

# Annual Report 2019-20



JAMNALAL BAJAJ  
AWARDS

Mr. Bhawani Shanker Kusum  
(Rajasthan)

For Outstanding  
Contribution in the  
field of Constructive Work

Gandhian 'Warrior' Honoured  
with Jamnalal Bajaj Award 2019



**Gram Bharati Samiti (GBS)**

**ग्राम भारती समिति**

# Gandhivan: Restoration of degraded land

## Species planted

The plant species planted in the gullies and nullahs include *Acacia nilotica* (Babool), *Leuceana leucociphla* (Subabool), *Zizuphus jujube* (Ber), *Ailanthus excelsa* (Ardu), *Prosopis cineraria* (Khejari) etc. Because of their fast growing nature the plants provided a lot of fodder and fuel during the year, which became a good support for the community people of the area.



Weeding in the nursery at Gandhivan: preparations for new plantation

## Outcomes

- 40 youth volunteers selected from the local villages trained on environmental issues,
- Awareness raised on various environmental issues among 2,000 community people,
- 6 rain water harvesting structures repaired e.g. step wells, check dams and village ponds,
- 30 sand dunes stabilized by planting shrubs in the contours, and bench terraces,
- 50 deep gullies plugged by erecting mud cum trench walls mulched with grasses,
- 3,000 species of fuel, fodder and fruits planted in different categories of land.

## Climate impacts

- Reduction of greenhouse gases,
- biodiversity conservation and ecosystem functioning,
- enhancing the yield of livelihoods to local people,
- reduction in poverty and vulnerability,
- local empowerment and capacity development,



- synergy with objectives of international instrument and conventions, and
- Coherence with local strategies for sustainable development.



A successful attempt of stabilizing sand dunes through bench terracing

### Environmental impacts

It is well known fact that the trees act as efficient interceptors or scavengers of atmospheric particles i.e. SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, O<sub>3</sub> etc. Canopy interception of airborne pollutants is deemed to be the main process by which forest plantations contribute to the acidification of surface waters. Conifer plantations, in particular, are recognized as enhancing, via the scavenging process, the degree of dry, wet and occult deposition, which then passes through the canopy and contributes to enhanced soil and freshwater acidification. The ability of trees to intercept or scavenge atmospheric deposition depends on many variables, including the leaf area, woodland height, canopy structure, leaf shape and, possibly, elevation.



Rain water conserved by constructing check dam



UNCCD COP14, New Delhi, India  
(September 2 - 13, 2019)

## CSOs' preparatory workshop in COP 14, UNCCD

14<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP 14) of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was organized in New Delhi on September 02-13, 2019. Being NGO National Focal Point GBS was given responsibility by UNCCD Secretariat in consultation with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India to organize Civil Society Organizations preparatory workshop, helping in their daily briefing, logistics etc. and printing the NGO bulleting every day during the COP.



Robin Kumar (India), Vu Thi Bich Hop (Vietnam), Bhawani, Marcos Montoiro (UNCCD), Ambassador Byong Kwon (Korea), Asha Bothra (India), Kusum Jain (India), John Kwon (Korea) and Abhishek Jain

GBS team of five staff personnel and volunteers e.g. Kusum Jain, Ramchandra, Abhishek Jain, Ankit Sharma, Banshilal Bairwa, Kanhaiya Puri and Sushila reached Delhi two days before to organize all the things properly. Robin Kumar reached directly to Delhi from Mumbai and joined the team.



Having got registered at the reception in the Conference organized logistics for the meeting of CSOs and made arrangements for printing the bulletin. Ramchandra, Abhishesk, Robin and Ankit fulfilled the responsibility to arrange all the things in appropriate manner by running round the clock till the end of the Conference. Later, some other NGO personnel i.e. Arti Gupta, Pradeep Poonia, Arun Kumawat, Munnalal Rao, Dr. Bhuvnesh Jain, Dr. Pradeep Pagaria, Asha Bothra, Sayed Fazle Ahmed, Hazi Rukhsar Ahmed, Anil Sharma, Hemraj Mali, Ghanshyam Lodha also participated in the COP.



Indian delegates together with Bhawani at COP14

The following student volunteers from AMITY University, NOIDA, especially Pulkit Tewari and Shiny Singh under the guidance of Robin Kumar fulfilled the responsibilities of day to day activities related to CSO community. It included logistics, collecting news and articles for the bulletin, preparing lay out and get it printed in the local press. Ramchandra and Ankit played excellent role in arranging all the logistics and printing the bulletin in time. The volunteers were Shiny Singh, Pulkit Tewari, Tanvi Chhabra, Aakanksha Gaba, Divya Madan and Sandhya Shreepaili.

1. Ms. Shiny Singh
2. Mr. Pulkit Tewari
3. Ms. Tanvi Chhabra
4. Ms. Aakanksha Gaba
5. Ms. Divya Madan
6. Ms. Sandhya Shreepaili



Indian Volunteers with Jiajia Luo (China) and Bhawani

Bhawani Shanker Kusum, President, GBS made a presentation in the inaugural session on behalf of the international CSOs delegates coming from around the World. While welcoming the delegates he described the effects of climate change and degradation of environment in India and other Asian countries as well. Also, he narrated the exemplary work being carried out by CSO/NGOs all around the World to combat Land Degradation, Drought and desertification.



Bhawani speaking on his experience of combating desertification at COP 14

### Side event

GBS organized a side event on “Afforestation and cultivation of drought resistant species in Asian Countries” in collaboration with China Green Foundation, China on September 07, 2019.



Group of participants in the GBS' side event held on cultivation of desert species in Asia

Bhawani while introducing the purpose of the event described the situation of drought in Asia. He told that the Asia-Pacific region comprising 35 countries stretches east west from Iran to

Cook Islands and north south from Mongolia to New Zealand. He further mentioned that drought is defined as “prolonged dry weather, in a meteorological term a rainfall deficit expressed on a long term basis.



Mr. Zhang Jianlong, Director, National Forestry, China, Bhawani, Dr. Pradeep Monga, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNCCD, Mr. Chen Peng, China Green Foundation, Dr. Bhuvnesh Jain, Dr. Pradeep Pagaria and Tanveer Arif of Scope, Pakistan

Mr. Chen Peng, Secretary, China Green Foundation describing his organization said China Green Foundation has been working with local CSOs and communities to restore the degraded land in northwest China through planting trees for decades. In one of the demo sites in Inner Mongolia, the number of plant species has increased to 130, comparing with 27 in 2007, before afforestation.

Dr. Pradeep pagaria speaking as guest speaker told that the community people residing in the arid areas have traditionally been planting trees of species those help them survive in drought conditions, which is prevalent in more than 5,000 villages in 19 out of 33 districts in Rajasthan. He described the following desert species as resisting drought:

- **Khejri** (*Prosopis cineraria*)
- **Rohira or** desert teak (*Tecomella undulate*)
- **Kumatiyo or** gum Arabic (*Acacia Senegal*)
- **Hingot or** desert date (*Balanites roxburghii*)
- **Jaal or** mustard tree (*Salvadora persica*)
- **Shisham** (*Dalbergia sissoo*)
- **Neem** (*Azadirachta indica*)
- **Ber or** Indian jujube (*Zizyphus mauritiana*)
- **Googal** (*Commiphora wightii*)
- **Badh or** Indian banyan tree (*Ficus bengalensis*)
- **Pipal or** sacred fig (*Ficus religiosa*)

Dr. Pradeep Monga, Deputy executive secretary, UNCCD appreciated the attempt and thanked GBS and CGF for of organizing such a useful side event. Ms. Jiajia Luo and Bhawani thanked the distinguished speakers and participants of the event.



## Restoration of step well

GBS's restoration of traditional rain water harvesting structures i.e. mud dams, wells, ponds and step wells etc. has been very useful for the village communities and appreciated by all segments of the society. GBS has restored six such step wells in the recent past few years with support from the Prince Clause Fund, the Netherlands. These years the restoration of Sayeed Step well in village Banskho in district Jaipur was taken up with collaborative support from the Prince Clause Fund, the Netherlands and **Gerda Henkel Stiftung, Germany**.



### Interesting history

The Sayeed Baba ki Bawari or Sayeed step well is related to Lakkhi Banjara (an old time famous nomadic trader of salt and grains in India) who has been very famous in Rajasthan and several stories of his liberal nature and munificence are prevalent in the rural society of Rajasthan. Lakkhi Banjara was a big roving merchant of cattle i.e. sheep, camel, bullock, goat and salt etc. of that time. He is popular for his charity deeds. He constructed number of wells, step wells, *saray* (rest house for travelers and pilgrims), temples etc. in many villages. Also, he is known for helping poor people to get their daughters married and lending money to the people in need for their important works.



Repairing the infrastructure of inside walls and the well

According to a folktale once when traveling through the area of Lakkhi Banjara encamped in village Banskho together with his family and co travelers for a night halt. He had semblance of a **Sayeed** (a Muslim deity) in the night who advised him to dig a well and erect a monument in his memory for the wellbeing of his own and the people of the area.

Lakkhi Banjara initiated digging the well the very next day and constructed a step well soon and erected a seat of Sayeed Baba nearby. The step well-constructed in the name of Sayeed Baba became popular from the very day and people started to visit the place both for safe drinking



water and offering prayers for the Sayeed Baba. Kings and Muslim rulers of that time have been using the water of the step well in their daily life as it was the only source of safe drinking water in the area.

The village Banskho was settled later on here when sufficient potable water was found in the step well. It is seventy km. away from Jaipur. Presently the population of the village is near about ten thousand. People visit the shrine and step well every Thursday and Friday. An annual fair is convened here when thousands of people of the area get together and offer prayers, flowers, propitiatory sweets etc. A priest is taking care of the shrine now, but the step well was damaged in lack proper maintenance and repair. Now it is being restored with support from the Prince Clause Fund, the Netherlands and Gerda Henkel Stiftung, Germany.



Sarita discussing with members of the PIMC (left) Repairing and plastering work (right)

### Outcomes

- A Project Implementation and Monitoring Committee (PIMC) formed consisting of women leaders of SHG, youth volunteers, community leaders, mason and architects etc.
- Garbage and silt brought out and whole of the step well was cleaned up
- Infrastructural parts i.e. walls, pillars, drainage, carvings, steps were repaired properly
- Water holes of the step well were deepened by 10 meters to get sufficient water
- Paintings and collages were restored and idols re-established
- The community people felt their involvement by nominating them in the PIMC
- The step well became quite clean and workable after pulling out the garbage etc.
- The step well was brought into its original shape on repairing its infrastructural parts
- Sufficient water is expected to come in the step well by deepening the holes

### Impact

As the key stakeholders of the village society involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the project the following change were seen in short and long term as well:

- The community people are happy with their nomination in the PIMC
- They feel their dignity when their suggestions are complied with
- The community people feel the ownership of the step well
- Problem of water of the people and the cattle will be solved
- The younger generation who never seen the step well are proud of having it restored
- As the PIMC members live in the vicinity its maintenance and protection is ensured

## Mobile health services

Mobile health care services continued with generous support from HSHR, Germany the Runnebaum Foundation. The Nurse Rinu worked during the year from April to December, 2019. During this period she visited regularly the villages of GBS area of operation. Following villages were visited and the women and their children provided with adequate diagnosis and treatment:

1. Meeno ka Badh
2. Bilod
3. Manota
4. Booj
5. Kharkhada
6. Sarjoli
7. Thali
8. Shivpura
9. Chhapradi
10. Kharana
11. Hastal
12. Tholai
13. Majipura



Generally the women were found infected with eczema, leucorrhea, night blindness, several kinds of PIDs. Most of them were anemic as they can't afford nutritious food and ignorant of usefulness of locally available herbal edible food, mainly the vegetables found in their vicinity.



The Nurse diagnosing the patients and dispensing medicines in Shivpura



Rinu had informed her inability to work with GBS project after December, 2109, so search for hiring a new nurse initiated. A new female Nurse Anjana Sinour working in a private hospital after completing her nursing course in 2014 was interested to work with GBS. She joined GBS mobile health care project and started to work from January 01, 2020. Anjana is also a very energetic and enthusiastic nurse to work with the rural communities for their health care. She performed her duties very well in the villages.

Kusum Lata Jain, Secretary and Sarita Yogi, project Coordinator, GBS travelled to the village together with the nurse in the beginning to get her acquainted with the community people and the women leaders of SHG.



Kusum with Seema Sharma, physiotherapist and health care team in village Kharkhada

As the semblance of risk of infection from Corona virus was seemed in many countries of the World after its appearance in China, the nurse was advised to use hand gloves and mask to cover her hands, nose and mouth and maintain proper distance to protect herself and advise the women as well to do so. She made the women to wash their hands with sanitizer before receiving medicines.

While Anjana described the women as how to protect them from the risk of infection with corona by wearing mask while going outside the house, wash their hands regularly and keep distance from everyone they were meeting, Kusum Jain advised them to avoid to go to the crowded places, not to spit here and there and wash hands when coming back to home from outside.

Many of the women were found anemic, whereas scabies, leucorrhea, eye infections, pain in teeth and gums etc. were the general diseases diagnosed by the nurse among the women.

## Empowering Women artisans

### Promoting women's handicrafts

Women artisans continued their handicraft work i.e. weaving durry (cotton mats) in village Koliyon ki dhaani and embroidery on sarees in village Pawata. The women artisans at both the centers carrying out their work own their own with support from GBS i.e. in bringing orders for them from the exporters and local buyers as well.



Work at both the centers slowed down in the month of February onward and stopped completely in March because of the lock down. As the wedding ceremonies banned throughout the country, all the orders of embroidery work were cancelled by the shopkeepers and hence the women became completely jobless in village Pawata and the neighborhood.



Sandhya Shreepaili, volunteer from Nepal at Durry project in Koliyon ki dhaani

Likewise export of cotton mats was stopped as there was no order from abroad. Therefore, the women weavers of cotton mats became jobless in the month of March. As the families of these artisans are very poor and absolutely depend on the earning from their handicrafts, they are facing very hardship. However, looking at the current rate of spread of the virus worldwide and all over India, no improvement could be expected in the situation soon



## Exchange of volunteers between in India and Nepal

First round of the project ‘**Promotion of women’s handicrafts in India and Nepal**’ through exchange of volunteers supported by FK Exchange, Norway was completed successfully.

Following were the major activities of the project:

### Volunteer at GBS from Nepal

- Study the cotton mats being produced by the women entrepreneurs
- Explored demand of cotton mats and embroidery in the international market
- Improved their skill on different designs, colors and sizes currently in force



Sandhya Shreepaili, volunteer from Nepal interacting with women in Koliyon ki dhaani

- Searched international market for cotton mats and embroidery
- Uploaded cotton mats and embroidery produced by the women on the website
- Contacted local and international buyers for cotton mats
- Women artisans got proper knowledge on Nepalese handicraft bags
- GBS volunteers’ skill improved on cotton mats and embroidery
- GBS personnel got information on export of cotton mats and embroidery
- GBS volunteers got knowledge on Nepalese handicraft bags

### Volunteer at DWA, Nepal from India

- Study on quality and designs of handicraft bags produced by the women artisans
- Explored demand of handicraft bags in the local and international market
- Sensitized women artisans to produce bags according current demand
- Women artisans got knowledge on Indian cotton mats and embroidery
- DWA volunteers provided with knowledge and skill on handicraft bags
- DWA personnel got information on international market for handicraft bags
- DWA volunteers' skill upgraded on Indian cotton mats and embroidery



Sangya Kusum, Volunteer from GBS to Nepal providing training to women in Kathmandu

### Achievements

- The women entrepreneurs improved the quality of their handicrafts
- They have better access to national/international market
- Income of the women artisans enhanced as a result of increased sale
- The organization improved skill of cotton mats, embroidery and bags
- Information received on exporting handicrafts of cotton mats and embroidery
- IT skill upgraded to communicate with the young generation
- Skill improved on developing income generating programs for Dalit women



Ramchandra and Abhishek participating in partners' training organized by NOREC in Kathmandu



### Partnership Forum in Oslo

A partnership forum was organized by NOREC at Quality Hotel Entry in Oslo, Norway from Sunday November 10 to Saturday November 16, 2019. Sixty participants from Asia, Africa and Latin America implementing the exchange projects with support from NOREC participated in the forum. Bhawani Shanker Kusum on behalf of GBS participated in the forum.

It was very interesting to participate in the interactive sessions of the forum, sharing experience and interacting with the other participants. The skilled and experienced experts facilitated the workshops on different topics related to the exchange projects being supported by NOREC.

Following subjects were discussed in various workshops during the Forum:

• Leadership and mentoring	• Tools for handling harassment
• Achieving and monitoring results	• Dialogue on managing conflict
• Emergency plan	• Intercultural communication
• Financial management	• Reciprocity: a good partnership in practice
• Organizational learning	• Global understanding on power relations
• Drawing boundaries	



Bhawani with Motilal Nepali, partner of the exchange and other delegates in Oslo

A session organized on useful communication tools facilitated by Norec was very interesting. Important news from Norec was described by Marit Bakken, Norec Programmes Director whereas a very useful presentation was made on 2019 KPMG Study of Government Institutions.

Partner meetings were organized with their regional project coordinators in the forum. In this series a meeting of GBS and DWA exchange project was organized with Ingild Mangerud, our program Adviser on November 15, 2019. While reviewing the exchange round I various problems faced at partners or participants level were discussed widely in the meeting and solution suggested by Ingild Mangerud. Closing remarks were made by Marit Bakken, Norec Programme Director at the end of the forum on November 15.



## Evening School for rural women artisans

The evening school of non-formal education for the women artisans was continued during the year in village Koliyon ki Dhaani with support of Evangelische kirchengemeinde, Kobe-Osaka, Kobe Union Church and Onfilia Co. Ltd., Japan. This was the fifth year of the School where the women entrepreneurs and their girls engaged in weaving Durr (cotton mats) are learning how to read and write in addition to get knowledge on various issues related to their life and surrounding. Thirty women are taking part in the evening School.



Women entrepreneurs practicing Hindi alphabet on slates in Koliyon ki dhaani



### Enthusiasm among the women

Enthusiasm and strength of the women is continued for learning. It has encouraged them to reschedule their daily work i.e. closing the weaving work, completing cooking early evening and reaching the class in time. Some times when the teacher is likely to come late, some of the seniors of them start the class by allotting some revisions or learning tasks. Also, some of the girls and younger children those who enrolled in the neighboring School join their mother to complete their homework and try to learn from the teacher something new for their study.

### The way of teaching

The women are involved in singing songs and folk lore and telling stories giving message of education, household and festive activities and sometimes in indoor games through which they learn many things. Also, the attempts are made to dispel the superstitions and improper customs by telling some good ethical and religious 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.



### Learning through games

Playing games increase creativity among the people regardless of gender and age as well. It was proved in Koliyon ki dhanni when Sarita involved them in some indoor games. All the women learners participated in these games happily. It not only created healthy recreation for them, but provided them with new ways of learning. Telling names of fruits, wild and pet animals, household things, birds, flowers, colors etc. are amusing games for them. Now they have learnt many more such things to prove themselves intelligent.

### Basic curricular

Since it is non-formal education center for the women of different age, class and castes those who spend 1-2 hours of their time after completing their entrepreneurial activities every day, they are given the following schedule to complete their preliminary standard:

- Reading, writing and pronunciation of Hindi alphabet
- The twelve vocalic sounds of the *Devnagari* (Hindi script) syllables
- Writing, writing and speaking numbers from one to hundred
- Learning intra-syllabic vowel symbols
- Framing words
- General knowledge on key topics related to their life i.e. cleanliness, environment etc.



VALUE AGROECOLOGY FOR DRYLANDS

## Inception workshop of agroecology project

An inception workshop of AVACLIM (Agroécologie, une Voie d'Adaptation pour le changement CLIMatique) project was organized in the Domaine du Hameau de l'Etoile (Route de Frouzet, 34380 Saint-Martin-De-Londres), 30 km from Montpellier, France. The workshop was organized from 20 to 22 January 2020. The objective of the Avaclim project implemented in 7 countries (Brazil, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, India, Morocco, Senegal and South Africa) is to contribute to the development of agroecology in dry areas. GBS is the only organization from Asia selected as partner of the project.



Bhawani and Kusum with other Participants of inception workshop of Agroecology

This project was built on the conviction that agroecology is one of the most promising approaches to achieve the mitigation and adaptation potential of food and agricultural systems to climate change and to strengthen their resilience.

The Avaclim project officially started in January 2020 for 3 years. It is the result of 6 years of construction and exchanges with different partners, old and new and today brings together 10 partners from 8 countries. The project kick-off workshop was built around 4 key objectives:

**Objective 1: Inter-knowledge between stakeholders:** This first workshop was an opportunity for all project stakeholders to meet, the objective being that each working and informal time should be used to create a group dynamics.





Bhawani and Kusum in a group discussion in the workshop

**Objective 2: Sharing the project's philosophy and political anchoring:** The Avaclim project was built over several years, with a significant gap between the first diagnostic phases and the actual start of activities. CARI, a French NGO and Coordinator of the project wanted this workshop to be an opportunity to share with all partners the philosophy of the project and its positioning in the general environment.

**Objective 3: Stabilize the tools:** The Avaclim project together with is complex and requires method and fluidity in its operation to avoid the heaviness and inertia linked to its complexity.

**Objective 4: Appropriation of project structuring:** The Avaclim project, together with a coordinator, 2 donors, 4 component leaders, 7 countries, 10 partners, is organized around 4 components, which are mutually interconnected. Each component has a component manager, who will be the key resource person on the subject, but the articulations between the activities of the different components are crucial as some activities cannot be carried out if others are not.

## Participants of the workshop

### Field Partners

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Arfa (Association pour la Recherche et la Formation en Agroécologie)   | : Burkina Faso |
| 2. Agrisud International  | : Morocco      |
| 3. Caatinga (Centro de Assessoria e Apoio aos Trabalhadores e Instituições Não Governamentais Alternativas)               | : Brazil       |
| 4. EMG (Environmental Monitoring Group)   | : South Africa |
| 5. Enda Pronat (Association pour l'ENVironnement et le Développement – Actions pour la PROtection NATURElle des Terroirs) | : Senegal      |
| 6. GBS (Gram Bharati Samiti)  | : India        |
| 7. ISD (Institute for Sustainable Development)  | : Ethiopia     |

**Associated partners:** IRD and Both Ends

**Institutional partners:** FAO, GEF, FFEM and MAAF

### Visit of Local Initiatives

On Wednesday afternoon, the workshop participants visited 'la ferme du Lamalou', a small family-run farm of 3 ha, located in the heart of the London valley, 30 km from Montpellier. Patrice Burger, the Coordinator of the project led the group to the field visit. Also, he introduced the participants with the family and vice versa.

The producers, Stéphane Petrimaux, a former trainer and lecturer in agroecology, and his partner Silvia Ferretti, practice organic market gardening (certified), produce seeds of old and medicinal varieties and raise laying hens. Among other things, agroecological practices for water conservation are necessary because the soil is exposed to severe droughts.



Stéphane Petrimaux describing his experience of practicing agro ecology project

The farm has also created the first AMAP (Association pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne) distribution network in the department, a weekly direct marketing system for consumers in Montpellier. This model allows them to ensure a regular income through the direct sale of vegetables.

It was in fact a very useful visit to visualize various activities related to agro ecology project practically being implemented by a family on field successfully. The participants enriched themselves by viewing the project activities on filed clarifying confusions by asking questions.





Bhawani Shanker Kusum, President, Gram Bharati Samiti was selected for the prestigious Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work 2019. A letter of confirmation of the award was sent to Bhawani Shanker Kusum on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2019 by Mr. Rahul Bajaj, the Chairman of Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation.



Bhawani receiving Award from Sadguru Vasudev Jaggi and Mr. Rahul Bajaj

The Award was presented to Bhawani Shanker Kusum in a grand ceremony organized in the Royal Opera House in Mumbai on December 02, 2019 by the spiritual leader honorable Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, Founder of Isha Foundation, Yogi, Mystic and visionary. The awards included a cash prize of INR 10, 00,000 (nearly \$ 14,000), a Citation and a Trophy.



Bhawani addressing the audience after receiving the award

While addressing the audience after receiving the award Bhawani humbly described briefly the programs and activities he implemented on behalf of GBS during past four decades. Also, he expressed his willingness to do some dream projects including establishing a Hospital for women and children in rural areas of Jamwaramgarh, a research center on environment and a training center for the women artisans.

There were four awardees including Bhawani (for Constructive work), others were awarded for women and children's uplift, introducing Science in rural development and an International awardee for spreading Gandhian ideology of peace and nonviolence abroad.

All the awardees were taken to Sevagram in district Wardha to visit Gandhi Ashram and other Institutions being run by Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation. Visiting these institutions was very important and useful for the awardees. The awardees were welcomed by the heads of these institutions in Wardha and they shared their experience with the students and staff personnel.



## Celebration shared with community

A meeting was organized at Gandhivan to share the celebration of Jammalal Bajaj Award with the GBS staff and community people of the area on 21.12.2019 Exhibiting the award ceremony organized in Mumbai through photos and a short video Bhawani briefly described the program held there.



He welcomed the staff personnel and community leaders of the local areas those who have been associated with GBS, particularly the development of Gandhivan for a long. He honored them by garlanding and offering a woolen shawl as a token of recognizing their contribution to GBS and Gandhivan. Kusum Lata Jain described in detail the award ceremony held in Mumbai and trip to Wardha and Sevagram. Sarita Yogi conducted the program whereas Ramchandra Saini gave a vote of thanks.



Community people from the neighboring villages of Gandhivan welcoming Bhawani

# Expert Group Meeting in Bangkok

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Bhawani Shanker Kusum, President, GBS participated in the ‘Expert Group Meeting organized on “Environmental Change Through Participation” by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) on **28 February 2020** at United Nations Conference Centre Bangkok in Thailand.

In 2018, ESCAP and SIDA developed a joint project “The value of empowerment and participation on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The overall goal of the project is to improve the understanding and access to knowledge of target stakeholders on the impacts and value of empowerment, including public participation, for strengthening implementation of SDGs in Asia and the Pacific, particularly on the environment-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16).



A statue of Mahatma Gandhi at UN office in Bangkok (Thailand)

As part of the first stage of the project, a call for case studies was launched to collect experiences and insights into the impacts of empowerment and participation on the implementation of the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific, including problem identification, decision-making, implementing solutions and programs, and/or monitoring and reviewing outcomes.

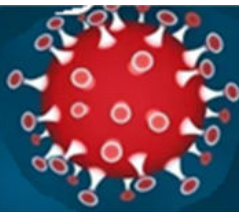
GBS ‘Wasteland development at Gandhivan’ was selected as a successful project and included in the case studies. Therefore Bhawani was invited to make a presentation on ‘Gandhivan’ in the meeting.

## Objective

As part of the key activities related to the project, and building on the previous work done, the main objective of this meeting was to develop a regional network of experts and civil society advocates that promote empowerment and foster public participation in Asia and the Pacific to support achievement of the SDGs. With attendance of 20 participants, the program consisted of three main elements i.e. presentation of the assessment report, selected challenges and establishment of a regional network of experts.

Bhawani described in detail in his presentation the framework and tools used and the key stakeholders participated in the implementation of Gandhivan project.





A team of GBS volunteers engaged in different activities to combat corona in Rajasthan since March 24 right from the day when complete lock down was announced due to outbreak of the virus. Activities like distributing food packets among the poor and migrant families in the villages of Amber and Jamwaramgarh in district Jaipur, feeding the fowls near the Amber palace and producing and distributing low cost washable masks according to the guidelines of WHO etc. are being carried out regularly.



Kusum distributing food packets among the women in Maliwas and masks in Pawta

Kusum Lata Jain, secretary GBS and Sarita Yogi, Coordinator, GBS women's programs distributed food packets among 500 to 600 families both times every day in 40 villages of Amber and Jamwaramgarh. Ramchandra Saini and Ankit sharma, GBS Community Support worker together with a team of youth volunteers was engaged in cooking food to distribute among the slum dwellers near Jal Mahal. Nearly 1,000 food packets were distributed every day.



Kusum feeding the pigeons at the ground near Maota in Amber

The pigeons of the Amber palace area would wait for Kusum and hundreds of pigeons and birds surrounded her when she reached there between 6.30 and 7.00 a.m. in the morning. The birds had become so friendly with Kusum that they fed fearlessly on her hand, head and shoulder etc. It proved that the speechless birds well recognize their well-wishers. The number of birds kept

increasing every day. Also, Kusum put couple of earthen pots to provide the pigeons with safe drinking water. She would fill in the pots fresh water every morning for them.

### **Migrants and daily wage earners**

There were two types of people badly affected with lockdown announced by the Government on March 24, 2020 i.e. laborers, mechanics or semiskilled persons working with some factories those were closed due to restriction of movement and daily wage earners who lost their jobs as the factories, shopping malls, small entrepreneurial units etc. were closed due to lockdown.

These low paid workers, labors and temporary employees became empty pocket within one or two weeks of their retrenchment and could not buy food grains on their own. Also, the small shops of food grain in their areas were closed where they could buy some food stuff on credit. This worsened the situation. GBS took care of such people living in a very distressful situation and distributed food grains among them.



Sarita motivating the women (left) Kusum distributing masks, sanitary napkins in village Sarjoli

Also, GBS distributed rice, tea, sugar, biscuits, roasted grams (ready to eat) along with sanitizers packed in small bottles and washable masks among these people. The women and girls informed GBS personnel and volunteers that they didn't have access to sanitary napkins, therefore GBS produced sanitary napkins at its unit and distributed among the migrant women and girls. It was appreciated by the Government and media as well.

As trains and buses have not yet started to run for many parts of the country i.e. Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bengal etc. more than five thousand laborers retrenched from their factory or other jobs are eagerly looking for any means of transport to reach their home as soon as possible. They will need essential commodities until they are here in want of transport. GBS took this responsibility, collected food grains and other eatables, packed them in small packets and distributed among these migrating people staying in camps. Many of the migrants and their children had lost their foot wears and moving barefoot. GBS collected shoes and sandals/slippers and distributed among them.

Gram Bharati Samiti (GBS) received support from HSHR, Germany, some industries, local donors, sympathizers and GBS executive members. Their support was both in cash and kinds. GBS women volunteers of Self Help Groups contributed to stitch washable masks and preparing sanitizers whereas sanitary napkins were produced at GBS unit in Amber. Since the women and girls did not have access to sanitary napkins due to lockdown, GBS produced sanitary napkins at its own unit and distribute among the women and girls free of cost.



# Visitors of the year

**John Kwon of Future Forests, South Korea** along with his three friends visited GBS on September 6, 2019 during the COP14. He arrived at Manoharpur on National Highway (New Delhi – Ahmadabad) where they were received and welcomed with flowers by Kusum and Abhishek and taken to Gandhivan.



John Kwon planting a tree (left) and together with his friends with Kusum and Abhishek, Kalu and Ramkaran (right) at Gandhivan

They walked around and visualized the wasteland development of Gandhivan and discussed the activities carried out here by GBS.



Kusum, Abhishek and Sarita with John and his colleagues at GBS women's Cooperative Bank in Bhanpur

After a short visit they were provided with Indian vegetarian lunch under the trees. They moved to the other project sites after lunch. First they reached GBS Mahila (Women's) Cooperative Bank, Bhanpur where Sarita Yogi, Coordinator, GBSD' women's project and secretary, Bank. John and his colleagues appreciated the work being implemented by the women. Later, they visited GBS' durry (cotton mats) weaving unit being run by women artisans in village Koiyon ki dhaani. Also, they came to GBS office in Amber and interacted with GBS staff personnel on its various programs and activities and left for Delhi with lots of sweet memories of a short one day visit to Jaipur.

#### **Patrice, France and Jiajia, China**

**Patrice Burger, President CARI, France and Jiajia Luo, Deputy Director, Projects Management Division, China Green Foundation, China** visited GBS on September 13, 2019 just after the end of COP14. Both Patrice and Jiajia visited Gandhivan and walked around the project area to visualize the activities like stabilizing sand dunes, checking soil erosion, conserving rain water and protecting natural land topography etc. carried out under the project.



Kusum, Abishek and Sarita with John and his colleagues at GBS women's Cooperative Bank in Bhanpur

They had lunch over there and then visited Sushil Public School the land was donated for by GBS in village Arjunpura. Mr. Richhpal Saini welcomed the guests by offering flower garlands and described them briefly the history of progress of his school. The students were happy to receive the foreign guests among them.

At the same a medical camp was being organized by GBS at its office established in the same premises adjacent to the School with support from National Institute of Ayurved (NIA). Four hundred sixty patients were diagnosed and provided with medicines free of cost by the NIA. A team of four doctors and three nursing staff extended their valuable services in the camp. Both



Patrice and Jiajia visited the camp and appreciated the spirit of the NIA and its doctors for serving the poor patients.



Health cam organized at Arjunpura supported by NIA

Later in the evening they came back to GBS office in Amer to discuss its work in detail. Next day Patrice travelled to Pushkar and Jiajia visited Abhishek's (GBS volunteer) house for dinner. They left Jaipur on 15<sup>th</sup> September with a promise to come again for couple of days to enjoy the culture and beautiful charming sites of Jaipur and other places of Rajasthan.



Patrice (left) and Jiajia (right) planting trees at Gandhivan

## Hitaahara Utsav 2019 (Healthy Food Festival)

GBS participate in the Hitaahara Utsav 2019 (Healthy Food Festival) organized by the National Institute of Ayurved (NIA) on October 18-19, 2019 on the occasion of Ayurved Day, 2019 in the premises of NIA at Jorawar Singh Gate, Jaipur. Healthy and organic food items were produced by GBS at the stall including herbal tea, khakhra, chapatti made of sorghum and millet etc. Kusum, Ramchandra and Ankit took care of the stall.



Dr. Rajesh Kotecha, Joint Secretary, Ayush Mantralaya, Government of India testing organic food at GBS stall



Dr. Meeta Kotecha, Professor and Head of the Department, NIA presenting certificate to Kusum for GBS contribution in the Mitaahara Utsav





“This is sacred cloth...”, said Mahatma Gandhi. Khadi (pronounced Khādī) is any cloth that is hand-spun and hand-woven. In 1918 Mahatma Gandhi started his movement for Khadi when spinning and weaving were elevated to an ideology for self-reliance and self-governance.

Khadi symbolized the need and importance of indigenous manufactured goods, “Every village shall plant and harvest its own raw-materials for yarn, every woman and man shall engage in spinning and every village shall weave whatever is needed for its own use.” Gandhiji wrote “Swaraj (self-rule) without Swadeshi (country made goods) is a lifeless corpse and if Swadeshi is the soul of Swaraj, Khadi is the essence of Swadeshi”. Khadi became not only a symbol of revolution and resistance but face of an Indian identity! Khadi marked the start of a democracy in the true sense.



Bhawani speaking in the inaugural session described the historical background of khadi in India

Khadi can be cotton, silk or wool. The difference between Khadi and handloom is apparent in the texture. The small weaving errors give it the particular Khadi charm. Khadi blends with other fibres to make raw Silk Khadi, Tussar Silk, Matka Khadi, Poly Khadi, and many more. Khadi has the unique property of keeping the wearer warm in winter and cool in summer. The more you wash it, the better it looks and feels. Khadi is more than a fabric; it is a way of life.... It stands for independence and for going back to the basics.

In the shade of these values an ‘**International conference on Globalization of Khadi**’ was organized in Jaipur with support from the Government of Rajasthan on January 30-31, 2019.

International delegates from U.K. Australia, Japan, Germany, China and Uganda participated in the conference in addition to 200 Indian delegates including khadi workers, social activists, Sarvodaya workers, representatives of Khadi and Village Industries Board and Commission and several Ministers of the Government of Rajasthan.

Mr. Ashok Gehlot, Chief Minister of Rajasthan while inaugurating the conference announced number of relaxations and programs to support for promotion of Khadi.

Bhawani speaking in the inaugural session described the historical background of khadi in India and underlined the current situation of khadi in the country. He suggested evolving a strong infrastructure and awareness programs to attract the younger generation in order to enhance the production and consumption of khadi. He also suggested providing the skilled women and youth with training in spinning and weaving khadi.



## Gandhi 150

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Hundred fiftieth birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation was celebrated throughout India. Mr. Ashok Gehlot, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan being a devotee of Gandhian ideology formed a committee comprising people from all segments of the society the follower and believers of Gandhian principles and announced number of programmes to be implemented during the

whole of year. Ms. Kusum Jain was nominated as member of the committee 'Gandhi 150'.

Bhawani was also specially invited in the first meeting of the committee 'Gandhi 150' in addition to Kusum Jain. Speaking in the meeting Bhawani suggested following programs to be implemented in Rajasthan during the year:

- Model of Gandhivan created by GBS in village Todaldi of district Jaipur should be replicated in all the districts of Rajasthan. For this purpose 25 hectare wasteland be allotted to CSO/NGOs to whom GBS will provide basic training on wasteland development
- Khadi promoted by Mahatma Gandhi as a strong weapon of India's struggle for freedom, has been used in various countries of the world as a healthy fiber for a long and some of GBS volunteers are marketing it in number of countries, an International conference should be organized on khadi to strengthen the movement of popularizing khadi (which was accepted by the Government of Rajasthan and organized on January 30-31, 2019)
- Collection of stories based on Gandhi's life should be published and distribute widely, particularly the young generation.





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