

ANNUAL REPORT

2018-19



Gram Bharati Samiti (GBS)
ग्राम भारती समिति

Restoring degraded lands

The restoration of degraded lands was carried out on the foothills of ARAVALI ranges in the remote of district Jaipur by implementing following activities:

Soil conservation

Deep gullies at the land around Gandhivan were plugged by erecting trench cum mud walls mulched with grasses, shrubs and bushes. It helped checking soil erosion due to rain water flowing from the uplands. Also, hundreds of trees indigenous species regenerated in the gullies, which are now producing plenty of green fodder that is distributed among the women of the neighboring villages.



Gully plugging a perfect way of conserving soil and moisture and checking further degradation of land

Stabilizing sand dunes

Bench terraces and contour trenches were erected around the sand dunes and small shrubs and bushes planted thereon to stabilize the sand dunes and check the process of desertification.



Stabilizing sand dunes through bench terracing and contour trenching

Harvesting rain water

The mud dam and ponds built earlier by GBS on the foothills at Gandhivan were repaired during the year to conserve the rain water properly.



Pond (left) and mud dam (right) are the perfect source of harvesting rain water at Gandhivan

Training on raising saplings

Five youth volunteers and two women leaders of SHG were provided with training on raising saplings in the nursery. Species were selected in consultation with local village leaders and foresters. The experts Forest officers provided the trainees with training on following issues:

- Preparing trenches in the nursery for capacity of ten thousand saplings
- Mixing soil with organic compost
- Filling in the bags with soil and placing them in trenches
- Seedling, watering and weeding
- Sifting them after three months

Belt and Road International Forum

Bhawani Shanker Kusum, President, GBS participated in the conference ‘**Belt and Road International Forum on Public Cooperation for Ecological Remediation**’ organized by the Government of China on September 10-13, 2018, in Wuwei, Gansu Province, China.

During his participation in the conference he interacted with the delegates from different parts of the world, particularly from Asia, Africa and Latin America on the burning issue of desertification, land degradation and drought. The CSO/NGO representatives participating in the conference were of the view that a coalition should be formed among all those who are engaged in combating desertification and land degradation.

The delegates were taken to village areas for a field visit to visualize the work being carried out by the Ministry of Forest, Government of China to combat desertification and land degradation in the Kubeqi desert. It is an excellent example of restoring degraded land and checking further degradation of the land. Begun 30 years ago, the Kubeqi desert greening project has succeeded in not only reining in the relentless growth of the seventh largest desert in China, roughly the size of Kuwait, it has also turned about 6,000 square kilometers of the desert, one-third of it, green.

Situated about 800 kilometers to the west of Beijing in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, the greening efforts have also controlled desertification in the rest of the area.



Bhawani together with some of the delegates and volunteers during the field visit

Situated about 800 kilometers to the west of Beijing in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, the greening efforts have also controlled desertification in the rest of the area. The project, which began about 30 years ago, can be looked to as an example advancing green development and build an ecological civilization generation by generation so as to create harmony between humans and nature and leave a better environment for future generations.



Bhawani in the panel spoke on the Gandhivan project to combat desertification

The success of the project, which has been praised by the UN Environment Programme as an "eco-pioneer" combines ecosystem restoration and ecological husbandry that sets an example for successful desertification control and ecosystem improvement based on effective government policies supported by private investment in the eco-industry, combined with the market oriented engagement of local farmers and herdsman.

Those three elements, Government policy support, the market oriented participation of local residents and ecological improvement as a result of investment of new technology has been vital to the success of the "Kubuqi model". Elion, a private ecology and investment enterprise, has invested about 38 billion yuan (\$5.82 billion) in the Kubuqi desert-greening project since 1988 helping to lift about 102,000 local farmers and herdsman out of poverty.

Under the company's guidance and with the Government support, the local residents benefit from the "environmental wealth" that is generated by the efforts of combating desertification. For example, the local farmers grow a drought tolerant herb, Chinese licorice, which is the most used herb in traditional Chinese medicine. The plant helps enrich the desert soil, with the bacteria around the roots of the plants generating nitrogen, which forms a biological crust above the sand that begins the fertilization process of the desert soil.

Bhawani made presentation on GBS work on developing wasteland in India through various activities based on indigenous technique and people's knowledge i.e. stabilizing sand dunes, plugging gullies, conserving rain water in traditional rain water harvesting structures, regenerating endangered and disappearing plants of medicinal species.

UNCCD Meeting in GBS Office Amber on October 06, 2018

GBS has been keeping the NGOs/CSOs accredited with UNCCD in constant touch with issues related to drought, land degradation and desertification in India in general and in Rajasthan in particular. Such a meeting was organized in GBS Office, Amber on October 06, 2018.



Bhawani, speaking to the NGOs accredited with UNCCD in a meeting organized in GBS office in Amber

Bhawani while interacted with the fellow CSO/NGOs engaged in various activities aimed at combating desertification advised them to share and learn with each other's experience. Exposure visits of good practices could be very useful in this context. Also, he suggested organizing such kind of sharing meetings at different places in the country and state as well, so that all could visualize each other's work, learn from them and replicate in their areas wherever possible.

World Day to Combat Desertification

Several activities were organized in various parts of India on World Day to Combat Desertification (WCD) on June 17, 2018. This includes the following activities implemented by CSO/NGOs associated with GBS:

With women farmers

Gram Bharati Samiti (GBS) organized a group discussion with the women farmers in village Kukas (Jaipur). The agony of the women was their small land holdings acquired by the Government on negligible remunerations and allotted to the corporate houses that deforested the area extensively and are exploiting now the natural resources massively, which has created a serious problem of land degradation and safe drinking water for the poor people of the neighboring villages.



Women farmers sharing their problems of land and water with Kusum and Sarita

They have to buy a water tank for INR 300 (nearly \$5). Kusum, Secretary, GBS advised the women to raise their voice against this injustice before the local administration and policy makers and restore the traditional rain water harvesting structures at community level to redress the water scarcity. Also, Sarita and Ramchandra of GBS participated in the discussion.

With landless labors

Komal Bal Evam Mahila Vikas Sansthan organized a meeting with women farmers and landless labors in Pushkar. Ms. Munnidevi, Secretary of the organization told the women to harvest the rain water within their farmlands to conserve the soil and check further degradation of the land. She advised the women to cultivate the crops that require less water and plant fruit trees on the peripheries of the farm to increase their income and improve the quality of the land.



Munni Devi describing the women how to restore the degraded land

With women leaders of SHG

A symposium was organized by Grameen Manav Kalyan Shikshan Sansthan Kachroda. Women farmers and workers at a School in Ganpati Nagar Self Help Groups of women farmers and workers participated. The women expressed their grave concern over the climate change that has created number of difficulties for the people, mainly for the women as they have to shoulder most of the household responsibilities i.e. bringing water from far away, fodder for the cattle and harvesting the crops on their small land holdings.



Grameen Manav Kalyan Shikshan Sansthan discussing with the women their problem of water

Land degradation and scarcity of safe drinking water are the key problems as the water is saline and not drinkable in nearly hundred fifty villages of the area. Mr. Suleman Sheikh, secretary of the organization advised the women to conserve every single drop of rain water and erects mud bunds on their farms to check further degradation of the land.

With local farmers

A group discussion was organized with the local farmers by Samuhik Vikas Sansthan Newai in village Bidoli. While the farmers were very curious of knowing the reasons of severe dust storms occurred in Rajasthan this year they were concerned of degradation of the land of their small holdings. Mr. Munnala Rao, secretary of the organization interacted with them described that the unwitting cutting of trees, uncertain and errant rainfall, soil erosion, unrestricted flow of rain water are the few reasons of degradation of our land and dust storms. People were agreeing that they could jointly check many of these reasons and change the situation. They decided to plant trees on wide scale and conserve the rain water within their fields.



Munnalal Rao interacting with the farmers the dust

Mobile health services for women

The project for providing the rural women and children with health care services in the villages of Jamwaramgarh in district Jaipur was continued during the year with support from HSHR and the Runnebaum Foundation, Germany. The project has impacted extensively the people, especially the women of backward castes those who could not afford to go to the big hospitals situated in Jaipur.



Rinu, the nurse dispensing medicines to a patient in village Newta

Major health problems

Since there are no medical and health care services in and around the area in order to access immediate treatment, women keep tolerating the health problems and avoiding any treatment until it is deteriorated and took a serious turn.



Women waiting for their turn in village Dantala for medical check up

Generally the women had problems at their ear, nose, throat, abdominal issues, white discharge, skin diseases etc. whereas the children had itchiness, stomach, liver, night blindness, diarrhea etc. Some of the women infected with gynecological problems were referred to Hospital for further tests.

Women's needs

Though there were repeated requests from the women of adjoining villages, but keeping the budgetary constraints it could not be possible to enhance the coverage of the area and populations.

Villages covered

The following villages were covered during the year:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Bhanpur | 11. Bilod |
| 2. Khawarani | 12. Manota |
| 3. Pawta | 13. Booj |
| 4. Kharad | 14. Kharkhada |
| 5. Kharana | 15. Sarjoli |
| 6. Phutala | 16. Deodha Dungar |
| 7. Sankotada | 17. Ghoreth |
| 8. Paladi | 18. Maliyon ki dhaani |
| 9. Maliwas | 19. Shivpura |
| 10. Meeno ka Badh | 20. Asthal |



Dr. Sonika, Dr. Anuj, Kusum, Sarita and Rinu counseling the women in village Pawata

Impact

As most of the people of the backward castes are very poor and can't afford to go to Jaipur for treatment of general diseases of their family members, they appreciate the importance of the project. So, the health services provided by GBS mobile health care unit is valuable for them.

Keeping in view the attitude of ignorance towards health care among the community people GBS received services of some women counselors to motivate the women to take care of their health properly by avoiding a few anti health habits and adopting health seeking behavior. The counselors advised the women and their family members to keep cleanliness in and around their hutments to avoid infections from several kinds of mosquitoes and using healthy diets without spending more money.

Following were the key impacts of the project:

- The women began to keep their houses and surroundings quite clean
- Women come forward to tell the nurse and seek proper treatment
- They have adopted health seeking behavior and paying attention towards their fitness
- Focusing on herbal intakes and vegetables
- Using safe drinking water
- Adopting hospital based deliveries



Rinu Kumari diagnosing a patient while others waiting for their turn in Manota

Also, the women learnt many things related to acupressure from Dr. Sonika in order to keep themselves Healthy and avoid medicines many times.

Youth Camp

Fifty two youth from 6 districts of Rajasthan i.e. Jaipur, Ajmer, Tonk, Nagaur, Churu and Jhunjhunu participated in the Youth Camp organized in Gandhivan on October 2-4, 2018. Main objective of the camp was to introduce among the youth Gandhian principles of peace, religious and communal harmony, doing *shramdan* (contributing manual work), protecting the environment etc.



The daily schedule of the camp included all religion prayer, doing *shramdan*, lectures on different topics, group discussions and cultural programs etc. Senior Gandhian leaders and environmentalists facilitated the camp. Youth participants enjoyed the daily schedule of the camp and thanked GBS for organizing such a useful camp.

Organizational development

The Organizational Development (OD) grant program was implemented with support from Global Fund for Children, USA. The purpose of the project was 'Training on Fund raising, human resources and Information and Technology'.

Objective

- **Short term**
 - a. Access to more funding agencies
 - b. increased efficiency in writing concept paper and project proposals
 - c. Using IT appropriately
- **Long term**
 - d. Increased funding
 - e. Getting staff personnel well trained and equipped with IT

The training was very important for GBS as having improved/enhanced these qualities will certainly increase it's capacity and capability.

Following were the key outcomes of the program:

- A list of potential donors for our development projects was prepared
- Efficiency was obtained to develop qualitative project concept and proposals
- Well experienced staff personnel using IT efficaciously

Producing Sanitary Napkin

Using sanitary napkins by the women and girls has been a very serious problem in the rural areas in India for a long because of lack of awareness, high costs and easy access in the villages. Villages in Rajasthan are more backward in this context. The issue was discussed with the Help Self Help in Rajasthan (HSHR), Germany and requested them to support for establishing a unit of producing sanitary napkins. After discussing in their Governing Body, HSHR agreed to support GBS for the project of sanitary napkins and supplying to the women in the villages.

A trainer from the supplier of the machinery of the plant travelled to GBS on February 10, 2019 who established the machines and provided two GBS personnel with training.



Rajkumar Sharma and Sarita making sanitary napkins

Lack of awareness

It was notified that very few educated girls i.e. less than 10% were using the sanitary napkins. More than 80% women and girls don't know about the sanitary napkins. Most of them use pieces of old torn clothes, which are generally not clean and safe. They keep using these cloth strips continuously for three-four days and then throw away openly in the backyards of their houses. GBS has started to raise awareness among the rural women and girls on using sanitary napkins regularly during their menstruation periods and disposing them properly.

GBS decided to distribute sanitary napkins to the rural women and girls for few months free of cost and then charge a small amount of money.

Group discussions

Following issues came up during the group discussions organized by GBS in the villages including the following:

- Young girls don't share it with their parents and use some short of clothes on their own

- Girls in their periods are not allowed to do any household work and enter the kitchen



Sarita and Anita producing sanitary napkins on the machine

- They don't have access to the shops selling sanitary napkins
- Shops are usually run by male owners, so girls hesitate to buy napkins from them
- Many of the girls and women can't afford the cost



Sarita motivating the girls in a group discussion to use napkins

As the girls and women participating in the group discussions, shared their concern and receive sanitary napkins even in the presence of their mothers, which was not possible earlier.

Night classes for the women

Evening classes for women entrepreneur continued during the year with support from Evangelische Kirchengemeinde, Kobe-Osaka, Kobe Union Church and Onfilia Co., Ltd., Japan.



Teachers telling the women the names of fruits and vegetables

Practice is going on

After learning Hindi alphabet, numbers, reading and writing words now the women are trying to make small sentences. They can write words i.e. name of fruits, vegetables, animals and their own names etc. easily. Also, they take help from flip charts, picture books, numerical charts etc.



Women learners doing the tasks given to them in the evening

Entertainment and creativity

Sarita Yogi, Coordinator, GBS women's Development Program and the key person of the project organize several activities that entertain the women learners and connect them with creativity.



Sarita advising one of the learners to write the numbers one to hundred

She involves the women in songs, household and festive activities and sometimes in indoor games through which they learn many things in addition to reading and writing. Also, she attempts to dispel the superstitions and improper customs by telling some good stories and inspire them to lead the life in a scientific way, which is possible only through education. Story telling has proved a very good way of attracting the women.

Increased Knowledge

The level of knowledge has increased among the women to a good extent. It reflects in many ways i.e. cleanliness of their houses and surroundings, having shower every day, cutting nails, keeping the utensils clean and systematically inside the house etc. Also, the women advise their husband and other male members of the family not to smoke and have liquors in the night resulting which reduced the incidents of internal quarrels and conflicts in the family and village as well. Thus the evening classes established to provide the women artisans with non- formal education not only motivated the women to read and write, but impacted the whole village community in many ways.

Promoting handicrafts in Asia

The project 'Empowering the women by promoting their handicrafts' was initiated in collaboration with China Green Foundation, Beijing and Dalit Welfare Association, Nepal with support from the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC), Norway. Purpose of the project was to promote the handicrafts of women artisans produced in India, China and Nepal.

Women of artisan class have traditionally been engaged in many kind of entrepreneurial activities in India, Nepal and China for a long that includes different kind of handicrafts i.e. spinning, weaving (coarse clothe), carpet, durry or cotton mat etc., knitting, embroidery, mirror, patch and art work on garments, making toys, plates from tree leaves, shellac bangles, shoes etc.

Main activities

Participants coming to GBS, India: Ms. Sandhya Shreepaili (Nepal) and Ms. Li Yike (China)

- Studying the quality and designs being produced by the women entrepreneurs and the demand thereof in the international market and advise them to produce accordingly by improving their skill, designs, colors, size, different items currently in force etc.
- Searching international market for cotton mat and embroidery produced by the women entrepreneurs, putting the produce on the website and communicating with the local buyers and importers
- Providing 2 GBS personnel/volunteers with improved skill of cotton mats and embroidery to further disseminate among women entrepreneurs in many other villages of its area of operation
- Providing 2 GBS personnel with all kinds of information and knowledge on exporting Indian handicrafts of cotton mats and embroidery in American and European markets

Participants coming to CGF, China: Mr. Manoj Sangtani (India) and Ms. Asmita Nepali (Nepal)

- Studying Miao Borderland Ethnic Costume Culture Museum and their handicrafts and designing online communication to be established with the young people of the area and attracting them towards the traditional handicrafts of the Miao community
- Studying the difference among the handicrafts produced by the women entrepreneurs of the three countries and creating innovations of quality, design, ethnicity, historical or traditional background etc. among the young artisans
- Providing 2 CGF personnel/volunteers with IT skill to communicate with the young generation of China about Miao culture Museum
- Providing 2 CGF personnel/volunteers with specific knowledge on quality of embroidery of India and Nepal and their difference with of China to encourage the young artisans of China to make innovations in their embroidery work

Participants coming to DWA, Nepal: Ms. Sangya Kusum (India) and Ms. Feng Chao (China)

- Conducting survey in 2 wards in district Kathmandu on the need and skill among Dalit women entrepreneurs and discussing with them the plan of income generation.
- Conducting survey in 2 wards in district Kathmandu on the need and skill among the Dalit women entrepreneurs and developing plan of training them in embroidery and cotton mats.

- Providing 2 DWA personnel/volunteers with findings of survey and developing projects proposals on income generation among Dalit women entrepreneurs
- Providing 2 DWA personnel/volunteers with skill to train the women entrepreneurs in embroidery and cotton mats

Expected result

GBS

- Improved quality of cotton mat and embroidery produced by the women entrepreneurs
- Access to international market for Indian cotton mat and embroidery made easier

DWA

- Proposals submitted to funding agencies for income generation for Dalit women
- A plan was developed for training Dalit women in embroidery and cotton mats

CGF

- Designed online communication on the Miao Culture Museum for young people
- Promoted innovations among the young artisans on their traditional handicrafts

Activities to be completed by the participants after coming home

The FK participants will continue to:

- Stay in constant touch with their host organization and the women's groups
- Search adequate market for the women's handicrafts
- Encourage the women artisans to produce handicrafts according to the latest demands
- Support the women artisans in developing their skill and design etc.
- Update and upgrade their websites

Period of exchange

There will be three rounds of exchange of participants (volunteers) each round will be of six months.

First round: April to October, 2019

Training of volunteers

All the six volunteers going as exchange participants to India, China and Nepal will be provided with one week training before going to their host country and one week training after completing their term at host country. This training will be provided by NOREC in Bangkok on pre decided dates.

Existing projects

Durri weaving

The project of weaving durri (cotton mats) weaving established with support from HSHR, Germany is being implemented successfully at koliyon ki dhani, a small village 50 k. m. away from Jaipur where a training center has been established a few years before. Presently twelve women artisans are working on the project. Twelve cotton mats are produced by the women artisans every month.



Women artisans weaving durri (cotton mats) in village Koliyon ki dhaani

Nearly INR four thousand are earned by each woman every month through this work. Presently the cotton mats produced by the women are sold in the local market in Jaipur. Attempts are being made by the volunteers from Nepal working with GBS under the FK exchange project of promoting women's handicrafts to explore international market to export the durries. The women entrepreneurs could be able to raise good profit if their produce is exported properly.

Embroidery

Two embroidery projects are under way in village Pawta and Gopalyawas in district Jaipur. One of them is supported by HSHR, Germany being run in village Pawta. Also, a training center has been established here like in Koliyon ki dhaani. Eighteen women are presently doing embroidery work under these projects. The women are earning on an average INR 3,500 to 4,000 per month through this handicraft work.

The embroidery work is very popular in Rajasthan, particularly on *sarees*, the long clothe worn by women. Different kinds of embroidery work are being done on artistic *sarees*, which are worn by the women on festivals, wedding ceremonies or some specific events. The work of embroidery goes on throughout the year, so women entrepreneurs get jobs regularly.



Women entrepreneurs doing embroidery work on Saari (Indian long clothe worn by women)

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Visitors of the year

Dr. Ann Goldblatt, Associate Professor, University of Alberta, Edmonton and Dr. Alvin Finkel President, Alberta Labor History Institute, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada visited GBS on November, 2018. They interacted on various topics related to GBS work on rural development including women's empowerment and forestation at Gandhivan. They travelled to Gandhivan together with Bhawani and Kusum Jain and appreciated the environment related activities carried out there i.e. fixing sand dunes, conserving soil erosion and regenerating endangered plant species etc. Also, they planted trees at Gandhivan.

Later, Dr. Ann Goldblatt requested Bahwani to spare half an hour time to share GBS experience with some of her students willing to know more about GBS work. He happily agreed and a Skype conference organized on January 26, 2019 with Dr. Ann Goldblatt and her students. Bhawani described briefly about GBS activities and answered the questions asked by the students. It was very interesting meeting over Skype.

Mini Jain's Visit Step well



Mini Jain from UK visited a step well restored by GBS

Kusum Jain, Secretary, GBS conferred with Mahila Shakti Purnskar



Kusum receiving **Mahila Shakti Purnskar** Award for women's empowerment) from Ms. Mamta Bhupesh, Minister, Women & Children's Development, Rajasthan

Dr. S. N. Subbarao's 91st Birthday



Ninety first Birthday of Dr. S.N. Subbarao, veteran Gandhian and Director, National Youth Project popularly known as ‘Bhaiji’ was celebrated in Jaipur by eminent civil society organizations of Rajasthan on February 07, 2019. Bhawani Shanker Kusum on behalf of the Committee presented him the citation. Mr. Ashok Gehlot, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Mr. D.R. Mehta, an eminent Civil Servant (retd.) and Mr. Girdhari Singh Bapna, former Advocate General, Rajasthan were the chief guests of the ceremony. Over three thousand people from around the country were present in the event.