

ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020



RUCHI

Rural Centre for Human Interests

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Registered as a society at village Shalana, Rajgarh 173101, Distt. Sirmour, Himachal Pradesh

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1. About the Organization

1. Background

The Rural Centre for Human Interests (popularly known as RUCHI) has incessantly worked towards uplifting the living conditions of the underprivileged section in selected regions of Himachal Pradesh, India. RUCHI through active grassroots participation and empowerment of the communities in all aspects of their development strives to minimize their dependence on external agencies. RUCHI's focus on promoting **sustainable anthropocentric development through environmentally, socially and economically integrated activities** ensures the improvement and sustainability of rural communities and their environment.

RUCHI began as a non-profit, voluntary organization in October 1980, set up in the Himalayan foothills of the state of Himachal Pradesh. It was registered as a Society on 16 February 1983 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

A new Technology Resource Centre of RUCHI came up in 1994 in a small village of Bandh in Dharampur Block of Solan District which also houses the headquarters of RUCHI. This great achievement was made possible through the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), under the aegis of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

From the onset, RUCHI realized the importance of providing assistance and technical support to facilitate and aid the process of development by encouraging individual and community participation in the process. Accepting and overcoming the various challenges is the key to RUCHI's successful progress which today looks back on its past achievements with pride and at the one ahead with hope.



Thirty seven years on, the organization is continuing with its commitment to instill an ambience of improved quality of life, a new scenario of social and economic progress and minimal dependence on others on the part of the communities. RUCHI has remained successful in achieving this only through an integrated, multi-disciplinary and participatory sustainable development.

1.1. Mission Statement

RUCHI's Mission Statement: Integrated rural development through people-centered, environmentally sustainable action.

With this in mind (and a view towards social and economic independence), RUCHI introduces technologies deemed appropriate to the conditions, and uses health and resource management education to socially empower and uplift rural communities.

1.2. Vision

A society which believes in and practices peace, good governance, equality and respect for each other.

1.3. Belief System

- People have an inherent capacity to achieve - even in the face of adverse conditions - provided they are given with help and guidance.
- Resources, goods, information and technology should be shared amongst and between communities.
- People should be empowered to demand services by virtue of being human and as a basic human right.
- Women play an important catalytic role in development.
- Both development and management should be participatory.
- Social change can occur through economic stability and independence.
- Economic stability and independence can be achieved through optimal and *sustainable* use of local resources.

1.4. Strategic Objectives

1. Promote and protect the environment and natural resources, through adoption of appropriate resource management techniques, generally focused at the micro-level of watersheds.
2. Promote education and awareness as a tool to improve the plight of the underprivileged rural poor.
3. Ensure that a participatory approach is used in the conservation and promotion of natural resources.
4. Catalyze the transfer of low-cost agricultural and construction technologies which will aid in environmental protection and community development.
5. Empower women and eradicate gender inequality, namely through micro-credit and self-help groups.
6. Extend our services to the vulnerable section of elderly, and promote independence amongst this section.
7. Develop areas of mutual cooperation amongst Government agencies and NGOs.
8. Improve the community health standard, mainly through preventative measures.
9. Foster an understanding of, and focus on, integrated rural development in the young rural workforce, promoted through non-formal education.

2. Management and Administration

2.1. Structure

RUCHI's daily activities are administered by an executive director. Over and above this, the management of RUCHI rests with the Governing Body, comprised of six members, each of whom is elected for a two-year term.

RUCHI lays great emphasis on 'people's power'. The consequence can be noticed in the environment of team spirit, collective experience, hard work and commitment in which and on the basis of which the whole organization runs. Very essentially this is manifested through the 12 full-time staff who proficiently strives to achieve the objectives mentioned above. Now, more than ever before, RUCHI has long- and short-term volunteers participating in the project activities injecting fresh ideas and knowledge into the strong RUCHI team.

2.2. Finance and Accounts

The details are outlined in Annexure 1 of the audited statement of accounts.

Besides project based funding in terms of grants-in-aid, RUCHI generates income from the following sources:

- Consultation fees.
- Infrastructure usage charges.
- Agricultural activities.
- Public contribution/donations
- IVS projects

At present, RUCHI is receiving funds from the following international funding bodies:

- Rotary Clubs of New Zealand.
- Erasmus+ project partners

RUCHI's Indian sources of funding include:

- Shamdassani Trust
- Hygienic Research Institute Pvt. Ltd.
- Reiki Packaging India Pvt. Ltd.

3. Projects 2019-2020

3.1: Baddi Integrated Development Water, Health and Agriculture.

This extended 4-year ambitious integrated project was formally completed by end of February, 2018. However, we have continued to extend our support to project area as an exit strategy until the close of FY 2019-20. With the handing over of all community and private assets to beneficiaries, our intervention is slowly being withdrawn. For sure, we will continue to provide back up support until March 2021 and then may restrict our presence in a fewer number of villages for a couple of more years.

The project was financially supported by RNZWCS under a New Zealand Aid programme.

The project made people more aware of burning issues, be analytical and well informed on topics like health, environment, climate change, economics etc. and be in a better position to make use of available government schemes meant for their welfare.



3.2 IVS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE:

In continuation to previous year we again collaborated with CCIVS to address this global issue of climate change through initiating micro community level actions at local level. During 2019, month of August was decided to be an action month where all the participating organisation had planned their local action. For RUCHI it was a great success as we undertook 3 local actions:

- 1) Plantation of native species of trees at Patta Nali panchayat in



cooperation with state forest department.

- 2) Created awareness among schools and women SHG's about earth overshoot day (August 8) and sensitized people about sustainable resource use.
- 3) Created internal check list for visiting interns & volunteers to minimise our carbon footprint at local level through sustainable travelling and strict waste management.

3.3 Equal Start Project under Erasmus+ programme of EU:

The final evaluation meeting of this all important project aiming at raising entrepreneurial sense among marginalized young women and developing their own businesses was held In Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 30th September to 3rd October, 2019.



The results as shared by all project partners were amazing. All together about 20 small businesses were started by young marginalized women in 4 countries of India, Nepal, Cambodia and Denmark. Roughly 40 project plans were in pipeline and were expected to be established in the next 4 months subject to approval of institutional credit through financial institutions.

3.4 STEP 2 Future: CCIVS Project under Erasmus+ programme of EU:

Mr Mahip Dagar from RUCHI was nominated by Asian network NVDA to participate in this Erasmus+ programme in early 2019. This project aimed to empower and create resilience in international voluntary services organisation through diagnosis and training on Organisational development.

Mr. Mahip joined the program and became trainer for Asian region. From 13-18 September a training was hosted by our member VSA at Sonkhla Thailand. The training was attended by many Asian voluntary services organisation with an aim to create self diagnosis of their organisation and develop future strategy.



The greater aim of this project was to create capacity of participant organisation to take up role of a trainer and act as a multiplier in their regions.

3.5 Waste Force:

Since October 2017, RUCHI is continuing with this innovative project called **Waste Force** with the help of interns from India and overseas. RUCHI continues its efforts in educating slum dwellers, rural communities and school children to minimize waste generation, waste segregation and proper disposal. This year we were also focusing on discarding single use plastic. The outcome is encouraging. However, the campaign can be more effective if the local government also sets up more collection points and make arrangement for proper disposal of waste.



3.6 Corporate Social responsibility (CSR):

Hygienic Research Institute Private Limited, Baddi extended their financial support to RUCHI under CSR activity to develop a compact unit of cremation in Balyana village under Barotiwala panchayat of Solan district. The project comprised development of a Fuel-Efficient Crematorium with a funeral pyre, a sitting shed for mourners, a store to stock wood and a platform to place dead body before cremation. This was the first unit of its kind and is talked about to have a multiplying effect in this area.



FEC Unit - Waiting area for mourners along with a store for fuelwood

3.7 Advocacy and Linkages:

RUCHI's focus has always been on empowering communities for their sustainable development. Therefore, a lot of stress is laid on disseminating information on government plan and policies, schemes and their rights. Keeping in view their needs, following activities were organized for them:

- A. **Peace & Social Justice:** Three hours sessions were held in various villages on social inclusion, peace and social equality. They were attended mostly by rural women.
- B. **Women Power:** Awareness camps were organized in about 30 villages for members of SHGs. The focus of camps was on education of women for their rights. Some issues of common interests were identified. The women decided to continue to meet at a platform on quarterly basis to share their issues, concerns and chalk out a strategy for campaigning and resolution of problems.
- C. **Training in Self-defense:** As an initiative of Amar Ujala newspaper to train young girls in self-defense, called as Aparajita, several camps were organized by RUCHI in schools in collaboration IVS volunteers, police and school authorities.



- D. **COVID-19:** With an outbreak of corona virus, subsequently named as Covid-19, worldwide early during 2020, India also enforced strict measures for detection and prevention of this pandemic. The national lock down was declared on 24th March, 2020. RUCHI also started educating people on adopting social distancing as an effective measure for prevention of this disease. Accepting advisory from our government as well as international community we ensured safe passage of Indian as well as international interns/volunteers to their respective homes.

4. International Voluntary Services:

4.1. International Voluntary Workcamps:

In line with our policy, we have been encouraging Indian students to take part in social services. Since then, RUCHI has already joined hands with international networks like CCIVS, NVDA and European alliance and their sub-networks. The volunteers placed through the network members help initiate inter cultural exchange, exposures/experience in community development at grass root level besides academic pursuits. Over the past 5 years, RUCHI has also started sending Indian volunteers overseas for their exposure under youth exchange programme.



Small donations raised through volunteers go a long way in taking up small but important need based projects for communities. About 70 students/volunteers visited RUCHI projects in Himachal Pradesh during this year.

4.2. Student Internship/Placements

81 Indian university students visited RUCHI this year to do their internship. The students came from various institutions like Aditi College (Delhi University), Central University Assam, Central University, Kerala, IRMA Gujrat, DAIICT Gujrat, Mumbai etc. While doing their internship, they get exposure to grass roots issues and how people struggle to find low cost solutions to address their problems.



5. Seminars/Conferences

5.1: Stop Climate Change

RUCHI continues to support Stop Climate Change project by regularly participating in plantation activities in collaboration with Forest department. Jointly we have planted more than 500 trees during monsoon season of 2019 and we continue to do the same for coming years.

One of our volunteers also conducted a study on feasibility of installing solar panels to produce energy as against conventional thermal energy production.

Ronal Rodrigues, one of our Indian volunteer, also represented RUCHI in a conference on Stop Climate Change held at Kaula Lumpur, Malaysia during September, 2019.

5.2 International Women Day

As a part of International Women's Day celebration, RUCHI on request of Rieke Packaging India Pvt. Ltd, Baddi organised an awareness event on POSH at their factory on 7th March, 2020. More than 70 women along with the management staff and workers attended the event where they were informed of their rights, peace, justice, laws against sexual exploitation, successful women entrepreneurships etc.



5.3 European Alliance AGM and TM:

RUCHI was accepted as an associate member of Alliance during their AGM held in Belgium during November 2019. Mr. Mahip Dagar, RUCHI Coordinator attended the meeting on behalf of RUCHI. He also attended the TM of Alliance held in Armenia during 29 February to 5th March, 2020.