

Uttarakhand Disaster of June, 2013

Relief & Rehabilitation Work in Ukhimath Area by USNPSS, Almora

A BRIEF REPORT

(April 2014)

Ukhimath town is located near Kedarnath in Uttarakhand at an elevation of 1311 metres and at a distance of 41 km from the district headquarter Rudraprayag. Ukhimath (a tehsil) too is an important pilgrimage site, as during winters the idols from Kedarnath and Madhyamaheshwar are brought to Ukhimath and worshipped for six months. Deoriatal, Chopta, Tungnath and many other famous sites of tourism and pilgrimage are located nearby. Therefore, before the disaster of June 2013, pilgrimage and tourism had been a very important source of livelihood and income for the local people.

USNPSS has already been working in Ukhimath area with rural communities, particularly women and children, since 2006. Our focus has been on environment, gender and education related issues. Himalayan Gramin Vikas Sanstha (HGVS), a local community based organisation, is associated with us in coordinating and implementing these activities i.e. formation/reactivation of Mahila sangathans, awareness camps/workshops, raising nurseries of broadleaf tree species, sanitary latrines for rural families. In May 2013 a library programme was initiated in five remote villages.

The disaster in Kedarnath occurred on June 16-17, 2013. A team from USNPSS and its affiliate UMP (Uttarakhand Mahila Parishad) visited the area shortly after the disaster to meet the affected people and to understand the ground situation.

In December 2013 and March 2014, USNPSS teams again visited the affected villages. During these visits, team members met women who had lost their husbands and men who have lost their livelihoods. Village level meetings of women and discussions with local CBO (Community Based Organisations) workers were also held to understand what type/kind of supportive interventions USNPSS could make.

The USNPSS has received an amount totalling Rs 746,635 from 25 generous donors between August 2013-March 2014, of which an amount of Rs 400,125 has been already used for relief activities based on the interaction and feedback from the villagers.

Two new activities, i.e. setting up a fruit processing unit and providing training to women on knitting machines, have been started in Ukhimath area besides the distribution of relief material in August 2013.

Distribution of Relief Goods

The relief goods, including solar lights and agricultural tools, were distributed to the affected families in villages Semala, Kimana, Karokhi, Pathali, Dungar, Parkande and Ukhimath town on August 14, 2014. HGVS, our local associate, cooperated in identification of the beneficiaries. A list of the items is given below:

Sl.	Item	Quantity
1	Solar light (15+16)	31
2	Kutla (grab axe)	250
3	Daranti (sickle)	250
4	Favara (spade)	75
5	Tasla (iron pan)	75
6	Gainti (pick axe)	60

Fruit Processing Unit

A small fruit processing unit has been set up at Ukhimath. This is located in the middle of the town and therefore approach is easy. A room of 33.5ft. x18ft. size has been constructed on the roof of a two storeyed private house. The open terrace space (45ft. x45ft. size) is also being used. Separate provision for drinking water and electricity connection has been made for the unit and equipment (pulper, mixer grinder, refractometer to check sweetness, electric balance, containers etc.) have been purchased. The secretary of HGVS, a local person, has taken responsibility for running this unit with participation and cooperation of women and youth of the area.

The unit has started functioning from January, 2014. Ukhimath area grows citrus fruits abundantly, but due to the lack of transport and fruit processing (FP) facilities, villagers didn't get a suitable price for their produce. With setting up of the FP unit, villagers are getting a higher price. This year 3,098 kg malta was purchased from 12 families of the area. Besides 14 villagers including 11 women got part time employment in Malta processing. As rhododendron trees are also found in abundance in the local forest, the unit is processing rhododendron flowers for producing juice/squash. The number of women getting part time employment in rhododendron processing work was 16 while 5 villagers were involved in the job of collecting flowers from the forest and transporting to the FP unit. This year 320 kg of rhododendron flower was processed.

In running this unit the objective is to support the disaster affected families, while ensuring that the unit should be self-sustaining in the future.

This unit, '*Himalayan Khadya Prasanskaran Prashikshan Kendra Ukhimath*', has received Registration Certificate under Food Safety and Standard Act 2006.

Training on Knitting Machines

During village level meetings in the villages, many women showed interest in weaving and learning the use of a knitting machine also. We discussed their demand with HGVS and decided to purchase 6 knitting machines for the area.

In the first phase, which started on April 1, 2014, 12 women regularly and 5-6 other women not so regularly from Pathali, Dungar, Semala, Kimana, Mangoli, Gandhi Nagar and Karokhi villages are getting training at Ukhimath in two batches (9.30 am-12 pm and 2pm-4.30 pm). After completing one month's training some of them have been selected as trainers. In the next phase, training programme on knitting machines will be organised in the selected villages itself, where these newly trained women will work as trainers.

Expenditure on relief & rehabilitation programmes in Ukhimath

Sl.	Programme	Head/item	Expenditure Rs.
1	Fruit processing unit Ukhimath	Construction of a shed, fitting of electricity and water connection	1,60,566
		Equipment- pulper, mixer grinder, refractometer, electric balance	1,45,290
		Stipend of one full time worker for 4 months @ Rs. 4,000/-pm (March-June 2014)	16,000
2	Training on knitting machines	Purchase of 6 knitting machines	32,130
3	Provision of relief goods to the affected families	Purchase of solar lights	44,400
		Purchase of agricultural tools*	1,515
		Bank charges	224
	TOTAL		4,00,125

*tools already available with USNPSS were also distributed

Balance on hand (on May 1, 2014) = Rs 3, 46,510



Newly constructed tin shed for fruit processing unit at Ukhimath



Malta collected from local villages



women are processing rhododendron flowers



Processing malta to make squash



Malta and rhododendron Squash is ready



women learning knitting with machine



women learning knitting with machine. For most of them this is a new' thing'.



Providing solar light to an affected family in Ukhimath area.



Agricultural tools kits have been given to the affected families



Shri Kailash Pushpawan, a local volunteer who has accepted responsibility to coordinate the relief & rehabilitation activities at the local level.