

# Stories

OF RESILIENCE

FROM THE HIMALAYAS

By CBM India Trust



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## **DISCLAIMER**

This document is written based on limited field work in the intervention areas. The findings are purely based on interaction with subject experts, project stakeholders, and observations from the field. The information in this documentation is not intended as an offer or solicitation with respect to being referred to as an empirical study for research purposes.



## (Promotion of Sustainable Livelihood in the Hills of Uttarakhand Reach & Impact)

In 2017, CBM India launched PRAISE (Promotion of Sustainable Livelihood in the Hills of Uttarakhand Reach & Impact) in Uttarakhand.

The project's objective was to enhance sustainable livelihood opportunities for people with disabilities in three Districts (Almora, Dehradun and Rudraprayag) of four blocks (Chaukhutiya, Syaldey, Chakrata and Ukhimath) in the state.

In phase I (2017-2021), the project focused on identifying persons with disabilities, mobilising them into groups - Community Based Inclusive Groups (CBIGs) and Organizations of People with Disabilities (OPD), livelihood basket assessment, developing business plans, skill development training in farm and non-farm activities, developing demonstration units, developing master trainers and promotion of inclusive Farmer Producer Organizations (iFPOs). The project was implemented in 353 villages covering 1313 persons with disabilities and 2483 from other marginalised communities.

The project resulted in increased self-confidence and self-esteem among persons with disabilities, acceptance by family and community members and increased awareness among members about their rights and entitlements. 1187 persons with disabilities, 2493 family members and other marginalised members are now engaged in livelihood activities. Most of them are earning an average income of INR 2000 – to INR 26,000 per month.

Phase II (2021-2023) of the project focused on strengthening the developed community structures (OPDs and iFPOs) to sustain the initiatives that included economic development of women and men with disabilities, families and other marginalised members and holding the local government and duty bearers accountable for inclusive development. Further, the project assisted in the development and capacity enhancement of inclusive Farmer Producer Organizations, provided assistance in the preparation of viable business plans, facilitated and supported iFPOs in accessing on and off-farm storage, primary and secondary processing facilities under State & Central Government schemes & private enterprises and facilitated & supported iFPOs for development of infrastructure and market linkage.

To further enhance the skill and knowledge of 2000 persons with disabilities, family members and other marginalized members, refresher trainings were conducted. Handholding support for 400 members involved in non-farm activities was provided to access financial assistance and provide technical inputs to sustain their livelihood activity.

To ensure that persons with disabilities are included and benefit from development interventions across all sectors and to maintain close contact with concerned government agencies and legislative bodies a state-level OPD was formed and strengthened. The OPDs formed under the project will be a member of the Bahuddeshy Viklang Jan Foundation (BVJF) national forum and support selected OPD leaders to participate in the BVJF annual national meeting and express their issues and views at the national level.

## Reach & Impact

1313

persons with disabilities were identified, which included 449 women and 764 men.

860

Skill enhancement training was provided to 860 persons with disabilities, 2870 family members and members from other marginalised communities in farm or non-farm activities.

3669

members, including 1186 persons with disabilities, were mobilised into 375 CBIGs.

4

block level OPDs were formed with 594 persons with disabilities as members.

250

persons with disabilities and family members trained as master trainers in farm and non-farm activities.

4

iFPOs (2 Spice and 2 Vegetable production) were formed in collaboration with NABARD to enable the farmers to reap the benefit of the economies of scale in the purchase of inputs, processing, and marketing of their produce.

311

demonstration units for different farm and non-farm trades were developed to provide practical skills to improve productivity.

835

persons with disabilities and other members of CBIG were able to access financial assistance of INR 23110926 under different poverty alleviation and livelihood schemes.



CHAKRATA

Marching Towards Freedom

# One Stitch at a Time

BACHAN SINGH  
Chakrata

Having worked as a small-time tailor all his life, Bachan Singh says he could never make money to cater to his basic expenses due to a lack of skill and feasible livelihood opportunities in his village. He recalls,

**“Before I became part of the CBM’s intervention, I worked under a master tailor where I would do petty tailoring work that gave me just enough money to afford a cup of tea every day.”**

Prolonged deprivation of sustainable livelihood opportunities and meagre income, coupled with his disability, made Bachan feel absolutely underconfident. However, things have drastically progressed with CBM India’s life-changing intervention. Contrary to the popular notion, growing old is now a fulfilling experience for Bachan Singh, who started his journey with CBM in 2017.



Bachan, visibly content with his progress, shares that CBM India was able to identify his passion for work and his zeal to be independent and chose him for the programme. He was made part of a 3-month training which enabled him to learn key techniques and enhance his skills from a local master tailor. This opportunity not only offered him the necessary skill upgradation but also gave him the confidence needed to run an enterprise all by himself, which many from his background can only dream of. The training modules also included personality development sessions that helped him identify and address core issues in terms of self-confidence and interpersonal skills.

Apart from the vocational training and other subsequent personal and financial developments, the project also provided Bachan with a sense of community. By being

Bachan Singh gladly says,

**“CBM not only covered my training cost but also provided me with a tailoring machine as part of the intervention programme to start implementing the newly acquired skills.”**

part of the Organisation of People with Disabilities (OPD), he was able to meet and interact with fellow trainees who share a similar set of challenges in their daily lives. The group also helped its members in terms of the exchange of resources and offered financial aid to those who may need it. The thoughtfully tailored training modules and frequent interactions with group members facilitated Bachan Singh to understand the rights and welfare policies meant for the benefit of people with disabilities, which he was not aware of earlier. This played a key role in his gaining a much-needed sense of confidence. Being aware of his rights made Bachan feel recognized and heard; he could identify himself as part of a larger group. It is this holistic approach towards life skills enhancement that made Bachan Singh the confident self that he is today.

Today, with consistent efforts and continued support from CBM India, he owns more than three machines which he purchased with his income. He is joyful that he is able to make around Ten Thousand rupees per month, all by himself.

Bachan hopes to source more work and increase his income if CBM encourages and conducts more such training programmes for women who are equally enthusiastic about enhancing their skills. He is glad that with the right kind of training and encouragement, he has acquired entrepreneurial skills and is able to be financially independent by putting all his learnings into practice.

# Light at the End

of a Long Dark Tunnel

If someone meets Tiku, they realize his story is a lesson in perspective. It makes one grateful for all that one takes for granted in one's own life – for not having a crippling disability, let alone two; For having the support of family and friends.

Tiku was born in the village of Auli. But an accident at the age of two rendered him unable to see and walk. This event triggered a cascade of events – primary schools rejected a doubly disabled child. Tiku recalls, “Nobody was ready to accept me.” No school meant no education, no skill, and no friends. Having no friends led to social isolation. And so, any chance of leading a normal life crumbled like a house of cards. Tiku had no choice but to stay home. “I was confined to one spot in the house, I would stay there all day...”

The entirety of his childhood was spent in that one spot in the darkness and gave way to an adulthood that turned out to be no different. Worse still, unable to work, he was left dependent on his ageing parents to survive. Year after year spent in the dark with nothing to do but contend with his own thoughts caused Tiku to slip into hopelessness and despair. A glimpse of his emotional turmoil is seen when, describing his disability for the first time, his voice suddenly wavers, and he chokes up, “I was really helpless, I've lost count of how many people came along promising to help, but nothing happened, I received no support”, remarks Tiku as he regains his composure.

All those unfulfilled promises led him to lose trust in people's willingness to help. So, when CBM India finally came into his life, he did not initially believe the representatives were there to help him, and he had no hope for change.



**TIKU**  
Auli, Chakrata

But somehow, despite being lost in the depths of despair for so long, he found the determination to try. Only this time, he would break free of his fate.

CBM India first evaluated the suitability of potential interventions for Tiku and decided on poultry and goat rearing. He was trained by a specialist who visited him at home. He was also provided earthworms to create valuable vermicompost from animal waste. Post



training, Tiku was given 100 chickens as seed capital to start a business, along with a primer in accounting and managing different income streams. Despite setbacks during the lockdown, Tiku claims that the business has given him a stream of income of about a few thousand rupees a month – be it from selling eggs, roosters, compost, or goats - which supplements his disability pension of Rs 1500. “Life isn't as hard as it used to be”, he says as he explains that some of the income goes into running the business. Importantly, after a lifetime of guilt for depending on his parents, he's now giving money to them. He no longer feels like a burden on them. His sense of responsibility towards his parents is clear when he asks, “Who will support them if not me?”

Success and independence have also brought about indirect benefits. Tiku is now visited by people from his village who ask him about

his business and well-being – bringing much-needed social interaction into his life. Crucially, he has found a support community through memberships in the Community Based Inclusive Group (CBIG) and the Organisation of People with Disabilities (OPD), both set up by CBM India's efforts. Today, he goes out with his father for these meetings, which allow him to keep abreast of his rights as a person with disability. Sometimes, he himself seems to be in disbelief at how much his life has changed. Several times, he emphatically thanks CBM India on his and his parents' behalf and makes it very clear how grateful he is for it all.

When asked about his future plans, he says,

**“I'll continue to do this. As long as I'm alive, as long as you (CBM India) are with me, and as long as I have access to knowledge, I'll keep going. I'll not stop.”**



Tiku says,

**“I'm really happy, I now have confidence in myself and my worth – I can raise chickens, make compost, and can even share my knowledge with others.”**



A Story of Hope from the Hills

# A Step Closer to Social Integration

SURAT SINGH  
Chakrata

Around 7 years ago, Surat Singh couldn't imagine a life beyond his menial jobs that offered him an inadequate income. Today, through his relentless pursuit of a better quality of life, along with the CBM India's intervention, he emerged as a role model for many people in his village.

Back in 2017, Surat recalls, some of the village members insisted that he attend the meetings organised by CBM India. Initially, Surat wasn't quite convinced by the idea and kept postponing his attendance. After attending his first-ever meeting, Surat felt assured that he is headed in the right direction towards a positive change. Soon after that, he joined the Community-Based Inclusive Group (CBIG), which he believes opened doors to new opportunities in his life. He recollects, "All of us (the villagers) were sceptical about the organisation's intervention programmes at the beginning. However, the meetings were elaborate and offered detailed information about the know-how of various aspects of cattle rearing, poultry, and farming. This gave us the assurance to further partake in their training sessions."

Surat Singh, after being trained in diary management, started off his business with one cow and went on to acquire three more by working consistently. He now not only sells

Surat quotes,

"Being a person with disability made me feel alienated from mainstream society. I never had the confidence to articulate my opinions. Community Based Inclusive Group (CBIG) gave me the much-needed confidence which helps me stay affirmative today."

milk on a daily basis but also sells by-products like butter, ghee, and curd to organisations and individuals in and around his village. Alongside owning the cattle-rearing business, Surat is also an inclusive Farmer Producer Organisation (iFPO) member. The iFPO set up by CBM India not only buys the entire produce Surat gets from his farm but also provides him with a share in the overall profits of the iFPO. "Being part of the iFPO and through the training offered during the course of setting up the iFPO, I could learn various aspects of marketing and the importance of being able to work with a group", shares Surat. He is delighted to share that CBM has enabled him to earn 7-8 thousand rupees every month and is glad that he was given an opportunity to build a stable source of income. He is now confident that he can sell his farm produce in any local market. He is also

thankful that the CBM's training modules and business plans are individual-centric and are designed to address various challenges faced by each member of the group and work towards establishing a sustainable business model.

Surat and other group members meet around two to three times a month to discuss not just the best practices but also share their problems which help them find solutions.

"The CBIG meetings offer us a safe space where we could think aloud, something we couldn't even dream of prior to the intervention",

says Surat. He wishes for CBM India to continue extending its support to more people who are passionate and willing to change their lives.



Jaunsar Kissan Producer Company Limited

# An inclusive Farmer Producers' Organisation



Chakrata, Uttarakhand

## The iFPO

Jaunsar Kissan Producer Company Limited is an inclusive Farmer Producers Organisation (iFPO) that was incorporated on 28th August 2019 under the Companies Act 2013. The iFPO has 350+ shareholders, of which 150 are people with disabilities. The produce includes Red Rajma, Black Rajma, Mirchi, and Masala spices cultivated by local farmers. The products are sold under the brand name Dev Van. The primary motive of the iFPO is to sell local produce with the active participation of the producers themselves. The iFPO comprises of farmers from around 90 villages across the state of Uttarakhand, some of whom are active shareholders in the company. The iFPO was conceptualised and set up by a group of 10 farmers who are now on the board of directors. It all started with awareness campaigns to spread the message that the farmers own their products and that they should be in control of the pricing and profit margins. With their fair pricing policy, the iFPO has built a community of farmers who can now reach out to the larger markets which were otherwise inaccessible to them as individual farmers. With a total profit of around INR 872422 from 2019-2022, it goes to prove that the iFPO has provided the local farmers with increased economic opportunities and financial stability.

## Operation

Local farmers sell their produce to the iFPO at prevailing market prices. Apart from this, the farmers are also given a share in the profits, thus making them shareholders of the company. The minimum value of each share in the iFPO is Rs. 500. However, not many farmers found it to be a convincing proposition in the initial stages, and hence, the board of directors had to contribute an initial investment of Rs 5000 each towards expenses related to registration of the iFPO. Once the iFPO was registered, it started procuring agricultural produce from farmers' doorstep in the surrounding villages by paying them a fair price. The products were promoted at various exhibitions and tourist destinations to reach out to more customers.

With CBM India's intervention, the farmers were trained in various aspects of the business, such as branding, packaging, and marketing, which helped them keep up with the dynamic market trends. The produce is sold at a few hotels in Mussoorie, to local army officers, at the Dehradun NABARD IT Park, and to a few other NGOs, apart from being sold at the local markets. The farmers are also provided with training from agricultural experts on scientific aspects of farming to maximise the yield. Although there is no formal certification yet, all the produce grown is organic, and no chemical fertilisers are used in the cultivation process. The iFPO also provides the shareholders with supplies like seeds and machinery which may otherwise cost more when bought individually.

From gaining local farmers' trust and running the company successfully to receiving the best iFPO award from the Uttarakhand State Government, one can say that Jaunsar Kissan Producer Company Limited has come a long way! With regular support and training from CBM India, the farmers are confident that they will be able to run the iFPO profitably in the years to come.



# CHAUKHUTIYA



# Of Passion and Possibilities

Raring to Go

HARISH KUMAR  
Ghungoli village, Chaukhutiya

Harish Kumar, who belongs to the quaint village of Ghungoli in Chaukhutiya block of the Kumaon region, is joyful as he shares his journey with CBM India, which started in 2017. Harish grew up in this remote village, where lack of access to vaccination made him susceptible to Polio. He lives with his parents, wife and son and has always shown keen interest in finding work to keep his family going. However, due to a lack of financially viable opportunities and given his physical limitations, he had to settle as an unskilled labourer. Things took a turn for the better when the team from CBM India approached him with an opportunity to enhance his skills and thereby create a sustainable source of income.

Harish is visibly glad that CBM India offered him a skill development training in goat rearing. In the 10-day training programme he gained extensive knowledge about goat rearing and ways to build a sustainable business model around the same.

Harish Kumar says,

“Today, when I look at other people with disability, I feel that with the right kind of support, they could live a happy and self-sufficient life. This confidence and clarity of thought come out of my lived experience.”



Post the successful completion of training, Harish received 3 goats from CBM India in 2018 to kickstart his small enterprise. Today, with continued efforts and hard work, Harish grew his herd to 22 goats. His living nearby a forest made it easier for him to breed goats. He was also offered help in setting up the goat shed in a way that is easily manageable for him. Harish, along with his wife, who is also a person with disability, manages to rear the goats and sell them in the local market without any external support.

Apart from earning eight to ten thousand per month, Harish feels there is visible progress in the quality of his life since he feels respected within the village community. He and his wife attend the regular Community Based Inclusive Group (CBIG) meetings conducted in his village. Harish shares,



“The CBIG meetings offer a great deal of motivation to me. Before joining the group, I had no one to talk to or interact with. They encourage us to keep the group intact and take the business forward at each level. They also provide us with information about ways in which we can save money.”

This sense of community and belongingness helped him remain consistent with his efforts and channel his zeal in the right direction.

With a contentful smile, he shares, “Earlier, I was constantly worried and depressed that I would not be able to take care of my family. However, now I’m confident and glad that I’m able to.” Harish is now optimistic that if approached, he can even impart his practical knowledge about goat rearing and running the enterprise with minimum to no support to those who are in need. He was also able to secure government benefits with the disability identity card, which he got with the help of CBM India. He goes on to prove that the right opportunities come to those open to possibilities, despite the immediate constraints that may hinder one’s growth.

From Poverty to Sufficiency

# A Story Of Self-Reliance

**GIRISH RAM KUMAR**  
Basbira Village,  
Chaukhutiya, Almora.



Poverty, like many social illnesses, can hamstring one in ways that are beyond one's imagination. Girish Ram, who resides in Basbhira, a small village in Chaukhutiya Block in Almora District, shares his sombre story of hardships and accidental opportunities that made him create a new life for himself and his family. He was not born with any form of physical disability and spent most of his life working as an unskilled labourer. Back in 2007, Girish had to migrate to Kashmir in search of work that would pay him as low as 100 rupees per day. It was during this time that he fell down by accident and hurt his back. Later, he had to spend 9 months in a hospital in Delhi for surgery and post-operative care for his spine. However, this left him with difficulties in the mobility of his leg. He says, "My left leg is completely dysfunctional. Especially during winters, it becomes totally immobile. As the temperatures rise and the climate gets warmer during the year, the mobility improves a bit."

After returning to his village, Girish found it increasingly difficult to find work to take care of his family – his wife and 2 sons. He kept receiving small amounts of money from his friends and relatives which barely kept him going for a while. His wife does petty work in agricultural fields that gives them a meagre income. Girish is determined to provide education to both his children. But the inability to earn made Girish extremely restless as there was no stable source of income to support his family. Girish recollects, "In 2017, CBM India approached me and provided me with a 3-month training in tailoring under a master tailor. They have also given me a tailoring machine to start my own business. It is only after CBM's intervention that I feel very secure and confident. Earlier, I did basic tailoring work like stitching torn clothes and quilts at home for personal needs. But I never thought that it could become my source of livelihood. It is only after the detailed 3-month long training I learnt all the techniques with proficiency." Girish

also shares that Community Based Inclusive Group (CBIG), that bring together fellow CBM programme beneficiaries and others in the village to share knowledge and provide financial aid to those who are in need, provide a great deal of motivation to all the members. He is thankful for being part of such a vibrant community.

Girish discovered his newfound interest in tailoring which brought him financial stability and a sense of identity in the village. With a twinkle in his eyes, Girish shares, "I am happy that I have become self-reliant. People around me say that I am doing a good job even at this age. Now I'm able to earn around 5 thousand rupees per month. I do not get any support from any kind of government schemes. Earlier, whatever little money I used to earn was just enough to meet the household expenditure. We were never left with any kind of surplus or savings. Today, I have a bank account, and I'm able to put aside little sums of money. Although there are other competitive tailoring shops nearby,

**I am confident that I can manage my enterprise efficiently. I believe that any kind of possibility can turn into a fruitful reality only if we put in effort and retain the willingness in our hearts. It is important to take up opportunities and work on them."**



A Story of Siblings from Almora

# Shifting Perspectives on Disability, Livelihoods and Life

SAVITRI

Basnal Gaon, Chaukhutiya

Not often does one come across an inspiring person like Savitri, who when offered the right kind of training and support system, changed the course of her life against all odds. Savitri hails from the Chaukhutiya block of the beautiful Kumaon region. She lives with her brother and his wife. “Savitri was born with mental disability and couldn’t finish schooling beyond 4th grade due to her condition and the general lack of inclusive atmosphere in the local schools”, says Kailash, Savitri’s brother. Kailash, the primary breadwinner of the family, had to move to a nearby town to find a private job. It was during one of his visits to Chaukhutiya that he was approached by CBM team members, who were then conducting a livelihood survey.

For generations now, agriculture has been the primary occupation of Savitri’s family and they continue to own a piece of land in the village. Kailash recalls, “Previously, my sister would water the plants, collect manure from our home and bring it to farm. However, there was no consistency in her routine or any significant outcome.” After attending CBM’s training programmes, Savitri is now able to set up a routine for herself and perform chores like sweeping and mopping the house every morning and supplying milk to nearby villages before beginning to work on the farm. Kailash says that the training sessions have helped her become more punctual and focused.



three to four crops a year. The training modules also enabled them to directly sell their produce in the local market. Apart from cultivation, the training also

CBM India’s intervention offers training sessions in farm and nonfarm activities as part of the skill development programme. Kailash is one among several people who were identified during the livelihood survey. He recalls that before CBM’s intervention, their family was able to harvest only one or two crops in a year. However, after CBM’s farm training which taught them to cultivate various kinds of vegetables, they are now able to produce

taught Kailash the know-how of natural manure preparation using cow dung. CBM offered financial aid to Kailash and his family to set up a compost pit and also trained them and assisted them in setting up a polyhouse which Kailash recalls was a great learning experience. Although the polyhouse does not exist anymore (it was irreparably damaged a couple of months ago due to heavy rains), the techniques that were taught to grow different kinds of vegetables prove to be of great help to date. He is glad that he can make 10 to 12 thousand rupees per month without having to leave his village and family while continuing to practice agriculture. Both Kailash and Savitri now spend the time working on the farm and earning a livelihood from it.

Savitri and Kailash are also part of the Community-Based Inclusive Group (CBIG) in their village. They attend monthly meetings. Kailash says that being part of these group meetings made him realise that communicating in the right way is the key to

addressing most issues they faced with Savitri in their day-to-day lives. He says that the training modules are exclusively crafted to address the challenges faced by people with disabilities. He is glad that Savitri is now more involved in farming activities and can make use of her time in a more efficient way. The one thing that Kailash is deeply grateful for is the change in the way he perceives disability. He says,

“Through CBM’s training sessions, I have realised that it is everyone’s responsibility in society to remain sensitive towards people with disabilities. We have always lived together with our sister, and today, with CBM’s intervention, I’m happy that we could come up with better ways of communication, and in turn, she is able to channel her skills in the right direction.”



## A Story of Tenacity

# Learning New Ways of Life

The story of Narendra Singh Bisht from Palangbari village, Chaukhuthiya block, seems inconceivable to those of us who have access to good healthcare facilities in most towns and cities. Narendra Singh, while recollecting the episode that changed his life forever, says, “In 2007, I got struck by electric shock. My right hand got severely affected. We do not have good treatment facilities in the village, and I could not afford to get the treatment done in a town/city. I had to take whatever treatment that was available in the village. This resulted in infection, which further spread to the bone, at which point, the doctors informed me that the hand needs to be amputated. That is how I lost my right hand.”

Earlier, he cultivated his agricultural land and also worked as an unskilled labourer in cities like Delhi and Haryana. Narendra Singh's journey with CBM India began when the team visited his village to conduct the livelihood survey in the year 2017. The team approached him and helped him gain a thorough understanding of their intervention programme, the possible outcomes and benefits. This encouraged him to take up the opportunity. He says, “I have always been into farming, but I never knew the right techniques and practices. The training sessions were designed to ensure that I learn the best tips and techniques to get maximum returns. Earlier, I used to plant too many saplings in a square



feet area. I didn't have the knowledge that if we plant too many saplings in a limited area, they wouldn't get enough nutrients from the soil which in turn affects their growth. Thanks to the training, I was able to understand that the saplings have to be planted with enough space to grow and the techniques for doing so. This has been a game-changer for me. The produce from my farm thereby increased.” The training sessions also included many organic farming methods and business development topics like branding, pricing, marketing trends, and packaging, which helped him develop a profitable business plan.

Today, Narendra Singh cultivates wheat, jowar, and vegetables. Most of the produce gets sold in the local market, enabling him to support

his family of six; all of whom are now involved in farming. He is one of the board members and a shareholder of the local inclusive Farmers Producers Organisation (iFPO). He is also part of the 15-member Community Based Inclusive Group (CBIG) in his village. He attends the meetings regularly where he is given a space to share his experiences and concerns and discusses any setbacks he may face in his daily life/business. The meetings also instilled a sense of empowerment as now Narendra Singh is aware of the policies and legal rights of people with disabilities.

Narendra Singh, who is now independent and self-sufficient, shares, “Today, I'm able to work on my own farm and sell my produce. I am very happy with this progress. CBM India members

have helped me build my confidence. I firmly believe that people can achieve anything they want to if they don't lose confidence. I want to tell everyone that if I can work and bring about change in my life, anyone can do that. One should always have a positive mind. Meeting CBM members was the best experience of my life. It is because of them that I could see a positive change within me and in my life. I am also grateful to all my villagers who have been very supportive in my journey.”

NARENDRA SINGH  
Palangbari, Chaukhuthiya

Narendra Singh says,

“CBM India members have helped me build my confidence. I firmly believe that people can achieve anything they want to if they don't lose confidence. I want to tell everyone that if I can work and bring about change in my life, anyone can do that.”



A March for

# Disability Rights Gains Momentum in Almora

**RAJENDRA KUMAR**  
Dhaun Village, Chaukhutiya  
Almora.

**R**ajendra's brush with disability came early in his life. His young body had only begun taking small steps when polio affected both his legs. He was fully dependent on his father who carried him around for all tasks. As time went by, Rajendra however started dreaming of being independent. Perhaps sensing this, one day, his father ventured into the forested hills and brought back with him a big bole of bamboo. He then cobbled together a pair of bamboo crutches for his son, enabling him to start walking again. Learning to move around with his new gift didn't come easy, however, says Rajendra, "I used to tumble a lot. My father built two support rails on either side, so I could grab them every time I lost balance." Eventually came the day when Rajendra stopped falling and went to school on his own.

**His father's support - coupled with reclaiming the ability to move - spurred in young Rajendra's mind a lifelong desire to help others like him.**

**"No physical impairment is insurmountable if one has mental tenacity and grit",**

sums up Rajendra Kumar

His mental resilience saw him through difficulties. Even before CBM India had identified him, he was making ends meet by painting walls, banners, and signboards. But he could only take up such work if – as he puts it – "the signboard came home to me, or if the wall was at my level. If it needed climbing, the job was out of reach". And although he was engaged in farming, the traditional techniques he would employ used to result in uneconomical yields.

**"But while I tried a lot, my efforts were often negated by a lack of knowledge",**

Rajendra Kumar recalls.



Despite facing hardship, the plight of the fellow disabled, the aged, and the widowed women of his village moved him a lot. He never ceased his efforts to help them.

When CBM India came to Dhaun in 2017, they found in Rajendra a man who was already well-aligned with their mission. CBM India subsequently trained him in organic agricultural techniques and cattle rearing. Most significantly, a totally new world of knowledge and awareness opened up to him. The exposure led him to grasp the extent of his rights guaranteed to him as a person with disability. "Till then, I had no idea just how many government laws and schemes existed to help people like us", he remembers. CBM India financed his family's purchase of a cow and a cowshed just as Rajendra began organic cultivation in his fields. Today, not only has his family become significantly self-sufficient in milk and vegetables, they're able to sell their surplus in the market. From earning

5000 rupees in his painting days, their net income has increased almost five-fold today.

Rajendra, however, did not stop at his own emancipation. Empathy burned bright within him, and he began training other people with disabilities and their families in cattle rearing, all on his own. Seeing his initiative, CBM India chose Rajendra to lead the newly constituted Organisation of People with Disabilities (OPD) in their block. Rajendra immediately chalked out an engagement plan involving monthly

meetings with the members and adopted the motto Knowledge is Power.

**"While many beneficial schemes exist, a dearth of information and awareness about them among those who need them is a big missing link, and people with disabilities stay deprived. Awareness should reach each of them and I want to show them how life can get better by availing one's rights."**

Under his leadership, the OPD has grown to 300 members. The strength of their fraternity is now respected by high-ranking government officials, who cooperate well with their demands for better amenities and support. "Our People finally have awareness", beams Rajendra. He looks forward to scaling his painting business and setting up the OPD on the state level. In doing so, he dreams for himself as well as his community.

Sailing through Challenges

# with Grit and Grace

BEENA NAILWAL  
Ganai, Chaukhutiya

landed herself the opportunity to upskill when she came to know about the project through a livelihood survey in 2017.

Beena can't stop herself from appreciating CBM India's approach, where she was free to choose her field of interest to gain the necessary skills to develop and implement a profit-making business model. She was offered skill enhancement training in tailoring for 3 months and provided with a sewing machine. Beena, determined to explore her full potential, continued to work at the local Anganwadi during the first half of the day and tailoring post-lunch. Very soon, she became a master trainer and provided training to others. Beena feels that gaining a new skillset has allowed her to spend time more productively and realise her multitasking ability.

Beena is thankful to CBM for helping her with securing the Unique Disability ID (UDID), which is otherwise a tedious process to get through. She also participated actively in the monthly Community Based Inclusive Group (CBIG) meetings where women and other people with disability in the village come together to discuss different government welfare schemes and their rights and share best practices for business development. She was soon made the head of the group to lead such meetings owing to her leadership skills. However, Beena could not continue, given her work at the Anganwadi and family commitments.

When asked what inspires her to get to work every day, she says, "From childhood, I was ridiculed because of my disability. Today, I'm used to people passing such comments. I don't pay much heed and keep moving forward. I'm thankful that I can move around and get my things done. Many other people with disabilities cannot even move."

Beena Nailwal says,

"With my UDID card, I feel much more confident now as I have access to many benefits offered by the government. I have also learnt that this ID can be used anywhere across the country. We were given this ID during our training camps. Earlier, we had to show a range of certificates to avail ourselves of the benefits; now, it is just this one card we have to carry."

But Beena continues to face challenges in her personal life. She lost her husband and brother during the third wave of COVID in 2022 and currently lives with her 11-year-old daughter.

**"I was heartbroken but also realised that I must work and care for my daughter. I need to keep moving forward."**

**She wishes to take up more work and develop her tailoring business. With unwavering will and commitment, Beena turned each challenge into a steppingstone for success and proved that every cloud has a silver lining.**



**W**hen the going gets tough, the tough gets going' – aptly describes Beena Nailwal on her attitude towards hardships that life presented to her at every stage. Beena is one of the 300 people with disabilities in Chaukhutiya block who are part of CBM India's entrepreneurship development programme. Beena, who also works at the local Anganwadi,

# SYALDEY





# The Journey of a Homemaker to An Entrepreneur

KAVITA DEVI  
Deghat, Syaldey

This story of Kavita Devi, a resident of Deghat in Syaldey block, stands as a testament to every woman's ability to outgrow limitations and lead an empowered life when nurtured in the right direction. Prior to CBM India's intervention, Kavita would spend most of her time as a homemaker. The family owns a tiny piece of agricultural land in the village. She would work in the field that gave her a meagre income. Owing to her physical disability which restricts her right leg's mobility and functioning, she could not take up work that enabled her to make any significant contribution to the family's income. Her husband had to move to Punjab to secure a private job in a hotel to take care of the family. Kavita lives with her two children and in-laws. She was first approached by the CBM India team in 2017.

Kavita fondly recalls, "I have been associated with CBM since 2017. Initially, when the team offered to provide training in tailoring to set up my own enterprise, I was sceptical and denied the opportunity. However, when I discussed it with my family, my husband thoroughly encouraged me to take it up and enhance my skillset." She is glad to have a partner

who supported her through the journey and made her believe in her ability to learn a new skill and make a living out of it. She was trained under a master tailor for 3 months following which she was offered a tailoring machine to set up her own business. She practised stitching at home for a couple of months before taking orders from others. Kavita, who now owns a tailoring-cum-garments shop, excitedly says, "I like working from this little shop. This allows me to focus on my work. There can be too many distractions at home. Also, when I work from this shop in the market, there is better visibility

and a chance to get more work. Initially, there was no recognition. But as my skills improved people started to recognize. Now, many people in the village know me as someone who can deliver good quality work and hence choose to give me work. I started the business with one machine that CBM gave me and later expanded the business by taking a loan and setting up this shop."

Kavita says that she owes her success to CBM India's intervention and the constant support of her husband. She feels that the entire experience gave her the confidence that she can lead an independent life and, in the process, achieve financial stability. CBM also helped her secure the Unique Disability ID Card that gives her access to a plethora of benefits offered by

the government. Being part of the Community Based Inclusive Group (CBIG) made it possible for her to be aware of such schemes. Kavita hopes to scale up her business and provide employment to more girls as she is able to take up more orders with confidence now. She says, "I have a son and a daughter who go to school. My in-laws are also quite supportive. They take care of my kids which helps me to focus on my work. Today, I'm confident that people recognize me for my work and that I have an identity of my own. I keep telling my mother-in-law that even if all of a sudden, I need one lakh rupees, I can find someone who would lend me that amount because I have earned that goodwill through my work. I took the initiative to work and take the first step. This will open doors to new possibilities."



Kavita Devi says

"I'm confident that people recognise me for my work and that I have an identity of my own."

Harish chandra's

# Polyhouse of Hope



**F**orced to drop out of school by teachers who dubbed him a failure, Harish rewrites his fate and stands tall with his family.

Harishchand had to spend the first three decades of his life living in social isolation and fear. His father Kamlapati says of his childhood, "He was terrified of people and would avoid talking to everyone. We would often find him murmuring to himself, but he was absolutely unable to

speak to anyone else". This inability to carry out meaningful social interaction, coupled with his mental disability, robbed Harish of a normal childhood. While children his age were picking up crucial social skills interacting with their peers at the village primary school, this window of opportunity also closed on Harish soon. The day he passed class 5, his teachers refused to take him on for further education, citing his mental ability. Written off as a failure, Harish grew up at home thereafter.

His family had more to worry about. Making a decent living in their village wasn't easy. Harish's father, like most men, had migrated to bigger cities in search of a livelihood. However, when Harish was 3, Kamlapati had to leave his job in Delhi and return home to look after his family. Their small piece of land near their house wasn't enough to sustain cultivation economically. So, the family had no income. Despite these odds, Harish had shown potential. He once overcame his fear to rush out to the village and call others for help when his grandfather slipped and fell. And, despite being barred from school, he displayed perseverance. His father proudly remarks, "Despite all that, today he is able to read, and can write his name."

**HARISH CHANDRA**  
Chachroti, Syaldey

Little did anyone know back then that the boy indeed had within him a spark waiting to be nurtured. In 2017, CBM India's outreach programme reached their village and provided exactly the kind of care and personalized training that Harish needed. He was deemed suitable for Horticulture training, for which he was accompanied by his father. This training proved life changing for Harish. Not only did he pick up the science and art of growing vegetables organically but also gradually became more involved in social interactions. These were deliberate exercises designed by CBM India's field staff to allow him to slowly adjust to being in the company of others, and he even began speaking to people a little.

The father-son duo emerged from this training empowered with vital agricultural skills and

courage and set up a polyhouse on a parcel of their land with seed money from CBM India. Once unthinkable to them, today, Harish, his father (and brother) are successfully cultivating a wide variety of produce in this polyhouse. The local inclusive Farmer Producer Organization (iFPO), set up by CBM India and in which Harish and family own shares, gives them access to distant markets and sometimes allows them an income of up to Rs. 25,000 a month. Having spent his childhood alone, Harish is now able to tap into the support of not just his family but also the Community Based Inclusive Group (CBIG), which gives him the confidence and support to continue to be a contributing member of society.

Today, he sits comfortably beside his father who gratefully remarks, "He's able to do so much himself; he talks to everyone now. I was

constantly worried about him, but now he can work on his own with a little guidance. Our life changed completely after these people (CBM) arrived." Eventually, Harish finally speaks himself "I work in the polyhouse...I cut and gather hay, attend to the buffaloes, I manure the plants and harvest the wheat..." Standing tall on his own, Harish looks set to realize his family's dream of expanding their polyhouse operations and netting a higher income.



Harish Chandra's father says,

"He's able to do so much himself; he talks to everyone now. I was constantly worried about him, but now he can work on his own with a little guidance. Our life changed completely after these people (CBM) arrived."



# A Resilient Shepherd

of the Himalayan Mountains

DEVENDRA SINGH  
Chirkhanda, Syaldey

In the pursuit of finding a job to support his family, Devendra Singh left his village at 14 and moved to Haridwar. As fate would have it, soon after he arrived, he lost his right arm due to a tragic electric shock. Yet, undeterred by the setback, he returned to his village and took on various odd jobs to make ends meet.

“I encourage people with disabilities to have the courage to follow what they believe in and not let anyone else’s opinions or negativity get in the way of their pursuits.”

says Devendra Singh



“As a person with a disability, I have faced many challenges and have often been ridiculed by people, but I refused to let them define me,” said Singh.

Singh’s disability was eventually noticed by a group conducting a survey for CBM India, who stepped in to support his aspiration of becoming an entrepreneur in the goat-rearing business. After identifying ten other people with different disabilities from the

village, they helped form an Organisation of People with Disabilities (OPD), aimed at helping people with disabilities overcome the barriers that prevented their equal participation in the community.

Singh received assistance in skill development training and financial support from the group. He participated in a 5-day training programme in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, which taught him various details of the goat-rearing business, ranging from meat curing process to animal care. CBM India also offered preliminary financial support, with which Singh purchased 2-3 sheep as a formidable steppingstone. Despite facing initial challenges, such as a lack of pasture for grazing and the loss of some of his goats, Singh persevered and expanded his business. Rising above his dire conditions, he is now raising 20-30 goats. Today his profits from the goat-rearing

business, though not as much as he would like, are enough to support his household.

His success and self-motivation have inspired him to expand his business and venture into poultry as well. Even though this business was not his initial plan, he is now determined to expand it if he receives the necessary support.

He concludes by saying,

**“Disability can happen to anyone at any time, but it should not stop us from living our lives to the fullest.”**



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