

Policy influences on forest-based livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh, India



Gouri, Sushil Mudgal, Elaine Morrison and James Mayers

2004

A research project of **Support Initiatives in Development (SIDT)**
and the **International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)**
with the collaboration of the **Himachal Pradesh Forestry Department**



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Cover photo: Participatory analysis at village level. Photo: James Mayers.

Executive summary

Trees, Poor People and Policies in Himachal Pradesh

Summary

Poor people often rely heavily on forest goods and services. This report explores how policy has influenced, and not influenced, the relationship between poor people and trees, and how in future policy might increase its influence for the better, in Himachal Pradesh (HP), India. There is a particular focus on five major policy arenas: Panchayati Raj institutions, timber distribution rights, joint forest management, nomadic graziers and medicinal plants. This report highlights that though these arenas are messy, evidence from changes over time suggest that there are ways of linking sound information and experience to well-wielded policy argument and key political moments to hasten change in the right direction for forest-linked livelihoods. The report concludes by highlighting options to improve the policy process.

Introduction – The Tree we are Barking Up

Does policy make any difference to the way poor people use trees? If so, which policy, how does it exert influence, and how can such influence be improved for poor people and the trees in future? A group of researchers worked with some policy practitioners with their feet on the ground in HP to try and find some answers. The work was organised in three general phases during 2001-02. Firstly, analysis, at state and district level, of the influences of policies and institutions upon the links between forest goods and services and livelihoods. Secondly, work within village settings to investigate these links, the influence of policies and institutions on them, and the means by which local people can influence policies and institutions. Thirdly, further policy work at district and state level to deal with the issues and consequences of the fieldwork.

Forests and Livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh

HP is a comparatively better-off state, yet 25 per cent of its people live below the poverty line and there are big disparities in wealth within and between rural communities. Whilst figures for livelihood dependence on forest goods and services are weak, there is little doubt that dependence is very high amongst poor people in many areas.

Policies that Affect Forest-Linked Livelihoods

There is no one strong policy or institution that stands out as being the major determinant of forest-linked livelihoods in HP, rather there is a range of many influences, of varying strengths and interactions.

HP Musings on Livelihoods and Policy

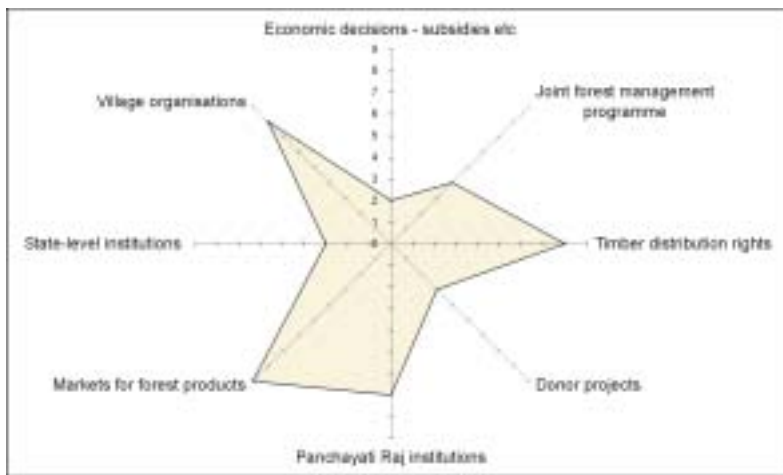
“Livelihoods are the way you make your moola and muddle along” – Senior FD officer, Shimla

“People are starving because of policies” – Panchayat Samiti Member, Mashobra

“Policy only gets implemented through Brownian motion” – Senior FD officer, Shimla

“Development fashions come and go but the role of a forester remains - to dig a pit and plant a tree” – FD Officer, Kullu

The nominal power of forest policy rests chiefly on the legal classification of 63 per cent of the state as forest land (although just 23.5 per cent of the state is under tree cover, FSI, 1999). Yet, despite the control by the Forest Department (FD) of two thirds of Himachal's land, villagers' present access to forest lands and development of forest goods and services is mediated by a complex web of rights, notifications, legislation, regulations, management arrangements, institutional influences and markets. Policies and institutions cooked up explicitly to deal with the relationship between people and forests – ‘forest sector’ policies and the FD – are only part of the story. The figure illustrates how one group of forest users in Sirmour District see the relative strengths of influence of key policies and institutions on their forest use.



Rise of Local Government

Local government is becoming an increasingly important influence on forest-linked livelihoods. Building on ancient traditions, and with previously limited legal basis since the 1950s, the three-tier system of elected local government – at district, block and village level - known as *Panchayati Raj Institutions* (PRIs) began to be seriously installed in HP from the mid 1990s. Fifteen sectoral departments, including forestry, have been decentralised, giving panchayats supervisory authority over their field level functionaries – although so far this is in principle rather than in practice.

HP has been ahead of many other states in promoting PRIs, but the FD has lagged behind in transferring powers to them. Whilst a few senior FD officers, who have been involved in the joint forest management (JFM) programme embrace the chance to formalise links with local democratic government, others perceive PRIs to be a threat to the FD's power to determine local action. However, under pressure from the GoHP, the FD recently moved closer to formalising the transfer of several responsibilities to PRIs. These include the power to issue permits for a range of non-timber forest products, to issue grazing permits in forest land, and to make decisions about the use of fallen/ dead wood.

In 2000, the FD formalised its intention to work with panchayat, block and district level forest committees and a year later Government of Himachal Pradesh (GoHP) rules provided for the elected delegate from each ward of the panchayat to sit, *ex officio*, on the executive committee of Village Forest Development Societies (VFDS) constituted at ward level. Whilst over 500 VFDS have been established with support either from the FD or through donor-funded projects, as yet none of the PRI forest sub-committees exist (note that the latter is not the FD's responsibility).

How significantly poor people's access to forest goods and services benefits from PRIs will depend on how effectively and responsibly PRI capacity is increased in relation to the diversity of other village institutions. At the local level there is considerable mistrust of the political games being played in PRIs and not only poor women and other marginalised groups but many well to do are yet to engage well with these institutions. PRIs have the potential to give a major boost to political capital at the local level and a means by which a policy process connecting state institutions to local reality might emerge. But they are also a threat to the established order and its ability either to muddle along or to generate crisis and assert control.

'TD' Rights – An Old Political Hot Potato Regularly Re-Heated

Once every 3 to 5 years a family with land in HP may be allocated trees to build or repair a house under the timber distribution (TD) rights which date back to the forest settlements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A fee per tree, largely unchanged since those days, is still payable and is about Rs.5.

Until the 1960s HP's relatively low population was engaged in a small agrarian economy - the

market rate for timber was not high and most was used for construction of local houses. From the 1960s the apple industry developed and those who had a head start generated cash surpluses and started to build big houses. Roads, markets and urban areas opened up and by the 1970s the demand for TD timber had rocketed. With this rocket came the racket, and soon a timber mafia had developed to run it – buying up timber from right-holders and smuggling it down to Delhi and elsewhere. The mafia comprised wealthy, resourceful people who were politically well-connected.

Today, whilst trees are still being allocated for the nominal sum of Rs.5, some big cedars are worth as much as Rs.50,000. Poor people, however, do not benefit from this windfall. Even if they are eligible, they often do not have the capability to push through a TD claim, and if they do succeed then they are unlikely to be able to afford milling and carpentry costs. Yet, when calls for review of the system are voiced, the beneficiaries of TD rights are quick to claim that the poor will suffer and are effective at politicising this. The last serious attempt to change things - a bill to increase timber rates to 25-30 per cent of the current market rate - made good progress through the GoHP until the timber mafia opposition mobilised 'poor people' – *“wearing torn pyjamas and bussed into Shimla in a fleet of trucks”* to demonstrate loud and long – and the bill was shelved.

Thus, although it is also widely acknowledged that timber is being greatly under-valued, no HP governing party has yet had the political confidence to challenge the 'conventional wisdom' that interfering with TD rights would adversely affect the 90 per cent of the electorate that lives in rural areas. The TD rights system has become a highly politically-charged issue of equity, misplaced subsidy, and malpractice, which is likely to require both local-level reform and state-level action.

Joining up the Dots in Forest Management

Until recently, JFM in HP was confined to donor-supported pilot activities. Then in 1998, the GoHP introduced its own JFM programme, *Sanjhi Van Yojna* (SVY). There are now 687 village forest institutions, including those under SVY and the 153 such institutions established under a DFID-funded project in Kullu and Mandi – some of these are active, others barely alive beyond their listing on paper.

The SVY programme has had an ambiguous position in the pecking order of priorities in the FD. There is a big gap between the plans and expectations of the programme (flexible, poverty-focused, leading to community control of forests) and its patchy implementation to date (rigid, tree-protection focused, leading to a selective hand-out of benefits). This is unsurprising given the institutional starting point – in an agency focused on forest protection, saddled with inherited systems like TD rights, and grappling with new developments like the rise of local government.

Agreed rules and procedures for the SVY programme were until recently rather weak. Senior FD officers admit that as yet SVY is generally not benefiting the poorest – e.g. it has all been focused on degraded areas, whilst poor people often get their livelihood inputs from good forests. However, as experience grows, and senior officers grow more confident with the approach, this is slowly changing. Recent policy pronouncements have rebranded the programme 'New SVY' and point it more in the direction of poorer communities and community members. The PFM Rules of HPFD (2001) extend JFM to good forests. This has also been agreed to and issued as a guideline to the states by the GoI, MoEF.

Forest Lands and Nomads – If in Doubt, Stir up a Crisis

An enduring issue for forests and livelihoods in HP is nomadic grazing on forest land. Large numbers of herders and livestock move across particular routes covering quite a large proportion of the state. This policy issue continues to challenge both the 'old style' regulatory efforts of the FD, and 'new style' JFM approaches of the state with settled communities.

Traditionally the FD has been largely unable to enforce its own policies aimed at regulating access to and use of forest areas for grazing. As a result, perhaps, it has tended to make selective use of an international discourse on ecological degradation of the Himalaya to raise alarm and maintain

profile for its attempts to control forests and plant large conifers. Some evidence suggests however that nomadic grazing may not be as degrading of HP's forests and grasslands as has been claimed by the FD over the past century. Contrary to the notion of unregulated herder use of grazing resources, access may be regulated by kin networks, labour, wealth and grazing systems recognised since the mid 19th century. Furthermore, researchers have pointed to the multiple causality and resulting uncertainty with regard to ecological phenomena in the Himalaya, which is rarely acknowledged within the FD's policy documents.

More recent discussions in the FD have at least highlighted the need for working with other agencies to find multi-intervention approaches, instead of the traditional target-oriented plantation focus. This would include augmentation of forage through planting fodder species (not just pines), developing water points and providing medical support for the herders and their flocks.

Medicinal plants: cultivating profit or conserving livelihoods?

HP hosts a rich resource of medicinal plants: more than 900 of its species of higher plants are thought to be of medicinal benefit, of which about 34 are traded. In the past few years demand for herbal medicine has increased tremendously, putting great pressure on natural sources and leading to unsustainable extraction. Lack of infrastructure, market information, poverty, indebtedness and poor bargaining power of unorganised, and often very poor, collectors has led to their exploitation by middlemen. There is clearly a need to move towards sustainable use of medicinal plants, but there is a tension between two approaches: cultivation and *in situ* conservation.

The dominant thinking that currently steers conservation efforts is based on the premise that because they are over-exploited in the wild, large-scale commercial cultivation would relieve these pressures and thus allow regeneration. The Department of Biotechnology envisages making huge investments in expensive equipment, and developing super medicinal species through genetic engineering and the like. The GoHP is keen to follow this approach to exploit its medicinal plant resources. But in the absence of a national or state policy on the conservation of medicinal plants, efforts so far have been *ad hoc* and uncoordinated, and there are fears that disproportionate benefits will accrue to the industry.

However, the belief that *ex situ* cultivation would lessen pressure on the wild ignores the fact that wild collections are a livelihood activity and a significant source of cash income, and will remain so until alternative livelihood opportunities are provided to poor people who depend on such extraction. It is not clear whether or how commercial cultivation would provide benefits to the traditional, skilled, knowledgeable collectors of wild plants. Furthermore, the efficacy of the raw drugs and the survival of the plants depend on very specific ecological conditions. The disappearance of these species from their natural habitats would have far-reaching consequences not only for local livelihoods, the medicinal plant trade, the quality of raw drugs, the development of new drugs and the herbal pharmaceutical industry but also for the habitat itself.

This tension between commercial cultivation and collection from the wild remains unresolved. Moving from collection to cultivation has severe implications for livelihoods of the poor, whilst offering the hope of substantial commercial gain for the industry. Research funding is directed at agro-technology development for *ex situ* cultivation, whilst the inherent potential of wild habitats to provide a range of potent medicinal raw drugs in a sustained manner, benefiting local communities particularly the poor and women, and simultaneously being ecologically sound and conserving the natural medicinal plant diversity and their habitat sustainably, continues to be seriously neglected.

Conclusions on Policy Processes

- The FD's *extensive formal territorial control is both a curse and an opportunity* for policy which can improve forest-linked livelihoods. A curse – the legacy of command and control policy geared to environmental protection which can barely be sustained and results in impoverishment for many. An opportunity – for those who can push through new approaches.
 - In recent years, for forest-based livelihoods in HP, *much change has been catalysed by donor pressure* or by *central notifications*. Those individuals in the FD who have tried to take the initiative within the participatory forestry approach have been constrained by slow, inflexible administrative and institutional procedures.
 - From the evidence of change in the policy arenas surrounding local government, TD rights, JFM, nomadic grazing and medicinal plants, there appear to be *several features of policy processes which make them more likely to result in benefits for poor people's forest-linked livelihoods*:
 - Elite perceptions of poor people amenable to poverty reduction (especially among elites in the FD)
 - Pro-poor coalitions with some strength within civil society
 - Elites in the larger political system competing to appeal to poor voters
 - Sufficient representation of poor people on decentralised bodies that leaders have to create alliances with them.
 - *Policy stories and rumour in the corridors of power are fundamental* to the current policy process. Stories are wielded by individuals – although they may require years of re-telling. Some fast-tracking is possible through: catalytic field projects with political kudos attached; targeted use of literature; and experience exchanges (and the channelling of the resentments of those not involved into something constructive!).
 - *Interrogation of assumptions is crucial* if policy stories are to improve forest-linked livelihoods. For example, the belief that raising the rates for TD rights will adversely affect the poor needs examination, and rigorous assessments (possible through community bodies like VFDSs) of the current use of TD timber is needed.
 - But *producing reports on what must change may be part of the problem itself*. Two donor-supported forestry projects in HP have so far come up with an estimated 3,500 policy recommendations – mostly from consultants. FD officers are now considering hiring yet more consultants to read all these reports and to draw out something useful that they can actually do.
 - *Information, if well-used, can help create political opportunity*. For example, sound information on timber use could help in the devolution of authority for managing TD allocation to local levels, since it is at this level that it is recognised that the system needs reforming and equitable negotiated agreements may be possible.
 - The *opportunities for the FD in transferring forestry responsibilities to local government* are yet to be seized upon. Few have yet realised the chance to take on new and important roles – technical advice, state level overview, disseminating new policy information, etc – since the arena is still over-shadowed by perceptions of loss of power and influence.
- This partial set of conclusions reflects issues at the heart of the process of policy and institutional development, maintenance and change. There are no easy answers in intractable policy arguments. But the actions of those using the forests, and the opinions and stories of district and state level protagonists in policies and institutions, help us to see the nature of their strengths and problems, and to see how these problems might be amenable to change.

Contents

	Executive summary	i
	Acronyms	viii
	Acknowledgements	x
1	Introduction	1
2	Key issues concerning policy influences on forest-based livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh	3
2.1	Livelihoods in rural HP: dependence on forest goods and services	3
2.1.1	NTFPs	6
2.1.2	Timber rights and usage	6
2.1.3	Valuing the forest resource	7
2.1.4	Agriculture	8
2.1.5	Horticulture and floriculture	8
2.1.6	Livestock and grazing	9
2.1.7	Off-farm income	9
2.1.8	Ecotourism	10
2.1.9	Legal forest land	10
2.1.10	Forest plantations	11
2.1.11	Encroachments and illicit felling	11
2.1.12	Industry including mining	11
2.1.13	Policy – and the Forest Sector Review	12
2.1.14	Other policy initiatives affecting the forest sector	13
2.2	Key research issues	14
3	Methodology and actions taken in this study	16
3.1	Research questions	17
3.2	Activities	17
3.3	Selection of districts and villages	19
4	Results and discussion	29
4.1	Results of village, district and state level survey	29
4.1.1	Village and household level forests-policy-livelihoods findings	29
4.1.2	Village level institutions	34
4.1.3	New district and state level initiatives to develop livelihoods	39
4.1.4	District level policy and institutional mapping	42
4.1.5	State level policy and institutional mapping	46
4.2	Key forests-policy-livelihood stories	55
4.2.1	Timber Distribution rights	55
4.2.2	Panchayati Raj Institutions	62
4.2.3	Community forestry schemes	68
4.2.4	Medicinal plants trade	75
4.2.5	Nomadic graziers	79
5	Conclusions and recommendations	90
5.1	How can poor people's access to forest goods and services be improved?	90
5.2	How to improve poor people's development of forest goods and services?	93
5.3	How can demand for forest products developed by poor people be improved?	97
5.4	How to improve big policy frameworks in favour of forestry's contribution to sustainable livelihoods?	99

Annexes		
1	People consulted during the study	105
2	State-level and district-level interview checklist	109
3	Village level guide and checklist	111
4	Household checklist	115
Boxes		
1	Research partners	2
2	Forests and people in Himachal Pradesh: some initial facts	3
3	Assessing who are the poor?	5
4	HP's relative prosperity and socio-economic groups	6
5	Examples of NTFPs used in Himachal Pradesh	6
6	Summary of recommendations of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Review	12
7	Livelihood example: oil from trees!	30
8	Livelihood example: hops in Lahaul and Spiti	30
9	Livelihood change: from apples to Chinese garlic	30
10	Dairying as a viable livelihood option	31
11	Livelihood example: stone masonry	32
12	Time to look for diversification: from apples to a flour mill	33
13	Beekeeping as an alternative livelihood	39
14	Institutional efforts to promote beekeeping for apple crop pollination in Himachal Pradesh	40
15	Kiwi fruit	40
16	Floriculture	41
17	Getting women to choose	43
18	Macro influences on resin production	47
19	Ecotourism: a state wide but sector narrow policy	50
20	State level forest institutions: some problem areas	53
21	Macro policy to provide link roads	53
22	Social security support for landless labour	54
23	TD benefits the affluent: feedback from field research	58
24	Kathkoni timber houses	61
25	PRIs yet to find their role: feedback from field research	65
26	Medicinal plants: cultivation or conservation?	77
27	Nomadic herders in HP	81
28	Foresters' response to Saberwal's perspective	87
Tables		
1	Land utilisation pattern in HP	7
2	Economic values from SFM and conservation	7
3	Four 'circles of influence' of policies and institutions on livelihoods	16
4	Growth of JFM in Kullu and Mandi	69
5	Yearwise formation of VFDSs under SVY	70
6	Yearwise allocation of funds under SVY during and after the 9 th Five Year Plan	73
7	Annual requirement over 1 MT in the 3 Ayurved Government pharmacies in HP	76
Figures		
1	Four 'circles of influence' of policies and institutions on livelihoods	16
2	Map of selected villages	28
3	District level institutional map	42
4	State level institutional map	49

Acronyms

APDP	Accelerated Power Development Programme
BDO	Block Development Officer
BKDO	Beekeeping Development Office
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCF	Chief Conservator of Forests
CFS	Cooperative Forest Society
CM	Chief Minister
CRC	Conifers Research Centre
CWDM	Central Wool Development Mandal
DDFC	Department of Forests and Forest Conservation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DLCC	District Level Coordination Committee
DPC	District Planning Committee
DPF	Demarcated Protected Forests
DRDA	District Rural Development Authority
DWCRA	Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
EAS	Employment Assurance Scheme
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FD	Forest Department
FDA	Forest Development Agency
FMP	Forest Management Plan
GHNP	Great Himalayan National Park
GoHP	Government of Himachal Pradesh
Gol	Government of India
GTZ	Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (Germany)
HEP	Hydro electric power
HFRI	Himalayan Forest Research Institute
HP	Himachal Pradesh
HPFD	Himachal Pradesh Forestry Department
HPFP	Himachal Pradesh Forestry Project
HPFSRP	Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Reform Project
HPSEB	Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board
HPSFC	Himachal Pradesh State Forest Corporation
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IGA	Income generating activity
IGCP	Indo-German Changar Project
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IRDPA	Integrated Rural Development Programme
ISM	Indian Systems of Medicine
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (World Conservation Union)
IWDP	Integrated Watershed Development Project
LIC	Life Insurance Corporation of India
JFM	Joint Forest Management
JFPM	Joint Forest Planning and Management
LDP	Local District Planning
LIG	Low Income Group
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MoEF	Ministry of Environment and Forests
MPB	Medicinal Plants Board
MPPA	Medicinal Plants Production Area

MT	Metric tonne
MTA	Mother teacher association
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Products
OBC	Other backward caste
OGL	Open general licence
PAPU	Policy Analysis and Planning Unit
PDS	Public Distribution System
PFM	Participatory Forest Management
PR	Panchayati Raj
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PWD	Public Works Department
SC	Scheduled Caste
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SGSY	Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna
SHG	Self help group
SIDBI	Small Industries Development Bank of India
SIDT	Support Initiatives in Development
ST	Scheduled Tribe
STEP	Special Training Education Programme
SVY	Sanjhi Van Yojna
TD	Timber Distribution
TDC	Tribal Development Committees
UPF	Undemarcated Protected Forest
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
VEC	Village Education Committee
VEDC	Village Eco-Development Committee
VFDC	Village Forest Development Committee
VFDS	Village Forest Development Society
WSCG	Women's Savings and Credit Group
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Rs. 48.15 = US\$ 1

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Gouri
Director, Support Initiatives in Development
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1 Introduction

Does policy have any effect on people in real life? In particular, does policy make any difference to the way poor people use trees? If so, in what way? What types of policies have some effect and how are they informed or influenced by the reality of local livelihoods? And what is 'policy' anyway? These were the sorts of questions taxing a group of researchers and policy practitioners who came together to implement a small project in Himachal Pradesh, India to try and find some answers.

This project in Himachal Pradesh is part of a wider initiative to develop understanding of the impacts of policies and institutions on the livelihoods of poor people in rural areas, and to support policy processes which enable poor people to improve their livelihoods sustainably¹. The goal of this wider initiative is to develop and promote practical policy options to support rural livelihoods through a range of research, development and advocacy activities. Led by the Stockholm Environment Institute, research has been conducted by a range of UK and South Asia-based institutions². Research activities within the wider initiative include: participatory forestry and water resources management in Andhra Pradesh; participatory forestry in Nepal; and integrated coastal zone management in Bangladesh and in Sri Lanka.

This report presents the results of a fifth component, coordinated by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in collaboration with Support Initiatives in Development. This component focuses upon participatory forestry in Himachal Pradesh (HP), India.

HP was selected as a research site given: the high degree of forest resource utilisation in local livelihoods documented in the state³; its recent strategic policy development process (the HP Forest Sector Review); the increased policy focus on livelihoods in forestry activities (manifest in particular in the aims of the HP Forest Sector Reforms Project, prepared with DFID-India support and underway since late 2002); and the expressed interest in the issues by key personnel in the HP Forestry Department (HPFD). In addition, the process of development of Panchayati Raj Institutions is relatively well advanced in HP – although much implementation capacity development is required.

The research was conducted with the overall *aim* of improving policy-livelihood relationships linked to forest goods and services. The *approach* (further detailed in section 3) was to examine and contribute to improvement in the influence of policies, institutions, markets and processes in four connected 'levels' (or 'concentric circles') of policy influence on livelihoods: access to assets; development of assets; demand for products of livelihood strategies; and the macro-policy/economy of the village, district and state.

The expected outcomes of this research included an improved understanding of the impacts on policies on forest-based livelihoods and of how or whether information on livelihoods is reflected in policies. Expected outcomes also included recommended policy options for improving access to natural and other livelihood assets and for reducing vulnerability of poor rural people, and the identification of means of building institutional capacities to develop and implement enhanced policies.

The *research partners* involved in the project are listed in box 1.

¹ Further details of the wider initiative can be found on the website: www.york.ac.uk/inst/sei/prp

² UK partners are: Stockholm Environment Institute, University of East Anglia, University of Reading, Marine Resources Assessment Group, International Institute for Environment and Development. South Asian partners are: Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, IUCN-Bangladesh, Centre for Environment and Geographical Information Systems (Bangladesh), the Centre for Science and Environment (India), Development Alternatives (India), the Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (Nepal), and the Lanka International Forum on the Environment.

³ For example see the HP Forest Sector Review, and documents relating to the HP Forest Sector Reforms Project.

Box 1: Research partners

Support Initiatives in Development (SIDT): a research consultancy based in Panchkula, near Chandigarh, who have extensive experience of local livelihoods survey and analysis in HP. SIDT were responsible for leading and managing the research, coordinating inputs from other team members, and developing outputs.

Mr. K.C. Sharma IFS, Shimla: as a forestry expert, played a consultative and advisory role in the planning stage.

Himachal Pradesh Forest Department personnel: made secondary information sources available, and enabled some field-level staff to participate in the research work. They also helped ensure that significant links were made with senior policymakers.

University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni (Solan): played a consultative and advisory role in the project.

Himalayan Forest Research Institute (HFRI), Shimla: played a consultative and advisory role in the project.

Ms Mamta Chandar: an independent consultant with recent field experience of refining the implementation of participatory forestry programmes in HP, and who has also developed a handbook for identifying livelihood needs and dependence on forest resources, reflected on emerging findings, made inputs and shared experience.

Prashant Negi, Jawarhalal Nehru University: an independent consultant with experience of environmental policies related to dams, helped coordinate secondary data collection and field research, supported by some investigators from H.P. University, Shimla.

Harish Kumar, sociology researcher: provided support in participatory data collection particularly concerning nomads (migratory graziers in Chamba), tracking their routes and influences.

International Institute for Environment and Development: a London-based policy research institute, IIED supported and backstopped the research, and facilitated information flow and integration with activities in the wider initiative coordinated by the Stockholm Environment Institute at York (SEI-York).

Consultations began in May 2001, leading to the development of a workplan and the identification of appropriate research tools and methodologies (see section 3). Testing of research tools and collection of field data began in January-February 2002. Secondary data was collected and analysed as part of the state and district level work, followed by village and household level survey work, most of which was completed by June 2002. In a few interior villages in Shimla and Kullu districts, field research was delayed due to snow and rainfall. Following a review of interim findings, a few of the sample villages were revisited in August 2002, to substantiate some of the key issues. The field research findings were shared with the community and other stakeholders at village and district level workshops and meetings. Insights and comments from these meetings were incorporated in this report.

This report is presented in five sections. Section 2 describes background information on Himachal Pradesh and highlights significant issues concerning policy influences on forest-based livelihoods. Key research issues are drawn from this. Section 3 presents the methodology and actions taken during the study, including selection of districts and villages for survey. Section 4 presents the results of the study in two parts. Firstly, results of field survey are given for village/ household, district and state levels; secondly, five 'policy stories' focus on issues which are particularly important, and contentious, in HP. Finally section 5 presents conclusions and recommendations in terms of poor people's access to and development of forests goods and services, as well as how to increase demand, and how to improve big policy frameworks in favour of forestry's contribution to sustainable livelihoods.

2 Key issues concerning policy influences on forest-based livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh

Box 2: Forests and people in Himachal Pradesh: some initial facts

The northwest Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh was created in 1972 from the former Chief Commissioner's Province, which comprised 26 former princely hill states⁴ and four Punjab hill states⁵. Although a relatively small state within India (the total geographical area of HP is 55,673km²), there are wide ranges of altitude, climate and geology. Whilst significant areas of the state are mountainous, and above the tree line - including the 'cold desert' areas of Lahaul and Spiti - it also includes temperate and sub-tropical zones. Altitudes range from 350m. to 6,975m., and the state may be divided into three broad zones: the outer Himalayas or Shiwalik foothills (up to 1,150m.), the inner Himalayas or mid-mountain zone, and the greater Himalayas or alpine zone.

All of HP's Himalayan area forms the upper watersheds of four major tributaries of the Indus, and of the Yamuna river – thus the management of HP's forests has impacts far beyond the state, in terms of downstream water supply. The role that HP's forests are perceived to play in protecting the sources of water supplies that ultimately serve the cities and agriculture of the Indo-Gangetic plain is widely appreciated in HP, and is used in national negotiations over water and forest policy.

The wide ranges of altitude, climate and geology have brought about a rich and diversified flora in HP. Major forest types include moist tropical, dry tropical, montane sub-tropical, montane temperate, sub-alpine and alpine scrub. The western Himalayan forests have been identified as one of the world's priority areas for conservation of biodiversity. National parks and sanctuaries cover twelve per cent of the area of the state.

Whilst 66 per cent of the state is legally classified as forest land, just 23.5 per cent is under tree cover. Of that, only about one quarter is under dense forest⁶; this equates to only about 17 per cent of the geographical area. Also included within legally classified forest land are large areas which can neither be cultivated nor sustain forests, comprising barren land, alpine pastures and areas above the tree line: these constitute almost 37 per cent of HP's geographical area. If these areas are added to the forest land that is under scrub and grass slopes, it comes to 65 per cent of the forest area.

The area under agriculture covers about 12 per cent of the geographical area. Land reform between the 1950s and 1970s resulted in much land being nationalised then distributed to the landless or near landless. Land reform appears to have been successful in terms of reducing landlessness and rural inequalities, although by virtue of its undirected nature there have been adverse implications for the rational utilisation of the land in some areas. However, HP probably boasts the least number of landless people of any state in India.

People living in rural Himachal Pradesh are often highly dependent upon forests for their livelihoods. Out of HP's total population of at least 6.08 million (with a growth rate averaging 1.9% per annum since 1981 (Census of India, 2001)), about 90 per cent reside in rural areas, so most people rely on forest goods and services to a greater or lesser extent.

2.1 Livelihoods in rural HP: dependence on forest goods and services

Local communities in HP use forests for subsistence purposes (subject to restrictions) such as for fuelwood, fodder, grazing, construction timber, non-timber forest products (NTFPs) as well as conserving areas of forest for spiritual purposes. Major income generation activities related to forestry include sale of fodder and fuelwood, medicinal herbs, fruit products and employment from

⁴ 'Old' HP was formed into a Chief Minister's Province in 1948 after the overthrow of recalcitrant Rajas by YS Parmar and Praja Mandal activists

⁵ 'New' HP transferred in 1967 on the reorganisation of Punjab

⁶ i.e. with a crown density of more than 40 per cent

afforestation and forest management work. Bamboo forests are viewed with particular importance as many villagers generate income from them by making use of bamboo in basket making. Tourism/ recreation and aesthetic values are also becoming important, as are other forest services such as climate amelioration, soil protection, water regulation and biodiversity maintenance.

Significant areas of HP are uncultivable and population growth in HP has resulted in increasing pressure on the limited land available for agriculture. Forests are depended on as the principal source of grazing, fuelwood and fodder, especially among the poorest, as well as for timber through Timber Distribution (TD) rights (see section 4.2.1). The pressure on forests is continuously increasing leading to rapid degradation of forest resources. In two of the sample villages surveyed as part of this project, where apple cultivation was adopted 35 years ago, encroachment has reduced the forest cover to 5 per cent in Kiari and 3 per cent in Dhadi Rawat. Even though density of population on the basis of geographical area is lower than the national average, the significant proportion of uncultivable land means that population density per hectare of cultivated area is higher than the national average.

For agro-pastoralists (most of whose livelihoods are at subsistence level), dependence on forest resources is essentially linked to free access. Those who depend on forest resources for cash income, such as basket makers, herb collectors, etc., are not necessarily the poorest.

Policy decisions, rules and regulations that apply across the board have impacts on both dependence on and contribution of forest resources to household livelihood strategies. For instance the co-option of forest areas under Joint Forest Management (JFM) affects the earlier open access nature of forests and sometimes adversely impacts the livelihood options of the poor. Conversely, badly degraded forests have been rehabilitated by inclusion under JFM. JFM is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.3.

The HPFD has formal control of forest use and draws revenue from timber and resin production. However, there is also a high level of illicit extraction of produce, which is sent to markets which are often distant from the source of production. Rural people feel excluded from the control of forests and, with no widely-recognised local organisational basis for resource use regulation, extract products and graze livestock on an opportunistic basis. The outcome, where HPFD regulation is also weak, is resource degradation – particularly of grazing lands and undemarcated protected forests. There is great potential for local resource management through participatory use regulation, and in some places there is potential for building forest-based enterprises in production of forest goods, tourism, etc.

Box 3: Assessing who are the poor?

The question as to who are the poor can perhaps best be understood at the local, village level. Many of the criteria for defining and understanding poverty at the village level may not be uniformly applicable. For instance, at high altitude, remote village or panchayat land holdings may be comparatively larger than in the valleys or livestock numbers may be greater, but total rainfed conditions and lack of access to markets alone can make the people of such areas much poorer than those who hold less land but live in the valley. However, within these remote villages there are marginalised groups (usually Scheduled Castes (SCs)) who are generally the poorest. For these poor people, traditional occupations like grazing the village livestock, fuelwood and fodder collection, tree cutting and timber conversion, NTFP collection, etc. still form major livelihood activities.

Furthermore, the gender dimension of poverty at the village level is not always well understood. This is particularly so in rainfed, agrarian economies of the hills where women's unmeasured and unpaid contribution is generally not considered in developing criteria to assess poverty.

The definition of the poor obviously depends on what criteria are used, and assessment of a community can produce quite different results based on different sets of criteria. For example, in one project in the Lag valley of Kullu district, the project developed and applied a list of criteria to assess poor households. This identified 1,159 out of a total 3,218 households as being 'poor'; yet the Rural Development Department survey of the same area, conducted through panchayats, had identified only 353 poor households. Further, not all of those 353 'poor' households were identified by the project as being poor, and there are suggestions of a subjective or political element in the selection of which households should receive assistance.

The criteria used to define the 'poor' in this study were:

- Landholding <5 bigha⁷
- Annual income <Rs.22,500
- Less than two cows, and of local breed
- Kuchcha houses
- Part of Integrated Rural Development Programme
- Women headed household
- Daily wage earner
- Dependency on forest goods for sale
- Low literacy level

In this section we explore rural livelihoods in HP in more detail. A broad list of forest stakeholders includes policy makers, politicians, local inhabitants, entrepreneurs, researchers, the Forest Department and the local level institutions. However those directly dependent on forests are the local inhabitants, of which the poorest are worst hit. A list of the forest dependent poor which formed the key focus of the present study is as follows: landless, scheduled castes, scheduled caste women, other backward castes, women, migratory graziers, nomads, access poor and opportunity poor (such as migrant labour, unemployed youth).

⁷ 12 bigha = 1 hectare

Box 4: HP's relative prosperity and socio-economic groups

HP is perceived to be a relatively well-off state according to its average per capita income (Rs. 22,500 per annum), but there are very substantial disparities in wealth within rural communities. An estimated 25 per cent of its population is below the poverty line (BPL) according to Government of India statistics. Over 29 per cent of HP's population are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and these groups comprise 70 per cent of the households below the poverty line (1994 figures, used in HP Forest Sector Reform Programme documents).

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are particularly disadvantaged. In some parts of HP divisions along caste lines remain strong such that they often do not have equal access to forest lands and resources which serves to perpetuate the poverty and alienation of marginalised groups. Scheduled Tribes include Gaddis, transhumant pastoralists herding sheep and goats, and a small number of Gujjars, transhumant buffalo herders (see the 'policy story' on nomadic graziers in section 4.2.5).

Immigrant Nepali and Bihari labourers appear to have few assets, often live in very basic conditions in temporary camps (for example, those who work for the PWD, building and repairing roads), and receive only basic wages. They migrate seasonally or for longer periods, for employment on orchards and farms, or on construction work. These are probably the poorest people in HP, although they have constructed much of the physical infrastructure on which the prosperity of the state has been developed.

2.1.1 NTFPs

Local people have rights to collect NTFPs, of which there are rich sources in HP. Collection of NTFPs constitutes a small but growing livelihood activity for the poorest and the less poor, and contributes a substantial part of the cash income of households in some areas. There are, however, also instances of these rights being sold to contractors, who further employ labourers to collect medicinal herbs. It is estimated that at least 900 of the 3,210 plant species recorded have medicinal use; however most NTFPs are exported from HP in their raw state. There is much potential for increasing value addition to NTFPs within the state, and circumventing monopolistic market arrangements controlled by middlemen and major ayurvedic companies. There is also a need for careful controls to ensure sustainable extraction levels are not exceeded. Some examples of the uses of non-timber forest products are given in the box below.

Box 5: Examples of NTFPs used in Himachal Pradesh

NTFPs comprise a multitude of produce, for example:

- Herbs: Patish, Dhoop, Kadu, Dioscorea
- Seeds: Horse chestnut (Khanor), Deodar and Kail cones, Inus (which is sent to Darjeeling and is mixed with tea leaves), Chuli, Honey
- Grass
- Charcoal from Baan/ Oak (sold at Rs.300 per 20kg sack)
- Lichen/ moss
- Bajj
- Mohra (poison)
- Khair (Kathha) from Shivalik hills – there is a lot of smuggling of khair across Una/ Nalagarh
- Walnut: root bark used for brushing teeth as 'dandasa', flowers, shawls are dyed by using colours from the walnut (seedcoat: coffee colour, flowers: light green, seed: dark green, bark: dark brown)
- Wild fruit: Berberis, an edible fruit (the Forest Department introduced a ban on the root in 1990-92)
- Poppy and marijuana – huge illegal business in Malana, Kheer Ganga (Kullu)

2.1.2 Timber rights and usage

HP appears to be in the fortunate position of being able to meet much of its timber needs for domestic use, although there are local shortages (e.g. those areas unable to produce sufficient fuelwood – such as the high 'cold deserts' of Lahaul and Spiti – are provided with fuelwood from

other districts at subsidised rates). It has been estimated that seventy per cent of fuelwood is derived from villagers' own land⁸. Total fuelwood demand of HP's population comes to around 4 million m³, which in volume is more than the harvested timber. Headloading is quite a common practice especially from forests that are closer to towns, for example it is a key livelihood practice in Kullu. This is thought to have contributed significantly to forest degradation, despite several (failed) attempts to increase fuelwood production through social forestry programmes. In an effort to reduce fuelwood consumption, the state government has banned the use of wood in traditional heating devices in offices.

There is generally a lack of information on domestic consumption of local timber, and on the productive capacity of forests. Timber Distribution rights provide for rightholders to be allocated a certain amount of timber on a periodic basis; these rights are widely used – and abused. People view TD rights as being very important for house construction and repair, though they are not very satisfied by the manner in which the FD distributes TD rights. The TD rights issue is discussed in more detail in the 'policy story' in section 4.2.1. Concerned HPFD staff and other stakeholders now feel there is a greater need for local management rights in order to tackle evident local management problems leading to depleted forest cover.

Table 1: Land utilisation pattern in HP

	Area in '000 ha	Percentage
Total geographical area	5,567	
Reporting area for land utilisation	3,396	100.00
Forests	1,056	31.10
Not available for cultivation	331	9.75
Permanent pasture and other grazing lands	1,204	35.45
Land under miscellaneous tree crops and groves	46	1.35
Culturable wasteland	123	3.62
Fallow land other than current fallows	26	0.77
Current fallows	52	1.53
Net area sown	558	16.43

Source: State of Forest Report 1999. Forest Survey of India.

2.1.3 Valuing the forest resource

There have been several recent attempts to put a broad value on the role of forests in HP. Table 2, taken from documents relating to the HP Forest Sector Reforms Project, summarise the values likely to accrue from sustainable forest management and conservation – to give an idea of overall value. Some major economic values have been left out – for example drinking water, irrigation, industrial and agricultural production benefits in downstream areas. Even so, this shows an annual economic value of SFM/ conservation to be Rs. 5,264 million.

Table 2: Economic values from SFM and conservation

Values	Rs. million
TD timber	550
NTFP collection	30
Fuelwood	1,034
Livestock inputs	1,700
Salvage timber	777
Ecotourism	170
Local users: ecological services	8
HEP	375
Flood control	620
Total	5,264

⁸ Agro-Economic Research Centre, n.d.

2.1.4 Agriculture

Most rural people use significant quantities of forest goods and services, but few are totally dependent on forest products. It is estimated that 87 per cent of the population is also dependent on agriculture, largely at a subsistence level. In the lower valleys agriculture and animal husbandry form the backbone of the economy whilst at higher altitudes, agro-pastoral systems predominate. Landholdings are small and agriculture is mainly rainfed. Wheat, maize, pulses, rice, sugarcane, vegetables, ginger, garlic, potato etc. are grown. Agriculture covers 60 per cent of the available private land. In fact agriculture and allied activities (including horticulture - see below) remain the mainstay of HP's rural economy, providing direct employment to 71 per cent of workers. Population density per unit area of agricultural land is very high compared to the national average, and landholdings are small – 64 per cent are less than 1 hectare. Only 20 per cent of the cultivated area benefits from irrigation; the rest is rainfed and productivity is low (though not necessarily in horticulture, which has enjoyed good yields). Marginal subsistence farmers, particularly those in high altitude areas, manage to be fully self-sufficient from agriculture for only about two to six months a year; consequently they rely on other livelihood strategies for survival.

These livelihood strategies include some combination of livestock raising (particularly in high altitude areas – for subsistence use and for sale), transhumant grazing (by both local farmers and nomadic herders), collection of NTFPs such as medicinal plants for sale, artisanal activities such as blacksmithy, basket making, carpenters and *kilta*⁹ makers, small-scale production of cannabis, seasonal and regular employment as resin tapping¹⁰, salvage timber extraction, bamboo working, charcoal production and slate mining. Tourism, having enjoyed a boom in recent years, has become an important new income opportunity. Some of these activities are described in more detail later in this section, and in the field survey results in section 4.

2.1.5 Horticulture and floriculture

Horticulture has become a key economic activity in HP in recent years. Note that the term 'horticulture' is used to mean fruit growing in HP, and not production of flowers, which is termed 'floriculture'. Commercial apple production began in the 1920s and by 1988, covered nearly 150,000 hectares (Gupta, 1999). In 1988-89, apples constituted 80 per cent of the food produced in HP. Out of the sample areas studied under this project, Shimla and Kullu districts are the largest apple producing zones. Apples are the primary cash crop in the state, accounting for 60-80 per cent of household income for those households that have orchards.

In 1996-97, out of 3.46 lakh tonnes of fruit produced, about 2.94 lakh tonnes, mainly apple, were exported from HP. About 10 million apple boxes (each of 20 kg.) are exported out of the state annually: the demand for timber for the boxes has, itself, been a drain on resources. The demand for wood for fruit packing boxes has reached 0.2 million m³ annually. Up to the 1980s these packing boxes were mainly supplied from fir-spruce forests within HP, but these forests suffered from unsystematic working and overfelling. This resulted in depletion and degradation of fir-spruce forests. In 1990 the state government put a complete ban on felling for supply of wood for fruit packing boxes. The state government has since started manufacturing cardboard cartons through its two factories in Gumma (Shimla district) and Baijnath (Kangra district); also wooden packing boxes of eucalyptus or poplar are procured from Haryana and Punjab.

Apple growing has been beset by a number of problems over the past decade. Yields have declined, crops have failed and, due to the limited range of cultivars, they have become susceptible to disease and there is increasing dependence on pesticides. The majority of farmers claim that productivity has declined by about 50 per cent. In many areas, apple productivity is declining as a result of inadequate pollination. The commercially important varieties of apples

⁹ 'Kilta' are baskets made of *Arundinaria spp.* and are carried on the back.

¹⁰ Resin is extracted from Chir pine trees and its present annual yield is about 12,000 tonnes. Trees are tapped under the rill method of resin tapping; however the resin yield per unit area tapped has been lower under the rill method as compared to cup and tip method.

require pollen from other compatible polliniser varieties in order to produce fruit; yet, swayed by market demand, farmers began to ignore the appropriate ratios of polliniser varieties of apple trees in planting to the extent that some farmers do not even have a single polliniser tree in their orchards. Furthermore, inadequate populations of pollinating insects in apple growing areas (due, in turn, to alteration in their natural forest and grassland ecosystems and heavy use of pesticides) have contributed to pollination failure (see boxes 13 and 14).

Most recently, there are concerns about the impact of liberalised trade arrangements which will allow the import of cheap Chinese apples, at prices against which Himachali growers cannot compete.

In light of increasing risks in apple growing, diversification into other crops is increasing. Such diversification includes off-season vegetable growing by farmers, as well as cultivation of ginger and garlic. Sixteen hectares have been brought under floriculture with 21 flower grower co-operative societies. As well as apple, cultivation of pear, plum, mango, citrus and stone fruits plays a vital role in boosting village economies. Floriculture, kiwi production (in Kullu and Solan), beekeeping (producing about 284mt of honey), hop production (in Lahaul) and mushroom cultivation (in Solan and Mandi: total production about 457 mt) are also becoming popular among local farmers.

2.1.6 Livestock and grazing

Rights to graze livestock constitute one of the important recognised rights of the rural population, as laid down in the settlement reports. Three types of graziers are defined in the state:

- local graziers who keep cows and buffaloes for milk and manure, bullocks for draught purposes and sheep and goats for wool, meat and manure. Grazing rights mean that there is no restriction on the number of cattle they can graze in the forests without paying any fee. This has resulted in increase in uneconomical livestock population putting pressure on the forest resources besides adding to economic poverty, soil erosion and ecological degradation.
- migratory graziers or Gaddis, Kinnars and Lahulas keep sheep and goats and move into alpine pastures during the summer and to lower areas of the Kangra valley, Solan, Mandi and Sirmaur in the winter.
- nomadic graziers or Gujjars usually have buffaloes and migrate from lower regions to high hills seasonally. They generally move with their families and many believe that they cause extensive damage to forest trees through lopping.

The size of the livestock population, at about 6 million, is similar to the human population and largely depends on forests for fodder. While the drain on forest resources to feed the livestock population is high, its contribution to the rural economy is low and proportionately unviable. Animal husbandry continues in villages because of the subsidiary benefits it provides, other than milk, like calves, dung for manure and fuel cakes, hide, etc. There have been attempts by the HP government to consider the grazing issue, but with little effect until recently.

However, the economic status of those Gujjar communities who have settled is high, with equally high social status. In fact, other communities were found to be antagonistic towards them due to their eligibility for reservations (Praxis, 2000). The livelihood base of settled gujjars has shifted drastically from dairy production to agriculture and paid work. Prohibition of entry to forests and grazing is thought to be responsible for the shift. The issue of nomadic grazing is considered in detail in section 4.2.5.

2.1.7 Off-farm income

In terms of occupation, by far the majority of the population is engaged in agricultural activities and care of livestock. However, the importance of off-farm activities should not be underestimated. The

expanding trade and service sectors offer alternative sources of income; and particularly in Shimla, Kinnaur and Chamba districts, the growth of tourism has contributed towards the expansion of service sector activities. Casual labour also contributes, but most of these opportunities are taken up by labourers from other states, who work particularly on government infrastructural work such as building roads. Public sector employment is also increasing in importance. HP has the highest proportion of people in government service of all the states in India – and also the highest fiscal deficit. Government grants and subsidies also provide considerable income. In some areas, for instance Hamirpur, Kangra and Una, remittances and pensions from household members employed in military service are very significant. In sum, most rural households display a diversified pattern of occupation and income.

The HP Forest Department is the second largest employment provider in the state after the PWD. Temporary employment in the form of daily wage labour is provided, for regular forestry work such as in nurseries and forest rest houses. Even in the case of daily wage labour, though, political influence and connections matter in terms of who is allocated work.

2.1.8 *Ecotourism*

Tourism has an increasingly important place in the state's economy, and the state government adopted a new ecotourism policy in 2001, making the HPFD the nodal department for ecotourism. This envisages that the involvement of local communities in tourism will support their livelihood needs and consequently create a direct stake in the conservation of local culture, ecology and environment. Several of the hill tracts are often used as film locations by the Indian film and television industry, thanks to their wilderness areas, landscapes, beautiful forests and wildlife. In villages around the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) and Manali, villagers rent out accommodation to tourists and provide them with guides, tents for trekking and sticks, shoes and warm clothes for sightseeing in snowy forest areas. This activity is just developing in Kullu district with the support of GHNP and interventions by SAHARA (a local NGO). As part of the promotion of ecotourism, the state government has decided to have a network of nature parks so that people can see wildlife at identified places. To enhance accessibility in remote areas, ropeways are also being planned. In the last decade, ten helipads have been set up in different parts, and some tribal areas that were restricted for foreign tourists have also been opened (see box 18 for further discussion of ecotourism).

2.1.9 *Legal forest land*

The 66 per cent of the state of HP that is legally classified as 'forest lands'¹¹, under the nominal control of the policies and institutions of the formal forest sector, holds the key to many diverse livelihoods in the state. But, as will become evident in the policy stories (see section 4.2), villagers' present access to forest lands is mediated by a complex web of rights, notifications, legislation and management arrangements.

Farming, forests and pasture systems are closely inter-related, where the farming system is dependent upon inputs from pasture and forest to sustain it. Fuelwood, timber, fodder, grass, leaf litter for compost, bedding, and medicinal herbs for sale are among the products gathered by local people to secure their household needs. This close inter-relationship with lands outside private holdings is recognised by local people and in many cases where communal resources are degrading, local people have set up systems for their management.

Farmers are increasingly dependent on the forests as a result of the steadily decreasing average size of landholding. Commercialisation of agriculture has further placed greater demands on forests. Tomato, pea and ginger cultivation are being done on a large scale in the areas surveyed under this project, as vegetables can be grown in the summer season when their cultivation in

¹¹ Legal 'forest' lands include village common/ grazing lands, grasslands, alpine pastures and forests – the bulk of the non-private cultivable geographic area of the state.

adjoining plains is not possible. Forest trees, especially chir, are heavily lopped for stakes for providing support to tomato, beans and pea plants. In Solan about 60 per cent of the stakes used are lopped from chir pine trees. It is estimated that 3 to 4 hectares of chir pine forest is required to be lopped every third year to provide stakes for each hectare of tomato cultivation. Thus it contributes significantly to forest degradation. Besides this, ginger cultivation needs heavy application of organic matter which is collected from forests by scraping the forest floor and also by lopping of trees. About 10 tons of leaf litter are collected from the forest for each hectare of ginger cultivated in Sirmaur and Solan district (NRMG 1999). In a few of the areas where forests have been degraded as a result of excessive lopping, ginger cultivation has already suffered. Lopping of trees to collect leaves to spread in cattle sheds and to compost them with dung is a common practice in most villages. Four to six tons of loppings are extracted by an average farming family each year to supplement organic matter supply to agriculture fields, causing considerable damage to forests.

The critical balance between private lands and communally used forest and pasture lands is disturbed when there is a change in the use of these lands, for instance through establishment of tree plantations on grazing lands or encroachment by individuals. All these changes have led to localised pressure on existing communal resources, and in some cases have led to their degradation.

2.1.10 Forest plantations

Large scale forest plantations are being raised in the state under different programmes. They are mostly raised on forest land, however a few plantations are also raised on private lands under section 38 of the Indian Forest Act and the HP Land Preservation Act (fencing material and plants have been provided to private farmers). Substantial areas are covered by forest plantations on an annual basis, and the labour involved makes the HPFD the second largest employer in the state. The average survival rate is about 70 per cent, while in case of areas that are difficult to manage or prone to damage by cattle, the survival rate is reported to be as low as 40 per cent.

2.1.11 Encroachments and illicit felling

Since the time when forest harvesting was entrusted to the HP Forest Corporation in the early eighties, organised illicit felling and timber smuggling has been controlled to some extent. However alternative ways are now used, whereby right-holders sell timber acquired through their rights. This is discussed in more detail in the policy story in section 4.2.1.

2.1.12 Industry including mining

In Himachal Pradesh, there are not many large industrial units that affect forests. There are 161 medium and large scale units and about 25,000 small scale industrial units with an annual turnover of Rs. 30,000 million, employing around 1,25,000 people. Those with some link with forests include sericulture where mulberry plantations are used; and the handloom industry - a large stakeholder with more than 50,000 handlooms across the state, it is indirectly dependent on forests as wool is required from the sheep which graze on forest land. Forest-based industries include a few resin and kathha factories besides the sawmills. There are many furniture making units in all the towns and small semi-urban points in rural areas. These are tree based and get their raw material both from private and government areas. There are also several small and medium scale herbal pharmaceutical factories, three owned by the state Ayurveda Department and one fairly big one owned by the Tibetan Astro-medical Institute in Dharamsala. Forest based adventure tourism is now quite an industry in the private sector.

There are acts and laws relating to regulation of mining activities but it still seems to be very difficult to stop uncontrolled mining. Materials mainly extracted are limestone, barites, rock salt, silica boulders, gypsum and shale as major minerals and brick earth, clay and building material like

sand, stone and minor minerals. Three cement factories are already functioning in the state and there are plans to set up a few more. Annually about 4.5 million tonnes of minerals, including about 2.7 million tonnes of limestone, is extracted from an area of 330 hectares that has been leased out by the state government to cement factories. Usually conventional open cast mining operations are followed except for two mines, one of rock salt at Drang in Mandi and other of barites in Sirmaur, that are using underground methods.

Thus whilst some local stakeholders are highly dependent upon forest products for much of their livelihood, currently at subsistence level, there is some practice - and much potential - for building forest-based enterprises in production of forest goods, tourism, etc. Furthermore, a shortage of forest environmental services, which provide critical support to hill farming systems as well as to domestic water supply, entrenches poverty for many.

2.1.13 Policy – and the Forest Sector Review

The 1988 national forest policy dictates that environmental conservation of forests and the meeting of subsistence needs of forest-dependent communities should take precedence over commercial production. This is generally supported in HP; there is a widespread feeling amongst senior government officials in HP that the primary purpose of forests should be for conservation and sustainable use. The state aims to bring 50 per cent of the area under tree cover, besides meeting all local requirements¹².

At present there is no formal state forest policy document in HP. However, the recent Forest Sector Review (FSR)¹³ enabled substantial progress to be made towards the development of a new forest policy. It was a strategic process designed to enable informed debate on key issues affecting the forest sector and represented an opportunity to redefine HP's priorities for the sector. It provided a basis of information and consensus on which to build future policies and strategies for the forest sector. The FSR sets out current thinking on policy for HP's forest sector, which is in line with the national policy climate¹⁴, and lays the foundation for HP to develop a new forest policy. The FSR recommendations are summarised in box 6.

Box 6: Summary of recommendations of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Review

Recognition of four key principles:

- There are *multiple forest values* which sustain local livelihoods and economic growth
- There are *multiple forest stakeholders* involved in the forest sector, from those dependent on forests for subsistence to state, national and international stakeholders
- *Changing conditions*: whether economic, environmental, social or institutional, conditions are changing rapidly
- The need for a *lead agency to coordinate the transition to SFM*.

Ten policy objectives:

- Institute a multi-stakeholder *HP Forest Consultative Forum* – to create a platform for continued discussion, at a high level, with local forest fora ensuring links with local interests.
- *Cross-sectoral coherence towards SFM*, with an early emphasis on agreeing criteria and indicators of SFM for Himachal Pradesh.
- *Strengthen village-level institutions* to enable them to fulfil local needs for forests, as well as to contribute to the production of state, national and global forest values.
- *Liberalise off-reserve, ie. plantation/ farm forestry on private lands*, with technical support from HPFD.
- *Improve investment in the public benefits from forests* – HPSFC could invest in improving the quantity

¹² The rationale for achieving 50 per cent forest cover is not clear, beyond the traditional target-setting and –meeting mentality. A significant percentage of HP's geographical area is above the tree line, and although much of this is legally termed 'forest' land, it clearly restricts the land available for forestry.

¹³ IIED and Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. 2000. *Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Review*. IIED, London.

¹⁴ Forestry is a concurrent subject in India, such that state forest policies must be within the national framework.

and quality of public forest assets.

- *Undertake organisational change and capacity development in the HPFD* to support other stakeholders, and especially village-level institutions, to take up sustainable forestry roles.
- *Develop a vision for balanced land use and* to establish what types of forest are needed to meet current and future needs, and where they are.
- *Ensure biodiversity values are factored better into land use*, including a better system of protected areas, and attention given to biodiversity conservation outside protected areas.
- *Develop a transparent information system on forests*, to inform stakeholders.
- Greatly improve efforts to *spread awareness of forest values*, objectives, rights and responsibilities, increasing political commitment to SFM.

Source: Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Review. 2000. IIED and HPFD.

It was recognised that the FSR cannot resolve all the debates in HP's forest sector; rather, it attempted to provide structures for further debate and consideration of forest sector issues in terms of what is most supportive of local livelihoods - as well as forests. Some of the recommendations made under the Forest Sector Review are designed to increase participation in policy formulation and implementation in the future. One example is the proposed creation of an HP Forest Consultative Forum - subsequently notified in August 2001 - with related multi-stakeholder fora at district and local levels, feeding information and opinions into the state-level Forum and strengthening cross-sectoral linkages. In addition, the establishment of mechanisms for public review and comment on major government-related forest actions would increase public 'ownership' of policies, and would likely increase acceptance and compliance.

To facilitate the HPFSRP, in June 2002 the GoHP notified the constitution of a Forest Sector Strategy Development Steering Committee to facilitate convergence of sectoral policies and programmes at macro/ micro level with forest sector policies. At the same time, a Policy Analysis and Planning Unit (PAPU) was notified for preparing forest sector policy and strategies for implementation. PAPU has now been established.

2.1.14 Other policy initiatives affecting the forest sector

Whilst these initiatives may be seen as enabling, one of the most limiting factors in HP's forest sector – at least to the private sector and the Forest Corporation - is the *ban on green felling* for commercial harvest, in force since 1987. This was partly a national initiative, derived from a Supreme Court ruling, but was enthusiastically adopted in HP and reflects the general desire within HP to use its forests for conservation rather than commercial production. Timber extraction is restricted to the felling of trees under TD rights, salvage fellings, and removals of green trees damaged by fire, wind or snow (however no precise definition of 'damaged' trees is given). Whilst in some other parts of India (e.g. West Bengal), timber is now being harvested from JFM forests, in theory the ban disallows such activities in HP, except to the extent permitted under TD rights (Blunt *et al*, 1999). But in fact, TD rights allow for substantial removals, and of all the best trees in the forest at that. The ban is only on felling of all green tree species from government forests managed under working plans, and it greatly reduces the harvest of timber according to working plans. It is estimated that the state realises only 9.1 per cent of the market value of the permissible yield, indicating an opportunity cost of Rs 790 million. However, there is a significant lobby in favour of the ban, which rests its arguments on the assumptions that it serves to conserve forests and that lifting the ban would open the way for widespread illegal logging. In fact, the lobby in favour of the ban argues that existing removals are not sustainable and that there is no guarantee of regeneration. In addition, past experience has shown that fellings in higher altitude forests have failed to regenerate, leading to serious disturbances in moisture regimes, local ecology, etc.

Policies and institutions cooked up explicitly to deal with the relationship between people and forests – 'forest sector' policies and the forest department – are only part of the story. Others, like health and education policies and institutions, have major effects on this relationship too. But in Himachal Pradesh, at least, it is clear that forest policies and institutions are indeed quite influential.

2.2 Key research issues

Given this background, a number of key issues concerning the links between policy and livelihoods emerge. These include the following:

- *Roles played by the newly-empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are both a great opportunity, and a significant challenge, for developing local capacity to address livelihood needs and natural resource management.* Following HP's panchayat elections in December 2000, more than 90 per cent of elected panchayat officers are holding such posts for the first time. Whilst there is as yet lack of clarity on PRIs' relationships with other, longer-established local institutions, and much need for developing capacity within PRIs, their new roles represent opportunities for devolved policy implementation and local policy development.
- *Existing village institutions have strengths and weaknesses, complementarities and tensions, with respect to PRIs.* Particularly in areas far from roads, traditional institutions such as Devta Committees remain strong, whilst PRIs are yet to be established. A study of formal and informal village institutions, their linkages and relative roles with respect to the village communities they serve, and their contributions to improving the livelihoods of the poorest, would help to inform the further development of PRIs.
- *Livelihood strategies of the poorest and most marginalised are not well incorporated into the thinking of most policy and institutional interventions.* Past interventions have tended to focus on the village community without much disaggregation according to wealth, land holdings, type of dependence on forest goods and services, etc. – yet poverty statistics and the prevalence of caste divisions indicate that village communities are far from homogeneous. Identification and acknowledgement of these groups is necessary as a first step towards PRIs becoming truly representative of their constituencies. A second step is to start ensuring that policy and institutional interventions take account explicitly of potential impacts on the poorest and most marginalised, particularly women.
- *Distributive impacts of participatory forestry interventions are not well understood.* It is not known what the overall effect of participatory forestry and its net distributive impact among poorer and better-off households is. Benefit sharing by members of the village forest institution does not seem to have any apparent relationship to the benefits foregone by specific members of the institution, and thus labour input in protecting and managing the forest.
- *Impacts of participatory forestry 'laid on top' of existing local rights and practices are unclear.* In HP, participatory forestry is being implemented in an environment where local people have rights and concessions and already established practices for forest access and use (such as Timber Distribution and individual rights of NTFP collection and sale). It is not clear to what extent current and evolving participatory forestry programmes learn from, and build on, these established practices – as opposed to non-participatory classification and acquisition policies which have tended to suppress traditionally participatory practices.
- *Potential opportunities for improving livelihood security through the development of small enterprises are not well enabled by current policies and institutions.* The range of suitable activities will depend upon criteria such as whether families are landowners or landless; proximity and access to forest resources; access to water resources; access to roads; provision of market information and links; need for start-up credit, etc. An example of local enterprise with much potential to benefit the forest-dependent poor is the collection and processing of medicinal herbs, of which the northwest Himalayan forests are a major repository. Another example from the Palampur area of western HP, of a federation of village women's groups each with a stake in a thriving enterprise producing chutneys, pickles and other products from forest and farm trees and plants, may provide lessons for setting up further

new enterprises.

- *At the state policy level, the policy development process is often ad hoc, and interaction and coordination between departments is poor (but improving).* Participatory policy development, whilst developed to some extent during the Forest Sector Review, has yet to become a widely accepted approach. In terms of vital inter-departmental coordination, there are some existing and proposed fora and mechanisms which could be developed and strengthened to enable more effective joint action amongst the Departments of Forestry, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, and Irrigation and Public Health (which administers water resource issues). These include: consultative fora to address forestry issues at state and circle levels; and a Policy and Planning Unit located in the HP Government secretariat¹⁵ (as noted in section 2.1.13 above).
- *Existing livelihoods information is being poorly utilised.* It is not clear to what extent current policies and methodologies for their implementation are based on the wealth of information on livelihood needs that has already been collected from the field. Numerous consultancy missions and field surveys have been carried out in recent years, but there is apparently no synthesis of the learning and recommendations produced by these studies, in a form that can inform policy development such that policies better support rural livelihoods. The challenge here is to ensure greater understanding within HP Forestry Department of the different livelihood needs and strategies of stakeholder groups. Further, given the rapid turnover of policy initiatives and the ensuing challenge to implementation agencies, there is a need to consider how participatory programmes themselves can be made more sustainable.
- *Understanding needs to be improved concerning the means and routes to policy changes that have real impact.* Linked to the need to optimise learning from experience of livelihoods, there is a need to consider what fosters change, and whether policy initiatives have led to change. Analysis and evaluation of the processes of policy change, and of the actual and potential roles played by the poorest groups in influencing policy, is lacking.

With these key issues in mind, the team developed a set of specific research questions and methodologies to address them. These are presented in section 3.

¹⁵ Subsequent to this research it was suggested that the Policy and Planning Unit be located in the Forest Department.

3 Methodology and actions taken in this study

The approach taken in this project was to examine and contribute to improvement in the influence of policies and institutions at four connected ('concentric') 'circles of influence' on livelihoods. The four 'circles of influence' on livelihoods are:

- *Access to assets* – rights and rules about forest resources, water, finance, infrastructure etc
- *Development of assets* – capabilities to do something with the accessed assets
- *Demand for products* – chiefly the markets for developed assets (the outputs of livelihood strategies)
- *Macro-policy/ economy* – the big policy frameworks which originate at the district and state level and may shape all of the above (whereas policies and institutions in the other three circles of influence have more specific effects)

Figure 1: Four 'circles of influence' of policies and institutions on livelihoods

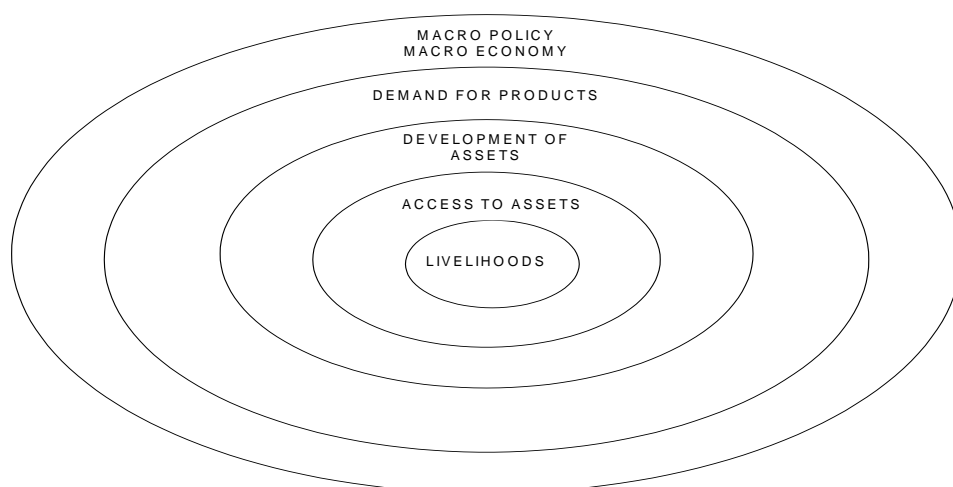


Table 3 shows some initial examples of policies and institutions influencing use of forest goods and services in Himachal Pradesh.

Table 3: Four 'circles of influence' of policies and institutions on livelihoods

<i>Access to assets (rights and rules)</i>	<i>Development of assets (capabilities)</i>	<i>Demands for products (markets)</i>	<i>Macro-policy/ economy (big policy)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TD rights/ forest settlements • Green felling ban • Cooperatives • Water access rules • Roads • Remittances from migrated workers • Bank lending rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-initiated JFM projects • Education strategy and knowledge development • Agricultural/ horticultural initiatives • Health provision • Public works • Micro-planning • Hydro-development and water structures • Savings and credit groups • Product processing initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidies - insecticides/ fertilisers; electricity; hotels; pensions, etc. • Existing/ predicted/ new use of resources/ services: electricity • Ecotourism initiatives • Liquefied Petroleum Gas initiatives • Vegetable and fruit markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panchayati Raj Institutions • Nationalisation of timber trade • World Trade Organisation rules, liberalisation • National Joint Forest Management policy • Energy plans • Lifting of import restrictions • Fiscal reform targets

Source: developed at, and following, a round-table discussion with senior staff of the HP Forestry Department and discussions with heads of other government and non-governmental institutions – May 2001.

3.1 Research questions

Specific research questions stemming from the key policy-livelihood issues organised within the above framework include the following.

1. How to improve poor people's access to forest goods and services?

- *Who are the poorest in HP, and what are their current livelihood strategies? What are the actual uses of forest goods and services – the contribution of forest goods and services to livelihood strategies? What are the policy, institutional and market influences on this contribution – and what are the constraints and opportunities to forest goods and services playing a larger role?*
- *How have historical rights of usage and extraction been incorporated into participatory forestry in HP, and how might they further enhance the participatory forestry framework? How may traditional rights - such as Timber Distribution to which the majority of the population assert their rights – be retained and developed in order to foster improved livelihoods?*

2. How to improve poor people's development of forest goods and services?

- *How may the roles and powers of local institutions be developed? What are the local leverage points for developing roles and capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (including the newly constituted panchayat, block samiti and district level zila parishad), with respect to the appropriate 'mix' of these constitutional institutions with existing village institutions in contributing to the livelihoods of the poorest and in implementing policy? How can the strengths of traditional informal local institutions be preserved and adapted as appropriate?*
- *How may equity issues best be addressed within participatory forestry programmes?*

3. How to improve demand for forest products developed by poor people?

- *How may an enabling environment for small enterprises be fostered? What are the roles of policies and institutions (including markets) in generating opportunities for improving livelihood security on an equitable basis through such enterprises? What are the potential uses of forest goods and services and how can they contribute more to sustainable livelihoods in HP? How may lessons from existing small enterprise development in HP best inform further initiatives?*

4. How to improve big policy frameworks in favour of forestry's contribution to sustainable livelihoods?

- *How may 'livelihoods thinking' be installed in policies and institutions? How can policy processes most effectively take into account the livelihood strategies and needs of the poorest? How can newly proposed policy mechanisms be infused with livelihoods-oriented policy positions? How can a livelihoods approach be used as a catalyst for state-level departmental coordination? What or who are the 'champions of change', and how do they create change? How can the poorest be supported in increasing positive change?*

3.2 Activities

The sequence of work followed three general phases:

- Firstly, analysis, at state and district level, of the influences of policies and institutions upon the links between forest goods and services and livelihoods.
- Secondly, work within village settings to investigate these links, the influence of policies and institutions on them, and the means by which local people can influence policies and

institutions.

- Thirdly, further policy work at district and state level to deal with the issues and consequences of the fieldwork.

Activities planned within each of these phases are summarised in the following section (as described in the workplan).

State and district level work

1. *Make better use of existing analysis.* A wealth of information has been collected from the field in recent years by consultancy missions and field surveys, both by governmental and non-governmental efforts. Gathering relevant existing information and analysis, and synthesising it using a livelihoods approach, can optimise the use of relevant secondary information. This information can also be drawn upon, where relevant, in the village-level work.
2. *State-level policy and institutional mapping.* Consultations with key government departments (including Forestry, Horticulture, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Science and Technology, Planning, Tribal Development, Indigenous Systems of Medicine, Women and Social Welfare, Fisheries etc.) and academic and research institutions serve to elicit inputs on which policies and institutions really have influence at local level, on how policies currently address livelihood needs, on how policy processes work, and on how interaction between departments may be improved. These consultations will build on those conducted during the Forest Sector Review. Some initial 'maps' of policies and institutions, their linkages and strengths of impact, will be drawn up with appropriate additional notes.
3. *Further prioritisation of issues, selection of districts, and development of checklists for district-level work.* Based on the above mapping exercise and reactions to it at state level, the key policy and institutional influences and specific research questions identified in this work plan will be further focused into a checklist for district level work. Four districts will be selected for this work. Criteria for selection will be drawn up (see also 5. below) and a matrix used to identify a reasonable spread of districts across several continua, including: high to low proportions of people in extreme poverty; high to low levels of use of forest goods and services; high to low perceived strength of influence of policies, institutions and markets (from the mapping exercises); weak/ strong existing knowledge base; and different agro-climatic zones – sub-mountain low-hills, sub-humid mid-hills, temperate wet high-hills and temperate dry high-hills.
4. *District-level policy and institutional mapping* will involve consultations with key informants from government departments at district level and from zila parishads (the district level tier of PRIs), as well as project officers of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and the District Panchayat Officer. Maps of institutional relationships and Venn diagrams will be developed with these informants to illustrate the range and degree of interaction of institutions.
5. *Selection of village-level sites and further development of issue checklists for village-level work.* Criteria for selection of villages will be drawn up into a matrix (see also 3 above). These criteria will include: distance from roads, presence/ absence of external forestry project support, degree of development and capacity of PRIs, presence of traditional local institutions, access to markets, access to natural resources including forest resources and water, composition of village community (proportion BPL), population density and weak/strong existing knowledge base. Field study will be carried out in 20 villages spread across 5 districts.

Village-level work

6. *Village-level policy and institutional mapping* might take the form of a group mapping exercises to show village level institutions and perceptions of external policy influences. Venn diagrams and discussions around them will be used to illustrate the range, and degree of interaction of, institutions and policies on village life. This mapping exercise will build on the survey of local institutions carried out during the Forest Sector Review.
7. *Timeline of major policy and institutional events* in the lives of the village/ group, to examine historical trends and dynamics of change in livelihoods.
8. *Social analysis* to define groups with different livelihood strategies, wealth and assets and dependencies with respect to forest goods and services. This will follow from the above village-level mapping and can be developed through household ranking exercises, semi-structured interviews with key respondents, and focus group discussions with poorer and more marginalised groups.
9. *Group-level policy and institutional mapping*. Venn diagrams and other interview and diagram-based techniques will be used to identify the strength and degree of interaction of policies and institutions on different groups (identified in 8). Cause and effect relationship diagrams will be used to establish the sustainability of livelihood strategies.
10. *Household survey – to develop livelihood profiles and assessment of policy and institutional influences* on different components of livelihoods. The survey method will be based on issues checklists. Household survey will be carried out in 20 villages, 10 households per village, i.e. a total of 200 households. This will reach an estimated population of 1,000.
11. *Feedback, verification and discussion of findings* through report-backs, debate, modification and identification of ways forward at group and village levels.

Further district and state-level work

12. *Analysis and interpretation of data* from state and district level analysis, and from fieldwork, and production of a draft report.
13. *Discussion and further development of findings, and their implications* at a workshop to be attended by village, district and state level stakeholders and IIED.
14. *Finalisation of report incorporating feedback from findings workshop*. Policy options will be identified which can improve access to natural and other livelihood assets and to reduce vulnerability for poor rural people, as well as identifying means of building institutional capacities to develop and implement enhanced policies. This report will complement the policy and livelihoods review paper, which will be updated during the course of the research. These outputs will be posted on the website of the wider initiative and made available in published form within HP.
15. *Initiation of steps to take forward findings with key district and state level actors*.

Checklists for state, district, village and household surveys and interviews are in annexes 2 to 4.

3.3 Selection of districts and villages

Matrix of districts with selection criteria

Six districts were selected for survey according to the following criteria:

- Agro-climatic zones
- High to low proportion of people in extreme poverty
- High to low levels of use of forest goods and services
- High to low perceived strength of influence of policies, institutions and markets
- Presence of nomads

Districts were selected such that a range of conditions, defined by these criteria, was represented. The matrix below summarises the districts selected.

District	Shimla	Mandi	Solan	Sirmaur	Kullu	Chamba
Selection criteria						
Agro-climatic zones	high hills temperate-wet	mid-hills sub-humid	sub-mountain low hills, mid-hills sub-humid	sub-mountain low hills	high hills temperate-wet	high hills temperate dry
High to low proportion of people in extreme poverty	15% BPL households	12% BPL households	16% BPL households	high 18.5% BPL households	high 18.82% BPL households	high
High to low levels of use of forest goods and services	high	high	low	low	high	high
High to low perceived strength of influence of policies, institutions and markets	high influence on horticulture growth – apple and off season vegetable cultivation	Low	high influence on off season vegetable cultivation	high influence on ginger and tomato cultivation	high influence on medicinal plant trade	low
Nomads	-	-	-	migratory graziers - Gujjars	-	Nomads - Gaddis/ migratory graziers

Matrix of villages with selection criteria

Field study was carried out in 20 villages covering 5 districts – Shimla, Mandi, Solan, Sirmaur and Kullu; the sixth district, Chamba, was the site of the nomad specific study.

The criteria used to select villages for survey were:

- Dependence on forests
- Distance from roads
- Presence/ absence of external forestry project support
- Degree of development and capacity of PRIs
- Presence of traditional local institutions
- Access to markets

- Access to natural resources (forest/ water)
- Composition of village community – SC/BPL
- Women headed Panchayat
- Weak/ strong knowledge base
- HEP
- Degree of forest dependent (low/ medium/ high)
- Forest dependency for livelihoods
- Migratory graziers

The matrix below shows the presence of these criteria in each village. It also demonstrates the spread of conditions represented by these villages.

	Shimla District (Rampur)				Mandi District (Jogindernagar)	
	Kiari	Dhar	Thada	Dhadi Rawat	Gwali	Triambli
Degree of dependence on forests	Low: fuelwood, fodder	Low	Low: fuelwood, fodder	Low: fuelwood, fodder	Low: fuelwood, fodder	Medium: fuelwood, fodder
Forest dependency for livelihood	Dependent on horticulture	Dependent on horticulture	Dependent on horticulture	Dependent on horticulture	Dependence on pensions/labour	Dependence on labour
Distance from roads	10km from main road; accessible by jeep	3 kms from main road which is a jeepable kuccha road cut off for 2 months due to snow fall and heavy rains	Remote: 11 km from road; cut off for 3 months due to snow fall	Remote: 10km from main road; cut off for 2 months due to snow fall	Lies on main road, accessible round the year	6 kms from main road which is a jeepable kuccha road
Presence of forestry projects	SVY	SVY	SVY	SVY	HPFP/SVY VFDC/S	HPFP/SVY VFDC/S
Degree of development and capacity of PRIs	Training on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Training on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Training on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Training on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Training on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Training on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998
Presence of traditional local institutions	Mahila mandal, Mandir committee	Mahila mandal, Mela & Mandir committee	Mahila mandal	Mandir committee, Mahila mandal	Mahila mandal	Mahila mandal
Access to markets	10 km	3 km	20 km	10 km	Main market 20 km	Main market 25 km
Access to natural resources (forest/ water)	Forest far off and a small patch; water available through a nullah*	Forest accessible; water available through a nullah	Forest accessible; water available through a nullah	Forest far off; water available through a nullah	Forest accessible for fuelwood and fodder; water available thro' a nullah & Kuhl	Forest accessible; water available through a Kuhl
Composition of village community – SC/BPL	7% BPL households; 5% SC	2% SCs; 15% households are BPL	25% SC; 25% under BPL	30% SCs	25% SCs & 12% BPL	SC village & 10% BPL
Women headed Panchayat	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Weak/ strong knowledge base	No	No	No	No	No	No
Migratory Graziers/Nomads	Kinnars move through	Kinnars move through	Kinnars move through	Kinnars move through	Muslims migrate to Kullu	-

HEP	No	No	No	No	No	No
Other criteria	Shift in livelihoods to horticulture; in-migration of orchard labour, Parent Teacher Association	In-migration of orchard labour	shift in livelihoods to horticulture, in-migration of orchard labour	shift in livelihoods to horticulture, in-migration of orchard labour	medicinal herbs, migratory graziers	medicinal herbs

* A nullah is like a stream, sometimes also rainfed. A Kuhl is a gravitational irrigation mechanism.

	Kullu District					
	Solang	Bhulag	Shalwad	Shanghad	Dashad/ Sainj	Peej
Dependence on forests	Forest dependent - fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent - fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder
Distance from roads	1.5 km	7 km from main road	On main road	4 km	On main road	15 km
Forestry projects	HPFP VFDC/S	HPFP VFDC/S	GHNP-VEDC /VFDS	GHNP VEDC/VFDS	HPFP VFDC/ VFDS	HPFP VFDC/S
Degree of development and capacity of PRIs	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Backward panchayat ¹⁶ . Trainings on roles and responsibilities: UNICEF supported project in 1998
Presence of traditional local institutions	Nag Devta Mandir committee, Mahila mandal	Naina devi mandir committee, Mahila mandal	Mahavir mela and Mandir committee, mahila mandal	Devta committee mahila mandal	Devta committee mahila mandal	Mandir committee mahila mandal
Access to markets	13 km	12 km	30 km to main market	46 km to main market	40 km	15 km from market; access by foot
Access to natural resources (forest/ water)	Forest accessible for fuelwood and fodder, water through Kuhl and river	Forest accessible for fuelwood and fodder, water through bawadi and Nullah	Forest accessible for fuelwood and fodder, water through kuhl and Khud*	Forest accessible for medicinal herbs, fuelwood and fodder, water through Nullah	Forest accessible for fuelwood and fodder, water through kuhl and khud	Forest accessible for fuelwood and fodder, water through bawadi
Composition of village community – SC/BPL	-	75% SC	60% SCs, 2% ST and 8% OBC	15% SC and 15% OBCs 70% BPL households	29% SCs and 1% STs	11% BPL
Women headed Panchayat	Yes	Backward panchayat [see footnote 14]	No	Yes	Yes	No
Weak/ strong knowledge base	No	No	No	No	No	No
HEP	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Other criteria	TD Ecotourism Skill – shawl weaving	TD, shift in livelihoods, horticulture, floriculture	TD, medicinal herbs, migration for livelihoods. Skill – shawl weaving	TD, medicinal herbs collection/ nursery, ecotourism. Skill – shawl weaving, vermicomposting	TD, medicinal plants collection, nursery, income generating activities in ecotourism	TD

* A Khud is a rainwater stream

¹⁶ Geographically remote, poor socio-economic conditions such as low literacy, high OBC/SC population etc and difficult terrain – notified by Planning Department on basis of survey and recommendations from the Subdivisional Magistrate/ Deputy Commissioner.

	Solan District			
	Ambota	Piplughat	Bhojnagar	Manjhu
Dependence on forests	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder
Distance from roads	5 km	1 km	2 km	9 km
Presence of forestry projects	IWDP (Integrated Watershed Devt. Project)	SVY	IWDP (Integrated Watershed Devt. Project)	SVY
Degree of development and capacity of PRIs	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998
Presence of traditional local institutions	Mandir committee mahila mandal	Julpa Devta committee & Nikku Guru Mandir committee mahila mandal	Mandir committee mahila mandal	Devmandhol mandir committee Mahila mandal
Access to markets	Close to market	Close to market	25km from market	9km from market
Access to natural resources (forest/ water)	Forest accessible for fuelwood & fodder, water from handpump	Forest far off, some collect fuelwood & fodder, water from bawadi	Forest accessible for fuelwood & fodder, water from bawadi & handpump	Forest far off, few collect fuelwood & fodder, water from bawadi & handpump
Composition of village community – SC/BPL	-	40% SC	16% SC	30% SC and 10% OBC
Women headed Panchayat	Yes	No	Yes	No
Weak/ strong knowledge base	No	No	No	No
HEP	No	No	No	No
Other criteria	no	herbs	medicinal herbs	-

	Sirmaur District				Chamba
	Andheri	Janglabhood	Dakra	Bharal	Gaddi routes
Dependence on forests	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fuelwood, fodder	Forest dependent – fodder
Distance from roads	3 km from link road Remote – cut off during rains	2km from link road Remote	Main road good access	Good access to main road	-
Presence of forestry projects	IWDP	IWDP	IWDP	SVY	-
Degree of development and capacity of PRIs	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998	Trainings on roles and responsibilities held under UNICEF supported project in 1998
Presence of traditional local institutions	Mandir committee mahila mandal	Mela & Mandir committee mahila mandal	mahila mandal	Shiv mandir committee & gurudwara sabha	-
Access to markets	25 km	25 km	25 km	9 km	-
Access to natural resources (forest/ water)	Forest far off, few collect fuelwood & fodder, water from bawadi & handpump	Forest far off, few collect fuelwood & fodder, water from bawadi & handpump	Forest far off, few collect fuelwood & fodder, water from bawadi & handpump	Forest far off, few collect fuelwood & fodder, water from bawadi & handpump	-
Composition of village community – SC/BPL	60% Gujjars 5% SCs and 35% OBCs	15%SC, 30% OBC	60% ST, 30% SC and 10% OBC	30% OBCs and 10% SCs	-
Women headed Panchayat	No	No	No	yes	-
Weak/ strong knowledge base	No	No	No	No	-
HEP	No	No	No	No	-
Other criteria –	No	Bamboo baskets	No	No	Nomad specific interactions

The number of households in sample villages ranged from 16 in Thada to 300 in Shanghad. The survey focused specifically on the poor.

Workshops

District level workshops were held during the course of this study. A wide range of discussions were held with PRI representatives, project personnel from IWDP, Sanjhi Van Yojna, Great Himalayan National Park and HP Forestry Project, DRDA and HPSEB/HEP officials, locally active NGOs, District Forest Officers and Range Officers HPFD etc.

The discussions centred around the issues of livelihoods, their management, marketing and quality control. Workshop participants also talked about the role of their respective department/ institution, the policies affecting livelihoods and how these influence inter-departmental linkages and relationships.

The villages selected for the field research are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: Map of selected villages



4 Results and discussion

4.1 Results of village, district and state level survey

This section starts with a basic description of villages and livelihoods, and of village institutions and the linkages between them. Within this section we also describe some initiatives to develop new sources of income and give examples of traditional and innovative livelihood examples in boxes. Moving from village to district and then state level, the results of policy and institutional mapping at each level are summarised.

4.1.1 Village and household level forests-policy-livelihoods findings

As described in the previous section, field research was done in 20 villages spread across 5 districts (the sixth district selected informed the study on nomadic graziers). This section presents a summary of the key, specific findings at village and household level, which complements the background information in section 2. Especially highlighted are the range of attempts by local people to develop forest goods and services: of the examples presented in boxes, some are traditional activities, some innovative.

The number of households in the sample villages ranged between 16-300, with a village population of 115-2,500. The percentage of the population below the poverty line was high: 18.8 per cent and 18.5 per cent in Kullu and Sirmaur respectively. The majority of the population are Rajput caste, followed by about 30 per cent scheduled caste. Scheduled castes exist in most of the villages surveyed. They continue to constitute the poorer and weaker sections of the society: owning fewer assets, poorly educated and enjoy relatively fewer opportunities for their significant socio-economic advancement. The literacy rate was highest in villages of Shimla district, at 78 per cent. Some of the survey villages are inaccessible in Kullu, Shimla and Sirmaur during monsoons and snowfall.

The field survey found that the important government schemes and projects in the area are GHNP, DPEP, SGSY and IWDP: these provide employment, education for children, loans, training in skill building, etc. In terms of occupation, by far the majority of the population continues to be primarily engaged in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry. However, daily wage labour and the expanding trade and service sector offer alternative sources of income, and the importance of government jobs is increasing. The Gurkha and Bihari labourers, who often live in pathetic conditions in temporary labour camps and receive nominal wages, are probably the poorest in the state. They are more aware of the poverty alleviation programmes. They are migrant labourers who typically work on road construction and maintenance, and remit money to their home states.

Most of the big landholders exhibit a good standard of living, with access to modern facilities, their children go to best boarding schools and colleges within and outside the state, and they have access to good health facilities. An overall improvement in the standard of living is shown by the decrease of about 10 per cent in the number of households below the poverty line, a statistic which is not reflected elsewhere.

Quite a few villagers work as *forest* labourers; from May to August they sow pine trees and during November and December, they plant broad-leaved trees. However, there is a feeling amongst the community that 'Bhai-bhatijawad Policy' (nepotism) is the biggest deterrent in equitable access to labour employment and that it applies to all the government schemes. As well as providing employment, discussions with women revealed that forest plantations have led to a considerable increase in the availability of fuelwood and fodder. (Views on the use and access to timber under TD are given in section 4.2).

In the apple belt where forests are being depleted, *fuelwood* needs are met by people

through grass from their own fields and through pruning of the apple trees, resources which they store for the winter. They are not really aware of the effect of having degraded forests around their village, as apple production is their primary interest.

Box 7: Livelihood example: oil from trees!

In some areas, for instance in the Rohru division, the villagers are using the stumps of the trees for generation of oil. The process followed is crude but income generating. A furnace made of clay is employed for the purpose. The tree stumps are burned inside the furnace and oil is collected at the bottom of the furnace.

Fruit-growing has become increasingly important to the local economy over recent decades. Timelines constructed with a number of the selected households revealed that agriculture was the main focus in the 1960s, with a shift in the 1970s towards apple as a cash crop, which earned good revenue and contributed to HP becoming one of the high income level states. Many households contract out their orchards to fruit agents/ sellers from Delhi at the beginning of the season while the trees are budding. This provides the household with a guaranteed income from their orchard regardless of the harvest. Some farmers who have links in Delhi market sell the fruit themselves, thus ensuring they receive the market price. However, two years ago there was a bad apple crop, which forced the farmers to start thinking of alternatives. Now a few farmers are planning to visit areas near Shimla where off-season vegetable growing has started.

Box 8: Livelihood example: hops in Lahaul and Spiti

In Lahaul and Spiti, people have started to cultivate hops, an essential ingredient for beer brewing. Earlier the people used to cultivate seed potatoes, which had a relatively poor market in terms of the effort required and the benefits reaped. Hops, on the other hand, are economically remunerative – even though the hops have to be transported out of the district: the nearest brewery is in Solan.

Formerly, most villages in the lower areas grew sugarcane (as well as the usual crops of wheat, pulses (masoor, urad), mustard and some sesame). But sugarcane production has stopped for the past five years due to a sharp decline in prices. Together with concerns about the apple crop, this encouraged a shift to *vegetable cultivation* in the late nineties, and this has gained impetus under SGSY. Vegetables grown are mainly tomato, cucumber, ginger, french beans, cauliflower, cabbage, gourd and pumpkin. There are limited marketing opportunities because of very small landholdings (average 4 bigha). Most work on vegetable cultivation is done from July to October; in fact during September, cauliflower and cabbage is seen all over Sainj, Shalwad and other high altitude villages. Over the past three years, people in Kullu have started growing garlic as it generates more income and is a less labour intensive crop (see box 9).

Box 9: Livelihood change: from apples to Chinese garlic

In Kullu District, people have chopped down their apple trees as old as 20-25 years to cultivate Chinese garlic. Apple production has wavered lately and is dependent on climate. Moreover, as the area under apples has increased, the demand has subsequently reduced and the market price crumbled. Chinese garlic was introduced as it is less labour intensive, ensures steady production and commanded a market price of Rs. 30-40 per kilogram. In addition, this variety of garlic was originally cultivated only in China and commands a healthy international market. However, the Chinese garlic price subsequently crashed to Rs. 6-12 per kilogram in 2003, bringing yet more uncertainty to the farmers.

Dairying is one activity that is common in villages that adds to the household income. Villagers have taken loans from cooperative societies to buy cattle and have been able to repay the loans. Every household keeps a few cows and buffaloes, and amongst the

villagers there are a few milk vendors who collect milk and take it to nearby local markets for sale. There is a market for the milk at the urban colonies and sweet shops. But this activity is dependent on fodder that is reducing day by day, and cattle feed that is also becoming more costly. Still, people find it to be an important livelihood activity as they get direct cash in hand through selling milk, there is manure for the agricultural fields and the family itself gets milk which supplements the nutritional level especially of the children.

Box 10: Dairying as a viable livelihood option

Lalsen lives in the village of Gwali and has 2 bigha of land. Dairying is his primary occupation. He has 10 buffaloes and 2 cows, and sells the milk to nearby areas. In order to transport the milk to market he took a loan of Rs. 25,000 from the cooperative society to buy a pony and cart. He finds it a beneficial option and is regularly repaying the installments.

Lalsen would like to increase the dairying business as he is now familiar with the loan process and knows that he can access further loans given his established credibility for repayment. But there is a related problem which restricts him in expanding his business: the shortage of fodder for meeting the needs of an already large herd of cattle. He feels that small landholdings in the area are a big deterrent to those villagers who want to diversify their business, and that it is a vicious cycle.

His family members are responsible for routine household chores, collection of fuelwood, caring for animals and season-specific, agricultural activities like planting, weeding, and harvesting, while marketing and handling money remains his responsibility.

They depend on forests for grass for fodder, leaves for fodder and animal bedding, tree branches and twigs for fuel, shrub fibre for making rope. Throughout the year, stocks and stores of fodder and fuelwood are built up for the winter months. Lalsen said that usually poorer landless households, without animal assets, depend on forests only for fuelwood needs, which collectively puts major pressure on the forest resources.

He was of the opinion that like the big farmers or land owners who have started using LPG gas for cooking (which normally they use for making tea when there are guests), some support should be given to the poor families who are totally dependent on the fuelwood from forests so as to promote use of LPG as a policy instrument. Such a policy will have great implication in terms of reducing the pressure on forests. If the forests are saved from the pressure due to fuelwood, it will support the increased access to fodder from the forests too which can sustain the needs of landless community folk and they will become motivated to take up dairying as a viable source of livelihood, that helps their families, take care of society where they supply nutritional milk and milk products.

He thinks there would not be any competition if the village produces a large quantity of milk, as the collective effort will help people in securing a good stable price round the year. They can also look for options of making milk products as part of value addition and diversification.

A few families - about 15 per cent of the households in each village, on average - go out to the forest to collect *medicinal herbs* and sell them to local shopkeepers or *pansaris*. An informal network of local herb collectors, general village merchants and big traders is present in Mandi, Kullu and Solan. Medicinal herbs are primarily collected during the period March to June, when production is at a maximum. The focus on medicinal plant cultivation under the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) to provide alternative livelihoods came into being because it gives fast returns where despite a short working season at high altitudes. The wage rate in Kullu is Rs. 65/ day and in cold areas, Rs. 100/ day. Therefore labour is not viable. Hence the Park authorities motivated the village women to organise themselves into self-help groups (SHGs) with the help of SAHARA, a local NGO. 12 million medicinal plant seedlings have been developed in the last two years, involving 103 women's groups in Kullu, 1 hectare plots on forest land plus Rs 5,000 seed money given out to each of these groups.

There are a few families who make *bamboo baskets* for sale. These baskets are usually made to order or on piece labour rate, and bamboo is provided by the buyer, obtained from the forests. There is ample demand for these baskets which are commonly used in the fields and handling dung. But the group of basket makers had not taken this up as a planned livelihood activity, they consider it to be just a supplementary income source and are not using their skill to exploit the market demand. Other *non-farm livelihood sources of income* include shawl/ pattu weaving, vermi-culture, etc., whilst fishing, primarily for trout, is done in Shimla and Kullu. Sericulture and mulberry plantations are taking off in some areas. In Kullu, marijuana and poppy are also collected during January and February; whilst this is an illegal activity, most of the households have one member involved as a supplement to their livelihood.

Box 11: Livelihood example: stone masonry

In Mandi, which is known for its durable stones for house construction, machines for chiseling stones are being used. Normally chiseling by hand is labour intensive and unproductive. With the inception of such machines the output increases manifold and incomes multiply accordingly.

The last decade has also seen growth in *tourism* activities in H.P. (particularly due to disturbances in the Kashmir valley and the decline in tourism there); this has led to opportunities for employment within the village and other nearby tourist places. Many households have taken advantage of these opportunities and out-migration has reduced to a great extent. In Solang village, Kullu district for example, four households have 'graduated' from the below poverty line category thanks to such opportunities. The local community gives credit to the promotion of tourism by the government in improving the livelihood options in Kullu district, especially the villages between Manali and Rohtang Pass. The Indian film industry is also attracted to this area, and many big film directors and producers have regular filming schedules in HP.

Usually, many households participate in three or four secondary activities providing household income. Income and inputs enter the household both through traditional practices and livelihoods that are lucrative and viable due to the dynamic socio-economic changes in the area. There is a range of traditional and innovative initiatives supplementing household income, but some of these are facing constraints. For producers of marketable crops and fruits, returns from marketing were found to be mostly sub-optimal on account of absence of bargaining power and thriving business of middlemen. The need to set up producer's collectives was felt in some locations. A role for collectives was also seen in the area of scientific extraction and sale of NTFPs. Returns from forests are on the decline due to over-exploitation, particularly in the lower hills where people have nearly stopped going for NTFP collection (Praxis, 2000).

Box 12: Time to look for diversification: from apples to a flour mill

Devi Dass aged 45 years belongs to a Scheduled Caste household in Dhar village, Shimla district. He did not receive formal school education. He is married with two sons (one of whom is disabled) and a daughter. He has 5 bigha of land which has apple plantations that has helped his family to come out of the BPL category in the past decade. Subsequently he took a loan for establishing a flour mill and has repaid the entire loan amount from the earnings of the mill.

Regarding the dependence on forests he said he was fortunate to have got TD from which he was able to have a wooden house where his family of seven (including his parents) stays. Fodder for the cow is collected from the orchard and fuelwood is also accessible from his own small field. He remembered that about 30 years ago they used to go to the forests for fodder and fuelwood but now with the growing emphasis on apple cultivation and to some extent encroachments, the forest cover has reduced considerably and also there will be a time soon when there will be no forest to even get TD for house repairs. This in his view is attributed to irrational distribution of TD to the big landlords who have a larger demand for the timber to construct or even repair their houses.

He said that there are several problems while living in the village like kuccha road to reach the market and difficulty in getting packaging material for the apples during the season since there is a lot of demand when the crop is ready. He feels there is need to motivate people to look beyond apple cultivation and explore other options for livelihoods – just as he thought of supporting his income through the flour mill.

The rural population is also dependent on *forests and pasture resources* for fuelwood, timber, animal fodder, forage and bedding, and for a range of minor products. Forests and pastures play an integral role in the farming systems of the region, supporting livestock which, in turn, provide manure and composted bedding to fertilise land under cultivation. Therefore population growth is depleting the natural resource base, including forest and pasture. However, natural resource depletion is brought about not simply by population growth and increased demand, but by failure of the institutional arrangements to regulate, manage and rehabilitate resources in a socially, economically and environmentally satisfactory manner.

Among the various problems listed by villagers, they gave maximum priority to grass and fodder. They cited forest fire, greater grazing by sheep, presence of weeds, decrease in grassland, increased pressure on land utilisation due to people adopting horticulture, greater number of Jersey cows (as they consume more fodder); as some of the reasons for the shortage. Since fodder is a major livelihood dependence issue here, its scarcity has affected the income and quality of life of poor people, who are most dependent on fodder for their livestock. This forces them to buy grass, increases their dependence on cattle feed from the market, and means they have to sow fodder species on their limited land on which they were producing their staple food or cash crops. These problems become more severe in the context of a rural economy where there is problem of available cash and where many products are exchanged in barter. Further the scarcity of fodder has resulted in people keeping fewer cattle and this has affected the availability of cow dung and natural manure. As a result, people are more dependent on fuelwood and have to use chemical manure. This manure is both expensive and not good for the human body. The shortage of fodder has a multiplier effect on their traditional village economy. This affects women particularly, as they are primarily involved in the daily collection of fodder; as this becomes more difficult it adds to an already high workload which is particularly acute in households where men are in government or private services.

With encroachments, road construction, acquiring land for schools, panchayat buildings, community centres, mahila mandal bhawan, etc, there is increased pressure on forests. Many trees are felled and areas cleared, so a thick growth of forest is replaced now with concrete buildings. TD is considered a bane and affluent people who have access to it dictate the terms (see section 4.2). Most of the time, this results in illegal felling and lopping

of good trees.

The younger generation who have followed courses of study are less willing to look after cattle, so people are selling their cattle or keeping just one or two for milk for their own consumption. As a result the fuel requirements, which were to some extent met through cow dung cakes, are now solely dependent on forests.

4.1.2 Village level institutions

On average, a typical village has six to seven village institutions. There is a mahila mandal for women, yuvak mandal for youth, devta and village committees for the village and then there are project and programme specific institutions like VDC/VEC, as well as mela committee, panchayat, SHGs, PTA/MTA, VFDC/S, gurudwara committee, etc. Women's institutions and devta committees, together with forest institutions, are probably the most important local institutions for forest goods and services. It is these bodies that link more strongly to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who are often particularly dependent on forest resources. Youth groups these days are also active especially in fostering ecotourism, together with links to women's groups and use of traditional foods. SAHARA in Kullu organises treks in GHNP area with support from GHNP staff. All the institutions have different objectives and are also *ad hoc* in nature. Apart from devta committees and gaon sudhar sabhas that people consider their own institutions, the rest are all externally imposed village institutions. Preference ranking of village level institutions showed that mahila mandal and yuvak mandal do exist in villages, but villagers find mela and mandir committees to be more important. Village institutions are described in more detail in the following sections.

In most of the sample villages, it was apparent that the community lacks the initiative to take any kind of stand in relation to policies and is also less active primarily due to lack of awareness of programmes. Another reason could be that there is little sign of emergence of local leadership. Such populations are usually more dependent on the inputs coming to their doorstep through the government, and in the process are never empowered to take actions on their own. This is evident in the inactive multiple village institutions that exist.

The important government interventions from the villagers' point of view are TD, that provides timber to people for house construction and repairs, and Anganwadi centres that provide day care and supplementary nutrition to children and nursing or pregnant women.

Among the *donor aided projects*, villagers felt that IWDP was closest to them and made efforts to improve their life. Through the project they had been able to check soil erosion, increase availability of fodder, protect their forests from fire, develop more livelihood opportunities like sewing, nursery raising, vermi-composting, mineral brick making, etc. The formation of asset utilisation and maintenance user groups and SHGs of women were additional benefits. There are also SHGs promoted by the Department of Social and Women Welfare, but women found IWDP SHG more useful in terms of the cohesiveness it created and the varied livelihood options available.

Some of the projects, institutions and policies just confuse everybody or divert them from their own actions. For example, when a new programme appears and a politician or government official announces that "every home will get [such and such]", people forget what they are already doing and wait for the programme to arrive. Other programmes may create opportunities but only for roadside villages; up in the interior hills it is a different story. Programmes have limited reach in the remote areas.

Here we describe some of the village level institutions of particular relevance to forest-based livelihoods, then look at the linkages between them.

Panchayati Raj Institutions

The Gram Panchayat is the central constitutional body at the local level and is constituted over a group of villages. As an institution it is key to decentralised governance. Recent notifications relating to gram panchayats which concern forestry include the giving of monitoring powers to panchayats related to 15 departments, and the PFM rules. But the full implementation of decentralised responsibility is yet to begin. The resistance of the legislature and bureaucracy and the inadequate responsible accountability of PRIs are cited as major hurdles; the management capacity of PRIs is also in need of support.

The head of the *gram panchayat* has limited executive and administrative powers, but has a considerable influence at the village level. The *pradhan*, *patwari* and the other members of the *panchayat* are generally the funnel through which all official contact is made with the village level. Thus, they are in a position to influence and select individuals to benefit under particular schemes. Generally, the members of this political elite are wealthier male farmers and do not represent the needs of their poorer *panchayat* constituents. This is the reality with which development assistance (whether state or external) has to contend, but the structure of assistance should be such to ensure that the resource poor do have some part in the management and decision-making processes. Women Panchayat representatives are there, but they need a lot more support in a system where women are never allowed to speak in open or their presence is never acknowledged to be of much use. Mahila mandals and women's self help groups can help to strengthen and actively integrate women in the process of development. Their presence in Village Development Committees/ Village Forest Development Societies (VDC/VFDS) should be meaningful contributions to the solutions of the problems they face and also how best the forest resource can be preserved and protected. However, the role and functions of panchayats is undergoing marked changes (see the 'policy story' in section 4.2.2 for more detail).

Forest specific village level institutions

There are a variety of *forest specific village level institutions* in HP. All of them came into existence on an *ad hoc* basis under various projects, with each project having a slightly different mandate. These institutions were primarily fund-driven, with little uniformity. Village Forest Development Societies (VFDS) are institutions set up under Sanjhi Van Yojna (SVY) and are registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. Village Forest Development Committees (VFDC) were established under the DFID HP Forestry Project in Kullu and Mandi districts (these have since been converted to VFDSs under SVY, following a notification of 13 August 2001); Village Eco-Development Committees (VEDC) were set up in the Great Himalayan National Park area; and Village Development Committees (VDCs) were institutions formed under the Indo-German Changar Project (IGCP) and Integrated Watershed Development Project (IWDP). A cluster of villages is the unit except for VDCs, where a watershed is the unit. VFDC, VFDS, VEDC and VDC all have a general house comprising one adult female and male from all households falling in the programme area. Meetings are usually quarterly and the quorum is 50-60 per cent. The executive of 7 to 15 members is chosen from the general house.

The executive members include panchayat representatives, SC/ST/OBC and 33 per cent are to be women. Until recently the forest guard has been the member secretary in all such institutions (initially this was intended to ensure effective management of funds, record-keeping and at the same time equip community members to take over responsibilities), though this is no longer required. In the case of the IGCP, most member secretaries of new VDCs are now from the community.

Presently, the primary responsibility of VDCs and VFDSs is to develop and implement the micro-plan and undertake entry point activities; the latter usually include repair of drinking

water sources like bawdis (water springs - local drinking water sources), plantations, constructing mule roads, village paths etc. These institutions are active in forest protection, controlling forest fires and grazing, TD certification, nursery plantation, construction works etc.

Similar institutions called Watershed Development Committees are being created under the recently introduced Watershed Development Project through District Rural Development Authority (DRDA) across the state.

Village committees

Gaon Sudhar Sabhas/ Village Committees exist throughout HP and were found to be present in all the sample villages. These committees are usually formed village wise and have between five and ten members, all male. Primary responsibilities are the maintenance and upkeep of villages, and they play a key role in the identification, selection and voting of different office bearers in different community institutions and as a support committee to the devta committee. Prior to the formation of forest specific groups, these committees used to address forest-related issues (such as controlling grazing and fire protection) informally within their own villages. Presently most of the members are formally part of the VFDC, VDC, VEDC or VFDS in their respective areas and play an active role in decision making.

Cooperative forest societies, Kangra

Seventy *Cooperative Forest Societies* (CFSs) were established in the 1940s, in Kangra district, by the Punjab Forest Department in conjunction with the Co-operative Department and the Revenue Department, when the idea of managing the wastelands and forest lands in association with people was mooted. Reserved, demarcated, un-demarcated protected, un-classed, shamlats and even private ownership lands were entrusted to these societies. The CFSs were formed to regenerate degraded forest areas around villages, through handover of management responsibility to them. The Co-operative Forest Society Scheme was initially sanctioned for a period of five years with an annual grant-in-aid of Rs. 50,000 in 1941. The Forest Co-operatives continued to receive grant-in-aid till 1971. According to all reviews they have been very successful in managing their local forests for livelihood needs, and in protecting HPFD plantations.

After Kangra was transferred from Punjab to HP, the CFSs were treated unsympathetically by the new HP government which had no experience of this issue. After 1972 financial agreements to return revenues from marketing of forest products from the CFS forests were no longer honoured by the HPFD. There has been little political will to address the issue since then. Most of the CFSs continue to protect their forests, with a greater or lesser degree of tacit co-operation from HPFD field staff. Many CFSs have been able to manage community development over their lifetimes, and now feel betrayed by the HPFD, who are not returning the revenues from the forests the CFSs regenerated. They feel tricked by the HPFD public pronouncements that they are 'officially' not active now. Currently these co-operatives in Kangra are looking after the plantations, its use and the rights. However they seem to have little mandate and direction for the future. The accounts of the co-operatives were audited by the Co-operative Department and technical guidance and control was of the Forest Department. At present these co-operatives are in a state of dilemma not knowing what to do, however they still desire the pre 1971 status quo.¹⁷

¹⁷ Detailed discussion and analysis of forest cooperatives is given in Ahal: Forests, People and Participatory Forest Management in Himachal (ICIMOD).

Women's and youth groups

In part due to the poor delivery structure offered by the *panchayat*, other village level organisations like the *mahila mandal* (women's group), *yuvak mandal* (youth group for boys), *yuvati mandal* (youth group for girls) have been set up through various agencies like the Block Development Office and Directorate of Youth and Sports. In most cases these organisations operate informally, but in order to make them more effective, a formal constitution is necessary, for instance they are powerless to act against those who continue to use the resources illegally and depend upon agencies such as FD to enforce sanctions against the same.

The Department of Youth Affairs and Sports facilitates the organisation of *yuvak* and *yuvati mandals* for involving the youth in development activities. The youth groups are primarily involved with literacy programmes and *shramdan* or voluntary labour in development works. Those Yuvak mandals visited had between 10-20 members, but meetings were irregular and there was little involvement in forest related activities. However there lies ample scope to involve youth in income generation activities, conservation and protection of forests, etc.

Two or three mahila mandals exist in every panchayat of HP. The membership comprises women in the age group of 18-45, who meet monthly. These groups however, are not representative of the poorer socio-economic groups, who cannot afford to pay the monthly membership fees, or at times cannot attend meetings or activities. Non-membership of lower castes in these organisations sometimes leads to critical dissension and conflict between different users of a forest resource. It then requires a focus on having such groups for the marginalised/ poor sections too.

The Rural Development Department has promoted these institutions. An emerging role of mahila mandals is seen in the formation of active Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of women under different schemes. Most of the NGOs also work through these mahila mandals. Mahila mandals are the only traditional institutions to consider fuelwood, fodder and water as important issues, not because they are forestry focused groups, rather because their members are the most dependent on forests for these three basic requirements). These groups do take into consideration the equity and gender issues, however forestry related issues are not their mandate.

The idea of forming *Self-help groups* has emerged from mainly four channels - the Rural Development Department through its Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY); the Forest Department through its various projects; the Social and Women Welfare Department at Anganwadis; and the NGOs with the support from NABARD with the mandate towards economic empowerment of women or Mahila Vikas Kosh (the Women's Development Bank). Usually the existing self-help groups comprise 10-25 women including those from Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDPP) families as well. At monthly meetings, they collect monthly savings and disburse loans; some groups are involved in income generation activities. Usually the members of Mahila mandals and SHGs overlap and the meeting dates are also the same. Those SHGs visited had a membership of 10 to 22 women.

Presently there is a multiplicity of SHGs, given the four different initiating channels. The purpose of having the SHG is rather unclear as a strategy and has been tried as a programmatic tool for organising women, but has no clear cut mandate in terms of integration in terms of long term sustainability. However it is a very viable strategy that can be used not only for actively involving women but also men. But it is important that its focus and mandate corroborates with sustainable livelihoods.

Local *educational institutions* (such as village education committees) also do not have any direct linkage with forest based livelihood issues, however they can be used to spread

awareness about the importance of forest protection and of taking up livelihoods that are land based so that they do not disturb the ecology of the area.

There are institutions in all villages formed to facilitate the *Public Distribution System* (PDS) and agricultural activities within the villages. Generally these are multipurpose co-operatives providing the subsidised agricultural inputs like seeds, pesticides, fertilisers etc. through the agricultural co-operatives; whereas the multipurpose co-operative stores distribute rations (rice, sugar, flour etc) under the PDS.

Religious organisations

Himachal Pradesh is also called the 'Land of Gods' and within the state, it is believed that Kullu is where most Gods reside. Adherence to religious beliefs is strong. Devta Committees are the oldest and most honoured institutions within the village system. These are not *ad hoc*, are not promoted under any project and there is complete ownership among people. There was a time when there were several Devta Committees in each village, based on caste, even now for every god there is a committee. There are generally about 10 members, usually male, including the Pujari (priest) and Kardar (manager). It is believed that God has chosen a few families through whom s/he comes on earth and helps people. Throughout HP the Devta Committees have responsibilities for maintenance and upkeep of temple premises and organising religious ceremonies or fairs.

In Kullu district the role of Devta Committees surpasses all other institutions including panchayats, and all major decisions are facilitated with the guidance of committee members (who may also be part of the executive of forest village institutions). Formerly these committees looked after all aspects of the area development, however with the increasing influence of the outside world, their importance is on the decline, though they remain revered institutions.

In Kullu and in parts of Shimla district, each Devta Committee or the local deity owns substantial land and forests that really are growing without protection i.e. people respect these areas of forest such that protection is not required. These forests are called *Devta ke Van*.

Mela committees

Mela (fair) Committees exist throughout the state. These are usually formed on a village basis and have five to ten members, all male. They meet once a year, shortly before the mela or village fair is organised, during that period they are actively involved in organising and conducting the mela. They work closely with Village and Devta committees.

Linkages between local institutions

There has been a proliferation of institutions at the local level. Some are long-established and traditional, others have been set up at the instigation of state government departments, donors or NGOs, and all with different mandates. The common target-oriented and somewhat mechanical approach has exacerbated the growth in the number of institutions, and has also eroded the ethos of these groups.

Most (though not all) village forest institutions are of comparatively recent origin. Village consultations carried out as part of the Forest Sector Review showed that many such local forest institutions have succeeded in bringing greater focus and awareness of the need for protection and conservation of forests, and they have carried out practical work such as fire protection, soil conservation and silvi-pasture activities. That said, there remain challenges within these institutions such as the dominance of traditionally powerful groups; inability to

counter manipulation and malpractice (for example by the 'forest mafia'); and the recent proliferation of village institutions with unclear boundaries and responsibilities. In general, primary stakeholders lack an institutional and legal framework to enable equitable participation in the processes of decision-making concerning forest resources, both at village, district and state levels.

Thus the multiplicity of institutions at village level reflects a very similar scenario that exists at the government level: multiple institutions with different roles that very often overlap and all having no future direction to evolve and transform or multiply their scope.

4.1.3 New district and state level initiatives to develop livelihoods

There have been a number of initiatives at district and state level to promote new livelihood initiatives. Some of these are described below.

In section 2 we described the importance of horticulture to HP's economy and to many small farmers. But recently there have been worrying declines in yield, attributed in part to the declining diversity and abundance of natural insect pollinators, which is, in turn, a result of the excessive use of pesticides on the new generation of cash crops by farmers. Farmers observe that, in the past, there used to be a lot of insects such as wild bees, butterflies, and moths during the apple flowering season but now they have all disappeared. During the last few years, bad weather conditions such as frost, rain, and hailstorms and low temperatures during the apple flowering period have also been experienced.

A positive spin-off from this is the development of beekeeping as an alternative livelihood. It provides an essential service to owners of orchards as well as providing income to almost 1,000 people. This is described in more detail in boxes 13 and 14 below.

Box 13: Beekeeping as an alternative livelihood

Apiculture is being promoted as a cottage industry in HP. With an average landholding of less than 2 hectares, cereal cultivation alone is insufficient for farmers to earn a decent livelihood. The state government has been making efforts to engage farmers in allied activities like beekeeping, by providing various incentives, besides marketing and processing facilities. As many as 49 departmental beekeeping stations have been set up across the state, which serve as nodal centres for dissemination of technical support, and supply of bee colonies and other necessary inputs. The number of bee colonies has shot up from a meagre 580 in 1971 to 25,778 in 2002. Over the same period, the production of honey has increased from 12 tonnes to 655 tonnes.

Apiculture really picked up only after the introduction of the Italian honey bee *Apis mellifera* in 1962. The beekeeping research station of Nagrota Bagwan in Kangra district successfully acclimatised and multiplied this species. The Horticulture Department had also established two Agricultural Marketing and grading laboratories (for certification) at Hatkoti in Shimla district and Chhetru in Kangra district. The state Agro-Industries Corporation has established a honey processing plant at Kandrori in Kangra district with an annual processing capacity of 120 tonnes. The Horticulture Department is providing necessary inputs to farmers like beehives, comb foundation sheets and other equipment, as well as bee colonies at subsidised rates. During the last four years, Rs 70.25 lakh has been spent under various government schemes on providing benefits and concessions to beekeepers. Currently more than 900 people are engaged in beekeeping as a part-time or a full time vocation on a self-employed basis.

An estimated about two lakh bee colonies are required for efficient pollination in agriculture and horticultural crops being grown in the state. Bee colonies are being privately managed by fruit growers for pollination at the rate of Rs 300 per colony.

The Horticulture Department has so far registered seven bee breeders in HP, who have been assigned responsibility for the multiplication of honeybee colonies. Financial assistance of Rs 7.75 lakh has been provided to them for the creation of infrastructure necessary for the bee multiplication programme. The result is the production of 6,896 bee colonies.

During 2001-2002, Rs. 2,41,764 was spent on training farmers, unemployed youth, ex-servicemen and commercial beekeepers. A total of eight training camps were organised at Chambaghat, Jole, Delphine Lodge, Hatkoti, Sundernagar and Chhetru, in which 103 people participated. With a view to providing further impetus to apiculture the Horticulture Department has formulated a Rs 83.60 lakh proposal to be financed by the Government of India.

Box 14: Institutional efforts to promote beekeeping for apple crop pollination in Himachal Pradesh

The role of Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Solan:

- Strong scientific expertise on honeybees, beekeeping, and pollination aspects;
- Field stations in apple farming areas constantly monitor horticulture-related problems of farmers and focus on problem-solving research;
- On-farm research and demonstration on the positive effects of beekeeping for apple pollination;
- Special awareness programmes in apple farming areas;
- Agricultural Science Centres or extension centres of the University are located in these areas and give on-demand beekeeping training to farmers and interested new entrepreneurs;
- Provision of bee colonies for pollination: the Beekeeping and Horticultural Research Stations of the University have maintained both *Apis cerana* and *Apis mellifera* for this purpose.
- Training and demonstration on how to use bees for pollination.

The Role of the Department of Horticulture, Himachal Pradesh:

- Establishment of a Beekeeping Development Office (BKDO) for pollination which maintains bee colonies and rents them to farmers. It also sells *Apis mellifera* colonies at a subsidised rate of US\$ 7.5 per colony. The current market price of a healthy colony is over US\$ 50.
- Annual assessment of the possible demand for bee colonies by apple farmers and facilitating role in arranging supplies with private beekeepers.
- Attractive financial support to start beekeeping enterprises for pollination.
- Provision of honeybee colonies at subsidised prices to promote their use in pollination.

The role of the Himachal Apple Growers Association:

- It is an excellent platform for farmers to discuss emerging problems and to act as a strong pressure group to seek government intervention.
- It raised the apple pollination problem faced by farmers with the University and government - seeking rapid solutions.
- It raised awareness about the scale of the problem in the state and encouraged farmers to become beekeeping entrepreneurs for pollination. It coordinated bee demand-supply aspects.

Source: Partap, U. & Partap, T. 2001

Diversification within fruit growing is also being promoted; for example with kiwi fruit (see box 15).

Box 15: Kiwi fruit

The Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry in Solan has developed new varieties of kiwi fruit, (Hayward and Allison) for commercial production. The fruit requires T-bar support and one vine can give a yield of 80 to 100 kg of fruit. Kiwi fruit is rich in vitamin C and is excellent for diabetes patients; it also has a long shelf life. The middle hills of HP are ideally suited to growing this fruit. Horticulturists say the fruit is ideal for crop diversification and has a market among high-end consumers. It fetches Rs 60 per kg in the Delhi market. Kullu and Solan districts are ideally suited to kiwi cultivation where people have already started working on its promotion.

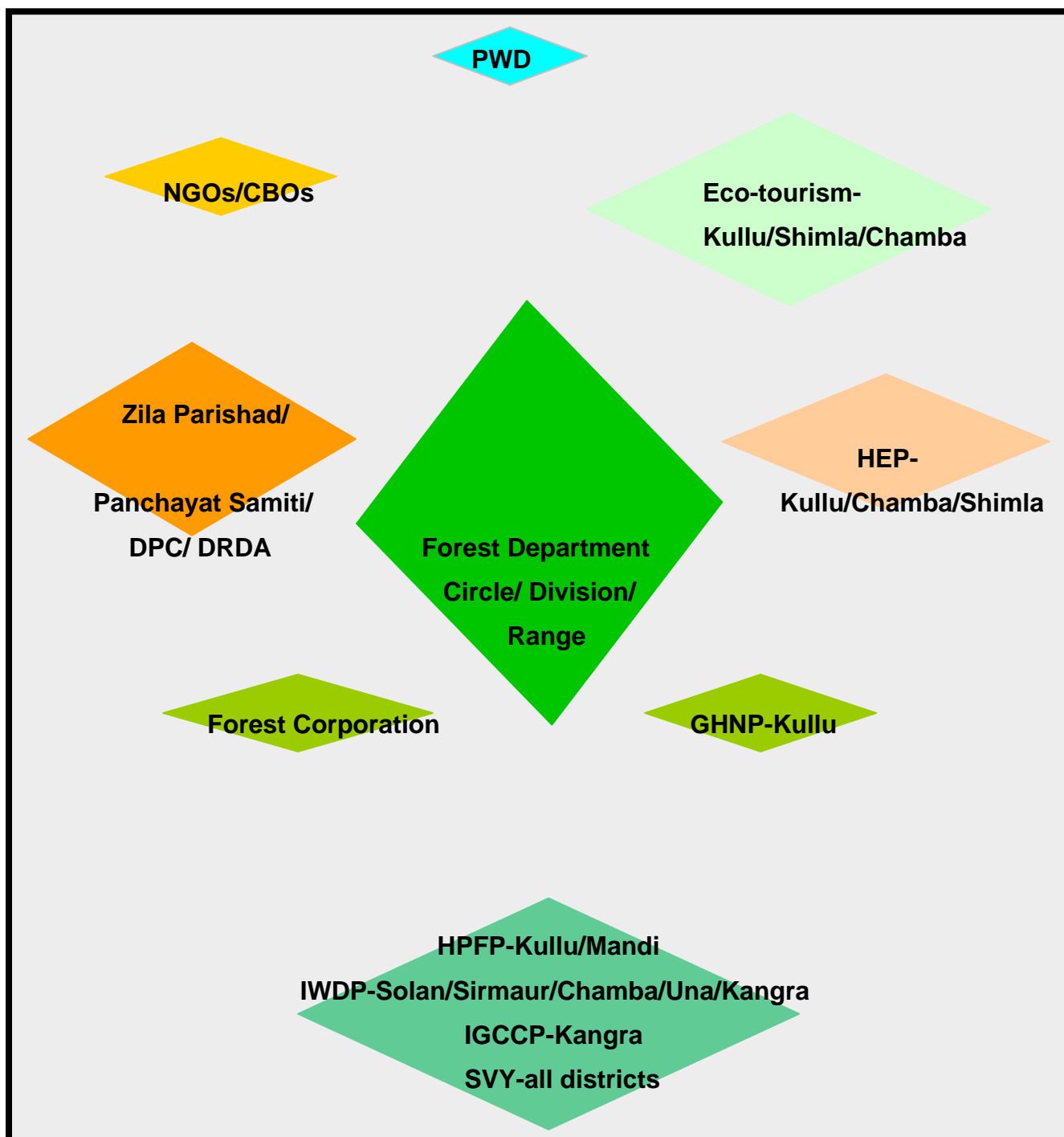
A high-value product which is well-suited to HP is the cultivation of flowers for sale in urban markets (see box 16).

Box 16: Floriculture

In Mandi, near Sundernagar, an experimental centre for floriculture is being run for the purpose of educating people towards cash crops other than apple. It is primarily the progeny of the Deputy Commissioner, Mandi, Mr. Jagdish Chander, who takes a keen interest in not only its functioning, but also imparts invaluable knowledge to people on alternative options. Under the scheme, greenhouses are employed for flower production and the seedlings are imported from Holland to ensure good quality. Out of the four greenhouses, two are employed for carnation production, and the other two for orchids. The production from the first two is 60,000 flowers a day at peak times. Normally a carnation fetches Rs. 3-5 per stem in the markets, while orchids can range between Rs. 100-250 per stem. Such an initiative is worthy of its cause of espousing alternative options available to people. There are already two private greenhouses established under a cooperative. As the markets are well-established, people involved in floriculture are flourishing economically.

4.1.4 District level policy and institutional mapping

Figure 3: District level institutional map



The district level institutional map shown above is the outcome of the district level workshops held during the course of this study (note that some of the institutions are described in more detail in section 4.1.5).

The Forest Department has been placed in the centre signifying its effect on forest based livelihoods. Close to it are the Forest Corporation, the projects (IWDP, IGCCP and HPFP), the SVY and GHNP.

Since it was established, the Forest Corporation has been primarily a marketing institution for various forest produce, however with the passage of time the interdependence between it and FD has been replaced by more isolated initiatives. Each institution regards the other as an adversary and consequently, the lack of understanding is reflected in both working in a compartmentalised way.

The Great Himalayan National Park or GHNP area is more closely linked to the livelihood initiatives of the FD, both within Kullu district and more widely. Several reasons were cited for this – firstly, the focus on livelihoods was stressed by organising Women's Savings and Credit Groups (WSCGs) of poor women to initiate collective income generation activities; secondly, being a park area it is better protected and NTFP collection rights within the park have been closed; thirdly, the GHNP in collaboration with a local NGO, SAHARA, is pioneering efforts to initiate ecotourism in the state; fourthly, the leadership has remained unchanged; and fifthly, its area marks some of the poorest and most forest dependent communities in HP.

In the GHNP area, the FD along with a local NGO had initiated the process of bringing poor and most forest dependent women together in the form of WSCGs. These groups have on average about 10 members and they save a minimum of Rs. 1 per day and then revolve their group fund among themselves in the form of loans. They then, with guidance from GHNP staff, initiate small income generating activities, such as medicinal plant enrichment in forests, vermicomposting, and eco-tourism. FD, PRI representatives and HEP personnel regard it as an important forest group promoting forest based livelihoods, especially herb collection and ecotourism. The role of NGOs/ CBOs concerning forest related livelihoods is not particularly visible or prominent except in Kullu district, from where an example is given in Box 17.

Box 17: Getting women to choose

This box presents a case study in reducing poverty through organising poor, rural women for sustaining and diversifying their livelihood options in the eco-development zone of the GHNP. In this area there is one panchayat where there is not even one literate woman; and dependence on forest resources is high – as is the burden of domestic tasks.

Recognising that reducing poverty has to begin with the poorest and that often these poorest are women, a local Community Based Organisation, SAHARA, planned an intervention aimed at enhancing income of poor women along with their social and political empowerment through an instrument called "Women's Saving and Credit Groups". The SAHARA intervention targeted firstly, the Scheduled Castes, and among them women and then other poor women. The GHNP authorities joined hands with SAHARA and the two have been working together in the area since late 1999.

House to house surveys were carried out to assess the economic status of households in each village, supplemented by records from secondary sources including government. A fair idea of the poorest in the village was formed and their women organised into Savings and Credit groups. This has been done hamlet-wise or groups of hamlets taken together depending on the population/ distance. Since caste considerations are socially important, same caste women's groups were organised as far as possible. In some cases, mixed caste groups had to be reformed when women of one caste were either not showing interest or had reservations about the other caste. In other cases mixed caste groups have worked for over two years (an indicator of change!).

Sustaining the Savings and Credit groups

The formation of Women's Savings and Credit groups was started in late 1999. Initially the minimum saving rate was Rs 1 per day; this has since increased.

The existence of an organised group of women in the Panchayat ward seems to relate better with the panchayat structure and dynamics. A persistent complaint in the area has been that several government programmes meant for the poor do not reach them. An organised women's group(s) that consists of primarily the poorest households in the panchayat ward becomes difficult to ignore in surveys, census operations etc. and gradually acquires political significance. In the present case, 16 women members of S&C groups contested the Panchayat elections in November 2000 and seven of them were elected either as members of the Panchayat (representing a panchayat ward) or as Panchayat President. It is also significant that this is the first time that sustainable village/ hamlet level organisations have emerged in the hills of Kullu.

The introduction and success of an income generating activity appears to be crucial ingroup stabilisation. The production loans taken in most groups are for starting vermi-composting pits. One pit takes Rs1200 to Rs1300 investment including the cost of earthworms. The Park authorities and the forest department have a ready market for the vermi-compost which is bought through the CBO, SAHARA. Some fraction of the sale proceeds goes to SAHARA (after agreement with the groups). Some other income generation activities that have shown promise include apricot seed sale and oil extraction and hemp based handicraft products. A longer term (2-3 year) income generation programme involves the planting of high value medicinal herbs on forest land allocated to one group. Group members plant and protect this Medicinal Plants Production Area (MPPA) and in agreement with the Park authorities and the Panchayat members have exclusive rights to harvest the medicinal herbs from it. Presently, over 40 hectares of forest land involving an equal number of groups has been planted up at the rate of 22,500 plants per hectare.

In the eco-zone of the GHNP, the acceptance of the CBO, SAHARA amongst the villagers can be attributed to the fact that all their staff (group organisers and the director) are locally based. Most of the group organisers are women. Above all, the CBO has genuinely worked with poor households including scheduled castes. The composition and acquired credibility of SAHARA continue to increase the area and household coverage under the present initiative. It is clear that without the local CBO, such a programme would be nearly impossible to initiate and sustain. However, the active support of the Park authorities have helped synergise the efforts at reducing poverty.

Building capacity at the local level remains a challenge. Over ten formal training sessions have been held, but these have had to find ways round the fact that local dialects have no script, most women are illiterate, even Hindi is not properly understood – and most training materials are in English. Further training sessions have been held in skill development, and monthly meetings including a training/ problem solving session held internally by SAHARA. Either the Park authorities or other donors have met the training costs.

Marketing support to sustain income generation activities remains an area of concern. So far for marketing apricot oil and hemp based handicrafts outside knowledgeable persons have been engaged though for small periods. Vermicompost has sold locally. But marketing of products outside the area involves much value addition before the products become competitive and problems in either arranging sufficient funds or marketing assurance or both, persist.

The role of GHNP authorities in sustaining local livelihoods

Until this initiative, daily waged work was provided somewhat selectively and often the poor found it difficult to obtain work for any meaningful lengths of time. However with the introduction of this initiative, it was agreed as a policy that in the eco-zone area the first preference in daily waged work would be given to members of the WS&C groups. This has provided substantial amounts of work, and some groups have agreed to save one third of their daily wage and are doing so thereby greatly increasing their collective and individual savings.

The success of vermi-composting as an income generation activity can be largely attributed to the assurance given by the Park authorities to purchase the compost produced by the groups. The local Forest Department too is a major buyer of vermi-compost from the SAHARA groups. Vermicompost worth over Rs 1,40,000 has been sold so far. The forest department uses vast quantities of manure in its nurseries every year. A policy decision to purchase vermi-compost produced by women's groups in the area could give a big boost to this important livelihood opportunity in the years to come.

What can be learned from this initiative?

The present case study shows that efforts to reduce poverty need to be properly targeted for them to be effective. In the eco-zone of the GHNP, women are amongst the poorest of the poor, as in other mountainous regions. Once these women are properly identified and organised into Saving & Credit groups, it is only a matter of time (six months) before sufficient money becomes available to finance most of their household and production requirements. Since this is their own money, it is very carefully spent. Thus dependence on outside capital or continued government funding is obviated or greatly diminished. In the present case, much of the collective savings are lying unused for want of suitable income generation activities or marketing problems. Suitable, usually traditional or locally resourced, income generation activities wherein the products are easily marketed are essential to increase income and livelihood opportunities. Government daily waged work is very important. Suitable policy changes can direct much of this work to the poorest and not only provide more income but also a chance to save much more as has been seen in some of the groups in this study, and thereby reduce dependence on daily waged work.

Women's Saving & Credit groups formed at the Panchayat ward level make their presence felt even in remote areas with largely illiterate populations. This is seen in the election of group members to positions in the Panchayat during the last election in the area. Groups also greatly facilitate collective articulation of women's interests and concerns at the village and panchayat level. The establishment of about 40 MPPAs exclusively by and for women's groups with the agreement of the concerned panchayats is a case in point.

It has been noticed that there is a perceptible change in attitude among the men of households where women have brought in money either through daily wages or from income generating activities. Women members reported willingness on the part of her husband or other family members to share household work and facilitate their attending meetings. This change is also reflected in members' willingness to attend longer duration exposure visits and take up more activities that bring in income and improve livelihood opportunities.

Sustainability

The continued existence and role of the local CBO as well as of the groups would require institutional and financial support especially in areas of capacity building and marketing. This combination has so far been able to improve livelihoods of the poor especially women in the Eco-zone of the GHNP. It may be too early to measure overall impact on poverty reduction. But the signals are clear though much needs to be done. Importantly, groups of poor women have caused gender biases and political outlook in the area to change. Perhaps, they can now begin to choose.

Source: V. Tandon.

Among PRIs, the Zila Parishad along with District Planning Committee (DPC) is the tier directly linked at the district level institutional mapping. Local HEP projects like Larji in GHNP area, Parvati in Kullu, Chamera in Chamba and Nathpa Jhakri in Rampur also are there at district level providing direct labour and contract jobs for the locals. Similarly, there are local PWD and other departments which provide employment to the local community taking them away from total dependence on forests.

The district level workshops and policy and institutional mapping exercises reveal that both policy formulation and the direction of policy implementation is done at state level, and the district level just implements the directions from above. The compartmentalisation reflected at top level in policy making gets translated "as it is" to the district level without any contextual modifications at the local level.

There appears to be no scope for modifications and local flexibility. Similarly institutional ways of working are translated to the local level without much contextual adaptation and influence. In general, it is difficult to establish district level policy influences on forest based

livelihoods, apart from employment generated through regular forestry works.

Whatever initiatives exist are also reflected at local levels. Donor aided projects have a mandate for livelihoods promotion, so they are doing that; but here again it appears to be just an activity with no one seriously concerned with the sustainability of the income generating groups and their long-term viability.

4.1.5 State level policy and institutional mapping

We begin this section by describing in some detail the key state level institutions and their roles in the formulation and implementation of policies. We then look at the linkages between the state level institutions.

The *HP Forest Department (HPFD)*, established in 1864, has a traditional role as forest protector and manager and latterly, as an agent in the spread and supervision of participatory forest management. It is clearly the main institution involved in the development of forest sector policies. The hierarchical administrative structure of HPFD restricts procedural and policy decision making to only the most senior officials. However, the implementation of new strategies takes place at the lowest level of the hierarchy and it is here that policies could, potentially, be adjusted to the realities of the local situation (although the lack of adaptability and flexibility of policies to the local context tends to leave policy and community needs in separate compartments).

In recent years, progress has been made in HPFD's capacity to implement participatory forestry. Thanks to the first phase of the DFID-supported Himachal Pradesh Forestry Project, there is now a group of forestry officials who are trained in participatory management, and a strengthened system of forestry training for some grades of staff has been introduced (HPFD, 2000). While the attitude of many junior staff towards JFM may now be positive (although there was much resentment towards those who were trained abroad), there is still a need to transfer information regarding new policies and procedures systematically (Gupta, 1999).

The HPFD has tended to be dominated by technicians and lacks multi-disciplinarity, pointing to a need for an institutional reorientation and restructuring of the department, to gain more trust and acceptability amongst rural communities, especially the poor (Sood, 1996). In addition, communication within the HPFD could be improved - particularly in terms of creating opportunities for lower level staff to contribute to policy development. There have already been improved consultations within the HPFD during the Forest Sector Review process.

The *HP State Forest Corporation (HPSFC)* has direct control over trade of timber, fuelwood, charcoal, resin and finished goods from both government and private forests. Following nationalisation of timber extraction work (in 1967), timber belonging to private owners is extracted and sold by the HPSFC. Even though downsizing might be more compatible with commercial objectives, HPSFC continues to provide employment to a large number of staff, giving rise to its image (even within the HPFD) as a white elephant. But given the green felling ban - which includes a ban on silvicultural thinnings - the role of the HPSFC is restricted to extraction and marketing of dead or damaged trees, and resin tapping. The HPSFC manages two rosin and turpentine factories and a pine needle board unit in Baijnath, which also works on treatment and seasoning of chir pine timber for use as a structural timber. Recently the HPSFC has been involved in raising bamboo plantations with community involvement under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for NTFPs.

Box 18: Macro influences on resin production

HPSFC's two resin processing factories at Nahan and Bilaspur have the capacity to process 1.12 lakh quintal¹⁸ of resin annually. The state government pine forests produce about 73,000 quintal of resin and until three years ago, the private forests produced about 40,000 quintal, the sum of which was sufficient to supply the two units. However, import restrictions were lifted following the WTO agreement, and large-scale imports under open general licence (OGL) brought the market price down from Rs 2,700 to Rs 1,900 per quintal. The state Forest Corporation also reduced the procurement price accordingly, from Rs 2,500 per quintal to about Rs 1,600 per quintal. The farmers found the price quite uneconomical and consequently, the number of resin-tapping blazes has come down from 16 to 6 lakh, and output from private forests has also declined to just 21,000 quintal. This has created a shortfall of about 15,000 quintal. The HP state government is now trying to procure resin from the neighbouring state of Uttaranchal to make up for the sharp decline in output from private forests.

Uttaranchal was producing about 75,000 quintal of resin annually and would help Himachal if surplus resin were available. The only problem is that, at present, the state policy is to not export raw resin. The Uttaranchal state Forest Minister has given an assurance that Uttaranchal would amend its policy and allow export, should a deal be finalised. Himachal Pradesh asked for 15,000 quintal immediately, to make the Nahan processing factory operational (as it had closed due to shortage of raw material). The HP Forest Corporation offered to procure resin at Rs 1,725 per quintal, the rate being paid to farmers in the state. It would lift the entire quantity in four instalments should Uttaranchal agree to export its produce. The corporation has also taken steps to increase resin production from private forests in HP. The procurement price for this season has been increased from Rs 1,629 to Rs 1,725 per quintal.

The latest position seems to be that HPSFC is currently offering Rs 1950 per quintal to private people. Earlier in 2002 they were buying for Rs 2100. As a response to fall in prices, GoHP in September, 2002 amended the HP Resin Act to allow private tree owners to sell resin outside the state, though reportedly the prices outside are similar to what is being offered by HPSFC. However, the HPSFC plans to continue its resin tapping and collection operations at the same levels as before.

Because the number of blazes on private trees have come down substantially, the most affected have been the resin tappers. For the poor among the tappers this was a major source of income and many are now having to look for alternatives or make do without what they were earlier earning as tappers. However, tappers engaged by the HPSFC continue to remain at more or less the same level.

The 2003 budget has further reduced import duty on resin and this will further depress resin prices in HP and elsewhere. The up side is that increased demand for quality rosin for paints etc. that is produced by HPSFC would help improve the economics of the trade. This could also be an incentive for private tappers to improve the quality of resin collected and cleaned to become more competitive.

The *private sector* is not a major player in HP's forest sector, particularly due to the felling ban and HPSFC's monopoly over extraction and sales. There is a network of more than 3,000 small sawmills spread throughout the state; these handle TD rights timber and timber purchased under auction from HPSFC depots. A number of private ventures have had to close due to lack of raw material. However, farm forestry may be on the increase and could form an increasingly important source of HP's wood requirements in future. Furthermore, HP is noted for its apple production, although orchards are generally developed on non-forest land.

The HP government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Union Ministry of Power to harness the *hydel power* potential of the state. It is envisaged that the Union Ministry will help in harnessing 10,035 MW of hydel power by 2011-12 and will also work with the State to develop the hydro potential by 2020. Under the MOU, the Centre will

¹⁸ 10 quintals = 1 tonne

provide financial support through the Accelerated Power Development Programme (APDP) undertaking augmentation, upgradation and improvement of critical transmission lines in the State. The State government has involved the private sector in this process at a large scale through Himurja – the nodal agency for non-conventional energy sources. Because of these and other plans, the power sector – including private operators – has become a major stakeholder in sustainable forests/ watershed management. This also has important implications for sustainable rural livelihoods for the poor.

NGOs are generally considered to be somewhat less active and developed in HP than in some other parts of India. This may be because HP demonstrates reasonable levels of welfare, and it is far from being the poorest state. There is strong government presence even in remote areas; hence the imperative and opportunities for NGO intervention may be less than in other states.

In Himachal Pradesh, *cooperatives* have become a mass movement rather than a mere programme to accelerate economic growth coupled with social justice. Today, the cooperative movement has covered most of the villages through a network of 4,334 Cooperative Societies, reaching the entire rural population. The cooperative institutions have a membership of 1,187,000 (around one fifth of HP's population), investment of Rs. 114.62 crore as share capital, Rs. 3,214.98 crore as deposits and Rs. 3,389.89 crore as working capital.

HP has two Central Cooperative Banks and one Apex Cooperative Bank. These banks provide credit facilities to the farmers through Primary Cooperative Societies via 138 extension counter branches. These Cooperative Banks have advanced Rs. 17,401.64 lakh as short- and medium-term loans during the year 1999-2000. In addition, there are five urban banks and 376 primary thrift and credit societies which provide loans to their members. During the year 1999-2000, these societies advanced a sum of Rs. 105.93 crore as loans to their members. However, it appears that co-operative banks in HP have the lowest recovery rate of loans advanced, and nearly all these loans have been cornered by the rich and politically influential.

Cooperatives also provide marketing and forwarding facilities to agricultural and horticultural producers. During the year 1999-2000, produce worth Rs. 50.27 crore was marketed through cooperative marketing societies, which provided packaging material to producers.

Cooperative Societies also distribute agricultural inputs like fertilisers, seeds, implements, insecticides, and pesticides to farmers. During the last year agricultural inputs to the extent of Rs. 46.08 crore was disbursed to the farmers. Apart from this, consumer goods worth Rs. 155.55 crore were sold through 2,674 fair price shops to consumers. Other cooperative ventures include one implemented by the Apex Weaver Cooperative Society Ltd. in Kullu: the Special Training Education Programme (STEP) Project. The project's objective is to train at least 2,500 women weavers in six districts. In order to ensure empowerment of women and weaker sections through cooperatives, the audit fee for women's cooperatives has been waived, to encourage their involvement in socio-economic upliftment.

Forest Cooperatives are described in section 4.1.2 above, as part of the village level policy and institutional mapping.

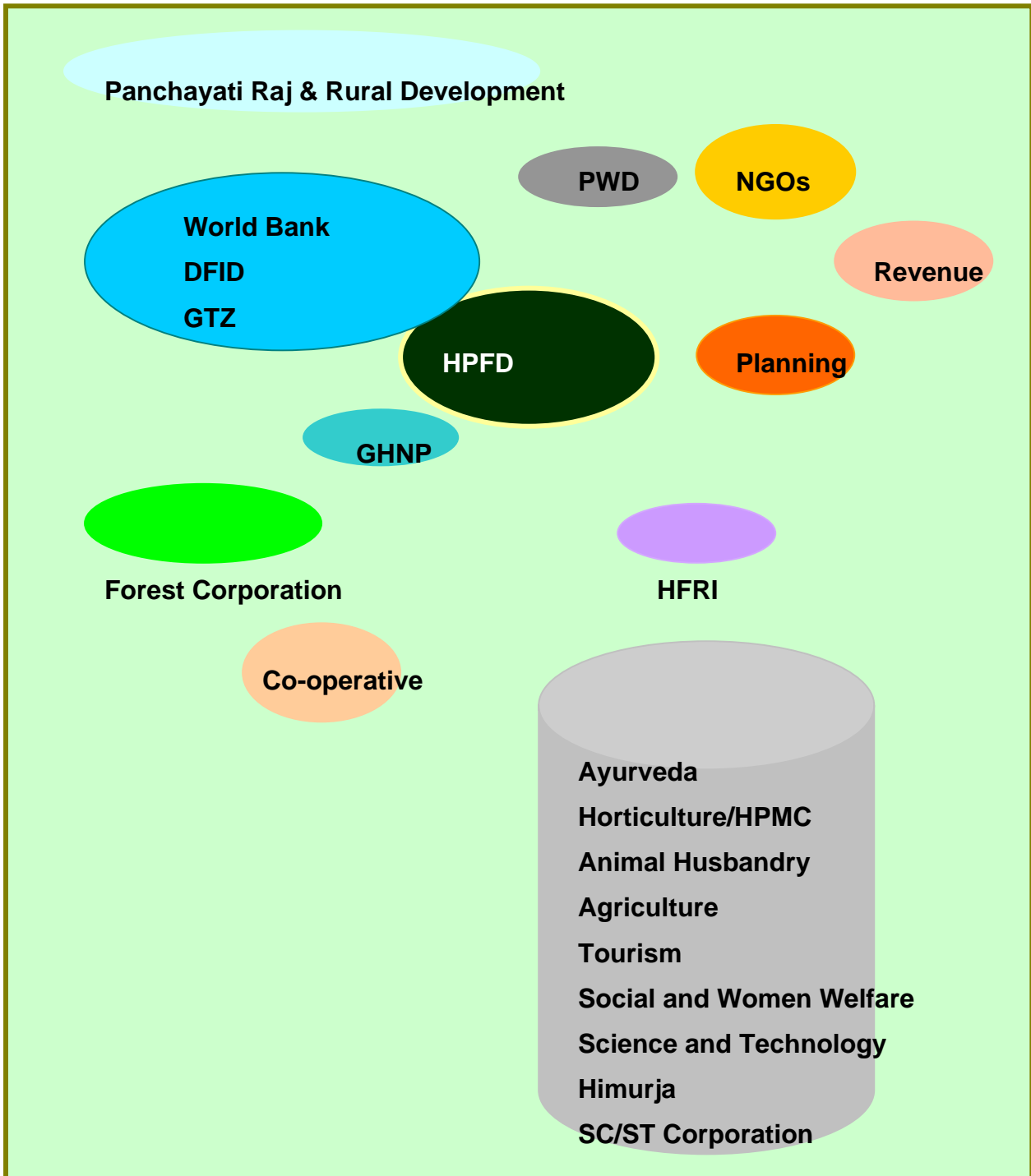


Figure 4: State level institutional map

The cylinder represents potential linkages; the rest of the diagram represents the actual situation.

Inter-sectoral policy links may be seen to be improving from a traditionally vertically arranged structure in which there was little exchange of information and debate between sectors. However, collaboration is somewhat constrained, partly by the jurisdictional uncertainty over some lands and forests – notably between the HPFD and the Revenue Department, but perhaps more importantly by the clear division of responsibilities.

The state institutional map above depicts various departments which are currently or potentially linked to forest-based livelihoods. Interaction between the Revenue Department and the Forest Department is neither close nor frequent. The PWD, on the other hand, is shown to be closer, as there are frequent interactions between it and the FD, though limited to road clearance cases under the FCA, 1980. With growing impetus on building infrastructure, especially roads, interaction will remain close. Roads are critical to the development of the economy. There is potential for interaction between the FD and the Departments of Ayurveda, Horticulture/ HPMC, Animal Husbandry, Agriculture, Tourism, Social and Women Welfare, Science and Technology, Himurja and SC/ST Corporation. There appears to be much scope for involving these departments actively, but currently there are few linkages due to the compartmentalised, sectoral approach and the lack of collaborative policies. An example of this lack of consultation is that the ecotourism policy was made by the FD without sufficiently engaging the Tourism Department (see box 19). The expansion of such initiatives is limited when it is solely the FD's responsibility to take it forward, plus there is the risk of duplication by other departments – especially the Tourism Department. There are likely to be other examples of poor cooperation between sectors.

Box 19: Ecotourism: a state wide but sector narrow policy

The HPFD formulated its own policy on ecotourism in May 2001, apparently without collaboration with the Tourism Department. With this policy now notified, the state is expecting a major shift in livelihood patterns especially for the poor communities in the remote interior and most settlements in the hill region, who have very limited employment opportunities. Ecotourism societies are being established; in Shimla district one has been set up in Kufri, Solan forest division is all set to launch ecotourism in the region, and a society in the name of Barog hills has been proposed and is likely to be formed soon. Thus all ecotourism is to be managed by local groups and not individuals; in contrast, the traditional approach of the Tourism Department has focused on dealing with individuals, the construction of hotels, etc.

Ecotourism societies are intended to bring maximum involvement of local communities in the programme, resulting in support to their needs and creation of a direct stake in the preservation of local culture, ecology and environment. It is proposed that local host families who have reasonable traditional accommodation in the village will provide facilities for paying guests. As the initiative is based upon the support of local communities, local committees will be formed and given training. The community's involvement will include provision of services to tourists like guides, porters, Forest Rest House attendants, cooks, park wardens and hosts for paying guests. However, not all initiatives connected to tourism are viewed positively by local communities:

Villagers oppose airport project

The proposal for an airport in the tourist area of Banikhet in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh has not materialised due to procedural wrangles. Over 1,000 residents of Pukhri and Kanda villages are opposed to the idea, as at least 150 families will be relocated and thousands of pine trees axed. The residents point out that during the past 10 years a number of surveys have been conducted, but nobody has bothered to find any alternate site for their habitation and suggest adequate compensation for them. However, the Director of Civil Aviation said that the people would be given 'good' compensation and efforts would be made to get them jobs. The government claims that the airport will go a long way in promoting tourism in Chamba.

Women are clearly an important group dependent on forests and with whom forest based livelihoods can be promoted. Usually women's participation in decisions affecting their livelihoods is through mahila mandals set up by the Department of Rural Development, but these institutions are more or less defunct or lacking direction; therefore one needs to look towards other existing women's institutions at the village level. The Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) scheme of RD has been closed and has been replaced by a comprehensive rural development programme called Swarnjayanti Gram

Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY). This programme calls for formation of SHGs. However these SHGs are comprised of individuals who are not necessarily interested in taking up livelihoods activities without subsidies. The SHGs created by the Social and Women Welfare Department could be another option for involving women in forestry related activities. However, as of now there exists negligible linkage between the Department of Social and Women Welfare and FD, though it did participate through fairly junior level officers in various multi-stakeholder workshops organised by the FD during the FSR.

The FD and the Ayurveda Department have over the last 2 to 3 years worked closely through a Centrally Sponsored Scheme called "Vana Vanaspati Scheme" which aims to increase the production of medicinal raw drugs with local community involvement (see section 4.2.4). In Kullu (GHNP) this scheme is being implemented through Women's Savings and Credit Groups - formed by a local NGO - with many current and potential livelihood benefits.

In relation to Panchayati Raj Department's linkages with FD, here credit needs to be given to FD, that it developed and notified its PFM Rules that directly link ward wise forest societies with the PRIs by placing the elected panchayat member of that ward in the Executive Committee of the VFDS.

The Planning Department is closely linked to not only FD but others too. This signifies the important role that the Planning Department plays when planning programmes and activities of all government departments along with the budget outlays. However, once the budget is approved, then its role in coordination and convergence of various departments is dormant, even though that is probably the stage where a coordinating agency is required most.

The Co-operative Department and NGOs have also been placed on the map; it is evident that they are away from the centre of activity. The involvement and collaboration with NGOs/ CBOs has hitherto been inhibited by the fact that, in the way the government works (and the FD is no exception) there are no established institutional arrangements to formally collaborate with NGOs. They are viewed as individuals or a group of individuals who can do certain kinds of "errands" and financial arrangements with them are generally suspect and/or grudgingly accepted. Departmental co-operation with NGOs seems to be officer driven rather than institution driven. FD experience with co-operatives is restricted to the Kangra Societies and as government has withdrawn from these, in financial and other input terms, most societies have either become defunct or are just managing to survive in hope of seeing better days again. However some cooperatives in Kangra have worked out an independent working system and seem to be economically viable.

The relationship of the FD with the HFRI is not a substantive one; the latter is considered to be just another research institute, like several other universities, which experiment and propagate technologies in isolation.

The Himalayan Forest Research Institute (HFRI), Shimla is an institute of the ICFRE, Dehradun and mandated to promote and execute forestry related research in the Western Himalaya. It has grown out of the erstwhile Conifers Research Centre (CRC), also at Shimla, and has a long standing working arrangement with the HPFD. Standardisation of nursery and planting techniques of fir and spruce were developed by the CRC and are now universally adopted by the HPFD. However, with vast expansion in the range of forestry related research and the FD's neglect of silviculture generally, the relationship urgently needs strengthening with a big push towards addressing new problems and improved dissemination of research.

By arrangement and per force the HPFD and the HPSFC have to work hand in hand. With jobs interchangeable between the two at virtually all levels, there is close identification with

larger conservation objectives. Illicit felling for instance in felling lots worked by the HPSFC has climbed down dramatically since nationalisation took place.

The GHNP area in Kullu has seen some innovations in the field of both forest conservation, diversifying forest potential beyond “traditional” uses, ecotourism and women’s self-help groups. The interventions are quite satisfactory, however, this is only a result of efforts of a few individuals and cannot be attributed to FD initiative. It is placed separately on the map because being a part of the FD it has been able to establish good examples and a few models in the area, which directly address forest based livelihoods issues (HPFD has also established good examples elsewhere, including IGCP Palampur and IWDP, Solan).

Those closest to the FD in terms of policies and institutions affecting forest activities are the *donors*, primarily the World Bank, GTZ and DFID. The donor aided projects brought in many initiatives for change: all these projects emphasised community participation, the involvement of women and disadvantaged groups, promotion of small income generation activities, cost sharing, conservation of forest resources, linkages with PRIs, formation of multi-stakeholder fora, etc. These initiated an era where foresters were expected to come closer to people instead of being confined to technical forestry, to encourage village communities to develop their own development plans, to monitor the implementation of works, etc.

Needless to say, much remains to be implemented at the grassroots, but it is also important that these initiatives have indeed brought a lot of focus to these issues. Community participation, income generating activities for women, linkages with PRIs, linkages with different institutions/ departments etc. are some such areas. These donors have had a major effect in influencing the policies of the FD and sometimes the Government of HP – and especially DFID, primarily because of its strategy of mainstreaming the HPFP, capacity building, the HRD strategy, the FSR and instituting a range of studies that feed directly into the process of implementation. Many of these studies will be picked up under the new DFID-supported HP Forest Sector Reforms Project. Both GTZ and the World Bank are important too, but their focus on mainstreaming is quite limited therefore the effect is more visible within project areas and among project staff. They certainly have had great impact on livelihoods, primarily in terms of exploring more income generating activities (IGAs) and imparting training on them. This has led to people adopting new IGAs especially through involvement of women and the poor.

Another way of considering the outputs of the DFID support - though just one of many aspects – is that it generated some 160 consultancy reports¹⁹ (in addition to 140 reports generated by German support, giving an estimated total number of recommendations as 3,500). FD officers are now considering hiring more consultants to read these with a view to condensing them into concise, useful material but *only* if the resulting pool of information will be used and acted upon by the HPFD.

During the district and village workshops, some criticisms were offered regarding state level institutions concerned with forests: these are summarised in box 20.

¹⁹ Key consultancy reports are included in the annotated bibliography:

Box 20: State level forest institutions: some problem areas

- There is a lack of co-ordination and communication at different levels of forest administration in terms of policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, extension and project implementation. The outcome is slow progress of community forestry efforts.
- Traditional modes of working of HPFD and lack of proper interaction and communication between field functionaries, forest administrators and forest users results in mistrust and conflict and hampers people's participation in forestry programmes.
- The FD staff lacks tools and incentives to respond to varying local conditions, and relies heavily on standardised technical procedures, which limit the opportunities for local communities to participate in forest management.
- Local people are hired as wage labourers on recommendations from the political circles; their role in safeguarding, rationally managing or utilising the forest resources are ignored.
- The recognition that the success of community forestry programmes is intrinsically intertwined with people's participation in such programmes is gradually circumscribing the FD. But the impetus from policies, procedures, attitudes and objectives is not concomitant with such realisations.

Some other state level initiatives to improve access for rural communities, and to increase livelihood security, are given in boxes 21 and 22.

Box 21: Macro policy to provide link roads

The Union Minister for Rural Development announced in a public meeting that the pre-condition of a population of 250 for a village to be eligible for the construction of a link road would be relaxed for the hilly areas and clusters of villages would be taken into the account for sanctioning a road connection. He said it was paramount to connect villages by road to boost the rural economy. A sum of Rs 7,000 crore had been set aside under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojna for the construction of link roads during the current financial year. The scheme had been extended to cover pilgrimage tourism, which is expected to be a boon for the state commonly called 'Land of Gods'. Of the total 16,807 inhabited villages in HP, only 7,897 are connected with roads.

Box 22: Social security support for landless labour

The Ministry of Labour, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance, has chosen Paragpur in Kangra district for implementing of an insurance scheme that will cover the social security needs of agricultural workers in a phased manner. The scheme will be implemented by the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). Named as Krishi Shramik Samajik Suraksha Yojna 2001, the scheme covers all persons who are involved in agricultural activities as labourers on hire in farming, dairy farming, production, cultivation, growing and harvesting of any horticulture commodity and in forestry, raising of livestock, beekeeping and poultry farming.

Under the scheme, a landless agricultural worker will contribute Rs365 per year while the Government of India will put in double the amount, every year. Ten years is the minimum contribution period to be eligible for pension, which ranges from Rs100 to Rs1,900. The scheme envisages providing a lump sum payment of Rs20,000 in case of natural death of a labourer before the completion of the 10 year period and Rs50,000 in case of death due to an accident. It guarantees return of the contribution amount plus interest on the pension to the family. On disability due to an accident before the age of 60, a worker under the scheme gets a lump sum payment of Rs50,000 in case of permanent total disability and Rs25,000 in case of permanent partial disability. In case of death, it entails to provide a lump sum payment of Rs13,000 to Rs2,50,000 to the family, depending upon the age of entry to the scheme.

The scheme will initially be launched in 50 select blocks in 15 states during the first phase and will cover 20,000 agricultural workers per block or district - whatever has been chosen. Gram panchayats of the selected blocks have been asked by the district authorities to identify agricultural workers and to organise them into self-help groups. They are also to collect the premium and submit the details to the project society, which in this case is the Kangra Zila Saksharta Samiti under the chairmanship of the District Commissioner. In the first phase, 5,000 workers are to be enrolled and in case results are positive, the scheme will be extended to the entire district.

4.2 Key forests-policy-livelihood stories

This section presents a set of particular 'policy stories' around which village, district and state level policy protagonists have interacted. They describe the debate around some key issues in Himachal Pradesh and are by no means an exhaustive list, but represent some of the most common areas of concern for forest-based livelihoods and the policies that support them.

This section adopts a *narrative policy analysis* approach²⁰. This approach seeks to take the following basic steps:

- Explain the context: a policy issue in which there is high uncertainty – many unknowns, high intricacy and little agreement – forestry is a classic case
- Identify the positions, scenarios or arguments that dominate the issue in question
- Identify the arguments that run counter to the dominant position
- Compare the two sets of positions ('narratives') and tell the overall story ('metanarrative') of how two widely different positions can both be the case at the same time
- Explain how understanding of this story helps re-cast the problem and makes it more amenable to specific ways forward

Five policy 'stories' related to forest-linked livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh are described in this section following these steps:

- Timber Distribution rights
- Panchayati Raj institutions
- Community forestry schemes
- Medicinal plants trade
- Nomads

4.2.1 Timber Distribution (TD) rights

The context of TD rights

A policy feature that is unique to HP, and that is of key importance to rural livelihoods, is the form of Timber Distribution (TD) rights provided to local people. These rights go beyond similar provisions in other states. TD rights became codified in the original forest settlements carried out between 1870 and 1920²¹, which recognised that all communities were dependent on agriculture and forests, and thus that residents should have certain rights in law to timber and other products²².

TD rights were appended to land ownership, whilst other rights like grazing, NTFP collection and access to water resources were more general. It has been estimated that perhaps half of the population of (what later became) HP then was dependent on forests for major parts of their livelihoods, with grain-based agriculture yet to become widespread. Prior to this colonial rule policy, forests in the region were governed under various small principalities with different rules.

²⁰ Roe (1994) draws together an academic text detailing this approach, whilst Shore and Wright (1997) describe its roots in anthropology with a range of examples. Some analysts in the forest sector have adopted related approaches - see Filer (1998) in Papua New Guinea, Fairhead and Leach (1996) in West Africa, and Mayers *et al* (2001) in Malawi.

²¹ Further details of the early forest settlements and associated notifications are given in Gulati (2000).

²² A discussion of the settlements and exercise of rights in parts of HP is given in Hobley, 1996.

The forest settlements were an extension of the British introduction of 'scientific forestry'. Scientific forestry required working plans, and these in turn needed defined areas. Forests were classified as reserved forests or protected forests and carefully mapped on topographic sheets (4 inches to the mile and 16 inches to the mile). Other areas were also classified: 'undemarcated protected forests' and 'non-reserved land' – the latter to be left aside for expansion of the economy and the needs of the population – but nonetheless part of the 'forest estate' (about half of it). The forest in the 'undemarcated protected forest' areas has mostly been removed over the years (responsibility for the undemarcated protected forests was given to HPFD in the 1970s when government wanted to find a way to police illegal timber), but the (demarcated) protected forests and reserved forests have remained more or less intact.

To this day, trees are granted to all those with recorded rights according to the Settlement (i.e. those who controlled the land at the time of settlement). The provision of TD rights has been extended to include those who have been granted land under various government schemes. Once every two to five years a family is permitted to fell a tree for subsistence use. Sons inherit the rights as head of the household, but even today, widows have no rights. TD rights are effectively spread through division of landholdings among family members before the death of the main rightholder. In cases where land is owned by women, they also become eligible for TD rights.

People find the TD grant procedure extremely cumbersome and time consuming. TD application is verified by Panchayat Pradhan, Patwari (revenue official), Forest Guard and Range Officer before being sanctioned by Divisional Forest Officer. This process is tedious and at times takes up to a year. Further, the increase in the period of TD grant, choice of wood and the marking of the tree to be felled under TD is time consuming and immediate needs for TD are not respected.

The timber is intended to be used for *bona fide* use in house construction and/ or repair, kinship rituals, temples ("*Gods have rights too*" - Forestry officer) and the like. In times of disaster, trees may be felled for cremation of the dead. At the time of settlement, the fee was set to be paid by TD right-holders for trees for domestic use. This was set at one-third of the market rate at the time – by the 1920s the average across districts was about Rs. 5 per tree. It has not been revised since then, though the market rate of a normal second class deodar tree is presently in excess of Rs. 20,000.

When the Forest Settlements were undertaken, the forests were plentiful, therefore rights were admitted liberally. However, even at that time it was clearly laid down²³ that:

".....the rights may be exercised only for bonafide, domestic and agriculture purposes of the right".

".....trees for building purposes are not given when the right holder applying for them has already got a suitable building in a reasonably convenient locality and of size sufficient for requirements of a bonafide native agriculturist holding the land to which the right appertains".

The geographical spread of TD rights is more extensive in HP than in any other state. Around 95 per cent of the (largely rural) population has TD rights and awareness of those rights is high. TD rights are linked to specific forests and do not apply to all forests: for example they are not granted in some reserved forests.

The changing impacts of the TD rights system

²³ Kullu Settlement Report of 1886 para 65 & 67

TD has long been blamed for forest loss, as extraction has reached unsustainable levels. In the past most of the TD requirements were met with from Class III forests, but now these forests have been depleted and no more trees are silviculturally available for future markings. The pressure now has tilted towards the Class I forests, which have some of the finest specimens of deodar and kail species. Even in the early 1970s, the Forest Officer preparing the Working Plan for Kullu district noted that the rights provide for limiting the extent of cutting:

"It is however, laid down in the Settlement that exercise of rights is limited to the extent, beyond which a forest is unable to bear the same. Actually this is not being done and the capacity of the forest is taxed beyond limits. A villager wants a tree of his choice, convenience and near to his place and the marking officer just to oblige, yields and ignores his profession, silviculture has thus become the culture of mutual interest. Due to this malpractice, the forests near the villages and towns have been opened up very much and hardly any tree can be taken normally".

However in due course the blame shifted from villagers' unsustainable extraction to that of traders:

"Until the 1960s the relatively low population of HP was still engaged in a small agrarian, only partly commercialised, economy. The market rate for timber was not too high and most was used for local construction of houses. But as time went by, and the TD timber price stayed the same, huge markets developed – with wealthy traders buying up timber from right-holders and smuggling it down to Delhi and elsewhere" (Forestry officer).

The smuggling of TD timber on a large scale is a relatively recent phenomenon. But the concessional rates charged of right-holder extractions today reflect a huge subsidy - and stimulus - to such smuggling. It is estimated that TD right-holders effectively receive a subsidy of Rs. 640 million per year due to the low rates that they are charged (Blunt *et al*, 1999).

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the apple industry also developed in the central temperate zone of HP:

"Those who had a head start in this industry generated cash surpluses and soon wanted to construct big houses. Roads, markets and urban areas opened up and by the 1970s the demand for TD timber had rocketed. With this rocket came the racket – and soon a timber mafia had developed to run it. The mafia comprised resourceful people who were already rich and who were well-connected to the political machine. Questioning of the system was repeatedly squashed – TD rights had become a highly touchy political subject" (Forestry officer).

A second racket, possibly linked, was the granting of highly concessional rates to sawmillers for felling fir and spruce to make packing cases for apples. *"Stories abound of felling sprees as the sawmillers bribed guards and felled much more than their already-generous permits allowed. Some sawmillers even sold off-cuts to local people when they were supposed to give them away" (Forestry officer).* It is likely that if the state had cut and sold the timber itself it could have generated much more of a return. But, some sawmillers became very wealthy and with this wealth came political power. *"When one DFO piped up and said they should pay income tax he found himself on the transfer list the following day!" (Forestry officer).*

Thirdly, villagers also try to find ways of getting around a system that has become tedious and cumbersome. In most villages the villagers have formed syndicates, which illegally fell trees required. In case of complaints the trees are hidden or buried underground and

retrieved at a more convenient time. Allegedly the forest staff are bribed to overlook these practices.

Counter-arguments to the dominant policy position on TD rights

The continued existence of TD rights in their present form is the subject of much debate in HP. The GoHP and other observers have raised concerns about sustainability, the highly subsidised cost of TD timber and the increasing and illegal commercialisation of rights that were intended to meet domestic needs. Some of the key issues are described below.

1. The current TD system is inequitable

The TD system was inequitable to begin with, and is made more so by abuse. TD rights were established on the basis of land area, so that land ownership meant a generous entitlement to TD timber and wealthier TD right-holders were able to establish a level of timber rights that enabled them to construct one or more large houses. There is no lack of cases where rich and influential people have constructed palatial houses and also more than one house on TD grants.

One of the arguments put forward for maintaining the current system is that any change will impact negatively upon the poor. Others claim that this is not a poverty issue, but that TD rights are an extra, a bonus. *“To claim that the poor will suffer without the current TD rights, as those who are benefiting from them frequently do, is absurd. TD is currently wholly captured by the rich”* (Forestry officer). Poor people generally live in smaller homes requiring less timber. Often they do not have the capability to push a TD claim through even if they are eligible, and if they do succeed then they have difficulty in converting trees into planks and the like – not being able to afford the milling and carpentry.

“The expansion of local economies based on horticulture and orchards has increased the TD rights problem in some localities, since it is the people with new cash who lobby for TD rights and encroach on reserves” (Policy analyst, Delhi). Furthermore, the rights do not grant ‘one tree’ but ‘timber for one house’, and with increased incomes some of the houses being built are huge – so the extraction of timber per family has increased. Misuse of villagers’ TD rights by powerful interest groups has also occurred in the increased amount of construction due to the recent tourism boom: TD timber is used (illegally) for commercial purposes like shops, hotels etc.

“So TD rights may be seen as an example of the skewed distribution of subsidies, which benefit the powerful but which, if lifted, would not affect the poor - because the poor are not necessarily benefiting from them anyway” (Government officer, HP).

Box 23: TD benefits the affluent: feedback from field research

Field research showed that TD is primarily an issue of affluence. During a problem analysis exercise conducted with the people of Dhadi Rawat in Shimla district, the community identified the issue of TD availability. Though it is an affluent village and people have used many trees to construct one house, and even though they have influence, availability of TD has gone down. The community analysis showed that there are three major reasons – deforestation, sleeper slides and virtually no regeneration. It is only now that both the community and the government are realising that immense timber distribution, deforestation and little to minimal regeneration resulted in great shortage of timber trees and hence of TD timber itself. Direct outcomes of this are that people now travel long distances to get TD, have to make more effort related to greater procedural delays and there is less TD. They felt that, had they been warned before and guided properly, they would themselves have not taken TD or wasted so many trees on constructions. They said they did not know of any such policies, were not aware of planting cycles and now they were paying heavily in terms of shortage of timber trees.

Seventy per cent of the respondents had been able to access the TD for making houses; but it was significant that the poorest and the landless, who have houses in poor condition and are most in the need, do not get TD - a big flaw of TD policy. Influences of forest policies could be seen in access to increased fuelwood, fodder and employment in plantation work. The suggestions were to make policies such that everyone should get TD, rather than just the rich. However, the so-called rich people, when asked to comment, said "Although we get TD, it has not contributed to improve our status".

The issue of TD rights is central to the relationship between forests and village communities. Although the government has evolved an elaborate method of identifying TD rights of villagers and the timber distribution, tenets, choice of wood sanctioned etc., its ethos remains ambiguous in a sense that it has led to an alternative system of distribution within the village. The system is institutionalised within the village and its functioning varies from village to village. The need for wood is satiated illegally with the connivance of the community and the field officials. This system coupled with the forest mafia is a serious hindrance towards the understanding by community about the importance of forests in the generation of livelihoods and biodiversity.

2. The current TD system promotes shady business

Whilst many of the right-holders might exercise their rights for legitimate subsistence requirements, there are clearly opportunities for significant financial gain to be made from the sale of TD timber. For those who choose to take advantage of the vast differential between rates payable to the HPFD and market rates, illegal sale of all or part of an individual's TD timber allocation can become a source of significant cash income:

"Some of the trees that are still being allocated for the nominal sum of Rs. 5 are worth as much as Rs. 50,000. This is a recipe for corruption. Particularly popular are the big cedar trees: on the black market this timber would fetch between Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 21,000 per cubic metre, and a big cedar tree could contain three cubic metres or more" (Policy analyst, Delhi)

Naturally this causes an excess demand situation, with consequent impacts on forest resources. It is thought that approximately 150,000m³ of timber, with a market value of some Rs 750 million, are extracted annually. This is significantly more than would be extracted were TD rates closer to market rates. The trade in TD timber also has links to the issue of inequity - poorer rightholders are often easily persuaded to part with their TD timber at the right price (so the poorer or more desperate the household, the lower price they are prepared to accept). This timber can then be sold on at a substantial profit. The reasons given for TD grants are often frivolous and ultimately at least part of the wood granted finds its way into the markets.

One suggested solution to this problem is a classic bureaucrats' technical fix, but one which will not necessarily be immune from abuse itself:

'This practice [of HPFD staff succumbing to pressures from vested interests] can be checked effectively to a large extent if an identity card is issued to right holders, showing therein his status as a right holder and the quantity and year of TD grant to him.'

3. *The current TD system undermines other forestry programmes*

Since a high proportion of the produce allowed to TD right-holders is being captured by wealthier interests in society, those who are poorer and whose genuine demands for TD timber is not being fulfilled, may distrust the HPFD and may not be attracted to other HPFD-led programmes such as Joint Forest Management (see below). In addition, the profit-sharing arrangements of JFM provide little or no incentive when most trees become the subject of a TD claim on maturity. Thus lack of equity in long-standing rights may backfire on new initiatives.

Although settlements succeeded in codifying user rights and thus protecting users from outside influences, the formalisation of rights on an individual basis has slowly broken down any existing collective control of forests (Hobley quoted in Sood, 1996). Individual rights granted by the forest settlements de-linked the right-holders from management of the resource through de-legitimising their traditional resource management institutions. Enjoyment of individual rights is not tied to any responsibility for sustainable management of the resource²⁴. New settlers do not have any legal rights as there has been no significant revision of the original forest settlements.

Although there are many cases of collective actions having taken place at various times, these are exceptions which prove the rule. Tenure has been formalised and diluted and rights progressively restricted through the logic of state territorial command and control. In general, local peoples' separation from the former customary systems of management and regulation of forests has resulted in a decline in collective management. Increasing socio-economic differentiation within villages has also increased differences in the nature of livelihood dependence of different socio-economic groups on forest lands. Non-right holding households are often among the poorest with the greatest dependence on the commons.

Furthermore, together with the ban on felling of green timber in Himachal Pradesh due to the Forest Conservation Amendment Act 1988 (see section 2.1.16), and the policy which requires that all planted trees of nationalised species like deodar, kail and chir to be sold to the state when harvested, the current TD rights system is a major disincentive to tree growing. Although poplar (which is increasingly grown in states such as Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh as a commercial farm crop) is excepted, the potential of farm forestry in Himachal Pradesh is significantly constrained by this policy regime.

The TD system as a recurring political hot potato

Despite the concerns about equity described above, the system of TD rights is widely perceived in HP to have become a social security system for rural areas. Thus, although it is also widely acknowledged that timber is being greatly under-valued, no HP governing party has the political confidence to change a system that 'conventional wisdom' (dominant narrative) suggests would adversely affect the 90 per cent of the electorate that lives in rural areas. It is reckoned that this would be political suicide. But, given the challenge (counter-narrative) to this conventional wisdom described above, what explains its survival? The answer seems to lie in the power over state decision-making of those who benefit

²⁴ Although there are provisions that for non co-operation in putting out forest fires, TD rights of a village or community can be suspended, this has rarely happened.

economically (and of course 'timber mafia' is probably too crude a description) from the current use and trade in timber from TD rights.

Studies have been carried out at various times by the FD, sometimes with external collaborators, with a view to rationalising TD prices. For example, a recent TD Rights Committee appointed by HPFD recommended increasing the TD price to 10 per cent of timber market values. The political response to this was negative – it was seen as a regressive measure that would particularly hit poorer households. Whilst this conclusion may be doubted, it can certainly be noted that such an increase would be unlikely to depress demand from wealthier interests – they would continue to pay poorer right-holders to claim their rights, so that overall demand would not fall by much.

The desire to reform TD is there, though sometimes without any practical framework or analysis of the problem, rather, the blame is directed straight at the forest dependent poor:

"The system of TD needs to be refurbished, revamped and examined in its entirety. It becomes imperative considering the impending ecological and environmental disaster that besets humanity, the consideration that resources are scarce and limited, etc. The efforts in this direction need to be constant, continuous and concentrated. Finally, no effort in this direction will succeed without the participation of the right holders, peripheral populations and the users of the forests. The need to educate, sensitise and create awareness among such people is dire and immediate"

Efforts to reform TD rights have rarely been able to raise their heads above the political parapet. To do so appears to require pressure from 'higher up'. There have been attempts. In 1989 a non Congress-party Chief Minister was installed in HP:

"Congress was the party which had previously presided over what was popularly perceived as the 'the devastation of the forests', and at national-level there was a mood for a different approach. The new Chief Minister stopped the concessionary felling of spruce for packing cases and raised the issue of rationalising TD prices. A bill was developed to introduce a price based on 25-30% of the current market rate, and for such household rights to be granted only every fifty years or so rather than every five. The bill was examined by the secretaries of about seven departments, but it foundered due to opposition activities. Those in the timber mafia opposition quickly mobilised and organised 'poor people' (wearing torn pyjamas and the like) in a fleet of trucks to demonstrate in Shimla, demanding 'how can we pay Rs500?' and so forth. The issue was shelved, and the Chief Minister lost the next election" (Forestry officer).

Other attempts to deal with some of the negative issues surrounding TD rights have seen greater success.

"In the late 1980s/ early 1990s, a new PCCF was keen to make his mark on the public relations front. Timber smuggling had become an issue about which the FD received bad press. Encouraged by initiatives to crack down on sandalwood smugglers in the southern states of India, the new PCCF generated the 1992-93 Section 52B Amendment (HP)²⁵ of the National Forest Act" (Forestry officer).

This legislative amendment introduced strict rules on illicit trafficking of timber, with provisions for impounding trucks and confiscating illegal timber:

²⁵ The passage of a state Amendment is as follows: the PCCF makes a proposal to the State government, which approves it at cabinet level and then passes it to the national government. The national government may make changes which then go back to the state level for state cabinet acceptance. In this case, the approved regulations were considerably watered down from the PCCF's proposed ones.

“Whilst previously, tourism or construction entrepreneurs would come to the FD to ask ‘how can we get our hands on cheap (illegal) timber’, and be given the answer, now the risks are too high. But still, for every one truck caught, perhaps twenty get away. Recently, for example, a converted oil tanker was ‘discovered’ with a specially enlarged top opening for illicit carrying of timber sleepers” (Forestry officer).

Possible ways forward

With the passage of time, the original spirit of TD rights – of granting rights to timber for basic needs - has been obscured and abused (Sood, 1996; Gupta, 1999). As one HPFD officer stated, *“TD is no longer a forestry problem”*. It has become a highly politically-charged issue of equity, misplaced subsidy, and mal-practice, which is likely to require both local-level reform and state-level action.

Changing circumstances may also create opportunity for reform. The pattern of building material use is changing amongst the wealthier householders of HP. Together with increasing carpentry costs, the (partially enforced) crackdown on the illegal transport of timber means that those who can afford to often choose concrete, iron frames and bricks in preference to timber for house-building. In future this may mean that access to timber will become proportionately less important to more and more people.

Box 24: Kathkoni timber houses

The quantity of timber used for construction purposes depends upon the size of the house and its design. For instance, a "Kathkoni" house usually built in the hills with wooden floors and ceiling, wooden verandah all around the house with wooden binders would entail heavy quantity of timber. Such houses were a common feature on the hilly landscape of HP a few decades ago but have been discontinued in the present, largely due to the fact that such houses require a large amount of timber. Similarly, there is a paramount need to change the design of hill houses in view of the limited forest resources. Some say the use of modern house building materials such as cement, iron etc. should be encouraged – but given that Himachal Pradesh lies in a highly seismic zone, others contend that timber constructions are more suitable given the risk of damage from earthquakes and landslides.

Thus those pushing for reform may find it easier to create a political opening for change towards a more sustainable system which benefits those in greater need. Some steps in this direction seem to present themselves:

- Further examination and interrogation of the assumptions upon which resistance to reform of TD rights is based - such as the belief that raising the rates will adversely affect the poor – will help clarify what are the key constraints to reform.
- Rigorous assessments (possible through community bodies like VFDSs) of the current use of TD timber, by whom and for what purpose, are needed to highlight the extent to which the needs of the poor are, or are not, being met.
- Development of methods to better identify those villagers in genuine need of timber for subsistence purposes is needed.
- The above steps will develop information which in itself is insufficient without the political opportunity to make changes, but it will be vital to generate this information to increase the understanding which can *create* such political opportunity and to make the most of it when it presents itself.
- When political openings arise, a devolution of authority for managing TD allocation to

local levels should be urged, since it is at this level that there is widespread recognition that the system needs reforming and equitable negotiated agreements may be possible. In some areas where JFM has been introduced, approval of TD to local right-holders was made after recommendation of the VFDC. This seems a good way to control TD and check its misuse, but would only become effective if the discretionary power of the DFO to grant TD is curtailed or modified.

The last Chief Minister said that there should be all-party consensus on 'rationalising TD rights'. Whilst this might be unattainable at least in the short term, the policy story above suggests that some practical steps could at least be taken to provoke change in the currently unjust and unsustainable system.

4.2.2 *Panchayati Raj Institutions*

Context and changes

In 1992 the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act gave a national impetus to decentralisation by providing formal constitutional status for a three-tier system of local government, known as *Panchayati Raj Institutions* (PRIs)²⁶. The *HP Panchayati Raj Act, 1994*, follows on from the 73rd amendment to the Constitution²⁷. This Act establishes the three-tier system, with panchayats at village, block (panchayat samiti) and district (zila parishad) levels, and gives a renewed emphasis to decentralised government in the state. The aim is to progressively delegate planning, decision making and service delivery to district, block and community level, and hence enable local communities and institutions to take responsibility for the management and development of their economic, social and natural environment. The Act has been amended to extend the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, by the HP Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 1997. Essentially, the amendment Act lays down certain ground principles which will constitute the basic structure or core features of the local authorities. This consists of a well-defined duration, safeguards against external interference in the form of prolonged supersession, provision for regular election, proper and meaningful representation to the weaker sections and women and devolution of powers, authority and adequate finances. The HP Panchayati Raj Act was further amended on 3 June 2000. These further amendments generally relate to improvement of the various provisions for each sector; they do not alter the basic Act in any way so as to change the nature or structure of the PRIs.

Although progress has been relatively slow, the institutions are now in place and a number of recent State Notifications have added impetus to the process, conferring new powers and strengthening PRI oversight of public servants' work. There are at present 12 Zila Parishads (each member represents about 20,000 voters), 75 Panchayat Samitis (each member represents about 3,000 voters), 3,037 Gram Sabhas²⁸ and 18,549 Up Gram sabhas²⁹ constituted in the state. Elections to establish the three-tier Panchayati Raj system took place in 1995-96 under the superintendence, direction and control of the State Election Commission (the latter was established at the time of the HP Panchayati Raj Act). Further elections took place in December 2000. In PRIs at all levels there is 33 per cent reservation

²⁶ The Panchayati Raj system is by no means new; the concept of panchayats dates from ancient times. In recent times, the Panchayati Raj system was established in a statutory form under the HP Panchayati Raj Act, 1952. Following the merging of some hilly areas of Punjab into HP in 1966, the HP Panchayati Raj Act 1968 brought uniformity to old and newly merged areas.

²⁷ The Rules under this Act (4 of 1994) were notified by the state government on 25 November 1997.

²⁸ A Gram Sabha consists of the voting population above 18 years, and has the status of the 'general body' of the gram panchayat

²⁹ HP has also introduced 'Up Gram Sabhas' at ward (sub-village) level.

for women and proportional representation to the members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Fifteen sectoral departments³⁰ have been decentralised in terms of devolving local decision making to panchayats, giving them supervisory authority and monitoring responsibility over the field level functionaries of these departments³¹. It is the intention that instead of each department having its own committee, use be made of the different standing committees of the panchayat.

According to the Panchayati Raj Act, Gram Panchayats shall prepare micro-plans proposing development interventions that reflect the felt needs in their area by way of improving rural connectivity, schooling, health and veterinary care facilities, drinking water, sanitation, etc., indicating the order of priority. The micro-plan must be approved by the Gram Sabha. Thereafter at least 75 per cent of the funds available under the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Local District Planning (LDP), decentralised planning, relief funds and small savings prize money shall be earmarked by the Deputy Commissioner for funding the micro-plans in the order of priority indicated by the Gram Panchayat. But capacity for developing and running the required micro-plans is still very weak and it will take a long time to develop. Currently, different departments are making their own micro-plans³², although some integration of sectoral micro-plans has been tried in panchayats of the Indo-German Changer project in Palampur. PRIs under the new amendments are empowered to raise bank loans – but it remains to be seen whether sub-PRI groups such as women’s savings and loans groups will be able to access any of this. PRIs will be allocating subsidies e.g. pensions.

Village level functionaries include the Panchayat Assistant, Panchayat Secretary (covering 3-5 panchayats) employed by the Block, an extension worker from the Agricultural Department, secretaries of cooperatives, Anganwadi³³ Worker for Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) mid-day meal and other programmes and village health workers. These functionaries are usually responsible for several villages and are supposed to meet together regularly with the panchayat members to discuss village developments and problems. This will obviously be a key initiative to promote the exchange of ideas and information among the government staff working in the villages and also between the villagers. Currently however, there is no village level forum in which HPFD staff participates and discusses with other village level workers. Nevertheless, some HPFD officers recognise that PRI policy is “*the big one for livelihoods*”, and is the main policy process by which policymakers see themselves as engaging with livelihood issues.

The role of PRIs in the management of local resources and promotion of PFM was strengthened by HPFD’s notification of the constitution of *panchayat, block and district level forest committees* in January 2000³⁴. These forest committees are to be in congruence with the three-tier standing PRI committees and are supported by the Participatory Forest

³⁰ These departments are: Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Ayurveda, Education, Fisheries, Forests, Food and Supplies, Health and Family Welfare, Horticulture, Industries, Irrigation and Public Health, Public Works Department, Rural Development, Revenue and Social Welfare.

³¹ However there is no mention of this in the Participatory Forest Management Rules.

³² All forestry projects including SVY have micro-plans; micro-plans are also made by Gram Panchayats under the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.

³³ Pre-school daycare centre for children in the age group of 0-6 years.

³⁴ Notification dated 5 January 2000. Most of the provisions in the notification have been lifted from the draft PFM Rules, subsequently ratified on 23 August 2001.

Management Rules, notified by the Government of HP on 23 August 2001. These Rules provide that the elected panch of each ward of the panchayat will be *ex officio* on the executive committee of the VFDS, and the VFDSs are to be constituted panchayat wardwise. This is a first step towards providing an organic linkage between the two, and may help the HPFD in clearly defining the active and meaningful participation of PRIs in forest related activities, which at present is almost non-existent. However, by mid-2002, none of the PRI forest committees had yet been established; it remains to be seen what impact this notification has on the existing local forest institutions.

Positions, arguments and counter arguments

The expansion of PRIs represents a major shift in the way in which local resources are (proposed to be) managed. Whilst the panchayati raj system will continue to be an established part of local governance, according to national law, there are a number of issues about which people are concerned.

1. Limited capacity of PRIs

The Panchayati Raj Act has enabled devolution of much responsibility to local levels. However, the capacity of panchayat officers to manage these new responsibilities is lagging behind this relatively rapid change. For example, a result of the December 2000 panchayat elections in HP was that more than 90 per cent of newly-elected officers were new to the job, presenting both a tremendous opportunity and a challenge for those charged with training and capacity building of panchayats. There has been some transfer of government staff to PRIs to boost capacity - although there has also been some resistance by unions. In the long run, however, both leadership and managerial capacity will have to be built within the panchayat and its wards.

A Gram Panchayat can consist of 7 to 15 members including the Pradhan and Up Pradhan. The members or panches are elected wardwise while the Pradhan and Up Pradhan are elected by the entire panchayat. The Secretary of the panchayat, who is its key functionary and officer, is appointed by the Director, PR and is a government servant. Under the PR Act, the Panchayat Secretary is responsible for maintaining records and other statutory functions and correspondence of the panchayat. This seems to be quite a job. The Act does not indicate anything about the office of the secretary and/or Pradhan and how many other people are allowed to work and be paid by government. It is, however, clear that even if a fraction of the proposed devolution of powers/ line departments' work is to be overseen by the panchayat, its office in the present form would be hopelessly inadequate to deal effectively with the workload. Moreover, the various panches, if not the pradhan and Up Pradhan, are neither paid any salary nor provided other facilities except perhaps expenses to enable them to attend meetings. Given the nature of involvement expected from the office bearers of the panchayat, particularly in view of the devolution now enacted, it seems unlikely at present that a sufficiently robust structure or system can exist at the panchayat level to be able to deliver either in terms of implementation, planning or co-ordination and monitoring of various works/ function of the panchayat. It therefore seems a pre-requisite to have in place or provide mechanisms to induct sufficiently experienced and trained staff to manage panchayat offices. Yet the recognition that PRIs require capacity building and should be regarded as legitimate partners in development processes appears to be lacking within the state administration.

Devolution of responsibilities to PRIs has not yet taken place properly and is more at the notification level. Genuine apprehensions relate to the capacity of PRIs to take up responsibilities envisaged under various notifications. For instance a forest guard normally controls or has jurisdiction over an area that includes two or more panchayats. Who is the forest guard to report to in which panchayat? Basic TD records are currently maintained at

the beat, block and range level. TD and several other rights also cut across panchayat boundaries. Similarly, it would be difficult to make state level teachers (who can be transferred anywhere in the state) to report to panchayat pradhans.

There seems to be a vicious circle: PRIs are not trusted to fulfil their responsibilities due to limited capacity, yet they cannot function well unless additional support is given. Those who criticise their lack of capacity may well be the same as those who are in a position to, yet resist offering the required support.

Box 25: PRIs yet to find their role: feedback from field research

People feel that Panchayats have no real development motive, but are mostly oriented around contractual work. The panchayat leadership tends to be dominated by elites, who have little interest in equity or the genuinely needy. The panchayat is not seen as a very important institution except for it being a constitutional village body. People said that there was a lot of noise everywhere about the new Panchayati Raj Act, but even after 10 years of its enactment by Parliament, it has not been able to bring about the primary expectations in terms of devolution of powers and clarity on roles and responsibilities. Even today, though two rounds of elections are over in the state, people are not aware of the provisions and basic knowledge of the programmes under PRIs.

2. Convergence or duplication of responsibilities with other institutions

The new PRIs are not operating in an institutional vacuum: far from it. Recent years have seen a proliferation of local-level institutions, both formal and informal, traditional and externally imposed, active and on paper only. Whilst the introduction of PRIs heralds new opportunities for local decision-making and control of resources, it must be seen in the context of the existing institutional structure. Notably there are village forest institutions which have been established under participatory forest management programmes in HP (such as the Village Forest Development Societies established under Sanjhi Van Yojna), some of which may well be functioning effectively. It is often the case – and will probably continue to be so – that village level institutions get or generate more funds than PRIs.

Decentralisation has created a degree of role confusion between government departments and PRIs, and the locus of control for many services and development activities remains in dispute. This has led to the further proliferation of single function village level institutions, created by government departments despite the asserted coordination role of PRIs. Integration between departments is uncommon and inconsistent.

PRIs tend to be seen as a baby of the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. The Panchayat Secretary reports to the Block Development officer (BDO) and all panchayat functions are routed through the BDO's office. However, at the block level there are no co-ordination meetings between the BDO and other departments of government. At the district level such meetings do take place but in a ritualistic manner. In the Panchayati Raj Act itself there is no provision or role for any other office or officer of government concerning the functioning or direction of PRIs. It is important that within government and outside, the PRIs get to be seen as a third level of government and not as institutions handled by one government department. This also affects access to PRI members and office bearers by other departments.

PRIs themselves have been given little chance to participate in discussions about devolution of HPFD responsibilities (one FD officer reported having had a couple of discussions at samiti PRI level and with some state administrators), nor have they been involved in any other discussions about sectoral functions being transferred to them. It appears that much remains to be done in terms of publicising PRIs, training PRI officers and making the

institutions work. It is progress on this front that would indicate the growth of the third level of governance³⁵.

Opinions vary as to the extent to which the link between village forest institutions and PRIs should be formalised. Whilst PRIs are part of the government structure and, in theory, information and finance can flow to and from village and state levels through them, some villagers consulted during the Forest Sector Review expressed reservations about the PRIs' ability and efficiency regarding forest-related activities. Whilst the Gram Panchayat now controls substantial patronage in the form of development grants and the right to allocate village land, and has become very influential, local organisations like the mahila mandal, VDCs, VECs etc. are seen to be effectively challenging the authority of the Panchayats. However, there is scope for a strengthened relationship between them, and PRIs emerge as the most likely point of convergence of all local village level institutions (of which there has been a proliferation in recent years).

“PRIs look wonderful on paper but in practice things are more complicated. For example the man who is both the head of the elected PRI and the [usually nominated] village forest institution formed under the DFID-supported forestry project – gave good reasons, mostly to do with efficiency, in arguing why all funds under the DFID phase II project should be channelled through the latter body” (Delhi policy analyst).

A point in favour of village forest institutions over PRIs is the degree of participation the former offers. Because of previous history of casual participation in panchayat functioning and general secrecy about its operations (as in TD recommendations for instance) and a commonly held belief that panchayats are “political”, there is general lack of understanding particularly among the poorer and marginalised sections of how they work. Added to this is the size of an average panchayat, making regular and good attendance in Gram Sabha meetings a rarity. The PR Act is a fairly complicated document, difficult for ordinary persons to follow and understand. When it comes to illiterate and semi-literate rural people which includes large numbers of women, it can be easily seen why PRI functioning looks complicated. Village forest institutions on the other hand being simpler, smaller bodies with rules of their own are much more “understandable” and easier for ordinary people to relate to. Several studies on the HPFP in Kullu/ Mandi have pointed out the less than satisfactory level of community participation especially of women in the VFDCs under JFM over several years. No such study seems available for participation in panchayats, but one can safely assume that it would be much less.

The new PFM Regulations, 2001, of HP attempt to establish an organic link between the village forest institutions and the PRIs by providing that the elected panch of each ward of the panchayat will be *ex officio* on the executive committee of the village forest institutions. The village forest institutions as per the new rules are to be constituted panchayat wardwise; this has already taken place around GHNP.

3. Promotion of and resistance to PRI expansion

Whilst the expansion of PRIs is a direct response to national legislation and central government - and the Chief Minister is acting under pressure to implement the 73rd amendment - donor-supported projects have become the main lever for PRI progress with the HPFD. The HPFD as a department handles the highest share of aid project funding in HP – getting about 75 per cent of the Rs10 crores in aid allocated to HP.

³⁵ Similarly in the education sector there has been a lack of consultation. Recently “vidya upasaks” (teachers) have been appointed in primary schools and are to be under the panchayats, but it seems the panchayats were not consulted about their appointments which were done centrally.

At the same time, there is resistance to PRI expansion. Because HP is a relatively small state, sectoral departments reach to quite a local level and so consider PRIs as a threat to their powers. The HPFD has been the last department to support PRIs and transfer any responsibilities. However the HP Secretary for Forests from 1997 to 1999, who was PRI secretary for four years, was keen to see some progress and sits on a HP committee for PRIs.

Further resistance to transfer of power to panchayats seems to lie in the belated realisation that powerful panchayats would adversely impact on the role and importance of the local MLA. Even ministers are believed to feel threatened and it would certainly affect their capacity to dispense patronage on which political "shrewdness" rests today.

4. Politicisation of local institutions

Panchayats are democratically elected bodies, and naturally become politicised institutions. This can have both advantages and disadvantages in a system where political patronage is strong. There are concerns among the frontline staff and some community members about linking village level institutions with PRIs. These concerns mainly relate to danger of politicisation of village level institutions, dilution of their focus and increased conflicts. Such suspicion of the political nature of PRIs reflects the early stage of development of local democracy. It is well known, for example, that field level functionaries of the HPFD (and possibly all other line departments) have heavily relied on panchayat pradhans to actively lobby for postings or transfers of their choice.

5. New roles for the Forest Department

Devolution of some responsibilities to panchayat level has naturally meant significant changes to the functions of sectoral departments, including some loss of responsibility and perceived loss of power.

The Government of HP Secretariat asked the FD "what can they give" to the PRIs. The FD has responded, but still has concerns about PRIs.

- The FD recently prepared a notification that the power to issue permits for a range of NTFPs is to be given to PRIs (about 56 species are involved, whilst about 20-25 are still controlled under national government rules). NTFP extraction and sale is allowed only to right-holders. However, over the years several traders and medicinal plant agents have employed outside labour to extract NTFPs and later got right-holders to sign that they have sold the material to the trader. Technically, communities own these NTFPs anyway and the FD has just regulated them – thus the fee charged is a fee not a royalty. Forest guards will give the go-ahead (whereas before permission had to be given at Range and District level). *"The system will still be a mess, but a PRI mess not a FD mess"* (Forestry officer).
- Grazing permits in forest land are also to become the responsibility of PRIs; however the FD is concerned that this could lead to over-grazing. Grazing permits often relate to transhumance. They are issued or renewed to gaddis/ gujjars who migrate over long distances all over the state and into other states as well. These rights are either recorded or are customary and have been maintained by the FD for over a hundred years. As things stand it would be beyond the capacity of panchayats to be able to manage and regulate transhumance grazing (see the 'policy story' on nomadic grazing in section 4.2.5 for further details).
- It is also proposed that PRIs should make decisions about the use of fallen/ dead wood; currently the Forest Corporation is supposed to do this but has little economic incentive to do so. Fallen or dried branches can be removed by right-holders in most forests and these rights are recorded in settlements.

Whilst the HPFD's role is likely to become more that of technical adviser than decision maker and implementor, its role in contribution to policy change could be enhanced by the PRIs. The January 2000 notification of panchayat, block and district level forest committees could provide a structure for increased participation in policy development through the PRI structure.

Possible ways forward

"HP is probably furthest ahead in pushing PRIs" (Delhi policy analyst). This was true until a couple of years ago, but there has been little progress since then. The decentralisation policy and legislation are beginning to have a far-reaching impact on centre-local relationships in HP. Although the process is still in transition, and there remain many associated problems, the policy provides a basis for a clear future role for local government, and is strongly supported by the key ministers and secretaries³⁶. PRIs, given their legislative and judicial back-up, may be seen as the beginning of political capital (in livelihoods terms) at the local level, and HPFD officers acknowledge that even in the face of social difference, something can be made of this.

It is thought that it will take ten years for PRIs to work through to acceptance by people. The PRI system is not new, although the 73rd Amendment in 1993 gave the system renewed impetus. The two lower tiers of panchayats – at village and block levels – existed in some form since the 1950s. Only the 3rd tier – district level – was introduced in 1994. District level panchayat officers are now in their second term, following elections in 1999, so it will take a few more years before they are fully accepted. It seems that as long as the panchayats are administered by the PR department it is difficult for the people (as well as other government departments) to see them representing a third level of governance³⁷.

4.2.3 Community forestry schemes

Context

The issue of rights concerning JFM in HP is complex and has been exacerbated by the historical path JFM has followed. The traditional customary usage and extraction rights of people living in and around the forests, as well as those of migratory pastoralists, allowed them to use the produce of the forests for their livelihood. These were later incorporated in the various forest settlements (c. 1847 to 1921) and continue to regulate exercise of rights to this day. Such rights were over fairly vast areas that had good forests – in contrast to TD rights, which went with ownership of land.

When JFM was introduced it was restricted to degraded forest areas. This meant there was little or nothing to extract from these areas and thus even if some communities had recorded rights in the JFM areas, there was no issue of exercising them. In the implementation mode JFM was restricted to (and still continues to be) the closed, planted up patches and/ or certain ancillary works like checkdams and water harvesting structures spelt out in the microplan. Whether or not there is any joint management over open forest areas and with what considerations, needs to be assessed. Since January 2001 the Government of India agreed to bring "better" forests under JFM but how many have actually been included under microplans is not known.

³⁶ According to project design documents for the HP Forest Sector Reforms Project.

³⁷ This has also been the unsaid problem in accepting the co-ordination role of the District Collector by other independent departments. In HP in Tribal Areas the government introduced Single Line Administration to overcome this problem. Though many activities like quicker sanctions are facilitated by this arrangement, it still does not address the core issue of a co-ordinator being independent of the hierarchy of some government department.

Since forestry is a concurrent subject in India³⁸, state forest policies must be within the national framework - hence HP has tended to follow national initiatives. In 1985, social forestry was given impetus by the National Social Forestry (Umbrella) Project. However within HP, participation was limited and the initiative was broadly 'top down'; village development committees tended to be imposed rather than community-driven. The project achieved its objective of planting more than 100,000 hectares of plantations, but such physical targets took precedence over participatory objectives, and social and equity issues could not be addressed (Sood, 1996).

In the 1980s the World Bank-supported social forestry project (1984-92) and the Indo-German integrated Dhauladhar project (1982-92) were taken up in HP. Both were more participatory than previous FD projects. In the 1990s both donors switched their focus to the Shivalik hills.

Subsequently, HP followed the national initiative in Joint Forest Management, and participation of foresters from HP in the National Workshop on JFM in 1990 was the beginning of the process of change. The framework for JFM in HP is provided by the Government of HP Order of May 1993, which followed the 1990 Government of India (JFM) Circular enabling the spread of JFM. The HP Order was compiled following study of JFM resolutions issued by other states, and lessons drawn from experience of implementation (Sood, 1996). Donor pressure was probably not insignificant: the JFM Order coincided with the development of a donor-led (DFID) project for Mandi and Kullu districts, in which JFM was a key element. This Himachal Pradesh Forestry Project (HPFP) may be seen to have facilitated the introduction of JFM statewide (Gupta, 1999). Donor support to Mandi and Kullu districts continued until March 2001. But as one HPFD officer notes: *"There were no rules and this plagued everything"*.

The customary and recorded rights of local communities as recorded in the various forest settlements have remained intact. For this reason, initially the VFDCs were formed on "kothi" or revenue estate level. Thus all the villages that had recorded rights in certain forests were included in one VFDC. This led to formation of huge VFDCs and subsequently their functioning was affected.

The pace of growth of JFM in Kullu and Mandi is shown in the following table:

Table 4: Growth of JFM in Kullu and Mandi

Year	No. of VFDCs in Kullu	Area (ha)	No. of VFDCs in Mandi	Area (ha)	Total no.	Total area
1995-96	4	1,870	-		4	1,870
1996-97	4	2,685	8	3,110	16	5,795
1997-98	12	8,930	13	5,537	25	14,467
1998-99	21	12,426	35	7,134	53	19,560
1999-00	14	7,000	42	21,174	59	28,174
Total	55	32,911	98	36,955	153	70,166

In addition in Mandi there are 35 Forest Management Plans (FMPs) covering about 10,500 hectares, and in Kullu there are 21 FMPs covering about 10,000 hectares. At the end of the first phase of the HP Forestry Project in 2001, it was agreed that all the 153 VFDCs formed in Kullu and Mandi would be taken over by the SVY and converted into societies. Information on progress is, however, not available as of December 2002.

³⁸ This empowers the Government of India to legislate despite the fact that the administration of forests continues to be with the state governments.

Until 1998, JFM in HP was confined to donor-supported pilot activities (DFID, GTZ, World Bank). Then, as in earlier years (see above with illegal timber) the arrival of a new PCCF in 1998 meant the search for a new programme to make a positive public relations impact. Participation was the buzzword from Delhi, and a small group of three or four FD staff were tasked with developing plans for the new scheme. The Chief Minister was persuaded to launch *Sanjhi Van Yojna* (SVY). ‘Entry point activities’ – such as making pots, water taps, mending temples, small infrastructure developments; all designed to attract people to the project – were given a budget so that DFOs could be seen to be dispensing something worthwhile.

There are now 687 village forest institutions under SVY including 153 such institutions established under the DFID project in Kullu and Mandi. Hence there has been rapid spread, but it is difficult to determine the extent of real benefits; at a very rough guess, perhaps half of them function satisfactorily. There has been an impact assessment of the DFID project, but there is no indication of a similar assessment for SVY.

Table 5: Year wise formation of VFDSs under SVY

<i>Name of Forest Circle</i>	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2000-01</i>	<i>Total</i>
Rampur	17	-	17
Chamba	44	-	44
Dharamsala	65	-	65
Kullu	62	-	62
Mandi	50	5	55
Shimla	30	-	30
Nahan	30	-	30
Bilaspur	49	-	49
Wildlife	12	-	12
Total	359	5	364

But SVY was overly budget- and target-driven; change was needed. There followed a short period of uncertainty when the launch of a new JFM scheme called *Apna Van Apna Dhan* – Our forests our wealth – was mooted. In April 2001, the Chief Minister announced that all community forestry schemes should be merged under a new scheme called *Apna Van Apna Dhan* (our forests our wealth). The CM was advised by the Planning Department but the HPFD had not been consulted. HPFD officers conclude that the lack of consultation was a sign of the CM’s displeasure at the failure of SVY – which he had launched two years previously. The new scheme was not described in detail; but there were indications that communities must contribute themselves (perhaps 15 per cent), notably to the costs of microplan funding, to avoid a wish-list mentality and to increase ownership³⁹. The Chief Minister’s other concern was to save money given that the state is cash-strapped; microplans are an expensive exercise. The new scheme was also thought to be a good way for the Chief Minister to show he is serious about PRIs.

To support the state JFM Order, Participatory Forest Management (PFM) Rules were developed for HP, and notified in August 2001⁴⁰. These Rules make provision for increasing the institutional autonomy of Village Forest Development Committees (VFDCs) by registering them as Village Forest Development Societies (VFDSs) under the Societies Registration Act. Importantly, the PFM Rules encourage VFDS formation panchayat wardwise thereby attempting to link these bodies directly with the panchayat structure with each elected panch being on the executive committee of the VFDS, *ex officio*. However, the

³⁹ Earlier schemes in HP have involved some community contribution – “our village, our work” involved a 30% community contribution and was administered by the Deputy Commissioner and block officer – it worked well.

⁴⁰ Further discussion of the Rules, and other forest-related legislation, is given in an annex to the Forest Sector Review by Jon Lindsay

role of the VFDSs continues to be viewed narrowly, focusing mainly on helping the HPFD to police forests and on wage-based micro-plan activities.

Following the failure of Apne Van Apne Dhan, those in the FD who had shaped SVY but had been frustrated at its rigidity saw their chance, persuaded government to stick to the old SVY term although with 'New' in front, and developed some detail. This resulted in the 'New SVY' rules and guidelines being announced by the GoHP in August 2001. They contain provisions for VFDSs to become, in legal terms 'the forest officer' for levying fines etc, and for 100 per cent share in intermediate usufructs while on final harvest 75 per cent would go to the VFDS and 25 per cent to the panchayat. The GoHP agreed to completely forgo any share from JFM areas.

Under 'New SVY': entry point activities are abandoned but "income-generating activities" introduced; forest guards will not be the member secretary of the Executive Committee (organising agent); but local organisers – usually led by a literate woman linked to a local community-based organisation, helps mobilise towards a properly representative VFDS based on a panchayat ward. Several meetings are held before a microplan is initiated – this shows VFDS maturity. The FD sends a cheque to a local bank account. The VFDS agrees with the FD a 'utilisation certificate' which can be monitored and checked. It will take some time to get the 364 'old' SVY groups re-organised as VFDSs under New SVY – though progress is being made.

In HP until recently, JFM has been applicable to degraded forest lands which are to be planted and require investment for enclosure and plantation establishment. Hence the focus has been on plantations mainly for growing fuelwood and fodder yielding tree species to be protected from grazing, cutting and lopping. However JFM is likely to extend beyond degraded areas following a recent notification from central government.

Another new scheme was proposed by the Chairman, Employment Generation in May 2001. This focused on employment generation through forestry, and proposed giving "wasteland" forest areas to individual households who would be paid to grow trees (poplar and other species). Upon harvest the grower would get between 35 and 50 per cent of the selling price. It was suggested that this would provide an annual return of Rs. 1 lakh per family after eight to ten years. However, consultation with representatives of the FD and a range of other departments through a workshop raised various basic objections and concerns and this scheme never saw the light of day.

At the policy level the PFM Rules and SVY Rules and Guidelines of August 2001 are seen as a major step forward, laying the basis for uniformity in approach to community based forest management. It also makes JFM poverty focussed and is targeted to the resource dependent.

Positions, arguments and counter arguments

1. Lack of participatory approach

SVY is largely target-driven and as such tends to neglect participatory processes in its formulation. Whilst it appeared to spread rapidly (as shown in table 5, 359 out of a total of 364 VFDSs were established in one year), the processes (or shortcuts) used may be questionable, there were concerns about quality, and the institutional structure, operating procedures and regulatory framework were not fully adapted to participatory approaches. Even some of the HPFD staff charged with implementing SVY admit that they don't understand what participatory forestry entails. SVY has scope for capacity building initiatives.

Whilst the official impact assessment of DFID support to Kullu and Mandi was carried out by consultants for DFID, some HPFD officers offer their own assessment of the project “in a nutshell”:

“money in Kullu-Mandi; forest schools refurbished; 80-90 people highly trained, mostly in UK. But beyond the FD, little to show for it. It was not clear what VFDCs should do – the set up sequence was: range officer focuses on area and groups, holds meetings, works (in theory) on participatory assessment using PRA and develops a microplan. In the last 2-3 years of the project microplans were mass produced clones: “CP” became “clones produced” rather than “community participation”.

2. Sustainability of the scheme

SVY is a scheme, not a programme of GoHP or a central policy for HPFD; it depends on continuous injection of government funds and thus may be considered unsustainable (HPFD, 2000). Questions remain concerning the real extent of effective SVY committees and the achievements of the scheme to date. According to the Impact Assessment of phase 1 of the DFID project, SVY is likely to be short-lived and does not achieve its livelihood objectives: “JFM as being practised at present essentially involves little more than devolving traditional forest protection responsibilities to village communities without meaningfully addressing their livelihood concerns” (Blunt *et al*, 1999). A thematic flaw in both the HPFP and SVY arose from treating the village community as one homogenous lot and thus not being able to effectively target the poorer people whose dependence on forest resources was crucial for their livelihoods. Whilst SVY reflects an appreciation of the concept of JFM by GoHP, largely attributed to a positive impact of the DFID project, the participatory aspects of that project had not been adopted by SVY. The attitude of the HPFD as a whole was found not to have changed. However, more recently there has been significant perceptible change in the HPFD’s style of working, such that HPFD staff are much more oriented to participatory ways of working.

It is also debatable as to whether JFM is a *means* for the FD to meet its traditional ends of protection and production, or whether JFM is an *end in itself* in bringing about local community management of forest areas was yet to be resolved. Furthermore, FD officers admit that JFM is often not benefiting the poorest: it is all focused on degraded areas, but poor people often get their livelihood inputs from good forests. However, following a recent central government notification JFM is now likely to extend beyond degraded forest areas.

However, there are isolated examples of how activities can be aimed at the poor. In Changar, the Indo-German project has also worked for ten years developing village institutions in the lower catchment areas, after previously working in the upper catchments on watershed management. The project’s ‘new’ approach is based on a ‘watersheds plus’ notion that aims to target activities at the poor and build social, human and financial capital, more than natural capital.

3. Sense of ownership – and overlapping boundaries

The PFM Rules require that VFDSs be formed panchayat wardwise and therefore the microplan would obviously cover the ward area only. But where forests are concerned, other wards may have legal rights in the forests falling in the jurisdiction of any one ward. This could lead to conflicts and eventually may have to be settled through “exchange” of rights among different wards and similar adjustments. The issue remains unaddressed partly because public forum where such issues can be resolved, like the panchayats, along with line government departments have yet to begin systematic attempts (and be delegated sufficient power) to evolve acceptable arrangements and policy. On the state level changes/

modifications in existing settlements though long overdue, would have to wait for political consensus perhaps driven from below.

Another major problem with SVY (as was with the DFID-HPFP) was the issue of size and scale. The VFDCs (formed under HPFP) and later the VFDSs (under SVY) were spread over large areas, in several cases including two or more panchayats. It therefore became impossible to hold well attended meetings and thus develop any broad based ownership of the programme.

4. *Translating political commitment into action*

The impact assessment of phase 1 of the DFID project found there to be an “appreciable level of political commitment for JFM in ... GoHP” (Blunt *et al*, 1999). However, this has apparently not been translated into action. Out of the total state forestry budget for 1998-99 of around Rs. 80 crore, the allocation for SVY/JFM was Rs. 6.2 crore, and this was significantly underspent.

Table 6: Yearwise allocation of funds under SVY during and after the 9th Five Year Plan.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount in Lakhs of Rs.</i>
1998-99	623.95
1999-00	799.39
2000-01	869.07
2001-02	584.54
2002-03	571.53

The 10th Plan outlay for this important scheme is pegged at Rs 22.79 crores as compared to Rs 24.29 crores for 4 years during the 9th Plan.

Conversely, individual initiative can be constrained by lack of political commitment, or in this example, institutional inertia. A senior FD officer recognised the need for a community to pilot a savings and credit group scheme linked to forest resources. To carry out the groundwork for this scheme, he needed Rs 20,000 to undertake PRA work in five villages. The project had to be tendered in three newspapers – which cost much more than Rs 20,000 - and it took a year of to-ing and fro-ing before the money was finally allocated. By this time it was too late to do anything because the funds that were finally allocated had to be spent within a very short time before the end of the financial year.

5. *Equity issues*

It needs to be noted that the exercise of rights has largely favoured the resourceful. Smaller VFDSs would tend to better address issues of equity and joint decision making in forest management. At the local level, JFM is at least initially expected to address issues of equity rather than generate large biomass surpluses to satisfy villagers’ requirements. However, the past 10 years of JFM in HP (and elsewhere) have tended to be resource centered rather than being people centered. To some extent the PFM regulations and SVY guidelines of 2001 address these issues. Concerns of the poor, particularly women, have to be incorporated in microplans and JFM generally focused on “pockets of poverty.”

Possible ways forward

Just as is the case with PRIs, successful JFM implies some change in the roles and powers of the Forest Department. There remains a need to address what, in some areas, has become an adversarial relationship between the HPFD and local stakeholders. The outcome of JFM will likely be dependent on how the livelihood needs of the various sub-groups of the

rural population are addressed, and conflicts resolved (Gupta, 1999). Village level interventions – such as those proposed under the next phase of DFID support - offer an excellent foundation for the development of more integrated, livelihoods-focussed, and sustainable village institutions which can, if successful, become the successors to VFDCs and SVY institutions (HPFD, 2000). But to date, it appears that the poorest are not well represented in the VFDCs and as a consequence forest protection and regeneration activities have not adequately reflected their access needs, leading to a situation where livelihoods may have been adversely affected (HPFD, 2000). Therefore the challenge is to work towards more balanced representation within village forest institutions, and greater understanding within HPFD of the different livelihood needs and strategies of local stakeholder groups.

Whilst the SVY initiative is promoted at the highest levels of government in HP, appropriate strategies and capacities for implementation require more attention. The challenge is to build a sustainable livelihoods approach onto what has been an essentially forest-first institutional structure and operating procedures. This entails developing an enabling framework for broad-scale participatory forest management on top of an existing regulatory framework which did not anticipate participation – and perhaps even modifying that regulatory framework.

The most recent scheme has been introduced by central government, and which states are invited to buy into. It focuses on developing Forest Development Agencies (FDAs) at district level – with districts getting direct access to central funding – for forest and plantation work for employment generation objectives. This is an 100 per cent central sector scheme, created to reduce the multiplicity of schemes with similar objectives (it merges four existing central schemes), ensure uniformity in funding pattern and implementation mechanism, avoid delays in availability of funds to the field level and institutionalise peoples' participation in project formulation and implementation. FDAs will be constituted at the territorial/ wildlife forest division level, and JFM committees will be the implementing agencies at grassroots level. FDAs are likely to work through forest guards - and thus appear to conflict with SVY rules which are phasing out forest guards. However, it was subsequently agreed that in such cases the approved state PFM regulations will supercede central guidelines. FD officers are aware that the HPFD will need to be develop its thinking on this scheme quickly, because politicians are likely to seize on it to look good with local and central powers.

The next phase of support from DFID is due to start imminently. However, FD officers fear that, like other projects, it will displace government money rather than be additional to it (despite a condition in the project agreement that it will not).

There are also differences in jargon: as one FD officer noted: "*Livelihoods is the language of donors – here in HP our policy is 3-dimensional forestry*" (3-dimensional forestry was actually the name given to the Forestry Department for a while – when a former PCCF became enthralled by a Japanese-American forester emphasising the values of different tree associations and height levels in forestry).

4.2.4 Medicinal plants trade⁴¹

Context

There are close to 2,000 species of medicinal plants reportedly used in various formulations of the Indian Systems of Medicine (ISMs). Trade studies indicate that barely 10 to 15 per cent of these are in high demand (exceeding 100 metric tonnes dry per year) in the industry.

⁴¹ A more detailed overview of the Indian medicinal plants industry is given in Subrat, Iyer and Prasad, 2002: The ayurvedic medicine industry: current status and sustainability. ETS, New Delhi and IIED, London.

Except for spices which are almost exclusively cultivated, the demand is being largely met from forest sources.

Within HP there is a rich resource of medicinal plants. Out of around 3,120 species of higher plants, more than 900 are thought to be of medicinal benefit. About 34 of these are traded, and a similar number threatened according to the IUCN Red List criteria (Kullu CAMP, 1998)⁴². The zones between 1000-3000m elevation represent potential reservoirs for these medicinal plants, including most of the top commercial taxa. However this natural wealth has not been systematically assessed. The right holders collect the medicinal plants free of charge and sell to the local contractors. An estimated 2,000 tonnes of medicinal plant material is reported to be exported out of the state each year. The more valuable species are becoming rare due to unsystematic exploitation. Some villagers in the high hill locations collect from the wild, but these are seasonal rather than full time livelihood activities. They also require specific skills that do not attract large numbers of people.

In the past few years herbal medicines have gained wide acceptance and demand has increased tremendously, putting great pressure on natural sources and leading to unsustainable extraction. Lack of infrastructure, market information, poverty, indebtedness and poor bargaining power of unorganised collectors has led to their exploitation by middlemen.

The medicinal plant trade is complex and poorly recorded. Because most medicinal plant collectors barter their wild collections with local traders/ shopkeepers, who in turn are secretive about their sources, quantities and rates, keeping track of traded species and quantities is difficult. There are middlemen operating in every village, trading according to a barter system. At district level in Kullu there are over 20 medicinal plant traders, who export the material to Amritsar, New Delhi and elsewhere.

“The Amritsar-based, and monopolised ayurveda industry is something of a racket - the big traders have told the HPFD that they should ban harvesting of certain ‘endangered’ plants – this has more to do with attempts to increase prices and profits than concern for the supply – evidence of threats to which is scanty.” (FD officer)

The difficulties in accessing information have been compounded by the revision in the medicinal plants export permit fees that were substantially enhanced by the government in 1993-94, which has possibly led to increased undeclared trade. Co-relations between authentic trade names and botanical identities are not available. Neither are there any authenticated raw drug centres or trained personnel who can effectively help in identifying raw drugs and monitoring the medicinal plant trade.

The requirements of the herbal pharmaceutical industry in the state seem to be of a different nature and order. Table 7 below shows the requirements of three Government Ayurvedic factories in HP of 13 species that they use in quantities exceeding one metric tonne per year. It is seen that the species listed are not sourced from HP because most do not grow there. Other species used are required in smaller quantities and probably do not warrant cultivation.

⁴² The most commercially valuable species include *Aconitum heterophyllum*, *Valeriana wallichii*, *Centella asiatica*, *Dioscoea deltoidea*, *Jurinella macrocephala*, *Taxus baccata*, *Saussurea costus*, *Berberis sp.*, *Cinnamomum tamala*, *Picrorhiza kurrooa* etc

Table 7: Annual requirement over 1 MT in the 3 Ayurved Government pharmacies in HP

Species	Quantity in MT/year
Ajwain - spice	2.0
Gulgul (<i>Commiphora mukul</i>)	1.5
Kali Alaichi - spice	1.5
Mulathi (<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i>)	1.5
Piper longum - spice	2.0
Daru harida	1.0
Daru phal dhak (Fruit of <i>Berberis spp</i>)	1.0
Galoe	1.0
Holarrhena antidysentrica	2.0
Harda Peel (Peel of Daru/ pomegranate)	2.0
Tribulus terrestris	1.0
Zeera - spice	1.0
Saunth (<i>Zingiber officinale</i>)	1.0

Attempts to address the problem

In the absence of a national or state policy on the conservation of medicinal plants, efforts so far have been *ad hoc* and uncoordinated. For the long term conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants, it must be recognised that in much of rural Himachal, especially in “pockets of poverty”, medicinal plants collected from the wild are a significant source of cash income in the agrarian economy. Livelihood and market pressures have and will continue to severely deplete their wild populations.

There are several schemes currently under operation relating to medicinal plants in HP. In the absence of a nodal department/ agency, these schemes are under various departments and are being implemented independently. It is difficult to develop a strategic approach in the absence of a policy on conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants. For instance, present efforts and schemes on medicinal plants are exclusively dependent on government funding (and hence are very vulnerable), though a huge, and often disproportionate benefit will ultimately go to the industry. Yet there is no strategy to tap either industry’s profits or other institutional financing to support medicinal plant conservation or development.

Cultivation

The dominant thinking that currently steers efforts on the conservation of medicinal plants is based on the premise that because medicinal plants are over-exploited in the wild, their large-scale cultivation would relieve these pressures and thus they would get rehabilitated. So much has this line of thinking taken root, that the Ministry of Health (Department of ISMs) and the MoEF recently issued guidelines to all states averring that to save medicinal plants the way was to cultivate them so that pressures on the wild are lessened.

In cases where medicinal plants have been cultivated on a large scale there is a repeated boom and bust cycle, which has been attributed to fluctuations in the export market.

The position has been bolstered by both the National and State Department of Biotechnology jumping on to the medicinal plant cultivation bandwagon. Huge investments in expensive equipment, development of super medicinal species through genetic engineering and the like are envisaged. A large part of this line of action stems from projected global medicinal plants trade figures, expected to be of the order of US\$6 trillion soon!

Counter position: conservation

On the other hand it is argued that *in situ* conservation of medicinal plants and sustainable harvest/ use that is crucial in the livelihood strategies of millions of forest dwellers including tribals has never been given a chance. This is despite nearly all studies indicating that over 90 per cent of medicinal plants are collected from the wild.

Box 26: Medicinal plants: cultivation or conservation?

Around 90% of the medicinal plant diversity of India is found in forest habitats. The State Forest Departments, therefore have a critical role to play in *in situ* conservation of India's medicinal plant diversity along with the habitats and ecosystems that harbour and perpetuate this diversity.

In situ conservation of medicinal plant diversity is crucial for several reasons, but in the development context because it is from the natural habitats that most medicinal plants are procured for livelihood by the poor or for commerce by the rich. It is believed that over 90% of the commercial demand for medicinal raw drugs is met from wild collection. Though the cultivation of some medicinal plant species has grown in recent years, the gap between demand and supply continues to widen, largely fuelled by a rapid increase in national and global *industrial* demand (read for the *rich*) for herbal medicines and cosmetics. Due to pervasive poverty within and around forest habitats, this inexorable commercial demand has led to severe depletion of medicinal plants in the wild. And medicinal plants are not just a question of species and their numbers.

It is recognised that as population levels of a species decline beyond a threshold in the wild (that may vary from species to species), the ability of that species to recover becomes almost irreversible and can lead to rapid extinction in the wild. Within a species there is genetic variability and traditional knowledge has recognised that certain ecotypic and/ or genotypic variations affects their potency as medicinal raw drugs. It is this infra-specific genetic diversity (often unknown) that is being lost much more rapidly and the range of this diversity is only found in the wild. Further, medicinal plants like any other species have ecological specificities (some very narrow ecological niches) and grow and thrive in natural associations - which mainly cause them to be medicinal in the first place. The disappearance of these species from their natural habitats would have far-reaching consequences not only for local livelihoods, the medicinal plant trade, the quality of raw drug availability, the development of new drugs and the herbal pharmaceutical industry but also for the habitat itself.

Unfortunately, the standard response to this dilemma has been to advocate large-scale *ex situ* cultivation of medicinal plants in the naïve belief that such a development would automatically lessen pressure on the wild. This is unlikely to happen because as indicated, wild collections are a livelihood activity and will remain so until alternative livelihood opportunities are provided to poor people who depend on such extractions to earn their meagre cash income.

One consequence of this approach has been that wild populations of over-exploited medicinal plants continue to deplete with many species categorised as threatened in the wild. More so is the loss of genetic variation within species that can be found in natural habitats. Thus medicinal plants and variations within them continue to disappear. Even today, while most of the medicinal plant raw drugs come from the wild, the bulk of research and scarce funding continues to flow into agro-technology development for large scale, industrial, energy and resource intensive *ex situ* cultivation, *a la* the Green Revolution!

What is being unthinkingly advocated as a “conservation” measure has several pitfalls. What sort and what scale of “cultivation” are we talking about? Will the poor herb collectors be able to undertake this proposed hi-tech cultivation? (Many tribal forest dwellers are practically landless anyway). Even on the viability of large scale cultivation consider this: the Indian herbal pharmaceutical industry is said to use about 1,800 odd medicinal plant species in its various formulations based on ISMs (Indian Systems of Medicine). Most of these species are used in moderate or low volumes, typically below one metric tonne (dry)/ year. Only about one hundred species are used in large quantities i.e. over 10 metric tonne (dry)/ year. The three government pharmacies in HP use only 13 species (including four spices) in quantities over 1 metric tonne but below 2 metric tonne per year. It is significant that none of these 13 species either grows or is procured within the state. Even if this current requirement is multiplied by a factor of ten every year or two years (given the projected rise in demand), the volumes do not warrant a massive increase in production through widespread monocultural cultivation. By all indications, the cultivation/ agro-technology packages and marketing possibilities are developmentally geared for bumper production by the better-off and/ or rich farmers. This is probably going to accentuate with the adoption of genetically engineered “super crops” of medicinal species.

On the other hand, the inherent potential of wild habitats to provide a range of potent medicinal raw drugs in a sustained manner, benefiting local communities particularly the poor and women, and simultaneously being ecologically sound and conserving the natural medicinal plant diversity and their habitat sustainably, continues to be seriously neglected. The easy availability of thousands of medicinal plants in their natural habitats is also crucial for the continuance of the myriad folk medical traditions practised by lakhs of folk practitioners found across the length and breadth of the country. There have been small, uncoordinated, half-hearted attempts to “do something for medicinal plants in the wild”, but it is increasingly becoming a case of too little, too late like with most species conservation/ recovery endeavours. In India there is no medicinal plants conservation and sustainable use policy at the national or state levels. The funding levels for *in situ* conservation of medicinal plants remain implicit (it’s a part of NTFPs) and abysmally low. Importantly because of the agricultural-monoculture-hi tech-cultivation approach being increasingly buttressed by misleading promises of BT miracles, our medicinal plants continue to vanish from the wild and efforts to “do something” remain starved of policy, strategy, funds and other resources.

The critical and immediate need, therefore, is to bring about a balance in our approach to conservation and sustainable use of this vast and priceless natural heritage. *In situ* conservation is far more cost effective and the natural thing to do. Threat categorisation of species is with respect to their status in the *wild*. The future of India’s medicinal plant wealth is inextricably tied up with the future of our forests.

Source: V. Tandon. MPC newsletter, IUCN (forthcoming).

Potential ways forward

That some form of conserving sources of medicinal plants and ensuring sustainable use is not in doubt. There is clearly a tension between the two approaches of cultivation and *in situ* conservation.

The National Medicinal Plants Board (MPB) was established with a view to ensuring availability of medicinal plants and coordinating all matters relating to their development and sustainable use. It provides financial assistance to State MPBs, government research bodies universities, NGOs, etc. for the purpose of ‘promotional and commercial/ economic activity leading to cultivation and utilisation of medicinal plants’. The MPB’s functions also include promotion of *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation for restricted sustainable harvesting, as well as promotion of co-operative efforts among collectors and growers and assisting them to store transport and market their produce effectively, and the provision of a marketing information service. On paper at least, the MPB should provide a good forum for the debate that is needed between the two approaches of cultivation and conservation. It also aims to support value addition, semi processing of produce of medicinal plants cultivated under Vanaspati Van schemes and other agencies. A state MPB has been established in HP, but there has been little activity as yet.

Vanaspati Van (herbal garden), an ambitious scheme for development and conservation of medicinal plants has recently started operating in Kullu and Chamba districts. It aims to conserve and enrich the depleting natural herbal resources (by the Forest Department) and to develop the agro-techniques of the medicinal plants cultivation besides providing nature care by setting up nature care units in the region (by Ayurveda).

There is much scope for local processing of medicinal plants. There are government processing centres in Jogindernagar and Mandi.

An NTFP policy, creating conditions that enable medicinal plant collectors to harvest, process, and market them, could open up attractive income and employment opportunities in remote high altitude areas. Protecting the IPRs of communities with indigenous knowledge about medicinal plants will contribute to assuring them substantial benefits from biotechnology development instead of all the benefits being cornered by private industrial interests.

With regard to herbal garden scheme promoted by the state government, there is a wide gap in policy and implementation. These herbal gardens are primarily show windows without futuristic vision and sustainability focus, a good example of policies that are designed with good intentions but die out due to absence of direction and political interference.

The Himachal Government has drawn up a comprehensive plan for making the state a front runner in the field of adoption of biotechnology for exploitation of its wealth of aromatic and medicinal plants. District-level committees headed by specialists are being formed for chalking out location specific plans for introducing commercial cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants, hitherto found flourishing in the wild only. District officers of related departments like Forests, Agriculture, Horticulture and Industries would be made members of these committees along with scientists of the three universities of the state.

Some FD staff have high hopes for developing a livelihoods-benefiting medicinal plants trade in the mid-hills area, but it will take some time to properly establish the necessary well-federated groups (this is not the same as ayurveda which is an alien concept in HP, but is perhaps better described as 'folk medicine'). This could be linked to basket-making and weaving linked to management of species which sustain these.

A start has been made in Kullu district, where 12 million medicinal plant seedlings have been developed by the FD in the last 2 years under a scheme with 103 women's groups in Kullu. This was outsourced to an NGO partner SAHARA and involves 1 hectare plots on forest land plus Rs5000 seed money given out to each of these groups (see box 17). Others in the FD charge that this is a 'livelihood' activity not a 'FD' activity. However, at least there is increasing agreement that the focus of such activities, and of SVY development, must be women. It is thought that the majority of forest guards now recognise this.

4.2.5 *Nomadic graziers*

Context

Nomadic graziers are seen as a key forest dependent stakeholder. In HP they comprise predominantly Gaddis and Gujjars. Gaddis are transhumant pastoralists herding sheep and goats. Gujjars are transhumant buffalo herders. These migrants travel each year from the Punjab plains through the Mandi and Kullu districts on their way to and from the high alpine pastures of Lahaul and Spiti and from Pathankot towards Chamba district. The Gaddis are mainly domiciled in Kangra, Chamba, Lahaul and Kinnaur districts. In addition, many migrants are not true Gaddis at all, but local villagers involved in less extensive transhumance cycles. This, and the fact that the homes of many Gaddis and Gujjars are

located in other districts, makes it difficult to access with any accuracy the population of transhumants or their animals.

Both Gaddis and Gujjars are Scheduled Tribes⁴³. In Himachal Pradesh parts of Chamba district (Bharmaur and Pangi), Lahaul Spiti and Kinnaur (fully tribal districts) Scheduled Area of Panchayati Raj Act is applicable, where all the domicile residents fall under the category of 'Scheduled Tribes'. Tribal communities remain among the most neglected and exploited sections of Indian society. Scattered efforts have been made through government policies of reservation in education, services, support through providing books, uniform, exemption of fees, hostels etc. during the past few years to improve their lot and to integrate them into the mainstream. Access to benefits of policies and development activities to the tribal areas has been marked by several problems and challenges.

These areas are sparsely populated with habitats that are mostly hilly, rugged, forested or semi arid tracts. They are situated in the north and northeast of the state forming a contiguous belt in the high mountain areas and are amongst the most remote and inaccessible areas in the state. They have extensive pastures and provide nutritious and luxuriant grazing facilities to the animals. Due to small size of land holding and inclement weather, agricultural production is not sufficient to meet the needs of the family, and animal husbandry is the main occupation, with sheep and goats being the most common livestock. Some sections of the local tribals leave their homes during the period of severe cold along with their flocks of sheep and goats in search of pastures and to avoid the extreme of winter. This search takes them to the areas on the boundaries of the state and beyond.

We describe the two major groups of nomadic herders in more detail in box 27.

⁴³ Other STs in HP include Lambas, Khampas, Bodhs or Budhis, Kinnauras or Kinners, Lahaulas, Pangwalas and Swanglas.

Box 27: Nomadic herders in HP

Shepherds

The shepherds move their flocks to lower hills during the winter for about four months, then return to higher elevations in April/ May in search of pasture. They generally use the same route for both journeys. A typical Gaddi *dera* (flock) consists of 5 to 6 men looking after 250–400 goats/sheep. On average, a gaddi *dera* has about 80% sheep and 20% goats. They have three or four dogs to protect their animals, and a few mules to carry their clothes, utensils and other utility items. During migration to these places the migrants move with their flocks in groups; each group consists of 5 to 20 flocks of various sizes, and may comprise flocks from different villages. The total number of sheep and goats varies between 500 to 800 per migratory group.

Shepherds from tribal areas (mainly Gaddis, Kinnauras, Lahaulas) migrate with their flocks of sheep and goats to low hills. The Kinnaur shepherds migrate to Markanda and Ghaggar catchment areas. Gaddis are mostly concentrated in Chakki, Swan and Sirsa watersheds. The Lahaulas mostly migrate to Swan and Sirsa catchments. The migrants of Chamba, Lahaul-Spiti, Kullu, Kangra, and Mandi move with their flocks to lower hills of Kangra, Chamba, Mandi, Hamirpur, Una, Bilaspur and Sirmour districts of Himachal Pradesh and Gurdaspur in Punjab and Dehradun in Uttaranchal. A few of the families have even purchased agricultural lands in the places of their winter abodes and are engaged in cultivation also. Only male members of the families from Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti, Kullu, and Kangra areas accompany the flock during migration.

Gujjars

Gujjars are one of the dominant tribes of Himachal Pradesh. They inhabit the interiors and forest areas of Chamba, Mandi, Sirmour, Bilaspur and Shimla districts. Gujjars are Muslims as well as Hindus. Hindu gujjars have mostly settled down permanently and own cultivable lands; Muslim gujjars, however, remain largely nomadic. There have been efforts on the part of the State government to help the Muslim gujjars to settle down permanently, but owing to the diversities in their cultural compatibility and socio economic characteristics, this experiment has not been accepted. The gujjar economy is predominantly pastoral and thus demands extensive utilisation of pastures. This non-availability of fodder is the major cause of this migration to higher hills, called 'Dhars'.

Gujjars also engage themselves in the sale and purchase of animals during migration. They return back to their native place any time during September.

Some nomads (generally Gaddis) have acquired permanent *grazing rights* in the places of their winter migration. Migrants of Kinnaur who have grazing permits in forest areas of Sarahan, Dharampur, Jabli and Arki, have grazing facilities available within Himachal Pradesh. Most of the flock owners of Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, and Lahaul have rights for grazing in Himachal Pradesh. But now due to non-availability of grazing permits in Uttaranchal, the grazing pressure has intensified in HP.

Grazing charges depend upon the number of animals in the flock. The fees are paid to the Forest Department at the time of issuing the grazing permit; fees are set at Rs. 0.20 per sheep, Rs. 0.40 per goat and Rs. 8 per other animal (cows, buffaloes, horses, ponies etc.). Additional charges are payable to private landowners and the Panchayat if the animals are grazed on their lands. There are no fixed rates for these additional charges; they are mutually agreed upon depending upon the flock size, the amount of grass available and area sought for grazing.

Resource management systems

Collective systems of grassland management exist throughout HP. In higher altitude areas, where grasslands are essential to the maintenance of the livestock system, the *phat* or

*ghasni*⁴⁴ system operates. During the monsoon season these areas remain closed to use by villagers until September/ October when they are opened by mutual agreement.

Grazing lands are allocated to individual households by the local community. These households are then allowed to harvest the grass for storage and use during the winter months. Open grazing is permitted on these grasslands from the time the snow has melted until the beginning of the monsoon. This closely regulated system allows regeneration of grasslands and permits each household to secure their winter fodder requirements.

Regulatory mechanisms

There are mechanisms existing at different levels that cater to the protection of the rights of the various nomadic groups in the state. For example Tribal Development Committees (TDC) are informal groups, formed by the migrants themselves, who follow a specific route during their migration. Their main concern is to generate required facilities such as place for halts, fodder, provisions for human consumption, sale and purchase of products etc. while camping and enroute. They establish links between the migratory people and local villagers. State level regulatory mechanisms are described below.

Issues

Relationship with local communities

Nomadic herders' relations with settled villagers varies from place to place between animosity and cooperation over the herding of animals; such diversity requires situation specific, localised interventions rather than blanket solutions to resolve conflicts over resource management.

There has been a long-standing symbiotic relationship between the local farmers and these nomads, which has been institutionalised over a period of time. There is a particularly close rapport where the nomads have adopted a migration permanent route for many decades. The nomads receive a much needed local support system from local farmers, in the form of shelter and other facilities. In return, local farmers receive invaluable organic manure for their agricultural fields. Local people also traditionally receive lambs, blankets and shawls from the nomads. In the past, such exchanges were bartered, but more recently cash transactions have also been taking place. For example, a local landlord might charge Rs.2,000-5,000 for permitting gaddi deras (group or flock) to occupy his land for a season, and the gaddis might sell a shawl or blanket for a few hundred rupees. Some of the other positive aspects of the nomad-local farmer relationship are as follows:

<i>Benefits to nomads</i>	<i>Benefits to local farmers</i>
Grazing on private land	Cash or in-kind payments from nomads
Resting place for shepherds; some payments in kind	Manure from sheep/ goats boosts productivity of crops
Farmers provide market for wool and animals for meat	Shepherds provide market for cereals, pulses etc.
Cash or in-kind payment	Genetic improvement of local flocks
Cash income from sale of dogs	Opportunity to buy shepherds' dogs (which are much in demand)
Provision of winter fodder	Cash income from sale of dry and green grasses
Sale of manure during winter stall feeding	Manure for boosting productivity of crops
Cash income from sale of milk	Increased availability of milk
Greater acceptance by local farmers	Technical knowledge regarding buffalo rearing passed on by Gujjars

⁴⁴ *Ghasni* is a pasture land.

Conflicts between migrant shepherds and local communities arise mainly from competition for scarce resources like fodder, grazing land as well as factors like damage to crops, theft of animals, spread of disease, illegal felling of trees, encroachment of common property land etc. Conflicts also arise between migrants themselves, for example due to encroachment upon the allotted grazing land of other shepherds.

Users of forest resources

The impact of their passage through the lower pastures and forests is the subject of much debate. They are viewed with considerable suspicion by the FD which, while being nominally responsible for their registration and controlling their migration, in reality can do little to check the migrants or enforce legal controls.

The nomadic herders themselves face difficulties concerning adaptation to increasing flock sizes:

- The number of animals included in the permits of shepherds has remained constant over the years, whilst the flock sizes have undergone substantial increases.
- Insufficient available fodder, compelling grazing on panchayat and individual lands for which they have to pay in cash or kind. Gujjars face this problem despite the fact that they own small areas of land.
- The overall availability of fodder has been shrinking due to uncontrollable incidence of *Lantana* and *Ageratum* in the pasture lands.

Lack of facilities and services for nomads

- The migration route and grazing sites are invariably far away from inhabited places, thus the transhumants have difficulty procuring provisions for themselves and for the flock due to lack of Public Distribution Service facilities especially while moving on the dhars.
- Need for better shelter facilities
- During migration to high hills in summers, most of the gujjar family members also migrate with the herd. Education services are not available in these areas, resulting in low literacy levels.
- Veterinary treatment is very difficult to access during migration as well as at the destination. Sometimes dozens of animals are lost due to hailstorms or infectious diseases within a span of a few days: there is a high prevalence of foot and mouth disease, skin disease, and T.B. among the flocks. The transportation of diseased animals is not allowed in public transport.
- Limited access to drinking water for animals enroute.
- Non-availability of shearing machines.
- Lack of awareness of better livestock management practices.
- During transit as well as at some of the grazing sites, the flock is often in danger of attack by leopards. The Government pays compensation; these rates were considered to be too low but have been recently revised.

Poor marketing opportunities for nomads

- Many shepherds are not aware of the facilities offered by WOOLFED (Wool Federation of Himachal Pradesh). Often they are not aware of the procurement dates in that area.
- Inhabited places are far off from their place of stay and hence the milk has to be transported through long distances for its sale. The prices are also uneconomical.

Poor productivity of livestock and crops

- Due to poor feeding and indigenous breeds of animals the milk, wool and meat yields are very low.
- The land holding of Gujjar households is small and the quality of land is poor,

consequently crop productivity is low. Lack of technical know-how, and irrigation is the main problem of both Gaddi and Gujjar families.

- There is reservation on the part of some tribals e.g. Bharmaur shepherds, to go in for crossbred animals as they regard them as less hardy.

Attempts at settlement

There are efforts, for example under the IWDP, to integrate nomads into settled society. Mostly these have been short term settlements at lower altitudes during winter seasons.

Political scrutiny

Presently the migratory Gujjars are subjected to intense scrutiny and checks owing to an influx of terrorists from the neighbouring Jammu and Kashmir. The muslim gujjars are seen as having links with insurgents in some parts of the state and are being monitored by the state too.

Recent changes

Part of one of the migration routes is from HP to Punjab. Over the last decade, the number of animals crossing into Punjab (at least those officially crossing) has declined, according to the drop in receipts from 'entry fees' (of Rs. 2 per sheep) charged by the Punjab Forest Department. Punjab FD records show that the amount collected as entry fees for sheep and goats has gradually come down from Rs.22,811 in 1990-91 to Rs.11,052 in 1999-2000.

The reasons for gradual decrease in the number of nomads coming to the area are economic changes, increasing local population, decreasing sources of forage and gradual change in the life style of the younger generation of nomads. There has been a shift from the use of more open access land resources in the past, to increased value being placed on local land resources and the growing of valuable tree crops on them by the local farmers. Nomads also distinctly prefer that their children should enter more rewarding professions, rather than following the traditional occupation of their elders. Many of the nomad youth are now successfully joining the army, becoming teachers or taking up other government jobs after completing their basic education.

Counter arguments to the dominant position

The dominant narrative is challenged by Vasant Saberwal in his book "Pastoral politics: shepherds, bureaucrats and conservation in the western Himalaya".

He notes that the official narrative of degradation in HP, and the larger Himalayan context, has run roughly as follows: grazing pressure is increasing exponentially with the growing human population; there is an absence of internal or external institutional regulation of grazing pressures, particularly with regard to pastoralist communities such as the gaddi and gujjar of HP; in the absence of regulations, grazing by these communities leads to a 'tragedy of the commons', with sheep, goats and buffaloes over-running the vegetation. Grazing by these communities is seen as being responsible for large-scale deforestation which, in turn, is expected to cause increased soil erosion, and enhanced water run-off. In fact "for over a century the Punjab and HP Forest Departments have been predicting that the overgrazing of Himalayan slopes would cause widespread soil erosion, alter the hydrological cycle, and eventually lead to widespread desiccation. Unless grazing pressures were brought under control, the agrarian economy of the plains, inhabited today by over 400 million people, would be destroyed by floods during the monsoon and by droughts during the dry season. The ultimate outcome of a changing hydrological cycle would be the conversion of fertile agrarian lands to desert". The conventional solution to the problem is seen in terms of restricting herder access to forest lands, and planting areas with pine and other fast growing species.

Yet, despite concerted efforts by the Forest Department to reduce goat and sheep grazing pressure in the region, these pastoralists have continued a successful herding tradition, and are among the most prosperous land-based communities in the northern districts of HP. Saberwal's analysis is ultimately focused on the apparent contradiction between the continued success of the shepherd lifestyle and the ongoing alarmism of Forest Department pronouncements. The continuing success of these herders, despite a century old effort on the part of the Forest Department to settle them, curtail their movements, and reduce the number of animals they graze, is an indication of the ineffectiveness of the Forest Department in regulating land use practices in the region, which in turn is largely a consequence of political and popular opposition to its policies. Consequently, the Forest Department has in effect been 'forced' to adopt a specific, alarmist discourse on grazing-induced degradation, as a means of supporting its demand for a more effective regulatory role. This illustrates a long-standing power struggle centred on control over forest lands.

The solutions that ultimately derive from this discourse i.e. increased restrictions on herders and the raising of pine plantations, may have significant livelihood consequences for the affected community, while also doing little to alleviate real environmental problems such as the annual flooding of the Indo-Gangetic plains.

Saberwal puts forward the following arguments:

- “contrary to the notion of unregulated herder use of grazing resources, herder access is critically regulated by kin networks, labour, wealth and a system of grazing rights officially recognised since the mid-nineteenth century;
- that local level institutions continue to influence the terms of herder access to resources is at least partly a result of the long-term and continuing inability of the Forest Department to enforce its own policies aimed at regulating access to and use of forest resources. This ineffectiveness of the Forest Department stems from sustained popular and political opposition to conservation policies that advocate curbs on resource consumption;
- multiple causality with regard to ecological phenomena contributes to the uncertainty inherent in our understanding of ecological phenomena in the Himalaya, an uncertainty that is rarely acknowledged within policy documents of the HPFD;
- within the overarching context of ecological uncertainty and sustained popular and political opposition to conservation policies, the HPFD has made selective use of an international discourse on degradation to relay an alarmist discourse on land degradation, which continues to inform current grazing policies of the FD;
- it is unlikely that shepherd land use is as degrading of HP's forests and grasslands as has been claimed by the FD over the past century. A lack of data – generated either within or outside the FD – precludes a definitive evaluation of the role of the gaddi in shaping the region's landscape.”

“Ultimately it is this culturally induced expectation that herder land use practices are a damaging influence on the land, rather than empirical evidence, that has provided the primary justification to Forest Department attempts to reduce the herder pressure in the region.”

Data from Saberwal's fieldwork also reveal how the FD lacks reliable information to support its contention that the intensity of shepherd grazing pressure have increased over the past century. The FD's position is based on the expectation of an inexorable increase in shepherd herd sizes, and a decrease in the extent of area available for grazing, linked to the growth of herder and cultivator populations respectively. While both herder and cultivator communities have undoubtedly grown over the past decades, it is unclear whether this increase has resulted in an increasing intensity of shepherd grazing pressures. Where the intensity of

shepherd grazing has increased, it is important to note that contributory role of extraneous factors that may reduce the extent of area available to herders, and consequently, force herders to intensify their use of the remaining grazing grounds that they have access to.

Saberwal suggests that a complex slew of factors have interacted to generate this alarmist discourse: cultural stereotypes regarding pastoralist societies, the international environmental discourse of the early to mid-20th century, and the uncertainty inherent to our understanding of ecological processes, with the related potential for a misplaced attribution of causality with regard to degradation. These various influences have interacted within an over-arching institutional environment within which there has been sustained resistance, over the past century and a half, to Forest Department attempts to curtail herder and cultivator access to and use of forest resources. In the face of such opposition, he argues that the FD has, in effect, been 'forced' to adopt an increasingly alarmist rhetoric, largely as a means of legitimising its own authority with regard to how forest lands are used in the state.

The rationale for maintaining high levels of forest cover is premised on a model of forest functioning that has been discredited within the scientific literature for the better part of this century. The myth that forests act as sponges with regard to water conservation has survived in the popular media, as well as official policy in many parts of the world, even as hydrologists and ecologists have debunked its logic since the 1920s.

Saberwal notes that "the problem with the FD's rhetoric is not that there is an absence of degradation in the region; the problem is in the inexact formulation of the problems, and consequently, the inappropriate targeting of environmental policies...increasing forest cover, which is the key solution that ultimately distils from the model of forest functioning used by the FD, will not solve most of these [numerous environmental] problems. That is the central inadequacy of the current policy of the HPFD".

A few progressive foresters feel that Saberwal's perspective should be taken as a challenging assumption by FD and is a good thing to look differently into the aspect of transhumants. Their response to the challenge of his 'counter-argument' is given in box 28. Probably a multi-intervention approach needs to be worked out instead of the traditional target oriented plantations focus. This will be possible only if FD looks into increasing the access of goods and services in the locations where these people live and move.

Box 28: Foresters' response to Saberwal's perspective

Saberwal seems to suggest that forest degradation in HP is perceived to be a result of transhumance – but actually only few make this attribution. In fact this might not be the case at all. Several observations of the author are valid and based on research done in the field. The FD's traditional response to migratory grazing remains similar to its response to most other forest protection related issues i.e. "exclude the people/ settle graziers/ close areas/ plant timber species". However, migratory routes and rights of graziers though not admitted in forest settlements⁴⁵ and/ or customary practices have been by and large recognised and respected by the FD. The gaddi/ gujjar "way of life" continues to this day.

Saberwal's use of the term "forest" to only mean trees/ tree cover is erroneous even though this might be the dominant paradigm in FD's thinking. It is now well recognised that natural, climax vegetation like alpine pastures are as much "forest" as a dense oak forest below. That forests might not be the best "sponges" is agreed, but this is not to suggest that one can alter/ change natural vegetation complexes with impunity.

The differential impact of large scale agricultural/ horticulture extensification (which has dominated agriculture policy) and corresponding loss and degradation of natural habitats in the valleys and on the hills on migratory grazing would need to be better understood. Now with the introduction of JFM several erstwhile open access areas (particularly grazing lands) will slowly begin to change to CPR status and could lead to greater conflict with migratory graziers. The FD response just as the local community response would naturally get differentiated with fewer across the board policy imperatives.

In the 1970s during several meetings of the state's Grazing Advisory Committee it was figured out (wrongly) that buffalo grazing would be eliminated by 2000 AD and that the number of goats would be drastically reduced. In fact the opposite seems to have happened. The buffalo population has registered the highest increase though much of this maybe stall-fed. The goat population (1997 and 2002 projections of the Animal Husbandry Department) is up by 4.7 per cent since its 1992 level. How much this has swelled migratory herds is not known but it has certainly contributed to bringing down the grazing intensity from 0.25 ha/unit in 1969 to 0.13 ha/unit in 2002. This is against the recommended intensity of 0.50 ha/unit. There are thus about four times the number of animals grazing the forests and grasslands of HP than should be the case. Incidentally, high goat populations are predominantly in four districts some of which are considered the poorest in the state, including Chamba and Kangra, home to the gaddis. Interestingly, the population of sheep has registered the lowest growth over the decade, a mere 0.57 per cent.

A major issue that seems to have escaped Saberwal is the impact nomadic grazing has on wildlife, its habitat and the protected area network in general. Many of the summer grazing grounds of migratory and local graziers have got included in wildlife sanctuaries or national parks. Fortunately in HP grazing in these areas is still permitted but with adverse effects on the wildlife grazing grounds and on the tenuous populations of species like the snow leopard. There can be a case for actually turning this situation to the advantage of both graziers and wildlife through adoption of more participatory processes under participatory forest management that might in due course lead to equilibrium between the regenerative capacity of grazing grounds and the intensity of grazing. The HPFD is actively looking at these options and is becoming more sensitised to people-centred conservation.

However Saberwal's point is to some extent a one-sided view, as a researcher only. The FD has to look in terms of implementer too where it still stands closed and rigid. The graziers see this activity as an option for livelihoods in high poverty stricken areas where there are no alternative livelihoods. When we see this in relation to poverty and limited access to other options, the population moves to the available biomass thereby increasing pressure on the available resources which is quite natural and eventually grazing becomes a way of life for the poor transhumants. The situation is predominantly attributed to lack of opportunities for these communities. Thus the successful herding tradition as reflected by the researcher is primarily their compulsion not a livelihood by choice.

Given the situation, grazing cannot be stopped and the problem is so large that FD efforts will keep failing. The emphasis on pine plantation needs to be reviewed critically in the areas where these graziers dwell and pass through. Their problems have to be seen in a different perspective where empathy, sympathy and healing touch becomes important. Efforts needs to be made for

⁴⁵ In HP records of rights exist only w.r.t. local people residing in the vicinity of particular forest areas. So far as the migratory

augmentation of forage through planting fodder species, developing water points and providing medical support for the herders and their flocks. All this requires teamwork from the FD and looking the problems in more humanitarian perspective. Exploring alternative options for the women, children and the aged who suffer the most while the male members are moving with flocks becomes important.

Possible ways forward – including the political response

There are two state level committees which are particularly concerned with the issue of nomadic grazing. The State Tribal Development Advisory Committee is headed by the Chief Minister, and comprises the Secretaries and the Heads of the departments of Animal Husbandry, Agriculture and Forestry; the Tribal Development Commissioner is the member secretary. It also includes the nominated representatives of the tribal groups as members. The main function of this committee is to deliberate upon policy issues concerning tribal development and to redress grievances. It meets twice a year.

The State Advisory Committee on Joint Forest Management has recently come into being. It has been constituted to look into and monitor the basic issue of grazing of flocks of the migrant tribals. Its composition is the same as the State Tribal Development Advisory Committee with the addition of Secretary Finance as a member. The Committee meets under the Chairmanship of the Chief Minister twice a year. It has recently resolved that tribal flock owners shall get a permit for the total number of cattle heads - unlike previously when the number was frozen at a fixed level - for grazing their flocks, and also have earmarked the areas on a priority basis.

In order to address problems of conflicts at the local level, it is suggested that visiting nomads become active partners in the planning and management of natural resources, by way of representation at the VDC. Migratory shepherds/ Gujjars are made members of the VDC at the places of their destination. However their participation in the proceedings of the VDC is an area of concern. Efforts are required to encourage mutual trust and co-operation between the migrants and the locals.

At the district level, within the area covered by the IWDP, a District Level Coordination Committee (DLCC) is already in position in each of the five districts where IWDP is operating, to monitor progress and to redress grievances of the locals and other stakeholders. IWDP is proposing that a representative of the concerned Tribal Development Committee, chosen by the nomads, be nominated to the respective DLCC. This representative would follow up the action required for implementation of the Tribal Action Plan, in order to watch and protect the interests of the tribal populations.

To improve the quality and quantity of wool yield in the state, a cross-breeding programme in the indigenous flocks is being carried out with fine-wooled exotic rams of Rambouillet and Russian Marino sheep. Five sheep-breeding farms are fulfilling the requirement of exotic ram and maintaining pure Rambouillet and Russian Marino sheep flocks at Karachham (Kinnaur), Jeuri (Shimla), Tal (Hamirpur), Nagwain (Mandi) and Sarol (Chamba). About 500 male hoggots and rams per annum, are being made available by these farms and the same are supplied to the sheep-breeders and sheep wool extension centres. Rams are supplied to sheep-breeders through 10 sheep and wool extension centres located at different places during the breeding season and taken back and maintained in the centre after the breeding season is over. In addition, an intensive sheep development project at Bharmaur in Chamba district is also making available pure exotic hoggets rams from the state farms or cross-bred rams from the improved flocks of sheep breeders to the sheep breeders of Bharmaur, Chamba and Bhatiyat tehsils.

and nomadic graziers are concerned, no where except in the settlement report (1912-15) of erstwhile Bilaspur state, have their grazing rights been recorded as a right. In almost all cases a particular pasture or grazing run has been made use of by a particular individual and his descendents by virtue of the right of easement/ simple usage.

Wool production has gone up to 1571 tonnes in the state. The Himachal Pradesh Sheep and Wool Board has been constituted to look after the marketing of wool, which also gives guidance and help to sheep rearers. The Wool Federation is implementing various projects for the welfare of wool producers in the state in collaboration with the Central Wool Development Mandal (CWDM), Jodhpur. For these projects the CWDM is providing funds in the form of subsidy. These schemes include Integrated Sheep and Wool Development Project, Kangra, and Chamba; Integrated Angora Rabbit Development Project, Mandi, Kullu, Palampur and Chamba; Machine Shearing and Training Project; and Mini-Wool Squaring Plant.

The Wool Federation provides training to women at different centres for weaving shawls and mufflers. The federation has also brought 1,50,000 sheep under the Integrated Sheep and Wool Development Projects owned by 1,250 families in selected areas. The federation also provides Angora Rabbits besides feed and health care facilities to identified families under the Integrated Angora Rabbit Development Project. The federation has also set up wool-procuring centres in Palampur, Shahpur, Chail-chowk and Bhunter for the facility of sheep and Angora rabbit owners.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

We present our conclusions and recommendations according to the key research questions identified earlier.

5.1 *How can poor people's access to forest goods and services be improved?*

- *Who are the poorest in HP, and what are their current livelihood strategies? What are the actual uses of forest goods and services – the contribution of forest goods and services to livelihood strategies? What are the policy, institutional and market influences on this contribution – and what are the constraints and opportunities to forest goods and services playing a larger role?*
- *How have historical rights of usage and extraction been incorporated into participatory forestry in HP, and how might they further enhance the participatory forestry framework? How may traditional rights - such as Timber Distribution to which the majority of the population assert their rights – be retained and developed in order to foster improved livelihoods?*

HP is a comparatively wealthy state, yet 25 per cent of its people live below the poverty line and there are big disparities in wealth within and between rural communities. Whilst figures for livelihood dependence on forest goods and services are weak, there is little doubt that dependence is very high amongst poor people in many areas. As in other parts of India, there is a strong correlation between the locations of tribal people, high-poverty areas and forests. The poorest in HP tend to be the most marginalised and those living in remote areas, where there is limited access to information and few opportunities to take advantage of economic opportunities.

In social terms there is rigid casteism, wide disparities between rich and poor, strict orthodoxy and much differentiation between the sexes. On the political front the leaders have small vote banks, consequently there is close contact with the electorate; there is less political turbulence and individual contacts are important. But policymakers often do not differentiate the 'poorest', and even then it is a welfare approach, which does not enable people to earn livelihoods. Most schemes for 'poverty alleviation' are directed to those higher up the scale. Caste and politics mean that schemes do not reach the poorest, the village elites ensure this.

Exploitation of forest resources has considerably increased in last two decades. This may be attributed in part to population increase of about 13% in last decade, changes in political and legal framework where a lot of encroachments have been reported over past fifteen years, procedural delays and increased use of political influences to their benefit have encouraged people, improved infrastructure and communications in terms of access to roads into the dense thick forested villages. Besides, telephones and even mobile phones have created a lot of problems for the unarmed forest guards who usually move on foot for the forest protection, increasing commercialisation and diversification of agriculture in general and the economy in particular has been a critical factor which has led to people bothering less about protecting forests. Anything that spins money is more important like extensive use of props in horticulture and the increased income from diversification making people think of investments in constructing bigger houses that again has direct impact on the forests.

However, there are clear cases of communities successfully protecting forests: for example devta forests are protected because of a feeling of respect and ownership for the forests. Protection is also likely to occur where there are early benefits to the community and options to this effect could be explored in SVY and other community oriented projects.

Increasingly, marginal land is being brought under cultivation, and pastures are being over-

exploited and depleted. The need to manage forests sustainably for the benefit of primary users is dire and immediate.

The research findings show that among the poorest are included the small land holders, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, nomads, migratory graziers, women, people living in remote areas etc. The poorest in HP may be described as follows:

- *Resource poor*: those who do not have access to adequate resources to sustain themselves.
- *Access poor*: HP's predominantly rural population includes some communities which are as much as 30km from the nearest road and in high altitude areas, may be cut off for several months of the year; government services are unlikely to reach them at any time of year. These are also the people who are most dependent on forests for everyday needs like fuelwood, fodder and water.
- *Opportunity poor (primarily herb collectors)*: those who do not have opportunities for livelihoods other than their traditional ones, which are primarily agriculture based and supplemented by labour employment. Educational facilities are basic and vocational education is unheard of, they rely on whatever government schemes have to offer and are absolute passive beneficiaries. Girls are encouraged to marry very young and boys to take to traditional occupations. Their exposure to, and interaction with the outside world is very limited.
- *Poor by virtue of gender*: women in HP are particularly disadvantaged, and in some part of the state traditions dictate that the husband is literally the lord and is also thus called *Malik*. Few benefits reach women, and there is a need to target livelihood strategies at women, especially with SC and the poor, because they are available at home, are more dependent on natural resources and quality of life indices show improvement with women due to their better spending priorities.
- *Poor based on equity*: there is much caste-based discrimination in HP, as well as social discrimination based on assets and income levels. The equity parameter affects access to basic sustenance needs, social discrimination and sometimes ostracism.

There is no one strong policy or institution that stands out as being the major determinant of forest-linked livelihoods in HP, rather there is a range of many influences, of varying strengths and interactions. The nominal power of forest policy rests chiefly on the legal classification of 66 per cent of the state as forest land (although just 22 per cent of the state is under tree cover). Yet, despite this apparently strict control by the FD of forest areas, villagers' present access to forest lands and development of forest goods and services is mediated by a complex web of rights, notifications, legislation, management arrangements, institutional influences and markets. Policies and institutions cooked up explicitly to deal with the relationship between people and forests – 'forest sector' policies and the Forest Department – are only part of the story.

Timber Distribution Rights represent an example, unique to HP, of how villagers' legitimate access to resources can be misused. TD rights are long-established and are the most important right with which people associate, and which they draw on to meet basic construction needs. Though the state government has evolved an elaborate method for identification and application of TD rights of the villagers, misuse of rights has led to an alternative and inequitable system of distribution within the village. Access to TD timber by the poor and marginalised is severely limited: the influential and wealthy - including the forest contractors and the forest mafia - have a strong hold on access to TD timber. It is widely acknowledged that a radical reform of the TD system is needed if it is to benefit those it was originally intended to support.

Even where TD timber is made available to villagers, they report that Forest Department staff, especially front-line staff, consider TD rights as a negotiation and leverage tool. The

need for wood is satiated illegally with the connivance of community and the field officials. It is these staff who make the ultimate decision on who is allocated which TD trees, and when. Meanwhile policy regarding TD is made at the state level (and is influenced by political vested interests) and local level FD staff have little if any role in influencing policy.

Thus at the village level there is much disquiet concerning access to TD timber. The TD application process is tedious and time-consuming, there is a blanket ban on TD grants in closed areas and there is a lack of proper afforestation and subsequent maintenance of the afforested land. Villagers' conflicts with the FD focus on this: some villagers feel that TD rights are curtailed for the sole reason of conservation of forests, and conservation itself is ignored by lack of maintenance.

Recommendations

- Development of methods to *better identify those villagers in genuine need* of timber for subsistence purposes is needed.
- Rigorous assessments (possible through community bodies like VFDSs) of the *current use of TD timber*, by whom and for what purpose, are needed to highlight the extent to which the needs of the poor are, or are not, being met.
- Further examination and *interrogation of the assumptions* upon which resistance to reform of TD rights is based - such as the belief that raising the rates will adversely affect the poor – will help clarify what are the key constraints to reform.
- The above steps will develop information which in itself is insufficient without the political opportunity to make changes, but it will be vital to generate this information to increase the understanding which can *create such political opportunity* and to make the most of it when it presents itself.
- When political openings arise, *devolution of authority for managing TD allocation* to local levels should be urged, since it is at this level that there is widespread recognition that the system needs reforming and equitable negotiated agreements may be possible. In some areas where JFM has been introduced, approval of TD to local right-holders was made after recommendation of the VFDC. This seems a good way to control TD and check its misuse, but would only become effective if the discretionary power of the DFO to grant TD is curtailed or modified.
- Then ensuring that those who have real needs for, and legitimate rights to TD timber have access to it will be enhanced by *strengthening the role and capacity of village level forest committees* and panchayats in administering TD applications. Currently the poor, illiterate, marginalised members of communities have no means of accessing the TD process unless someone assists them to do so.
- Given increased responsibility by local institutions, the *role of HPFD staff* should be modified to one of monitoring activities and providing technical support as required.
- Ensuring that policy on TD is continually informed by current implementation practice and constraints can be enhanced by *involving front-line forestry staff* in policy development. The recently constituted circle-level fora should help with this (to date these have been notified but are not yet operational).
- Access to minor forest goods can be appropriated by the wealthy: Villagers use wood sticks as a supports for certain crops like tomatoes, but there is much greater use of props in the apple belt. Only deodar is sufficiently strong for this, and it tends to be the relatively wealthy apple farmers who appropriate such use, possibly depriving the poorer households of fuelwood in the process. It is recommended to promote plantation of trees that provide fodder and the support props on the private land so that dependency on forests could be reduced considerably. Such commercial use of small wood, as part of exercise of rights, including issues of equitable distribution, are better handled by VFDSs than through regulation by FD.
- Historical rights to grazing areas, fuelwood, etc., as laid down at the time of settlement

are recognised as such and are allowed to continue. This is not spelt out in the PFM Rules, for example, but the rights are generally accepted. There may, however, be a need for negotiation in some cases where SVY boundaries cover areas of traditional rights. Conflicts might increase if high value crops such as medicinal plants are established in the area: there are examples of men stealing those medicinal herbs which were planted by women of the same village. Such conflicts could impact on the whole system of rights, so means to harmonise historical and recently-constituted rights are required. Again, these are best addressed within and between VFDSs at the local level.

5.2 How to improve poor people's development of forest goods and services?

- *How may the roles and powers of local institutions be developed?* What are the local leverage points for developing roles and capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (included the newly constituted panchayat, block and district level committees), with respect to the appropriate 'mix' of these constitutional institutions with existing village institutions in contributing to the livelihoods of the poorest and in implementing policy? How can the strengths of traditional informal local institutions be preserved and adapted as appropriate?
- *How may equity issues best be addressed within participatory forestry programmes?*

The workings of local government are becoming an increasingly important influence on forest-linked livelihoods. Building on ancient traditions, and with previously limited legal basis since the 1950s, PRIs began to be seriously installed in HP from the mid 1990s. Fifteen sectoral departments, including forestry, have been decentralised, giving panchayats supervisory authority over their field level functionaries. The HPFD, however, has been a laggard department in transferring powers to PRIs. Whilst a few senior FD officers, who have been involved in the joint forest management programme embrace the chance to formalise links with local democratic government, others recognise in PRIs only a threat to the HPFD's power to determine local action – though this partly due to the slow progress in transferring power to panchayats as brought out in section 4.

Panchayat, block and district level forest committees are to be established, in congruence with the three tier PRI committees, but as yet none of the forest committees actually exist. Some changes are in the offing, though: the state government has yet to formalise the transfer of several responsibilities to PRIs proposed by the FD. These include the power to issue permits for a range of non-timber forest products (about 56 species are involved, whilst about 20-25 are still controlled under national government rules), to issue grazing permits in forest land, and to make decisions about the use of fallen/ dead wood.

How significantly poor people's access to, and development of forest goods and services benefits from PRIs will depend on how effectively and responsibly PRI capacity is increased in relation to the diversity of other village institutions. As yet there is considerable mistrust of the political games being played in PRIs and they are yet to be well engaged with by poor women and other marginalised groups. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for capacity building: more than 90 per cent of those elected in the 1999 panchayat elections are holding panchayat positions for the first time.

PRIs are here to stay, whatever fears their detractors may express. They can be seen as a major boost to political capital at the local level and a means by which a policy process connecting state institutions to local reality might emerge. But they are also a (positive) threat to the established order and its ability either to muddle along or to generate crisis and assert control.

A panchayat in middle and higher altitude areas of HP may cover a substantial area. This makes participation in panchayat meetings and events by ordinary people, especially the

poor and women, very difficult, and dissemination of information is poor. Consequently panchayats function mainly through the office and only a few of the more resourceful people besides the elected members are well informed. Recent Amendments to the PR Act have stipulated Up-Gram sabha (wardwise) meetings to be held at fixed intervals, which should help with local participation.

The level of participation, the regularity of attendance and the representation of poorer sections and women will define the strength of the PRIs. But on a big format even at the panchayat ward level it is very difficult for ordinary people particularly women to articulate their interests in an intelligent and informed way. The question, therefore, is whether the ward is an appropriate level (geographic and population wise) to really facilitate active participation by voters?

The state PFM Rules recognise this difficulty and provide for VFDSs to be formed panchayat wardwise and/ or of about 100 households. Further, the organisation of smaller interest groups like SHGs has been encouraged.

Whilst village forest institutions have generally proven themselves effective in addressing local concerns, it remains to be seen how their capacity to implement policies from the state level will evolve. As far as is known, they have not been consulted in policy formulation or implementation. Local institutional capacity is likely to develop in line with the broader trend towards decentralisation through Panchayati Raj. It becomes imperative to ensure that the local institutions reach the basic level of institutional and financial sustainability. This is important to enable these institutions to function as development agencies rather than politically motivated extensions of government programmes. Powerful elements within village institutions have considerable influence amongst political leaders and any decision regarding development work in the village needs their approval: this may have positive or negative ramifications.

Local forest based institutions have in them immense potential to contribute in real terms to forest based livelihoods. One such way could be that as part of the strategy of various projects, promoting forest and other land based activities can be an important overall objective. Secondly, these institutions can support and assist the women's groups to take up activities like nursery raising, sericulture, cultivation and semi-processing of medicinal plants, vermi-composting etc.

Forest Cooperative Societies provide an important body of experience for reference in the development of new participatory approaches, although in the original Societies participation was limited (Sood, 1996). In view of the existence of a plethora of village level forest institutions with little clarity and financial viability in relation to forestry issues, reviving the forest cooperatives may be considered. This policy initiative could be supportive in terms of promoting rural livelihoods based on forest goods and services.

At present, devta, gaon sudhar and mandir committees do not play any role in forest based livelihoods, but their membership is influential at the local level. There is potential for them to influence forest protection related decisions, promoting and facilitating the acceptance of various forest based livelihoods and also to support the marketing of produce. Devta committees are being registered under the Societies Act 1860 since 1997 and some of them are also getting transferred to the *Kardaars* (managers). There are cases where *Kardaars* have got the land transferred in their names, treating it as personal property.

Recently some youth groups have become involved in ecotourism activities, especially in GHNP area, but prior to this initiative no such involvement was seen. Similarly, the women's self-help groups are being encouraged to take up nursery raising of medicinal plants, these initiatives have been taken by both the HPFD and local NGOs. However, this also cannot be

attributed to any broad strategy or policy decision.

The mela committee could be an important institution that may support marketing in the local fairs (these are common occasions at village level), more so as usually these fairs are associated with some celebration of *Devta/ Devi*.

A new role for gram panchayats could be the promotion of ecotourism in panchayats, which already has a supportive policy in place in the state. Women and youth can work out livelihood strategies with the mela/ devta/ gaon sudhar committees and the panchayat could be used to develop the area using the resources available through various departments such as tourism, rural development, forests, district lead banks⁴⁶, etc. These resources should primarily be used for creating infrastructural development in villages, such as developing viewing spots, accommodation in private houses, water points, small markets, toilets, transport, ropeways, ponies, taxis, camping facilities, guides, local cuisine, promoting local folk traditions, handicrafts etc.

However there remains a real danger of duplication of effort by local institutions. Currently the basic links between local institutions are provided by the overlap of membership and executive committee representatives. Very few formal mechanisms of institutional linkage exist; this is probably partly due to the lack of follow-up support, direction for the future and sustainability strategy in the projects that established the institutions. It is imperative that a clear inter-departmental policy on the formation of these institutions emerges with the mandate of convergence with the PRIs. Additionally HPFD has also to look into the multiplicity and nomenclature of its own institutions (at least in new projects and institutions that were created earlier) vis-à-vis other institutions and PRIs.

Recommendations

Many of the recommendations apply equally to panchayati raj institutions and specific forest institutions and other village level organisations.

- *Ensure representation of the poor and marginalised in village level forest institutions:* to date, the poorest are not well-represented in these institutions and as a consequence forest protection and regeneration activities have not adequately reflected their access needs, leading to a situation where livelihoods may have been adversely affected (HPFD, 2000). Therefore the challenge is to work towards more balanced representation within panchayat and village forest institutions, and greater understanding within HPFD of the different livelihood needs and strategies of local stakeholder groups (Reservations in PRI elections have brought an increased focus on women and other disadvantaged sections, but beyond their entry in constitutional bodies of local governance, a lot needs to be done in terms of recognising their identity and skills as managers). This is essential to the successful implementation of Sanjhi Van Yojna. In the current situation of a proliferation of local institutions, powerful and influential individuals may dominate a number of institutions; restricting the overlap of group members will facilitate access to those who are normally marginalised from such groups. That said, despite the problems of proliferation, local institutions do serve to ensure a certain level of participation in local decisions.
- As well as increased representation, there is a need to ensure *a real voice and participation* of the poor and marginalised – this means building the confidence required to participate, and fostering leadership skills. An example of where this approach has been successful is in the Lag Valley, where organisers of women's self-help groups are encouraged to attend panchayat/ Up Gram Sabha meetings.

⁴⁶ Areas of operation are divided amongst banks and the district 'lead' bank is that bank responsible for a particular district.

- *Realising the potential of village forest institutions:* At the local level, there is potential for village forest institutions to take on new roles especially in terms of supporting rural livelihoods beyond forests. Proliferation of village-level institutions may be addressed by the further strengthening of the PRI structure, although it remains to be seen what are the best mechanisms – and where is the appropriate capacity – for local policy implementation. There is a real danger that too much will be expected from PRIs before sufficient support and time has been given to enable enhanced capacities. In particular there is a need to develop skills in institutional building, leadership, decision making, conflict resolution and good financial management practices.
- As responsibility is increasingly decentralised to panchayats there is a need for *clarity of respective roles* at community and HPFD levels. HPFD roles need to evolve to complement those (potential roles) of local institutions – moving away from controlling and directing use of the forest resources towards supporting and advising local bodies, and provision of technical knowledge. This loss of perceived power is a big challenge to some staff and a huge change to traditional roles – most foresters feel less powerful. At the same time, the opportunity to have real dialogue with the FD is a big change for community members. Capacity building needs to take place in parallel for local institutions and government bodies.
- So far, the role of PRIs are an expression of panchayat level governance (notably *not* at village level), but there is much scope for *PRIs to strengthen rural livelihoods*, such as through exploring diversification of forest based livelihoods to provide alternatives for the rural poor. PRI committees – such as the forest committees that exist on paper – should play an important role here.
- The process of preparing and supporting *micro-plans under Sanjhi Van Yojna* may be improved through including the mapping of policies and institutions, and defining roles and linkages of different stakeholders as part of the planning process; and by diversifying the financing of micro-plans so ensure support beyond short term schemes and projects
- Involvement of NGOs and CBOs as a strategy is good but their role should be seen beyond awareness generation and the implementing arm under different schemes as the catalysts in sustaining the interventions beyond the stipulated project period. However, government officers by and large are skeptical of involving NGOs/ CBOs and even where they do, it is with a high level of government monitoring (or as some contend, interference). Most projects – including SVY - do not provide for capacity building of NGOs/ CBOs. Primarily in HP the NGOs are dependent on government programmes for their survival as there is very limited donor interest in the state and only a few big NGOs are able to access long term funding. Hence whenever some funds are available, the NGOs start working in that very sector. So there is more potential with the CBOs to take up awareness activities and support the NGOs operating in the area, while the role of NGOs needs to be seen as different from that of CBOs, as implementers.

As regards equity issues and how they may best be addressed within participatory forestry programmes - the PFM Rules and SVY guidelines 2001 are designed to address issues of equity. The Executive Committee of a VFDS is to have 50 per cent women, and SCs and the poor are to be adequately represented. However, while regulations and guidelines may provide a framework, ultimately it is the people who make institutions work. The key to more equitable access and distribution of forest resources lies in the efficacy of representation of SCs and other marginal groups in the village society. Even when there is adequate representation of such groups, it is their collective ability to be heard and to be involved in decision making at the local level that will impact issues of inequity. It is a question of how much, how well and for how long are the marginalised groups able to negotiate (and with success) with dominant interest groups in the VFDSs or panchayat and within the larger

village society. To begin and sustain this process would entail continual capacity building of different interest groups and leadership development within each group.

It is somehow presumed by people in government and PRIs that equity will be taken care of once there is plenty of everything for everybody – without any differentiation between the requirements of specific groups such as women. There is much to be done on equity and gender issues, sensitisation and factoring these into micro-plans and quality assessment methods: principally this needs to cover better organisation and capacity and leadership building in small, cohesive interest or user groups particularly of women.

5.3 How can demand for forest products developed by poor people be improved?

- How may an enabling environment for small enterprises be fostered? What are the roles of policies and institutions (including markets) in generating opportunities for improving livelihood security on an equitable basis through such enterprises? What are the potential uses of forest goods and services and how can they contribute more to sustainable livelihoods in HP? How may lessons from existing small enterprise development in HP best inform further initiatives?

There are two projects based on the livelihoods-first approach currently in operation in Kullu. One is in the eco-zone of the GHNP through a local NGO called SAHARA while the other works in Lag Valley through a women's organisation called JAGRITI. In both projects, group income generation activities are being promoted. However, the scope for individual enterprise development especially among poor people appears to be extremely limited simply because there are no local markets that can absorb goods produced in household enterprises. What does seem to work, however, are *low investment group enterprises*. In both projects mentioned above, group activities like vermi-compost production, wild apricot seed collection, sale and value addition and growing of high value medicinal plants have shown promise. Precisely because these are group enterprises and involve poor women, better marketing investment such as drying, storage, semi-processing, oil extraction and attempts to sell in places like Delhi become feasible because viable quantities are involved and individual risk is minimised. Likewise investment in continual skill up-gradation becomes cost effective.

- Support for establishing *low investment group enterprises* with value addition, marketing investment and skill up-gradation can bring real benefits to poor women. A good example of this is given in box 17.
- The Industries Department should be involved by HPFD to support forest based small scale units – such as furniture, handicrafts and sawmills - and developing small market zones to provide direct access to markets outside. This will provide the poorest opportunity to earn a regular income through small income generation activities.

In the case of GHNP community based ecotourism has also shown much potential and promise. Guides, cooks, porters, etc. are selected from households of group members and are trained and then deployed with visitors, trekkers and campers entering the national park. This ensures that alternate livelihood options are developed for poorer households living around the park and that their stake in ecotourism is enhanced; this also increases incentives to conserve local traditions, culture, heritage and environs, as these would be seen as aiding the local economy rather than impeding it. In the development of this approach the policy guidelines of the FD need to be explicit and not dependent on the attitude of the current incumbent. GoHP has issued an ecotourism policy (as developed by the HPFD) that promotes livelihood enhancement of local communities around Protected Areas. In tourism, however, despite policy prescriptions the challenge is how to retain and enhance the stake of poorer local communities as against the interests of an entrenched,

capitalised, tourism industry?

- There is much potential for *ecotourism* in HP, as shown by the early promise of initiatives in GHNP. Currently the initiative at state level is mainly with HPFD, although there is rivalry between the HPFD and the Tourism Department for taking the credit. Ecotourism societies (see box 19) are key institutions in the new policy: income remains with the societies (this is already happening in GHNP, where all entry fees accrue to the society) and there is provision made in the structure for it to be equitable. There is a clear role for VFDSs, which can operate as ecotourism societies as well. This is a new initiative and monitoring and feedback will inform future expansion of ecotourism activities.
- There is currently a 25 per cent subsidy on setting up industry, which large hoteliers are quick to avail themselves of. In theory it is possible for Ecotourism Societies to apply for the same subsidy: assistance to the Societies will be required to facilitate this.

It appears that there is a significant potential market for medicinal herbs, although at present middle men collect herbs from villagers at nominal prices much lower than market rates. However, the biggest jump in prices is between exporters and foreign buyers – the increases between middlemen are more gradual.

- Local people know that medicinal herbs are of fundamental importance both as herbs and for income generation but have detailed knowledge on the uses of only a few of the more popular herbs. Provision of *information on the identification and scope for using a broader range of herbs* would encourage potential income generation, but at the risk of depleting resources if not complemented by an *in situ* conservation strategy.
- *Local level value addition* to medicinal plants is vital to ensure that villagers derive real benefits beyond the meagre income from collection. However, this must be managed carefully on the supply side, to ensure a diversity of produce. The industry link is very important for providing security such as guaranteed purchase and prices. Any strategic intervention has to come from industry; whilst at the government level - particularly the HPFD and Ayurveda Department – can encourage such interventions in value addition and semi-processing.
- *Local level marketing of medicinal plants* are key to ensuring benefits to local communities. Provision of warehousing and other infrastructural support can be developed with the help of HPMC, NABARD, SGSY and SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India). Access to information on marketing opportunities can be provided by FD and the support NGOs operating in the state.
- *Local institutions* for processing and marketing medicinal plants will enable poor collectors of medicinal plants to market them collectively rather than as individuals at the mercy of middle men. These issues of scale are particularly significant if products are developed with industrial linkages: co-operatives, which already operate successfully for agricultural products – are potentially useful institutions for this purpose.
- *In situ conservation* of medicinal herbs to both conserve resources and maintain important sources of income to local collectors is vital. Wild collection is a livelihood activity and will remain so until alternative livelihood opportunities are provided to poor people who depend on such extractions to earn their meagre cash income. *Ex situ* conservation, while perhaps appropriate and practical for a few species, will tend to favour wealthy farmers and industry.
- The *Medicinal Plants Board* should be in a position to provide the policy direction and

support that many of these recommendations require. The Board was specifically set up to assist with promotion of marketing of medicinal plants, including *in situ* conservation for restricted sustainable harvesting, as well as promotion of co-operative efforts among collectors and growers and assistance with storage, transport and marketing. It also aims to support value addition, semi processing of produce of medicinal plants cultivated under Vanaspati Van schemes with a view to ensuring availability of medicinal plants and coordinating all matters relating to their development and sustainable use. So far, the MPB's focus has been on cultivation; out of 100 projects already awarded, just 13 are in forest areas, the rest are in agricultural areas. Three small projects have been awarded to HPFD in HP: two in GHNP and one in Sundernagar.

- A revamped NTFP policy, creating conditions that enable medicinal plant collectors to harvest, process, and market them, could open up attractive income and employment opportunities in remote high altitude areas. Protecting the IPRs of communities with indigenous knowledge about medicinal plants will contribute to assuring them substantial benefits from biotechnology development instead of all the benefits being cornered by private industrial interests.
- The application of biotechnology to the cultivation of aromatic and medicinal plants has become a priority for the state government. This presents an ideal *opportunity to present and discuss* how best to enable the development of medicinal plant resources to contribute to livelihoods of the poorest. The state Medicinal Plants Board might provide an appropriate venue for such discussions.
- There is scope for promoting forest based handicrafts as a viable livelihood activity especially for women and youth. Jewellery, wood based crafts, textiles and artefacts that are made using natural dyes, fancy items like folders, pen stands, file covers, etc. There is a market available, in fact during the tourist season, there is a lot of demand for wood craft which is usually brought from Saharanpur in U.P. and sold in the name of products from H.P. Primarily vocational and skill trainings need to be imparted to youth and rural SHG women groups.
- NGOs could provide linkages between traders and community groups/ self help groups. However other support such as capacity building and developing those linkages should be provided by the market, as practised in GHNP through SAHARA. Furthermore, there are real roles for the much maligned middlemen, or traders, to improve marketing. It has been a consistent policy and attitude failure that has not enrolled or coopted these key stakeholders into supporting sustainable NTFP management.

5.4 How to improve big policy frameworks in favour of forestry's contribution to sustainable livelihoods?

- *How may 'livelihoods thinking' be installed in policies and institutions?* How can policy processes most effectively take into account the livelihood strategies and needs of the poorest? How can newly proposed policy mechanisms be infused with livelihoods-oriented policy positions? How can a livelihoods approach be used as a catalyst for state-level departmental coordination? What or who are the 'champions of change', and how do they create change? How can the poorest be supported in increasing positive change?

The state government is in the process of restructuring its forest policy and programmes to shift the focus from sustainable development to sustainable livelihoods for forest dependent communities. The new forest policy being worked out by the state will be based on ground realities and recognise the fact that causes of deforestation lie outside the forestry sector. Unless there is a commonality and convergence of other departments concerned, the forest

resources cannot be conserved.

The state government has set up a policy development and planning unit (PAPU) under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary to ensure inter-sectoral coordination. It is felt that the plethora of village committees set up under different programmes have caused bottlenecks at the grassroots level where committees have been set up for the implementation of schemes related to education, forestry, health, social security and rural development. These single-issue committees were more often than not found to be working at cross-purposes. The new DFID project will work on the premise that instead of setting numerous lopsided committees, the departments should work out strategies of integrating with Panchayati Raj institutions. The state also plans to introduce the concept of green accounting to help evaluate intangible benefits of forests like water, purity of air, cultural and heritage value, ecotourism and soil conservation. So far only forest produce is accounted for.

After the Green Revolution, agricultural policy with its single minded stress on increasing food productivity and production has, it is now widely acknowledged, done considerable damage to the status of natural/ forest resources (including biodiversity) generally and at the ecosystem level to several life support systems. But agriculture policy like most others in the country serve to protect the interests of the rich rather than promote the interests of the poor in whose name they are promulgated. This calls for a virtual policy reversal that can only be achievable through a staggered, bottom up approach. In political terms it would mean making democracy work at the grassroots level.

Discussion on the role and efficacy of PRIs indicates that the path to make the voice of the poor heard and acted upon may begin with something as small as a poor women's saving and credit group. A key to institutional receptivity to such groupings lies in the response of the front line worker/ official of Government and of the PRI itself.

Positive and empathetic response to interests of the poor cannot be expected only by "orientation or training" of field staff and officers of government departments. At the macro-level, structural changes and fiscal reform processes seem to flow and ebb with the *champions of change* associated with them (though ruling governments continue to claim credit); and as experienced within small groups like women's savings and credit groups, change seems to be related to the quality of leadership. In groups with strong leadership, achievement across a range of desirable indicators is quicker and possibly more sustained. Most capacity building interventions while they are broad, fail to even mention, let alone address as crucial a requirement for change as leadership development. The HPFP that ushered JFM in HP, sadly did not leave behind "leaders or champions of change" in the FD or among the VFDCs despite enormous investment in capacity building.

It would seem logical then that as groundwork on lines of group organisation and development among the poor proceeds, it needs to be sustained by champions of change. This appears critical to negotiating the "share" in decision making at the group, hamlet, village, panchayat and other levels whether on allocations for natural resource development or conservation in micro-plans or the choice of species to be grown in nurseries and subsequently planted by the FD; on whether closures will affect the livelihood options of poor graziers or who will be elected the member secretary of the local VFDS? With champions of change policy processes would tend to be internally driven, a requisite that appears essential for evolution of policies that adapt to change.

- There is a need to identify, promote, train and encourage "*champions of change*" within the government and outside. Part of this is the development of leadership skills, both at community and state levels.

Some of the legal framework within which forest sector policies reside is in critical need of

being updated – for example the Forest Act of 1927 is still in force. In bringing policies and legislation up to date there is an excellent opportunity to install livelihoods thinking, and to include mechanisms for monitoring, reviewing and modifying policies as local level information becomes available. Within HP, there are plans to develop a state forest policy, and HPFD will have a major role in this.

- *Develop policy research capacity within HPFD:* currently there is no provision or structure for policy research, despite (some) research capacity and experience amongst its staff. Thus there is little internal tracking of the impacts of forest policies, or of other sectoral policies, on forest-based livelihoods. Individuals within the department have benefited from training, sabbaticals and support for postgraduate research, but on returning to the department they can find themselves appointed to positions in which their new skills are not applicable, and the lack of merit-based incentives stifles motivation.
- *Encourage intra- and inter-sectoral policy links:* these are key issues in addressing a livelihoods approach, in terms of identifying what policy affects other assets or capitals, which in turn influence the capability of natural resources to contribute to livelihoods. In HP, economic development and rural livelihoods in forested areas are the concern of many departments, and greater inter-sectoral coherence is needed at both state and local levels. To date this has been limited but is improving. If implemented, some of the FSR recommendations should assist such coherence. Collaboration between sectors will be enhanced by clarifying division of responsibilities. During the Forest Sector Review, the links between forestry and other sectors were increasingly appreciated by HPFD staff, resulting in a call for a vision for balanced land use, possibly even a land use policy. Perhaps of most importance for forest-based livelihoods are policy links between the Forest Department and the Department of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, given the key role that PRIs are set to play in village level forest management and development issues. Also of particular importance is the issue of water: shortages are increasing, yet although more funds are pumped in each year, much is diverted to private farms.

The HPFD's primary objective has always been conservation, protection and preservation of the forest wealth, with a focus on the *forest as a resource* as the single most important aspect. Consequently the role of the personnel emerged that of the *protector* and *policing* became their style; foresters were regarded as a cadre that specialised in fault finding and punishment. With recent changes such as the introduction of PFM and the spread of PRIs, and an increased focus on involvement of community through village level institutions in protecting and managing forests, the HPFD is regarded somewhat more positively by local communities. There is, however, some way to go. Almost by default, HPFD has acquired a major potential role in rural development, given that its staff (more so than those of any other department) are posted in all parts of the state, even the remote areas. To fulfil this potential role, there is a need for HPFD staff to develop more broad-based skills than forestry. This also presents an opportunity for HPFD to develop and improve communications with local communities under participatory forestry. However the HPFD has no sectoral responsibility for rural social development, and there is a need for closer cooperation with other departments, and perhaps to introduce a greater element of local development into HPFD's work.

- *Develop a service-oriented approach within the HPFD:* there is an increasing trend towards balancing the traditional 'control' function of policy and legislation with more 'enabling' policy and legislation. Examples of this are developments in the framework for participatory forest management and devolving responsibility to local institutions. There are certainly individuals within the department who are keen to foster and promote a livelihoods-first approach, but they are constrained by institutional inertia and by those who opt for a more cautious approach. Devolution of power and responsibility presents a threat to traditional power structures, and unsurprisingly, this continues to be resisted by

many forest bureaucrats – although a slow attitudinal change is apparent among many officers and the overall relationship between foresters and villagers has improved in many areas. Devolution of power also an opportunity to develop new skills and roles. In particular, the HPFD has a responsibility to provide technical support and provision of policy information, and in a way which is responsive, communicative, and which involves local people in planning and implementation to local forest institutions. Clarification of new roles following decentralisation of power must ensure that local level institutions and state level departments complement one another. There are significant parts of the state level bureaucracy that are resistant to such local level empowerment, but the process is backed by countrywide change under the Constitution.

There are opportunities to overcome some of the constraints to the HPFD's capacity to implement participatory forestry policies. HPFD staff are transferred between posts with great frequency, thus there is a need for good reporting and learning mechanisms to ensure continuity and build on experience. A significant percentage of the staff are due to retire in the next few years – although this could be seen as an opportunity to develop new attitudes and skills supportive of participatory forestry, provided training for the new intake is tailored accordingly. In particular, the recently completed Human Resources Development strategy for HPFD puts much focus on the need to improve the gender balance, and gender awareness, within HPFD; and HPFD is actively attempting to recruit more women at the lower levels⁴⁷.

The findings of this research clearly reflect that the vision, mission and goals of policies affecting the forest sector are well defined; however, discussions with local people reveal that there is a wide gap in awareness and understanding about institutions and policies affecting forest based livelihoods. This highlights the alienation and lack of involvement of communities in both policy making and implementation. Communities remain as passive beneficiaries.

- Dissemination of *information on policies to the local level* is necessary to overcome what, in some areas, seems to be a complete lack of awareness among villagers on policy interventions of the government. The recently established (but as yet inactive) circle level fora will be able to play a key role in this. Clearly the information must be disseminated in a way that is appropriate for local communities, and which illustrates the benefits to be accrued from implementation of those policies.

Donor projects have been seen to bring real change and, in specific areas, to bring about improvements to livelihoods – for example, in IWDP, GHNP and IGCP. Approaches taken have not, however, been fully mainstreamed, and there has been duplication of effort and institutions. There is also a culture of dependence on government and development agency interventions for development needs at the local level – as well as by government departments on donors for financial support and the impetus to make change.

- Truly sustainable interventions are those developed within the local community, or within the government system at the state level. Support and encouragement to the local level institutions can help to foster such local interventions and the development of local enterprise. There are already some examples of successful initiatives, such as those in the GHNP or in Changar. At the state level, mechanisms recommended by the Forest Sector Review can serve to bring about continuous feedback between local information and policy development.
- There is little reservation in community involvement at the front line level, but more efforts are needed to support the middle and top level officials so that they are able to

⁴⁷ However the posts advertised for recruiting Forest Guards earlier meant for women are in fact being filled through back door regularising the daily wagers, thanks to political intervention. 102

influence pro-people policies. This relates to the earlier recommendation on supporting 'champions of change'. It is important that policies affecting livelihoods of local people be evolved based on their knowledge and skills which highlights the need for an emphasis on participatory approaches. Also the local context needs to be understood especially in terms of livelihoods systems and problems/ issues related to hills.

Overall conclusions on policy processes

- The FD's *formal territorial control, on a massive scale, is both a curse and an opportunity* for policy which can improve forest-linked livelihoods. A curse because the legacy of command and control policy is geared to environmental protection which can barely be sustained and which results in impoverishment for many. An opportunity for those who can push through new approaches, and because the FD has a wider reach through its field staff than any other sectoral department.
- It is clear that for forest-based livelihoods in HP in recent years, *much change has been catalysed by donor pressure* or by *central notifications*. Some individuals in the FD have made attempts to take the initiative within the participatory forestry approach but have been constrained by slow, inflexible administrative and institutional procedures.
- From the evidence of change in the policy arenas surrounding local government, timber distribution, joint forest management and nomadic grazing, there appear to be *several features of policy processes which make them more likely to result in benefits for poor people's forest-linked livelihoods*:
 - Elite perceptions of poor people amenable to poverty reduction (especially among elites in the FD)
 - Pro-poor coalitions with some strength within civil society
 - Elites in the larger political system competing to appeal to poor voters
 - Poor people with sufficient seats on decentralised bodies to make it necessary for leaders to create alliances with some of their representatives
- *Policy stories, rumour and bitching in the corridors of power are fundamental* to the current policy process. Individuals may spread stories of significance to policy change, although they may require years of re-telling before being accepted into mainstream thinking. Some fast-tracking is possible through: catalytic field projects which are seen to come with some political kudos attached; targeted use of literature; and experience exchanges (and the channelling the resentments of those not involved into something constructive!)
- *Interrogation of assumptions is crucial* if policy stories are to improve forest-linked livelihoods. For example, the belief that raising the rates for timber distribution rights will adversely affect the poor needs examination, and rigorous assessments (possible through community bodies like VFDSs) of the current use of TD timber is needed.
- But *producing reports on what must change may be part of the problem in itself*. Two donor-supported forestry projects in HP have so far come up with about 160 reports and an estimated 3,500 policy recommendations – mostly from consultants. FD officers are now considering hiring yet more consultants to read all these reports and draw out something useful that they can actually do.
- *Information, if well used, can help create political opportunity*. For example, sound information on timber use could help in the devolution of authority for managing TD allocation to local levels should be urged, since it is at this level that there is widespread

recognition that the system needs reforming and equitable negotiated agreements may be possible.

- The *opportunities for the Forestry Department in transferring forestry responsibilities to local government* are yet to be seized upon. Few have yet realised the chance to colonise new and important roles - technical advice, state level overview, disseminating new policy information, etc. - since the arena is still over-shadowed by perceptions of loss of power and influence. But these opportunities could be highlighted and built upon. A large proportion of FD staff are soon to retire, which presents a chance for newly recruited and promoted officers to develop these opportunities.

This partial set of conclusions reflects issues at the heart of the process of policy and institutional development, maintenance and change. There are no easy answers in intractable policy arguments. But the actions of those using the forests, and the opinions and stories of district and state level protagonists in policies and institutions, help us to see the nature of their strengths and problems, and to see how these problems might be amenable to change.

Annex 1: People consulted during the study

<i>Name, Institution, Contact details</i>	<i>Dates met</i>	<i>Remarks / Policy-livelihood issues highlighted</i>
Mr R.A. Singh, IFS, PCCF	March 2002 April 2002	Worked as CF Mandi during HPFP for 4 years, was also Director IWDP in 2001
Mr S.K. Pande, IFS, Ex PCCF	May 2001	Retired from services as IG Forests, GOI in August 2002
Dr Pankaj Khullar, IFS PCCF Wildlife	May 2001 April 2002	Eco-tourism
Mr A.K. Gulati IFS CCF Projects	May 2001 April 2002	Projects in HPFD
Mr Vinay Tandon IFS Additional PCCF	May 2001 April 2002 May 2002	'Livelihoods core group' member was CCF Projects, then CCF SVY, CCF Wildlife
Dr Hemant Gupta IFS DCF Projects	April 2002 August 2002	Policies and government orders related to forests and other line departments
Mr.Arvind Alipuria IFS CF Projects	April 2002	Now transferred as CF Chamba
Mr R.K. Sood IFS Managing Director H.P. Handlooms & Handicrafts Corporation	May 2001 April 2002 August 2002	was CF Policy and Legislation, CF Projects
Mr V.P. Mohan IFS Retired PCCF	May 2001 and onwards	Coordinated FSR
Dr. Sanjeeva Pandey IFS Director, Gt Himalayan National Park, Kullu	August 2002	Possible 'livelihoods core group' member
Dr S.S. Negi IFS CF Nahan	August 2002	Ex-Director IWDP Possible 'livelihoods core group' member
Ms Anu Sharma IFS DFO Chamba	August 2002	Possible 'livelihoods core group' member
Mr Alok Nagar IFS DFO Wildlife, Chamba	August 2002	Possible 'livelihoods core group' member
Dr Sushil Kapta – APD, IWDP Nahan	April 2002	Possible 'livelihoods core group' member
Mr.R.K.Gupta,IFS Director IWDP, Solan	April 2002	Nomads in IWDP
Ms.Archana Sharma, IFS, DFO Working Plan & PDC, IWDP, Solan	April 2002	Income Generation Activities in IWDP
Dr.V.R.R.Singh, IFS DCF, IWDP Solan	April 2002	Sustainability of village institutions in IWDP Now transferred as CF Rampur
Mr Nagin Nanda IFS HP State Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Board	May 2001	
Mr.Deepak Sanan IAS	May 2001	Ex-Sec Institutional Finance
Pt Sukh Ram Chairman, Employment Generation	May 2001	

Mr.Tarun Kapoor IAS Director, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Dept	May 2001	Now transferred to NJPC
Mr.Kewal Sharma, District Panchayat Officer – Headquarter, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Dept	August 2002	Key staff in deptt was part of PR Act formulation and subsequent amendments
Mr.R.K. Bhota, Legal Assistant, Headquarter, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Dept	August 2002	H.P Panchayati Raj Act for Scheduled Areas
Mr S.S. Negi, Secretary Appeals, Labour, Employment and Technical Education	March 2002	Ex-Sec Revenue
Mr V.C. Pharka – Director Tourism	April 2002	Eco-tourism
Ms Gouri Director, SIDT, & Dr. Sushil Mudgal SIDT 244 Sector 4, MDC, Panchkula, Haryana	May 2001 onwards	SIDT is a support NGO working in HP, Punjab & Haryana in north-west region. It was part of FSR process and facilitated part study on Village Institutions
Mr. Prashant Negi Consultant SIDT & Researcher	February 2002 onwards	Secondary data collection & analysis
Mr. Yashwant Harta- Fieldwork coordinator SIDT		Primary data collection & analysis
M/s Virender Bisht, Devi Prakash, Pramod Kumar, Vivek Gupta Field investigators SIDT	February 2002 onwards	Primary data collection
Mr. Harish Kumar Sociologist, SIDT	February 2002 onwards	PRA & Nomad study
Mr. Anurag Sharma Field Coordinator, SIDT	February 2002 onwards	Nomad study
Dr Kinsuk Mitra and Mr Sushil Saigal Winrock International – India	May 2001 and onwards	
Dr James Mayers IIED	May 2001 and onwards	Study coordination & discussions
Ms.Elaine Morrison IIED	May 2001 and onwards	Study coordination & discussions
Mr. Kevin Crockford DFID Livelihoods Adviser (forestry)	May 2001 and onwards	
Dr Virinder Sharma DFID Environment Adviser	May 2001	
Mr.Rajeev Ahal Navrachna	May 2001	Now working with IGCP
Silvio de Curtins (now left) Indo-German project	May 2001	
Dr. Tej Partap Vice Chancellor CSK Agric University, Palampur	May 2001	

Mamta Chandar Consultant	April 2002 onwards	Key Institutional Profiles and their links; prepared field handbook on Natural Resource Dependence of Rural Communities
Dr. Kuldeep Tanwar IFS Director, State Resource Centre, Shimla	May 2002	On deputation work for HGVS - literacy
Mr.KC Sharma IFS retd.	April 2002	Ex-CF. Was Coordinator HFRI
Mr.D.P.Gupta IFS retd.	April 2002	Ex-CCF
Mr. Jitendra Sharma – IFS Subject Matter Specialist (Forests), Punjab	May 2002	Working for PhD on policy issues – forestry. Was in IGCFRE Dehradun as Assistant Director General
Dr.S.P. Bhardwaj Agro-forestry Specialist, College of Forestry, Univ. of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni	May 2002	Community Forestry
Dr. I.P.Sharma, Coordinator, State Watershed Group Univ. of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni	May 2002	Watershed Management and Rural Communities
Mr. Surinder Kumar, IFS Director, HFRI, Shimla	August 2002	Research on forestry
Mr.K.S.Thakur, IFS, DCF, HFRI, Shimla	August 2002	Research on forestry
Dr.K.S.Kapoor, Sr.Scientist, HFRI, Shimla	August 2002	Research on forestry
Mr. M.P.Sharma RO, GHNP, Kullu	August 2002	Dependence of rural community on forests goods and services/ NTFPs
Mr.H.L.Rana, RO, GHNP, Kullu	August 2002	Eco-tourism/ TD/NTFPs in Kullu
Mr.Sharma, RO, IWDP, Nahan	April 2002	Livelihoods and settled Gujjars
Mr. Omchand Chauhan Forest Guard, Ambota	April 2002	Dependence on forests
Ms.Nirmala Dolta, Participatory Development Facilitator, IWDP, Jabli	April 2002	Women & rural livelihoods
Mr.J.S.Mankotia, RO,IWDP,	April 2002	Forest based livelihoods in Shivaliks
Mr. Rajinder Chauhan Director SAHARA, Kullu	August 2002	NGO working with GHNP Women SHGs and Forest based livelihoods
Mr.Vinod Tewari, IFS DFO, Parvati, Kullu	August 2002	Forests based Livelihoods in Kullu
Mrs.Vijaylaxmi Tewari, IFS, DFO Working Plan, Seraj Division, Kullu	April 2002	Micro-planning and Working plan
Mr.V.P.Pathania, RO, Sarahan, Shimla	April 2002	Horticulture and Forests
Dr.Hemant K. Badola, Scientist, Conservation of Bio- Diversity G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment Kullu	August 2002	Medicinal Plants

Dr. S.C.R. Vishwakarma, Coordinator Scientist, G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment Kullu	August 2002	Forest Ecologist, Land and Water Management Expert
Mr. Jitendra Singh Butola, Research Fellow, G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment Kullu	August 2002	Pursuing PhD on Medicinal Plants
Mr.B.D.Sharma, Chief Engineer, Parvati HEP Project Sainj,	August 2002	HEP projects and its effect on forest wealth
Ms.Sheetal, HRG, Kullu	August 2002	NGO working in Lagh valley with women groups on Medicinal plants in Kullu

Annex 2: State-level and district-level interview checklist

Questions need to be asked, in ways appropriate to the type of interviewee, for all the issues listed below. Several underlying questions also need to be kept in mind and used to further analyse all the issues (these underlying questions are noted below the issues list):

Issues checklist for investigation through individual interview or focus group discussion, and possible **methods** to use:

Issues	Possible method
<i>Interviewee/group's own role</i> – general perspective and relation of the interviewee or group to forest-linked livelihoods	Ask questions, write notes on answers, including interesting quotes
<i>Institutions</i> - major institutions which affect forest-linked livelihoods, their types and strengths of influence and the relationships between them	Ask questions, write notes on answers, including interesting quotes
<i>Policies</i> - major rules, orders, guidelines, policies, acts, licences and other decisions which affect forest-linked livelihoods (including those from beyond HP – other states, national government and international), their types and strengths of influence and the relationships between them	List institutions, policies, economic decisions and programmes identified, then rank them according to their strength of influence, then diagram them.
<i>Economic decisions</i> - subsidies, support prices, procurement practices and other economic decisions which affect forest-linked livelihoods, their types and strengths of influence and the relationships between them	Possible diagrams include Venn diagrams with positions of circles/other shapes showing relative strength and relationships of influences, and with connections between influences described (including whether positive or negative)
<i>Programmes</i> - projects (including donor supported), industrial investments/ development initiatives and other programmes which affect forest-linked livelihoods	Concentric circles of influence diagrams
<i>Local level institutions</i> (if not covered in responses to questioning on earlier issues) – influence of panchayats, cooperatives, mahila mandals, etc, and business houses, local industries, contractors etc	<p>For key influences identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Power mapping over time – Force-field analysis – Cause-effect diagrams <p>For key examples of forest-linked livelihoods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cobweb of policies and institutional influences
<i>Markets for forest products</i> – types and key players involved e.g. contractors	Ask questions, write notes on answers, including interesting quotes
<i>Non-forest markets</i> which affect forest-linked livelihoods (e.g. changes in apple packaging and price competition, emergence of alternatives/new versions of forest products)	Diagramming market chains and influences on them
<i>Influences on enterprises</i> – above-listed types of influence shaping enterprises/businesses based on forest products - value-adding / processing / transport / storage / licensing – opportunities and constraints	

<p><i>Processes</i> – ways in which key institutions, policies, economic decisions, programmes and markets have developed – who has been involved in making decisions, through what means, and what has happened in practice</p>	<p>Ask questions, write notes on answers, including interesting quotes</p> <p>Power mapping over time</p>
<p><i>Informal ‘policies and institutions’</i> – verbal decisions and informal arrangements and groups (e.g. peer groups which cut across formal institutions), which affect forest-linked livelihoods, both positive and negative e.g. based on corrupt practice</p>	<p>Influences on a decision</p> <p>Stories</p>

Underlying questions – which need to be considered in investigating all the above issues:

1. What livelihood **assets** are policy influences actually affecting (i.e. which of the five types of asset: human, natural, social, financial and physical/infrastructural)? [factor in vulnerability etc, and environmental services, here?]
2. How have the influences changed over **time** (e.g. many years ago, more recently) and how will they change in the future (particularly forest policy influences)?
3. What are the **direct and indirect** aspects of these influences (e.g. change in tree-use or change in grazing pattern which in turn affects tree-use)?
4. Which **‘level’** do the influences operate – (see concentric circles of influence idea) - access to assets, development of assets, markets for developed assets and/or wider enabling environment
5. What influences stem from **non-governmental and private sectors** (i.e. it is not just governments which develop and use policies and institutions)
6. What are the influences on livelihoods stemming from **four particular areas of policy-institutional focus**, namely:
 - Timber Distribution rights and other long-standing timber rules;
 - Panchayati Raj Institutions;
 - Sanji Van Yojna; and
 - NTFP trade rules.

- Bank lending rules and implications

Step IV – Village level Policy and Institutional influences checklist

Resource mapping will be supported by discussions on issues related to forests goods and services and the influence of policies and institutions on the use of these goods and services in livelihoods. This can lead on to forms of mapping of village institutions and policy and market influences on them, their linkages and inter-relationships - through venn diagrams and other visual means

Questions need to be asked, in ways appropriate to the type of interviewee, for all the issues listed below. Several underlying questions also need to be kept in mind and used to further analyse all the issues (these underlying questions are noted below the issues list):

Issues checklist for investigation through individual interview or focus group discussion, and possible **methods** to use:

Issues	Possible method
<i>Interviewee/group's own role</i> – general perspective and relation of the interviewee or group to forest-linked livelihoods	focus group discussions, ask questions, write notes on answers, including interesting quotes
<i>Village level Institutions</i> - major village level institutions which affect forest-linked livelihoods, their types and strengths of influence and the relationships between them influence of panchayats, cooperatives, mahila mandals, etc, and business houses, local industries, contractors etc	Village profile, ask questions, write notes on answers, including interesting quotes, Venn diagram, timeline For key influences identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Power mapping over time – Force-field analysis

<p><i>Policies</i> - major rules, orders, guidelines, policies, acts, licenses and other decisions which affect forest-linked livelihoods (including those from beyond HP – other states, national government and international), their types and strengths of influence and the relationships between them</p> <p><i>Economic decisions</i> - subsidies, support prices, procurement practices and other economic decisions which affect forest-linked livelihoods, their types and strengths of influence and the relationships between them</p> <p><i>Programmes</i> - projects (including donor supported), small enterprise development/ investments and other programmes which affect forest-linked livelihoods</p>	
<p><i>Markets for forest products</i> – types and key players involved e.g. contractors</p> <p><i>Non-forest markets</i> which affect forest-linked livelihoods (e.g. changes in apple packaging and price competition, emergence of alternatives/new versions of forest products)</p> <p><i>Influences on enterprises</i> – above-listed types of influence shaping enterprises/businesses based on forest products - value-adding / processing / transport / storage / licensing – opportunities and constraints</p>	
<p><i>Processes</i> – ways in which key village level institutions, policies, economic decisions, programmes and markets have developed – who has been involved in making decisions, through what means, and what has happened in practice</p>	<p>Ask questions, write notes on answers, including interesting quotes, focus group discussion,</p> <p>Power mapping over time</p>
<p><i>Informal ‘policies and institutions’</i> – verbal decisions and informal arrangements and groups (e.g. peer groups which cut across formal institutions), which affect forest-linked livelihoods, both positive and negative e.g. based on corrupt practice</p>	<p>Influences on a decision</p> <p>Stories</p>

Underlying questions – which need to be considered in investigating all the above issues:

1. What livelihood **assets** are policy influences actually affecting (i.e. which of the five types of asset: human, natural, social, financial and physical/infrastructural)? [factor

in vulnerability etc, and environmental services, here?]

2. How have the influences changed over **time** (e.g. many years ago, more recently) and how will they change in the future (particularly forest policy influences)?
3. What are the **direct and indirect** aspects of these influences (e.g. change in tree-use or change in grazing pattern which in turn affects tree-use)?
4. Which **'level'** do the influences operate – (see concentric circles of influence idea) - access to assets, development of assets, markets for developed assets and/or wider enabling environment
5. What influences stem from **non-governmental and private sectors** (i.e. it is not just governments which develop and use policies and institutions)
6. What are the influences on livelihoods stemming from four particular areas of policy-institutional focus, namely: **Timber Distribution rights and other long-standing timber rules; Panchayati Raj Institutions; Sanjhi Van Yojna; and NTFP trade rules.**

Annex 4: Household Checklist

- Primary, secondary and other livelihood activities and their links with forest goods and services
- % of income and amount of time spent on these livelihoods
- land ownership pattern
- change in spending pattern (past 5 years) for physical assets – land, cattle, house construction, water harvesting, agriculture equipments etc. social assets – education, health, food, marriage/functions etc.
- change in number of active working members (past 5 years)
- access to credit facilities
- change in migration pattern (out migration & in migration)
- integration with village institutions (Panchayat, SHG, mahila mandal, VDC etc.)
- role of women in decision making, dependence on forests, time spent in resource collection – fuel wood, water, fodder etc. (daily routine diagram), control over income, reproductive rights, spending priorities
- role of disadvantaged (SC/ST/OBC) in village socio-politico-economic system
- rights over resources – forests, water etc.
- change in livelihood over past 5 years with reasons
- problems related to livelihoods
- suggestions for strengthening livelihood activities and diversification
- influence of policies and institutions on household activities and plans