

STEPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY:

20 Success Stories from Nepal's Himalayan Communities



Steps Towards Sustainability: 20 success stories from Nepal's Himalayan communities

These stories are collected from the SURHR II project districts Humla, Mugu, Kalikot and Jajarkot.

Publisher

Human Rights and Environment Development Center, Nepal (HURENDEC-Nepal) and Gramin Samaj Nepal (GSN-Jajarkot)

HURENDEC Ph: (977) 087-440152

E-mail: hurendec@gmail.com and gsnjkt@gmail.com

Web: <http://www.hurendec.org.np>

Supporter

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Steps towards sustainability: 20 success stories from Nepal's Himalayan communities.

SURHR: HuRENDEC/ tdh Germany/BMZ

Advisor: Amrit Devkota

Editor: Diwakar Pyakurel

Programme Coordinator: Rajesh Gautam

District Coordinators: Gopal Karki (Kalikot), Khemraj Khanal (Mugu), Surya Rokaya (Humla) and Huckdonal Tajpuriya (Jajarkot)

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FOREWORD

The terre des hommes Germany (TDH G), an international child rights organisation that believes in peace and just society and works for assuring child rights across the globe, has been implementing its projects in more than 30 countries since its inception. In Nepal, the TDH G started its projects in 1997 and the regular projects have started in 2009. The organisation has already worked in 22 districts through 36 local partners focusing on children, youth and women rights, ecological rights of children and youth, organic farming, sustainable agriculture and resource utilisation, quality education, livelihood improvement, water, sanitation and health, biodiversity conservation and climate change, emergency relief and recovery, and skill enhancement.

In Nepal, the organisation has reached out to the remotest parts of the country, primarily in Karnali province during this two decade period. It is partnering with Human Rights and Environment Centre (HuRENDEC) since 2012, carrying out various projects in the fields of livelihood improvement, sustainable utilisation of the Himalayan resources, alternative energy promotion, youth mobilisation, earthquake relief and recovery, flood recovery, promotion of agriculture and forest-based enterprises, and biodiversity conservation. Sustainable Utilization of Himalaya Resource II project has significantly contributed to improve living condition of the project area through promotion of renewable energies -biogas, solar panels for light, improved water mills (long shaft and soft shaft), improved cooking stove (clay and metal), eco-toilets, promotion of enterprises among the youth utilizing local forest and agriculture resources, children and youth mobilization for plantation and environment protection, and awareness campaign in coordination of the local municipalities and rural municipalities. Moreover, the project has an instrumental to draw attention of public domain to protect environment and adopt climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

I am very much pleased to hear that HuRENDEC as the lead implementing partner of the project is going to publish success stories of the project, and hope it will be a readable material to design new projects in the region, replicating the successful model activities that will contribute overall socio-economic transformation as well as biodiversity conservation in a sustainable manner. I would like to thank all the project partners, the project staffs, the beneficiaries, and local governments who directly and indirectly supported for success of the project in favour of needy people and environment justice. I wish for the success of the publication and to cope the COVID 19 pandemic situation as well.

April 2020

Shyam Krishna Shrestha
Country Coordinator
TDH Germany Nepal

PREFACE

The Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region is a terre des hommes Germany (TDH G) and the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) supported project implemented by HuRENDEC-Kalikot as the lead partner and GSN-Jajarkot, MCDC-Mugu and RPUDP-Humla as district implementing partners in four districts of Karnali province from 2013 to 2016 in the first phase and from 2017 to 2020 in the second phase.

The project has contributed to the adaptation to climate change through renewable energy technologies, sustainable utilisation of natural resources and strengthened community structures to provide a better basis for life. The project has implemented adaptation actions and structural development for environmental protection, renewable energy technologies, access to safe drinking water, environment education, green entrepreneurship, forest and species protection, and climate resilience for poor and marginalised people and communities.

Implementing the project, our organisation has accumulated valuable knowledge and insights into how communities are adapting to climate change, and improving their livelihood through sustainable utilisation of resources. These success stories attempt to reflect some of the project's best cases on how increased knowledge and capacity development, climate adaptation actions and natural resource management are making positive impacts on the lives of the vulnerable, poor and marginalised people including children, youth, and women. I hope that this would be beneficial to both national and international partners in understanding the impact of utilising natural resource and alternative sustainable development models.

Finally, these success stories are a testament to the dedicated, hardworking people in the project who have worked hard with a conviction for their improved livelihood and sustainable environment. I wish may the TDH Germany have many more such stories to share in the future as well! I thank the entire project staff members, partner organisations and all for the valuable contribution.

April 2020

Amrit Devkota
Programme Coordinator
TDH Germany Nepal



FOREWORD

Started in January 2013, the Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region (SURHR) is one of our best programmes. The main objective of the programme is to adapt to climate change through the improvement of environmental conditions and the restoration of natural resources. The programme has been implemented into two phases. In the first phase, it was implemented in 3 districts (Humla, Mugu, and Kalikot), and in the second phase, it has been implemented in Jajarkot also besides the three.

This book emphasises the changes made by the programme. In this book, we have selected only some case stories as samples of the whole. We have published the book so that other organisations can replicate such initiatives whereas the beneficiaries can be inspired to improve their life in a more sustainable way.

When emotions are profound, words are not sufficient to express our gratitude. With these words, we would like to thank our development partner TDH Germany and BMZ, members of its Nepal office, local governments, local community people, and our district partners: Rural People Upliftment Program (RPUDP) of Humla, Malika Community Development Centre (MCDC) of Mugu, and Gramin Society Nepal (GSN) of Jajarkot.

Last but not least, we would like to thank our board members, programme director, programme coordinator, district coordinators, programme and account officers, field supervisors, social mobilisers and organizational staff for their keen interest, innovative suggestions and hard work in bringing out project and success stories in this shape.

April 2020

Jaj Raj Shahi
Chairperson
HuRENDEC Nepal Kalikot



MESSAGE

For the past 21 years, the Gramin Samaj Nepal (GSN) has been working in Jajarkot district in partnership with overnment, and national and international non-government organisations. We have been working in various sectors such as good governance, social justice, climate change, biodiversity, health, and sanitation, targeting women, children, and the marginalised in remote villages.

In this context, the organisation has been implementing the second phase of the Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project-II from 2017 with the financial assistance of the TDH/BMZ Germany after successfully implementing its first phase from 2014 to 2016. In these two phases, 27 women-led farmer groups, 27 child clubs and nine youth networks engaged themselves in various projects such as solar light installation, biogas plant, improved metal and clay stove, water resource protection, and whatnot. Overall, our activities have created a new development model at the local level in partnership with local people's representatives, the beneficiary, and non-government organizations.

I hope this collection of success stories will be useful for the people working in biodiversity conservation, climate change, health, and sanitation sectors, and anyone interested in these fields. I would like to thank tdh/bmz Germany for financial support and project staffs who worked hard for the success of this project.

April 2020

Khim Bahadur Shahi
Chairperson
Gramin Samaj Nepal, Jajarkot



INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region (SURHR-II) is the significant initiative by the TDH/BMZ in Nepal in the sector of climate change adaptation. The Human Rights and Environment Development Centre (HuRENDEC) is a lead agency implementing the SURHR-II in close coordination with the local government agencies, Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPIC), District Coordination Committees (DCCs), District Forest Offices (DFOs), District Agricultural Offices (DAOs), Districts Child Welfare Boards (DCWBs), National Youth Council (NYC), municipalities and rural municipalities, and ward offices. The overall goal of this project is to contribute to adaptation to climate change in 12 vulnerable villages of Karnali province.

This project was implemented in three municipalities and five rural municipalities (then 12 VDCs) of four districts of the Karnali province: Kalikot, Mugu, Humla, and Jajarkot. It had five areas as the thematic focus: 1) Structural development and environmental protection 2) Renewable energies 3) Access to safe drinking water 4) Environment education, and 5) Forest and species protection.

Over a period of two years and eight months (September 2017– April 2020), the SURHR-II has already implemented 20 adaptation actions benefitting 9,320 households covering a population of 49,120. This process has advocated the rights of children, youth, women, and poor people and capacitated them with skill-based training that has changed the lives of many people in the project area. One of the most noteworthy achievements of the project is community-led natural resource utilisation with the help of modern renewable technologies. Through these stories, we aim to share some positive changes from the project.

I would like to thank the TDH/BMZ Germany for providing financial support and the HuRENDEC for technical support to the project. My appreciation also goes to SURHR-II staff and facilitators for their tremendous effort in visiting the remote areas, interacting with the communities and helping in documenting the success stories.

April 2020

Rajesh Gautam
Programme Coordinator
SURHR-II Project

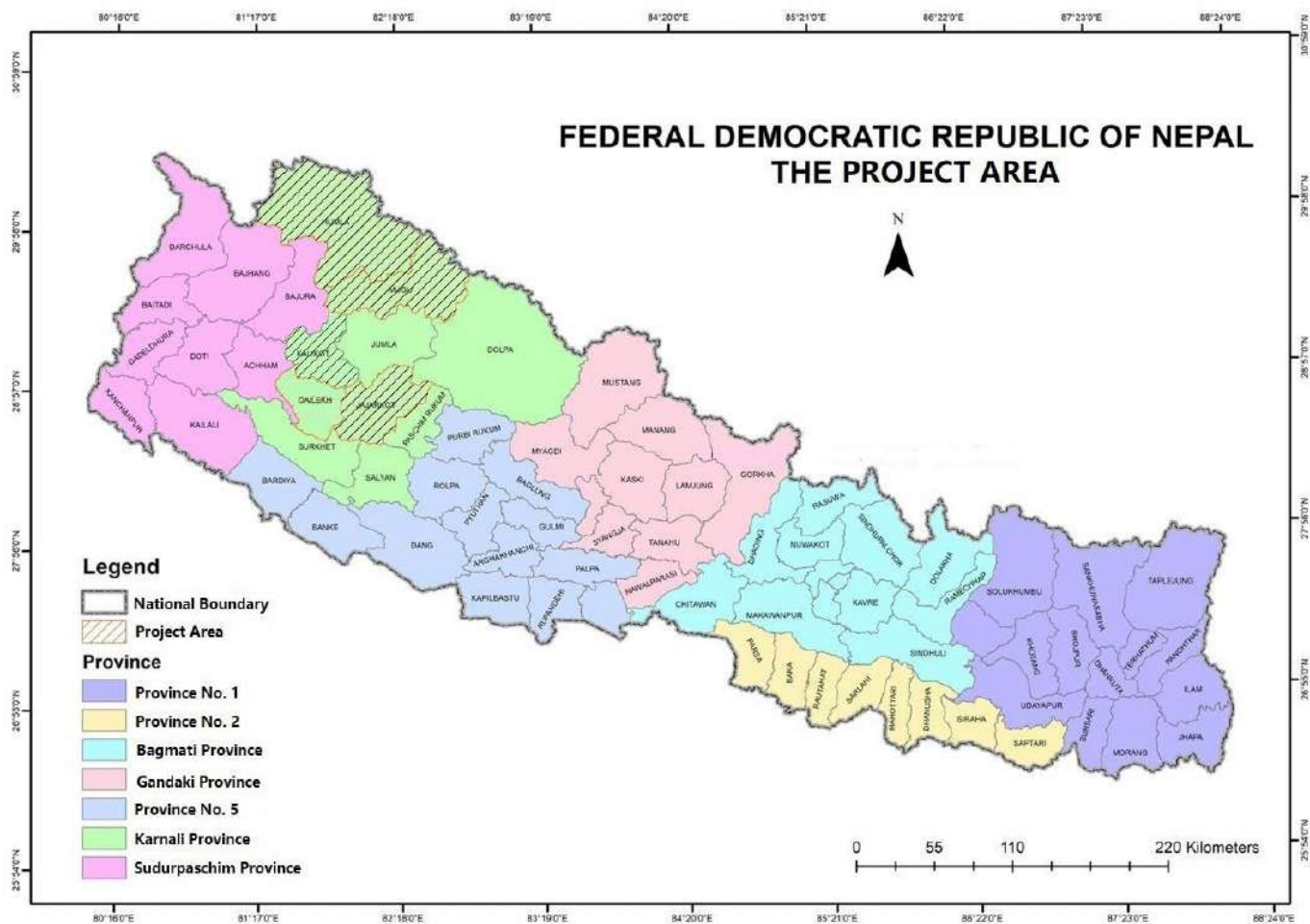
ACRONYMS

BMZ	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
CBOs	Community-based Organisations
DAO	Districts Agricultural Office
DCC	Districts Coordination Committees
DCWC	Districts Child Welfare Committees
DFO	Districts Forest Office
GON	Government of Nepal
AEPC	Alternative Energy Promotion Centre
GSN	Gramin Samaj Nepal.
HURENDEC	Human Rights and Environment Development Centre
MCDC	Malika Community Development Center
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NYC	National Youth Council
RPUDP	Rural People Upliftment Development Program
SURHR-II	Sustainable Utilisation of Natural Resources in the Himalayan Region
TDH	Terre Des Hommes

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GREEN ENTERPRISE SPARKS HOPE IN FARMER

While dozens of men like him have moved to mountainous districts of India for work, Sheru Bohora, 50, a resident of Sukatiya in Shubhakalika rural municipality of Kalikot district, has been cultivating fruits and vegetables in his village farm. With the support of the TDH/BMZ Germany via a local NGO, HuRENDEC, he has been setting an example of 'green entrepreneurship' in his village since 2018. It ignites hopes that his neighbours would follow his success trails so that they can provide proper living conditions to their children in the poverty-stricken village. As Bohora was in his late 20s, he cultivated dreams of prosperity for the family as he produced some promising yields. He remembers that he sold potatoes worth Rs 150,000 in a single year in the late 1990s. However, a war had broken out between the state and a rebel Maoist party before that, which pushed him away from the village. After the war began to subside, two years before it officially ended in 2006, the family returned to the village and resumed farming. Thanks to his leadership potential, Bohora got an opportunity to attend a training course given by the District Agriculture Development Office about improving productivity. That gave a new lease of life to the family's economy.

Then, Bohora introduced different species of oranges and rice to his village. Besides, he produced quintals of potatoes, tomatoes, onions, garlic, and chillies and sold them in Manma, the district headquarters three hours away from his house on foot. Despite his consistent efforts, the farming would not yield a promising income for the family because of the distance between the market and the farm, and his family size. The Bohora couple has three sons and four daughters. Currently, two daughters live in different places with their husbands; but a daughter-in-law and two grandchildren have been added.



But in 2018, HuRENDEC has provided him fencing for his orange farm, saplings of new species of oranges and vegetables, worth around Rs 89,000 in total. In the first year after the support, Bohora witnessed a significant improvement in the yields. While he sold oranges worth Rs 25,000 in the winter of 2018, the income doubled the next year. He also sold vegetables worth Rs 40,000 that year. "That means a lot to me. It has made me hopeful that I can change my family and my village one day," outspoken Bohora shares, "In the next years, I will also cultivate herbal plants along with the fruits."

Bohora also worked in Himachal of India for a few years. He has seen how modern technologies and practices have changed the agriculture sector there. He now hopes that the organisation's support can lead him to that status in the future.



YOUTH CLUBS STRUGGLE TO TRANSFORM REMOTE VILLAGES

For most of the residents, Bohoragaun in Shubhakalika rural municipality of Kalikot district has a lot of problems and no prospects: it is geographically remote; the village is not connected to the road network; and other development infrastructures such as education and health facilities are poorly available.

Yet, for Keshav Bohora, 24, and other members of the local Laligurans Youth Club, the village is full of prospects. For the past two years, they have been actively working to bring gradual shifts to the village and the lives of locals here. Their performance in the first two years have shown some exciting signs that the locality will get a facelift in the next few decades and the children of upcoming generations will live a different life.

The club was formed in December 2017 with the support of HuRENDEC, as a part of its Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project. The project is funded by the TDH/BMZ Germany.

“As we founded the club, we focused on eliminating various cultural malpractices being exercised in our society. We ran campaigns against child marriage and chhaupadi,” the club’s current chairman Bohora informs. Chhaupadi is a tradition practised in Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces of western Nepal in which menstruating women are forced to stay in a separate hut outside their house for five to seven days every month. After getting success in significantly decreasing the occurrence of such practices, the youth club expanded its focus.



It got registered with the concerned local authorities as an independent NGO so that the organisation can run its own activities by generating funds or seeking support from other partners, on its own.

“Thematically also, our focus area expanded,” Bohora shares, “We realised that sports were impactful means to energise youth and motivate them for social activism; hence we organised a grand volleyball competition among the youth from three wards of the village, in May 2018.”

This is not the only case of youth empowerment the organisation motivated. It was just a few years ago that HuRENDEC help Dilip Shahi, a former child soldier, become a youth leader. Today, he is active in the district and beyond to promote youth empowerment.

Following such examples, Bohora today wants to promote youth entrepreneurship in the village in partnership with the concerned local government. After preparing a playground for the youth to play with the support of the local government, the club is preparing to convert an uncultivated land plot beside the playground into a vegetable farm.



BACK HOME TO BUILD THE NEXT GENERATION'S FUTURE BETTER

Dalsur Shahi, now 56, worked in the Himachal state of India from 2009 to 2017. He had decided to go abroad as he could not find any means of living in his Haudi village in Kalikot district. The village looks like a touristic hill station perfectly suitable for tourists to spend their summer holidays, but its distance from a road network has been a real misfortune.

In the Indian hills, he saw local farmers cultivating a flowery herb widely. Shahi instantly recognised the plant because he had seen it in his village also; it was called 'satuwa' in Haudi. The locals around his workplace told him that the powder produced after crushing the plant's roots can be used as medicine for 41 types of ailments and injuries. After learning that the plant would fetch a handsome income, he wished he would go back to the village and launch a commercial farming project.

Two years ago, he returned home—for the cultivation of *Paris polyphylla*. With a little support of the TDH/BMZ Germany via HuRENDEC, Shahi today owns a nursery worth NRs. 3.5 million, which could multiply in the next few years. The farm's monetary value is not as significant as the impact it can have on a poor family living in a remote region of Nepal and its children.

Because Shahi had come back home with the mission, he tirelessly searched where he could get satuwa plants.

In a few weeks, he managed to get around 30 saplings and planted them on his small farm in the spring of 2018. But, there were challenges galore. Whereas the cattle in the neighbourhood could easily graze on his farm, people aware of the species' economic value could steal the saplings. There was no one to guard the farm round the clock. Likewise, he did not have any workable means to provide water to the plants.

In the meantime, his ward's chairman Karna Bahadur Khatri told him about the NGO's project that could support farmers like him. Shahi came to the district headquarters, Manma, seeking support. Responding to his application, HuRENDEC decided to provide fencing and shadows as well as pipes for irrigation to the farmer. It was around one year after he began farming.

Results of the support were immediate. In the last autumn, he sold the powder worth Rs 50,000. Likewise, he also sold 120 saplings, for NRs. 100 each, as well as roots worth Rs 2,000. In the first year, he had been unable to make any substantial income from his new project.





IMPROVED STOVE MEANS IMPROVED LIFE FOR A POOR FAMILY

Ajamati Acharya is just 59, but she says she is already ‘over the hill’, perhaps humorously. This woman of Shubhakalika rural municipality-6 looks more energetic than most neighbours of her age, and she has a reason behind this.

It has been around two years since Acharya has been using an ‘improved’ stove in her impoverished kitchen and it has made all the difference. Acharya feels it is not only her who is benefitting from the invention, but the entire family has lived a better life since. In addition, it has reduced the level of deforestation around her hilly village. Before that, they had to blow air from their mouth through a small pipe to start the fire, and most of the time it would take minutes. Smoke would billow heavily, affecting the immediate visibility of the room and the long-term vision of the people around. Environmental costs of this practice were quite high as firewood is a nonrenewable form of energy and the traditional way of cooking required a lot of them.

Like other villagers, Acharya also chopped down young trees when dry firewood was scarce. She was not aware of the impacts such practices would have on the environment before the new stove was installed with support from the TDH/BMZ Germany via HuRENDEC.

Today, Acharya is no longer required to go through the ordeals of collecting firewood and blowing the pipe to ignite the fire. The new stove has a simple system that produces a bigger fire with fewer pieces of firewood. You just burn a matchstick and throw it into the stove to ignite it. It is a huge relief for Acharya as she is getting older and it was becoming more difficult for her to flow the air to ignite fire day by day.

Likewise, it includes a chimney that directly sends the smoke out of the house. "Our eyes have benefitted the most; tears don't flow when we cook food," a happy Acharya innocently says, "I believe the new stove will also protect us from other diseases too."

As the improved system requires a smaller amount of firewood, it will contribute to saving the local forests, according to her. "I could cook food for two times only with one pile of firewood in the past," she claims, "Now it lasts for four days, which is at least eight meal times."

With the financial support of the TDH Germany, the organisation has distributed 57 such stoves to financially struggling families in the district. The organisation says a stove costs around Rs 20,000, which such families cannot afford on their own. Local community-based organisations were assigned to identify the needy to distribute the device.





RURAL WATERMILL SYMBOLISES GREEN INDEPENDENCE

When you visit Haudi, a hilly village in Shubhakalika rural municipality of Kalikot district in Karnali, you notice a small hole at the centre of the stone-paved yard in front of almost all households. Unaware of its use-value, you might think that the hole is just a part of the design of the yard. But wait, it has a very significant meaning in their life. Until two years ago, these holes, locally called okhals, were the sole tools of removing husks from rice grains so that they can cook it for their consumption. The process used to be time-consuming, requiring a lot of effort.

The story changed in October 2018 when a local man established a mill there. Unlike traditional rice mills, the mill owned by Dhanarup Acharya derives energy from the water of a local stream, which was just a waste till then. Whereas it has improved the living standard of his small family, Acharya, now 32, feels that the mill has served the local villagers and set an example of renewable energy promotion. Further, it is inspiring him to expand his entrepreneurship independently.

Till a few years back, Acharya was just a frustrated young man. Albeit for a short period, he stayed and worked outside the country, ultimately to grow homesick and realise that the cheap labour could not provide him sufficient means to make a living for the family. After returning from Garhwal of India, he got engaged in various trade activities in Butwal in Kathmandu for the next two years.



Nonetheless, that could not make any change in his life—then, he did not have any option except to return home. While working in the cities, Acharya had seen different machines and factories. In the meantime, he learned about HuRENDEC’s Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project. Then, he proposed establishing a water mill, the first of its kind in the village, considering the lack of a rice mill there and its connection with their daily life. The organisation agreed on his idea and provided him machinery and other materials worth around Rs 85,000.

Acharya knows that most of such rice mills rely on diesel for the black smoke which could affect the atmosphere’s cleanliness. However, cases with water or electricity are quite different. “As I operate this machine here, just go outside and look—you don’t see any smoke coming out,” the entrepreneur says, “I believe it is my contribution to efforts to reduce the harmful impacts of climate change.”



GRANT TRANSFORMS FAMILY NURSERY INTO MODEL ENTERPRISE

From the age of 14 to 54, Anipal Mahatara continued to move between Nepal and India. Every year from December to June, he lived in Mussoorie, a hill station in Uttarakhand of India, working as a porter and mason. In the summer and autumn, he used to come back home in Mungraha Kalika, a remote village of Kalikot district, to take care of a small farm his family owned.

Ten years ago, he stopped going to India—on the one hand, he felt he was losing his stamina due to the age; on the other, his eldest son began working for the family. Yet, for the man who worked for decades continuously, staying idle in the village could not be the best option. Besides, his children lived in more developed parts of the country such as Kathmandu and Surkhet, leaving the ageing parents unattended in the village. It means Mahatara must have done something to make a living.

Since then, the 65-year-old man is engaged in farming, most of the time struggling to meet the basic needs of the family including providing support for the children's education. Supported by his son, he established a commercial fruit nursery three years ago, and it brought a paradigm shift to the family's economy. After a year, he received a fund from the TDH/BMZ Germany via HuRENDDEC to boost his business, which has elevated him as a model agriculture entrepreneur in the remote district. Three years ago, Mahatara borrowed Rs 100,000 as a loan from a local cooperative to open the nursery. He cultivated plants of different fruits and herbs such as orange, lemon, walnut, cardamom, and timur (*Zanthoxylum armatum*).

Whereas his nursery was showing promising potential for future growth around a year after the inception, he received support worth Rs 125,000 from HuRENDDEC. With the support, Mahatara fenced in and extended his nursery. Today, his enterprise boasts around 500 saplings of walnut and around 300 of timur. In total, there are around 20,000 saplings.

Last year, in the first year of the company's sale, Mahatara's nursery sold plants worth around Rs 700,000. Of them, the local government of his neighbourhood, Shubhakalika rural municipality, purchased the plants worth Rs 400,000. This year, the farmer is looking forward to an extended sale amount to around Rs one million.

Now Mahatara plans to extend the nursery. Meanwhile, his nursery has submitted an application to the Karnali provincial government requesting for support to extend the business. In particular, it has asked for help in growing more walnut plants as the government has declared the district as a 'pocket area' for walnut farming.





BIOGAS PLANT MOTIVATES LOCAL LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

Locals of Tersobajaar, a small market area near Kalikot district headquarters Manma, lovingly call 52-year-old Gorkha Karki a 'badda', the term they use to refer to middle and old-aged men in their family and relation in an informal and congenial manner.

Since years ago, many neighbours have been gathering at this badda's house frequently. There were two distinct reasons: first, he runs a small grocery shop and a restaurant at his home; then secondly, he is actively engaged in local politics and the locals want to consult him about administrative affairs. Karki has been elected a member of the ward 5 committee in Khandachakra municipality in 2017. The team including him reigns over the locality till late 2022.

Now, one more reason has been added to the list of what motivates villagers to frequent his house, feels Karki. "For the past two years, I have been producing biogas here and many of the neighbours want to follow me," he explains, "They all want to lead me through the process."

The biogas plant connected with an 'eco-toilet' is a part of the TDH/BMZ Germany-funded Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project. Besides making his family's daily life easier and eco-friendlier, the plant has been successful in making the locals aware of alternative energy forms that could be instrumental to save forests in the locality. The local leaders like Karki are motivated to promote it.

Karki feels applying the organic fertiliser made of human urine has left some immediate impacts on his small farm. "Whereas I could produce one kilogram of cabbage in that section of field in the past, the same field yields three kilograms of cabbage now," he says pointing at his field, "It may not be the exact ratio for every vegetable every time, but rest assured that the rise is significant."

Having learned of various benefits of the project and seen people's enthusiasm about the eco-toilet and biogas plant, Karki suggests such programme has to reach more households in his locality in the coming years. In order to spread awareness, Karki has been informing his neighbours about the benefits of the new technologies and methods of installing them. Karki also tells people that they should explore similar opportunities.

Meanwhile, Karki himself is a part of a local governance system now; therefore, it is not always appropriate for him to expect help from NGOs and motivate people to do the same. Karki states local leaders like him are also committed to such initiatives which have multiple advantages from forest conservation to easier life and improved livelihood. "Of course, we will do, but we need ideas and suggestions from the agencies who are already working in the sector," he says, "The more the support, the better it will become."





PLANTATION SAVES NATURE AND INHABITANTS



For locals of Khandachakra municipality, which also includes the administrative headquarters of Kalikot district, landslides are one of their biggest troubles. Whereas Manma, the headquarters, is located at the top of a steep hill, other human settlements are also in difficult terrain.

Landslides are a problem in this area not only during the monsoon but they fear 'dry' landslides in other months also. So is the situation of a few other places in the district. For example, Kalika Primary School in neighbouring Shubhakalika rural municipality also bore the brunt of several landslides in the past year. Dozens of families lived with a fear of displacement every day.

In order to address such concerns, the Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project funded by the TDH/BMZ Germany and run by HuRENDEC, a local NGO, initiated an extensive plantation campaign in 2017. The campaign, in particular, targeted 131 households living in the locations which have been identified as vulnerable in a climate change vulnerability mapping. The campaign covered different wards of Khandachakra municipality and Shubhakalika rural municipality.



Beginning the campaign, the project organised a one-day discussion programme with all stakeholders of the target communities. School teachers, elected people's representatives of the local governments and their staff, other local leaders, members of community forest user groups and other community-based organisations were present in the discussion.

Following the event, they were given different plants to afforest uncultivated land space owned by their families or public land around their houses.

Maan Singh Shahi, a resident of Daha in Khandachakra, says the campaign has made a lot of difference now. Shahi, who is also the chairperson of Jana Kalyan Community Forest User Group, happily shares, "For example, consider the situation of Ghodana, a community forest in our neighbourhood now. In the past, there used to occur several landslides in a year, but now they have stopped. Likewise, less forest fire incidents have been reported. The number of other human-made incidents has also decreased." Informing that the locals have stopped letting their grazing cattle enter the community forest area, Shahi says, "All these positive changes are caused by the plantation campaign."



COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS DEMOCRATISE DEVELOPMENT

Khaghi Sara Roka Magar, a resident of a remote village in Kalikot district, has seen many nongovernment organisations taking various programmes to her village. Whereas the NGOs would make people aware about various issues and keep the locals engaged, Magar felt they were not helping the people cope with a basic problem of their daily life: the villagers, most of whom are dependent on agriculture for a living, would not have money every day to meet their needs or in some emergency situations and they had to borrow it from local loan sharks. The loan would solve their problems in urgency, but would keep them subjected to exploitation with excessive interest rates.

However, she has found the activities of HuRENDEC under its Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project different because the project has also taken initiatives to address the locals' concern about high interest rates. The project has established different community-based organisations (CBOs) in its project areas, which also provide loan to its members at a concessionary rate besides doing other activities. The CBOs have also become effective tools of democratisation of development activities in rural areas as they, not the funding NGO, plan and execute local-level activities. As in Magar's case, they have been instrumental in letting the locals enjoy dividends of togetherness.

The project assigns its social mobilisers/local resource persons to establish a CBO in a target community. The CBOs target incorporating the voices of the most disadvantaged members of the community, mostly women.



The CBOs meet regularly to discuss the issues related to their everyday challenges and learn about their rights and responsibilities.

After seven months of such regular meetings, the members will be aware of other contemporary issues concerning them, such as climate change, environmental protection and solid waste management. The focus, however, is different from community to community. For example, Mimkosa BK, the chair of Naineldev CBO, says all the women in her organisation are aware of solid and liquid waste management. Likewise, Kokila Adhikari, the secretary of Deutibajai CBO, says her organisation's focus is renewable energy. She explains, "Using renewable energy has a significant impact on our health condition. It makes us free of smoke than before."

Meanwhile, Magar is happy in getting loan whenever necessary at an interest loan as low as one per cent. She explains that the members save a certain amount of every month and the collective fund will be used to meet the needs of the members, individually or collectively.



DIVIDED COMMUNITIES COME TOGETHER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Like in many places of Nepal, Brahmins and Dalits, two ethnic groups placed at the top and bottom of the traditional caste ladder, have been living separately in Kalikot district also. However, interestingly, both the groups are so much interconnected that their problems are the same.

Both Brahmin Toles and Dalit Toles (settlements) in Daha of Khandachakra municipality and Bharta of Shubha Kalika rural municipality are vulnerable to climate change impacts and in a need of strategies for adaptation. The Sustainable Utilisation of the Resources in the Himalayan Region project launched by HuRENDEC with the financial support of TDH/BMZ Germany has taken some initiatives to address such concerns in both the settlements of both places. The project has brought the divided communities together to adapt to climate change.

The project works to help communities increase ecosystem and community resilience in a manner that benefits both nature and people. Consequently, the neighbourhoods have made impressive advances in livelihoods, women's empowerment, health, sanitation, and climate change adaptation.

In September 2017, the organisation carried out the Underlying Causes of Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment in both the local units. Following the assessment, it identified the Dalit Tole as a more vulnerable village due to the smoke produced by traditional stoves in the houses. Likewise, the places where around 120 households were living in were prone to landslides. The Dalits were at the receiving end as they were poor and lacked resources to recover the losses. However, ironically, they were dependent on the rainfall for agriculture, making the issue tricky. Now, with the help of the project, the groups of Dalits and Brahmins have together implemented a Community Adaptation Plan of Action aimed at improving the ability to adapt to climate change. In their adaptation plan, the immediate priority has been given to addressing the impacts of landslides and smoke, increasing their resilience by improving their livelihood conditions.

They have planted various plants such as *Melia azedarach*, *Cinnamomum tamala*, *Juniperus indica*, *Leucaena leucocephala*, and *Pinus roxburghi*, among others to help bind the soil, slow down the water flow, and reduce the risk of soil erosion. They have also afforested uncultivated areas. The restored forest should absorb more rainwater and help reduce landslides. It will also offer a more suitable environment for flora and fauna.

To improve livelihood, the villagers have begun commercial farming of various plants, herbs and fruits, jointly as a community-based organisation. Likewise, the biogas plants and improved cooking stoves installed by the project help reduce the pressure on local forests, save women's time spent collecting firewood and drastically reduce indoor air pollution.





CHILD CLUBS LET CHILDREN TAKE LEAD TOWARDS THEIR HOLISTIC GROWTH



Mandala Malla, a teenage girl from Jima in Soru rural municipality of Mugu district, was no less happy than any member of a football team that visited Spain to play a prestigious tournament recently. Malla was elated because the team (Team Rara) that visited Spain came to her community for a friendly football match.

When Sunakali, a documentary film about the Mugu girls' struggle for football, earned fame and fortune in various international events, its producer also managed to take the girls to Spain. Taking advantage of their exposure, another group of local children of Jima invited the footballers to their village after they returned from the European country. A local child club took initiatives in making the friendly match with the 'international team' possible. This is an example of how child clubs in remotest parts of the country are helping children claim and use their various rights including ecological ones.



Formed and operated with the support of Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project, the child clubs like that of Malla's have spearheaded various impressive campaigns in villages of the district. Malla, a 14-year-old multitasking girl, shares that the children like her have benefitted a lot from the child club. Recalling that she sang a song in the function in March 2019 when the Spain-visiting footballers were invited, Malla says she also learned to dance and act after joining the child club. Many other children share the same happiness. Malla's friend, Kamala Malla, says, "The football match with the Team Rara enhanced our gaming skills, but is also motivated us to get engaged in extracurricular activities for our holistic development."

As she puts it, the holistic development has been the central target of the child clubs. Running on small funds provided by the project, the clubs have become instrumental in making children aware on various issues of their concern such as child rights, child protection, child marriage, and child labour.

The clubs have also been active in sensitising them in other contemporary issues that affect their life immediately and in the long run. For example, a few clubs have recently organised Fridays for Future climate strike activities. "Our region is also very vulnerable to climate change impacts as we are very close to the Himalayas," a child club member says, "It is important that we raise our concerns when climate change has become a buzzword across the world."



FENCING SUPPORT ELATES SAD FARMERS

Karma Rokaya is just 28 but he has already become a father of four. Married at the age of 18, which is quite common in his neighbourhood of Mugu district, Rokaya now finds it difficult to provide sufficient care and education as they deserve to the children.

Because Rokaya, a local of Surukot in Soru rural municipality of Mugu district, did not attend school, he could not get any job dependable enough to sustain his family. He was forced to take on agriculture in a traditional way, which did not lead him to a prosperous life. However, thanks to the support of the TDH/BMZ Germany-funded Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in Himalaya Region project, Rokaya now has begun to feel secured about his future. The project has supported dozens of other green farmers like him in the neighbourhood.

A few years ago, Rokaya and some of his neighbours started an apple farm with the hope of selling the fruits to nearby and distant markets and earn the living. However, they did not bother to fence the farm because they did not have sufficient money. Consequently, livestock of the local farmers damaged their farm and ate many apple plants and fruits before they were harvested and sold to the market. "Our dreams were shattered," shares Rokaya, "We could not earn a single penny."



After they came to contact with the project staff, Rokaya and his neighbours shared the problem with them. Consequently, the project decided to support them in installing a fence around the farm. Another member of the farm operation team, Kala Rokaya says, "After the installation of fences, the domestic animals were totally barred from our farm so that we could take the apples to the nearby market. In exchange, we earned some money, which could be significant in improving our family condition and buying necessary goods for our household purposes."

"This year, the production increased. More importantly, all of the fruits were safe thanks to the fence," a happy Rokaya informs, "I earned Rs 6,000 this year." The team has planned to plant as many as 150 apple plants on the farm this year, which could fetch thousands of rupees in the next few years.





IMPROVED STOVES MEANS HAPPIER WOMEN

Sugani Karki, a 32-year-old woman from Sorukot in Soru rural municipality of Mugu district, looks happy these days. The mother of two sons and two daughters says the cause of her happiness is a recently installed improved stove in her house.

“In the past, we used to cook food on a traditional stove that would require a lot of firewood and produce an equal amount of smoke. We feared that the smoke did not only make our walls inside the house black, but our lungs inside the body also got damaged,” recalls Karki. She was aware that there were many alternatives available in the market, but she did not have money to buy them.

Recently, with the support of Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project, she has got rid of the fear because she no longer uses the traditional stove. “Now, look at us! We use less firewood and the stove directs all the smoke outside so our inner walls stay clean,” she happily shares pointing at the walls.

Karki says she could not tolerate the smoke billowed from the traditional stove as it would make her eyes full of tears in a few minutes. That is why she could not work well in the kitchen; she had to take a break frequently. "It used to take me many hours to prepare food for the family of six," she says, "But now, everything is ready in less than one hour. We can save time, which we can utilise in many other creative works."

In those times, her children would be frequently late for the school as she would fail to feed them on time. These days, they arrive at the school before the bell rings and taken the classes regularly, promising a better future. Also, she has got rid of the burden of going to nearby forests every day and carrying a heavy load of firewood. "It has not only saved my back from pain, but the forests have also been protected. I am hopeful that our children will be able to enjoy the greenery throughout their life."

Inspired by her, many other villagers have expressed their desire to install such stoves. The project has supported a few of them. Women from other households also share similar stories. Recently, the villagers have also formed an environment protection group in the neighbourhood, which conducts different activities regularly.





CLEAN WATER MEANS RISK-FREE AND HEALTHY LIFE FOR LOCALS

Though lying next to the big Karnali River, Mandi village in Saya of Sarkegad rural municipality of Humla district suffered drinking water crisis for many years. The water was there, but taking it for domestic consumption was risky. There were a few apparent reasons: the water was unprocessed, and going close to the river would put them at the risk of drowning.

However, the villagers did not have any alternative to taking the risk because they had to survive. Consequently, they would knowingly and unknowingly invite various diseases to the community along with the water from the river.

When the under-resourced community was looking for options to combat this problem, the TDH/BMZ Germany-funded Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region extended its support to build a water treatment and storage system in the village and it changed the life of 25 households there. The villagers remember that the water in the river used to be completely murky for the six months of a year, between April and September, because of glacier melting, monsoon rainfalls, and consequent landslides. Consuming that water could make anyone, the children in particular, sick.



But, today, waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea are less frequent in the village after the project built a drinking water tank here in 2018. Investing Rs 230,000 from its side, the project called locals to contribute their labour to the construction. Dozens worked to complete the construction on time. Besides the water tank, the project also installed five taps in different locations of the neighborhood.

The chairperson of the water user committee Bhim Bhadur Shahi shares that the local women are happier than anyone in the village due to the construction of the water tank. In this patriarchal community in the past, it was always women, and some children, who would have to walk for minutes, hours in some cases, to fetch water from the mighty river, risking their lives. And, it was children who had to become frequently sick.

Meanwhile, the taps have been made child-friendly. Children can easily use them when they need water. Arrangements have been made to supply the water to the school of the community also so that it can maintain sanitation and cleanliness, contributing to the children's healthier lives.



CHILDREN OF CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABLE VILLAGE FIND WAYS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

Like many remote villages of Nepal, Thehe in Simkot rural municipality of Humla district also lived in the dark for ages. Though the people began living in communities, they could not access many other advantages of the human civilisation. They were forced to depend on firewood for cooking and other wooden materials for illuminating the house.

Whereas the difficulties of smoke-producing firewood and dim light-producing lamp were apparent, the locals were unknowingly inviting another disaster to their life: they were destroying the forest in their neighborhood which was already mapped as highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. It could lead them to various other problems such as landslides and water crisis. However, they did not have options because they could not live without fire and light.



The story got a turn when the TDH/MBZ Germany-funded Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project installed solar lights and improved stoves for the highly vulnerable families of the village. With that, the families have got an opportunity to improve the status of education and the health of the children.

“Until now, we lived in complete darkness, but we have got the light of our life now,” a happy Panchkala Bohora shares, describing how her children, two daughters, and three sons, would cry for their failure to see letters on pages of their books when they used to read under the light of a ‘jharro’ lamp in the past. “On the other hand, smoke would billow from the firewood, and it would bring tears in their eyes. They could not study for more than one hour,” she says, “But now, they can engage themselves in the study for as many hours as you wish.”

The health benefits of the support are also equally apparent. In the absence of smoke produced by the traditional fire-making system, the villagers have got rid of eye irritation, cough, respiratory problems and many more. Another advantage is that the locals are no longer needed to spend hours visiting nearby forests and collecting firewood. Nirmala Bohora, a neighbor of Panchkala, says, “In the past, the women had to wake up at dawn and had to leave for the forests as early as possible for the collection of wood. But now, that rush has ended.” She feels that the local women now have plenty of time for other activities. “We can utilise this time to meet each other, to discuss our problems, to talk of conserving our forests – like what we are doing now.”

Recently, the women in the village have formed a group to discuss various impacts of climate change on the village and villagers and probable solutions to tackle them. They feel that the solar lights and smokeless stores are also critical parts of the solution system.





NEW WATERMILLS HELP A REMOTE COMMUNITY IN MULTIPLE WAYS

The Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project funded by the TDH/BMZ Germany installed seven improved watermill systems in Sarkideu of Sarkegad rural municipality of Humla district during its second phase in 2018 and 2019. Around 800 people in 150 households residing in Ripa village of the locality have also benefitted for the past two years from two of such short-shaft improved watermills installed by the project. The project has installed the mills with the objective of providing easy and time-efficient grinding and threshing facility to the villagers. In the past, the villagers used to complain that they had to spend hours every day to grind their crops with the traditional mills. For many families, the available facilities were quite distant requiring them to spend more time than others. It had forced them away from other household works. Because the households would also mobilise the children in grinding jobs, they could not get sufficient time to study. “But this new mill saves our time,” Pasang Mahatara, a local operating one of these mills says, “Nowadays, these villagers are happy and satisfied.”

The new system is named 'improved' because it has some other benefits also. It uses water, which is easily available in the village and does not involve any cost. It is a renewable source of energy. Likewise, this system produces a negligible amount of smoke and noise, contributing to the village's fight for a greener, healthier community.

While everyone in the village has benefitted from the new machines, a few households have got additional advantages. The project has assigned the locals showing willingness and potential to run the watermills on their own. A team has been formed incorporating five people from different families to operate each of the mills. They get benefits for contributing their time and labor to the system.





MAN WITH A DISABILITY SETS EXAMPLE OF ENTREPRENURSHIP

Dhan Bahadur BK faced a series of discrimination in his society in the past four and a half decades of his life. At first, he was born in a Dalit community, which the Nepali society, in general, considers untouchable. Then, his family was poor and had to depend on other families for a living. Moreover, BK himself has a partial disability: he cannot speak and hear properly.

But, this man from Nauli, Bheri municipality-9 of Jajarkot district never felt that his disability inhibited him as much as the social perception of it did. With that very spirit, coupled with a local NGO's support, BK is heading towards better livelihood today.

For many years, the BK family was dependent on traditional agricultural practices for livelihood. However, like many other villagers in the area, he recently felt that the soil's productivity was decreasing. Though he was not aware of theories of climate change, he experienced frequent irregularities in the rainfall pattern and extended drought. "The water crisis in the area turned more severe," he remembers, "It felt that we could not survive on agriculture alone."



Then, BK engaged himself in making various traditional bamboo containers (doko, supo, dalo etc) to make a living for his six-member family (himself, his wife, one son and three daughters). BK fell into a grave crisis when his wife caught a serious ailment around three years ago.

The doctors suggested that she needed an expensive treatment, but he could not afford it. Restless, he sought help from different agencies including the community organisations and local NGOs that ran different programmes in his community. Many of them used to teach the locals different vocational skills to support their livelihood. BK always wished that he could be a part of such programmes, but he could not get any of these chances because his neighbours told the agencies that he was physically disabled and hence he could not do anything. Life became really difficult for him, his wife and the four kids. But in 2018, Gramin Samaj Nepal selected him for a green enterprise training programme. The programme was a part of the TDH/BMZ-funded Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project. In the training, BK learned to advance his basket-making skill as he also learned to make mudas, small sitting stools made up of bamboo sticks.

BK feels that many other participants of the training had thought he could not learn that. However, they were shocked when he became the first person to complete making a muda during the six-day training. Perhaps BK himself was also unaware that many shocks were yet to come to his life. Impressed with his learning, the NGO promoted him as a trainer and assigned him to train local women's groups and other organisations. BK's income level significantly improved and he got established as an entrepreneur. Witnessing his progress, Ratna Devi Malla, who heads the district's Cottage and Small Industries Office, says, "We are proud that one of our trainees is now a skilled trainer himself. We are committed to creating more opportunities for people like him."

Today he feels that if he had got this opportunity, his life could have changed way earlier. Now, BK plans to make as many mudas as possible, along with dokos and supos, so that he could earn more and give his children a better education and other opportunities. He has hoped to launch a formal business soon and reach out to bigger markets. But, before that, he has to give his wife a better treatment that is pending for many years now.



WOMEN LEAD CLIMATE ADAPTATION TO ADDRESS FARMING ISSUES



The elderly of Morko village, Shivalaya rural municipality of Jajakot district, vividly remember harvesting tonnes of different crops every year from the local fields during their youth. However, these have become a once-upon-a-time story now.

Besides such immediate economic benefits, the project has aimed at some long-term social benefits also. Not only because the men of the village are abroad, but also realising women should come forward for social leadership to bring a sustainable change, the NGO has promoted women leadership for the management of the pond. A user committee has been formed that has secured a significant representation of local women. One of them, Samjhana Pun, says, “In the past, there were not any agencies that included us in their executive committees. Now, the women lead the irrigation work in the village.”

Samjhana’s neighbour Gita Gharti chairs the user committee. She happily shares, “If women are given decisive roles, it will help us set an example among others.” She hints that the village, as a whole, can inspire other adjacent villages also to promote women’s leadership in the long run.



ECO-TOILET GIVES FAMILY A WAY TO BETTER LIVING

It has been six years since Bhima Khadka and her husband, Man Bahadur, a resident of Chhedagad municipality-13 of Jajarkot district learned that human waste boosts agricultural produce. Though using the animal manure for agriculture is quite common in Nepal, the family in the remote Karnali region was unaware that the human waste does even better.

The family of five had knowledge about the effectiveness but did not have resources to facilitate the process effectively. Therefore, they were restricted from benefitting from the knowledge to the fullest. Recently, the Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project has helped her construct an 'eco-toilet' that separates faeces and urine to apply them to the farm productively. Since then, the family has been feeling it has been doing magic.

"In the past, I used to collect urine in small containers like plastic drums. It was doing something good; the production had increased," Bhima says, "But I was not satisfied; the lack of resources had limited my potential." The eco-toilet has addressed her concern.

Meanwhile, her husband is happy that he no longer needs to spend thousands of rupees on chemical fertilisers every year. "We need neither fertilisers nor pesticides," he shares, "What we used to consider waste has been a great boon to us."

Aware of the harmful side-effects of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, Man Bahadur believes the eco-toilet facility will help the family maintain good health in the long run. The couple is proud that they have been able to produce fresh and organic vegetables and other crops on their own farm.

Besides using them in the family (including the couple, Man Bahadur's father, one son and one daughter), the couple also manages to sell some of them in nearby markets. Mainly, they sell seasonal vegetables such as cauliflower, cabbage, tomato, cucumber, and radish. Their earning from the sale has been impressive, and buying all necessary goods for the household use has not been any problem now. "While uplifting our living standard," Bhima smiles, "We have been able to provide our children a better education and the ageing father better healthcare."

Meanwhile, the couple has set an example in the neighbourhood. Of late, many other locals have contacted them to learn about the tools and techniques of the system. Some of them even managed to get training from the project about how the system works. The entire neighbourhood is desperate to go greener and more organic.





USING SUSTAINABLE ENERGY BOOSTS THE LOCAL ECONOMY



It has been many years since Kusami Chadara, a local entrepreneur of Sirugar, Chhedagad municipality-12 in Jajarkot district, has begun operating a mill for her community. Over these years, she has seen how the population in the community increased, putting her pressure to grind maize, wheat, and other grains as fast as possible. However, for want of better technology, she had been unable to meet the need. Chadara was frustrated with herself that the lack of resources inhibited her potential.

Now, she has got a solution. Besides being faster and more efficient, the newly installed water mill is environment-friendly and sustainable as it generates energy from water, which is a renewable source of energy. The TDH/BMZ-funded Sustainable Utilisation of Resources in the Himalayan Region project helped her install the new mill. The mill has been instrumental in giving a boost to the local economy of the entire community. "In the past, we used the wooden shafts for the grinding of grains and that could not address the increasing processing need of the people," she says, "But, the new mill is very easy to operate. It grinds the grains very quickly."

According to her, the traditional mill's grinding capacity ranges between 10–20 kg maize per hour whereas the new mill can grind up to 50 kg maize an hour.

This is achieved by improving various components of the mill, but the major breakthrough is replacing the traditional wooden runner with a metallic runner, which has a better hydraulic design with cup-shaped blades, according to her.

Locals give 10 per cent of their grains to the mill operator as a charge for the service. Because the processing of the mill has become faster, the operator's income has almost doubled since the installation of the new mill. Also thanks to the increased speed of the machine, the mill has begun to attract more customers these days, even from distant villages. Consequently, the grains she collects from the mill as the service charge has become sufficient to feed the family; sometimes she even can sell the surplus to the local market. She says, "In the past, it used to be just a half or three-fourths of the need of my family." Meanwhile, Chadara now has a higher social status in the village, and the enterprise is considered to be prestigious.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



108 community structures were formed/re-formed with 2376 community members



2 large and 12 small environment campaign took place with the involvement of 35,876 individuals



10 watermills for grinding & threshing, oil extraction, sawing jobs were constructed benefitting 2112 HHs directly and indirectly



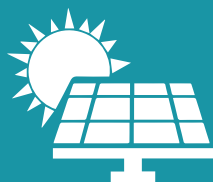
48 improved water mills for grinding performance were installed benefitting 2985 HHs directly and indirectly



1601 families were benefitted with 375 metal and 1226 clay stoves



48 bio-gas plants were constructed benefitting 266 populations



1358 solar plants were installed which benefitted 1358 families in the communities



39 small scale business were established benefitting 39 families



9 water tanks were constructed with 705 HHs including schools with 385 children's and 124 youths



320 sanitary facilities were constructed in the communities benefitting 320 families



31 water user groups were formed for the conservation of water source and tanks



144 environmental training events were conducted in 77 schools



12 child and 12 youth environment protection groups were formed in the 12 project villages



2 large National youth convention on SDGs were conducted with the involvement of 155 youths



4 districts youth networks & one Province youth networks were formed with 130 child's/youths



4 nurseries were established with the 2,63,900 saplings & 1,47,890 seedlings benefitting 857 households directly and indirectly



49 women got the employment opportunities in the nurseries



Afforestation was done with 4,11,790 seedling & sapling species.

MEDIA COVERAGE



GLIMPSES OF SURHR – II







