Our Highlights of the year

Won the prestigious HCL Foundation award in the Environment category

Besides establishing the robustness of the model in the sphere of environment, the multistage due diligence process involved a 360-degree review of all structures and processes model in the sphere of environment.

Mumbai to Montreal—Let’s talk Bees

Selected to present our work at the global forum of beekeeping, Apimondia 2019 at Montreal at two technical sessions.

In the news for all the right reasons

A new logo for UTMT Society and we got our own social media handles on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Setting up of an FPO

Process of setting up a Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) in Valsad district, Gujarat, thus taking the much-needed step for Collectivisation of beekeepers.

A year of many innovations across states

Kitchen gardens + grey water + bees impacted nutrition and created new streams of income in a drought year.

Shetishalas or agri clinics helped small farmers tailor their produce to the needs of the market, direct market linkages for increased yields, training in making of bee friendly bio fertilizers.

Deepening digital impression

Increased use of CommCare - mobile based reporting app across the organisation to monitor the health of bee boxes.

Training in sustainable honey harvesting from Apis dorsata

Training for traditional honey hunters in sustainable honey harvesting from Apis dorsata began, to further our mandate to the cause of protecting indigenous bees.

Convergence mode

Strengthening partnerships and collaborations with our partners - RBL Bank and NABARD in Gujarat and JSW Foundation and NABARD in Maharashtra- To reach our programme to more people and spread the message wider.

Facilitating the linking of farmers to the market

Facilitation of market linkages for the sale of increased yields of bee pollinated crops to aid small scale farmers.

Learning and evolving

Promotion of cross learning across states through technical groups that picked up issues like participation of women in beekeeping and discussed the progress made, challenges and how to overcome them.

Linkage with Academia

Shylaja Nair, Director, M & E was invited to present our work at an international seminar at IISER, Trivandrum.

Won the prestigious HCL Foundation award in the Environment category

Besides establishing the robustness of the model in the sphere of environment, the multistage due diligence process involved a 360-degree review of all structures and processes model in the sphere of environment.

Highlights

Our Highlightsof the year

UTMT Society Annual Report 2019-20
UTMT Society completed eleven years of its journey in 2019-20. It has been a memorable year right from winning the prestigious HCL Foundation award in the Environment category to piloting many innovations successfully to being able to present our work at well-known international and domestic fora.

The year also saw UTMT Society carve a distinct identity for itself by creating a new logo that reflected our work better with the bee being centre stage. A new website and social media handles on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter were also launched.

An organisation is as good as its team and supporters not to forget the donors who firmly believe in our work and vision and we have been fortunate in all these departments.

Recognition for the hard work of the first decade came in the form of being selected for the prestigious HCL Foundation grant. While our work has carved a niche for itself due to its uniqueness, the fact that we were chosen in the environment category in the face of stiff competition from other well-established models and organisations was a huge morale booster. It also proved the efficacy of the model across cutting themes like environment, biodiversity, small holder agriculture and livelihoods. The five-year support will enable the expansion of the programme to new blocks and districts in the states we work in.

The year also saw the team pilot many innovations successfully. One such was the coming together of kitchen gardens and bees which proved effective in boosting both nutrition for malnourished families and ensured forage for bees in the summer months. Internally we were able to put our collective experience together across teams to find solutions to nagging issues which improved the overall efficiency of the programme.

The value of our work at the global level was highlighted when we were among the few Indian organisations and the only NGO chosen to present our work at the international forum for beekeeping, Apimondia in Montreal at two technical sessions. Our linkage with academia was strengthened when we were invited to an international conference on pollinators at IISER, Triandrum. Our work on creating awareness about the need for pollinators at the village level was held up as a model to emulate in other countries as well.

Our founder and Managing Trustee, Vijaya Pastala has been a source of constant support and guidance in our journey. She has always urged us to think out of the box, used her decades of experience in the sector to suggest various changes to the model when necessary. She has personally been a source of strength to me as we struggled through the initial years while finding our feet and continues to be the person we turn to while grappling with contentious issues. Vijaya and our Managing Committee, especially Sophie Moochhala and Naheed Carrimjee have always been there for us, ready to lend a patient ear, advice and encouragement whenever we needed it.

We have been very privileged to have a set of donors who believed in us and our work right from the beginning. We would like to especially thank Mr Nosherwan Jehangir of Dr and Mrs SMH Modi Hormus House Benevolence Trust, RBL Bank who have supported us over the last few years and the Australian Consulate, Mumbai who support us through their Small Grants programme.

We have been fortunate to have a team that brings passion and commitment to its work. They have not shied away from putting their best foot forward even in very difficult circumstances. We would not have been able to come this far if it had not been for them.

We look forward to another fruitful year of taking our programme onward and ahead.

Sujana Krishnamoorthy
Executive Director
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Bee Buzz!!
From the fields of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra to the corridors of Delhi and back but with a difference – recognition and pride in what we do and the way we do it!

Winning the prestigious HCL Foundation Award in the Environment category is by far among the defining moments of UTMT Society’s journey. The award was announced in February 2020 at the end of a grueling multi-stage due diligence process that stretched over five months. It was a closely fought final, which had some of India’s best-known NGOs in the field of environment with more than two decades of work in this sphere vying for the top place.

Our journey began innocuously enough, writing and re-writing a dream proposal and a struggle with technical glitches as the team tried to upload complex budgets and forms. The team at UTMT Society managed to overcome them just in time. After 2 months, we were pleasantly surprised to receive an email that we had been shortlisted for further due diligence. Then began a fairly tough uphill journey for the entire team, one in which everyone pitched in cheerfully and put their best foot forward, the hallmark of the work ethic at this organisation.

The first level of due diligence visits by the HCL team to the Mumbai office and the field helped us understand the evaluation process better and all the efforts seemed worthwhile when UTMT Society made it to the final five.

The next and final level of due diligence was undertaken by the external evaluation agency, Grant Thornton and was a 360-degree evaluation of the organisation and its processes which included everything from Accounting, Human Resource, Governance, Documentation to Record Keeping. The Grant Thornton team also held extensive meetings with the Leadership Team, our Founder and Managing Trustee, Ms. Vijaya Pastala and the Managing Committee represented by Ms. Sophie Moochhala and Ms. Naheed Carrimjee at Mumbai.

They also travelled to the field to meet with various stakeholders - farmers and others like the local Forest Department officials. Then the wait began – with some more phone calls in between as the final Jury presentation was done by the Grant Thornton team.

On the D Day, excitement was at a fever pitch. Sujana Executive Director, Shylaja, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation and Sachin Dhavle, Team Leader, Maharashtra travelled to Delhi to take part in the final award ceremony. When Under The Mango Tree Society was announced as the winner in the Environment category, it was a dream come true for all of us. It proved that our work with indigenous bees was equally important from an environment and biodiversity perspective.

UTMT Society looks forward to working with HCL Foundation to expand our work in the three states in the coming years.
Individual impacts - skill enhancement, employability, annual increase in the income of the farmers and the benefits for his/her family.

Increase in self-confidence, self-esteem, social status, higher aspirations for better farming, and better lifestyle for his/her family.

A major impact has been observed in terms of increased agricultural productivity and associated income. This has inspired initiatives such as providing various cash crops to the beneficiaries at Palghar.

As Bees travel up to 2 kilometers for pollination, beekeepers with an average annual income of ₹43,000 will impact their neighbours with 30% of income growth.

Increase in the social status was observed as an impact, where other farmers were found to appreciate and respect the beneficiaries for producing a good number of agricultural crops, despite a smaller piece of land.

Imparting training to Beneficiaries and discussing the benefits of beekeeping on their agricultural income was observed to be a major qualitative impact of the project.

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**UTMT Society Annual Report 2019-20**

**“Bees for poverty reduction. Bee a better farmer”**

- SROI analysis commissioned by RBL Bank

UTMT Society first partnered with RBL in 2014 during the Mumbai Marathon. The partnership grew and three-year funding to implement the project “Bee a Better Farmer” was sanctioned in 2015. After this was completed, based on the positive outcomes, another three-year partnership was initiated in 2019.

As part of a Board mandate, RBL Bank decided to undertake an external evaluation of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) and community impact achieved in the interventions of its long-term partners. RSM GC was the independent third-party evaluator appointed for this. It was a great opportunity for UTMT Society to also have this exercise undertaken.

Approximately 40 stakeholders were interviewed across the three states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, through field visits undertaken by RSM. The RSM Team met with various stakeholders - Farmers, Master Trainers, Apiarists, Carpenters, neighbours of beekeepers, Technical Assistants and Women SHGs while also visiting the Bee Keeping Resource Centre in all three states. The RSM team chose the villages and beneficiaries independently without any inputs from the UTMT Society team.

There were direct questions of what has changed before and after placing bee boxes in their field and the answers were clear and frank - the farmers spoke about how the yields and quality has vastly improved. The research team looked at details of how much is being invested on each farmer which included everything from training, flora to equipment. The aim was to find out the ratio or return on investment.

The findings were that for each rupee invested, the return was a high 8.94. Besides reinforcing the trust that RBL Bank had reposed in us over the years, the findings were a great morale booster for our team. The study quantified the returns not just for the farmers but also for the plot neighbours which were substantial, not to forget the whole ecosystem which was being developed due to this intervention.

What also impressed the research team was that the team in MP was running the program in very remote forest areas where no other NGOs have reached. In fact, they felt we needed to showcase more of our work by means of video stories.

**KEY OBSERVATIONS**

- During the field visits, RSM GC observed that the end beneficiaries were very happy and content with the intervention.
- Most of the beneficiaries surveyed had been positively impacted by UTMT Society’s initiatives and were very excited with the new employment opportunities after being trained.
- The initiative led to enhanced awareness and spending power for the beneficiaries and their families.

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**QUANTITATIVE IMPACT:**

| Total number of beneficiaries impacted | 8,035 |
| Total number of direct beneficiaries | 1,140 |
| Total number of indirect beneficiaries | 6,895 |

**QUALITATIVE IMPACT:**

1. Individual impacts - skill enhancement, employability, annual increase in the income of the farmers and the benefits for his/her family.
2. Increase in self-confidence, self-esteem, social status, higher aspirations for better farming, and better lifestyle for his/her family.
3. A major impact has been observed in terms of increased agricultural productivity and associated income. This has inspired initiatives such as providing various cash crops to the beneficiaries at Palghar.
4. As Bees travel up to 2 kilometers for pollination, beekeepers with an average annual income of ₹43,000 will impact their neighbours with 30% of income growth.
5. Increase in the social status was observed as an impact, where other farmers were found to appreciate and respect the beneficiaries for producing a good number of agricultural crops, despite a smaller piece of land.
6. Imparting training to Beneficiaries and discussing the benefits of beekeeping on their agricultural income was observed to be a major qualitative impact of the project.

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**SROI Analysis**

**1.** During the field visits, RSM GC observed that the end beneficiaries were very happy and content with the intervention.

**2.** Most of the beneficiaries surveyed had been positively impacted by UTMT Society’s initiatives and were very excited with the new employment opportunities after being trained.

**3.** The initiative led to enhanced awareness and spending power for the beneficiaries and their families.

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**UTMT Society Annual Report 2019-20**

**Pg. 10**
The Gujarat programme gradually expanded to more villages in Dharampur block and spread to the neighbouring block of Kaprada in Valsad district, both of which have a predominantly tribal and BPL population. A number of ecosystem services – like adding seeds and saplings of indigenous trees, plants, use of biopesticides and fertilisers to ensure sustainable agriculture along with a local Beekeeping Resource Centre as a centre for information dissemination and awareness on bees have now come up. The programme has also spread its wings to the neighbouring Dangs district and the Union Territory of Silvassa.
Kasu Shravan Baraf

What started as an accidental training has become a passion for Kasu Shravan Baraf, not to forget the extra income and pride being first a beekeeper and now a master trainer has brought him.

Kasubhai has come a long way from being a farmer and part-time carpenter to being master trainer who today is in charge of 12 beekeepers and 29 bee boxes in his native village of Hedri in Dharampur block of Valsad district in south Gujarat.

Two years ago, when UTMT Society organised a training in his village, he had no clue or interest in beekeeping. “I was not keen to learn beekeeping but since my name was listed for the training, I went for it. But I was so excited after attending training that I decided to keep bee boxes in my farm for pollination. Today I have 14 boxes”.

In 2018, Kasubhai was selected as a Master Trainer for his village. He enjoys the role of a Master Trainer and he is very regular for all the MT meetings and trainings. He has learnt how to transfer natural colonies from the wild, multiply existing colonies, extract honey and maintain boxes.

In the three years that Kasubhai has been associated with UTMT Society he has extracted a total of 23.5 kg honey and sold 17 kg honey. He has also sold 3 colonies earning more than INR 10000. Beekeeping has brought him additional benefits. “This year (2019) overall cashew production in my area was not good. But due to the bee boxes I harvested 30kg cashew seeds while other non-beekeepers harvested less than 20 kg”.

Like any father he wants the best for his three sons and feels education is the key to a better future. He himself had to start working at a very young age and could not study beyond grade 3 due to financial constraints. Having struggled all his life he understands the value of education, and therefore has ensured that all his children get college degrees; his eldest son is pursuing B.Ed., the middle son is studying B. Com while the youngest is in grade 11.

“I am working as a Master Trainer not just to get stipend but I like to do beekeeping and teach others whatever I know.”

45, HEDRI, GUJARAT
Visit by Vice Consul, Australian Consulate, Mumbai

It was a moment of pride for the Gujarat team when Mr. Tim Hall, Vice Consul, Australian Consulate, Mumbai and the Grant Officer, Ms. Aliya Elariss visited our field areas in Dharampur. The Australian Consulate, Mumbai has been supporting our work for the last two years through their Small Grants programme.

As a part of the grant, awareness sessions on bees and their benefits had been conducted with students at village schools after which a competition with three categories, drawing, essay and poetry was rolled out. While theme-based drawing and essay writing is something the students were familiar with, the team was unsure about the response to the segment on poems. They were in for a pleasant surprise when they received several interesting poems - most focused on the benefits for farmers due to bees and beekeeping. As a team member put it, “this meant that our message has reached the students and that was our biggest reward.”

The team also organised a field visit to drumstick and passion fruit plantation pilots where bee boxes had been placed. What really impressed the visitors was that this part of the region has rocky terrain where plantation is really difficult. However, with the right guidance from the UTMT Society team, the farmers have been able to grow drumsticks which are very high in nutrition.

The area has also seen colony multiplication due to better flora and farmers have supplemented their income by sale of colonies as well. The visitors also made a stop at the beekeeping centre of the area and interacted with farmers.

Both the interactions were enjoyed by the visitors. Their positive feedback and appreciation were a big morale booster for the field team.

This year UTMT Society were also invited by NABARD Regional Office, Ahmedabad to set up a stall at the annual Sahyog Mela. It was a great opportunity for our team to not only showcase the work and pure honey that is produced by our farmers but also meet many other FPOs and SHGs from across India. It was a learning experience to understand how they operate and market their products. Learning and continuing to improve our approach to further outcomes and ensure better benefits for all associated with us is something we always strive at UTMT Society.

Farmer Producer Organisation Workshop

Forming an FPO allows local farmers to come together in a group where they can collectively decide on the price, produce and markets.

One such step was attending a workshop to understand the working of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO). Those of us who work with small farmers are aware of the challenges they face while selling their produce - it is very difficult for a single farmer to get the right price for his produce - also when each farmer is selling individually the quantity of the produce is not enough to sell at bigger markets.

Forming an FPO allows local farmers to come together in a group where they can collectively decide on the price, produce and markets. The registered FPO also has an individual name which allows for branding and packaging, once again ensuring a bigger market reach.

After getting all the information and seeing the benefits, UTMT Society decided to go ahead with registering an FPO and applied to NABARD for assistance. Things are moving in the right direction and we are hopeful that the process will be completed shortly and hence benefit the many farmers associated with UTMT Society.
A farmer all his life and one always willing to learn new things, Mohanbhai is very happy with his new working partners- the bees. Cultivating 6 acres of land in his native village in Dang for the past 20 years, Mohanbhai has always experimented with new methods but the improvement he is seeing in the produce due to bee pollination is new and exciting for him.

"Trying new things isn’t new to me, as I’ve experimented with new crops and techniques before. I follow Krishi Channel on TV, through which I got acquainted with scientific beekeeping. When Ramesh bhai (a UTMTS Master Trainer in Dang) contacted me for beekeeping awareness sessions, I happily enrolled for it," says, 40-year-old Mohanbhai.

He started with 3 Apis cerana and 2 Trigona boxes from UTMT Society after taking training in 2019. In the following months, frequent visits from the master trainer helped him learn and understand the process thoroughly which in turn strengthened his belief in beekeeping.

He checks bee boxes thoroughly once in two weeks and observes them on a daily basis. He shared that he enjoys watching bees work on his field and collecting pollen in the box. In the first season itself he harvested 8 Kg honey which is not very common – he sold most of it earning INR 4000/-.

His wife is also part of the process. They also keep 3 Cerana and 6 Trigona boxes of his neighbour who does not have good flora, in his wadi. The couple are very happy with the extra income which will help them fund the education of their children who are pursuing their higher studies in the neighbouring city. His son wants to be a policeman while his daughter wants to pursue nursing. "With 50 bee boxes, I will easily earn enough to support my children’s college expenses, which was giving me nightmares until now."

The extra income is being supplemented by better produce, hence more money. Personally too, Mohanbhai has discovered a new hobby in the pursuit of bees. Beekeeping is taking him to new areas, and he has been exploring and appreciating the different hills in his area which he had never done in the past.

This tree has never given me more than 20-30 guavas in a season. I would have to search for fruits earlier though the tree used to be full of flowers. As you can now see even from a distance, each stem has more than 20 fruits on it thanks to pollination by my bees.
Colony transport using carrying cage
Dharampur, Gujarat

While for us at UTMT Society and the many farmers and beekeepers associated with us, bees are a natural part of our daily lives - the same does not apply to the general public who have a natural fear of bee stings. Therefore, transporting bees from one place to another has always been a difficult and tricky job.

But that has changed with the innovation of ‘carrying cages’, which is not only safe for humans but is equally safe and well ventilated for bees. A multi-size framed wooden cage with bottom holes for ventilation is extremely handy in transporting bee colonies. In addition, it is light in weight and easy to carry as it is like a suitcase with a handle.

Earlier, when the bee boxes had to be moved - being heavy, any jolt could lead to bees escaping from them. Due to this, even if a farmer had to transport a single box, they had to hire a separate vehicle which resulted in additional expense. The new carrying cage is completely safe and the bees can only come out when the latch is opened. This allows the farmers to even carry the suitcase-like boxes in public transport like buses or two wheelers (the most common form of transport in our field areas) making it easy and affordable. Another quality of this design is its light weight- at a time one person can easily carry two cages. The cages are available in different frame sizes so that farmers can choose the size of the cage based on the size of the colony.

This innovation has made the carrying of a bee box over long distances both safe and affordable.

Exchange of combs

Building, storing, finding food while also ensuring health and protection!! If you thought we were talking about a community, you are right. But the community is that of Bees.

Bees are extremely organized and hard-working - this and much more is what it takes to build and keep a healthy comb. A healthy comb is extremely essential for a beekeeper. But not all bees are the same and not all combs get the right environment to grow into a healthy comb. And this is where the ‘exchange of combs’ comes in handy.

In the process, a new comb which has the three essentials of fresh eggs, larva and pupa is taken from a healthy colony and added to a weaker colony which then sustains weak bee boxes and makes it stronger. A healthy comb means more eggs which means more bees. It also means that they will be able to fill in more honey for the hive.

This method promotes the concept of co-existing, helping each other- so that the bee population thrives and prospers.

New Method of Making Wax

As an innovation this year, the UTMT Society team in Gujarat started with a new way of extracting beeswax. Earlier, we used to put all the wax in a pan, add water and boil, as the wax melted it was transferred to another vessel using a thin cloth as a strainer. However, while transferring a lot of wax got stuck to the first vessel resulting in wastage. Also, it took time to filter the impurities.

In the new method the wax is directly put in the cloth which is then dipped in hot water. This allows the wax to melt and self-transfer to the vessel while the impurities stay in the cloth itself. The method is efficient, there is reduction in waste and has reduced the time of making wax by more than 50%.
The Maharashtra programme is currently focused in Palghar and Aurangabad districts. In Palghar district, we also started work in Jawahar and Mokhada blocks. New components of beekeeping with Trigona (stingless bees), a larger role for women in beekeeping including a strong Master Trainer cadre and use of kitchen gardens+beekeeping as a climate change strategy were innovated here in the period 2015-2019.
Farming is hard work and the biggest reward for a farmer is good produce and steady income. But can you imagine the excitement of the farmer when he is able to more than double his income and grow export quality produce. And that is the story of Bharat Bhau whose life has been on an upswing since July 2019, when UTMT Society started awareness in his village.

Bharat Bhau along with his family of six lives in Modhgav village in the Palghar district in Maharashtra. Even though he owns 2.5 Acres of land, he was unable to invest in agricultural inputs for the entire land and cultivated only a small portion earning an annual income of INR 60,000. To supplement the family’s monetary need, Bharat Bhau worked as a daily wage labourer, which is hard work and less money but with no other skills he didn’t have many opportunities.

The chilli season lasted till April 2020 in which Bharat Bhau harvested 4 tons of chilli, and was able to earn INR 1,40,000 through sale of his produce. With new skills and understanding Bharat is all geared up for the next season and plans to cultivate his entire land. Though market linkage is the key highlight, he understands the importance of handholding support for beekeeping and agriculture tips that he has received from UTMT Society. He is very thankful for how it has changed his life for good. Bharat Bhau is hopeful that better produce and therefore a better future await him and his family.

UTMT Society also connected us with local chilli farming experts who guided us throughout the farming season on pests and treatments. "Within a couple of weeks of understanding the process of beekeeping, he managed to fill his first bee box with Cerana colonies."

At awareness meetings at the Modhgav gram panchayat, Bharat Bhau learned about beekeeping and pollination impact on crops. During interactions with the UTMT Society team he learned how people are carrying out commercial farming of bottle gourd, tomato and chilli in small patches of land, and how beekeeping has increased the production quantities by 30-40% for each crop. Within a couple of weeks of understanding the process of beekeeping, he managed to fill his first bee box with Cerana colonies. Seeing the need and sincerity of Bharat, UTMT Society decided to extend support and find the right market linkages for him.

“UTMT Society organized a plot assessment survey by a Vashi APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) dealer and this helped us to fill a lot of gaps in our farming practices. Now we know what categorization is required to prepare export quality production. After looking at the harvest, the Vashi APMC dealer was satisfied with the quality of chilli and offered a price much higher than the local market price."
Shetishala – the literal meaning of which is ‘farm school’ or in this case Agriclinic has brought a new lease of life for tribal farmers in the Palghar district of Maharashtra. Before the intervention of UTMT Society, farmers in Palghar carried out rainfed farming using traditional methods leading to limited yields which was used for self- consumption. Given this scenario, the team began looking at options to develop additional forage for bees in the area and provide more sustainable livelihoods, incomes which would help stop migration of the local farmers. This needed growing commercial crops which would result in increased and regular income.

In the earlier phases, bee flora was being distributed in very small quantities of 3 to 10 grams which was used only for household consumption. It was decided to scale this up, but the challenge was that it was a small, belt with mixed crop farming. And none of the farmers had any idea about how to increase the yield. One other reason was the farmers had never explored bigger markets and did not know what it takes to produce for the market let alone export quality produce. All these challenges and learnings is what gave birth to the concept of Shetishala.

As a first step, the UTMT Society team chose a group of farmers who could farm the same crop so that there would be enough produce for market linkage at a later stage. Next, we tapped into external resources to provide the right information and guidance on the whole process. Fortunately, we found an organisation working in the neighbouring area of Talasari.

Chilli, cluster bean, ladies’ finger is some of the common crops grown in the area. Keeping risk mitigation in mind, the team decided to start with only one crop- chilli, which was distributed in large quantities to the chosen group of farmers.

The intervention was conducted in 2 stages. In the first stage, two theoretical sessions were conducted which covered the whole process right from tilling the land before sowing the crop to sorting the produce. The team also made sure that the sessions were conducted locally so that all farmers could attend and hence get maximum benefit from it.

The second stage consisted of actual plot visits by the experts where they looked at the yield and gave crucial tips for protection from pests and more importantly the right methods of harvesting, storing, and selling.

Shetishala has been a stepping stone as for the first-time farmers from Palghar sold their yield at market price through a dealer at APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee), Navi Mumbai. The farmers were paid in cash at farm gate which helped them save on transport costs besides ensuring the best prices. This system continued to function well during the lockdown due to COVID in March proving its resilience and ensuring a steady stream of income in households which had lost at least one income due to family members returning from the cities in the aftermath of COVID 19.

The intervention was carried out with the concept of Shetishala. It required teamwork and allowed everyone to participate and make the most of the visit. Servathon served as a refreshing break for 30 employees of SODEXO and 100 farmers and their families of Zari, a village in Palghar district, Maharashtra.

Organized as an employee engagement activity, the Servathon provided the participants with an opportunity to work closely with the villagers. The day was divided into four separate activities - seed packing, tree plantation, rebuilding of shades over beeboxes and stationery kit distribution to local school - allowing everyone to participate and make the most of the visit.

However, what the team from SODEXO, UTMT Society and the farmers enjoyed most was re-building of shades over beeboxes which had blown away due to wind and continuous rain. It required teamwork and allowed everyone to interact and know each other.

There was also a stationery kit distribution organized in a local school of Zari. The activity culminated with a late lunch arranged for everyone and included the 100 farmers and their families. The informal setting allowed for free flow of conversation and a better understanding of the work done by both sides. The farmers explained the process they followed for beekeeping, which was so new and interesting for the visitors that they ended up capturing the same on tape. On the other hand, farmers felt valued as people had come to meet them all the way from Mumbai and understand what they were doing, which filled them with pride in their work.
At first glance, Dondmaryachimet is just another small, in fact a tiny village with only 127 households and a population of 534 people. But what makes this tiny village of Palghar district stand out is its wonderful workforce of women who take the lead in every aspect of routine life - agricultural, social and cultural.

In August 2019, when UTMT Society started conducting awareness sessions in the village on beekeeping, the team witnessed overwhelming response from women farmers. “Given an opportunity women farmer are more competent and deliver better results as compared to men in agriculture” says a woman farmer from the village confidently.

In October 2019, 9 women farmers were trained in two-day basic farmer training in beekeeping. However, Maharashtra witnessed drought in 2018 which meant no sowing for the area as the area completely depends on rains for farming. Though bee flora had been distributed in winter, due to drought many farmers decided not to sow the seeds. No farming meant inadequate flora for bees; these challenges were brought up and discussed in the staff meetings. Brainstorming to mitigate the effects of the drought year is what gave birth to the concept of kitchen gardens.

To begin with, the UTMT Society team researched about kitchen gardens and got in touch with institutions already working on the concept. We were introduced to three different styles of kitchen gardens. The first 2 needed more investment and space while the third style of circular farming did not need buying additional equipment and seemed to be a viable option. But to be sure, the pilot was carried out for all three styles in a small area.

The farmers were reluctant as this was not only new but also cultivating crops with grey water (water from bathing, washing utensils) was not something they were used to. Therefore, the team got an external expert to conduct a session on the methods and demonstrate the whole process. 7 out of 9 women farmers decided to develop a common kitchen garden in a plot of 35 x 35 sq. ft. and undertake the activity in a group. The kitchen garden group had women farmers between the age group of 30 and 62 years. They were all smallholder farmers with limited irrigation facilities.

We started with 10 to 15 vegetables which were mostly grown for self-consumption. However, the production was more than adequate, and the women were able to even sell some of it in the local weekly market. The farmers were happy with the produce and definitely with the extra income and we were equally thrilled as bees too were thriving.

One of the members shared, “to reduce the chances of failure, we decided to take it up as a group, though we belong to different Self-Help Groups (SHG), we unified for our families’ welfare. Encouraged by the results of last year and with help from UTMT Society we are scaling it to a commercial level in the next phase. This will also reduce our frequency of migrating outside the village in search of work and income”.

The success of the pilot has resulted in the expansion of the kitchen garden project. The UTMT Society team learnt that what started off as an activity to alleviate the impact of drought was in fact a much-needed project in the area. The summer months in the area see no farming due to shortage of water; the kitchen garden allows the women farmers to farm and earn even during the summer months, when there is shortage of water. The vegetables grown in the kitchen garden are also providing much needed nutrition which was otherwise missing. Also, those who are not directly involved in beekeeping can still earn through the kitchen garden.
Work began in MP with the World Bank Development Marketplace award in 2013 which facilitated replication of the model. After forays in Umaria, Hoshangabad districts, the programme has finally settled in Chhindwara district and is poised for expansion in Mandla.
Sometimes all it takes is the right connection. Karan has felt a special bond with bees from a very young age but did not know that hunting them was also harming them. All that changed when he attended the beekeeping training organized by UTMT Society in 2019.

Karan resides in Kangla village of Jamai block of Chhindwara district, Madhya Pradesh with his family of 8 members with an annual income of INR 45,000/- from agriculture.

Recently, Karan was selected as a master trainer. As part of the family and village culture he has been hunting bees from a young age and was never afraid of them. Today however, he is also their ambassador and saviour where he educates people on the importance and protection of bees.

Post the training he first started beekeeping with his family on his own farm and the results were there for everyone to see. “I saw better quality and quantity in the harvest of my vegetables and fruits like coriander, tomatoes, barbat (cluster beans), bananas, brinjal and toor, due to bees’. I also encouraged my paternal uncle to keep bee-boxes on his land. There was apprehension initially, but they were also convinced once we saw the pollination impact of beekeeping on my agricultural produce”.

Karan has since reported pest free and better-quality crops. Beekeeping also gave him surplus produce of tomatoes on his land. he was able to sell about 50 kgs of tomatoes, earning around Rs. 550 which he invested in buying manure and seeds. He currently has 8 filled *Apis cerana* bee boxes and has harvested 1.5-2 kg of honey.

“I also encouraged my paternal uncle to keep bee-boxes on his land. There was apprehension initially, but they were also convinced once we saw the pollination impact of beekeeping on my agricultural produce.”
Pollination is a fundamental process for the survival of our ecosystems. Nearly 90% of the world’s wild flowering plant species depend, entirely, or at least in part, on animal pollination. Not only do pollinators contribute directly to food security, but they are also key to conserving biodiversity. Understanding the need and importance of bees is important for all. The MP team celebrated World Honeybee Day across different venues and with participants of various age groups.

They say the younger you start the better; the values and lessons imbibed at a younger age shape our thinking and later decisions in life. Keeping this in mind, on World Honeybee Day, the UTMT Society team organized a program for younger kids in association with Little Tomatoes Pre-school, Bhopal. 25 toddlers in the age group of 4 to 8 years along with teachers and other school staff participated in an interactive awareness session which was followed by a drawing competition.

When we started, the common response from children was bees sting and that they feared them. As the session progressed and the team spoke about how they enrich our food and ecosystem the perceptions changed. By the end of the session the children became bee crusaders who understood the importance of honeybees and these thoughts shone through in their drawings.

All the attempts were remarkable and showed that the message we set out to deliver was successful. In one drawing the child showed a ripe mango next to a hive giving a clear message that juicy and well-formed fruit is the result of bees. In another drawing the student divided the drawing into 2 parts where on one side there were blooming flowers due to the presence of bees while the other side lay barren. The program ended with distribution of certificates.

Dr. Gowda and her team in collaboration with UTMT Society hope to study the impact of bees not only on agricultural land but also the positive impact Apis cerana and Trigona have on forest flora; which plants and in what capacity.

In the field, the team organized an induction session for farmers in the newly selected Chhawda village in Chhindwara district. Once again, the aim was to educate farmers on the benefits of bees and the negatives of honey hunting, which is a common practice in these villages. This was done with the help of videos and attended by 40 farmers. The session also focused on both the direct and indirect impact - how pollination works, how it improves the produce. The farmers were also given small, illustrated booklets with this information for future reference.

When the team visited the fields they found that the farmers who have kept bee boxes in their land. The farmers spoke about the real time benefits they saw in the quality and quantity of produce. The session also helped the visiting team understand the whole process of beekeeping right from the design of the bee box to various seasonal activities performed by the beekeeper.

At the end of the visit about 6 species of bees and a sample of at least 5 colonies of both Apis Cerana and Trigona were collected by the team for molecular and morphological analysis. Some other studies about plant pollinator interactions are also being explored.
Blueberries are small flowering plants, extremely pleasing to the eyes. But it is a cash crop and expensive to cultivate. UTMT Society was approached for providing bumblebees for blueberry pollination. The team was excited for more than one reason. First, it was a new area of work but more importantly because our work had spoken for us which is why we were approached. It was like having a seal of achievement for the hard work the local team has been putting in the very remote areas of MP.

However, the question of bumblebees remained as they are native to temperate regions and are not found mostly in high altitude regions of India. Using the expertise that we have in pollination, the team suggested Trigona bees as they are the smallest of the species. As a pilot, we provided ten boxes. The process requires time and patience, and the Blueberry Project team could not see results in the first few days. On a suggestion from another institution, they experimented with Apis mellifera species which did not work at all. However, in the meantime the bee boxes that were placed by UTMT Society started showing very encouraging results.

The project team was very happy with the progress and asked for more boxes. It has been a learning experience for the team and opens up new opportunities for the beekeepers in the area.
Blessing in disguise' may be a cliché but for Itman it became a reality. A former migrant worker, he was able to attend the beekeeping training organized by our team in his village as he was unwell and could not travel for work outside his village of Khapa. The training and subsequent support from the UTMT Society team has today resulted in Itman Evnati becoming a popular and respected Master Trainer.

Itman is a hard-working family man. In spite of being a graduate and having 4 acres of land, he was unable to provide for his family which includes his parents, wife and child. There are not many opportunities in his village other than farming, which is also difficult as the area faces water shortage. He used to frequently be away from his family for work, which meant eating and sleeping at odd times and different places. He says, ‘dependence on agriculture and lack of other sources for livelihood in the village limit family’s means of income, hence migrating to other places for work is the temporary solution’.

This changed when he attended the first training organized in 2018 in his village. He has seen beehives all his life and was in fact a honey hunter. Whenever he came across a hive, he would use fire to break the hive, thus killing the bees in the process. During the training when the trainer spoke about the numerous benefits of bees, he was surprised. He knew his health at that time would not permit him to travel outside the village anytime soon and one thing that worked in his favour was that he knew the area around his village very well. Immediately after the training he approached the trainer and spoke about a colony he had seen and showed interest in learning the process of beekeeping.

Thus, started the journey of Itman, first as a beekeeper and today as a master trainer. From the very beginning, the team recognised the potential in Itman. Even though he had just begun, he started sharing the newly learnt information on beekeeping with other farmers and discouraged them from honey hunting. In fact, he went around asking them to inform him of any colonies they found.

What made Itman an ideal choice for a master trainer was that he always asked questions with the intention of learning more about the process. He also started using his newfound knowledge to improve the yield of his land by implementing new techniques and innovations. He has now even switched from chemical to organic fertilizers for benefitting the quality of soil and reduced chemical usage to support bees. Itman grows other crops in his farm, but as of now, he has been able to only sell maize where beekeeping helped him with better returns of as much as Rs. 5000-6000!

Itman, witnessing the benefits of beekeeping in terms of improved quality and quantity of crops, has stopped migrating outside his village for work. He shares, ‘I feel if I focus on beekeeping, I can improve my income further, hence I have stopped migrating outside the village now. I observed that due to pollination by bees the fruit set on tomatoes was much better than in the past’.

His enthusiasm and sincerity led him to become a Master Trainer in 2019 whereby he received advanced training to provide handholding support to other beekeepers in his own village and neighbouring village of Chhwada. He feels accomplished when people tell him how they’re benefitting from beekeeping. There is also a certain amount of respect which has come with being a master trainer and he feels valued when people around the area recognize him as “Madhumakhi wale Bhaiya”.

With Itman’s and UTMT Society’s efforts, overall honey hunting has reduced in the area.
Bees Abroad Visit

UTMT Society’s work is about creating a healthy environment for bees and humans alike, while facing increasingly high, often man made, challenges like deforestation, drought, climate change”, says Dr. Martin Kunz who, besides being an avid beekeeper himself, was making his third visit to our project areas. They further studied in detail the kitchen garden projects started in Maharashtra and were impressed with how well the women understood and followed the processes. The Kitchen Garden project has been initiated in a cluster of villages with scarce water resources. Apart from increasing bee forage, the kitchen gardens aim to help villagers grow vegetables at a time when they are scarce – using greywater (water from washing utensils and bathing). “At the heart of UTMT Society’s work remains the attempt to increase harvests via improved pollination. Bees Abroad has co-funded a study to measure the impact. Interacting with farmers and seeing evidence of the impact have convinced us that plots with pollination fare better even under drought conditions than those without bees”.

In their observations and interactions with the farmers it was clear that the demand for Trigona boxes is increasing – which is ‘living proof’ that the grant by Bees Abroad was showing results. Mr. Urade, a farmer who has eight Apis cerana hives – and three Trigona (stingless) colonies and is also a carpenter with UTMT Society says that Trigona are even more cost effective than Apis cerana (and Apis cerana are rather low cost/maintenance compared to the ‘European’ honeybee).
Bee boxes at Taj Aravali Resort and Spa, Udaipur

80% of the food on our plate comes from bees!

This along with many other amazing facts comprised the Bee Trail at the Taj Aravali Resort and Spa (TARS), Udaipur.

UTMT Society was invited by The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) to collaborate with them for not just setting up Bee boxes at the property but also creating awareness on bees and beekeeping in the local communities and villages around the property.

Through this project they wanted local communities to understand and attempt beekeeping, while also setting up a Bee Trail for their guests. However, the project resulted in bigger rewards when within a year we started seeing increase in the population of bees in the surrounding areas.

While interacting with farmers both old and young, the team discovered that though the area was a natural habitat for indigenous bees in the past, rampant construction and mining in the area had had a negative impact on the environment and the bee population.

Under the project, the UTMT Society team had placed 20 bee boxes in the property and surrounding villages. On their part, the resort provided a dedicated person from their Human Resource department who was trained in beekeeping and bees in general. The project also brought a lot of learning for our team. It was our first foray into Rajasthan and we realised that the bee population in any area which has forests and hills can be increased naturally.

Over a period, bees swarmed and nested in the local vegetation. As in the case of Udaipur, elderly locals shared with us that they had not seen local indigenous bees since their childhood days. The boxes placed during the project resulted in multiplication, also during awareness sessions, there was a lot of emphasis on eschewing honey hunting. When the villagers started reporting natural colonies in the vicinity, it was truly a heartwarming moment for both the TARS and UTMT Society teams.
New Logo Design and increased Social Media presence

Introducing our new logo - Its earthier and its focus is on bees and farmers.

When we completed a decade in 2019, it was time to reflect on our work and the changes we have been able to bring about because of our model in the lives of farmers, their families, and the environment.

It has been a very productive and exciting period where we have been able to establish the importance of indigenous bees from a pollination perspective for small farmers in India. Our work has evolved from beekeeping training to a wider focus on creating a supportive ecosystem of allied activities for beekeeping with indigenous/native bees in tribal communities.

Our founder Vijaya Pastala set up Under the Mango Tree as a hybrid organisation comprising Under The Mango Tree Company (UTMT) to work with marketing of honey and the not for profit Under The Mango Tree Society (UTMT Society) to train farmers in beekeeping. While we were always clear about the roles and responsibilities of the two entities and had separate teams and governance structures, having the same logo often resulted in a lot of mixing up of identities, especially for donors and government agencies.

Also, given the evolution in our vision and work over the last 11 years, our Board and Team felt the need to move away from the common identity and logo that UTMT Society and our sister organisation, UTMT Company have been using. As difficult as it was to let go of our old logo, the bee representation with earthier brown and green represents our work better and puts bees and agriculture center stage. We kept the logo circular because we wanted to bring in some old into our new logo to create a harmony between the old and the new.

Creation of a new logo brings in the added responsibility of creating a brand-new identity. We aimed to represent UTMT Society as a separate not for profit organisation that works towards helping smallholders and farmers in tribal communities with beekeeping. With this in mind, we have created new handles for UTMT Society on various social media platforms.

There is now also a separate website which features our work with indigenous bees, conservation of bees, pollination, agriculture and environment as a whole. However, getting to the new identity with a brand-new logo and all its attendant aspects was no one- day job.

It took a whole year to brainstorm, work on a logo design and complete the groundwork before we could launch our new identity.

Our new logo was designed by the wonderful team at the design agency Sixofus (www.sixofus.com) as a pro bono project. It was like finding the right connection - the team at Sixofus had completed fifteen years and as a gesture of giving back they rolled out a competition where they would do a pro bono project for the winning organisation. We participated and we won! Sixofus made field visits to understand our work, speak to the farmers and incorporate their inputs while creating the logo.

Our website was designed by a freelance web developer Vinayak Rajguru and he did a marvellous job of bringing in the symmetry between all the elements of our model - the bees, the simplicity, focus on agriculture and environment.

A big Thank you to the Sixofus Team and Vinayak!
Our M&E Process

The M&E activities are spread out over the length of the programme and include the following:

1. Pre-training Assessment:
   Soon after the programme area and beneficiaries are selected, a “Pre-training Assessment” is undertaken to get a brief overview of the agriculture practices of the selected farmers, the types of crops they grow, and whether the crops grown by them are primarily grown for self-consumption, sale, and/or both. In 2019-20, 13 pre-training assessments were done.

2. Baseline Survey:
   After the farmers are trained in beekeeping a detailed baseline survey is conducted, generally to evaluate their socio-economic background, nutritional habits, agriculture practices, and their knowledge about bees and beekeeping.
   In 2019-2020, UTMT Society conducted three baseline surveys in Maharashtra and one baseline survey in Madhya Pradesh.

3. Monthly Monitoring Exercise:
   Upon the commencement of the project, monthly information is collected using two monitoring tools, i.e.,
   - UTMT Society’s inhouse Monitoring Information System (MIS) and CommCare, a mobile-based platform developed by Dimagi Inc., to track the health of all the filled bee boxes monthly.
   - In addition, the bee flora initiative that forms part of beekeeping projects, is monitored every month to understand the benefits to the farmers and the project. Monthly monitoring is an on-going exercise and includes all projects under implementation.

4. Case Studies:
   Regular information about project implementation and participants is also collected through case studies, success stories, and stories on shortcomings/drawbacks.
   In 2019-20, 42 case studies were documented by Regional Centers and finalized by the M&E team.

5. Endline Survey:
   Lastly, after the completion of the project an endline survey is undertaken to evaluate the changes in the lives of the farmers facilitated by the beekeeping programme, i.e., changes in their beekeeping skills, impact on the agriculture produce, impact on their nutritional habits, and impact on their overall livelihood.
   In 2019-20, an endline survey was conducted on completion of the Modi Trust-UTMT Society project at Kaprada Block in Valsad district, Gujarat and a report recording the impact of the programme was presented to Modi Trust, UTMT Society’s funding partner in the programme.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) is regarded as an integral function of UTMT Society. The M&E team provides valuable insights to the Leadership team and the Regional Centers on the operation of projects that serve as inputs for planning and running beekeeping programmes. It also evaluates projects at the time of their closure to understand the impact of the programme on the community.

Key findings

- The Gujarat farmers, who had bee boxes in their farms or orchards, produced 55% more Mangoes per tree as compared to the other farmers who didn’t have bee boxes in the vicinity, while the Maharashtra beekeepers showed a modest increase of 18% for Mango production.
- The Gujarat beekeepers produced 267% more Cashew per tree than the control group farmers and Maharashtra showed a 45% increase.
- For cluster beans, the Maharashtra beekeepers showed a huge increase of 435% per unit production as compared to the control farmers in the state, whereas Gujarat beekeepers showed 181% increase.

In 2019-20, the M&E team conducted its very first research study to assess the impact of beekeeping on pollination of Mango, Cashew, and Cluster Beans at two locations – Valsad (Gujarat) and Palghar (Maharashtra) – in western India. The study was funded by Bees Abroad, UK.

The findings of the study were presented at the 46th Apimondia International Apicultural Congress held at Montreal, Canada in 2019.

A total of 136 farmers (74 Beekeepers and 62 from the Control Group) participated in the study.
HCL Foundation gives Rs 16.5 cr grant to 9 NGOs
- Business Standard

Honey we shrunk the number of bees, we must bring them back.
- First Post

Unseen 2019: Silence of the bees
- Mint

Under The Mango Tree: latest from our project in India
- Bees Abroad

Thinking out of the beebox
- The Hindu Business Line

A pintful of honey in Mumbai
- Business Standard

Helping beehives thrive
- Hindustan Times

Click on Images to check out the Articles
UTMT Society Annual Report 2019-20
### Financial Details

#### Income and Expenditure Account for the Period ended 31st March, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENDITURE</th>
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<th>INCOME</th>
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<td>To Expenditure in respect of properties:-</td>
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<td>(c) Irrecoverable Rents</td>
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<td>(e) Leasehold Improvement</td>
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#### Funds and Liabilities

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<td>Total</td>
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As per our report of even date

For Under The Mango Tree Society

Chartered Accountants Mumbai: Vijaya Pastala
Vijay Agarwal
(Anagrawl Vijay & Associates)

Trustee

For Under The Mango Tree Society

Chartered Accountants Mumbai: Sophie Moochhala
Vijay Agarwal
(Anagrawl Vijay & Associates)

Trustee

As per our report of even date

For Under The Mango Tree Society

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Trustee

For Under The Mango Tree Society
Acknowledgement

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Dr. Martin Kunz: Front cover, Pg. 1, 2, 22, 28, 30, 33, 47, 48, 51 & 52
Acumen: Pg. 12, 47, 4
Going to School team: Pg. 5, 20, 47, 48 & Back cover

Content development by Nishi (NuTs and Us)
Design and layout by Mayank Rathod

Get Involved

You can do your bit by contributing and supporting:

- A bee veil and swarm bag made by local woman's Self Help Groups: 300 INR
- A bee box made by local carpenter groups: 1500 INR
- A beekeeping starter kit: 3000 INR
- A honey extraction kit: 4000 INR
- A farmer's beekeeping training and practical hand-holding for one year: 10,000 INR

We look forward to your continued support, keep buzzing!

For more information please contact:
info@utmtsociety.org

UTMT Society Annual Report 2019-20