

## *Himalayan Heritage – Valorization & Preservation*

*Backgrounder for a multi-stakeholder consultative workshop*

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### *The Himalayas – bounty & bereavement*

The Himalayas stretches in an arc across northern India and its neighbouring countries, covering an area of more than half a million sq. km. and inhabited by more than 65 million people. The isolation resulting from steep gradients and the topographical variations have contributed to the rich biological and cultural heritage of the region and helped preserved it, making it among the last bastions of globally significant biodiversity and cultural heterogeneity.

*The Himalayas are a repository of a most valuable heritage, that is at once a treasure that enriches the region but under severe threat of erosion, and an opportunity for the development of its people that however lies untapped.*

The region is a globally recognised biodiversity hotspot with the maximum degree of endemism in all of Asia. Its great heights are a storehouse of the most rare and valuable species of medicinal and food plants that are an integral part of the culture of the local communities, woven into their lives in innumerable ways. The Himalayas are also endowed with natural beauty beyond compare- innumerable lakes and verdant forests, and rare and beautiful animal species in several protected areas. A number of tribes and ethnic groups live on the slopes and valleys of this mountain range, and have given the region a cultural wealth of great richness and diversity, with each tribe/clan possessing its own distinctive cultural heritage of architecture, arts & crafts, sports, dress & food, customs & traditions, social structure & religion, and traditional knowledge systems, such as of herbal medicine. While these cultural systems bear a striking homogeneity because of the similar geographical context, it is significantly different from the mainstream culture of the plains, and thereby unique.

The Himalayan region lies at the crossroads today, the changing environment fast enveloping it, the associated pressures leading to a loss of this rich heritage. Increasing pressure on natural resources, uncontrolled extraction of resources from the wild and degradation of natural habitats are leading to a rapid depletion of its biodiversity. Several medicinal species are endangered for instance, as the market for alternative medicine and demand from pharmaceutical industries explodes. The Himalayan cultures too are eroding as a result of increasing connectivity and the strong homogenising influence of development and urban cultures. Himalayan arts and crafts, and knowledge and practices are dying having lost the earlier held utility, and the spread of cultural forms among the Himalayan youth are on a decline due to changing value systems. The erosion of the rich cultural and biological heritage of the Himalayas needs to be addressed, by reinstating this heritage in modern Himalayan lives.

*Towards this, it is important to build socio-economic value into the various heritage forms, transforming them into income generating activities, building these intrinsic strengths into engines of growth for the Himalayan region.*

### *The Himalayan economy – a history of exclusion*

The high altitude mountain pockets of the Himalayas, stretching from J&K in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east, remain in the rain shadow area of the larger development processes of the country. The communities that inhabit this infinitely tough terrain reside in a scatter of small villages across the valleys & plateaus cut-off from the world due to climatic & infrastructural adversities. As the external world changes, in climate, technology, values, practices, the positive impacts of development have missed the Himalayan people, leaving stark gaps between these areas and the plains.

#### *Different hues of poverty and vulnerability...*

Despite their rich heritage, the people of the high Himalayas face a 'vertical gradient of poverty'<sup>1</sup> that puts 30-40% of them below the poverty line, with an average of 47% of underemployment as well. Himalayan people suffer multiple forms of poverty, exacerbated by environmental vulnerability. More than 70% of the population is engaged in the farm sector that displays low productivity and resource-intensive practices. Lack of irrigation

<sup>1</sup> Payne, Katrina, Warrington, Siobhan and Bennett, Olivia; 2002; *High Stakes - The future for mountain societies*; The Panos Institute

and limited arable land constrains cultivation of cash crops. For large number of hill farmers, shrinking cropland holdings, short growing seasons and low crop productivity, along with environmental vulnerability are key concerns for managing food and livelihoods. The altitude is also a barrier to flow of resources to the area, and the reach & quality of infrastructure and basic services of communication, healthcare, education, are very poor. In the striving for reaching the MDGs, these populations are the farthest behind and the most difficult to reach and constitute the 'last mile populations'. Human resource capacity in the Himalayas is therefore stunted, pegging down development. Road connectivity and communication services are limited. This leads to high inequality of exchange- sale of Himalayan produce at low prices, purchase of commodities from outside the region at far higher prices. Lack of economic enablers and distance from markets, place Himalayan people at a disadvantage and marginalize them in the mainstream economic processes.

### *Trade unfair...*

Rich in resources that plains communities depend on, high mountain regions are characterised by a one-way extractive pattern- they provide water, timber, minerals, to downstream people, but negligible benefits flow back to them. There is no value placed on public goods & services provided by mountains and communities do not gain from their stewardship. The economies of these regions are almost wholly primary produce based. While some Himalayan producers do trade this primary produce to distant markets, most tend to trade internally, rendering these areas closed economies. Those Himalayan producers that take their produce beyond the valleys are also unable to access adequate share of the benefits of their produce. For e.g. the Himalayas region attracts a large number of tourists every year, but Himalayan tourism players are able to retain only 10-15% of the tourism revenues in the Himalayan region, the chunk of the revenues slipping to tourism entrepreneurs outside the region. Livelihoods practiced also lack the scale that would take them to commercial/sub-commercial levels; secondary and tertiary employment sectors are non-existent in the area.

### *Cultural erosion...*

The Himalayan populations have been neglected through history as a result of the geographical barriers and the cultural dissimilarity from plains populations, the latter having contributed to a social schism, as well. The uniform, homogenizing tools of development and the influence of alternate cultures is leading to an erosion of the Himalayan cultures. While the practice of various cultural forms have died altogether and are retained only in racial memory or in documented history, many others are on a decline, limited to ceremonial, ritualistic practice. The material and skills for them are rare, and since they were handed down through the oral tradition, modes for teaching and spread are no longer there. Several arts and crafts have lost their functionality as a consequence of changing values, lifestyles, and hence lie threatened today. This has resulted in a permanent state of anxiety for the Himalayan communities.

### *Resource stress and vulnerability...*

Population in the Indian Himalayan Region has increased 2.7 times in the last 4 decades - but resources have shrunk. The Himalayas are recognized as among the 34 biodiversity hotspots of the world that are a priority for conservation action, having lost more than 70% of their original habitat. It is not that the Himalayan communities had ever lived lives of plenty, but over the years, climate change has led to a shrinking of available resource base. The increasing climatic unpredictability and frequent environmental calamities are further affecting natural resource availability and incomes. Crop diseases and death of cattle through starvation, flashflood or snowstorms are frequent, devastation due to floods/droughts recurrent. The adverse impacts of poverty are borne mostly by the women and girl children. Hence, poverty in the mountains also has a gender dimension.<sup>2</sup> Women are overburdened with household and farm chores, and this is aggravated by the high rate of migration of male members of the households degree due to under-employment.

### *The voices unheard...*

The region is characterized by very low population density with a scatter of villages on steep mountain slopes and in remote, unconnected valleys, which makes it difficult for Himalayan people to participate effectively in the socio-political processes of the nation. Their remoteness and smaller populations have the effect of excluding Himalayan communities and rendering them voiceless in democratic processes. Mountain regions are perceived as peripheral and suffer from policy and development neglect. Investments continue to be low and there are stark gaps in development. The communities remain a 'shadow population', statistically insignificant, and hence neglected by the State, their plight not evident in the larger, more positive statistical profile of the state.

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<sup>2</sup> Bhadra, B. and Khanal, N.R. (2002); *Poverty in Mountain Areas of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region*

## Heritage Based Enterprises – Opportunities and Issues

Transformation of the Himalayan economy from subsistence to self-reliant but market oriented, would occur through judicious livelihood development, in conjunction with activities aimed at broader development goals. High mountain regions have comparative advantages in the form of particular resources and skills, arising out of their unique ecology and culture. In these advantages lie the potential to produce a variety of niche products for which latent markets exist; additionally, the burgeoning tourist market in these regions has substantial consumption capacity for a range of goods & services. Significant economic benefit may be wrested by mountain communities from their specific advantages of niche products & markets. There is growing interest globally, in cultural products, that the rich Himalayan heritage could leverage. Traditional arts and crafts may be commercialized, and serve to develop local livelihoods while also providing a fresh lease of life to these cultural forms. Himalayan produce such as local herbs and fruit/nut crops could serve increasing demand for these in distant markets.

### Niche Sectors for the Himalayas

- \* Ecotourism
- \* Handloom & Handicrafts
- \* Visual arts & Performing Arts
- \* Medicinal & Aromatic Plants
- \* Agro-based products

### Handloom & Handicrafts- Comparative Advantages

- Iconography, composition, symbols and motifs used in art and craft are drawn from religions of the Himalayas
- Extreme climatic conditions and inaccessibility allows considerable time for crafts work
- Himalayas handicrafts are attuned to the materials, climate, and religio-aesthetic and lifestyle considerations of the region
- Superior craftsmanship- in bamboo & wood carving, silver and gold articles, weaving of shawls, carpets and rugs

### Ecotourism- Comparative Advantages

#### Potential destinations:

Famous ecotourism destinations- Leh, Spiti, Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Tawang.

#### Ecotourism resources:

Natural Resources – Diverse flora & fauna, glaciers, rivers, hot springs and lakes

Biodiversity Hotspot (15 National Parks & 59 Wildlife Sanctuaries)

Cultural Resources – Pilgrimage, Heritage, Performing Arts, Folklore, Festivals, Rituals, Arts and Handicrafts

Activity Resources – Homestays, Adventure Sports, Village walks, Agrotourism

### MAP and Agroproducts- Comparative Advantages

- Himalayan ecosystem is blessed with numerous and invaluable species of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAP's)
- Various well-developed practices in traditional medicines (Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, among others) based on indigenous knowledge of these plants' medicinal and healing properties
- Ideal agro-ecological conditions supporting the MAP's, agricultural and horticulture produce having high economic values
- Huge demand of Himalayan MAP's and horticultural produce

Livelihoods shaped around such products that the area/people have an advantage in could help absorb the growing Himalayan population and their needs, and would enable quicker economic growth. Micro/small heritage-based enterprises based on local cultural and natural heritage, such as the traditional arts & crafts of a region, are especially appropriate considering the local resources and strengths, as well as the constraints of low population density, poor infrastructure and resources stress in mountain regions. Such economic activities have a number of advantages: they are usually easily acceptable as occupations to the community; the skill-base and inputs required for them are amply available in the community and region; they typically do not require high technology or high investment; they are usually environmentally suitable for the region; they are suitable for home-based or small-scale enterprises and easily carried out in dispersed locales.

Value-addition to local produce and productive use of local resources of every mountain valley for unique products/services for internal and far markets, could provide alternate avenues for income generation, and also dynamise these very resources and ensure that a greater part of the benefits is retained by local communities. Thus for instance, mountain communities would have a comparative advantage in the cultivation & processing of high value medicinal plants that grow only in the rarefied atmosphere of the mountain regions, and would be able to extract a higher proportion of the benefits thereof. Enterprises that add value to Himalayan farm produce

and culture products and services could help absorb the growing unemployment and act as a potential route out of poverty. A likely spin-off is the development of secondary industries to support it, which in turn would generate additional employment. Being centred around the rich natural & cultural heritage, heritage-based enterprises (HBEs) would also have the benefit of stemming ecological degradation and cultural erosion. Occupational diversity has been found to be a significant catalyst for development of rural areas, bringing in revenues that in turn draw other constituents of development, viz, welfare services & infrastructure as well.

Yet, the disadvantages of mountain regions have meant a high leakage of revenues and inability of mountain communities to benefit from the advantages.

*Lack of economic enablers:* Entrepreneurial activities thrive in an enabling environment, which includes – capacity building initiatives, easily accessible finance, supportive government policies. Such economic enablers are singularly lacking in the Himalayan region however and this retards the growth of non-farm/value-adding enterprises and hinders occupational diversification. Entrepreneurial activity is limited and primarily through people from outside the Himalayan region.

*Skill gaps:* The insulation suffered by highland communities has meant an increasing gulf in skills & technologies. Access to training opportunities are limited for inhabitants in Himalayan districts, and exposure to improved methods and techniques non-existent. Himalayan communities remain trapped in a time-warp, unable to produce/sell value-added products or services that meet the requirements of today's customers, deriving at best, small benefits from low-end tourism employment in the flourishing tourist markets in their regions.

*Infrastructural and service gaps:* Many a Himalayan district is below the infrastructural threshold needed to enable value-addition and harness the modern markets. Power, water and sanitation in the area do not meet the needs of high-end tourists. Energy required for the processing of agricultural produce for instance is either not available or not of requisite quality. Transportation of produce is beset with problems of lack of all-weather roads. Transportation facilities and services by intermediaries are inadequate and those that are available are extremely expensive, often rendering the product non-competitive as a result.

*Isolation and distance:* Its distance from major consumption centres and the geographic and climatic factors that characterize it, isolates the Himalayan region from the rest of the world. The produce to market distance is 200-600 kilometres (not considering local markets) and several days away. The high altitude regions are cut-off during the winter months, marooned by the winter snows, often for about 3-5 months a year. Communication facilities – telephone, internet – work only sporadically and some areas do not have them at all. As a result, Himalayan people are removed from information, developments, markets and customers.

*Product and channel issues:* Traditional products are frequently not marketable in their existing forms. The problems usually lie in the loss of functionality of the traditional form in current day lives, the low productivity and quality standards against the current requirements, and the lack of marketing infrastructure and efforts. Himalayan produce is also subject to supply chain disadvantages due to lack of technical advancement and infrastructural facilities. The supply chains suffer from: dispersed production and difficulty in aggregating, lack of market related information, losses during transportation/storage, lack of post harvest facilities and others.

### ***Enterprise Clusters for the Himalayas***

Economic development efforts in the highlands need to concentrate on valorization of the local heritage, removing the bottlenecks to mountain areas' benefiting from their specific advantages of niche products & markets, and creation of business enterprises and clusters that potentiate their economic value for the region and act as engines of growth for the region. This would provide a solution both to the erosion of the Himalayan heritage as well as the economic marginalisation of the region.

Valorising local heritage calls for sound judgment, special skills and combined efforts. Each locale has its own resources and strengths, and it is important to determine these and work out the methods for utilizing and leveraging them, while also retaining their authenticity. Successful HBEs would call for well-designed products/services based on ecological/cultural niche factors, and attuned to market preferences and demands. The HBEs should also be designed for the achievement of broader development objectives, including poverty reduction, heritage conservation and the promotion of participation at grassroots in the mountain regions.

Mountain value chains require detailed contextual analysis however, since, apart from the availability of the relevant resources and skills, the constraints of remoteness and difficult access, fragile environment and high indigenous cultural & natural diversity, need to be considered in the design of viable enterprises. Sparsely populated mountain areas besides result in heterogeneous and dispersed production units and associated problems in achieving economies of scale. This makes it imperative to develop a bunch of products or services along the same value chain rather a single product or service based enterprise.

### *Clusters of Opportunity – the rationale*

Economic development efforts in the highlands need to concentrate on creation of HBE clusters for specific ecological/cultural niches. Area-specific produce such as medicinal plants and crafts, as well as ecotourism and culture-based products, can be developed as niche sector clusters in the Himalayan region with a high income and employment-generating potential. The multiplier value of business clusters is well-recognised, and when centred around local Himalayan strengths, they would contribute significantly to enhancing the economic potential and sustainable development of the region.

A cluster is an alternative way of organizing the value chain.<sup>3</sup> Geographic proximity and commonality of resources/activities would give cluster constituents the economic benefits of several positive externalities, of sharing and collaboration. Clusters facilitate - horizontal and vertical linkages, and members of a cluster are able to share activities through cooperation. They can operate more efficiently, drawing on specialized skills, common high value assets, linkage with large-scale suppliers and buyers, saving considerable effort and time. Critical resources and skills may not be owned by the members themselves but can be accessible through the networks they are part of. A direct access to buyers or even an enhanced strength through cooperative action, could also help reduce channel losses in terms of margins to middlemen, and enable the Himalayan producers to benefit from a more responsible share of the business. Studies show that members in clusters can achieve higher levels of knowledge creation and innovation due to knowledge spillovers and close day-to-day interaction between members both in terms of technical (i.e. product and process improvements) and non-technical (i.e. business model improvements) innovations. Also, these knowledge and innovations tend to diffuse quickly within the clusters.<sup>4</sup> For Himalayan clusters, forward linkages with regional techno-economic networks would ensure product-market compatibility and help maintain pace with ongoing development in the region while contributing to balanced regional growth. Vibrant, dynamic clusters act as a driving force to encourage innovation and help in developing strategies for overall economic development.

In Himalayan highlands, the productive resources are traditionally community owned, rather than privately, owned. The role of heritage-based clusters therefore, becomes extremely important in order to ensure appropriate management of common property resources, conserve the local heritage, and enhance benefits derived from these. The recommendations of Cancun International Colloquium also recognized importance of encouraging entrepreneurial development of the local cluster industries at policy level to facilitate economic development, creation of employment opportunities, and promotion of a range of productive activities – particularly by the poor and the women<sup>5</sup>.

### *Economy or Environment – the trade-off*

Economic activities are accompanied with varying degrees of environmental impacts and economic benefits. Each choice entails a trade-off and for sensitive eco-cultural zones like the Himalayas, it is imperative to select the combination of activities that minimises environmental impact and maximises economic benefit. The Agenda for Sustainable Tourism developed by UNEP and UNWTO (2005) highlights the concerns to achieve the required balance between economic principles and conservation ethics and emphasizes on *Community Well-being, Cultural Richness, Integrity of Physical Landscapes, Biological Diversity, Resource Efficiency, Environmental Purity* along with *Economic Viability* and other socio-economic concerns.<sup>6</sup> In keeping with these, the cluster-based approach blends income opportunities with development gains. A study revealed that Himalayan watersheds facing a higher degree of resource stress have a greater

*‘... fostering the health and vigour of ecosystems is one and the same goal as fostering the health and vigour of human societies, their cultures, and their languages. We need an integrated biocultural approach the planet’s environmental crisis.’*  
(UNESCO 2003)

<sup>3</sup> Porter, Michael E. (1998); *Clusters and the New Economics of Competition*; Harvard Business Review; Nov-Dec; 1998

<sup>4</sup> Söhlvell, Örjan (2009); *Clusters – Balancing Evolutionary and Constructive Forces*; Stockholm School of Economics

<sup>5</sup> Anon. (2002); *Report of the International Colloquium on Regional Governance and Sustainable Development in Tourism-driven Economies*; UNDESA

<sup>6</sup> Kruk, E., Hummel, J. and Banskota, K. eds (2007); *Facilitating Sustainable Mountain Tourism Volume I – Resource Book*; ICIMOD

amount of unproductive or less productive resources. Hence, sustainable utilization and appropriate value addition to these resources for better economic returns, will also improve the adaptive capacity of the watersheds, thus achieving the much-wanted balance.

### ***Community Based Heritage Management***

Although development of backward regions is viewed as a national responsibility, any appropriate solution cannot be successful without active participation of the local leadership and community. An understanding of local knowledge and practices is extremely important to identify what is important and can be adopted in the current Himalayan context. The Himalayan communities can respond better to the changing world and shape their own destiny in a more effective manner - if networked for solidarity and sharing, if collaborating for local level interventions and range-wide actions. They need to be involved in shaping policies and programmes that recognizes their heritage and traditional values and addresses their problems and unique conditions.

The geographical and adaptation systems of the Himalayas have helped create a 'Himalayan way of life' and a rich tapestry of traditional knowledge, spanning domains, such as architecture, medicine and agro-forestry that reflect the particular ecological conditions of the region. Capitalizing on these local strengths would also enable reducing the region's dependence on external support<sup>7</sup>. Heritage management and economic development in the Himalayas thus needs to involve local people, as they are the real 'experts' of these regions, and create a blend of traditional and modern approaches to suit regional needs.

## ***The Way Ahead***

### ***Set Himalayan Heritage at the core of all policies and plans***

The Himalayan region, till recently, has tended to remain on the periphery of policy-space. The form of development that is being instituted in the region, is also often at variance to its ethos. Policies and interventions have tended to be developed based on the more dominant lowlands and applied in high Himalayan regions, in spite of their distinctive cultures. The developmental policies and models being applied to the region need to be viewed from a broader perspective as well, in order to address intra-regional differences, and to facilitate development in tune with the local conditions. Heritage Management needs to be at the core of all activities and decision-making.

### ***Develop HBEs adopting a locale and cluster approach***

Gradual development of heritage-based enterprises and their relative success, in spite of the infrastructural lacunae and other constraints, is visible in several Himalayan districts. Farmers across the Indian Himalayas have undertaken cultivation of various horticultural crops- apples, apricots, walnuts and peaches, and some have embarked into cultivation of herbs and spices. Initiatives for heritage based tourism and marketing of agri-produce have started in isolated pockets. Heritage-based livelihood initiatives need to be undertaken at a wider (area/district) level however, and involve the creation of niche-sector clusters for a broad-based economic development of mountain regions. Cluster building is a gradual process involving capacity building and forging of collaborative relations, and the appropriate positioning of the clusters in the economic mainstream. Initiatives should weave together development and conservation elements, ensuring economic returns to the community along with sustainable utilization of the mountain resources, and the conservation and preservation of the natural and cultural heritage.

### ***Create unique heritage products along with associated local capacities***

Himalayan communities need to be facilitated to take up heritage-based industries as a measure for the continuation of traditional skills. Traditional arts and crafts, bio-products can be commercialized, and the economic motive would provide cultural actors of these traditional cultural forms with a new lease of life. Frequently this would require the traditional product/service to mutate in form. Marketability might call for a degree of modification to adapt the products/services to new user requirements and preferences. The traditional purpose, often social or spiritual, could often be overlaid by commercial considerations. The essential skills involved however, would tend to survive this route and evolve. Dynamising local resources and valorizing local heritage is contingent on the availability of adequate and appropriate skills and technologies in the Himalayan region. With due support and capacity building, local producers and cultural actors would be able to leverage on

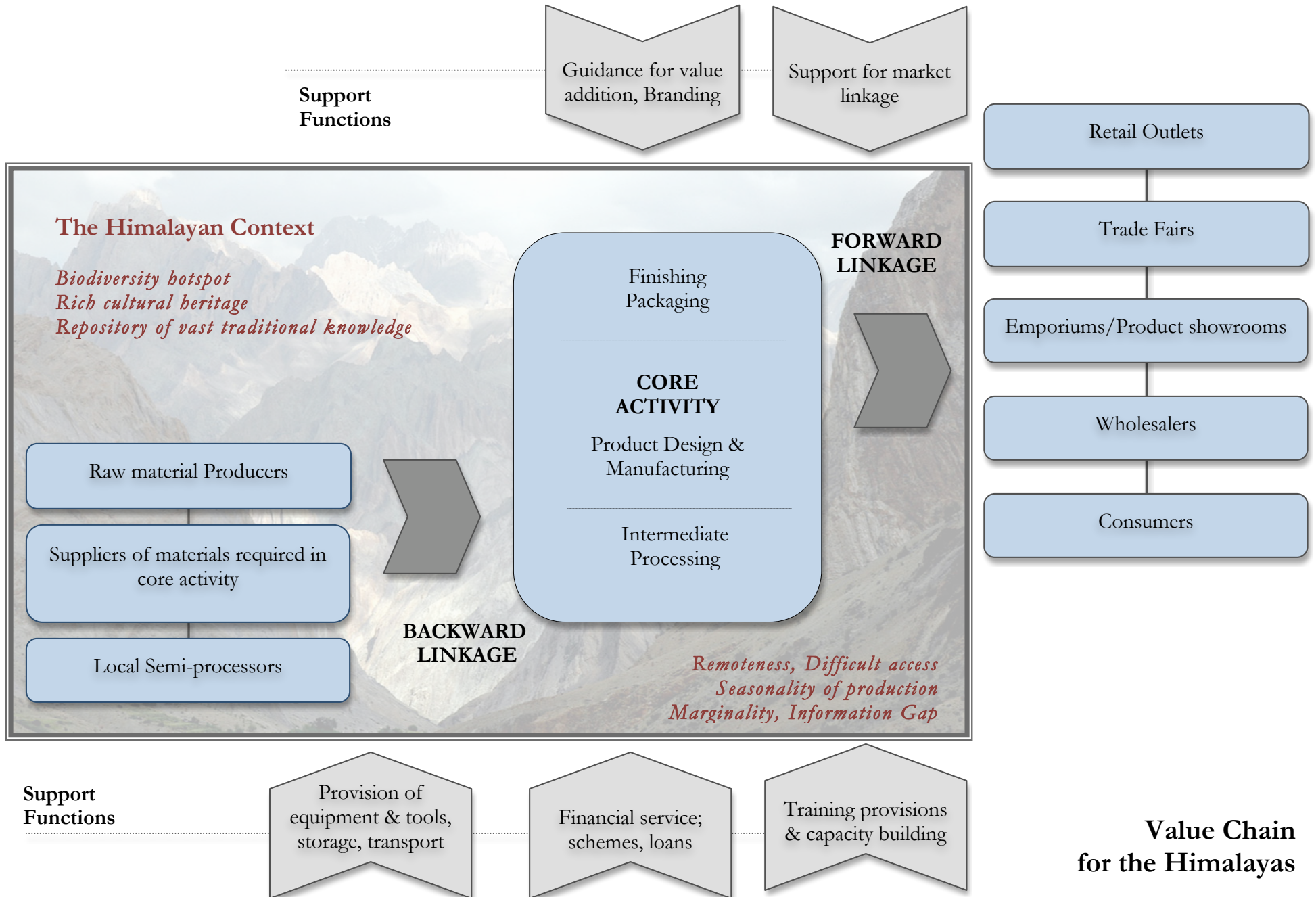
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<sup>7</sup> Kollmair, Michael; 2007; *Greater Voice for All Mountain People in the Himalayan Region*; ICIMOD, *Sustainable Mountain Development*; Vol. 52, Spring 2007; pp 4-7

opportunities and derive benefits from their heritage, adding value to local products and adapting cultural forms to current day needs and preferences. Support for cultural actors and producers of mountain goods and services would need to provide exposure, information on markets, resources, institutions etc., and training opportunities to upgrade their products and skills.

***Catalyse collaborations and networking to overcome bottlenecks and enhance bandwidth***

Networking and collaboration are valuable in remote, rural areas where capacity to engage with modern technologies, markets and institutions is lower, and where solidarity and peer-group support therefore is significant in the value it provides. This is especially true of the high altitude Himalayan region. Culture actors and natural heritage managers of the Himalayan region lack a voice in the mainstream and feel a sense of isolation owing to their smaller numbers and dispersed locations. The focus therefore, should be on developing and strengthening networks that will give them the capacity to enhance visibility and economic values of their natural and cultural heritage, to integrate these with the mainstream psyche, to be able to influence policies and bridge the gap between policy and practice. Partnerships and coalitions among cultural actors and producers of Himalayan products would help build capacity, solidarity and support. Effective marketing for heritage-based products and services of the Himalayas would need to create linkages in the national and international trade channels, as well as increased visibility and demand for these products/services. Support would also be called for to enhance demand and scale of the markets and institute responsible trade practices.



## The Pragma Approach in Livelihoods Development in the Himalayas

### Core Principles

Pragya, a not-for-profit organization, is specialized in delivering development goods in remote and difficult regions. We have been working towards enabling communities in the high altitude Himalayas (above 8,000 ft) to develop in a sustainable manner, achieve a higher quality of life and satisfaction of their aspirations. The guiding principles of the organization are: *Development without destruction* and *Empowerment for enabling choices*. Interventions include conservation of natural ecosystems, fostering ethnic/alternate livelihoods, revitalizing traditional knowledge, formation and strengthening of community based institutions and infusion of appropriate technologies. Livelihood projects being implemented by Pragya adopt a holistic and multi-dimensional approach, and comprise interventions aimed at conservation of the rich natural and cultural heritage and capacity building and facilitation of the indigenous people for heritage based sustainable livelihood options.

Key Pragya principles in livelihood development of Himalayan communities include:

**Endogenous Development:** Development of Himalayan regions needs to evolve according to their local character, appropriate to their socio-ecological context. The endogenous development approach is one that places the goal of human development beyond that of mass consumption and respects values & cultures along with economic progress. It recognizes the accumulation of human capital or knowledge as the key engine of growth for regions. Pragya emphasizes investing in local human capacities and potential towards shaping livelihoods that adhere to and optimize on the socio-cultural-ecological milieu of the Himalayan people. Rural development that is rooted in the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity can release mountain regions from the tyranny of exogenous interventions and also give these communities a voice in the mainstream politico-administrative processes of the nation.

#### We believe in . . .

**Development without destruction** ~ Pragya believes that the development of the Himalayan region needs to be closely attuned to its unique ecology and cultures. Interventions are designed combining development and conservation activities, addressing people's core needs while also helping to preserve the rich heritage of the region. Appropriate technologies are infused, blending them with the traditional knowledge of the communities.

**Empowerment for enabling choices** ~ All Pragya projects are anchored strongly with the Himalayan communities. Pragya emphasizes that local people participate in their development and take responsibility for project activities. Interventions build capacities of local people so that they can manage their cultural and natural heritage and address their development goals. Endogenous systems and organizations are also created that help address people's needs with minimal dependence on external support.

**Development cum Conservation:** In the less-developed, fragile ecosystems of the world, such as the Himalayan region, efforts towards building enterprises, should not be based on the principle of mere economic growth but be treated as means to achieve larger goals of conservation and equity. As an organization dedicated to sustainable development of fragile mountain systems and communities, Pragya ties together development and conservation elements in its initiatives, ensuring economic returns to the community along with sustainable utilization of the mountain resources, and the conservation and preservation of the natural & cultural heritage. Livelihood interventions aim to reduce overuse of natural resources by the infusion of value-addition that enable enhanced productivity of NR, as well as through change to sustainable and less resource-intensive technologies and materials. Alternate low-impact non-farm livelihoods are also facilitated that accommodate people off the land.

### Strategies for Livelihoods Development

**i. Local is Beautiful:** Economic development of mountain regions must make productive use of local resources of every valley for the creation of unique products for both internal and new markets. Pragya promotes the development of Himalayan industries that use Himalayan resources, are run by the Himalayan people, and provide maximum benefits to Himalayan communities.

**ii. Heritage Based Enterprises:** Micro or small enterprises based on the local natural and cultural heritage and suitable for home-based or small-scale enterprises, may be used for economic galvanizing of Himalayan regions. Pragya interventions involve appropriate product modification and tool upgradation along with requisite marketing towards building them as successful rural enterprise options, while also helping preserve the heritage.

**iii. Weaving Technologies:** In each livelihood intervention, Pragma assesses technologies-in-use and undertakes adaptations that blend the traditional and the modern. The adaptations are easily implementable, for they use local materials, are oriented to the unique features of the local environment and culture, and are similar to traditional techniques and hence more acceptable to the local community, while also providing quality and productivity benefits.

**iv. Capacity Building:** Pragma's capacity building inputs are multi-pronged. At an individual level, skills are developed in the particular trade, sector, product/service that is being promoted, with upgradation of competencies to align them to current-day markets and product quality. There is considerable emphasis on technology infusion and associated skill building, as well as on entrepreneurship development and infusion of basic management skills. Enterprises are facilitated with group formation, management support and all manner of linkages- with Government as well as non-government institutions and bodies for the strengthening and upgradation of enterprises.

**v. Phased Support:** Pragma assists enterprise groups with the provision of equipment and materials (looms, tourism equipment, wool, planting inputs) aligned to their seasonal production quantities and based on the performance level of each. Management, technology and business development support is likewise provided for a longish duration and while the quantum of inputs reduces with time, the nature of inputs is graded upwards as the enterprise stabilizes and grows and the capacity of the entrepreneur group is enhanced.

**vi. Fair Trade Mechanisms:** Pragma invests considerable effort in creating collaborative structures such as Self Help Groups and Cooperatives to ensure equity in trade. All Pragma-facilitated enterprise groups are also provided inputs on fair trade mechanisms, as well as assistance in sales promotion, and are networked with select partners in the market/trade channel. Fair trade is facilitated by working at the buyer end, educating industry and helping set up Responsible Trade Networks that recognize producers' rights and protect these in transactions with mountain communities.

**vii. Building Economies of Scale:** Pragma interventions are seeking to develop clusters in specific sectors, such as crafts and agro processing, in the Himalayan region. Cluster associations are created, that determine the necessary common services and/or facilities required for the cluster, such as equipment for value-addition or promotion for all cluster products/services. Such common facilities/services are then installed with cluster associations, thus helping all cluster members achieve a technology and product/service status that each would otherwise be unable to achieve. Scale building is also achieved through intensive efforts at networking and linking the cluster to market, credit and technology channels, helping it ford the barriers created by geographical remoteness and distance from enabling infrastructure and markets.

**Process of Livelihoods Development**

Our livelihood interventions follow a multi-phase development process, as follows:

