

# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



## RUCHI

### Rural Centre for Human Interests

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

# Contents

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<b>1. About the Organisation</b>	
1.1. Background.....	2
1.2. Mission Statement .....	3
1.3. Vision .....	3
1.4. Belief System.....	3
1.5. Strategic Objectives.....	3
<b>2. Management and Administration</b>	
2.1. Structure .....	4
2.2. Finance and Accounts .....	4
<b>3. Projects</b>	
3.1. COVID-19: Prevention and Protection .....	5
3.2. Time for Tea .....	6
3.3. RECALL Project .....	6
3.4. Waste UpCycling .....	7
3.5. Global Pathways .....	7
3.6. Hydroponics Farming .....	8
3.7. Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) .....	8
<b>4 . International Voluntary Service</b>	
4.1. International Volunteer Workcamps.....	8
4.2. Student Internships/Placements .....	8
<b>5. Webinars/Conferences .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6. Audited statement of accounts .....</b>	<b>10</b>

# 1. About the Organization

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## 1. Background

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

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

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

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



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

## 1.1. Mission Statement

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

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

## 1.2. Vision

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

## 1.3. Belief System

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

## 1.4. Strategic Objectives

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

# 2. Management and Administration

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## 2.1. Structure

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

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

## 2.2. Finance and Accounts

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

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

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

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

- Rotary Club of Eastern Hutt, New Zealand
- Rotary Club of Palmerston North, New Zealand
- Social Square Venture
- EU under Erasmus+ programme

**RUCHI's Indian sources of funding include:**

- Shamdasani Trust
- Corporate funding under CSR programme

# 3. Projects 2020-2021

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## 3.1: COVID-19: Prevention and Protection:

The COVID-19 pandemic is the first of its kind which has affected the very existence of human beings. The pandemic through various economic, social and political avenues, will affect global developmental objectives at a much broader scale. The impacts will be observed more prominently in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Along with the national government, the community based organization and other NGOs are dedicatedly doing their part of work in extending emergency and welfare services to needy people. The situation is still not expected to be going anywhere near to normal in the near future and its impacts will continue to be felt for a year or so.

Keeping in view the stagnation in economic activities and badly affected earning capacities of people worldwide raising funds to sustain our efforts in combating covid-19 is a big challenge. Still, the current scenario warrants for continued philanthropic actions from all corners.

With our limited resources, we have been able to contribute through the following actions:

1. Capacities of general public raised to operate smart phones for making payments, accessing COVID relevant information, transfer funds and shop online.
2. Taught children & parents on how to use platforms like Meet, Zoom, whatsapp etc. for their kids education during online sessions.
3. Assisted village transporters and taxi drivers in obtaining & printing movement passes during lockdown towards supply of essential items and medical services in remote villages.
4. Assisted local shop keepers in creating social distancing signs outside their shops.
5. 1000 odd N95 masks distributed to those who could not afford in villages and slums during unlocking of economy.
6. About 4500 packets of Bagrry's white oat meal, each of 200 gm, distributed to street children, slums and roadside migrant workers.
7. Rural people are getting confident on use of digital media and realise how it has made their lives easy. Acceptance level to digital media is rising.
8. Majority has started following social distancing and wear masks when in public places in a crowd.



### 3.2 Time for Tea Project of EU under Erasmus+ Programme:

*Time for Tea* is an educational activity which uses tea to give young people a voice. It encourages global learning, creative thinking and social action. It is simple, fun and accessible to people of any age, background or ability, anywhere in the world.

*Time for Tea* is an initiative of Momentum World CIC. This is a 2 year project involving 3 Asian and 3 European partners with a coordinating partner in Momentum World of UK. An online Kick-off meeting was held in March.



#### Why tea?

- Tea brings people together. It is enjoyed in different cultures all round the world.
- When busy people have a cup of tea, they stop and relax for a moment – the perfect time to listen and think.
- The medium of tea allows young people to initiate dialogue with decision makers in a way that is engaging and non-confrontational

### 3.3 Recall Project of EU under Erasmus+ Programme:

The project seeks to build the capacity of youth organizations in Europe and Asia to promote green skills, circular economy and youth-led green entrepreneurship in encouraging positive social change in rural areas of involved countries. Based on their cultural traditions and identity, young people can find inspiration to use nature and local resources sustainably, to start new entrepreneurial endeavors, which preserve the natural environment, and to contribute to their communities' wellbeing. The project seeks synergies between the four pillars of sustainable development – environment, economy, society and culture to fight youth unemployment in rural areas.

The project aims to motivate youth to rediscover rural areas as places where they can apply their creativity through innovation and entrepreneurship based on the ideas of sustainable development and circular economy. The project will strengthen the organizational capacity of youth organizations to foster the acquisition of green and entrepreneurial skills of young people gaining inspiration from local culture and identity. An online Kick-off meeting was held in February this year.



### 3.4 Waste UpCycling :

The main aim of the project is to create a mobility scheme, labelled W\_UP Tour, to support young people and non-profit organisations to develop entrepreneurial activities on waste upcycling both in Europe and in Asia. This is a project approved by European Union under its Erasmus+ programme.

W\_UP Tour are defined as a mixture of raising awareness tours and change-making actions organised by 3 European and 3 Asian non-profit organisations working on the field, with the purpose of:

- offering quality-learning experiences to international participants;
- raising awareness at international and local level on waste issues;
- financially supporting non-profit organisations and local communities through social financially supporting non-profit organisations and local communities through social entrepreneurship;
- helping the local community to manage better manage the waste.



By valuing the know-how of the partners involved, the project aims to enhance the organisations' competencies to host and implement change-making experiences on waste upcycling with common quality standards, and to develop an innovative sustainable entrepreneurial concept, based on non-formal education principles, to make positive impact in local communities.

### 3.5 Global Pathways Project under Erasmus+ programme of EU:

Keeping in view the urgent need to not only educate young people in creating financially successful enterprises but also sustainable enterprises that utilise the worlds natural and human resources responsibly, RUCHI joined Fora Copenhagen as a partner in executing a project GLOBAL PATHWAYS under Erasmus+ programme of European Union. It is essential that this generation of young entrepreneurs put a halt to 'business as usual'.



The main aim of the project is to contribute at mainstreaming Sustainable Entrepreneurship Education in non-formal sector as to combat youth unemployment and contribute at the sustainable development of our societies.



### 3.6 Hydroponics Farming

Hydroponic gardening is fast becoming a popular choice for many growers around the world due to its more sustainable approach to resource usage than the usual growing methods. It basically involves growing healthy plants without the use of a traditional soil medium by using a nutrient like a mineral rich water solution instead. A plant just needs select nutrients, some water, and sunlight to grow. Not only do plants grow without soil, they often grow a lot better with their roots in water instead. With the help of Rotary Club of Palmerston North, New Zealand, we set up a unit at RUCHI for demonstration purpose. We are growing plants such as cucumber, tomato, capsicum, lettuce and leafy greens. However, this will be fully functional once the Covid pandemic is over and we can make additions to the unit.



### 3.7 Corporate Social responsibility (CSR):

Baggry's Food Private Ltd. was kind enough to donate us 75 cartoons of White Oat meal for distribution to formal and informal communities in our project area.

## 4. International Voluntary Service:

### 4.1. Placement of International Volunteers for Personal Development:

There were four international volunteers studying community development process for their personal development when the nationwide lock down was enforced in the country. Consequently, they had to leave RUCHI to return home during early April 2020.

### 4.2. Student Internship/Placements:

Four Indian interns of SPIJMR, Mumbai had joined RUCHI for their one month internship during mid March 2020. However, they also had to leave RUCHI early in April 2020 due to complete lockdown in the country.

## 5. Webinars/Conferences

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All physical meetings/seminars etc were cancelled this year due to corona pandemic. In their places, online meetings were held which were attended by RUCHI:

1. Technical Meeting of European Alliance.
2. GA of CCIVS and NVDA
3. 4 Partners Meetings under Weltwarts programme