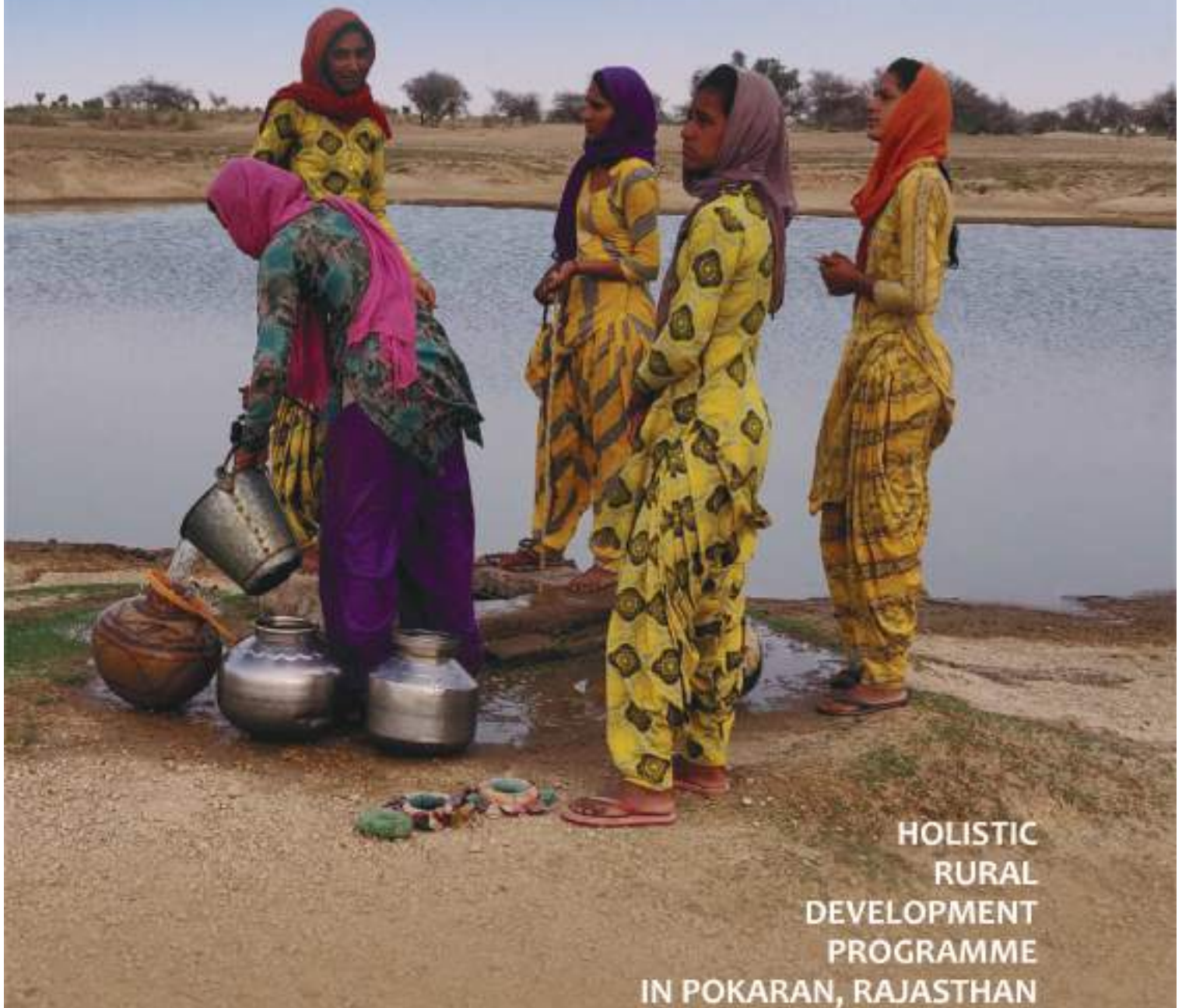


MARUGANDHA



HOLISTIC
RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME
IN POKARAN, RAJASTHAN



A STEP TOWARDS PROGRESS
Annual Report 2019-2020

Marugandha in Pokaran Impact Narrative 2019-2020

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कठिन रेगिस्तान में जीवन को आसान बना रहा 'उरमूल'

जागरण विशेष • सेतीली भूमि और अकाल जेजूनन कावे उन्ती-परिष्करी राजस्वान के कई क्षेत्र में बहती बहावताय की सुखद बहाव

कठिन रेगिस्तान में जीवन को आसान बना रहा 'उरमूल'।

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महिला हस्तकला प्रशिक्षण शुरू



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दैनिक भास्कर



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ग्रामीणों की मदद से ही स्कूल का विकास संभव



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महिलाओं को स्वरोजगार के माध्यम से स्वावलंबी बनाने के लिए प्रशिक्षण



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पोकरण व गोमट में शिविर, 650 मरीजों की जांच



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833 पशुओं का टीकाकरण



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Executive Summary

Marugandha is a journey of collaboration, courage and hope in the Thar desert.

The Thar Desert has its home in Rajasthan. The region boasts of unique geography, history, diverse people, and their culture. Historically, the landscape had to grapple with its challenges. The remoteness and isolation have resulted in its peripheral development. The people have not been able to fully reap the benefits of modern India's growth story. The western region of Rajasthan fares poorly in all the human development indicators. However, these struggles and challenges should be looked at as opportunities that remain untapped. Through these harsh conditions, the land, life, and living of the desert remain invincible. This strength and resolution to seek possibilities in these fights for survival is what Marugandha is all about.

HDFC Parivartan and Urmul Trust together launched efforts under the Marugandha Programme in 2019 towards aiding the people to realize their full potential by building their capacities, supporting them with infrastructure, and delivering the necessary services. Through the course of the last year, the interventions impacted around 70,000 individuals across 14 villages in 5 gram panchayats. With a cluster development strategy and an agenda to address the sustainable development goals set by the global community, focused activities across key verticals of social inclusion and livelihood generation were undertaken. This report is an attempt to collate the experiences and challenges along this journey of collaboration, courage, and hope.

“The Marugandha initiative, a partnership of HDFC Parivartan and Urmul Trust, is committed to bring a visible and sustainable change in the lives of local communities of Rajasthan inhabiting the remote and challenging areas of the Thar Desert. It gives us immense happiness to see that the project is supporting people in finding livelihood options, enhancing their capabilities through skill development and empowering them especially during COVID-19. We at Urmul would like to thank HDFC Parivartan for being our partners and supporting desert communities.

Avind Gijha
CEO, Urmul Trust



The Thar Desert



The western region Rajasthan is the home to the largest desert of the country- the Thar. This region boasts of a rich cultural and historical heritage. The desert abounds with its unique set of struggles, challenges, and opportunities. It supports resilient plants and animal species that are a testament to the indomitable spirit of the land, life, and living of the desert.

However, the desert is the harshest landscape. It supports sparse vegetation and plantation. It is further exacerbated by extreme weather conditions and the variability of monsoon. The vagaries of the weather range from dry hot summers where temperature shoots up to as high as fifty degrees Celsius and cold winters where the temperature hovers around one degree Celsius. The desert and its people are at the mercy of weather conditions. The 'gamble



Theory of Change

“ To achieve self-reliant holistic transformation in the rural communities, the members are linked with the required resources, skills, institutions, knowledge and technology. The communities would then be able to organize themselves for collective action, developing their skills and levels of confidence. ”

of monsoon' defines the fate of the people of this region.

Further, patriarchy, sharp inequality, rampant poverty, poor levels of education, high rates of child marriage, violence against women, adoption of purdah system, and low sex ratio have set this area back by several years. With the start of this millennium, the region witnessed a sharp increase in its population, development of new livelihood

opportunities in urban areas, limited employment avenues in rural areas, and the advent of climate change. They are grappling with these rapid developments that now underpin their existence. Amidst all these changes, the vulnerable communities have found it difficult to realize coping mechanisms. Their access to healthcare, education, banking or steady livelihoods has been poor. They require support to combat these challenges.

Jaisalmer

Untapped Gold in the Thar

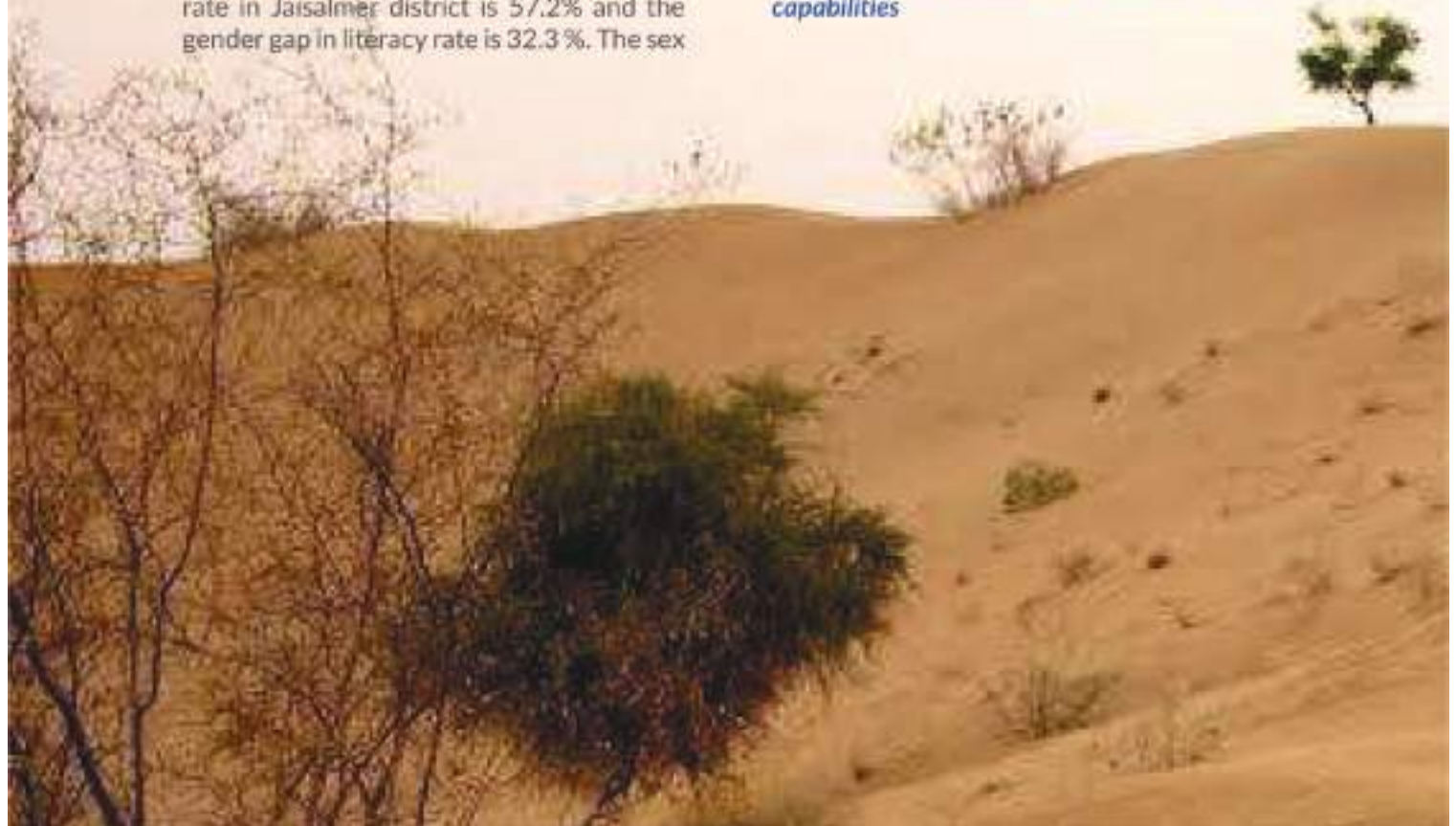
In this challenging land of Thar desert lies Jaisalmer, the largest district of Rajasthan. It was founded in the twelfth century. It has enjoyed a strategic location on the trade route. With caravans of traders passing through the area, it soon became prosperous. It has witnessed a chequered history of victories and defeats, glories and subjugation. Over the years, with its wind-swept sand dunes, camels and night sky, Jaisalmer has managed to captivate millions of national and international tourists.

The district is impoverished. It is the most backward district in a desert which is already deprived of bare resources. Jaisalmer district is barren, its famous sand dunes are sloped towards the Indus valley and the Rann of Kutch. There is no perennial river in the district and the region receives poor rainfall. The underground water level is very low. The district fares poorly in all the human development indicators. The literacy rate in Jaisalmer district is 57.2% and the gender gap in literacy rate is 32.3%. The sex

ratio is as low as 852 which is lower than the national average. In addition, the region witnesses extreme weather conditions with the temperature reaching as high as 52 degrees Celsius in summers.

It predominantly has a rural population. The economy of Jaisalmer district is mainly dependent on agriculture as the majority of the workers in the district are either cultivators or agricultural laborers. To secure their livelihoods, the men of the families are forced to migrate to urban areas and there is an absence of alternate livelihoods. In 2018, with such challenges, the district was included in the list of most backward districts of India by the Niti Aayog.

Jaisalmer is abundant with resources and opportunities. I am glad that HDFC Parivartan has given the people of the Thar this wonderful chance to achieve their full capabilities



Tapping Potential of Pokaran

Pokaran block in Jaisalmer district has witnessed even greater unfavorable conditions. The harshness has ravaged the lives and livelihood of the people here. There is an inequitable division of limited resources and opportunities, amidst innumerable variables it makes the living in this region full of struggles.

Pokaran is one of the poorest and socio-economically challenged blocks of the district which is entirely a sandy waste, forming a part of the great Indian desert. The general aspect of the area is that of an interminable sea of sand dunes, of all shapes and sizes, some rising to a height of 150 feet. Water is scarce and generally brackish.

Given the lack of water, only rainfed crops, such as bajra, jowar, and til are scanty. In remote villages basic drinking water is still a survival challenge. The locals are forced to buy water from vendors supplying water from tankers at unreasonably high rates. The social welfare schemes have poor reach amongst the beneficiaries. The area has a

very high level of illiteracy and further gender-based marginalization.

The education infrastructure is abysmal with a poor environment for quality education. Due to high poverty – children are forced to either never attend the school or are forced to drop out of the school and contribute to earnings for the family. The public health services delivery is infrequent, inadequate and remote.

It is important to shift the lens to understand the rich resources of the region. There are a plethora of opportunities lying ahead for the development of the region. The district received Government of India's support after in 2019 under the "Transformation of Aspirational Districts" Programme it was declared as an "Aspirational District". Under this initiative, the government has visualised improving the Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure of Jaisalmer. Umul with HDFC Parivartan launched focused efforts along these verticals to ensure the potential of this area could be tapped.



Cluster Development Bolstering Pokaran

The programme team believed that a bottom-up approach is essential to create an impact that matters. Keeping this approach in mind, with the aid of a needs assessment exercise and extensive dialogues with the community members, the common challenges and opportunities the region offered were identified. The communities in Pokaran faced a lack of social and cultural capital, infrastructure support, and delivery of state welfare services. The communities recommended that adopting an approach of mobilizing government resources, utilizing social capital, and garnering financial support could result in the prosperity of the identified region.

With adopting the principles of cluster development, the communities and the team believed it would ensure wholesome connectivity of all the stakeholders in the

ecosystem and ensure concerted efforts towards the progress of the area. Through the programme activities, gaining initial traction, appreciative cooperation from the local community and governance, and commitments for long term partnerships for future investments and integrated development in the Pokaran cluster was envisioned.

The programme interventions charted out were in tandem with the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations as well as the Aspirational Districts' programme principles launched by the Government of India. The goals identified by the communities in the grassroots would ensure that the vision of these macro goals were realised in their region as well. A multi-pronged approach to defining programme strategy and implementation were undertaken



Marugandha

Building a Sustainable Future

Through the Holistic Rural Development Programme under the aegis of HDFC Parivartan, Urmul Trust envisaged a dignified and healthy living among the rural communities and strengthened community self-governance. The integrated development outcomes were achieved through a host of interventions in non-farm livelihoods, education, natural resource management, health, education, WASH, and leadership training for women self help groups. The programme team launched efforts across the identified thematic areas through generating awareness, building capabilities of community members, and

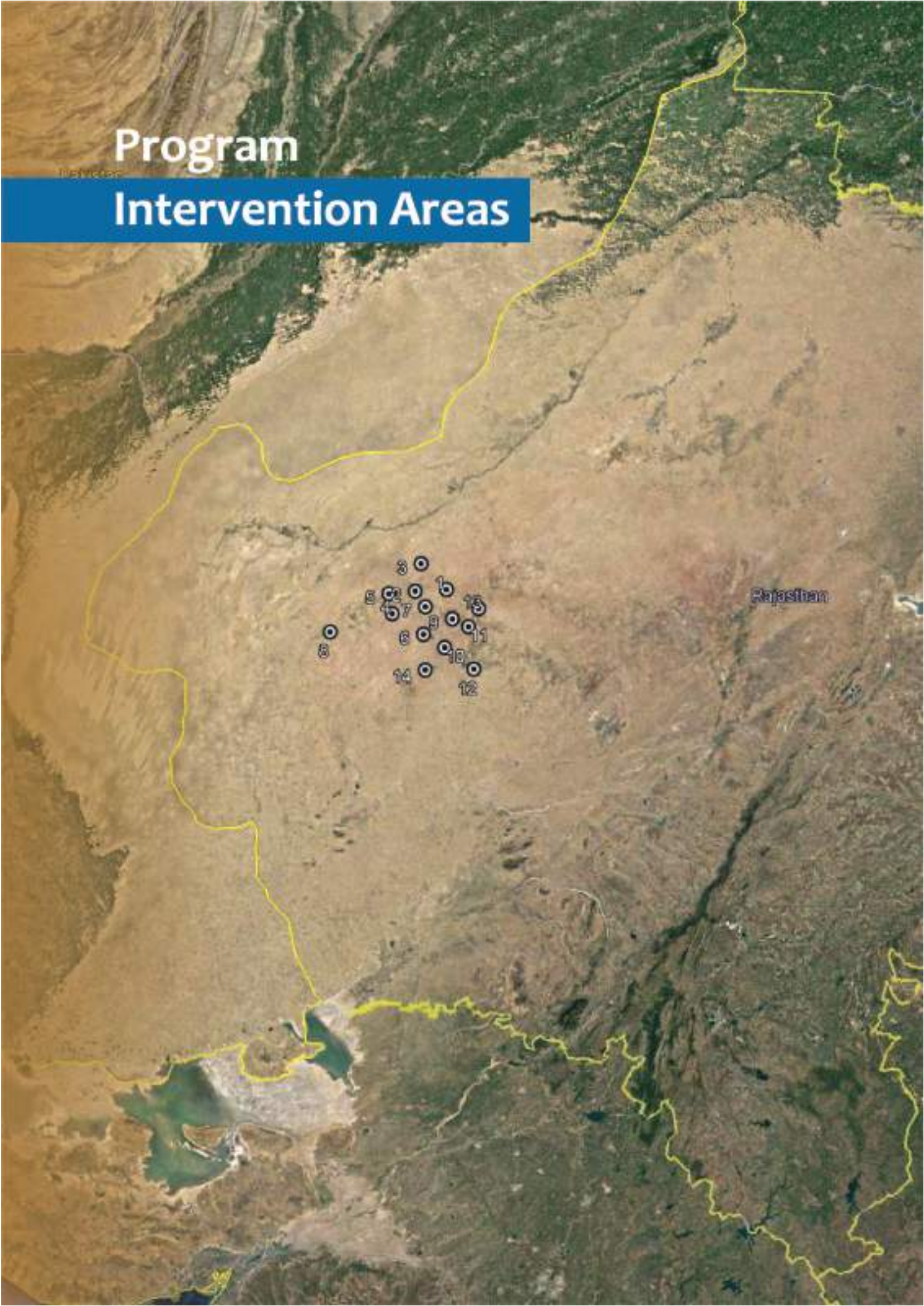
development of required infrastructural support.

The Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations for the global community are a set of principles that aim to ensure an inclusive and better future for the vulnerable groups. They address the challenges the world faces today. These goals are all interconnected and are envisioned to leave no one behind. Through the programme interventions the community and the programme team successfully addressed 16 such goals.



Program

Intervention Areas







Delhi

Project Expanse In Pokaran

1. Gomat
2. Odhaniya
3. Chandani
4. Chacha
5. Khetolai
6. That
7. Kelva
8. Suganpura
9. Biliya
10. Barli Nathoosar
11. Barli Manda
12. Ujlan
13. Shaheed Raelipura
14. Mehtabgarh

 Rajasthan State Boundary

 Village

Timeline

Phase 1

ASSESS AND IDENTIFY

Identified vulnerable groups that required support

Needs assessment conducted to ensure project efforts effectively respond to concerns of the community

Phase 2

INCUBATE AND EDUCATE

Discussions and focused meetings organised to mobilise community members

Increased awareness levels of the members through workshops and focused group discussions

Launched efforts to enhance the capabilities through training facilitated by domain experts

Phase 3

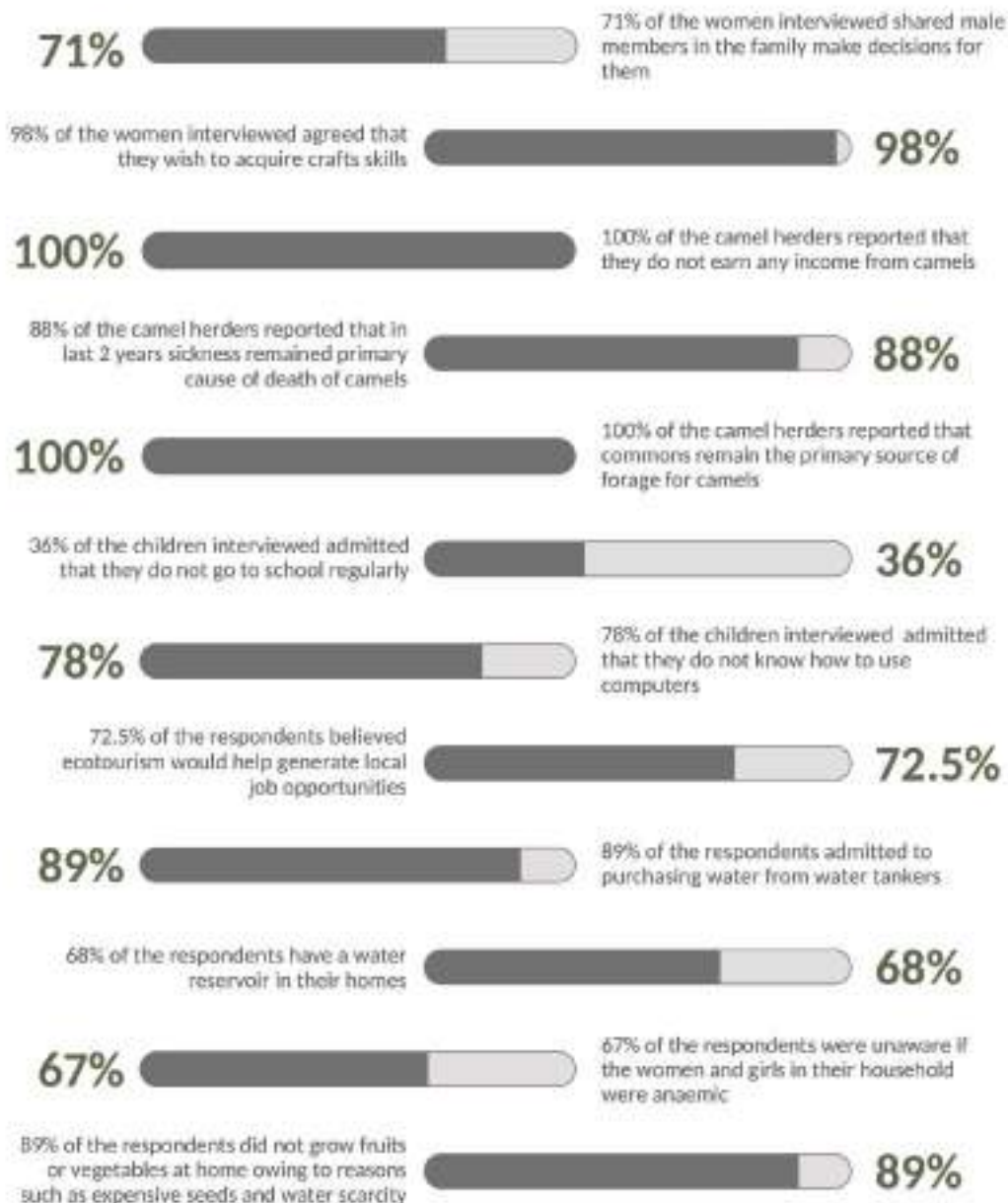
SCALE AND CONSOLIDATE

Ramped up infrastructural support under all the project verticals

Assessed feedback taken from the community to launch streamlined efforts in 2020-2021

Needs Assessment

This Needs Assessment exercise recorded interviews of 50 respondents that could potentially be impacted across each programme vertical. The research design entailed purposive random sampling with semi-structured interviews. The results were leveraged to design and constantly innovate programme interventions.



Impact

Evaluation Methodology

This impact assessment study was carried out parallelly with the programme interventions in June 2019 - March 2020. The impact assessment team consisted of the programme implementation team with technical support from Desert Resource Centre, Urmul group. The DRC team facilitated the capacity building of the programme team to ensure that they are able to critically assess the impact of the activities on the communities.

The DRC team had designed an extensive needs assessment study. This study recorded interviews of 50 respondents that could potentially be impacted across each programme vertical. The research design entailed purposive random sampling with semi-structured interviews. The results were leveraged to design and constantly

innovate programme interventions. The findings enabled the impact assessment team to monitor whether the expected impact was ensured through the programme.

All the programme verticals had designated coordinators. Observational research methods were adopted by the team to understand the learning journeys of the community members during the programme interventions. The programme coordinators were encouraged to leverage the Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge (ASK) Framework to understand the impact on the community members. The framework reflects the core beliefs and values behind the design of the programme activities. It uses the lens of how through specific interventions, communities could be empowered. It comprised of three parts:

Attitudes

When the community members are extensively engaging in activities and believe that through their sincere efforts they would be able to empower themselves.

Skills

When the community members believe that through their increased capacities, they could make better decisions and develop their problem-solving abilities.

Knowledge

When the members are aware of the dynamic challenges and opportunities in their environment and are aware of how they could responsibly address them.

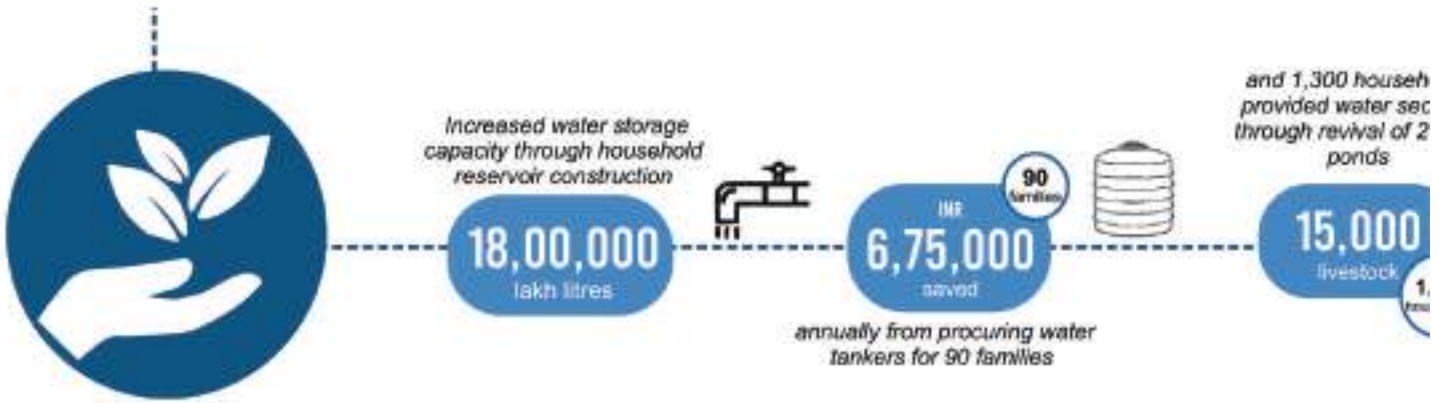
The impact assessment team relied on the project reports to collate all the data regarding the community interventions. In-depth discussions with the community members were conducted. By applying a

bottom-up approach, the programme was able to regularly reflect on the feedback and support the programme team to dynamically devise innovative interventions accordingly.



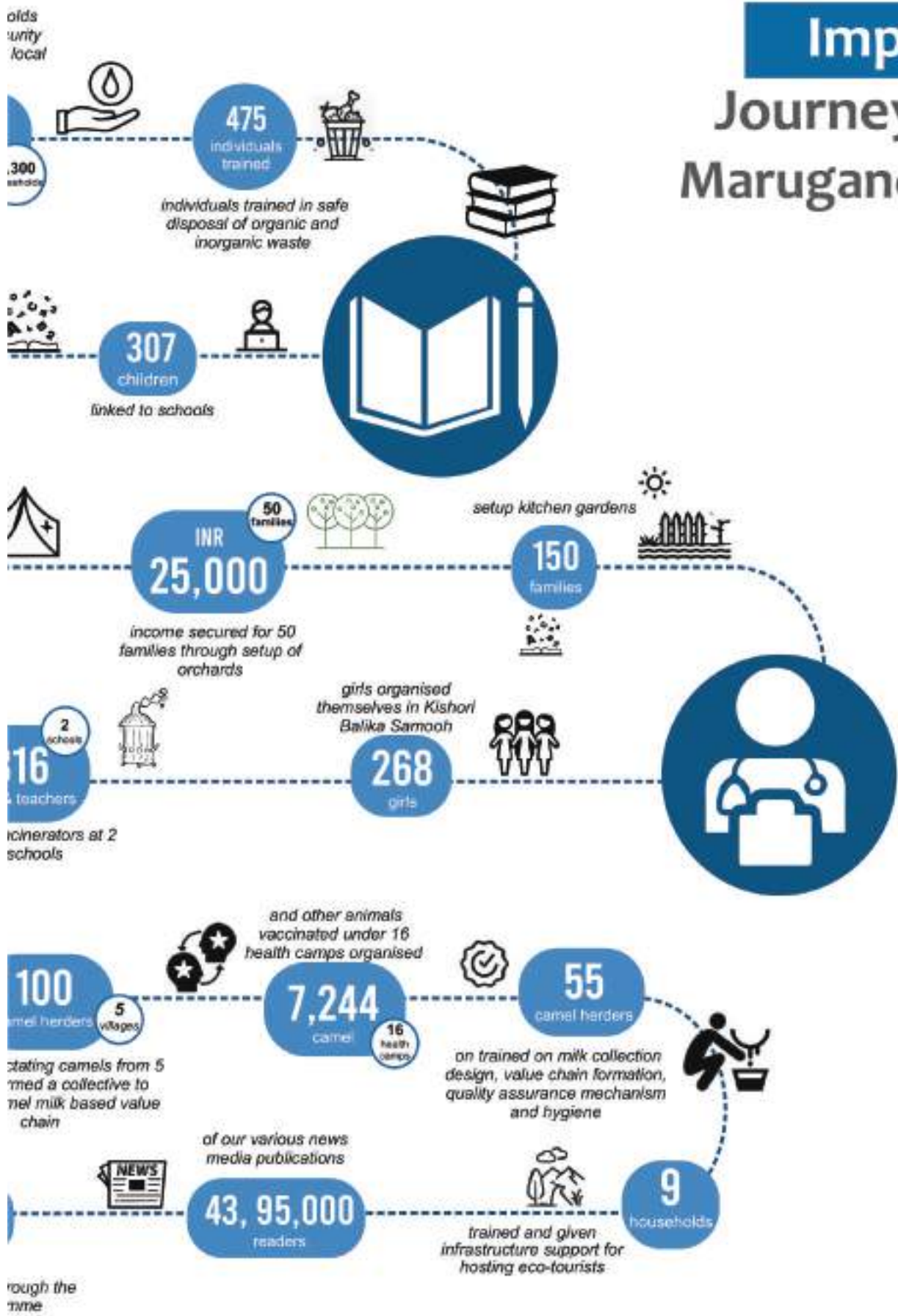
Photo Info:

- 1/ Sajjan Kanwar Bhati, Field Coordinator recording responses of locals during the baseline survey.
- 2/ Mr. Deendayal Arora, Program Manager reviewing updates and strategising the way forward with the programme team.
- 3/ Mr. Deendayal Arora, Program Manager to understand the expectations of the artisans from the skill training engaged in a conversation with them.
- 4/ Mr. Nagendra Mathur, Cluster Coordinator interacting with the camel herders to assess the impact of the programme interventions
- 5/ Ms. Ruksana, Field Coordinator interacting with the adolescent girls to assess the impact of the programme interventions.



Impact

Journey of Marugandha



rough the time

CRAFTS

Not In The Shadows Anymore



The people in the desert are left at the mercy of the vagaries of the weather. This has been worsened by the onslaught of climate change. The farmers depend on rains for a good cropping season. A poor monsoon results in most families being deprived of a steady source of livelihood and food security. The development of alternate livelihood avenues is necessary to ensure their survival. Urmul through continuous interactions with the community ideated and developed drought-proof livelihood options.

“ Earlier, I had no training in applique. The training sessions led by master trainers were so informative. I took training in two phases. I learned so much from the training. We learned how to make cushion covers, bags, table covers, etc. There is a lot of potential for further work. If the project further supports us, then we can hone our skills. I am sure this would be a good supplementary source to my family income and who knows from now maybe I could start my own venture in a few years. It has been wonderful to interact with all the ladies and learn together.

Anu Devi
Gamot village

”



The heritage of the region has been passed on to generations through varied handicrafts. The locals through their skills and talents have captured intricately designed and beautiful hand-crafted items. Jaisalmer is home to artisans who are extremely skilled in warp and weft, and applique.

Urmul with the aid of the community understood that by harnessing the traditional skills of the community, handicrafts could be developed that would ensure a steady source of livelihood. With the vision of socially and financially aiding the communities, Urmul launched specific interventions. They focused on the capacity building of the artisans and providing significant

infrastructure support. Experience in the Thar has taught the team that a society that leaves behind its women would never be able to succeed. Through programme interventions under Marugandha, key activities were charted under the crafts vertical to speed towards the goal of creating self-reliant women that reflect progress with each step.

Through the interventions, building holistic development of the capacities of these women and ensuring that no woman gets left behind in this region were the primary focus. These women would then lead transformational economic changes and provide a robust means of income across the rural landscape.

Photo Info:

1/ Indra Devi an artisan hailing from That village displaying her weaving skills

Crafts Capacity Framework

A multi-pronged approach was adopted. In the year 2019-2020, the programme focused on improving artisan capabilities through training and providing vital infrastructure support. The focus areas for the crafts interventions remained in Gomat, Chacha and That villages. The interventions

are at a nascent stage in creating crafts value chain into a profit-making, community-owned, and sustainable business venture. The approach works towards attaining the vision of artisans earning a good income from the handicrafts they produce.



Programme Interventions

Towards skilling our women

Capacity-Building Measures

Conducted skill development training by master trainers in applique, reverse applique and weaving

Infrastructure support

Set up and renovated 3 craft centers to encourage women to operate at a professional level.

10 handlooms and 9 sewing machines were procured for the artisans.



Impact Flow

The programme interventions enabled women and their families to develop a crafts-based livelihood which would serve as a drought-proof alternative livelihood avenue.

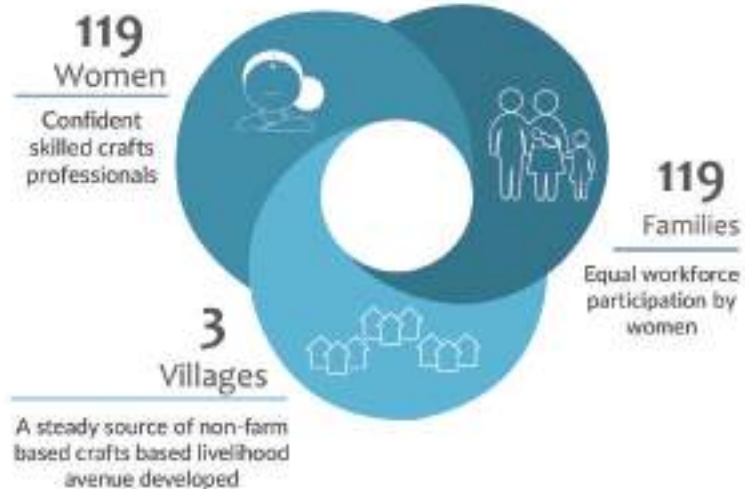


Photo Info:

- 1/ Weaving capacity building training for the artisans organized in That village.
- 2/ Artisans honing their skills in applique in a training session being conducted in Chacha village.
- 3/ Applique capacity building training organized in Chacha village.
- 4/ Refresher weaving training being conducted in That village.
- 5/ A woman artisan receiving hands-on training in weaving in That village.
- 6/ Artisans engaged in an applique training session being conducted in That village.

CAMEL

Saving The Ship Of The Desert



Animal husbandry is a traditional occupation and the backbone of the communities in rurscape. In the Thar desert, it's more pertinent as a scope and means of livelihoods, given the high variability and unpredictability of rains. Cattle, goats, camels, and sheep are reared in abundance and provide for milk and wool. The camels have enjoyed high popularity and demand amongst the herding communities of Rajasthan for its resilience to the climate of the region and the functions it has played. It is a unique feature of the Thar desert.

“ I had 45 camels, but I had left them all in the open and believed that the camels were a burden on us owners. In the month of September 2019, when we were taken on an exposure visit to Amul dairy in Gujarat and witnessed the camel milk collection efforts, we found it incredible. That one visit changed our minds. I had left my camels in the open and after this visit made an effort to found them within a month. I actively participated in various training and workshops in the Marugandha program. I enjoyed teaching the young camel herders about how to maintain the nutrition, hygiene, and treat them during diseases. 30 of my camels would be contributing to the milk collection efforts. We are eagerly waiting for the BMC to be set-up.

Bajiram
Gangaram ki Dhani village

”



Their interdependence with community and living has meant special care and utility for the animal.

Over the years, however, there has been a significant decline in the population of this animal - a crucial component of desert living

and the overall ecology of the region. In 2014, in a well-meaning gesture, the government declared camel as the state animal to prevent its slaughter, trade, and illegal transportation. However, this measure destroyed whatever little income the herders could earn from their camels.

Programme Interventions

Towards building a robust camel-based value chain

In order to contain the decline of camels in the region and open an alternative stream of livelihood for the significantly marginalized communities rearing these animals, a significant institutional mobilization under Marugandha was undertaken in 2019-2020.

Under the Programme spearheaded by HDFC Parivartan, Urmul has furthered the agenda of enhancing alternative livelihoods and growth ecosystems for camels and herders. This will develop new employment opportunities for the herding community.

Photo Info:

1/ Nawab Khan, a camel herder with his herd of 200 camels in Kelawa village

The interventions focused on building a camel milk collection centre and working towards mobilizing, training and

institutionalizing the camel herders towards a livelihood mechanism.



Path Forward

The Camel Partnership

Urmul Trust along with partner organizations is building a Camel Partnership that aims to mobilize the camel herding community, knowledge and potential. Together with the community, the team would be facilitating herders to take charge of their livelihood and drive an inclusive, accountable, collaborative and sustainable enterprise ecosystem. It currently has focused interventions across three core verticals- communities, enterprises and policies. The Partnership plans to systematically engage with stakeholders, create a collaborative policy ecosystem, design scalable enterprise models, promote market creation, foster cadre of leadership and micro-entrepreneurs.

Spread across three years, the partnership has a targeted reach of 5000 households affecting over 25000 individuals in the western districts of Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur by 2022. The aim is to mobilize knowledge and resources from other Camel Partnership locations of Bajju and Chimnana clusters and converge it with the Pokaran cluster.

The Pokaran cluster would serve as a pilot initiative and the same model would be replicated in other locations. Under the Camel Partnership, Pokaran would be part of a thriving ecosystem for camel-based enterprises.



Photo Info:

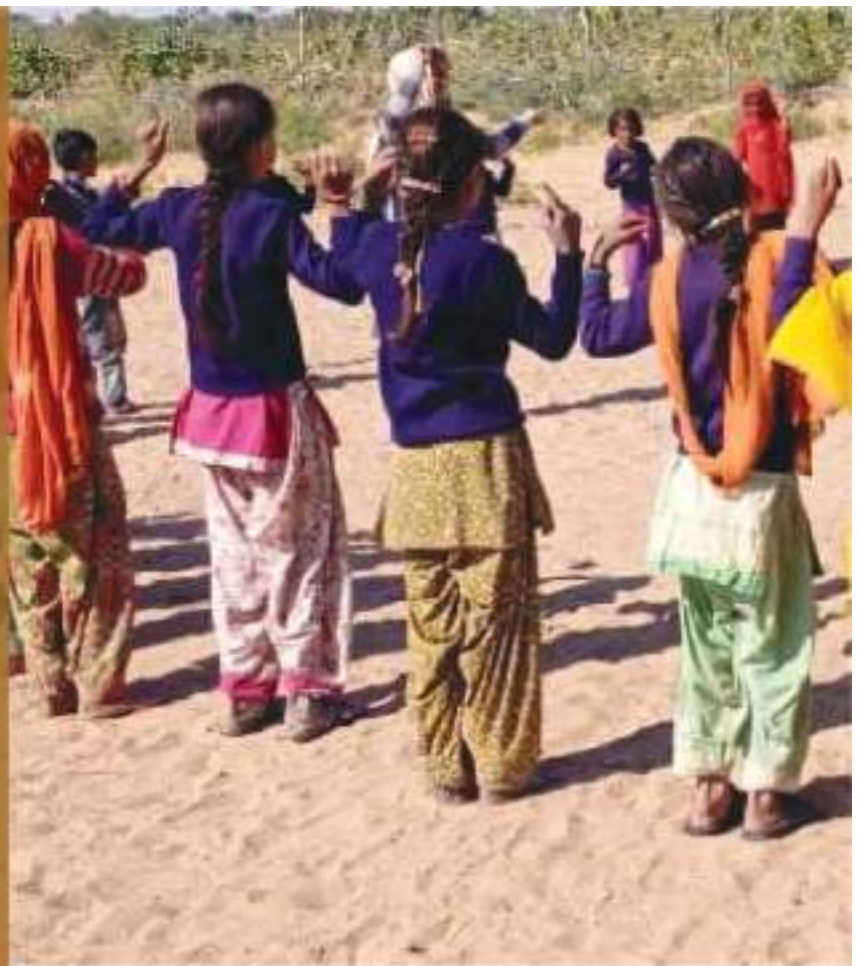
- 1/ Mr. Manoj Mishra, Director, Livelihoods (C/P) and Mr Arvind Ojha, Chief Executive, Urmul Trust meeting camel herders at village Ujlan
- 2/ Animal vaccination camp being conducted at village Khetolai.
- 3/ A herd of camels at a common property resource in village Ujlan.
- 4/ Training session on value chain addition for camel herders.
- 5/ Exposure visit of camel herders to Amul dairy in Kutch, Gujarat.

EDUCATION

Moving Up The Ladder



Poor literacy levels have plagued the people of western Rajasthan. Only the cities and towns boast of higher literacy levels whereas the rural Rajasthan is bereft of those services. From the very beginning, Urmul believed that for a society to progress it is essential to ensure delivery of quality services in the remotest rural areas. For decades together, the interventions have focused on up-skilling the teachers and building last-mile connectivity of quality education.



“ Last year, during the activities organised, we used to meet the program team every month. They informed us that to ensure menstrual hygiene we should be using sanitary napkins and trained us to make sustainable cotton sanitary pads at home. They installed incinerators for us to safely dispose napkins in our schools. Also, there were discussions organised that helped us overcome our hesitation about discussing issues on menstruation. I now try to carry out informative conversations with the women in my family, my younger siblings and my friends in school about this. Ruksana ji has been of great help. I consider her as my sister and would be always grateful for her efforts.

Pooja
Suganpura

”



A needs assessment was conducted in June 2019 in the Programme intervention areas. With the aim of girls to be the primary partners in the interventions under this vertical, focused discussions were carried out with them.

In the past one year under the programme, Urmul and HDFC launched efforts to address the glaring gaps in the education ecosystem. The mission was to ensure 90% of the children in the programme areas achieve class appropriate learning levels in 14 villages and improve the interest of the children in learning.

Programme Interventions

Leaving no child behind

Through the programme interventions, the aim was to ensure that no child was left behind. The children were provided with the

latest technologies and learning materials to ensure that they remain motivated to complete their formal education.

Photo Info:

1/ Girls enrolled in bridge course engaging in groups activities in Shaheed Raipura village



Infrastructure Support

1. Towards Water safety and security:

Repaired water reservoirs to ensure that students have access to safe and secured water. These water reservoirs ensured water safety and security to over 700 students.

2. Hygiene first:

Installed 2 sanitary napkin disposal units were installed in the government schools of Kelawa and Chacha. They were using inconsistent and unsafe methods of sanitary pad disposal. To systemise the same and lessen the amount of waste generation through these incinerators there are around 316 girls and teachers presently using these machines.

3. Leveraging ICT for a Model School:

Developed a model school in Kelawa village. Understanding the importance of Information and Communications Technology in improving learning outcomes this model school was developed. There were 357 students enrolled from classes one to ten. The existing computers of a school were repaired and the students had started using them. The aim was to ensure that a motivating and conducive environment for interactive learning is developed.



Generating Awareness and Capacity Building

1. Collaboration in School Functioning:

Encouraged establishment of 14 School Management Committees in the programme villages. It is essential that parents are continuously aware and contribute to the school activities of their children. The formation of these committees would ensure that the parents are involved.

2. Kishori Balika Samooh:

Identified 268 girls from the ages 11 to 18 years and organised them in groups to increase awareness around the issues of child rights such as child marriage, girl child education, menstrual hygiene, the importance of sports etc.

3. Child Rights:

Trained 268 girls to make sustainable sanitary pads at home. They were even made aware about their rights under protection of children from sexual offences, good and bad touch, gender roles and were motivated to question gender stereotypes.

4. Bridging the gap:

Encouraged and re-enrolled 300 children through continuous dialogues to continue their formal education. With the support of the team they re-enrolled and began regularly attending classes. Besides, for 35 children introduced a six months long bridge course. 7 girl drop-outs were motivated and re-enrolled for class 10 examinations.

5. Access to quality sports equipment and learning materials:

Distributed equipment for sports such as badminton, cricket, handball, among others in ensuring the students have access to good equipment and remain motivated to actively participate in games. Also, 1900 informative books on varied themes were distributed in schools which would be accessed by 3,000 students.



Photo Info:

- 1/ Inspection visit conducted at the Kelawa Secondary school to assess the internal functioning.
- 2/ Programme team distributing the sanitary napkin disposal machine to school in Chacha village.
- 3/ Inception Meeting of School Management Committee in village That.
- 4/ Kishori balika meeting conducted in village Chacha.
- 5/ Workers painting the anganwadi centre in Chacha village.
- 6/ Stationary distributed to students at the bridge course in Shahid Raylipura.
- 7/ Training of making sanitary napkins at homes for girls in Urmul Pokaran campus.

ECO-TOURISM

A Community-Led And Community-System Tourism Initiative



In most villages the income generation sources are limited. With vagaries of weather affecting farm yield and limited non-farm livelihood options, communities are often left with too little resources to live on.

In the desert landscape, ecotourism should be developed as an alternative non-farm livelihood avenue. Through an ecotourism enterprise, supplementary income would be generated in the households resulting in the creation of green employment opportunities in villages.



“ The work of the Marugandha project started in our village last year. Initially, we felt that this programme like other interventions would be limited to distribution of food items / food items similar to other projects. But, the interventions in the project were vastly different and focused on livelihood generation. I was interested in the EcoTourism initiative. In this house, the decoration of the extra rooms was improved by making them rooms for the guests. My village is located on NH15, which leads towards Jaisalmer. For this I have registered my house as a foreign guest house on Google. The hope is that the movement of guests of the Marugandha Project will also begin in the upcoming tourism season.

Videsh Kumar
Chacha village

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Ecotourism programmes are beneficial for achieving natural resource conservation and improved livelihoods of host communities. For rural communities, whose main sources of livelihood are natural resources such as forests, the programme provides a more

sustainable way of managing these natural resources by fostering conservation through the involvement of local communities, which in turn provides economic incentives to the communities.

Programme Interventions

Creating local livelihood opportunities

Efforts were launched with the vision to create a village-level community-based ecotourism enterprise across the Programme areas. The communities were involved by upskilling them and providing a fresh impetus to community-level conservation initiatives. The initiatives were launched in a systematic manner to ensure that by 2020-2021 every household engaged in community-based tourism should achieve an increment of 10% in their family income.

Interventions were initiated in the Pokaran cluster. Four villages- That, Gomat, Chacha and Khetolai were identified to be part of the Pokaran cluster. Infrastructure upgrading work has been achieved. 9 households are now ready to host eco-tourists. Further, efforts are now being focused on developing a sophisticated marketing interface.

Photo Info:

1/ Eco tourists shopping in Urmul Marusthali Bunker Vikas Samiti store.



Capacity Building

- Trained 25 family members from 9 families in hospitality. They were taught on how to respond to the needs and concerns of their guests.
- Trained members from the 9 families in cooking by a Master trainer from Jaisalmer. This was to ensure that the hosts are sensitive to the varied culinary tastes of their guests.
- Hired and trained a theatre group for performing for the guests at these homestays. The group has even performed in front of the members of the villages in programme areas to encourage them to support initiatives under Marugandha.

Planning is underway for a monsoon retreat cum festival around Pokaran for the month of July-August (would depend on the lifting off COVID-19 national lockdown).



Infrastructure Development

- Identified 15 households in the Pokaran cluster. These 15 households would be contributing to 20 homestays rooms in the inventory. There was focused support extended to only 9 households out of the 15 mapped households.
- 9 families were supported with financial aid for developing infrastructure such as toilet facilities such as wash basins, water tanks among others.

In 2020-2021, the rest of these households would be included in the programme activities.

Community-based Ecotourism Ensures A Host Of Benefits

01

Eco Focus

Sensitizing the locals and tourists about the desert ecology

02

Local Focus

Ensuring local biodiversity is maintained

03

Community Focus

Empowering community with drought-proof livelihood alternative

04

Cultural Focus

Promoting local culture and experiences

Motivated to realize the vision of ensuring holistic rural development, Urmul has been constantly devising means to converge Programme activities. In the community-based ecotourism experience, the tourists would be able to visit and explore the craft centres. In addition, the tourists would be offered products developed from camel milk. Converging those experiences would ensure that the community gets the impetus to fully develop these livelihood avenues and offer a wholesome experience for the ecotourists.

Rajasthan with its wide and colorful cultural heritage attracts lots of tourists, the programme is offering a greener and responsible tourism experience for travelers looking for fulfilling experience and simultaneously help generate income for households in these villages.



Photo Info:

- 1/ Tourists visiting Arganwadi center in That Village.
- 2/ Tourists visiting houses in That village to understand the people and their lifestyle of desert.
- 3/ Urmul Trust team interacting with the the hosts in That village.
- 4/ Mr. Bhanwarlal's house that has been set-up to host eco-tourists in That village.
- 5/ Tourists from France visiting That Village.
- 6/ Community members receiving inception training on cooking at Urmul Campus, Pokaran.
- 7/ Eco tourists receiving a warm welcome at Bhanwarlal's home in That village.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Building Sustainable Solutions



The desert is the harshest landscape and it is blessed with poor natural resources. Barren landscape, low rainfall, sparse plantation, water scarcity, and extreme temperatures make Pokaran one of the most difficult to survive in. Apart from the minimal groundwater, high salinity in the water is a key challenge in water security.

Water woes are what binds the lives of the people in the region. Irrespective of the season the people have to struggle for water. Historically, the women in the families have to traverse large distances to fetch water from the rain-fed water reservoirs.

“ Under Marugandha programme, in the year 2019-20, we planted plants and vegetables in our garden. Who would have thought that in this harsh desert we could grow them in our homes. For the first time in all these years, under the natural resource management activities, we were happy to find green vegetables in our courtyard. In the coming months, we plan to primarily use them for the needs of our family first and the surplus fruits and vegetables could be sold in the market. Our main aim is to first address the gaps in nutrition of our family members. Then we could sell the market surplus to supplement the incomes of the households.

Chhamiya Kanwar Bhakhar Singh
Biliya village

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Lately, people have been relying on private vendors who supply water at exorbitant rates. A family in summer ends up spending around INR 500 for a tanker that provides 4,000 liters of water. On average a family of 6-8 members has to rely on water supply from 2-3 tankers every month. A region where most of the families have just enough resources these added costs causes stress on the family income.

With the onslaught of climate change, the region has witnessed increased

desertification. A recent population explosion combined with an increase in per capita consumption of water has only added to the already stressed realities by creating tremendous pressure on the limited water resources.

The programme interventions were launched with the vision to promote active ownership of the community on their natural resources by spreading awareness toward the conservation, development and management of its natural resources.

Programme Interventions

Towards conservation and management of natural resources

Motivated to realise the vision of ensuring holistic rural development, Urmul has been constantly devising means to converge programme activities. The sustainable use

of resources would ensure that the natural assets are maintained to ensure that the programme areas remain a good eco-tourism hotspot.

Photo Info:

1/ Renovated and revived pond in Barli Nuthasar

The programme team encouraged the community to adopt an approach that focused on self-reliance. By promoting decentralized management and utilization

of natural resources the locals were encouraged to feel responsible for maintaining the ecological balance.



Infrastructure Support

1. *Water security and safety measures*

- Constructed 38 new tanks and renovated 52 existing tanks to store 18 lakhs liters and enabled 90 families to save INR 6,75,000 annually on procuring water from tankers.
- Revived and desilted two ponds, water for 15,000 livestock and 1,300 households were secured and water storage capacity of 1,00,00,000 liters was added.



Generating Awareness and Capacity Building

1. *Encouraged adoption of waste management techniques*

- 475 individuals were trained in segregation and safe disposal of organic and inorganic waste.
- Encouraged households to utilize organic waste for cattle feed and manure

2. *Improving nutrition and livelihood opportunities through adoption of kitchen gardening practices*

- Initiated setting up of kitchen garden for 150 families to ensure they are able to secure good nutrition
- Encouraged setting up 50 orchards wherein fruit trees such as berry, gunda, and pomegranate among others were grown. This ensured an additional source of the annual income of 25,000-28,000 per household after 3 years.

3. *Promoted adoption of new technologies*

- Experimented on green fodder production through climate grow house technique was launched. A machine that leveraged the hydroponic technique was set-up in the Urmul campus in Pokaran.
- There were plantations such as wheat and jowar grown. These plantations would serve as a good source of green fodder for livestock.
- Encouraged 75 families to set-up Azolla pits. The plantations proved to be a rich source of nutritive fodder for the livestock and resulted in a remarkable increase in the milk yield of goats and cows.

4. *Adopted a multi-pronged strategy*

- Steady availability of safe water to the most marginalized and vulnerable families of the community
- The community invested in drought mitigation and resilience infrastructure
- Improvement in agro-ecological conditions and biodiversity
- Development of active ownership in the community on maintaining their natural resources



Photo Info:

- 1/ Women engaged in pond renovation in Badlee Nathusior village.
- 2/ Local women engaged in pond renovation in That village.
- 3/ Women renovating the pond in That village.
- 4/ Azolla grass bringing in green in the desert in Ujala village.
- 5/ Excellent growth of crop under the experimental hydroponic technique being showcased in Urmul Campus, Pokaran.
- 6/ Reviving reservoirs in That village.
- 7/ Waste management training being organised for locals at Urmul campus.
- 8/ Tanka (water reservoir) constructed under the HRDP Marugandha programme in Gomati village.

HEALTH

Improving Access To Better Care



In western Rajasthan, appropriate medical facilities are available at the block level while any specialised diagnosis and treatment can be made only at the district headquarter level. The number of health centres are spread so far apart that one covers an area of sometimes as large as 50-kilometre radius. Even at these health centres the number of the patients that can be catered to fall starkly short of the actual need. On the other end, any private medical service is unavailable and if at all- it exists- it charges exorbitantly high.

“ I have not been able to get my medical checkups done for a really long time. I visited the doctor at a health camp organised in my village. The doctor diagnosed me with asthma and other allergies. I had these problems a long time back but never could go to a doctor. This health camp helped me get diagnosed for my ailments. After the health camp, I made it a point to take my health seriously. I now frequently visit the government hospital in Pokaran and I have been feeling much better. I am glad that under Marugandha programme there was focus on the health of the women and girls especially.

Kratu Devi
Thaat village

”



Infrastructural constraints are further intensified by lack of substantive knowledge, awareness and behavioural limitations about health. Under this

initiative, the team achieved the holistic vision of improving health, nutrition and their access to healthcare.

Programme Interventions

Healthier Families



Access to
Services

1. General Health Camps for community

Conducted 19 general health camps for women and girls in the 14 programme villages. Through the course of the camps the community were provided healthcare support for major diseases in the region through diagnosis and tests including anemia, asthma, allergies including general fever, flu and cold. Free of cost medicines were also distributed to the patients. 1504 patients in Pokaran block were reached through these camps.

Photo Info:

1/ Ganga Karwar happily looks on and shows her kitchen garden in Biliya village



Generating Awareness and Capacity Building

1. *Training on Menstrual Hygiene*

With 39% of the girls in the needs assessment reported that they do not use sanitary pads and they remain at the risk of being infected. Trained the girls on how to make sustainable sanitary pads at home ensuring that every girl gets access to a safe and steady source of sanitary napkins. Conducted 2 training sessions with adolescent girls to train them on sewing sanitary napkins at home and on usage and disposal of these napkins.

2. *Community Awareness programme on Health & Hygiene*

Under this vertical, activities focused on increasing awareness around the issues of child rights such as child marriage, girl child education, menstrual hygiene, the importance of sports etc. Girls from ages 11 to 18 years were identified and were encouraged to organise themselves into groups.

3. *Awareness through SHG Meetings*

Conducted discussions within Self Help Group members on hygiene practices, female health issues, use of sanitary napkins and infant care were initiated.



Infrastructure Support

1. *Improving nutrition and livelihood opportunities through adoption of kitchen gardening practices*

Set-up kitchen gardens with 150 families. Seeds for vegetables such as spinach, carrot, and cabbage were distributed. The families were taught on kitchen gardening practices. Also, 50 orchards with fruit saplings such as berry, gunda, and pomegranate among others were set-up. This was done to ensure the families were able to secure good nutrition.

2. *Model Anganwadi Development*

Renovated 4 Anganwadi centres to lay a strong foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the children in the region, interventions focused on improving the infrastructure and capacities of anganwadis in the program areas. The Anganwadi centres in Chacha, Khetolai, Badali Manda and That villages were painted with informative quotes, images, people and scenarios. Anganwadi workers, helpers, sathis, and ASHA sahyoginis on issues around nutrition, health and WASH to ensure quality care of the kids attending these centres. Training of 12 Anganwadi workers catering to 150 children were organised to inspire children and their families to maintain a clean, hygienic and safe environment.

The interventions ensured that not only infrastructure support was provided to the families but the families were made aware of how they could think about the health of

their family members in the long-run. The activities undertaken ensured that the family pays special attention to the health of the women and girls.



Photo Info:

- 1/ Kishori balika meeting in Badlee Manda village.
- 2/ Sustainable sanitary napkin making training in Ujlaan village.
- 3/ SHG meeting with women organised in Selvi village.
- 4/ Doctor conducting check-ups in a health camp organised for women and children in Biliya village.
- 5/ Doctors conducting check-ups in a health camp organised in Biliya village.
- 6/ The artist being felicitated for their contribution in revamping the walls of school in Kelawa village.
- 7/ Sanitary napkin disposal machine and its usage being explained to students in Kelawa village.
- 8/ Locals engaged in kitchen gardening in Badlee Nathusar village.

Marugandha Events

“Come, Let's Take a Step Towards Progress”

Honourable Cabinet Minister Saleh Mohamad & Mr. Jasmeet Singh Anand, Banking Head HDFC Bank formally inaugurated the HDFC Bank Parivartan, Holistic Rural Development Project Marugandha at Urmul Campus, Pokaran. Mr. Mohammad had remarked that the initiation of rural tourism in the area under this project would be a blessing as the culture and traditional weaving and craft add to the endless possibilities. He had congratulated Urmul Trust for their engagement with the camel herders for the conservation and initiation of setting up camel milk storage units in the area.

Mr. Jasmeet Singh Anand, Banking Head, HDFC Bank, participated in the ongoing crafts training at That village. He also

promised the opening of the bank's branch in Pokhran and prioritising the youth of the region for employment opportunities. He congratulated Urmul for reaching out and addressing the grassroot livelihood issues through the programme.

"I thank the programme team for choosing Pokaran for this intervention. The setting up of new livelihood avenues would be a blessing for the value chains in the desert. The initiation of rural tourism will support traditional craft and engagement with the camel herders for initiation of camel milk value chain could add to endless possibilities. We are all looking forward to a fruitful partnership."

Mr. Saleh Mohammed
Honorable Cabinet Minister



Women's Day Celebration

An equal world is an enabled world

A society that leaves behind its women would never be able to succeed. Through project interventions, the team had consciously charted key activities to speed towards the goal of creating self-reliant women that reflect progress with each step. These women would then lead transformational economic, social and cultural changes across the rural landscape. Historically, these women had poor access to healthcare, education, credit and limited opportunities. Through the project interventions, extensive focus was on

building holistic development of the capacities of these women and ensured that no woman gets left behind. On March 8, 2020 the women and girls from all the programme areas got together to celebrate International Women's Day. They shared their stories of struggles, resilience and learning under the programme. All of them voiced the same sentiment of looking forward to building a strong association and building their capacities under the HDFC Parivartan.



Photo Info:

- 1/ The HRDP Marugandha Pokaran team with the guests from HDFC Bank in Urmul campus, Pokaran.
- 2/ Honourable Cabinet Minister Saleh Mahamad addressing the audience in Urmul campus, Pokaran.
- 3/ The programme team interacting with the guests of honour in Urmul campus, Pokaran.
- 4/ Mr. Jasmeet Singh Anand, Banking Head HDFC Bank addressing the audience in Urmul campus, Pokaran.

- 1/ The programme team with the guests of honour in Urmul campus, Pokaran.
- 2/ Mr. Surendra Kumar Prajapat, Circle Officer (Pokaran) addressing the audience in Urmul campus, Pokaran.
- 3/ Annu Devi and Leela Devi addressing the audience and sharing their experiences in Urmul campus, Pokaran.
- 4/ Mrs. Anjana Meghwal, Zila Pramukh (Jaisalmer district) interacting with locals in Urmul campus, Pokaran.

Case Stories

Towards a safer future



Kavita,
Ujlan Village

Kavita hails from a family where menstruation is a taboo. She is a student of class eighth and would skip school for a

week every month during her periods and this incurred huge loss to her learning. After she attended the training on making sanitary pads at home, she is now encouraged to never miss her classes owing to menstruation. She has also actively participated in the WASH training sessions and learned about maintaining personal cleanliness and hygiene levels both at school and home. When asked about her takeaway from these sessions, she confidently expresses, *"Now, I make sanitary napkins not only for myself but also my mother and sister in law at home. I also dispose of these napkins in the sanitary chamber."*

Taking the future into their own hands

Rekha
Chacha village

The families in western Rajasthan are the poorest in the country. The harshness of the desert makes it more difficult for them to sustain. Farming is rain-fed here and poor monsoon could result in poor levels of family income. 19 years old Rekha comes from a family with just bare resources. She had limited exposure but she always envisioned meaningfully supplementing her household income. When she got to know about the programme, she approached the team and got herself enrolled for the applique training being conducted in her village. She showed keen interest in the training and constantly sought feedback from the master trainer. Ganpat Garg, spearheading the Programme vertical said, *"It was wonderful to watch her take interest in the training. Within those 15 days, I saw her overcome her hesitance and passionately hone her skills."*

Building camel milk enterprise



Ram Swaroop
Khetolai village

The families in Jaisalmer have been rearing camels for ages. The

animal was an essential part of their households. However, this equation has changed. The herders have limited resources and rearing camels have become very expensive for them. If the neglect by the community continues it would soon become a forgotten animal in the desert ecosystem. Ram Swaroop, a Youth Changemaker from a camel herding household has joined Urmul's efforts in reviving the significance of the animal. He is a Fellow with Urmul. He actively coordinated and mobilized the herders. His enthusiasm was a source of motivation for everyone. He was roped into the programme efforts because of the indigenous knowledge and passion he possessed. He expressed, *"I believe we have the ability to revive the livelihood stream around camels. I am hopeful that our efforts will come to fruition."*

Together we shall save our resources

Building a healthier future



Rajjo, Ujlan Village

Rajjo is an active member of the SHG in her village and a homemaker. When the programme team approached her for training on kitchen gardening, Rajjo was amongst the first ones to learn and start working on a kitchen garden at her home. She is highly sensitised on the importance of the adequate nutrition in her and family's diet. She also attended the health camps and got her blood and BP tested. She was elated to know that she wouldn't have to spend money on the medicines prescribed but would get it for free from the camps itself. She is an amazing host and invited the survey team for lunch made from vegetables in her kitchen garden.



Rekha expressed, "I never thought that I could develop my skills of handicrafts on my own. I am excited to learn under the aegis of Urmul and HDFC Parivartan."



Pokaran is ravaged by water scarcity. With limited knowledge around water harvesting, the people and their animals have to survive on scanty water.

Under the Marugandha programme, in efforts to ensure that the natural resources such as water bodies are properly managed, focused efforts to revive traditional ponds and water reservoirs were launched. Through interactions with the community during needs assessment, meetings and dialogues, the programme team realized the gravity of water scarcity in the programme areas. This problem was more severe in Badli Nathusar village, Ujlan gram panchayat. There was just one pond that barely catered to the requirements of the locals of that village. In addition, people and livestock from surrounding 8 villages were utilizing water from that pond as well.

The programme team approached the community members and encouraged them to collaborate to revive the pond. After consultations with the gram sabha and the gram panchayat, the locals mobilized the required funds. The programme team had supported the efforts with INR 45,000. Through dedicated efforts the locals raised a fund of INR 1,13,000 and the gram panchayat allocated funds of INR 1,88,000. The seamless and encouraging support of the village sarpanch ensured the mobilisation of community members. The people did not stop at only financially contributing to the initiative. They even supported the renovation efforts by offering labor that went into the process. The people believed that the onus to revive the structure was on them as well and enthusiastically supported all initiatives. The revival of this pond was a testament to the successful collaboration between the people, Panchayati raj institutions, and not-for-profit organizations.

Ready to host eco-tourists



Bhanwar Ram
Thar village

Bhanwar Ram hails from a family which for generations has survived on daily wage work. His

income is limited and his children are at school completing their education. He works with Urmul. The ecotourism initiatives launched under the HDFC Parivartan programme gave him a sense of hope. He believed utilizing the extra space in his house by extending homestay services would ensure that he has a supplementary source of income. He approached the team and requested them to include his house in the ecotourism enterprise initiatives. The team covered the costs of fixing the structure and interiors of the house. He has also actively participated in the hospitality and cooking training conducted for bettering their skills. He is so enthusiastic about hosting tourists and keeps asking the team whether he is capable of managing things. He innocently asked, "What if I ever disappoint the tourists?"

Towards a literate and aware younger generation



Jhammu
Thar village

The Thar is one of the regions in the country with the poorest girl child literacy levels. Poverty, lack of awareness, the rampant practice of child marriage, and their low

social status in the patriarchal set-ups makes it difficult for them to continue their education.

13 years old Jhammu had to drop out of school because her father was battling cancer and the family found it challenging to make ends meet. She was adamant that she would never want to go back to school. Continuous discussions enabled her family to become aware and they started encouraging her to enroll back in school. Through programme interventions focusing on natural resources, the private well of her house was renovated. The family became convinced that Urmul and HDFC Parivartan's efforts were sincere. Jhammu and her parents agreed that she should enroll back in school. She is now a regular student and expressed, "I enjoy going to school and would not ever think of dropping out".



"During the interaction with the community members, the programme took their concerns about their sustenance but were also relieved by the fact that grass is lowering their worries. Back when the team with the community this intervention, all of us didn't anticipate how greatly it would impact community members. For them feeding their families is a challenge today at least they don't have to undergo the same struggle for their livestock."

Pukhraj Jaipal,
Cluster Coordinator,
Natural Resource Management, Marugandha

Resilience in the times of COVID-19

Survival first

There is constant instability in all the regions of India due to the emergence of the deadly Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the preventive nationwide lockdown imposed. To aid the communities, across the country numerous relief packages were disbursed to reduce the distress in the country. During this emergency situation, several NGOs, volunteer organizations and stakeholders have shared the responsibility with the government to find a remedy at the earliest.



The programme team in Pokaran region of Jaisalmer district engaged in sensitising people on measures to curb the spread of the virus and distributed 12,000 masks to the community members. These masks were made by artisan network trained and skilled under the Marugandha Programme. The masks were provided to migrant and government workers and all those in need. Alongside, the team aided both government and private bodies in identification and distribution of ration kits to 400 families in need of critical support. In addition, Anaj Banks (Food Banks) have been set up in 5 villages of Pokaran block of Jaisalmer. These banks are facilitating collection and aggregation of food grains by the community members which would be distributed to the people in need.

Organic fodder proven a blessing in Pokaran

Under the Marugandha project supported by HDFC bank Parivartan, Urmul team has been working on holistic rural development interventions in 14 villages of 5 blocks of Pokaran. During the intervention the team had facilitated construction of 75 azolla pits in the programme areas. Little did they realise that these pits today will be proven as a blessing to the community members. Due to the lockdown it has become really challenging for the people to sustain themselves and their families, let alone their livestock. Both their immobility and poor financial conditions are a roadblock in meet the fodder requirements of their livestock. The organic azolla pits are filled with luscious green fodder that can meet all the nutrition needs of the livestock. Pastoralists are reaping benefits of this feed. The cattle are healthier and milk yield is better.



When heard at azolla planned pact the by but at

Programme

Learnings

- Each team member brought their own strengths. They were able to successfully traverse the initial hiccups they faced. Everyone was able to seamlessly lead conversations with community members. Their individual conviction to help the community members brought great energy to their efforts.
- Another great learning was to understand the importance of being patient during community interactions. The community would always have a better understanding about the problems it is challenged with. Thus, it became important for the team members to not rush with their own set of ideas and always be open to learning from the community.
- The team realises the importance of maintaining long-lasting relationships with the community members. The members have made conscious efforts to be continuously connected with the locals and keep updating them with the programme initiatives.
- The team enjoyed phenomenal support from the Panchayati Raj Institutions. They ensured that the programme efforts were supported with all the resources they could mobilise. Their enthusiasm to collaborate was inspiring for everyone. The team through the course of the programme realised that constructively engaging with the institutions creates impact that truly matters.
- The interventions focused around bringing behavioural changes in the community as well. Through discussions around menstrual hygiene, child marriage and other issues, the team ensured to remove the taboo surrounding them. Initially they were faced with resistance from the community members. Through the course of prolonged interactions with them, the community members overcame their resistance and were more receptive to delve further into these issues. The team understood that it was important to not rush on these discussions with the community and not adopt a didactic approach.
- Interventions focusing on two key verticals of eco-tourism and camel milk livelihood were around full scale enterprise building. For everyone it was an exciting learning journey to be a part of. The herders got chances to interact with knowledge domain experts, entrepreneurs, researchers, etc. Under these two verticals the learning for the team was sharp and exciting.
- For all the initiatives, opinions of the community members were constantly sought. The aim was to not alienate them from the programme activities and keep inspiring them to take the baton to lead these initiatives.
- The team realised this from early on that to create an impact that matters it is essential to create an equal world. Specific interventions were aimed to reach out to the vulnerable groups such as girls and women. The team through the past year noticed a considerable change in their confidence levels and were further convinced about adopting an all-inclusive approach.
- The learning of the community from capacity building measures through training and exposure visits was a gradual and organic process. The team realised that outcomes of these efforts cannot be witnessed immediately.

Programme Challenges



Our biggest challenge has been to connect well with the community and set expectations. They have noticed a series of empty promises being made to them. It was important for the team to understand the concerns of the locals and ensure that the team sets the right set of expectations and delivers on them.



Due to the then ongoing cropping season, the locals prefer residing in areas adjacent to their farmlands. It became challenging for the team members to travel to those remote areas for dialogues.



Another key challenge was that most of the activities are turnkey programmes, starting from scratch and demanding a completely new way of looking at planning the existing value chain with a new set of processes. This demands extraordinary change management work at the community and practitioners' level.



Initiating and promoting learning beyond the traditional and inherited knowledge among the locals exposed them to newer technology and techniques. There was an initial reluctance from the community members that had to be carefully traversed.



Mobilising the community members towards engaging in programme activities was initially challenging. The team's efforts were at first met with suspicion. Building credibility in the community was a gradual process.



A few programme interventions were specifically around exposing women and girls to newer ideas. Battling the patriarchal mindset of the community was an uphill task.

“ This year was full of newer challenges. We at Urmul constantly reflect on our journey and keep learning from it. That is what has made people believe in us and our work for the last three decades. The same spirit is followed in this collaboration between HDFC Bank Parivartan and Urmul Trust. We would use our first year learning to achieve our goals of the project in second year.

Deen Dayal Arora,
Programme Manager, Marugandha Project Pokoran



Team Testimonies



“ I have been associated with Urmul for almost 25 years now. I had never imagined myself to be working on such new initiatives such as setting eco-tourism and camel milk enterprises. Last one year for me was full of enjoyable learning. I am looking forward to my journey this year with all the partner organisations. ”

Deen Dayal Arora
Program Manager



Nagendra Mathur
Cluster Coordinator

“ I had a great experience working with camel herders in the last year. I was able to learn about disease management of the camels, the therapeutic value of camel milk and ways to set-up livelihoods around the camel. We are excited to engage in a more robust manner with the herders. ”



“ I was coordinating activities with our women artisans. We gave them training in weaving and applique. They learned so quickly and are now more confident about their skills. We think that the right motivation and support could enable them to become entrepreneurs. ”

Ganpat Garg
Cluster Coordinator



Pukhraj Jaipal
Cluster Coordinator

“ In the past year, in ensuring that the natural resources of the areas are well managed, we collaborated with people from the villages. The partnership bore fruits. This year I am looking forward to the restoration of common property resources and better management of our natural resources. ”



“ I was handling activities for setting up ecotourism enterprises. It made me realise that apart from farming and engaging in manual labour, there could be so many more other sustainable livelihood opportunities in rural areas. The community is very excited about hosting tourists and showcasing our culture and heritage to the tourists. ”

Pankaj Kewaliya
Cluster Coordinator





Mishrilal Barupal
Field Coordinator

“ I was closely working with school going children and their parents. It was exciting to work towards ensuring they get better education facilities. We paid specific attention towards enhancing awareness levels of girls. It was a fulfilling journey.”



Sajjan Kanwar Bhati
Field Coordinator

“ It has been a beautiful journey thus far. I thoroughly enjoyed working and facilitating organisation of these women into self help groups. We need to further support and strengthen them on their path to entrepreneurship.”



Dwarka Ram
Field Coordinator

“ I was working with camel herders. I really enjoyed partnering and learning with them. I am looking forward to this year wherein we will be able to successfully set up a camel milk enterprise and ensure these herders are able to build a robust livelihood.”



Sidhi Rade
Designer

“ As a part of the Project Marugandha, I got to travel along with my team to conduct applique and weaving training. Initially, training these artisans in traditional crafts was a challenge nevertheless I enjoyed it. It was great to shape their craft skills according to the market trends.”



“ I enjoyed my project work that involved interacting with school going children and teachers. I received full support from them. Their commitment towards the programme was very encouraging for the team.”



Rukshna Gauri
Field Coordinator



The Collaborative

Under the programme Marugandha, Urmul Trust was able to partner with varied private and government organisations. The support was chiefly along four verticals of partnerships, knowledge, technology, and resources.

Panchayati Raj Institutions and NGOs

Urmul Trust
Urmul Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti
Urmul Seemant Samiti
Urmul Desert Craft
Urmul Setu Sansthan

State of Rajasthan

Agriculture Department
Animal Husbandry Department
Education Department
Forest Department
Health Department
Panchayati Raj Department
Tourism Department
Women and Child Development

National Agencies

National Research Centre on Camel

CSRs and other Foundations

HDFC Bank Parivartan
Selco Foundation
Desert Resource Centre
Sahjeevan
Centre for Pastoralism

Way Forward

In the next year the focus would be on advancing camel cluster and camel milk enterprise; encouraging natural resource management, advancing artisans towards crafts enterprise; promoting eco-tourism as a sustainable livelihood model, increasing awareness and quality education levels, and ensuring community health and well-being through WASH interventions. The vision is to ensure that the programme areas achieve integrated rural development. In 2020-2021, Marugandha would continue to explore opportunities and challenges along this journey of collaboration, courage, and hope in the Thar.

About HDFC Bank Parivartan

HDFC Bank Parivartan believes that a nation truly develops when its communities find sustainable means of livelihood. Under HDFC Bank Parivartan, their CSR initiative, they reach out to communities and enable them to shift from a vicious cycle of poverty to a virtuous cycle of growth. Stemming from the core value of sustainability, this approach empowers millions to be self-reliant and in effect, become partners in the growth of their nation. Taking one step at a time, they aim to pave the way for a brighter future.

About Urmul

In the harsh and inhospitable regions of rural Rajasthan in the Thar Desert, Urmul Trust has been innovating models for inducing community-driven social developmental changes by devising programmes, strengthening them, and finally handing them over to communities. With the understanding that no intervention could be successful unless the community achieves financial security, Urmul has endeavored to improve livelihood opportunities through various farm based and non-farm based interventions in the region.



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