 rupees per month  
Stitching of masks during lockdown - received 12000 rupees as payment for material and stitching



Garima sharing her experiences during a women’s congregation at Maichun village.

Amidst these developments, a meeting of the women’s group was attended by the USNPSS staff. The women made a request to open a training centre in the village. Out of the seven sewing machines available in the village, three were functional. Two women offered to give rooms in their houses for free. Women also said that they were ready to give up to 200 rupees per month as fee. Garima was selected as the instructor. She asked her friend, Tanuja Joshi,

for help and ran the centre. They worked in Maichun village for about three months, training women on stitching clothes. However, their own understanding was limited and both of them realized that they would not be able to satisfy the growing demand for more varieties in women's clothes. For example, girls and young women wanted to learn new trending designs of salwar kameez and blouses which Garima and Tanuja were unable to do.

Listening to Garima and other women, USNPSS opened a new centre in Maniagar village. A trained and professional woman was appointed as an instructor in the new centre. Garima joined the group to learn to stitch more varieties in women's clothing. However, from her clients in villages she continued to earn about 2500-3000 rupees per month.

After finishing her six months training in tailoring, Garima began to learn knitting in the centre. On an average, she began to earn about 10,000 per month from tailoring and knitting sweaters. She was sent by USNPSS to Pati village in Champawat district as a trainer and spent about a month there. Following this, Garima and two other girls went to Galla village, district Nainital, to open a tailoring centre.

On an average she earns about 10,000 rupees per month by stitching and knitting sweaters in the centre. During the lockdown in April 2020, she got an order to stitch masks and received about 12,000 rupees working from home. In addition, her father has kept stitched masks in his shop. "Till June we had sold 600 masks at the price of 20 rupees each and I am making more as demand for masks is growing day by day," says Garima. She says that one should learn tailoring as well as knitting because demands vary based on the seasons. In winter, people need sweaters but in the summer season, girls prefer kurtas.

### **Maya Bisht**

Maya travelled every day for about 25 km from Kwiti village to Maniagar to learn tailoring. Hard working and a quick learner, she attended the centre for about four hours every day for more than a month. Back home, she used to practice every night and soon began to stitch women's apparel. As she puts it,

I was learning sewing when I saw a knitting machine. I had never ever seen a knitting machine. I did not even know that such a machine exists. I thought that it would help my business later if I learn to knit. At that time just seven women were learning to use a knitting machine. Now, it would have been more difficult to enroll myself because the room is always full. All women who come here

Resident-Village Kwiti  
District Almora  
Age-19 years old  
Enrolled in college-BA  
Centre attended- Maniagar village  
Average income earned- 2000 rupees per month



Maya in the center at Maniagar village.

now learn to knit. But at that time, I could find space for myself. I used to come early in the morning to learn both tailoring and knitting. I attended the programme for six months. It is good that besides acquiring skills in tailoring and knitting, we were to understand the machine-how it works, how to replace some parts such as a broken needle or the bobbin etc. how and where to put oil and so on. Soon, I got orders from people in my village to knit five sweaters. I earned some money. I bought a knitting machine for myself. Now, I stitch clothes and knit sweaters for men and women. I get orders at home. My parents are fixing my marriage. I plan to open a shop after my marriage.

### **Raveena Chaudhary**

In her village Bainoli, Chamoli district, Raveena is known for her expertise in solving mathematical problems. “This is what I like to do the most”, she says. Raveena worked as a facilitator in the village learning centre for two years. Later, she joined as an instructor in the tailoring centre at Bainoli village. Her father works as a taxi driver. Mother and grandmother are farmers. Some years ago, the family used to keep a herd of cattle at home. Manure was put in the fields to nourish the soil. Now they have just one cow at home and manure is bought from neighbors.

Bainoli is a relatively large village in Chamoli district. About 110 families live in the village. The nearest market is in Nandasain, about 2 km away from Bainoli. Earlier, all village residents used to get their clothes stitched in Nandasain and in the nearest town of Karnprayag. Now that Raveena has started the tailoring centre, many people specially women from poor households give her clothes to stitch.

While working as an instructor, Raveena herself learnt to stitch children’s clothes. She took the help of a professional who used to work as a tailor in a company in Delhi. He taught her design of a variety of women’s clothes. Raveena says, “earlier I

used to get orders from my neighborhood. So, I learnt to make more varieties of clothes, both for women and children. People appreciated the fact that I could make so many designs of salwar-kurti and blouses. This aspect made my work popular and income increased many fold”.

Raveena has explored many options to generate income. Besides working as a facilitator in the learning centre, she did a course on becoming a beautician. One time in her life, she thought of becoming a taxi driver and learnt to drive a car from her father. However, as she

Resident-Village Bainoli  
District Chamoli  
Age- 24 years old  
Centre Bainoli village  
Average income earned- 3000 rupees/ month



Raveena in Bainoli village, district Chamoli.



says, “tailoring is the most doable and viable option for me. There is a demand for this work and I can work from home. Being a taxi-driver and running it as a business is more difficult because people have prejudices and nobody here wants to hire a taxi driven by a girl. The work of a beautician is seasonal as demand would rise during the wedding seasons. Tailoring, on the other hand, generates income all through the year. I use internet and learn new designs every day. I can stitch trendy, fashionable clothes and this skill makes me popular in the region”.

### **Kiran Arya**

Born in Biroura village, district Almora, Kiran studied up to class sixth. She got married to Laxman Ram, a resident of Kasoon village. Laxman Ram works as a daily wage laborer and earns an additional income by stitching clothes. Representing a BPL (below poverty line) household, the family generates some income by raising and selling goats. Kiran has three children, all studying in government schools.

Seeing women of her village going to the tailoring centre at Maniagar village, Kiran wanted to join the group. This was not easy because during the day she had to take her goats to the forest for grazing. Later, her son offered to take care of the goats during the long summer vacations in school and Kiran began to learn stitching clothes.

Kiran walked about 4 km uphill every morning to reach the centre. She says, “my husband took care of things at home. My children would look after the cattle, wash clothes, cook food and clean the house. Without their support, I would not have been able to take classes in the centre. I attended the centre for about 5 months. Besides doing domestic

chores, I would sit in the evening and practice on old newspapers. My interest in tailoring was growing day by day. My husband knew a little bit of tailoring and we both started stitching clothes for women and children. Often, my husband would get orders from his friends who worked with him as daily wage laborers. In addition, we would get orders from our own village and relatives in nearby areas. Now I get orders from about ten neighboring villages. On an average, I earn about 3000 rupees per month which is a very big boost to our family income”.

Resident-Village Kasoon

District- Almora

Age- 44 years old

Centre - Mani agar village

Average income earned- 3000 rupees per month



Kiran at her home in Kasoon village.



## 5. Women-run eco-friendly restaurant

The women run eco-friendly restaurant at Danya has started functioning. Fresh, organic, local pahadi food is served in the restaurant. Usually, passengers travelling to Pithoragarh and nearby areas stop by to have lunch or tea at Danya. Asha Devi, a resident of Aati village has taken the lead in managing the daily errands in the restaurant.

The restaurant is made of bamboo and stones with a tin roof and its unique design has become a point of discussion in the region. It also serves as a model for a renewed vision towards income generation for women (and men) in the hills. USNPSS is encouraging the women in the region to become successful entrepreneurs and in the process providing support in the form of training and a network of women's group as a backup.



Figure 56. Restaurant at Danya.

The community at Galla is using the technique of sun-drying agricultural produce to sell it in the market. This traditional method of preservation of food items would fetch more price in niche markets at Delhi.



Figure 57. Sun-drying agricultural produce-corn and red chilies at Galla village for sale.

## 6. Resource centre

Repair of a wall in the training centre and of two bathrooms was carried out during late February-early March 2020.

## 7. Sangosthi programmes

An initiative of the USNPSS to provide a scholarly discussion forum to the residents of Almora, the sangosthi programme was started last year in September. Table 27 exhibits an overview of the programme during 2019. Two events for the year 2018 are also included in the list to have a record at one place.

Table 27. Sangosthi programmes.

Sl.	Name of the speaker	Date	Topic	Number of participants
1	Shri Devendra Mewari (Delhi based writer and story teller)	29.9.2018	Meri Yadon ka Pahar	40
2	Dr. Jay Datt Upreti (Sanskrit scholar and former HOD Sanskrit, Kumaon University Almora campus)	3.11.2018	Ved and Vedanta	38
3	Dr. Prayag Joshi (Hindi writer and researcher)	27.4.2019	Kumauni Lok-Gaathayen	28
4	Dr. Jay Datt Upreti	24.5.2019	Bharatiya Darshan	25
5	Ms. Rajni Bakshi (Mumbai based author)	22.6.2019	Gandhiji aur Paryavaran	48
6	Prof. Anil Joshi (Professor of History in Kumaon University, Almora campus)	26.7.2019	Ranikhet Nagar ke 150 Varsh	24
7	Dr. Diva Bhatt (former professor Hindi Department, Kumaon University campus Almora)	30.8.2019	Uttarakhand ki Lok Sanskriti aur Paryavaran	25
8	Shri Ranjan Joshi (former management and IT consultant)	27.9.2019	Hamari Samajik Samajh: Paribhashayen aur Pahchaan	26
9	Mr. Louk Vreeswijk, Dutch film-maker and cultural anthropologist (Kasar Devi)	25.10.2019	Mati aur Manav	32

## 8. Visits by supporters

### Visit by the Trustees of the Dayal Trust, New Delhi

The trustees of the Rajeswar Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust, New Delhi, made a visit to Pata village on 6.11.2019 to see the work on conservation of water to raise income of communities. With a total permanent resident population of 353, the pressure on limited water sources is high in Pata. Owing to the acute water shortages, especially during the summer, almost everyone has built at least one plastic-lined water tank (about 10,000 litres capacity) in Pata. The financial support and the technical guidance for this work was provided by USNPSS during 2018-2019. Having this facility to store water, the people at Pata grew peas, cabbage, radish and other vegetables and sold it out in Haldwani at god price.

The members also talked with young girls who inspire to do something else than farming like their mothers did in the village. In addition, the women shared their experience of running a movement to resist the negative impacts of construction of resorts which put a pressure on already diminishing sources of water in the area.



Figure 58. The Trustees of the Dayal Trust held discussions with the community at Pata village, district Nainital.

### **Visit by Col Pant**

Col C S Pant, Mr. Ranjan Joshi and Jayesh Patel from Aarohi-Pyura, district Nainital, visited USNPSS on 17.9.2019 to discuss the possibility of a future collaboration regarding work at Supai village. Later during the day, a visit to Maniagar and then to Supai village was made to interact with the Aarohi staff at Supai.

### **Visit by representatives from the Trivedi Trust**

Mr. Rajendra Joshi and Ms. Kanta Joshi, The Trivedi Trust, New Delhi made a visit to USNPSS during 27.11.2019-1.12.2019. Besides having discussions on the work supported by the trust with the staff at Almora, they visited Palyun and Maniagar villages on 29.11.2019. In the village they saw the tailoring, knitting and the computer centre at Maniagar. In Palyun village, interactions were held with the shikshika of the learning centre and the children. They saw the tailoring centre and held discussions with the girls and women. A meeting of the women's groups was also organized at Palyun village. They attended a meeting with our partner CBOS on 30.11.2019.



Figure 59. The trustees of the Trivedi Trust at Maniagar tailoring centre.



Figure 60. The trustee of the Trivedi Trust talking with women at Palyun village.

## 9. Research and publications

A paper titled “Living with and responding to risk in the Uttarakhand Himalayas: A call for prioritizing lived experiences in research policy praxis” written by Ritu was published in the International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction 48 (2020) 101499

Dr. Lalit Pande made a presentation during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monitoring and Evaluation workshop, dated 28-29 January 2020 at the Indian Science Academy (INSA), New Delhi under the aegis of the NMHS programme

On a request made by Dr. Helge Kminek, a small documentary titled “Insights from an environmental education programme in Uttarakhand” was made as a part of a lecture series on “Education for sustainable development” Goethe University, Frankfurt Germany



## Publications

### Nanda

Publication of Nanda continued as women, men and young girls in villages wrote about their experiences and views on diverse subjects re environment, education, gender and development. This year, 1500 copies of the 19<sup>th</sup> issue were printed and distributed in all villages covered by the programme.

### Muskaan

200 copies of Muskaan were printed and distributed in all village learning centres and villages. This is an initiative to cultivate writing skills among young children and shikshikas. Children sent their drawings, poems and stories for publication. This effort is much appreciated in villages where opportunities to write and publish any work are non-existent.



Figure 61. Nanda is distributed during congregations.



Figure 62. The block development officials and panchayat representatives receive copies of Nanda at Ukhimath, district Rudraprayag.



## 10. Collaboration with Other Institutions

### The Cranks Literature Festival

On the initiative of the district magistrate of Almora, a literature festival was held in the town on 13.6.2019. The USNPSS was chosen as the venue by the district magistrate. About 100 participants attended. The main speaker was Mr. Kapilesh Bhoj, a scholar from Almora. In addition, a session on poetry recital and a panel discussion was held.

### Nasha Mukti Abhiyaan Police Department Almora

Under the leadership of the Senior Superintendent of Police, a workshop regarding “visva nasha mukti abhiyan” was held at USNPSS by the Police Department on 28.6.2019. The workshop was attended by about 100 participants from different fields in the government and non-government sectors.

### IIT Roorkee

Dr. Lalit Pande participated in the National Social Summit, February 14-16, 2020 organized by IIT Roorkee “Rebuilding Nature through Innovation”. He was one of the key note speakers.

### S P Jain Institute of Management and Research

Two students came for an internship as a part of their MBA degree from the Center for Development of Corporate Citizenship, S P Jain Institute of Management and Research, Mumbai visited during 12.3.2020-20.3.2020

## 11. Samvaad

The Samvaad workshop was held on 17.11.2019. About 80 participants attended the workshop. Organized under the aegis of the local Samvaad committee, this event has brought together eminent citizens, civil society members, journalists, lawyers, educationists, hoteliers, environmental experts, architects, agriculturists, horticulturists and the local administration



including the municipality of Almora to raise their concerns. Deliberations are documented and recommendations are sent to the state government for intervention through various government policies and programmes. This year, the Rajya Sabha member, Mr. Pradeep Tamta and the MLA from Almora and Deputy Speaker, Mr. R. S. Chauhan attended the event.

Figure 64. Samvaad workshop at USNPSS office.

The B D Pande Memorial Lecture, an annual event usually held in March-April had to be cancelled due to lockdown in March 2020. This year, Mrs. Rohini Nilekani had agreed to deliver the lecture in end March/ early April. Depending on the situation re Corona-Covid 19 virus pandemic, the USNPSS will plan to hold the lecture in future. The lockdown, however, gave us time to consolidate and prepare a booklet containing all the last ten lectures in a digital format.

## **12. Meetings of the Governing Body**

Meetings of the Governing Body were held on October 7, 2019, whilst the meeting scheduled on April 3, 2020 was cancelled due to the Corona lockdown.

## **13. Accounts**

An audited statement of accounts is attached.

## **14. Visitors**

Ritu came from Faridabad on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019 and stayed on till 4.4.2019

Tanya Kaur from Delhi visited during 30.3.2019-19.4.2019

Mr. Parmeswaran Iyer, Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of India, New Delhi came on the 17.4.2019

Prem and Rina Kamath came from Mumbai on 20.4.2019. They saw the work in Maniagar on 24.4 2019

The annual meeting of USNPSS was held on 26.4.2019. 15 representatives of CBOs participated.

Renowned author and historian Mr. Prayag Joshi delivered a talk on the 27.4.2019. He came from Haldwani with Ms. Chetana Joshi and stayed in our guestroom. The lecture was attended by 26 invitees

Ms. Deepa Bhandari, SSJ Campus Almora visited to consult the library, 30.4.2019

Ms. Binita Dayal (Delhi) and Ms. Devika Krishnan (Bangalore) visited during 30.4.2019-3.5.2019. They saw the tailoring and knitting centre at Mani agar. In addition, a workshop was held with a total of 28 women and girls from different tailoring centres at USNPSS Almora on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2019

Mr. Manish Negi from Ramani village, Chamoli visited on 8.5.2019 to receive some photography equipment from the director USNPSS, on behalf of the benefactor Prof P S Virk.

Mr. R Sudarshan, Ms. Noor and Prem Sudarshan, Sonipat, visited on 17.5.2019

Mr. Amit Pande, Sandhya and Mihir, Noida, came on 21.5.2019

Mr. Niranjana Pant came on 22.5.2019

Ms. Madhuvanti Bhattacharya, Kolkata, came with her 4 colleagues on 23.5.2019. They went to see the centres on 24.5.2019 and left on the 26.5.2019

A lecture on Bhartiya Darshan by Mr. Jai Dutt Upreti, a Sanskrit Scholar, was attended by 25 participants from Almora, 24.5.2019

Col. Alok Jayal (Retd.), Col. Rawat (Retd.) and his friend from Dehradun visited during 26.5.2019-27.5.2019

Ms. Sushmita and Vidhu Pande (Delhi), Mayukhini (Bangalore), Shinjini (Mumbai) and their families visited on 28.5.2019

Ms. Yashasvi Joshi, Jeevanpur, Almora visited on 29.5.2019

Mr. Jeevan Chandra, S. s. j. Campus Almora came to consult the library on 3.6.2019

Mr. Malik visited on 6.6.19. Also Mr. Ranjan Joshi came on the 6.6.2019 to plan for the lecture by Ms. Rajani Bakshi

Mr. Rahul Choubey, PCS, District tourism officer Almora visited on 10.6.2019 to plan for the Cranks literature festival under the aegis of the state government. Representatives from the local administration made several visits to USNPSS on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Mr. Zakir came from Haldwani to meet us on 10.6.2019

Ms. Jyoti Pande, Galla village, district Nainital came on the 14.6.2019

Ms. Rajani Bakshi, Mumbai, visited during 21.6.2019-24.6.2019.

Mr. Niranjana Pant, Noida, visited during 22.6.2019-25.6.2019

Mr. Malik, Kasar Devi, came on 25.6.2019

A workshop “visva nasha mukti abhiyan” was held at USNPSS by the Police Department on 28.6.2019. The workshop was attended by about 100 participants from different fields in the government and non-government sectors

Ms. Nidhi Vyas and Mr. Jayesh Mehta, Aarohi-Pyura, visited on 8.7.2019 to discuss incorporation of local environmental issues in activities conducted in schools with children

Mr. Basant Pande came from Danya to discuss operation of the restaurant and future work, 24.7.2019

Mr. Atul Pant, London, visited on 28.7.2019 to conduct a workshop on robotics for children. About 40 students, teachers came from Maram, Chanoli and Govindpur area to attend the workshop

Mr. Gopal Prasad, Jan Shikshan Sansthan Bhimtal came on 10.8.2019

Mr. Ramesh Mumukshu and Ms. Pushpa Punetha came on 21.8.2019 to discuss work at Danya

Mr. Mahesh Galia and two of his friends from Galla, Ramgarh, came on 5.9.2019 to sell apples in Almora market

Ms. Pushpa Punetha and Ms. Surabhi Joshi came on 5.9.2019 to discuss opening of village learning centres in Danya area

The CDO Almora with his team of local officials made a visit on 6.9.2019 to USNPSS to see how the old building was renovated

Mr. Manish Khanna, came from Nainital for audit related work on 11.9.2019. His assistant had visited during 5.8.2019-7.8.2019

Col C S Pant, Mr. Ranjan Joshi and Jayesh Patel, Aarohi-Pyura, came on 17.9.2019 to make a visit to Supai and Maniagar villages

Mr. Niranjana Pant, Ms. Divya Pant visited during 23.9.2019-24.9.2019

Mr. Prashant Upadhyay, Chandan Dangi, Shekhar Pathak, Ms. Uma Bhatt came for breakfast on 24.9.2019

A group of 13 Students led by Chirag Rajguru and Ms. Induja from NID, Ahmedabad came on 24.9.2019

A lecture delivered by Mr. Ranjan Joshi was attended by 26 invitees, 27.9.2019

Dr. B. K. Joshi and Mrs. Beena Joshi visited during 6.10.2019-9.10.2019. Dr. B. K. Joshi also attended the meeting of the governing body on 7.10.2019

Mr. Deewan Nagarkoti and Ms. Dharma Bangari came on 8.10.2019

Mr. Anurag Srivastava, Delhi, came on 11.10.2019

Mr. Niranjana Pant, Noida, visited during 13.10.2019-14.10.2019

Mr. Vinod Singh, Pyuli, came from Gauchar on 14.10.2019 to discuss his work re homestay

Members of the Samvaad committee came on 14.10.2019 and 16.11.2019 to plan the next event

Ms. Shalini Pathak, SSJ Campus Almora came on 25.10.2019, 26.2.2020 to consult the library

Mr. Adarsh Lanka, IIT Roorkee visited during 4.11.2019-6.11.2019 in relation to his research

Brig. Sartaj Singh and Ms. Nandita Talukdar, Dayal Trust, New Delhi came on 7.11.2019. Along with the other trustees of the Dayal Trust, they saw the work re water tanks at Pata village on 6.11.2019

Mr. Kimaya Keluskar, assistant professor, came with his team of five members to see the old building of USNPSS on 16.11.2019. The team was from Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture and Environmental studies, Mumbai

About 80 people attended the Samvaad workshop on 17.11.2019

Ms. Brinda Pant, Pant kotli, Ranikhet came on 22.11.2019

Dr. J K Rawat, IFS retired and his relatives came from Dehradun on 22.11.2019

Mr. Rajendra Joshi, Ms. Kanta Joshi, The Trivedi Trust, New Delhi visited during 27.11.2019-1.12.2019. They made a visit to Palyun and Maniagar villages on 29.11.2019 and attended a meeting with our partner CBOS on 30.11.2019

Ms. Namrata Rawat, researcher, Bonn University, Germany came on 11.12.2019

Ms. Preetika Suri, Gurgaon, visited during 16-12.2019-19.12.2019. She went to see the work to Banthok, Maniagar and Dyonai villages

Mr. Manoj Pant and Piyali Pant, Bombay, visited during 23.12.2019-26.12.2019

Mr. Mehul Pant, O P Jindal Global University, Sonipat came on 4.1.2020, 7.1.2020, 28.1.2020

Mr. Ajay Rastogi, Majkhali, came on 14.1.2020

Mr. Deewan Nagarkoti came on 22.1.2020

Dr. Satyendra Singh, London, and Ms. Ritu Sugani visited on 30.1.2020 to discuss logistics of a workshop organized under the aegis of Lok Chetna Manch. The workshop was held during 31.1.2020 – 1.2.2020. 15 participants attended the workshop

A group of 8 students from St. Stephens College, New Delhi visited during 7.2.2020-10.2.2020

Mrs. Suyal from Dev Sanskriti Viswa Vidyalyalya, Haridwar came on 28.2. 2020

Mr. Heera Gahtori, Pati-Toli, came on 5.3.2020

Ms. Mala Arya, Saviri Joshi, PhD students, SSJ Campus almora, came on 5.3.2020

Ms. Richa Joshi and her parents came from Delhi on 6.3.2020

Mr. Sudarshan Pant came from Delhi on 8.3.2020

Mr. Pramod Pant, Bina Pant, Bombay came on 7.3.2020

Ms. Charu Bhatia and Parth Thakker, Center for Development of Corporate Citizenship, S P Jain Institute of Management and Research, Mumbai visited during 12.3.2020-20.3.2020



**Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora**

**List of Governing Body members for year 2019-20**

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	Shri Suman Dubey (Member)	Former Editor	N-125, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi- 110017
5	Ms.Ratna Sudarshan (Member)	Advisor, ISST, New Delhi	C-96 (third Floor), Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 11017
6	Mr Ranjan Joshi (Member)	Former IT consultant	Belvedere, Brighton Corner, Almora 263601

Special Invitees:

7	Shri Arun Singh	Former M.P. and Union Minister	MA 1/3-2D Garden Estate, MG Road, Gurgaon.
8	Ms. Manini Chatterjee	Editor	B-27, Press Enclave, New Delhi - 110017
9	Prof K. S. Valdiya, F.N.A.	Scientist	Shubhangan, Longview Compound, Nainital
10	Dr. M. G Jackson	Former Professor	Flat no H-1101, Pioneer Park Sector 61, Gurgaon 122001
11	Shri K.S. Mallick	Retd Civil Servant	Ganga Niwas, Kasar Devi, Almora 263601
12	Smti Anuradha Pande	Social worker	USNPSS, Almora
13	Shri Vikram Mehta	Brookings, Delhi	Binsar, Almora
14	Col C.S. Pant (Retd)	Consultant Radiologist	Green Park, New Delhi
15	Shri Deb Mukharji	IFS Retd, former Ambassador	C-71 IFS Apartments, Mayur Vihar-1, Delhi -91
16	Dr O.P. Yadava	CEO, National Heart Institute	Kassar Devi, Almora

# USNPSS Almora

## Staff 2019-20

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 IITDelhi Distinguished Alumni Award 2014 Outstanding Mechanical Engineer OME Award Purdue University (2017)	33 years
2	Ms Anuradha Pande	F	MSc. (Geology), Kumaun University Nainital, Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Management, Lucknow	27
3	Ms. Rama Joshi	F	Intermediate, U. P. Board	26
4	Sri Kamal K. Joshi	M	M. A. (History), Kumaon University, Almora campus	26
5	Sri Jeevan C Joshi	M	Inter science	31
6	Sri Suresh Bisht	M	Intermediate	26
7	Sri Kailash Papanai	M	MA (Education), MA (Political Science) Kumaon University	12
8	Sri D. S. Latwal	M	B.A. Kumaon University	15
9	Sri Divan Matiyani	M	Class 11	20
10	Sri Mohan Singh	M	Class 8	11
11	Ms. Ritu (PT)	F	MA (TISS, Mumbai), MPhil, IIFM, Bhopal	6

## 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 2020.

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*  
Manish Khanna, FCA, DISA(ICAI)  
Partner  
Membership Nos- 077858  
Place: Almora  
Dated: October 8, 2020  
UDIN -20077858AAAAEQ9406

**Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora**  
Balance sheet as at 31 March 2020

<u>Sources of funds</u>		
<b>Corpus Fund</b>		
Opening balance	18,671,877.47	6,764,204.97
Current year's appropriation of surplus	240,000.00	
Add: Corpus donations	898,274.00	11,907,672.50
Total corpus fund	19,810,151.47	18,671,877.47
<b>Reserves</b>		
<b>General Reserves</b>		
Opening Balance	3,802,495.11	3,393,964.90
Add: Current year's appropriation	481,751.72	406,530.21
	4,284,246.83	3,802,495.11
<b>Specific Reserves</b>		
Opening Balance	8,036,963.27	7,924,654.68
Less: Expenditure met from reserves	(1,592,705.28)	(2,186,295.68)
Add: Current year's appropriation	2,293,985.67	2,260,604.27
Total reserves	8,738,253.66	8,036,963.27
Total sources of funds	13,022,500.49	11,839,458.38
Utilization of funds	32,832,651.96	30,511,335.85

<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash in hand	19.00	50.00
Cash in bank	2,261,341.60	3,251,393.16
Balance in bank in fixed deposits	29,455,674.00	28,196,244.00
Accrued interest	1,197,924.11	148,575.00
Sundry advances	3,860.00	-
Income tax deducted at source	641,190.00	547,053.70
Total current assets	33,579,998.71	32,143,315.86
<b>Less Current liabilities</b>		
Income tax deducted at source payable	3860	
Sundry creditor	10,000.00	
Unspent grants in aid [Annexure A]	733,496.75	1,631,980.01
Net current assets		
Total utilization of funds	32,832,651.96	30,511,335.85
Notes to accounts and significant accounting policies - Annexure - "B"	32,832,651.96	30,511,335.85

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 038584C Chartered Accountants

Manish Khanna, FCA, DSA(ICA)  
Partner  
Membership Nos 077858  
Dated : October 8, 2020  
Camo Almora  
UDIN -20077858AAAAEQ9406



Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora  
Income and Expenditure Account  
for year ended 31 March 2020

<u>Income</u>	<u>Current Year</u> Amount [Rs]	<u>Previous Year</u> Amount [Rs]
Administrative charges	270,000.00	270,000.00
Receipts from imparting training workshops	162,100.00	251,700.00
Donations	620,064.00	618,888.00
Interest on bank deposits	2,121,734.11	1,566,605.70
Miscellaneous income	1,300.00	-
Income tax Refund- Sansthan	36,480.00	16,341.00
	<u>3,211,678.11</u>	<u>2,723,534.70</u>
Total Income	<u>3,211,678.11</u>	<u>2,723,534.70</u>

<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Current Year</u> Amount [Rs]	<u>Previous Year</u> Amount [Rs]
Bank Charges	3,411.72	1,150.81
Books	22,436.00	4,168.00
Electricity and water and municipal taxes	56,280.00	-
Insurance	20,500.00	11,303.00
Miscellaneous expenses	5,382.00	9,491.00
Postage and telephone	11,568.00	-
Society renewal fee	1,000.00	-
Seminars	22,306.00	-
Scholarship	33,700.00	-
Stationery	19,347.00	5,282.00
Excess Grant Spent	-	3,005.42
Total expenditure	<u>195,930.72</u>	<u>34,400.23</u>

Current year's surplus appropriated

a) Corpus fund	240,000.00	<u>3,015,747.39</u>	<u>2,689,134.47</u>
a. General Reserves	481,751.72		408,530.21
b. Specific Reserves	2,293,995.67	2,280,604.27	2,280,604.27
		<u>3,015,747.39</u>	<u>2,689,134.47</u>

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

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



For Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan

*Jeewan C. Joshi*

Jeewan C. Joshi  
Accountant

*Dr. Lalit Pande*

Dr. Lalit Pande  
Chairman

Manish Khanna, FCA, DISA(ICAI)  
Partner  
Membership Number 077858  
Dated : October 8, 2020  
Camp Almora  
UDIN -20077858AAAAEQ9406

## for the year ended 31 March 2020

This is the balance sheet referred

Tea-rose - bilade

Manisat Khanna, FCA, DISA(ICA)  
[ Membership No 077858]  
Partner  
Dated : October 8,2020  
Camp Almore

UOIN-20077853AAAFQ3406





**Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora**


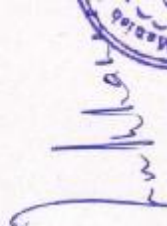

**Financial Year ended 31 March 2020**

**Annexure "A" to Balance sheet - Grants - in - aid**

Name of the grant	Balance as at 1.4.2019	Receipt of current year			Amount spent/ Adjusted	Balance as on 31.3.2020
		Amount received during	Interest credited to grant	Total grant funds available		
1- Rajeshwar Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust	1,213,509.23	2,400,000.00	74,204.70	3,687,713.93	2,838,245.64	849,468.29
2- Hari Krishna Kamla Trivedi Memorial Trust	1,574.33	1,318,000.00	20,409.00	1,339,983.33	1,339,512.52	470.81
3- Association for India's Development	495,000.00			495,000.00	495,000.00	-
4- ONGC	16,010.00			16,010.00		16,010.00
5- NMHS	-94,113.55	347,851.00	1,778.00	255,515.45	387,967.80	-132,452.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,631,980.01</b>	<b>4,065,851.00</b>	<b>96,391.70</b>	<b>5,794,222.71</b>	<b>5,060,725.96</b>	<b>733,496.75</b>

Name of the grant	Balance as at 1.4.2018	Receipts during the previous year			Amount spent/ Adjusted	Balance as on 31.3.2019
		Amount received during the year	Interest credited to grant	Total grant funds available		
1- Rajeshwar Susheela Dayal Charitable Trust	651,523.26	2,400,000.00	51,379.00	3,102,902.26	1,889,393.03	1,213,509.23
2- Hari Krishna Kamla Trivedi Memorial Trust	203,321.57	1,000,000.00	10,074.00	1,213,395.57	1,211,821.24	1,574.33
3- Association for India's Development	78,364.00	519,000.00		597,364.00	102,384.00	495,000.00
4- Silicon Valley Community Foundation - 1	16,847.00	674,329.00		690,976.00	690,976.00	-
5- Silicon Valley Community Foundation - 2	735,065.59	1,685,500.00		2,420,565.59	2,420,565.59	-
6- ONGC	-30,337.75	239,000.00		208,662.25	192,652.25	16,010.00
7- NMHS	232,549.25	3,959,839.00	81,903.00	4,274,291.25	4,368,404.80	-94,113.55
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,887,132.92</b>	<b>10,477,668.00</b>	<b>143,356.00</b>	<b>12,508,156.92</b>	<b>10,876,176.91</b>	<b>1,631,980.01</b>

SCHEDULE NO. "B"

Financial year 2019-20

(a) SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1. Assets are stated at cost , as reduced by amounts that have been met by persons other USNPSS. Those assets which are funded wholly out of grant funds and are not returnable to the donor at the time of completion of the project are stated at a nominal value of Rupee One.
2. Assets acquired by USNPSS are treated as application of income for charitable purpose and charged to revenue in the year of acquisition.
3. Amounts received by way of Grants are reflected in the Balance Sheet until utilized and upon utilization, the balance if any, is transferred to the Income and Expenditure Account. Unutilized grant is considered as income if not refundable and conversely, excess expenditure on grant if not recoverable is treated as expenditure.
4. Investments, if any, are stated at lower of cost or realizable value.
5. Cash basis of accounting is followed in preparing the statements except interest on time deposits with banks which is accounted on accrual basis

(b) NOTES TO ACCOUNTS

(i) Assets acquired by Sansthan and in use as at 31 March 2020 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	437,178.50
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	2,20,923.00
Total assets	24,77,900.46

