



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25



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Talla Chinakhan, Almora (Uttarakhand)



# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Partners,

As we reflect on the financial year 2024–25, I am proud to share the continued progress we've made in our mission to empower communities through integrated and inclusive development.

This year, our work remained rooted in three key focus areas—Health, Livelihoods, and Natural Resource Management. Through our health-based interventions, we supported vulnerable groups with access to essential services, awareness, and dignity. Our livelihoods initiatives helped rural families enhance their incomes and resilience, particularly by promoting skill development, entrepreneurship, and women's economic participation. Meanwhile, our efforts in natural resource management, particularly through watershed-based approaches, have strengthened ecological sustainability and water security across many communities.

These milestones were made possible by the commitment of our team, the active participation of our community members, and the continued support of our funding partners and collaborators. Each contribution has played a role in deepening our impact and reinforcing our belief that lasting change comes from the ground up.

As we move ahead, we reaffirm our commitment to equity, sustainability, and community-led development. We thank you for being a part of this journey.

**GOPAL SINGH CHAUHAN**

PRESIDENT

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Gramin Samaj Kalyan Samiti (GRASS) is a non profit organization founded in 1996 by Mr. Gopal Singh Chauhan. Headquartered in Uttarakhand, GRASS has been working for nearly three decades to empower marginalized and underserved communities, particularly in the districts of Almora, Bageshwar, and Nainital. Our work is guided by a rights-based approach and a firm belief in community-led development.

From its inception, GRASS has focused on creating sustainable and inclusive change through active participation of the local population. Our interventions span across a range of development areas including access to safe drinking water, early childhood care and education, maternal and child health, skill building, organic farming, microenterprises, and livelihoods. We place special emphasis on empowering women, youth, and persons with disabilities—helping them become active participants in their own progress.

Over the years, GRASS has facilitated the formation of self-help groups, producer groups, and collectives that enable rural families to access financial services, improve their skills, and increase income. Our efforts have also included gender sensitization, leadership development, and capacity building—helping communities identify their own needs and solutions.

Our journey is one of partnership, participation, and perseverance. GRASS continues to work hand-in-hand with local communities to build a future where rural families are healthy, self-reliant, and resilient—leading the way toward a more equitable and just society.

**8,883+**

Beneficiaries Trained

Good Governance, Business &amp; Marketing Skills

**905+**

Beneficiaries Trained

Jute Bag &amp; Handicraft Training

**463+**

Beneficiaries Trained

Panchayati Raj Training

**215+**

Beneficiaries Trained

Organic Farming &amp; Certification

**210+**

Beneficiaries Trained

Skill Based Training

**55,202+**

Beneficiaries

**48%**of total beneficiaries are  
Women & Girls**1,645+**

Villages

**950+**

Producer Groups (PGs)

**916+**

Self Help Groups (SHGs)

**167**Joint Liability Groups  
(JLGs)



## Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programme

### Introduction

The Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programme (LEDP), supported by NABARD and implemented by Gramin Samaj Kalyan Samiti (GRASS), was initiated in the remote villages of Raun, Daal, and Dhamas of Hawalbagh block in Almora district. The programme aimed to empower women farmers, especially those from marginalized and economically weaker sections, by improving their income through better farming practices, enterprise promotion, and financial inclusion.

Under this programme, 150 farmers—primarily women from Scheduled Castes and low-income households—were directly supported. The focus was on enhancing their skills in agriculture, organic and climate-resilient farming, soil health, water conservation, and value-added production. Training needs were carefully identified, and targeted capacity-building sessions were conducted to strengthen their knowledge and practices.

In addition to technical training, the programme worked to improve access to credit and financial services through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), promote financial literacy, and support small-scale investments in agriculture and micro-enterprises. Women farmers received guidance in enterprise management, marketing, and record-keeping, enabling them to manage their businesses more effectively.

Continuous expert support and advisory services were provided to help participants start and sustain their livelihood activities. The programme also collaborated with resource agencies to connect farmers with essential infrastructure like processing units, storage facilities, and market linkages.

By combining skill development, financial access, infrastructure support, and community-based approaches, the LEDP made significant progress in empowering rural women, strengthening SHGs, and fostering sustainable livelihoods in the region.

### Impact of the Programme

#### Income Growth:

Farmers saw a 60–80% rise in income. Earlier, millet sold for ₹10–20/kg; now it sells for ₹60–70/kg due to better quality.

#### Women's Empowerment:

Over 30 women started making and selling millet flour. Many became seed suppliers, gaining confidence and leadership in their communities.

#### Better Farming:

Healthier soil and improved techniques helped farmers grow more, using natural and eco-friendly methods.

#### Stronger Communities:

Access to credit, training, and market connections helped villages become more self-reliant. Women-led SHGs played a key role in this transformation.



## 10-Day Training Programme

### 1. Training and Capacity Building

To achieve the programme objectives, intensive 10-day capacity building programmes were organized in four batches—two in Dhamas and two in Raun-Daal—covering a total of 150 women farmers. Each batch received personalized attention and hands-on learning. A refresher course was also conducted to reinforce the learnings.

The training focused on strengthening farming practices, improving productivity, diversifying income sources, and ensuring long-term sustainability. Sessions balanced theoretical knowledge with practical demonstrations, making it easier for farmers to adopt new techniques.

### Key Training Modules:

- **Sustainable Agricultural Practices:**
  - Crop rotation for maintaining soil fertility and pest control.
  - Composting for natural fertilizer production.
  - Integrated pest management to reduce pesticide dependency.
  - Soil moisture conservation using mulching and drip irrigation.
- **Organic Farming:**
  - Use of bio-fertilizers and vermicomposting.
  - Preparation of eco-friendly natural pesticides.
  - Basics of organic certification for better market value.
- **High-Yield Crops:**
  - Drought-resistant varieties of mandua (finger millet).
  - Nutritional benefits of local millets like jhangora (pearl millet) and mandua.
  - Promotion of improved varieties like VL-400, VL-379, and VL-376 of finger millet.

### Objectives

- To enhance the income of women farmers through improved agricultural practices and value-added products.
- To build capacity in organic and climate-resilient farming techniques.
- To improve soil health and promote the use of efficient and sustainable farming tools.
- To strengthen financial literacy and facilitate easy access to credit through Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- To support women farmers in processing, packaging, and marketing their produce more effectively.





## 10-Day Training Programme (Contd.)

- **Soil Health and Fertility Management:**
  - Soil testing for nutrient assessment.
  - Use of cover cropping and green manure to reduce chemical inputs.
- **Water Conservation Techniques:**
  - Rainwater harvesting.
  - Efficient irrigation methods like drip systems.
- **Post-Harvest Handling and Value Addition:**
  - Techniques for cleaning, grading, and packaging to fetch better prices.
  - Value-added production using millets and other local crops to increase shelf life and income.

### 2. Expert Involvement and Institutional Support

Training sessions were led by subject experts from reputed institutions such as:

- Vivekananda Parvatiya Krishi Anusandhan Sansthan (VPKAS)
- Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)
- District Industries Centre (DIC)

Their expertise ensured scientific accuracy, field relevance, and real-time demonstrations for better farmer engagement.

### 3. Market Linkages and Cooperative Promotion

Marketing and branding were critical components of the training:

- Branding of millets as a “superfood” to appeal to modern and urban consumers.
- Direct-to-consumer models and access to wholesale markets were discussed.
- Formation of cooperative groups to promote resource-sharing and collective bargaining for better pricing and access to credit.

### 4. Government Schemes and Financial Support

Farmers were introduced to key government schemes to expand their entrepreneurial efforts:

- National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM): Support for SHGs and producer groups.
- Agri-Entrepreneurship Schemes: Financial assistance for processing and marketing units.
- Startup India Initiative: Resources and mentorship for rural innovations in agriculture.

## Outcomes and Impact

The 10-day training proved transformational, equipping women farmers with both technical and entrepreneurial skills to succeed in modern agriculture.

### Key outcomes included:

- Improved agricultural practices: Adoption of sustainable farming methods and high-yield crops enhanced productivity and climate resilience.
- Financial literacy and empowerment: Women gained valuable knowledge in money management and business planning.
- Marketing and value addition: Farmers learned techniques to enhance the appeal of their products and create new income streams.
- Cooperative support and funding access: Understanding the benefits of collective institutions and how to tap into government assistance.



## Refresher Training: Activity Overview and Outcomes

To reinforce the knowledge gained during the initial 10-day training sessions, a 2-day refresher training was conducted for all batches. The primary aim of this follow-up session was to strengthen key concepts and help farmers successfully apply new practices in their own fields.

### Key Activities:

#### 1. Review of Initial Training:

- A recap of the 10-day training was conducted, with special emphasis on the practical application of the techniques learned.

#### 2. Reinforcement of Core Concepts:

- The training revisited critical themes such as sustainable agriculture, organic farming, high-yielding fingermillet cultivation, and efficient water management.

#### 3. Addressing Agricultural Challenges:

- Farmers shared their on-ground issues, and expert trainers provided solutions. This helped build farmers' confidence in adopting new practices.

#### 4. Practical Demonstrations:

Demonstrations were held on:

- Fingermillet processing
- Producing milk from soybean and black bhatt (black soybean)
- Preparing millet-based nutritious namkeen.

#### 5. Soil Nutrient Management:

- A master trainer delivered in-depth guidance on soil health, balanced fertilizer use, and nutrient management.

#### 6. Farmer Feedback and Participation:

- Farmers actively shared their experiences, challenges, and suggestions during open discussions, creating a participatory and responsive learning environment.

## Demonstration Unit: Activity Overview and Outcomes

### Initiation and Purpose

Under the LEDP initiative, Gramin Samaj Kalyan Samiti (GRASS) established a Demonstration Unit aimed at promoting sustainable practices in millet cultivation and marketing to enhance the income of rural women farmers. Funded by NABARD, this unit served 150 women farmers from the villages of Raun, Daal, and Dhamas.

The unit was formally inaugurated by District Development Manager, NABARD, Mr. Girish Chandra Pant, and a focused training session was held on improving agricultural productivity and financial returns. The event was attended by officials from the implementing organisation, including Mr. Gopal Singh Chauhan (Chairman) and Mr. Bhupendra Chauhan (Executive Director), as well as the Master Trainer and a group of women farmers. During the event, a live demonstration of the Mandua Thresher cum Pearl Millet Machine was conducted by mechanic Shiv Singh, introducing farmers to modern tools for millet processing.

### Outcome

#### 1. Strengthened Knowledge:

Farmers gained a deeper understanding of advanced agricultural practices and techniques.

#### 2. Improved Implementation:

Field-level problems were addressed, enabling more effective application of training in real farm conditions.

#### 3. Increased Productivity:

Better soil health and improved crop management practices led to noticeable gains in productivity.

#### 4. Community Empowerment:

Peer learning and mentoring created a stronger support system within the farmer community.

#### 5. Continued Support:

Post-training, farmers continued to receive technical guidance and access to relevant resources to sustain their progress.



## Demonstration Unit (Contd.)

### Selection of Beneficiaries

The unit specifically targeted 150 women farmers, with key participants like Mrs. Kunti Devi (from Gomti Producer Group, Raun) and Mrs. Rama Devi (from Jai Golu Group, Raun) selected for their active involvement in agriculture and openness to adopting new practices. These women played a pivotal role in peer learning, training other members, and acting as role models in replicating successful practices.

### Training and Skill Development Focus

The Demonstration Unit served as a hub for hands-on training in the following areas:

#### 1. Millet Cultivation Techniques:

Emphasis was placed on sustainable farming practices like crop rotation and water conservation to improve soil fertility and reduce dependence on chemical inputs.

#### 2. Use of Advanced Equipment:

Women farmers were trained in the use of modern tools such as the Mandua Thresher and packaging machines, significantly improving efficiency in millet farming and processing.

#### 3. Marketing and Branding:

The training included modules on attractive packaging, branding of millet products, and marketing strategies to fetch better prices in local markets.

#### 4. Value Addition:

Farmers were taught how to convert millets into value-added products, expanding market opportunities and income potential.

## Educational Exposure Visit: Empowering Women Farmers Through Learning and Practical Insights

### Purpose and Overview

As part of the programme, an educational exposure visit was organized on 7 March 2024 for 60 women farmers from the villages of Raun-Daal and Dhamas. The aim of the visit was to enhance their understanding of value-added agricultural products, modern farming techniques, and rural entrepreneurship by observing successful enterprises and institutions in the Hawalbagh area. The visit provided farmers with first-hand experience of innovation in agriculture and food processing.

### Key Highlights of the Visit

#### 1. Mandua Bakery Unit – Pragati Livelihood Cooperative

The visit began with a tour of a millet-based bakery unit operated by Pragati Aajeevika Swayat Sahkarita, Hawalbagh. Here, women observed the production of high-quality bakery items like bread, cakes, snacks, and biscuits made from millets. Master trainers demonstrated how traditional grains like mandua can be turned into value-added products, increasing market value and income.

## Results and Impacts

### 1. Increased Awareness and Skill Enhancement:

Farmers gained valuable knowledge in organic farming, soil health, and the use of modern equipment, leading to improved productivity and income.

### 2. Improved Productivity:

Adoption of advanced techniques and machinery helped reduce manual labor, increase yield, and improve post-harvest efficiency.

### 3. Expanded Market Access:

Training in quality control and packaging enabled farmers to enhance product quality and reach broader markets.

### 4. Women's Empowerment:

The tools, training, and support provided through the Demonstration Unit contributed significantly to the economic independence and social empowerment of women farmers, thereby enhancing household incomes and rural resilience.

## Educational Exposure Visit (Contd.)

### 2. Fruit Processing Unit – Pragati Livelihood Cooperative

Farmers visited the cooperative's fruit processing unit where local fruits and herbs are used to prepare juices, pickles, and herbal teas. They learned about processing techniques, packaging standards, and marketing strategies that can significantly enhance income through value addition and proper branding.

### 3. Vivekananda Parvatiya Krishi Anusandhan Sansthan (VPKAS)

At this agricultural research institute, women were introduced to agricultural tools and mechanization designed to reduce labor intensity and improve productivity. Demonstrations of tools such as the mandua thresher, pearler, and row planting machines showed how simple mechanization can save time and effort while improving yield. Traditional and modern tools were shown as complementary approaches.

### 4. Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Matela

At KVK, Dr. Rakesh Meer conducted a session on high-yield vegetable seeds and polyhouse cultivation techniques. Farmers learned about region-suitable crops like bottle gourd, bitter melon, pumpkin, and tomato, and how polyhouse farming enables year-round production, leading to better income and resource use.

## Soil Testing Initiative: Improving Fertility Through Scientific Practices

### Purpose and Overview

To support better crop planning and soil management, soil samples were collected from farmers' fields in Dhamas, Raun, and Daal, and analyzed for nutrient content and soil health. The goal was to identify deficiencies and provide farmers with tailored recommendations for the use of organic fertilizers and improved fertility management.

### Key Findings from Soil Testing

#### 1. pH Levels:

The soil pH ranged from 6.20 to 7.47, indicating slightly acidic to neutral conditions, which are generally suitable for most crops. However, some samples (e.g., Vimla Devi from Raun, pH 5.65) required pH correction. Farmers were advised to use lime and other treatments to balance pH and improve nutrient uptake.

#### 2. Electrical Conductivity (EC):

EC values ranged from 0.009 to 0.436, indicating mild to moderate salinity levels. Though within safe limits, farmers were advised to monitor irrigation practices to prevent salt build-up, which can hinder plant growth.

#### 3. Nitrogen Deficiency:

Several samples, especially from Dhamas and Raun, showed low nitrogen levels, which can lead to yellowing of leaves and reduced yield. Farmers were recommended to use organic nitrogen sources like compost, green manure, and animal dung.

## Outcomes

### 1. Knowledge of Value Addition:

Farmers understood how processing and packaging can increase the market potential of crops like mandua and fruits, making them more profitable.

### 2. Understanding Agricultural Mechanization:

Hands-on demonstrations helped farmers recognize how modern tools can improve efficiency and productivity while reducing physical workload.

### 3. Introduction to High-Yield Crops:

Exposure to improved seeds and protected cultivation methods inspired farmers to explore more profitable and climate-resilient farming techniques.

### 4. Empowerment of Women Farmers:

The visit boosted the confidence of women in adopting new ideas. It promoted entrepreneurship and opened doors to new income-generating opportunities through value-added farming.

### 5. Networking and Collaborative Learning:

Farmers, trainers, and agricultural experts exchanged ideas and best practices. This peer learning environment encouraged farmers to implement innovative techniques suited to their local context.



## Soil Testing Initiative (Contd.)

### 4. Phosphorus Deficiency:

Most samples had low phosphorus levels, ranging from 4.5 to 18 (e.g., Saraswati Devi from Dhamas had 18). Phosphorus is essential for root development and flowering. Farmers were advised to apply rock phosphate or bone meal.

### 5. Potassium Variation:

Potassium levels varied across samples. For instance, Malti Devi from Dhamas had a high level (632), while Saraswati Devi had a low level (193). As potassium is important for water regulation, disease resistance, and drought tolerance, recommendations included using potassium sulfate or potassium-rich organic compost.

## Handholding Support for Credit Linkage

Under the handholding credit initiative by GRASS, multipurpose primary agricultural credit cooperative society (Dhams) facilitated loans for 51 farmers. Additionally:

- 2 farmers received loans under the CCL (Cash Credit Limit) scheme.
- 56 members from 6 SHGs (Self-Help Groups) were linked to bank loans through SHG-bank linkage.
- 41 farmers from 3 SHGs received internal loans from their group savings to bridge access to formal credit.





## Success Story

### A Transformative Journey in Almora – Millet Farming, Empowered Farmers, and Stronger Communities

In the scenic villages of Dhamas, Raun, and Dal in Almora, a remarkable transformation has taken place in agriculture. Farmers who once struggled with low prices and unstable millet yields are now shaping a new path of success. This transformation was made possible through the NABARD-funded Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programme (LEDP), implemented by the Gramin Samaj Kalyan Samiti (GRASS).

A few years ago, farmers sold finger millet (mandua) for a meager ₹10–20 per kg. Today, they sell their produce at ₹60–70 per kg—a dramatic shift that has increased their income and given them hope for a better future. This change began with the introduction of high-yielding millet varieties such as VL-400, VL-379, and VL-376, developed by VPKAS. These varieties not only provided higher yields but also proved ideal for Almora's challenging climate due to their drought tolerance.

The collaboration between farmers, VPKAS, SHGs, and the LEDP program has been deeply inspiring. Under LEDP, 87 farmers participated in seed production and have now become seed suppliers instead of just recipients. This transition strengthened the local agricultural supply chain and created a model for sustainable farming. Raun village, once struggling, is now emerging as a seed production hub and a role model for nearby communities.

But this journey wasn't limited to seed innovation. In Raun, over 30 women farmers began using a millet processing unit established for 150 farmers to empower their community. With support from GRASS and NABARD's training in organic farming and financial literacy, these women started selling finger millet flour in local markets. This increased their supplemental income and improved their standard of living. This initiative is not just about farming—it's about entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and breaking social barriers.





### Success Story (Contd.)

The growing demand for millets, driven by their nutritional benefits and popularity as a sustainable crop, has further strengthened farmers' resolve. Under the guidance of GRASS and NABARD, they are expanding production, accessing larger markets, and ensuring their success story inspires others.

This story is not just about farming—it's a testament to the resilience of farmers, the power of community collaboration, and the transformational impact of sustainable agriculture. It is the story of the women of Raun, and the farmers of Dhamas and Dal, who overcame challenges and emerged stronger. It is the result of the collective efforts of VPKAS, SHGs, and GRASS in creating a model of prosperity, self-reliance, and sustainability.

Together, we are not just growing crops—we are growing hope, empowering communities, and building a prosperous future. It is a journey of resilience, cooperation, and unwavering belief.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

The Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programme (LEDP) has proven to be a transformative initiative for the farmers of Almora. Through capacity building, financial empowerment, and access to markets, the program has enhanced agricultural productivity and income while empowering women farmers. As a result, the communities in Raun, Dhamas, and Dal are now more resilient, self-reliant, and economically prosperous.

The lessons learned from the program will serve as a blueprint for future rural development initiatives, ensuring that the farmers of Almora continue to thrive. With ongoing support, the program will expand its reach, impact, and sustainability, ensuring that more rural communities across Uttarakhand benefit from this transformative model.





### Dosad Watershed Project: A Pathway to Sustainable Land and Water Management

The Dosad Watershed Project, implemented by Gramin Samaj Kalyan Samiti (GRASS) and supported under NABARD's Watershed Development Fund (WDF), marks a significant step toward ecological restoration and livelihood enhancement in the Dwarahat block of Almora district, Uttarakhand. The project spans 1,642.2 hectares, covering 20 villages and benefiting approximately 760 farming families. The initiative was officially approved on 14 February 2024.

The Dosad region, located on the southern ridge of the Kumaon Hills, faces multiple challenges including water scarcity, land degradation, and limited irrigation, which have traditionally hindered agricultural productivity. Despite this, the area possesses high potential for agriculture-based livelihoods, particularly for spices and vegetables, owing to its favorable climate, topography, and road connectivity to major markets like Almora, Ranikhet, and Haldwani.

Recognizing the urgency and opportunity, NABARD selected GRASS—as the Project Implementing Agency (PIA). GRASS has previously partnered with NABARD on social and environmental initiatives and is well-positioned to lead community-driven development in this fragile ecosystem.

### Community Participation and Mobilization

To ensure strong local ownership, GRASS conducted village-level meetings across all 12 core villages—Bargal, Bhandargaon, Chabbisa, Chilalgaon, Masar, Melta, Nehragunth, Sakuni, Sailisunoli, Satinaugaon, Syalsuna, and Ubyari.

### Objectives

- Introduce soil and water conservation structures to reduce erosion and runoff
- Improve soil fertility and increase agricultural productivity
- Promote crop diversification, intercropping, and climate-resilient farming practices
- Enhance groundwater recharge through water conservation techniques
- Build the capacity of Gram Panchayats for effective watershed management
- Strengthen local value chains in agriculture and horticulture
- Engage landless and vulnerable families in income-generating activities
- Support sustainable land and water management for climate change adaptation





## Community Participation and Mobilization (Contd.)

The project team:

- Explained the programme and its long-term benefits to the villagers.
- Obtained formal consent from Gram Pradhans and Van Panchayat Sarpanchs.
- Encouraged and received voluntary labor (Shramdaan) from community members.
- Promoted the reduction of open grazing during the preparatory phase.

These efforts helped complete the Pre-Capacity Building Phase (Pre-CBP) and laid the foundation for full community involvement in the implementation phase.

### Implementation Plan and Activities

The project is being implemented over 1,000 hectares, combining forest and non-forest lands. The initial phase focuses on 100 hectares selected for the Capacity Building Phase (CBP), with core activities including:

- Building farm bunds and check dams.
- Constructing earthen pit tanks for rainwater harvesting.
- Enhancing agricultural land under Forest Panchayats.
- Supporting crop diversification and agroforestry.
- Livelihood promotion for landless families.

A local 11-member Watershed Committee has been formed in Masar to lead coordination, monitor progress, and ensure community participation.

### Pre-CBP Activities: Community Mobilization through Shramdaan

A 4-day Shramdaan campaign engaged community members in essential preparatory tasks focused on water conservation and sanitation. Activities included:

#### 1. Hand Pump Area Cleaning – Chilal Gaon

- Cleared debris and vegetation.
- Improved drainage to prevent stagnation.

#### 2. Village Pathway to Hand Pump – Chilal Gaon

- Leveled and cleared the pathway.
- Enhanced accessibility and hygiene.

#### 3. Drainage Line Cleaning – Kulludar Area

- Removed silt and blockages.
- Repaired sections to restore flow.

#### 4. Naula Rejuvenation in Kaptoi Tok, Masar & Chhabisa

- Removed silt, debris, and garbage.
- Improved inflow/outflow channels.

### Exposure Visit

On 15 March 2024, 20 farmers visited Daspad village in Dhauladevi block, Almora to observe integrated watershed development in action. Key learnings included:

- Importance of participatory implementation.
- Exposure to sustainable land and water practices.
- Insights into replicable livelihood models.

### Capacity Building Phase (CBP) Planning

Following Pre-CBP, a Detailed Project Report (DPR) was prepared with community input for three villages: Chhabisa, Chilal Gaon, and Masar, covering 116.68 hectares (100.92 hectares treatable).

#### CBP components include:

- Land use planning with conservation structures.
- Livelihood promotion tailored to socio-economic realities.
- Integrated farming and climate-resilient techniques.

This structured approach ensures sustainability and livelihood security for farming communities in the fragile Dosad watershed.

## Targeted Intervention Project

Gramin Samaj Kalyan Samiti (GRASS) has been implementing the Targeted Intervention (TI) Project in Almora since 2010, with support from the Uttarakhand State AIDS Control Society. The project aims to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and protect communities from sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially in rural and high-risk areas.

### Project Reach and Expansion

This year, GRASS worked with 400 individuals from High-Risk Groups (HRGs) – including 250 in Almora and 150 in Ranikhet. Through surveys and mapping, we identified areas with the highest risk and focused our efforts there.

### Reaching Migrant Workers

From 2022 to 2025, we reached out to 15,137 migrant workers (including Nepali and Bihari migrants) through awareness drives, street plays, group meetings, and health camps. We ensured they received timely information and services related to HIV prevention and care.

In April 2024 and January 2025, two individuals tested HIV-positive. Both were linked to Sushila Tiwari Hospital, Haldwani for free treatment and counseling.

### Empowering Women Through Health Education

We focus strongly on women's health, educating them about:

- Safe sex and how HIV spreads
- Risks from infected blood or needles
- How to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV

### Key Components of the TI Project

Our regular activities under the Targeted Intervention programme include:

- Behavior Change Communication (BCC)
- Condom promotion
- STI Management
- Creating a supportive environment
- Community mobilization
- Referral and linkages



### Strengthening Implementation Under NACP Phase V (2021–26)

All our interventions align with the goals of NACP Phase V, which aims to:

- Reduce new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths by 80% (from 2010 baseline)
- Eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis
- Promote universal access to quality STI/RTI services
- End stigma and discrimination

### Specific Objectives Under NACP Phase V:

- 95% of people living with HIV should know their status
- 95% of those diagnosed should receive treatment
- 95% of those on treatment should achieve viral suppression
- 95% of pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV should have suppressed viral load
- Less than 10% of PLHIV and key populations should face stigma or discrimination

## Monthly Health Camps (2024–25)

We organized 15 monthly health camps led by doctors to bring healthcare to the community. Each camp offered:

- Free screening and consultation for HIV/STIs
- Distribution of medicines, condoms, and IEC materials
- Support to address stigma, travel issues, and cost barriers

These camps helped in early diagnosis, prevention, and trust-building within the community.

## World AIDS Day 2024

**Theme:** Let Communities Lead: My Health, My Right

To mark World AIDS Day on December 1, 2024, GRASS organized an awareness rally at the Nursing College in Almora, in collaboration with local health authorities and students.

The rally was flagged off by Dr. R.C. Pant, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of Almora. In his address, he highlighted the importance of community-led efforts in fighting HIV/AIDS, encouraged people to break stigma, and emphasized the need for early testing and prevention.

Students from the college actively participated by distributing IEC materials, engaging with the public, and spreading awareness about HIV transmission, prevention, and available treatment services.

This event reinforced the message that health is a human right, and empowered local communities to take an active role in promoting public health.

## Biannual Community Awareness Events

In 2024–25, GRASS organized two major community awareness events to engage and educate high-risk groups. These events were designed to be interactive and inclusive, helping participants learn in a fun and safe environment.

### Key Highlights:

- Games and Quizzes made learning about HIV/STIs enjoyable and easy to understand.

## Monitoring PCPNDT Act Compliance

GRASS is an active member of the district-level committee that monitors compliance with the PCPNDT Act, which aims to prevent female foeticide and ban sex-selective practices.

Every quarter, the committee inspects ultrasound clinics to check records, licenses, and ensure there is no misuse for sex determination. Recent inspections found minor issues like incomplete documentation but no confirmed cases of illegal sex determination. Non-compliant clinics received warnings and guidance.

Challenges like hidden practices and underreporting remain. To address these, GRASS conducts awareness campaigns and training sessions for healthcare providers.

These efforts promote ethical healthcare, gender equality, and protect the rights of unborn girls.

## Special Awareness Session at Nari-Niketan

In March 2025, GRASS held a dedicated health awareness session for women at Nari-Niketan, Almora.

### Key Highlights:

- Women were educated about HIV and STIs, including causes, prevention, and treatment.
- One woman tested positive for syphilis during screening and was immediately referred for medical care.
- The team provided counseling and follow-up support to ensure proper treatment and care.

This session helped raise awareness and strengthened healthcare access for vulnerable women.



### Key Highlights (Contd.)

- Open Q&A sessions with peer educators encouraged honest conversations and helped clear doubts.
- Prize distribution boosted community participation and made the events more engaging.
- The events helped build trust, community bonding, and health awareness among participants.

### Community-Based Field Interventions Under NACP Phase V

GRASS carried out the following field-level activities to meet the objectives of the national program:

- **Street plays (Nukkad Natak):** Performed in public spaces to raise awareness among migrants and the general population.
- **Drop-In Centre (DIC):** Provided a safe, accessible space for migrants and Female Sex Workers (FSWs) to receive counseling, testing, and health information.
- **Monthly follow-ups with PLHIV:** Regular phone or in-person contact to track treatment adherence and health status.
- **Group meetings:** Conducted with migrant workers and FSWs to discuss safe practices, STI prevention, and available services.
- **Community-Based Screening (CBS):** Focused on individuals who had never been tested or had limited access to healthcare.
- **Community events with prizes:** Held to increase awareness and encourage active participation.
- **TB screening:** Integrated into health camps for early detection and timely referral.



## Success Story

### Hope in the Hills: Empowering Communities in Almora through Strength and Support

In the serene mountain villages of Almora, where tradition runs deep and life moves at a gentle pace, sensitive topics like HIV have long been shrouded in silence. Fear and stigma have kept many from seeking the support they need. Yet, beneath this quiet exterior, a profound transformation is taking place.

With the invaluable support of the Uttarakhand State AIDS Control Society, the dedicated team of GRASS, has been unwavering in its mission to reach marginalized and vulnerable groups—including migrants, daily wage workers, and women facing challenging circumstances—bringing vital health education and care to those often overlooked.

### Building Trust One Step at a Time

Each month, the outreach team meticulously plans their visits, identifying villages and individuals at risk, especially those hesitant to come forward. Navigating steep hills and difficult terrain, the team demonstrates exceptional commitment, patiently engaging communities because they understand that trust is earned, not demanded.

“We don’t just talk about HIV; we listen first,” explains a team member.

“Once people feel safe, they begin to open up.”

### From Fear to Courage: Personal Stories of Transformation

In April 2024, during a routine outreach session, the team encountered a woman quietly struggling with health concerns. Upon conducting a health check, she was diagnosed HIV positive. Fearful—not of the disease but of societal judgment—she found reassurance through continuous counseling and support. The team accompanied her to the ART Center at Sushila Tiwari Hospital, Haldwani, ensuring she accessed the treatment and care essential for her well-being.

Similarly, in January 2025, a young migrant laborer from Bihar, unaware of HIV risks, was diagnosed during a community screening. Initially shocked, he soon received compassionate guidance from the team, helping him confront his fears and begin treatment with confidence.

“I thought I was healthy. No one had ever talked to me about HIV before,” he reflected.





## Success Story (Contd.)

### Gaining Acceptance in Conservative Communities

In close-knit mountain communities, outsiders are often met with suspicion, particularly when discussing sensitive health topics. Initial resistance was common—contractors denied access to workers, and some villagers dismissed the efforts as unnecessary. However, through persistent engagement, respectful dialogue, and communication in the local language, the team has gradually won hearts and minds.

“At first, doors were closed. Now, people invite us in for tea,” shares a staff member with a smile.

As trust deepens, community members increasingly participate in group meetings, health checkups, and open conversations about HIV prevention and care.

### Combating Stigma through Knowledge and Compassion

Testing positive for HIV can be daunting, often accompanied by fears of rejection and isolation. Through empathetic counseling and free access to Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART), many have reclaimed their health and hope.

“Initially, the medication caused side effects, and I almost gave up. But my counselor encouraged me to stay strong—and now I feel healthy and hopeful,” shares a woman beneficiary.

### Extensive Community Reach and Impact

Since the project’s inception, thousands have been reached through a comprehensive array of activities, including:

- Health education talks and interactive group meetings
- Distribution of protective materials
- Confidential one-on-one counseling sessions
- Community-based health screenings every six months

“HIV is not a curse; it’s a medical condition. With proper treatment, people can live full, healthy lives,” affirms a community health worker.

### A Message of Hope from the Hills

“Though we live far from the cities, we deserve equal care and dignity,” says a local community leader.

“Thanks to this project, we are no longer in the dark.”

This initiative transcends healthcare—it is a movement rooted in respect, awareness, and collective care. Where silence once reigned, dialogue now flourishes; where fear existed, understanding has taken root; and where isolation prevailed, solidarity thrives.

### Together, We Rise

As the journey continues across these hills—both physical and emotional—the commitment remains unwavering: no one in Uttarakhand’s remotest communities should be left behind. With compassion, knowledge, and persistence, transformative change is not just possible—it is happening.