**Government of Himachal Pradesh**

**Himachal Pradesh Forest Department**

**INTEGRATED PROJECT FOR SOURCE SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENT RAIN-FED AGRICULTURE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH**

**(World Bank Assisted)**

**Chance Finds Procedures (Cultural Heritage)**

**Final Report**

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**Himachal Pradesh Forest Department**

**Project Management Unit**

**Solan, Himachal Pradesh**

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# ESS8 Chance Finds Procedures (Cultural Heritage)

## Project Description

The Government of Himachal Pradesh (GoHP) is preparing the Integrated Project for Source Sustainability and Climate Resilient Rain-fed Agriculture (IP) in the selected Gram Panchayats of the State, with financing from the World Bank. IP carries forward the ideas and learnings of H.P. Mid Himalayan Watershed Development Project (HPMHWDP). The proposed IP will invest in measures in upstream catchment areas to improve sustainable land and watershed management to promote the sustainability of perennial water sources. It will also support continued diversification and commercialization of agricultural value chains in downstream areas by supporting production and value addition including the promoting efficient water use thereby increasing the productivity of water in agriculture. It will adopt a spatial approach by (i) applying a landscape approach to individual high-risk micro-watersheds within select river basins in Himachal Pradesh; and (ii) overlaying this with a cluster approach to target value chain investments in specific locations to leverage economies of scale and network externalities. In parallel, the project will develop and demonstrate the application of an analytical evidence base to inform strategic policy choices viz. the trade-offs between alternative water use and will pilot a new institutional arrangement for addressing complex multi-sectoral concepts such as sustainable landscape management that involves several sectors and multiple Government departments.

Summary of Proposed Project Interventions

The project development objective of the proposed Integrated Project for Source Sustainability and Climate Resilient Rain-fed Agriculture (IP) is “To improve upstream watershed management and increase agricultural water productivity in selected Gram Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh.”

The proposed project interventions and its four main components are provided below.

Component 1 (Sustainable land and water management) will support a) establishment hydrological monitoring stations; b) preparation of Gram Panchayat Resource Management Plans (GP-RMPs); c) Soil and water conservation measures including afforestation, check dams, bunds water harvesting structures, drainage line treatments, gully plugging; d) Plantations, e) Pasture management with rotational grazing, fodder delineated forest, introduction of voluntary systems of rotational grazing in young forest; e) Development of high-quality seed stands f) construction of centralized seed center and climate-controlled seed bank; g) Nursery development h) Forest fire prevention and suppression measures. i) Innovative silviculture pilots and j) operation, maintenance and investment fund (OMIF).

Component 2 (Improved Agricultural Productivity and Value Addition) will support interventions on a) water harvesting, storage, and distribution infrastructure, small pond excavation, community tank renovation, roof rain-water tanks, traditional irrigation channels, and gravity and lift intake and distribution structures; b) on farm adoption of Climate Smart Technologies; c) “last-mile” market access infrastructure such as footbridges and manually operated, ropeways (but not roads or investments requiring land acquisition); d) matching grants to individual farmers and farmer groups for essential productive assets.

Component 3 (Institutional Capacity Building for Integrated Watershed Management) will support institutional assessments, functional reviews, institutional strengthening, institutional reforms, change management, capacity building interventions that would enable adoption of more holistic approach towards integrated watershed management, climate change, climate resilient and resource efficient agriculture, including information technology strategy

Component 4 (project management) will support key project staff, monitoring and evaluation, grievance redress mechanisms, Environment and Social Framework (ESF) implementation, overall capacity building, project communication etc.

## Objectives and Scope of Cultural Heritage

The state has rich cultural heritage such as several pilgrimage sites and places of religious prominence, sacred groves and sacred water sources that could be present in the project areas. ESS 8 on cultural heritage has the following objectives:

a) To protect cultural heritage from the adverse impacts of project activities and support its preservation.

b) To address cultural heritage as an integral aspect of sustainable development.

c) To promote meaningful consultation with stakeholders regarding cultural heritage.

d) To promote the equitable sharing of benefits from the use of cultural heritage.

Scope of Cultural Heritage

1. Tangible cultural heritage, or Physical Cultural Resource (PCR) which includes movable or immovable objects, sites, structures, groups of structures, and natural features and landscapes that have archaeological, paleontological, historical, architectural, religious, aesthetic, or other cultural significance. Tangible cultural heritage may be located in urban or rural settings, and may be above or below land or under the water. The tangible cultural heritage within the State includes:

a**) UNESCO World Heritage Sites** - The Kalka, Shimla Toy Train (Solan and Shimla district) and the Great Himalayan National Park (Kullu).

b) **Temples and sites of religious and spiritual significance** (estimated at over 10,000).

c) **Sacred Groves**, of which 350 are documented, however may run into thousands. An initiative by HP State Biodiversity Board has detailed records of 253 sacred groves in the districts of Shimla and Kullu. These groves are locally named Dev Van or Devta Ka Jungle and have rules such as a prohibition on cutting trees or carrying dry leaves outside the area. These groves, as documented possess a great heritage of diverse gene pool of many forest species with socio religious attachment and play an important role in water conservation.

d) **Traditional Water Harvesting Structures**. The state also has a rich tradition of water harvesting and water conveyance structures. These include ‘Khatris’ rectangular deep pits that are dug into the hard rock on hill slopes to collect rainwater which are present in Hamirpur, Kangra and Mandi districts and ‘Kuhls’ which are surface water channels found in the mountainous regions; The channels carry glacial waters from rivers and streams into the fields. The Kangra Valley system has an estimated 715 major kuhls and 2,500 minor kuhls that irrigate more than 30,000 hectares in the valley. An important cultural tradition, the kuhls were built either through public donations or by royal rulers. A ‘kohli’ would be designated as the master of the kuhl and he would be responsible for the maintenance of the kuhl.

2. Intangible Cultural Heritage, which includes practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith— that communities and groups recognize as part of their cultural heritage, as transmitted from generation to generation and constantly recreated by them in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage of Himachal includes skills in weaving and knitting and skills with bamboo, basketry and other handicrafts as well as folk songs and dances, traditional knowledge on harvesting and use of NTFPs and medicinal plants and culture associated with the pastoralist communities; however it could include myriad other things, that local communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

Cultural Heritage is governed under the following national and state laws:

a) The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958 and amendments

b) Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878 (as modified up to 1st September, 1949)

c) The Himachal Pradesh Ancient And Historical Monuments And Archaeological Sites And Remains Act, 1976

## Potential Risks and Impacts to Cultural Heritage from the Project

a) The project may undertake activities that are located in the vicinity of a cultural heritage site and cause damage and/or disturbance to such sites

b) There is a possibility of archaeological finds during minor excavation during construction of tanks and other water harvesting/ conveyance structures. The project will not involve any deep excavation, demolition, movement of earth, flooding or changes in the physical environment;

d) No negative impacts on intangible cultural heritage are envisaged; the project will attempt to build on traditional knowledge and practices on NTFPs and institutional mechanisms for the repair and maintenance of water harvesting and water conveyance structures.

## Management and Mitigation Measures

1. Screening

The project will undertake a screening to ascertain the presence of any known cultural heritage sites including temples, sites of religious or spiritual significance or sacred groves in the design of project interventions and their incorporation into the Gram Panchayat Resource Management Plan.

2. Consultation during preparation of GPRMP for identification of Cultural Heritage

During the preparation of the GPRMPs the project will include questions on tangible cultural heritage such as sites of religious and spiritual significance, sacred groves, traditional water harvesting and conveyance structures and intangible cultural heritage including traditional knowledge, information on which is not ordinarily available in the public domain. The project will ensure the participation of women and elders as well as traditional knowledge holders in these consultations. Although Cultural Heritage may be associated with any group, community or religion, certain marginalized or backward groups such as tribals may need to be given more focused attention in the process of identification of their cultural heritage since such communities may not have adequate representation in the institutional structure of local governance institutions such as Gram Panchayats.

3. Avoiding Cultural Heritage Sites

The project will seek to avoid disturbance to cultural heritage sites during construction and ensure that no damage through debris disposal or noise pollution is caused at any sites of cultural significance including, rocks, sacred groves or wetlands.

4. Management Actions to avoid damage to Physical Cultural Resources (PCRs)

Where activities must be undertaken near a cultural heritage site, the following measures should be taken:

1. Train/make aware the construction contractor of how to deal with these sites, and ensure that there is supervision from contractors’ side for the management of all such sites.
2. Restore all sites to their original shape post construction. It is advisable to take photographs, measurements etc. of the Physical Cultural Resource (PCR) if working in the same location, in case it needed for future reference while restoring the site.
3. Identify most appropriate time to undertake construction to minimise disturbance, e.g. avoid any special prayers/festivals for constructing in the vicinity of the PCR or on its access route.
4. Avoid keeping power back up systems such as generators near the Physical Cultural Resource.
5. Identify appropriate sites for waste storage and disposal of any waste generated by the project activity.
6. Identify appropriate sites for material storage

4. Conservation and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage, where applicable

The project will work on building on, repairing and enhancing and maintenance the traditional water harvesting and water conveyance structures – *Khatris, Kuhls* and other springshed structures in the project area. It will also attempt to build on traditional knowledge and practices on NTFPs and pasture management and incorporate these in the GPRMPs.

## Chance Finds Procedures

When artefacts or sites of cultural heritage are encountered by chance while undertaking excavation during construction activities, they are known as “chance finds”. The project will include a chance finds procedure, in all contracts related to construction awarded under the project. The steps in case of chance finds to be followed are:

1. Stop all work and cordon off area and do not allow anybody access to the area, unless cleared by the District Magistrate or Commissioner as the case might be and the Archaeological Department.
2. Based on discussions with the competent authorities identify further action
3. Actions at the site may require competent professionals who may need to be contacted and brought in, as needed.