

Harvest of Hope



Stories of transformation from **cbm** New Zealand's
Disability-Inclusive Organic Farming Programme
Uttar Pradesh, India



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Aid Programme

Author: Parvinder Singh, **cbm** South Asia
Editor: Karen Jack, **cbm** New Zealand
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Disability-inclusive organic farming for sustainable economic development of vulnerable farmers in Uttar Pradesh, India (2016-2020) is a second phase project supported by **cbm** New Zealand in partnership with the New Zealand Aid Programme.

Purvanchal Gramin Seva Samiti
cbm New Zealand
cbm South Asia Regional Office
www.cbmnz.org.nz

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foreword

Stephen Hunt *CEO cbm New Zealand*

This cbm New Zealand disability-inclusive organic farming programme in Uttar Pradesh India, brings together people with and without disabilities from rural communities to create sustainable livelihoods. In February 2017 this programme was recognised for innovation and inclusion by the Vienna-based Zero Project.

The Zero Project provides a platform where the most innovative and effective solutions to challenges that persons with disabilities face around the globe are shared. Each year the Zero Award focuses on a particular theme from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2017, 213 nominations were received from almost 100 countries. This programme was selected as the most innovative in its approach to Employment and Vocational Training.

cbm New Zealand is proud to work with Purvanchal Gramin Seva Samiti - our partner in India implementing this programme with support from the **cbm** South Asia Regional Office in India.

This publication shares our vision for an inclusive world in which all persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential. The stories of Puneeta and Maya show that gender is no barrier to agricultural entrepreneurship; Pramod and Suresh show us how determination and innovation can lead to success; and Zubedia demonstrates the change within a community when inclusive of children and adults with disabilities.

As we celebrate the achievements we acknowledge the New Zealand Aid Programme and the **cbm** New Zealand supporters who have generously contributed financially to this programme. We also want to thank our delivery partners within New Zealand that have provided time and expertise to make this programme a model of social inclusion in one of the most marginalised areas of the world.



Introduction

Linabel Hadlee

*International Programmes Manager **cbm** New Zealand*

In 2016 the UNDESA Report on the World Social Situation 'Leaving No-one Behind' pointed out that even though general development trends are improving at a modest rate, living conditions for the most marginalised social groups are in fact becoming worse. Likewise, the Human Development Report 2016 showed that despite progress, millions of people worldwide are still not benefiting from aid and development programmes. "Development for Everyone" is a strong call for inclusion that requires specific interventions, technologies and data to reach the most marginalised and deprived individuals within communities.

Over one billion people in the world live with a disability, 80 per cent of whom live in developing countries and face daily challenges in accessing basic human rights like education, employment and medical services. The experiences contained in this publication of an organic farming programme illustrate that reaching men, women, girls and boys with disabilities and providing opportunities for participation results in meaningful development for them and the communities they live in.

Eighty-one percent of those with disabilities involved in this programme had never received medical attention for their impairment. Almost half had not attended school; many were called derogatory names and lived in social exclusion. Training, rehabilitation and assistive equipment, has transformed the lives of women and men

with disabilities. They have been transformed into farmers creating social change while leading as master trainers, as agricultural business innovators or simply through participation in income generation activities. This has resulted in more respected and meaningful engagement in their communities.

This programme has demonstrated that 'leaving no one behind' requires development and humanitarian aid agencies to adopt a new approach to disability. 'Community Based Inclusive Development' (CBID) is one such approach and is key to the success of this programme.

'Harvest of Hope' is a collection of stories about social transformation providing evidence that participation of persons with disabilities is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The one billion people living with disabilities worldwide deserve not to be forgotten and excluded.

This publication shares the seed of inclusion cultivated through this programme, so that it can continue to harvest hope for all.



The need & context



Persons with disabilities, especially women and socially marginalised groups, are left out of livelihood opportunities in rural areas of India due to lack of adequate skills and inaccessible production processes. Years of chemical-based agricultural techniques depleted the soil resulting in visible malnutrition. The prevailing social mind-set creates exclusion and traps people with disabilities in the cycle of poverty. With the agriculture sector continuing to act as the largest source of livelihood in India and persons with disabilities being left out of opportunities in development and urban growth, there is a clear need to create employment and livelihood opportunities in rural areas that are inclusive, marketable and sustainable.

*Programme Officer Dinesh Rana provides rural development and resource management expertise to this inclusive livelihood project. He is explaining the contributions of sustainable agriculture to Rainer Brockhaus from the **cbm** International Leadership Team.*



The idea & impact

cbm New Zealand and its partners created a disability-inclusive livelihood programme based on agriculture and value addition through creation of assets, providing skills through training, providing a ready market linkage and facilitating producer groups.

The programme is empowering people with disabilities to be in leadership roles – agents of change and decision makers in inclusive groups that have both persons with and without disabilities.

Unique aspects of the programme include low-cost inputs and high returns, involvement of people with disabilities as asset and knowledge-holders of new techniques, creating inclusive farming groups, increasing capacity to take loans, and support of government schemes and marketability of the organic produce like vegetables, spices, honey and edible oils. Ownership of these businesses and the responsibility for decision-making remains with the farmers.

3,569 farmers including 639 people with disabilities have been employed or earn a livelihood through this programme, reaching 84 villages and covering 602 hectares of farmland. The farmers with disabilities have become economically independent

and are now operating bank accounts. Many have resumed education.

Branded produce created by these farmers is now under certification and has been recognised for its organic content. Farmers have received regular training in all aspects of organic practices including creating manure through vermi-composting, creating poly houses, processing spices and harvesting honey.

Producer groups and farmer's interest groups have been established enabling farmers to pool their resources to access larger market opportunities. Since commencing the programme in 2012 one of the greatest accomplishments has been adoption by the government under its various skill development programmes and the availability of loans from different national banks.

Achievements and impacts have been shared with government offices and media. **cbm** New Zealand partners have been advocating through a number of events in which senior government ministry officials are frequently invited.

cbm NZ Programmes Officer Karen Jack is a trained Occupational Therapist. She sits with Physiotherapist Shashi Shakhar as he meets with a farmer who has weak legs from polio to discuss an individual rehabilitation plan which will enable him to fully participate in the agricultural value chain.





Sweet taste of success: Puneeta's story

Puneeta grew up hearing insults from her neighbours on how she will always be a 'burden' and never be 'useful' in a village where agriculture is the only source of income.

At the age of five, she was affected by the Poliomyelitis virus which affected her lower limbs leading to a neuromuscular paralysis. Puneeta cannot use her legs and uses her hands to drag herself to move.

She lives in the Maharajganj District of Uttar Pradesh, one of the largest and most populous states in India which has historically had a very high number of Poliomyelitis cases. Subsequently a large number of young people have physical disabilities in the region.

Uttar Pradesh is also home to the largest number of people living below India's official Poverty Line which defines the poorest people in the country.

Today Puneeta is a processor of organically produced edible oil and is the local advisor on methods and advantages of organic farming. This change is remarkable, not only because Puneeta is an entrepreneur but also because she is a woman with a disability who is inspiring many around her.

"I am independent and have a bank account. I am respected for the knowledge I have on organic agriculture from all the training that is taking place under the programme".

Puneeta has received support and loans from the farmers group developed as part of the programme to set up an oil extraction machine and flour milling unit.



Puneeta has bees

Seven white boxes hide a swarm of activity under the shade of four towering trees. Puneeta is eager to explain what these are.

"They are honey bees boxes and mine are full of bees even in this heat. They stay here because I never miss providing water mixed with sugar and jaggery," she explains.

Moving on a customised wheelchair-styled tricycle around the boxes, she points out she is one of the few people in the village who extracts honey and sells it at a premium price. Though the ground is uneven, access to the field has been modified for her. The boxes generate about 84 litres of honey in a year. Sold at approximately \$10 NZ per litre, she can yield around \$800 NZ annually. Along with the boxes and necessary training to start beekeeping, she also received training on how bees benefit farming, particularly vegetable production.

Farmer groups have provided support and loans to Puneeta as part of the programme to set up an oil extraction machine and flour milling unit.

I have an identity

Puneeta has not only grabbed new opportunities that the **cbm** New Zealand supported programme has offered, but is also now a strong voice in her family.

"I have an identity of my own. It was not the case earlier. People with disability are often left behind as family members see them as a financial burden," she adds.

"Being able to make a living close to home and within the village has allowed me to change my life. With the beekeeping and oil extraction machine, I am now an example for other women with disabilities," she adds.

An important aspect of the programme is that it brings the community members together to create farmer support groups where those with and without disabilities share their learning and resources.

Puneeta wears many hats today. She is a beekeeper, a processor of organically produced edible oil and the local advisor on methods and advantages of organic farming. This change is remarkable not just because Puneeta is breaking ground as an entrepreneur but also a woman with a disability who is inspiring many around her.



Life in transformation: Maya's story

Maya Devi, 36, is a single mother of four and the family's breadwinner. Poliomyelitis infection at the age of five caused neuromuscular paralysis, taking away her ability to stand or walk independently.

Maya lives in the Kushinagar District of Uttar Pradesh and has been associated with this **cbm** New Zealand supported programme since 2012.

Dressed in a traditional sari, she is anxious and excited to share her latest news. Maya was able to pay for the wedding of her oldest daughter. Now she is able to invest in the education of her younger daughters.

For a single woman with a disability, her story is inspiring.

Maya with her daughter inside her new shop. She has recently purchased this much awaited asset to sell organic produce that she packages.





A Milestone

When we met Maya in May 2016, she frequently talked about her desire to upscale her operation of packaging organic produce that she sells both in the local market, and to the community in the village. Training in organic farming methods given under the **cbm** New Zealand supported programme has helped her revive the productivity of her small family land. Benefits for Maya include food security and an income-stream due to reduced cost of inputs. In addition, organic farming methods like manure and bio-pesticides are safe to work with.

Maya's dreams at that time were represented by a small table inside her mud and brick house with a limited number of things on sale – ranging from mustard paste to organic honey.

"I have a real shop now. It is made of solid wood, set on a platform and it has doors that I can lock," Maya said with a sense of pride in her voice. The shop is right outside her house and has been financed through a group loan and her own savings.

"I am happy with the way things are turning out. More and more women with disabilities are getting inspired by what we are doing here. This success is important to change the negative mind-set community has about persons with disabilities."



Hands that see: Suresh's story

Suresh appears much older than his age. But his high energy levels soon dispel this impression as he juggles several small green wooden boxes. The boxes are models of composting pits for creating manure to grow vegetables and crops. How it all works becomes clear as he starts explaining each of them through a spirited presentation based on touch.

Suresh, 52, is blind and works as a master trainer in the programme.

"I have been blind since birth and faced discrimination most of my life. But I never get bitter. I keep my spirits high," says Suresh, while talking about his life and often breaks into a smile with the evening sun illuminating his face.

Suresh is unmarried and lives with his younger brother. They live away from rest of the family that includes his elder brother, mother and father.

His family has struggled a long time with poverty, and both brothers rely on work they can find on the day. Although the family owned a small piece of land it had lost productivity and could not provide food security or any income.

"The land lost fertility with the relentless use of chemical fertiliser and pesticides. We just did not have more money to keep adding more and more fertiliser with each passing year. We also used to get blisters and skin rashes while dealing with chemicals," Suresh recalls.

A member of the local Disabled Peoples Organisation (DPO), Suresh is a part of the Inclusive Organic Farming programme. He is an expert in various techniques of creating organic manure providing training to farmers both with and without disabilities. He knows when the manure is ready for use just by touch and smell. Before he began creating waves of change, Suresh started closer to his home on the family land.

"I started using all that I learned on my own land. Slowly, the fertility of the soil improved. The local seeds, organic manure, and bio-pesticides started showing a positive impact on the quality of the produce, especially vegetables".





A mill that's churning out hope: Pramod's story

"As a person with a disability since the age of four, I grew up fighting dejection and low expectations that people have from those with disabilities. All I wanted was to get a job with the government but that is nothing short of a miracle due to massive unemployment and lack of quality education," says Pramod, leaning on a thick bamboo stick that he uses as a support for walking.

Pramod lives in a family of nine in the Maharajganj District of Uttar Pradesh. He has two elder brothers and sister-in-law staying as a joint family in a house made of mud and bricks. His lower limbs and lower back were affected by Poliomyelitis paralysis when he was a child.

The state has the largest number of people living below India's official Poverty Line and also has the largest population of persons with disabilities in the country. The district is located in a region that is dependent on agriculture and has been witnessing massive distress migration for work, with only women, persons with disabilities and elderly people being left behind.

Power of collective

Pramod is one of the many people with disabilities in his village who are part of a Disabled Peoples' Organisation (DPO) established by a **cbm** New Zealand partner in 2012. The process and experience of coming together has created a sense of solidarity and awareness among persons with disabilities, their families, and the wider community.

DPOs not only give a voice to persons with disabilities but they also promote inclusion through participation. The group meetings are popular and have become a canvas for sharing stories of

change. Small but significant successes are shared at these gatherings creating sources of inspiration and possibilities. Pramod is now the president of the DPO and is one of the key decision makers at village council meetings.

While he talks about the challenges youth face in terms of job prospects and skill gaps, Pramod gets ready to show us how he operates an electric-powered mill that has been supported by **cbm** New Zealand as part of the programme.

Pramod, 25, comes across as a shy person but he displays a sense of humour and a very analytical mind as he starts speaking. Young men from the village hear his words and statements with great interest.



A circle of change: Zubedia's story

As we settled into a relatively dark house, Zubedia, 35, explains how she has been participating in this programme that has created champions of inclusive organic farming in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

"The stereotypes and low level of expectations of children with disabilities force the family to look away from their needs and rights," says Zubedia, while getting a five year old girl ready for physiotherapy exercises. The girl has Cerebral Palsy and Zubedia has been working with the family to enhance the way they have been caring and engaging with her.

The girl herself is a bundle of energy and eager to engage with people around her. Through her laughs and gestures she messages people around her. Her favourite gesture is a "high five".



Coming together

"When people come together and stop hiding from the needs of persons with disabilities, things change fast. It gives families and parents the confidence to ask for support and inclusion," Zubedia added. Through this programme local communities have been inspired to take up opportunities of health care and rehabilitation.

Her father-in-law has a disability which led her family to become part of disability-inclusive organic farming. As the programme is inclusive of people with and without disabilities, she started marketing organic vegetables and organic manure. She also raises poultry and goats. Zubedia is now president of the women's group, a self-help group, and also the farmer's interest group.

Zubedia's example is a reflection of how the number of champions for disability-inclusion are growing through this programme.



"When people come together and stop hiding from the needs of persons with disabilities, things change fast. It gives families and parents the confidence to ask for support and inclusion".

cbm envisions an inclusive world in which all persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential.



For more information:

cbm New Zealand

www.cbmnz.org.nz

Zero Project

www.zeroproject.org

*This publication contains stories recognised as best practice from **cbm** New Zealand programme whose case studies were predominantly used for the Zero Project nomination. The consolidated programme nominated included 11,158 participants in inclusive organic farming supported by **cbm** Member Associations in Australia, Italy, Switzerland and the UK. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the New Zealand Government.*

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cbm New Zealand, Unit B, 112 Bush Road, Albany,
Auckland 0632 | PO Box 303 477 North Harbour 0751
Ph: **0800 77 22 64** or +64 9 414 9405
Email: enquiries@cbmi.org.nz

www.cbmnz.org.nz