

**Experiences  
with  
Women Self Help Groups  
in  
Forest Management In India**

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# Case Studies

- Great Himalayan National Park
- Dhamtari Forest Division
- Integrated Watershed Development Project Hills-II

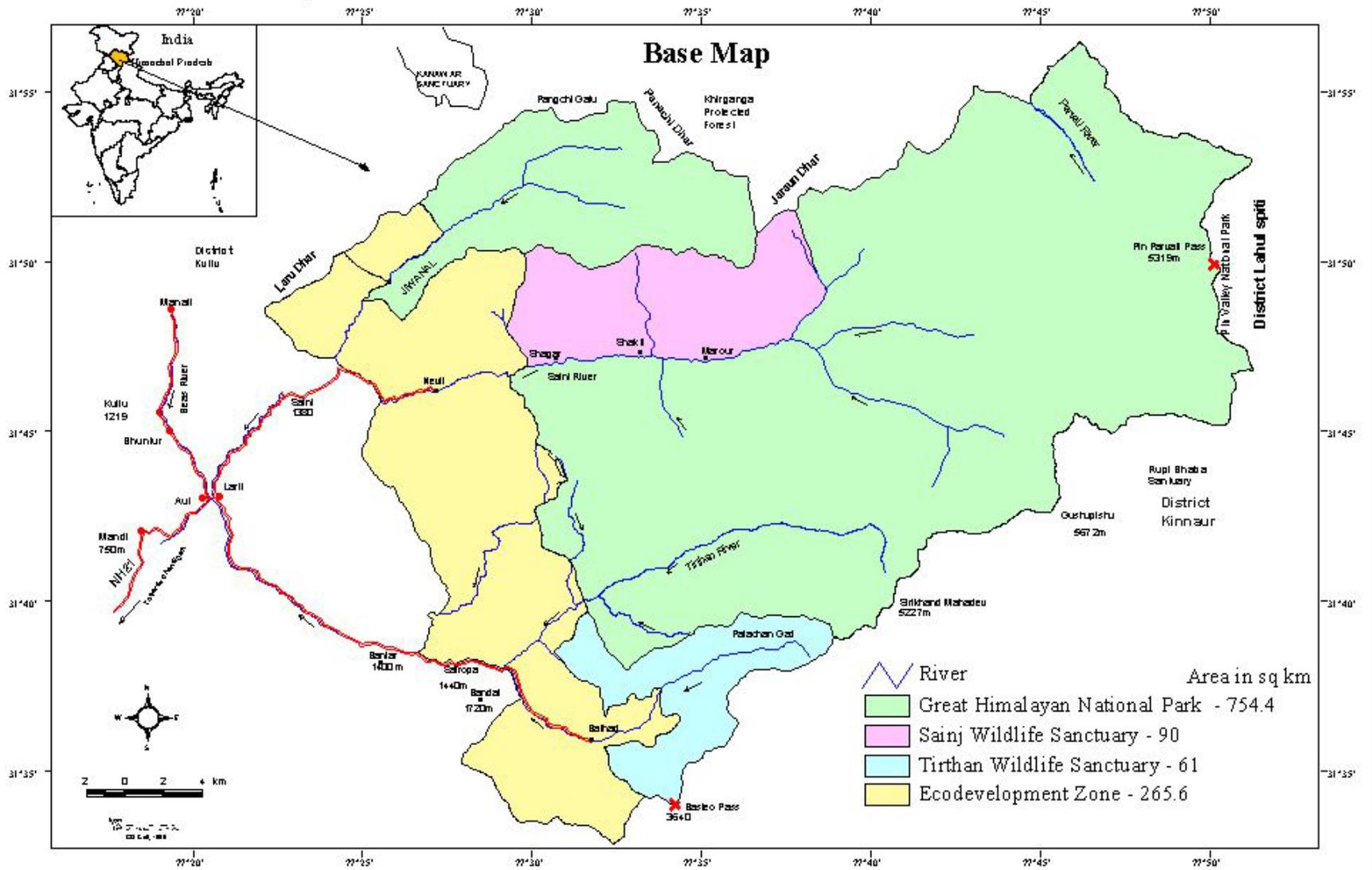


# **Making Conservation Work A Case Study of the Great Himalayan National Park**

Source: Sanjeeva Pandey

# Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (GHNPCA), Himachal Pradesh

## Base Map



# Great Himalayan National Park

- Unique biodiversity of Western Himalayas
- One of the two NPs in the world with viable populations of Western Tragopan

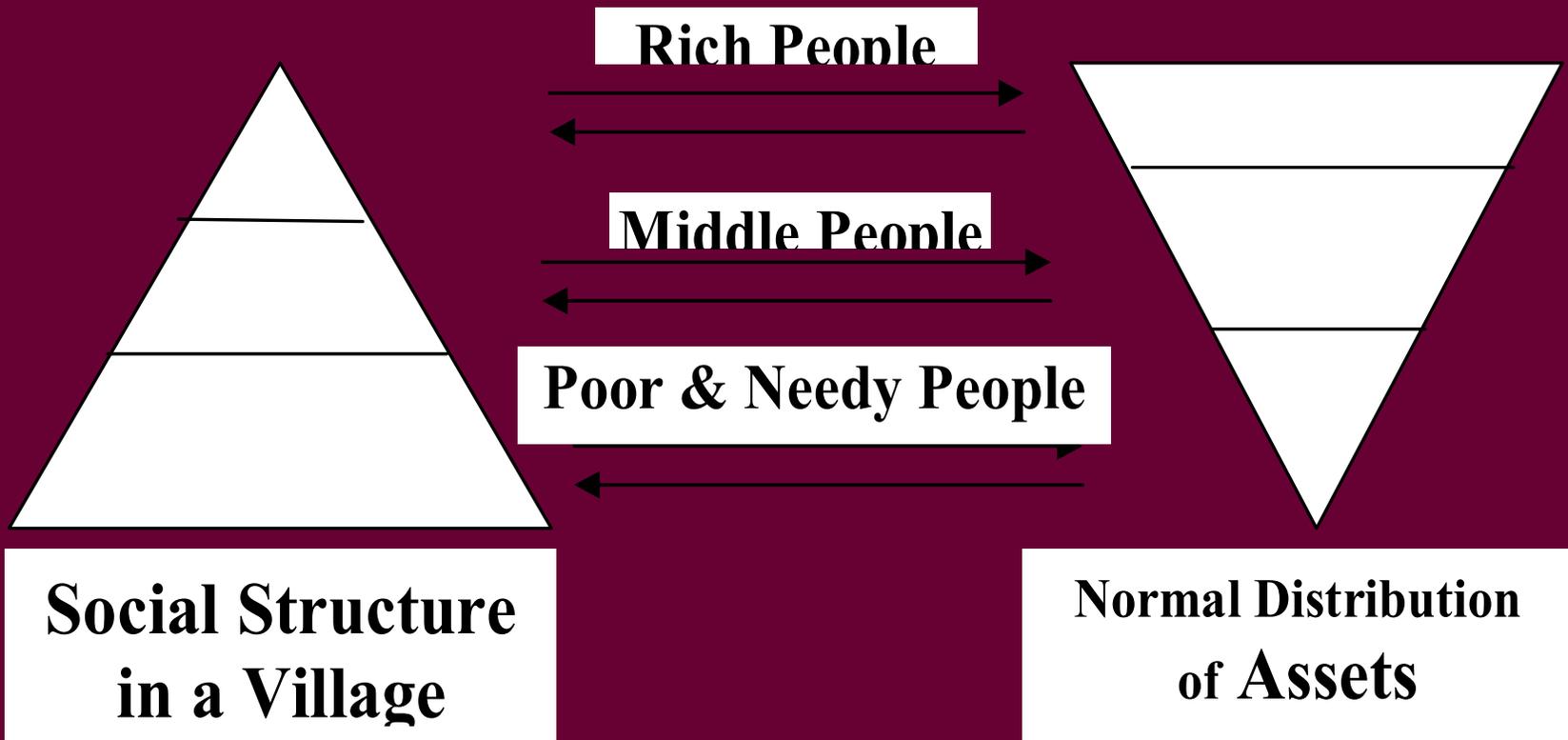


# Social Concerns in areas close to Forests in HP

- Income opportunities recede with remoteness
- Village societies highly stratified
- SC/ST poorest esp their women
- Poor dependent on free access to forests
- Female literacy low
- Need of more employment



# Social Stratification in Great Himalayan National Park



# Great Himalayan National Park: the Context

Prior to 1999

- About 5,000 people collected medicinal herbs from the designated GHNP area
- 20,000 to 25,000 sheep and goats grazed in this area



# GHNP: the Context

## Final Notification of GHNP (May, 1999)

- To conserve bio-diversity of a representative Western Himalayan bio-geographic zone
- For local people, a negative intervention impinging on their Livelihoods.

Need of positive synergy  
between the apparently  
opposing forces



# Great Himalayan National Park: the Context

1999

Beginning of a unique experiment  
to answer

How can conservation in a  
developing country happen  
when vital natural resources  
necessary for human survival  
are protected in a national park?

# Reaching the poorest in villages

- Detailed socio-economic survey of HHs
- Developing local indicators of poverty
- Identifying poorest HHs and women

## Reaching poorest women

- Organised poor women into Women Saving and Credit Groups (WSCGs)
- SC WSCGs mostly separate (homogenous groups)



# Income generation activities

- Vermicomposting – easy & large scale
- Federated Marketing of traditional agri produce like pulses, semi-wild fruits etc
- Improving local handicrafts like hemp based, wood masks
- Medicinal Plant Propagation Areas
- Community Based Eco Tourism
- Street theatre by local youth

# Role of Park Management

- First preference in Daily wages
- Vermicompost
- Capacity building

# Participatory Management Socio-Political Implications

WSCG, as a Production Center

At the same time WSCG, a center for social change

- Introduction of Literacy, Women and Child care, and Vet. Care programmes in WSCGs
- A forum to discuss and propagate ideas
- Genuine participation in microplanning and decision making

# What has Happened?

- 95 WSCGs doing business with their own savings (Rs. 9,60,000) through different IGAs
- Total Business so far worth Rs. 37,00,000 (July 2000-2006)

# IMPACT

- Dependence on outside capital obviated
- Facilitate collective articulation of women's interests- forum
- Establishment of 19 MPP areas- negotiation with panchayats
- Elected as panchayat office bearers
- Change in attitude of men

# Great Himalayan National Park

- ✓ **A drastic reduction in herb collection and poaching cases**
- ✓ **Increase in sightings of animals, particularly pheasants**
- ✓ **Based on LTEM baseline data, the current Estimated Density (2004-2005 census data) is favourably compared with the density of these specific animals anywhere in the western Himalayas**

# Constraints

- Park staff yet to own the whole process
- Male-dominated staff
- Weak linkages between Park staff and SAHARA
- Transport of finished products from WSCGs to market, a big constraint
- Despite DFID supported similar project, lack of commitment to livelihood approach in HPFD
- Lack of enabling atmosphere for participatory mode of functioning at state level

# Learnings

- Self Help Groups
  - Group size
  - Homogeneity
  - Capacity building
  - Diversity of activities
- **Like Development, let Conservation “Pay”**

# Dhamtari Forest Division

- **60% villages are located within 5 Km periphery of forests**
- **Tribal and other communities have significant socio-economic dependence on forests.**
- **59% families are BPL**
- **45% literacy**



# Dhamtari Forest Division



- 70% forest products collected by women
- 851 women SHGs
- Processing of NTFPs
- Savings to the tune of 263 lacs



# Dhamtari Forest Division

## Technological interventions





# Dhamtari Forest Division

## Group certification-CGCERT

- Sustainably managed forests;
- Setting standards
- Van vasi groups



# Outcome

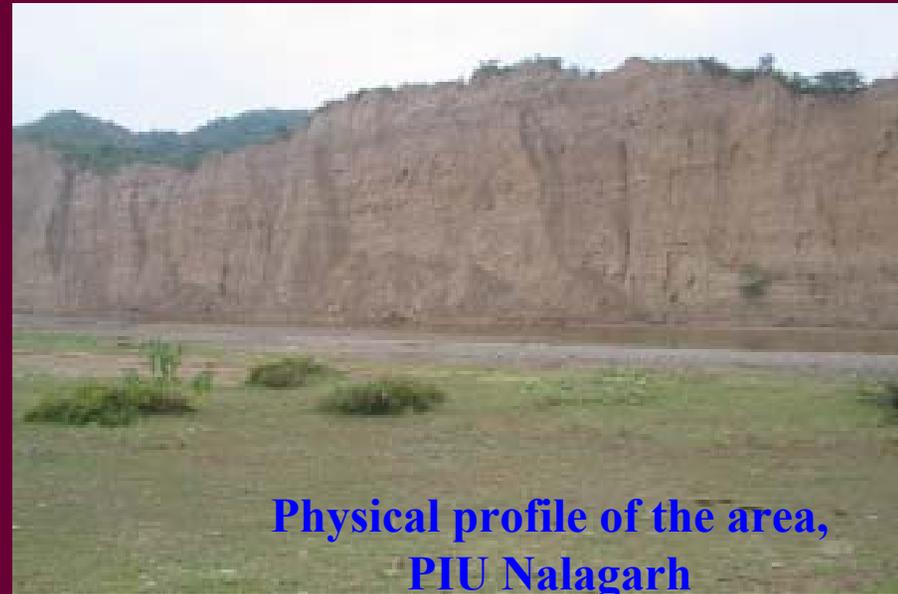
- Inclusion of women in decision making
- SHGs –linkages with banks
- Greater bargaining and negotiating skills-  
family and market level
- Non Destructive harvesting
- Patrolling

# IWDP Hills-II



# BASIC INFORMATION

Villages	835
Panchayats	139
House Hold	40785
Human Population	2.40 lac
SC/ST	27%
Population density	232 per sq./km.
Cattle population	1.44 lac



Physical profile of the area,  
PIU Nalagarh

- **77% households engaged in agriculture**
- **Occupational Multiplicity, Rural Subsistence farming and remittance economy**

# PROBLEM ANALYSIS



**Over  
Grazing**

**Fuelwood  
&  
Fodder  
scarcity**

**Faulty  
Landuse  
Practices**

**Forest  
Fire**

**Insufficient  
Community  
Participation  
in NRM**



**Increasing depletion of natural resources in Shiwaliks**



**Degradation of rainfed agro-eco system**

# Women in IWDP Hills-II

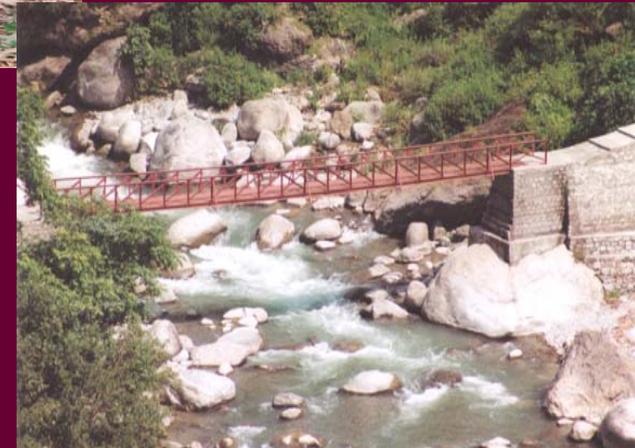
- Formation of SHGs
- Facilitators
- Income generating activities
- Separate prioritization of problems
- VDC performance Index
- Sound technical programs



# Technical Programs



# Technical Programs



# Outcome

- Confidence and self esteem
- Execution of microplans by SHGs
- IGAs- linkage with banks
- Election to other community organisations
- Increased awareness and communication- for CPR management also
- Addressing social issues



# Learnings

- Women effectively voice their opinions through organised groups
- Homogeneity of a group is important
- Confidence of a 'group support' leads to gender mainstreaming
- Women friendly technical programs can facilitate inclusion of women in NRM

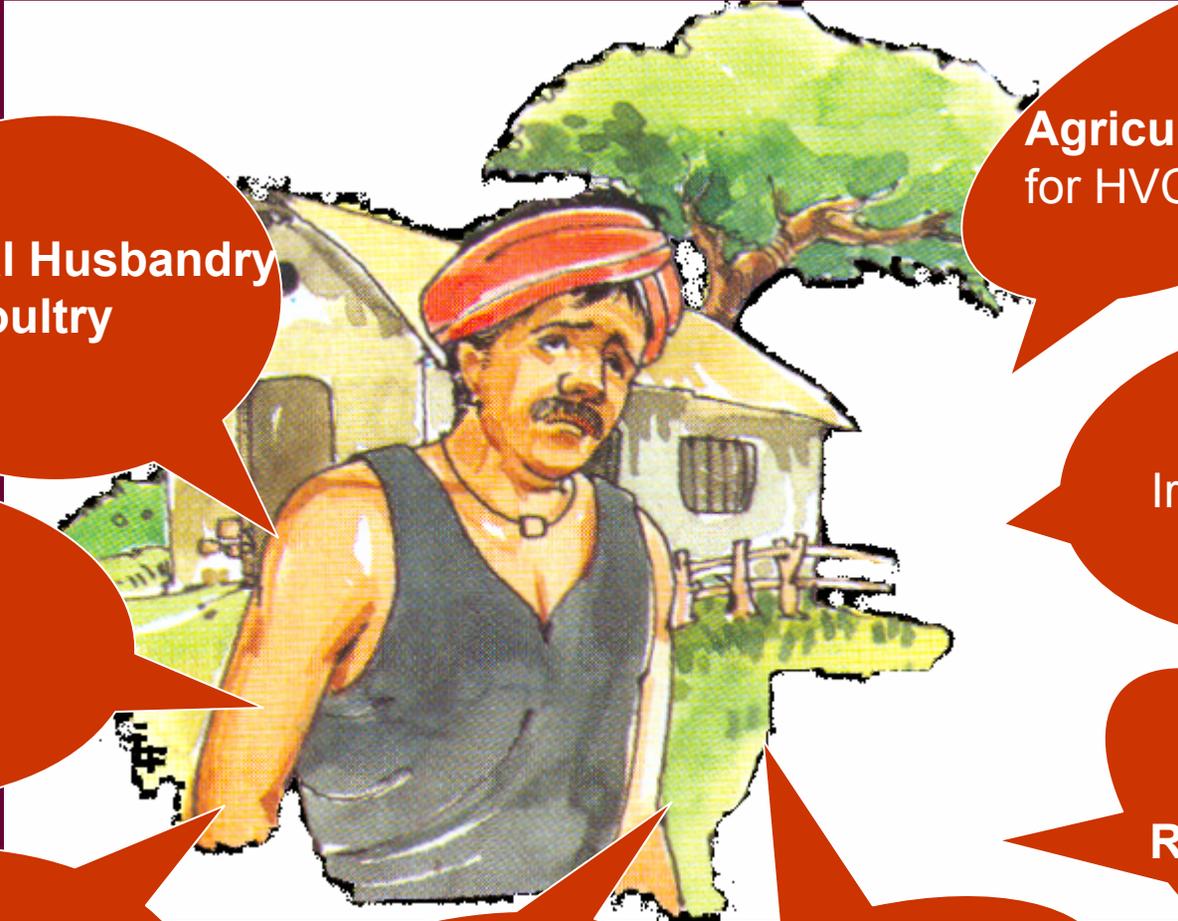


# Conclusion

- Better articulation of choices and concerns
- Economic empowerment- confidence and self esteem
- Leads to mainstreaming of women in NRM
- Sound and gender friendly programmes facilitate their inclusion
- Alternative sources of income wean away the dependence on forest resources
- Changing the mental maps from enforcement to participatory management is an underlying assumption
  - Female staff
  - Capacity Building

**Thank You**

# Problem Prioritisation by men folk



**Animal Husbandry  
Poultry**

**Agriculture Mini Kit  
for HVC**

**Irrigation**

**Linkage with  
finance  
institutions**

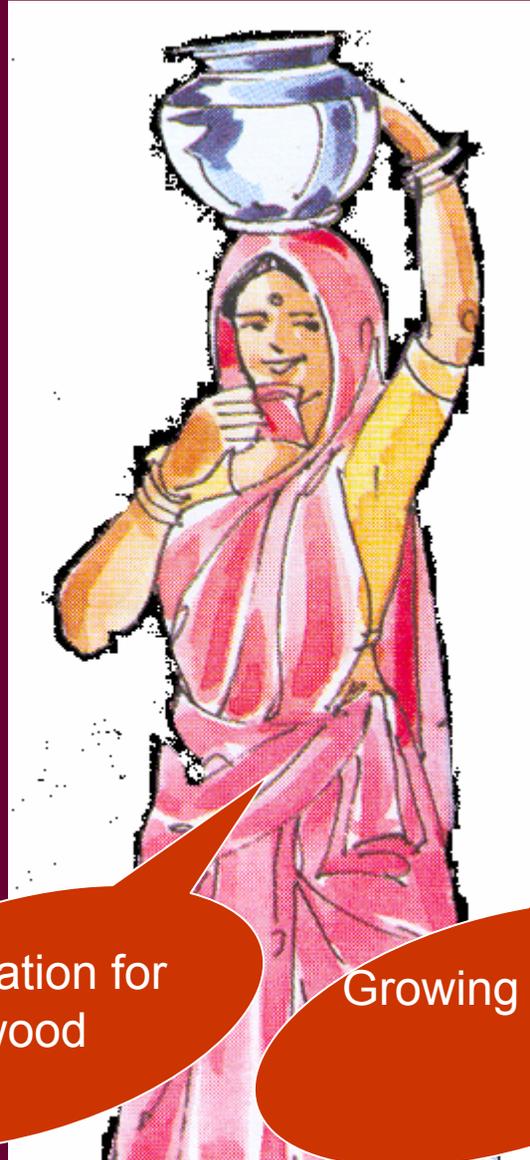
**Road**

**drainage line  
treatment**

**Horticulture  
Fruit Orchard  
Plantation**

**Land  
development**

# Problem Prioritisation by women folk



Improved seeds

SHGs-IGAs

Livestock improvement

Pantation for fuelwood

Growing Fodder

Drinking water

Footpaths

irrigation