

## HRP Outreach activities in April

Education and outreach is the stepping stone for any conservation project to bridge the gap between local communities, project stakeholders and the researchers. The Himalayan Restoration Project which aims to ecologically restore the degraded habitats of western Himalaya in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh works closely with the local communities to foster long term relationships and shared responsibilities for the project. So far this month we have successfully conducted three outreach activities.

### Collaborate to Conserve

On 3 April 2026, the HRP team met with Mr Ratan Chand Sharma the founder of Paryavaran Chetna Evam Gramin Vikas Prashikshan Kendra (PCEGVK), an NGO based in Saho Village in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh. We were also accompanied by Mr Gajendra Verma, who is also a member of that NGO and helped us build connections. PCEGVK has been actively working in Chamba since the last 21 years and focuses on a lot of environmental aspects like waste management, tree planting drives, awareness campaigns and school outreach activities. Mr

Sharma explained the history and significance behind setting up the organisation which was majorly inspired by the increased flash floods in the village. Due to lack of trees and grasses around the valley, their village used to get flooded every year causing huge financial and emotional loss to the local communities. In order to deal with the issue, Mr Sharma started the NGO by planting trees in 2005.

The HRP team discussed the similar nature of efforts being put in the Rathiya Panchayat area. Earlier in October 2025, HRP had collaborated with PCEGVK to conduct an outreach activity with the school kids to celebrate the wildlife week. Mr Sharma was happy to know about our project and was very enthusiastic to collaborate with our team for future outreach activities. With his support and engagement, we see promising opportunities to strengthen our outreach efforts and create a more meaningful impact within the community.

We also had the company of Mr Vinod Rathore, Mr Hem Singh, and Mr Jairam Thakur, members of PCEGVK who were also cooperative and



HRP team discussing with Paryavaran Chetna Evam Gramin Vikas Prashikshan Kendra.  
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showed a keen interest in understanding the objectives of the project and appreciated its focus on restoration and community involvement. Their enthusiasm was especially evident in their willingness to participate in the 2026 planting activity.

Through collaborative efforts of HRP and PCEGVK, our team aims to build and nurture long-term relationships in the landscape by fostering trust, shared responsibility, and active participation. The project seeks to create a collaborative network dedicated to conserving and restoring the landscape in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

**Additional read-** <https://paryavarnchetnasahoo.com/zoo-outreach-organization/>

## Outreach in Chanjui Village

Our next outreach visit was in Chanjui Village, where we met a group of about 40 people, mostly women, along with 10 children, watching everything with curiosity. To explain our mixed native tree restoration work in a simple and engaging way, we performed a small skit. It told the story of a young girl named Megha and her family. Through her story, we showed how she slowly began to understand the problem in her village like crop loss, the changing environment, raiding by animals and decided to do something about it. Later, she started her own movement named “Van Shakti”.

She started planting different kinds of wild, native trees and encouraged others to join her. The dialogues were kept easy and relatable, so everyone could connect with the message about why planting a mix of native species



HRP team interacting with the community members.  
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matters for the health of the landscape. The skit brought smiles, laughter and thoughtful reactions from the audience. At the end, we shared stickers of local plants and animals with everyone, which the children especially loved, carrying them home as a small reminder of the day.

### **When Students Truly Felt the Power of Native Trees**

HRP Team visited Odda School for an outreach program with students from classes 6 to 10. The teachers and the principal were also present, along with our guests from Mumbai Mitesh and Dupal, co-founders of Naturefuture Organisation.

We started with a short introduction and then performed a skit based on a village girl named Megha, who noticed her parents were worried about decreasing snowfall and irregular rainfall patterns, which were affecting their agricultural

income. It showed how Megha, with the guidance of her grandfather and support from her village friends, brought positive change by planting native trees, shrubs, and herbs. Slowly, she helped make the Chamba Valley greener again with a mix of native species.

One of my favorite moments was watching the students sit so quietly and attentively during the skit. You could really feel that they understood the importance of growing native plants instead of non-native ones like apples.

We also interacted with the students and asked them what black bears eat. Almost all of them answered together, “corn” which made us laugh a little. It reflected what they usually see and hear about animals like langurs, macaques, black bears etc. This helped us start a deeper discussion.

Using posters, we explained how ecological restoration can bring change. We talked about



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Students identifying native wildlife through stickers. © Trisa Bhattachajree

how planting native fruiting trees can provide food for wildlife, reducing their dependence on agricultural fields. We also showed them how forests can recover over time and explained that these animals are naturally adapted to eat wild food, not crops. Their perspective was quite surprising, but it gave us a good opportunity to clear misconceptions.

We made it clear that change won't happen overnight. It takes time but it can transform the entire landscape in the long run. To support this, we showed a documentary on Himalayan restoration, explaining the process, challenges, and scientific methods involved.

At the end, we distributed stickers of five native animals and five native trees to help them start recognizing local biodiversity. We encouraged them to learn their common names and even told them we'd conduct a small test when we meet again.

Finally, the principal kindly offered us a traditional "dham" meal, and the food was absolutely delicious. It truly felt like a perfect and happy ending to a meaningful day.

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**Citation:** Ansari, A., L. Tyagi & L.R.S. Rathore (2026). HRP Outreach activities in April. *Zoo's Print* 41(4): 09–12.



HRP team interacting with Students. © Trisa Bhattachajree