

review

2010-2011



Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation

www.grassrootsindia.com

About Us

The Pan Himalayan **Grassroots** Development Foundation is established as a non-profit voluntary organization under the Societies Registration Act (1860) at the office of the Registrar of Societies, Delhi since November 1992.

The primary aim of Grassroots is to initiate peoples action at the grassroots for restoration of ecological security in languishing river basins through holistic mountain development programs, in order to improve the quality of life.

Over the past nineteen years, Grassroots has been able to evolve a holistic intervention strategy which channels resources - managerial, technical and financial - directly to people and associations of the communities, working at the village/watershed level. The emphasis is on self-help participation and the belief that average villagers have the desire, the right and the capability to promote their own welfare and prosperity and to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Grassroots continues to be a lean and independent organization, which reaches out to far-flung micro watersheds in the central and western Himalaya through **Outreach Program Offices** located in the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The composite spearhead team comprises of fifteen professionals-in-development, almost all of whom are from the rural areas of the Himalaya.

Over the years, Grassroots has been able to initiate programs on improving the quality of life of mountain communities through sustainable community development strategies, training and technology transfer, micro enterprises and marketing by strengthening the capacity of community based organisations, selected voluntary organizations and creation of

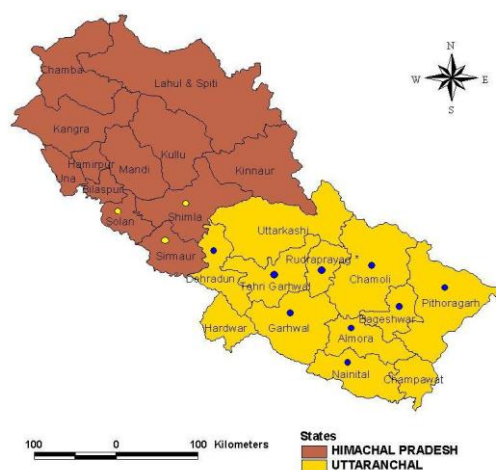
new forms of organisations such as Kumaon Artisans Guild and Mahila Umang Producers Company.

Through forging such partnerships, Grassroots has been able to spread the benefits of holistic mountain development strategies to communities in 650 villages, spread over 27 Blocks in 12 Districts in the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

In order to address issues related to sustainable mountain development in a comprehensive manner, Grassroots has been involved with the Restoration of Gagas River Basin in Almora district of Uttarakhand for the past six years. The idea is to demonstrate the feasibility of a holistic river basin management plan, based upon the three pillars of ecology, economy and equity.

During the period under review, Grassroots continued to consolidate outreach programs in the following cross-cutting sectors in order to accelerate towards Millennium Development Goals:

- ❖ Ecological Security
- ❖ Community Managed Drinking Water & Environmental Sanitation
- ❖ Renewable Energy
- ❖ Livelihoods Improvement



Outreach Districts in Himachal & Uttarakhand

Ecological Security

The Gagas river originates in the sacred forests of Pandokholi in Almora district, of the Kumaon Himalaya in the state of Uttarakhand.

The river is largely defined through the flow of over fourteen major streams or gadheras on both banks, and flows for about 50 kms prior to merging with Ramganga (West) river. Gagas river basin is spread over 500 square kms with a population of over 120,000 in 370 villages.

The loss or lack of title to environmental assets is viewed, by Grassroots, as an additional component of poverty, leading to the conclusion that environmental conservation is actually a necessary fundamental to poverty alleviation.

This approach has forged a coalition of interest between stakeholders to share lessons regarding ecological restoration which leads to fulfilling the millennium development goals in the following manner:

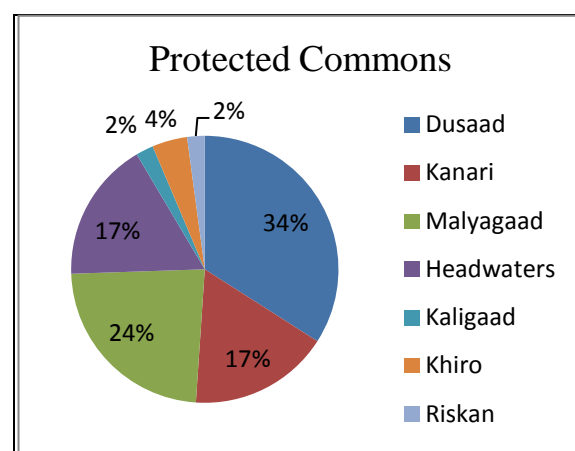
- ❖ Providing a fresh vegetal cover on degraded commons and renewal of traditional methods for soil and moisture conservation
- ❖ Swift spread of appropriate technologies in cross cutting sectors like drinking water, environmental sanitation, renewable energy and rainwater harvesting
- ❖ Improving food security and livelihoods through land-use optimisation and establishment of market linkages directly between producer-farmers and consumers

During the period under review, community-driven eco-restoration was consolidated in the following *gadheras* – Dusad, Kanari, Khiro, Malyagad, Riskan, Kaligad and Headwaters.

Alongside, these communities have been encouraged to create *gram kosh* worth more than Rs. 23.00 lakhs and more significantly shared the cost of infrastructure development to the tune of

Rs. 23.35 lakhs. Finally, steps are being taken to establish micro enterprises which would provide sustainable incomes to communities over the years – such incomes have reached Rs. 9.00 lakhs during the year under review.

The challenge ahead is for communities to comprehensively understand that economics and ecology are two sides of the same coin, balanced with equity.



Gadhera	Villages	Hectares	Saplings
Dusad	16	235	64,413
Kanari	8	54	13,725
Malyagad	11	141	41,347
Headwater	8	10	835
Kaligad	1	5	5,123
Khiro	2	5	Nil
Riskan	1	20	2,425
Total	47	470	127,868

It is significant to mention that communities in the river basin have been enabled to raise over 100,000 saplings of about 50 species of native trees and shrubs in various small village-level nurseries.

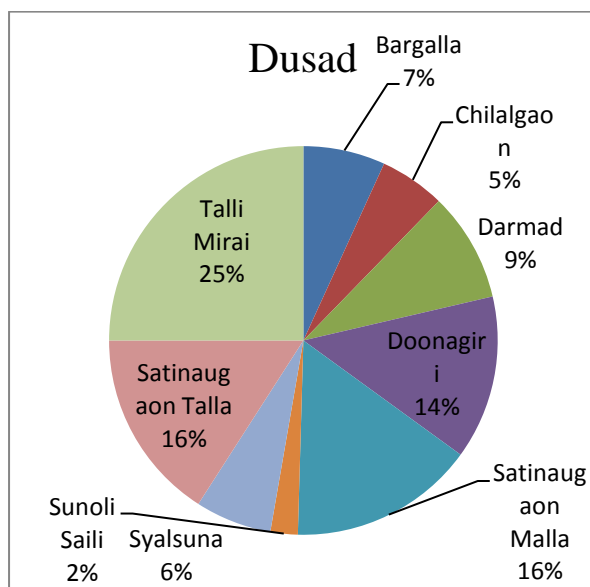
Alongside, planting-out saplings and protection of commons through ‘social fencing’ has evolved as a feasible way-forward for conservation of biodiversity in the various *gadheras*.

During the year under review, almost 10,000 saplings of various fruit trees were also planted-out on land adjacent to farmers homesteads. Alongside, over 140,000 slips and rootstock of *napier grass* was planted-out by 572 farmers in 52 villages.

It may be worth mentioning that the *gram panchayats* in these participating villages have also been enabled to undertake soil and moisture conservation activities by accessing funds available with the DRDA and have been able to construct 160 *khals*, 420 contour trenches, 45 dry check walls, planting-out 7000 saplings and 2000 running meters of boundary wall has been constructed. Approximately Rs. 26.00 lakhs has been invested in these activities by the DRDA.

Total of 444 *khals*, 52 check-dams and 1373 running meters of contour trenches have also been made in various villages in the *gadheras* mentioned above.

Grass Slips & Rootstock

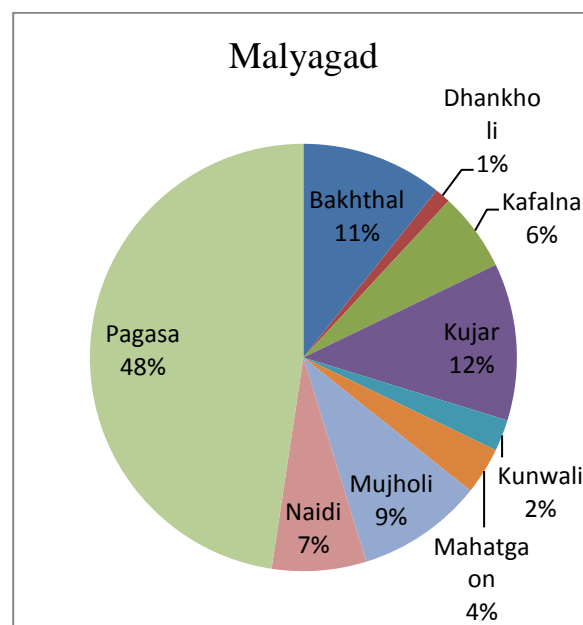


In addition to the above 300,000 seeds of native tree species have been sown directly on protected village commons during the winter-precipitation which was very favourable after a gap of more than five years.

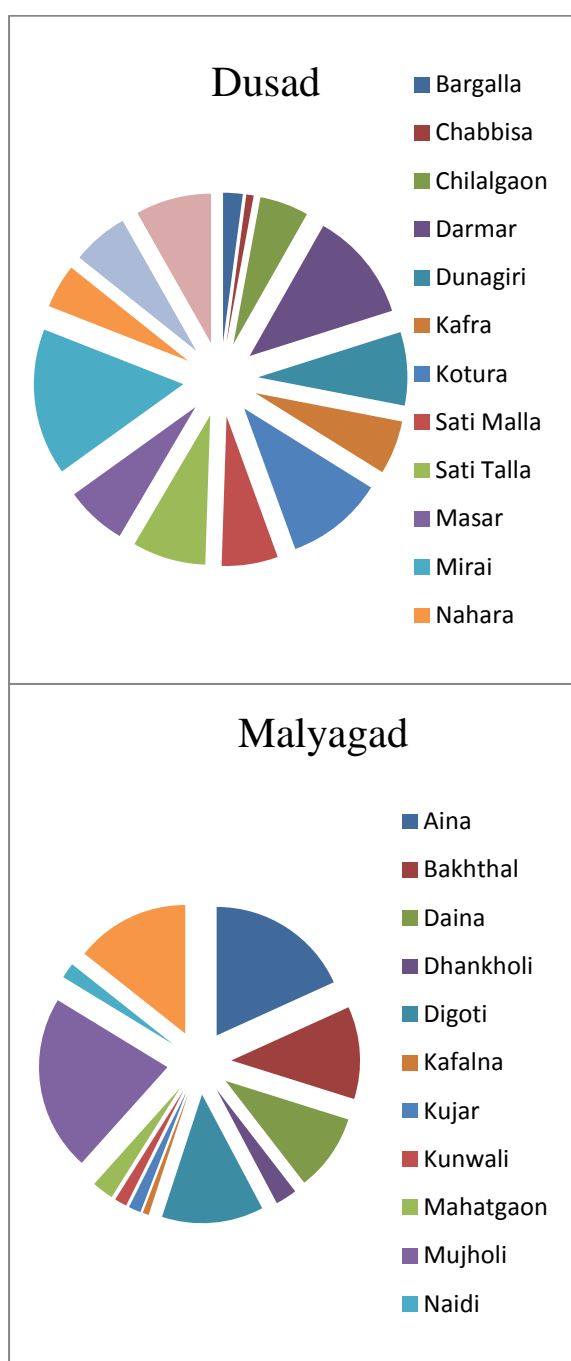
Participatory appraisal exercises to assess germination reveals that more than 75,000 seedlings have germinated and further progress would be known after the summer of 2011.

At the end of the year, 4300 households are engaged in the above mentioned areas within the river basins and 101 SHGs and 39 *Gadhera Bachao Samities* form the bedrock for sustainable change and development.

The distribution of village-wise grass slips/rootstock is depicted below for two representative *gadheras*:



Fruit Tree Saplings



Community-Managed Drinking Water & Environmental Sanitation

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in 2002, India along with 147 heads of state, pledged to adopt 8 goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges.

It is realised that human development is about much more than rise and fall of national incomes. It is about quality of life, the level of human well-being and the access to basic social services. The pressures on environmental and natural resources and the repercussions of their degradation on low income livelihoods have become a source of increasing concern.

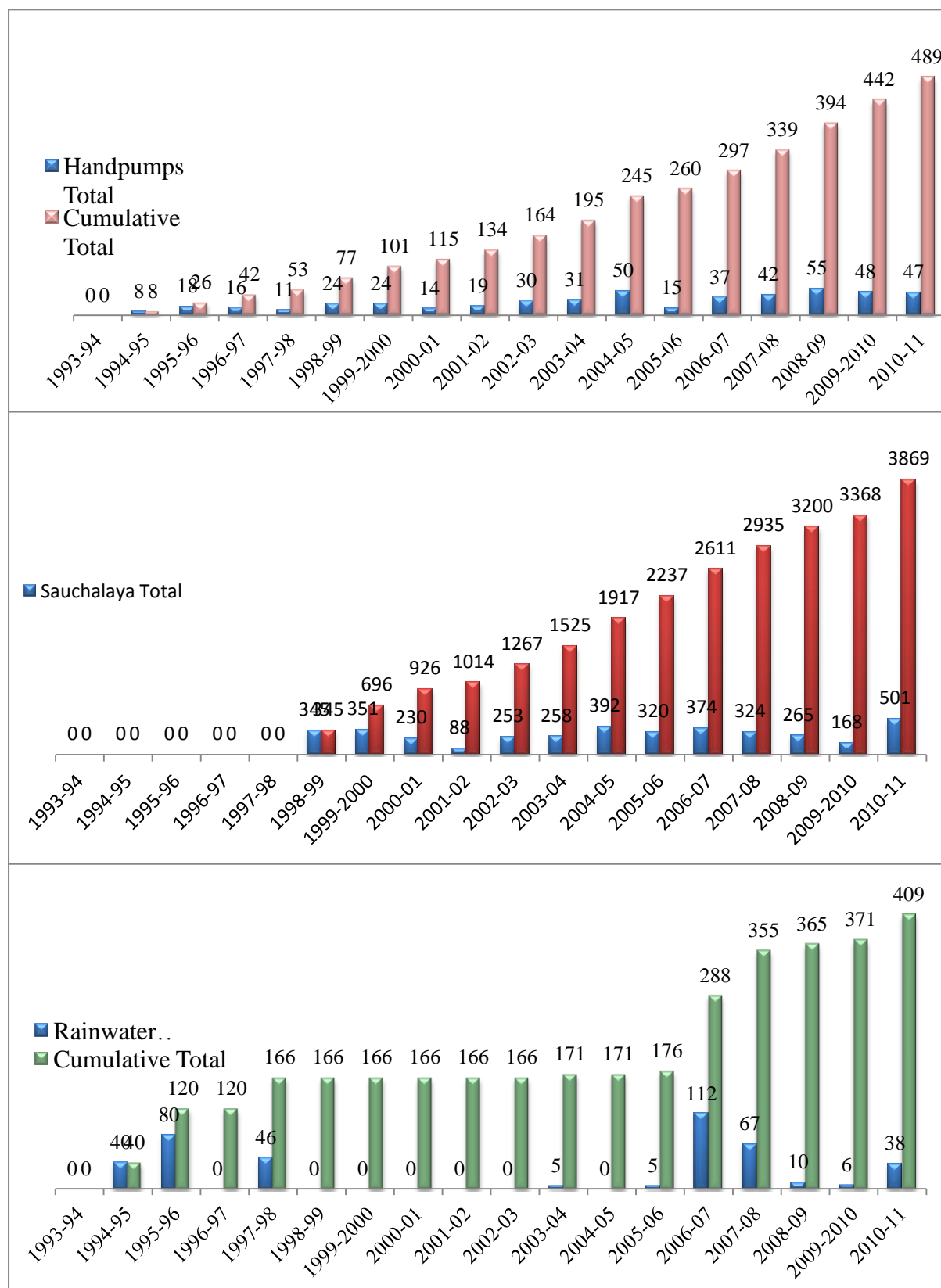
During the period under review, Grassroots continued to spearhead this action item in order to provide easier access to enhanced quantities of safe drinking water and basic sanitation facilities, through cost as well responsibility sharing mechanisms between communities and *barefoot engineers*. All together, 47 Infiltration Wells along with 500 toilets were installed in 7 districts of Uttarakhand.

As in the past, water quality monitoring exercises were continued and 832 water quality samples were tested in Gagas River Basin.

Grassroots also partnered with the state government of Uttarakhand to provide training to 372 *panchayats* in four far-flung watersheds in Almora district, wherein another 1,050 water samples were tested as an integral part of building upon the capacity of the panchayat representatives.

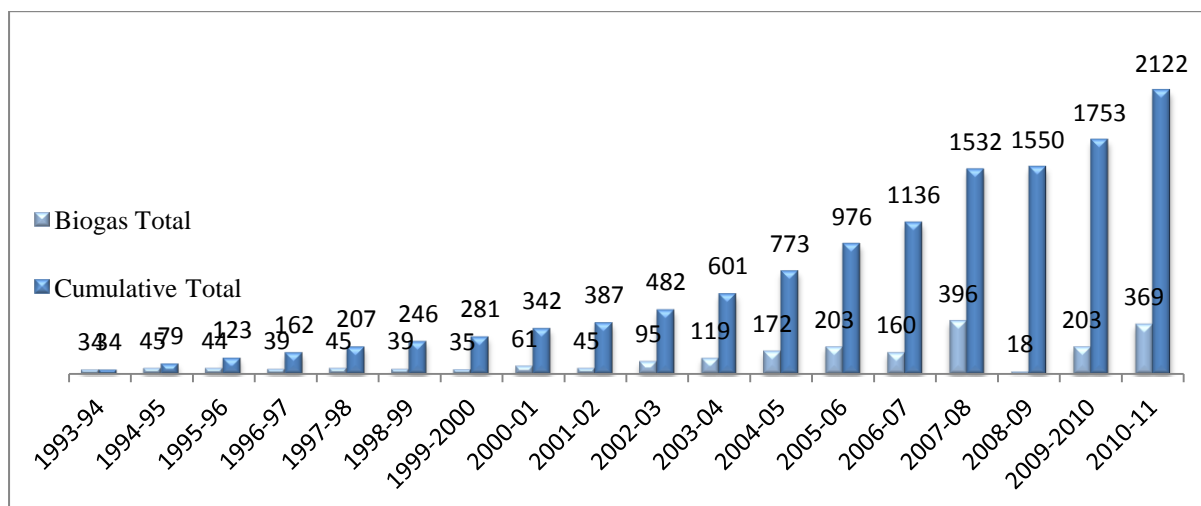
As usual, communities celebrated World Water Day at a function in the heart of the river basin with the active participation of over 1,300 men and women from various *gadheras*. The main agenda, besides sharing experiences, was the expression of solidarity across the river basin to renew the hydrology of gadhera-level ecosystems. This Sharing & Learning Platform is indeed providing fresh energy to new communities joining the *Gagas Bachao Abhiyan*. (A photo exhibition was also organised on the World Water Day)

The spread of Infiltration Wells as an appropriate technology option for community-managed drinking water systems, twin-pit water-seal toilets/sauchalayas and rainwater harvesting structures are shown below:

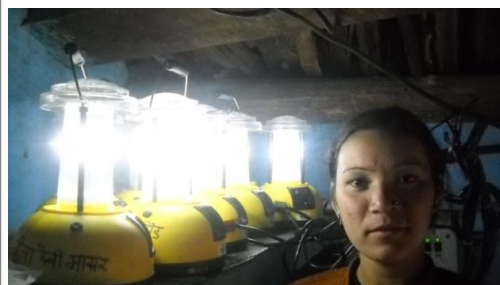
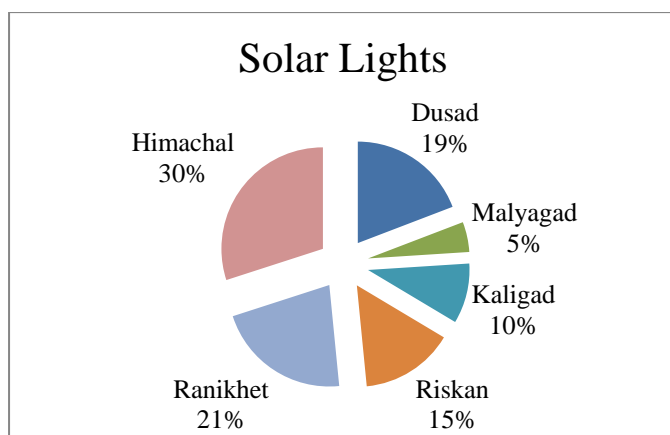


Renewable Energy

On a conservative estimate, installation of 2,122 biogas units, at the end of the period under review, has arrested the pace of environmental degradation by reducing the biotic pressure on scarce forest resources. At least 3,870 metric tonnes, which is about 400 truck loads, of firewood consumption has been reduced per year. Additionally, not only homes have been smoke-free but 5,000 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions/annum have been reduced in the atmosphere.



During the year under review, Grassroots initiated a pilot program regarding benefits of solar energy lights, especially in view of the poor voltage in rural areas which adversely affect the lives of school and college children interested in doing some homework! It is significant to mention that this appropriate technology is being disseminated in two ways: community charging stations and individual home lights/torches. Ten community solar charging stations are being managed by SHGs wherein 200 lanterns are being used and another 220 individual solar lanterns/torches have been adopted by people across the two states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh as shown below:



Livelihoods, Food Security & Micro Enterprises

In fragile ecosystems in the Himalaya, forests play a pivotal role in supporting mountain farming systems. The degradation of such essential support systems has affected traditional food security and enhanced risk to human health.

To find a fresh balance in the quality of lives for such marginalized farming communities, Grassroots has been involved with creating a platform for establishment of pro-poor business ventures, with women as the primary stakeholder.

Along with spearheading eco-restoration efforts in Gagas river basin, Grassroots has been involved in consolidating a network of over 2,000 women who are involved with various viable business activities, which provide small yet significant incomes on a sustainable basis. This operation is managed by a nascent producers company, Umang.

All products of the network are marketed under the brand name ***Kumaoni*** and ***HimKhadya*** and it is Umang's belief that those who purchase these products are directly assisting resource poor households through 'trade and not aid'. The turnover during the year under review has been over Rs. 120.00 lakhs and sales have reached Rs. 92.33 lakhs - 15 percent increase over the previous year. During the year under review a total of 1,181 women shareholders benefited from this venture.

However, the most significant aspect of these local efforts in promoting the spirit of enterprise is a concern of the institutional framework at the grassroots: each and every business activity be directly controlled by the producer-group, all assets be owned by them and all are

equal shareholders of the business. This arrangement ought to be also operated in a manner whereby the greatest portion of the consumer's rupee reaches the producer-groups.

In view of this, as well as future plans for further growth, Grassroots facilitated the process of obtaining registration of Umang as a Fair Trade organisation.

The challenge for Grassroots is to build upon the capacity of shareholders at all levels, from that of the producer-members in the various verticals of the business - hand-knits, fruit processing, bee-keepers and farmers – as well as the producer-members selected as the Board of Governors and the Team Members of the organisation.

An immediate task is to scale-up the business of Umang to a level which provides sustainable incomes to 2,000 producer-member families to the extent of Rs. 15,000 per annum, which would be an increase of fifty percent of current levels of income in the region. For this to be a reality, it is essential to forge forward linkages with markets in the metros as well as consolidate sales within the region.

The Umang showroom, during the year under review, was responsible for 25 percent of the total sales - Rs.22.30 lakhs. It is also significant to mention that Grassroots continued to facilitate the marketing-partnership with Himjoli, a social marketing firm; sales through this partnership amounted to 44 percent of the total.

Farm land growing value added crops like chamomile and strawberry need to be increased significantly in the year ahead as field experiences during the year (with 200 farmers in 23 villages) has revealed quite clearly that these crops could be providing much needed incomes to farmers – to the tune of Rs. 0.50 lakhs.

The farmers organisations business plan needs adequate backward linkages as well as forward linkages, in order to bridge the gap between farm-gate and consumers. In view of this, Grassroots is actively engaged in formation of Walnut Growers Coops in Himachal Pradesh. And, for forward linkages, Grassroots has enabled a group of women to use a vacuum packing machine to process, store and market shelled walnuts and thereby add value. Alongside, two more micro enterprises have been launched on an experimental

basis: floriculture with a group of 20 youth in 6 villages located in the headwaters of Gagas river basin and a smaller group of women have been set-up with a natural dye unit to add further value to hand-knitted garments.

During the year under review, the status of the nascent producers company has been as follows:



Livelihoods & Micro Enterprises Revenues Generated (Rs.in lakhs)

Hand-Knitted Products	35.33
Fruit Preserves & Pickles	24.19
Natural Honey & Spices	15.99
Beeswax Candles	0.07
Country Hens	4.25
Roofing Tiles	0.56
HimKhadya	11.94

Total Rs.92.33 lakhs

Monsoon Relief

Towards the end of monsoon, in the third week of September 2010, torrential rains led to damaging thousands of homesteads, fields and roads. Within a span of two weeks, Jamsetji Tata Trust provided relief-funds to the tune of Rs. 16.00 lakhs to Grassroots.

This fund was utilised to assist 437 farmers in 36 villages in the Gagas river basin, wherein the farmers themselves invested Rs. 46.00 lakhs to match the grant-in-aid. The farmers as well as Grassroots Team would like to acknowledge the sensitive and swift response of the Trust.



Grassroots Leadership Initiative

As always, Grassroots has encouraged visits of student-groups and other professionals to experience and understand issues related to sustainable development of mountain ecosystems.

Most of the guests have been subscribers to the concept of HomeStays – which basically means that board/lodge is organised in the homes of local farmers and payments are shared with the community.

During the year under review, the following interns visited the Outreach Program Office as part of this Grassroots Leadership Initiative:

- ❖ A group of 12 students from Lakeside School, Seattle, USA - selected for the Global Student Leadership Program supported by the Gates Foundation.
- ❖ A group of 4 students from Cambridge University, England spent six weeks as monsoon-interns. While two of them documented the Process of Community Organisation in Gagas river basin, the other two students stayed at the Outreach Program Office at Himachal Pradesh to complete an appraisal of Upland Irrigation and Protection of Commons in the Palor river basin.
- ❖ A student from Boston University, USA came as a summer-intern to study *Economics as if People Mattered*.
- ❖ A student from School of Social Work, Austria spent four months between summer and monsoon to study the impact of SHGs on womens empowerment in Gagas river basin.
- ❖ A student from Germany spent six months to conduct an appraisal of Bio-Diversity in Protected Commons in the Gagas river basin.

- ❖ Two students from Brandies University, USA interned for six winter months to document the outreach activities of Grassroots in terms of fulfilling MDGs within the Gagas river basin.

During the period under review, Grassroots was invited to present a paper at Women in the Mountains Conference, University of Utah, USA.

Finally, Grassroots was honoured by the Indian Merchants Chamber - Ladies Wing with the Jankidevi Bajaj Puraskar 2010 for Rural Entrepreneurship.



Council of Governors

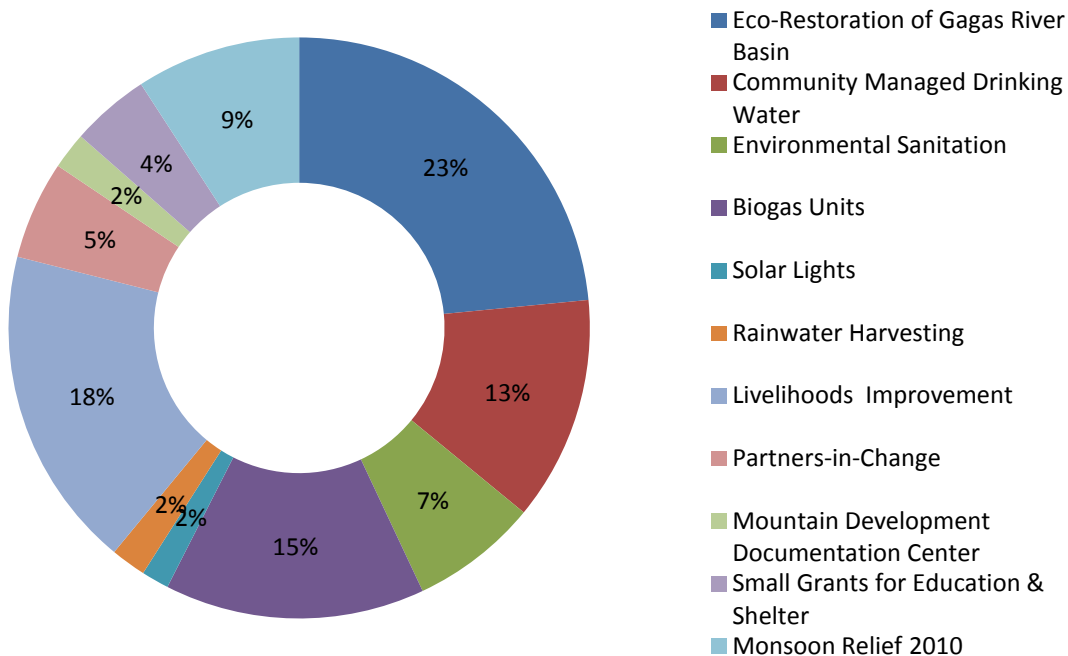
Mrs H Bedi
Chairperson

Mr Deep Joshi Mrs Sumita Ghosh
Mrs Annie Sinha Mr Naren Karunakaran

The Council of Governors and the Executive Officers of Grassroots would like to acknowledge the assistance received from the following organizations during the year under review : 2010-2011

Artha – Sustainable Development Fund
Government of Himachal Pradesh
Government of India
UREDA, Government of Uttarakhand
Friends of Grassroots
Jal Sansthan, Government of Uttarakhand
Jamsetji Tata Trust, India
Lakeside School, USA
Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, India
Winrock International India
World Wide Fund for Nature, India

Outreach Programs Funds



The financial records of Grassroots are a matter of public record and as such are available

Remembering Puran

Perhaps the Founders of Grassroots could never have been able to establish strong roots in the river basins of the central and western Himalaya if Puran had not walked into their lives. He was a Man who could only walk The Talk, which he did in over 1,000 far-flung hamlets in the Kumaon and Garhwal regions of Uttarakhand as well as in Himachal Pradesh. In twenty years, our friend Puran, popularly known as Topi-wala, literally squeezed water out of the rocks which lay in 500 villages with chronic drinking water shortages. Alongside, he motivated and nurtured a band of youth, more than 100, to dedicate their lives as barefoot engineers in order to reach the benefits of appropriate technologies to mountain communities.

Well, we lost Puran on 7 August 2010. And, as we continue to drink water from the Wells of our Homes, we pray that his soul rests in peace forever!



Post Bag # 3, Ranikhet 263 645, Almora District, Kumaon, Uttarakhand, India
 Telefax : +91 5966 221516, 240430
www.grassrootsindia.com

