

GENDER

In 2001, there were 34 million widows in India, most living in conditions of social, economic and cultural deprivation. Himalayan villages have many, living alone or with their children. In the mountains the risks of out-migration or simple day-to-day living in an unstable geographical environment takes thousands of lives a year. Sarojini Devi lost her husband many years ago and now lives with her three children in the remote village of Thayeli, in a district made famous by a dam – Tehri, which eventually did little to mitigate local poverty. Her life felt like a constant grind, a long, unending journey in which even feeding her children regularly was an achievement, and their education a dream. Sarojini Devi was one of the first beneficiaries of a loan procured by the Himmotthan IFLDP. She purchased a milch buffalo about a year ago and started selling three litres of milk a day through her local IFLDP Federation managed dairy. The milk brought her Rs 1,800 a month, of which she repays Rs 1,000 as the monthly loan installment. She is now planning on another loan, and another buffalo. The IFLDP community led micro-dairy ensures proper marketing of the milk and gives her a voice, and an income. The other nine IFLDP dairies, all placed in remote and inaccessible areas, are now leading many poor families like Sarojini's, to adopt dairying as a primary means of livelihood. Her children now go to the village school.

Responding to the demand of villagers across IFLDP project villages, Himmotthan, along with its field partner organization, the Mount Valley Development Agency (MVDA), applied for a loan amount of over Rs 10 million to NABARD, under their "Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme (DEDS). The loan was specifically for purchasing improved (more productive) milch livestock and goats for 159 women farmers from 45 Livestock Producer's Groups (LPGs) of the Bhilangna block, Tehri district. The loan was sanctioned by the Uttaranchal Grameen Bank, Ghansali, and most of the farmers have now availed the loans.

begun to show results in the birth of calves of the mixed Red Sindhi and Murrah breeds. Additionally, organising regular livestock health camps (>300) for livestock health checkups and treatment (>17,000 animals) and insurance of milch animals under the ULDB-Tata AIG animal insurance scheme have improved overall livestock health and minimise farmer risk in the keeping of improved animal breeds.

LIVESTOCK BASED MICRO-ENTERPRISES

Through the project, 12 women's Federations were formed, of which 10 are running micro-dairies. Of the remaining two, one is involved in the development, packaging and sale of Ayurvedic veterinary medicines, while the other makes and packages a cattle feed concentrate to be sold locally. Over a period of one year, the dairy Federations altogether collected over half a million litres of milk, and have shown a turnover of over Rs 10 million, while taking care of their operational costs. Since marketing of milk through the Federations began, there has been a net increase of Rs 5-10 per litre in local milk rates, which increased the income of milk selling households by about Rs 1,000 a month. As a consequence a trend has begun in project villages where households are replacing low milk producing local animals with improved, high producers, purchasing the animals through loans procured through the project.

Yet another issue pertains to local transport facilities. With limited pucca roads, high taxi hiring costs and non-existent storage facilities, particularly for perishable goods like milk, reliable and cheap transport can make or

break an enterprise. After three years on the project, the IFLDP Federations realised that not having good transport was hampering their potential in meeting market demands. The 10 Women's Federations then, separately, took unanimous decisions to purchase small vehicles which could be used both, to transport milk twice a day, and could be hired out for additional income generation. An open study of the market, both by the Federations and by Himmotthan quickly identified the most popular and financially viable vehicle as the Tata Ace. On realizing that the chosen vehicle was a Tata vehicle, Himmotthan requested the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, which in turn petitioned Tata Motors for the supply of Tata Aces to the 10 Federations, as a result of which Tata Motors granted a 15% concession per vehicle. It is expected that by the end of September 2011, all transactions would be fina-

lised, and the Aces ready for delivery.

With increase in the number of villages under the project, and regular interventions on feed and breed improvement, milk production has started increasing. It is expected that production will amount to 250 to 500 litres per day in each cluster of villages in the coming months. Efforts are ongoing to improve technical capabilities of the micro-dairies by giving them, and training them, in proper testing equipments. Bulk Milk Coolers are being installed to ensure safe storage and a sustained supply of quality milk to consumers. And, regular interventions are being made to enhance the skills of these women-led federations in terms of technical, legal, operational and managerial aspects of a business, so that the future can be planned with confidence.

¹ http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/prov_data_products Utt.html
² <http://www.uldb.org/>
³ Centre for Ecology, Development and Research (CEDAR), 2010. Determining the impact of fodder programme under the IFLDP on livelihoods and forests of Uttarakhand Himalayas. IFLDP Impact Assessment Final Report – 2010, pp 47.



2006: before the project, he had enlisted for trainin



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Progress Note Integrated Fodder and Livestock Development Project (IFLDP) being implemented by Himmotthan, Dehradun, Uttarakhand



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BACKGROUND

According to the 2011 census,¹ Uttarakhand's population has crossed one hundred million, of which 70 per cent is rural. In every district except Dehradun, the urban population is a minor percentage of the district's total population. Although out-migration also appears to have increased from some districts, this movement is mainly of the middle income, younger males of the villages, leaving behind women-headed families consisting of older people and children to eke out a living from the small, infertile farms and available commons.

Livestock has traditionally been part of the hill farming system, which is characterised by very small holdings, minimal inputs and low production. Animals, therefore, have been a major source of livelihood for the major-

ity of rural inhabitants. Currently Uttarakhand has a livestock population of 4.9 million (about 1 per cent of the country's total). Every rural household keeps at least a cow or buffalo for meeting household milk requirements, for compost or for labour on the farm. However, livestock rearing practices are significantly handicapped by an acute, seasonal, fodder shortage estimated at about 50 per cent of the state's total fodder need. This not only impacts milk production and livestock health, but forces women to collect fodder from remote and reserved forests, an activity recognised as the single most important cause for deterioration in forest quality. The lack of improved livestock breeds, modern feeding practices and the non-availability of fundamental animal health infrastructure is discouraging. The lack of local milk marketing networks (milk brands like Parag, Amul and other packets from Delhi and U.P. are readily available across

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Ganora village, situated in the border district of Pithoragarh, was identified for the project in 2008 by a local partner organisation, the Himaliyan Gram Vikas Samiti (HGVS), because of the huge fodder shortage in the area. All households purchased fodder from the local market or nearby villages. Women walked over five kilometres daily into the forest to collect fodder, returning with bulky, heavy loads on steep, rocky paths. Through the IFLDP project, fodder plantation was carried out over 15 ha of community land with active participation of the village community. Due to excellent protection and management by the villagers, production from the plots has gone up from nothing to 25 tonnes/ year. Bahadur Singh, the sarpanch of the van panchayat tells everyone willing to listen, that over the 3-4 years of project interventions they are now not only self-sufficient in fodder, but have started selling fodder to other villages. Last year the village groups sold Rs 18,000 worth of fodder from the plot. Bahadur also points out the reappearance of young plants of a rare species of oak (*Quercus lanuginosa*) in the protected plot. Officers of the Forest Department have visited the plot more than once, much to the amusement of the villagers. The village women have now made it a personal mission to cover all their nearby wastelands with fodder species with the support of MGNREGA funds, as demonstrated so successfully in the Himmotthan project. On a recent visit by the Himmotthan team, villagers from neighbouring villages have requested inclusion in the project, promising to work with all their hearts to deliver results similar to those of Ganora.



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the region), coupled with the lack of post production and packaging makes local animal husbandry non-profitable, adding to the reasons for across-the-board local economic failure and increasing rural out-migration. In response to this situation, in 2008 Himmotthan, in collaboration with different state government departments, the Centres MGNREG scheme, international research agencies and non-for profit local organisations, initiated the 'Integrated Fodder Livestock Development Project' (IFLDP) to address these issues at the level of the state, in a holistic manner. The project tackles the various issues in linkage with partner organisations, with Himmotthan designing, coordinating and monitoring the programme.

The project addresses issues of – (i) sustainable supply of quality feed and fodder; (ii) improving the genetic potential of livestock; (iii) improved management practices; and, (iv) collective marketing of milk to tap local markets. Collaborating government departments include the Uttarakhand Livestock Development Board² (ULDB), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Animal Husbandry Department (AHD) of the Government of Uttarakhand. The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Tata Tea, Tata AIG and Tata Motors are linked closely to the project. Ten non-profit organisations (NPOs) are taking the work forward on the ground.

The first phase (2008-2011) of the IFLDP created an atmosphere of confidence by organising over 2,500 women livestock rearers from 125 villages into over 250 Livestock Producer Groups. The groups were then clustered into 12 Regional Federations (geographically) to promote livestock based enterprises. In the project's second phase (2011-2014) an additional 125 new villages



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have been taken up within the old geographical cluster areas, covering a total of around 15,000 families across six mountain districts. The core focus is on producing and supplying feed; breed improvement; management practices and in developing self-reliant cooperatives to ensure long-term sustainability of the enterprises. Part of this includes diversification of dairy products and developing a sustainable value chain.

FEED RESOURCES

The serious seasonal lack of fodder required the introduction of new varieties of fodder grasses adapted to different altitudes, as well as an adequate supply of the seed/ root stock material. The achievement of the project in this case has been the establishment of fodder resource banks in each project area. In the initial phase of the project, all planting material was purchased from outside the project areas, often even from the plains. The focus then was on building local, economically viable nurseries by establishing the need and supply of fodder grasses. Today, with over 1,500 farmers having established small decentralised fodder nurseries across the project area, with fodder plantations across 1,200 hectares, and the fact that around 75 per cent of the planting material is now available locally is a matter of pride. The sale of

planting material to different organisations has now emerged as a major source of income for village communities. Although planting material was foreseen as a possible income source, the scale to which it has grown was entirely unexpected.

The post Phase I impact study³ showed average fodder production of 61 tonnes/ha in sub-tropical plots versus 43 tonnes/ha in temperate (higher altitude) villages. As of now the plots have met approximately 20 to 25 per cent of local fodder needs, but this figure will increase with time. A reduction in the trend of forest tree leaf collec-

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tion has been observed. Combined with better livestock management practices, the plots achieved increased stall feeding and reduced grazing pressure on adjoining forests.

BREED IMPROVEMENT AND LIVESTOCK HEALTH

With technical support from the ULDB, 20 village youth have been trained as Para-vets, who are now providing livestock related services (i.e. artificial insemination, vaccination, first-aid, etc.) at the farmer's doorstep. Over the years, the Animal Husbandry and ULDBs Para-vet programmes have been consistent failures in mountain

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districts mainly because the work involves extensive physical labour while at the same time there was a glaring lack of a business perspective. The IFLDP redesigned the Para-vets' image following the trainings – equipping them with the materials they need, working with the ULDB to tie them to government vets as part-time assistants and building business plans around each area. As the Para-vets are local boys chosen from the project villages, their comfort level in the region is high. For the initial three years to help them establish themselves, Para-vets were given stipends from the project as support towards the purchase of semen and necessary accessories. Constant encouragement and support, along with pressure from Himmotthan and the department on local officials to involve the Para-vets has started showing results. Although a couple have dropped out, most are working well. Some of the active Para-vets (50%) have started earning about Rs 60,000 annually, and are now gradually becoming self-dependent. The initial results of Artificial Insemination (AI) on indigenous breeds have

YOUTH

Jeevan, a youth from Simayal village in Nainital district, completed his schooling in 2005, but like many other young men from the area, was unable to continue his education because of the lack of funds. He was looking for a job in the nearby towns when he met the local IFLDP partner organisation, CHIRAG, in the area. In 2006, before the project, he had enlisted for training as a Para-vet with the ULDB. Back in the village after the training he began door-to-door visits in his own and neighbouring villages. His tasks were two fold – to conduct artificial insemination to breed better quality calves, and basic animal health treatment. Initially, despite an obvious need, the novelty of a village based Para-vet amused the villagers. He also faced some issues with the local government vet, and he had no back up support, either financial, or technical. Despite considerable effort he was not able to make his work a paying activity. When in 2008 the IFLDP entered the area, he was one of the first to join. With the project's financial, technical and network support, his enthusiasm revived and his work in the project villages began to show results. He began to increasingly receive calls from livestock keepers. When the cows he worked with calved well and his basic medication aided common ailments, demand for his services shot up. With constant support and encouragement from the project, his area of work now covers about 15 villages – some not even project villages. He recently bought a motorbike and now visits at least five to six houses each day. He conducts about 40-50 AI a month, charging Rs 150 per AI. For small ailments and first aid he receives Rs 50 per case. His current earnings from what he now sees as his "business", is about Rs 5,000-6,000 a month. He dreams of an office, an assistant and a larger "business", in a region where the out-migration of young males is reversing local population trends. The change from a diffident youth who could not see a future, to a young entrepreneur with confidence and a vision, took all of three years.