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**Title:**

**Socio-economic perspectives on the livelihood security in a changing Himachal Pradesh, India**

**Abstract**

The co-research project on 'Livelihood security in a changing socio-economic environment in Himachal Pradesh, India' gathered together around 30-35 researchers during 2009, and 2011-2015 from the University of Delhi, the University of Shimla, the Government Post-Graduate College, Chamba and the University of Turku. Our co-project was funded by the Academy of Finland. Among international articles and graduates (two Doctoral, three Licenciate thesis and five Master thesis) we presented the main findings in the project book involved 23 researchers (Singh, R.B. & Hietala, R. eds, 2014. Springer). Our results addressed the special reference to agricultural diversification, improving the land productivity, and to the wider scrutinizing of knowledge sharing, and community participation in the local carbon forestry initiatives. Also, the non-farm and tourism sector were to be tapped to ensure healthy ways of living, and the Indian NGOs were acknowledged in health and social sector. After this co-project, two Finnish doctoral studies are continuing concentrating on livelihood issues of migrating human groups which is a current phenomenon at the global level.

**Introduction**

In this co-project, the primary aspects of livelihoods that were addressed were the use of land cover among other natural resources, food, income as well as community participation in study areas in Himachal Pradesh, India. The project focused on three research tasks: 1. The roles of changing agricultural production, 2. Impacts of tree plantation activities and 3. The roles of tourism and the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on the livelihood security of the involved communities. The study approach in most studies of this project was exploratory, with a broader aim to understand

the relationships between land use patterns and livelihood within the local communities and as perceived by different groups and organizations. The methodologies deployed cover a broad range from literature-based surveys to different types of field research.

### **Towards changing agricultural production in the obtaining for livelihood security**

In mountainous Himachal Pradesh (Fig. 1), the land availability has been scattered and the small size of land holdings often leading to leave fallow. This is the challenging situation for livelihood security when at the same time there was seen in the larger farms the trend of the shifting from the cultivation of traditional crops to other crops like cash crops, vegetables, horticulture, floriculture and sericulture. During our co-project it was studied how the changing land use patterns of communities have impacts on the livelihood security in the study districts of Himachal Pradesh.

Food grain crops still dominate the cropping pattern of Himachal Pradesh, but cultivated area was slightly being diverted towards highly remunerative crops, such as fruits, off-season vegetables, and exotic vegetables during the 35-year study period (Thakur et al. 2014). These results were based on secondary data obtained from Directorate of Land Records, Horticulture and Agriculture: the percent share of total food grains in gross cropped area decreased from 91 % in 1972–1975 to 85 % in 2003–2006, and at the same time, the area under non-food grain crops has increased from 8 % to about 15 %. The similar trend of the cropping pattern change was also verified by Slariya (2014) in the districts of Kangra and Chamba in Himachal Pradesh based on the interviews of 200 respondents during 2012–2013. Slariya discovered that the farmers who have more than 2 ha of farming land are the ones changing their land use patterns; marginal farmers, having less land for agricultural activities, are not in a position to change their land use patterns. Marginal farmers still need to fulfil the needs of their families by cultivating food grains, especially wheat and maize.



*Fig. 1. The main study area located in the Himalayan foot hills, Dharamsala, India. Photo: Reija Hietala*

However, the extent of crop diversification is a visible sign of agricultural development in Himachal Pradesh. It indicates growing commercialization and diversification, but the food grains dominate; features of subsistence economy still remain (Thakur et al., 2014). In addition, Singh and Jha (2014) found that about one third of population practices subsistence farming because of unavailability of any other livelihood option in the region, and 37 % believe it to be a profitable means to utilize the land both for food production and livestock.

The results of the co-project showed that the shifting in traditional cropping pattern should be further monitored so that if there is a problem with food security, it can be solved. The government must act according to the needs and aspirations of the farmers at local level; and the policies should be framed after visiting farms in local areas. The plans should be locally adjusted, because every area has its specific geomorphological characteristics and the same plan cannot be implemented everywhere.

For better agricultural performance and improved land productivity in Himachal Pradesh, a cropping pattern suited for local agro-ecological conditions should be practiced. Irrigational facilities need to be strengthened to accelerate the process of crop diversification. Besides irrigation problems, the monkey menace is posing a threat for agricultural production. The governmental and agri-environmental roles are considerable in tackling these problems. Due to mountainous region and uneven terrain, there has been scattered land availability. Small size of land holdings and scarcity of land is often leading to leave small land holdings fallow, later transforming them into wasteland. An overall programme for supporting the farmers of small land holdings is needed. The government could offer e.g. timely seeds and good quality organic fertilizers at subsidized rates in order to maintain the most scattered land holdings profitable.

### **About the role of tree plantation activities for livelihood security**

Despite the recent shift of emphasis from exploitation towards conservation, forest degradation continues to be the major trend that alters the landscape in the vicinity of the populated areas and towns. Although the forest cover has slightly increased in Himachal Pradesh during the recent years, the total carbon stock in the forest biomass has been decreasing (Ma et al., 2014). The forestry Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects are intended to mitigate climate change through afforestation and reforestation (A/R) measures, thus sequestering carbon from the atmosphere and promoting sustainable development in the areas and communities where the carbon sink projects are implemented.

As the studied Clean Development Mechanism forestry project in Himachal Pradesh is one of the first pilot projects of this kind in India and in Asia, it was important to study whether the challenges have been met and how, and what can be learned from these experiences. According to the interviews of 120 people in 32 panchayats reported by Haapanen (2014), the project was generally welcomed and it had provided employment and other livelihood benefits for the villagers. However, as the findings also indicate, the project has largely failed to meet its goals for afforestation/reforestation; vast numbers of seedlings have either not been planted or they have not survived, certain conflicting interests over the dedicated land areas have not been solved, and the level of participation and knowledge sharing has been low.

In most cases, the villagers have lacked financial and other incentives, or have not been aware of these, for becoming committed to the project implementation. In particular, most villagers were not

aware of their possibilities to earn carbon revenues (CERs) from the plantations. Despite the currently low rates of the CERs, these could well have functioned as a stimulus for the User Groups and private land owners to effectively guard and maintain the plantations. As similar challenges have been found in other CDM projects, it is suggested that the wider scrutinizing of transparency, knowledge sharing, and participation in the planning, implementation, and monitoring procedures of the carbon forestry initiatives are therefore called for (Loivaranta, 2014). It is suggested that subsequent CDM and A/R projects emphasize institutional strengthening, especially in the arena of communications and interaction between different scalar levels. Fair and open sharing of information and responsiveness to feedback from local communities ought to be taken into account throughout the project.

### **Tourism, ethnic groups, on-migration and NGO interventions in the context of livelihood security**

Himachal Pradesh, especially the town of Dharamsala in Kangra region, is a preferred destination for both domestic and international tourists due to both the mountainous landscape and its part of Tibetan based culture in the upper part of Dharamsala, McLeod Ganj (Fig. 2.; also called 'Little Lhasa'). The tourist inflow in Dharamsala over the 5-year period of 2006-2011 increased especially by domestic tourists from 92,000 in 2006 to 148,000 domestic tourists in 2011 (Anand and Singh, 2014). The amount of foreign tourists increased slightly from 23,400 to 26,700 foreign tourists in 2011. The annual numbers of the tourists exceed approximately eightfold the number of the permanent population living in Dharamsala. Thus, Dharamsala belongs to the most touristic places in India (Hampton, 2013).



*Fig 2. Street view in McLeod Ganj in 2009, the upper part of Dharamsala, India. Photo: Reija Hietala*

In India, hill tourism composes a significant part of tourism development which requires the construction of hotels, apartments and associated infrastructure. With an increase in the population density in the district, limited land resources accentuated with lack of rainfall, increase in percentage of wasteland, urbanization, and migration, there is a tendency of diversification especially in non-

farm and tourism sector. However, the need of proper management of solid waste has been felt by the local residents as well as tourists (Anand and Singh, 2014). Without an effective and proper solid waste management programme and policies, the waste generated from various human activities can result in health hazards and have negative impacts on the environment, leading to a decline in tourism industry. Integrated solid waste management strategy focusing on Reduce, Reuse and Recycle should be promoted.

Tourism and farm economy are also seasonal livelihoods among Gaddis - an Indian indigenous tribe - in Bharmour and Dharamsala, which is why livelihood outcomes, strategies, and opportunities vary during a year (Hänninen, 2014). Gaddis have developed their own culture of work through transhumant herding. Nowadays Gaddis have settled down on permanent houses mainly in Bharmour, Kangra region and other nearby areas and started to cultivate land. Despite relatively low annual income, for example, the horticulturalists of Bharmour town area are satisfied with seasonal work and the received income, and seemed not to have an urgent need to change anything. Female labour workers of the study were willing to self-employ themselves in a small-scale business, although they lack not only land for subsistence agriculture, as well as financial and social capital, but also education and skills to run a business.



*Fig. 3. The upper part of Dharamsala town, McLeod Ganj in 2009. Photo: Reija Hietala*

The case of the Tibetan newcomers, mainly living in the upper part of Dharamsala called McLeod Ganj (Fig. 3), supports the analytical relevance of on-migration, a term close to what has been called transit migration particularly in the fringes of Europe (Düvell, 2012). The Tibetans arrive to India because they want to get a better education from the Tibetan premises and meet their religious leader, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. However, the Tibetan newcomers, who have relatively recently migrated from Tibet to India, often face socioeconomic and livelihood related difficulties in Dharamsala and in India in general, a country that struggles with its own poor. The newcomers are in a marginal position also within the Tibetan diaspora community because they are not familiar with all customs and habits of the Indian born Tibetans and seldom speak Hindi or English when they arrive, for example. As their level of education is also often lower in comparison with the Tibetans who have

gone through the Indian schooling system, they often end in low paid jobs in tourism sector if they get work at all.

In the current globalized world, on-migration activities can be found far from the final destination; in addition, the final destination is often chosen after examining the opportunities that are available in situ, not determined beforehand. In the case of the Tibetan newcomers, the most desired destination is usually what they commonly call 'the west'. This is not unexpected in Dharamsala where the tourists, travelers and expatriates belong to the global wealthy who have access to mobility. Hence, unequal distribution of global wealth and uneven access to travel is very visible in Dharamsala. However, on-migration is not easy for the Tibetan newcomers as they hold an unofficial refugee status in India and the only passport that they can get is an Identity Certificate (IC), so called 'refugee passport'. The process of getting it can be slow, it is not accepted by all countries as a legal travel document and visa can be easily denied because of the lack of internationally approved passport.

There are several NGOs in Dharamsala that concentrate specifically on the Tibetan newcomers or include them in their agenda. These NGOs provide schooling in computing and foreign languages, for example, and several NGO officials emphasize that they teach foreign languages for the newcomers because of their willingness to migrate further, among other motives (Frilund, 2015). This support is important for the newcomers who face difficulties if trying to on-migrate, like difficulties to obtain passports and visas as unofficial refugees of India.

In Dharamsala, there is a division between the NGOs that get money from the state and the ones who do not, and also between the Indian and Tibetan NGOs and their ethnic communities. The NGOs' role is considerable in empowering women in that they provide training for skill development. Moreover, it is interesting to point out the collaborative functioning of Indian and Tibetan non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Dharamsala area. The role of the NGOs is especially acknowledged due to their operations in health and social sector, and the fact that they concentrate on the very poorest and most marginalized people (Salmela, 2014).

The managers of the projects must ensure accessibility to most poor women of the society, rather than to few women belonging to higher income and influential families. Government should play a firm role towards implementing its declared policies and take appropriate measures to handle the bottlenecks prevailing in the local self-government, and through an important tool of Community Need Assessment target the real need of the community. Potential of non-farm and tourism sector must be tapped to ensure better, sustainable, and healthy ways of living. On the basis of Composite Capital Index Score (CCIS), the low score holder tehsils need more policy thrust on capital assets to improve upon the livelihoods of the people (Singh and Nitu, 2014). Although the performance of the programmes, e.g., MGNREGA is moderately satisfactory, they require adequate management and planning at the local panchayat level.

As summarizing, the qualitative improvement in the educational system with more emphasis on female technical and vocational education for self-employment generation is strongly suggested. Education as human capital and employment as livelihood outcome are synonyms for well-being of the people.

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