

# PROCESS DOCUMENTATION RESEARCH REPORT

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## LIVELIHOODS PROJECT

*“Promoting Rural Livelihood Options for Marginalised  
Communities in the Context of Covid-19 in Gujarat”*

September 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021



**Human Development and Research Centre (HDRC)**

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# Forward

Covid-19 pandemic has taken a huge toll on the livelihoods of the marginalised section of the society. Frequent lockdowns have left the underprivileged jobless for months together compelling lakhs of migrant labourers to return to their villages just for safety and shelter. While these families somehow managed to reach the safety of their homes they continue to face immense hardships because of unemployment. Restoring livelihoods of the marginalised sections of the society in the rural areas was therefore identified as a critical need to revive the economy.

Human Development Research Centre has been working on the inclusion of the rural deprived communities especially the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes, Women and the educationally backward classes for over four decades now. Given the Covid context HDRC leveraged on the wide network of grassroots organisations that it had created through its Rural Inclusive Governance Programme to initiate the project, “Promoting Rural Livelihood Options for Marginalised Communities in Gujarat.” It is one of the largest collaborative projects we have undertaken in 41 talukas to create employment opportunities in rural Gujarat.

This has been a novel experience for HDRC, as it immersed us in an area such as agriculture and livelihoods, that we had not explored so fully before. This project, which involved multiple stakeholders, was unique as it involved a participatory and collaborative approach right from the inception of the project, from the conceptualisation and planning stage to the Process Document Research (PDR) phase. Collaborations at every stage with other NGOs, CBOs and Women Cooperatives was a key contributor to the successful completion of this project, despite the serious communication challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns and the uncertainty of the times.

The aim of this PDR report, is to provide a guiding document. It is envisioned as a sort of 'how to' and 'how not to' manual, that may encourage others to join the movement to support marginalised and vulnerable sections of society, especially women, and help them with their livelihood options.



As we submit this PDR report, we would like to thank all those who have made this research process effective, with their invaluable contributions. We believe that, in the long-term, HDRC will continue to work in the area of livelihoods while also supporting like-minded organisations to find their direction in this area of work.

**Alice Morris**  
Director



# Acknowledgement

This PDR Report would have been incomplete without the help and support of many people to whom we want to express our gratitude. We are thankful to the Director of Human Development and Research Centre, Alice Morris, who created a space for research at the institute, otherwise, it would have been impossible to initiate such a vast study. We would like to express our special gratitude towards her. And we are also thankful to the Human Development and Research Centre, Secretary, Fr. Isaac Rumao SJ.

This document is under the guidance of Dr. Mukesh Lakum and Arif Mirza. This is a moment to remember and express my gratitude to all the field respondents who shared their experience and had many meaningful interactions on the Process Document Research (PDR) context of livelihood project. We are greatly thankful to Ramesh Tadavi, Deven Vanvi, Dalapat Bhatia, Jignesha Gamit, Dilip Solanki, for field support. This work would not have been completed without the extensive assistance from the research team, Arif Mirza, Mukti Barot and Rashmika Dabhi. We are also thankful to Hitendra Rathod, Dipak Solanki and Sharifa Pathan.

**Dr. Rajesh Lakum**  
Research Associate





# Executive Summary

Human Development and Research (HDRC) has been working in Gujarat since 1977, creating awareness of the rights of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), socially and educationally backward classes and other deprived communities. In 2020, the Covid-19 epidemic crippled the entire world, socially and financially. In India too, the pandemic brought the entire country to its knees and it had a serious impact on the livelihoods of the more vulnerable, marginalised communities, especially in the rural areas.

In this time of crisis, based on its years of experience of working during natural and man-made disasters, HDRC came forward to support the marginalised communities of Gujarat who were in distress due to the sudden loss of livelihoods. Answering the call of this community in dire need of economic support and empowerment, and based on the information received from their field staff and partners, HDRC decided to intervene and support the livelihoods of these marginalised communities. It embarked on the project, “Promoting Rural Livelihood Options for Marginalised Communities in the Context of Covid-19 in Gujarat” which ran from 1 September 2020 to 31 December, 2021.

The planning and design phase of this project was a participatory and collaborative one. Meetings were held with stakeholders from each zone to identify issues. HDRC also consulted with community-based organisations (CBOs) and local level organisations to obtain their suggestions with regard to the interventions. Thus, the participatory approach continued right through the project, from the pre-planning phase, proposal drafting, to the implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation phase.

The main goal of this project was to restore the livelihood of Dalits, Adivasis and women living in rural areas of Gujarat impacted due to the Pandemic, and to encourage them to try new options. The project targeted 420 rural areas in

## OBJECTIVES OF PDR

- 1) Provide an in-depth understanding of the objectives achieved, non-achievements and the learning from the entire process of this livelihood project.
- 2) Identify the limitations in the intervention strategy and processes and correlate them to field level contextual knowledge and experience of the marginalised community so as to develop a strategy of implementation.
- 3) Increase efficiency of HDRC and create a developmental attitude among the local workers.
- 4) Avoid repetition of the mistakes made in the project process and develop a comprehensive strategy for future projects.
- 5) Understand the perspective of the implementing organisation and partners, their understanding and methodology, farmers' experiences and demands.
- 6) Create a document that will also be helpful to other organisations working on such projects.

41 talukas of 17 districts of Gujarat and aimed to reach 8200 farmers from small and disadvantaged communities, including 2000 non-farming families. In order to do so, they worked in collaboration with Gujarat's Agricultural University, research institute, government and non-government organisations (NGOs).

Farming based activities such as the formation of farmers groups, seed distribution, awareness and training relating to organic fertilisers, support for ground levelling, formation of sales cooperatives and capacity building were carried out by HDRC and its partner organisations. The project also encouraged and supported mushroom cultivation, pickle enterprises, kitchen gardening, nurseries and provision of iceboxes for the marginalised fishing communities. Further, HDRC engaged in awareness generation about government schemes and organised exposure visits to the Agricultural University of Gujarat and the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK).

Based on their experiences during this project, HDRC felt that they should reflect on their journey, self-evaluate and consolidate their learning of the successes and limitations of this project into a Process Document Research (PDR) report. It is hoped that this PDR report will act as a learning tool, guide or manual for other NGOs and CBOs who may want to undertake or replicate similar projects in the future.

This PDR report shares the many successes in this project; As HDRC worked in close partnership with other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that had already implemented similar projects in other states and other regions of Gujarat, this project gained from the experience of these CSO. The baseline survey acted as a needs assessment will helped to better shape the intervention. HDRC's strategy of motivating women farmers to accept and use more modern farming methods worked well and many of them converted to organic farming. This project enabled an increase and exchange of knowledge and information between farmers, especially with the formation of farmers groups. Famers also gained exposure and confidence through visits to the Agricultural University of Gujarat. Due to awareness raising they also gained a better understanding of the government of India (GOI) schemes available, which were beneficial for them.

However, this project had its fair share of limitations and challenges, including difficulties in implementation of activities due to Covid-19 lockdowns, leading to delays. This aspect is also analysed in detail within this report, so as to provider the reader with a balanced view.

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As the interventions could only be done with a limited number of beneficiaries, this led to dissatisfaction among the farmer community. Provision of seeds became an issue during the course of the project as the cost was higher than anticipated and the project budget was insufficient to cover the costs which led to purchase and distribution of seeds that were cheaper and not necessarily the best option for the famers of the various geographic locations. Transportation of these seeds also became an issue and many seeds were burnt and damaged as a result, even before getting them to the famers.

It is clear that despite years of working for rights and entitlements of marginalised communities in Gujarat, this livelihoods project was one of many firsts for HDRC. Not only were they involved in implementing a project on farming for the first time, but they also adopted an intensely participatory

## RECOMMENDATIONS AS PER THE PDR

- Large-scale research should be undertaken to identify the farmers who were most badly affected due to the pandemic.
- Work should be undertaken by the GOI for land improvement such as ground levelling, to address irrigations issues such as creation of small check dams for year-round farming for the marginalised communities such as Dalits and tribals.
- NGOs, CSOs should promote cultivation by encouraging farmers to use a drip or sprinkler system and providing the necessary technical equipment for modern methods of cultivation.
- Provision of seeds, fertilisers, medicines etc to marginalised farmers.
- Farmers should frequently visit the government departments related to agriculture, institutes or research centres connected with agriculture and also increase their own skills through skill development training.
- Arrangements should be made and structures set up for farmers so that they get a fair price for their produce in the market.
- Markets must be prepared for the small-scale fishermen and their capacities built through training.
- Women farmers should be encouraged and incentivised towards organic farming and widowed women farmers must be made aware of their entitlements and land rights.

approach, from the start to finish of the project, which was a new experience for them. Thus, this livelihood project could be viewed as a learning project, even for HDRC. It is their ardent hope that this PDR report will encourage more organisations to enter this space of agriculture and marginalised communities and replicate the much-needed interventions discussed in this report.

