



# HIMALAYAN PERMACULTURE CENTRE

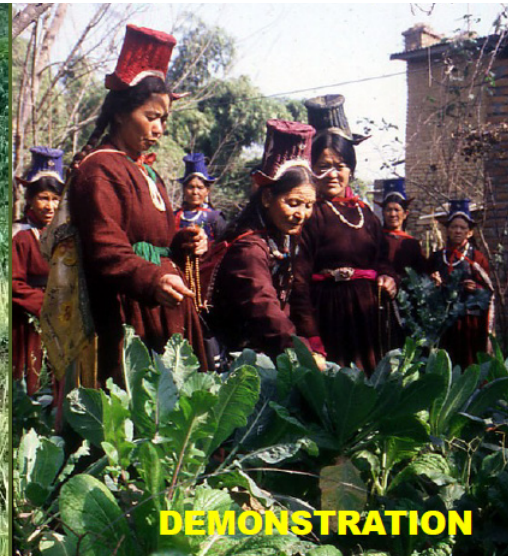
*A Hub & Network Demonstration & Learning Centre*

**Nepal**

**Project started: 1988**

The Himalayan Permaculture Centre (HPC) is a grass roots non-government organisation (NGO) set up by trained and motivated farmers from Surkhet district (Mid-Western Nepal) in 2010 to implement sustainable rural development programs in Nepal.

It provides an excellent example of what can be achieved over time by combining permaculture education with broader education, demonstration of effective systems and techniques, and provision of key enabling resources.



## Key Project Information (at 2019):

**Climate:** continental mountain climate.

**Key words:** small farms; rural communities.

**Beneficiary community:** farmers and their families; women; rural communities.

**Project reach:** nationwide and global.

**Education Activity:** permaculture; increasing climate literacy; effective community action.

## HPC Summary

HPC carries out demonstration, training, resource production and research on HPC working farm resource centres and on farmers' own land in Kathmandu, Surkhet & Humla districts.

The Challenges in remote rural areas of Nepal include: Challenging climate; Marginal land; Disappearing resources; Poor resource management; High input, low output; Culture of inequality; Political marginalisation; Corruption and nepotism; Poor governance.

HPC Solutions focus on creating low input-high output systems, and a sum of multiple yields. A 3-stranded approach links: a) demonstration; b) training; and c) resources to deliver improvements in 5 key areas: 1. Food security; 2. Health; 3. Education; 4. Livelihoods; 5. Capacity building.

## High Level Outputs & Outcomes

- 7,112 farmers trained to enable them to enhance their individual and community food security;
- Health improved across 32 villages including: Women's health trainings completed by 2,475 women and 60 men, and 12 Women's Health Camps provided in 2 districts, treating 1,946 women and 294 men;
- Groups empowered and capacity increased across 32

villages, including: 3 working farm resource centres operating, 178 demonstration farmers, 60 farmers provided with trainers' training enabling them to train others, 34 drinking water systems in 19 villages, over 100,000 fruit trees, multi-purpose trees and shrubs planted in agroforestry plots, construction/maintenance of 10 schools supported, and 10 hydro-powered mills and 5 biogas units set-up.

## HPC's Education Lessons

**Lesson 1:** Permaculture education works most effectively as part of a system that combines **broader education** (e.g. on health & nutrition issues) with **practical training** (e.g. on permaculture design & practices), **demonstration of what works** (on working farms) and **enabling resources** (seeds, seedlings & an illustrated guidebook in the local language) that make it easier for the learning to be applied by the learners, individually and collectively.

**Lesson 2:** The benefits of this system can be **scaled-up** by developing farmer-to-farmer training systems (called 'Barefoot Consultants' in HPC's case), rather than growing the central management element of the project.

**Lesson 3: Evidence** of improved outcomes has been gathered, that shows the effectiveness of HPC's 3-part education +demonstration+resources model and the validity of its *Theory of Change*,

## Mr Ange Aidi's Story: an HPC Beneficiary

*"I tried to leave the village to get manual labor in Indonesia and spent 60,000 rupees (about £450) trying to get a visa in Kathmandu, but failed. So I returned to my village and started a grafted fruit nursery, having learned from HPC. Now I make twice this amount from staying in my own village and using skills learned here and materials grown locally, and I have also been to train others in earthquake-affected districts."*



## An IPEN Case Study

International Permaculture Education Network (IPEN)

IPEN Case Studies have been enabled by the Lush Spring Prize

Case Study date:

August 2019



**Hommya Gurung facilitating a Women's Health Training at Almost Heaven Farm in Eastern Nepal**



**3. Education**

**HPC Outputs & Outcomes:**

- 3 Resource Centres (RCs) established & functioning; 2026+ farmers attended various trainings using the RCs demonstration & training facilities
  - 178 demonstration farmers in 32 villages, 387 kitchen gardens, over 100,000 fruit trees, multi-purpose trees & shrubs planted in agroforestry plots, 726 smokeless stoves made, 81 farmers practicing SRI, etc.
  - 7112 farmers trained (3302 women, 3801 men) of which 24 re active training others
  - 94 farmers provided international-standard Permaculture Design Course
  - 28 irrigation systems for 28 villages on 142Ha benefitting 346 households & 2073 people (947 female, 1126 male). Resources provided to construct 9 water storage tanks
  - 12 Women's Health Camps provided in 2 districts, treating 1946 women & 294 men
  - 124 specific Women's Health trainings completed for 2475 women and 60 men
  - 34 drinking water systems for 19 villages benefitting 2953 people and 4331 livestock
  - 358 women & 90 men trained in literacy
  - Construction/maintenance of 10 schools supported, benefitting 1121 students, food gardens started in 5 schools; classes provided to 337 students; 62 grafted seedlings distributed to 62 students. Drinking water systems provided for 2 schools
  - 10,000+ livestock treated by barefoot vets
  - Training in beekeeping and hive building for 316 farmers; 92 improved hives built; NRs 2,255,175/- (\$20,500) earned from sales of 10kg beeswax and 3,900kg honey
  - 6683 cardamom planted; farmers grew 150kg Cardamom and earned NRs 3,211,900/- (\$30,000) from sale of Cardamom in 2016-18
  - 60 farmers provided with trainers' training enabling them to train others
  - 7 organisational development trainings for 120 farmers' group members and staff
  - 12 videos made by HPC staff for distribution via mobile phones and showing in villages
- Continued on page 4 ....*

**Hommya Gurung's Story: an HPC Team Member**

A top barefoot consultant and women's health specialist/trainer: *"One of the biggest changes I saw was that vegetables are being grown everywhere in all the villages – and not just the odd plant, kitchen gardens are packed with a diverse range of vegetables and herbs. Farmers have really got into the habit.... There's no doubt also that because of HPC's work there are more vegetables and fruit so their diet is better, their homes are cleaner and especially less smoke because of the stoves they can build, so their health is improving."*

**HPC's Story**

In 1988, a permaculture demonstration and training centre was set up by Chris Evans and a local Nepali friend. This became the Jajarkot Permaculture Programme (JPP). It was as a response to caste/gender discrimination, forest nationalisation, population growth, ill-suited development and aid programmes endorsing high external input activities, a shift towards a market-based economy, corruption and forest clearance seeking to increase crop yields and subsequent land degradation.

In contrast, JPP aimed to address the core need of integrating forestry into agriculture in order to supply people's basic needs. It was based on the three activities: (a) demonstration (b) training/education (c) resource centres. By helping people to help themselves with local resources, rather than being externally dependent, the permaculture program showcased its resilience.

*"After 13 years we were working in 63 villages in 4 districts, and we had 8 demonstration training farms or resource centres ... about 120 people who were staff, most of which were part-time or voluntary, and a membership of about 12,000 farmers... at the height, then, our budget was still only about £50-60,000 a year ...the big lesson was...using local resources and building up local skills and working at grassroots level, having very low management or administration costs ...I was the only foreigner working, and that was voluntary...Towards the end of that time, when we saw that we had a lot of very useful things to share ... we started developing the Farmers' Handbook"* Chris Evans

In 2002, JPP's second-generation offspring was the Himalayan Permaculture Group (HPG), which now faced conflict-related threats from the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. Once more, the program demonstrated resilience through its grassroots approach. *"The programme was affected quite seriously. In Humla, we were stopped from working in the villages for a while, we were...the only NGO working in the villages...We got stuck from the government because they thought we were a Maoist organization and ... from the Maoists because they thought we were government agents. But we were allowed to work thanks to the pressures that the villagers put on the Maoists to allow us to work because they felt compatibility and that it was very grassroots.. It was a very testing time, but I think the programme had its own resilience ...that also came through in those times."*

The Himalayan Permaculture Centre (HPC) was then initiated in 2010 as the third-generation offspring of the JPP programme.



**Ange Aidi with his wife in their fruit nursery, Humla**

**Examples of Good Practise: What HPC Has Done**

HPC's strategy centres around 3 main activities, and can be seen as a 3-part model that can be widely copied or adapted:

1. **DEMONSTRATION:** ('seeing is believing') of how local resources can be assembled, with appropriate additions from non-local sources, to form resilient domestic food and energy security, through **sustainable agriculture** - which can be defined as "successful management of resources for agriculture to satisfy changing human needs while maintaining or enhancing the quality of the environment and conserving natural resources" (ILEIA).

**HPC contributes to these SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) being achieved:**



## What HPC Has Done *continued* ...

2. **TRAINING & EDUCATION** ('learning how to create what's been seen') - for farmers and development workers, learning the process of design and implementation of demonstrated sustainable agriculture systems and approaches.

3. **RESOURCES** ('to enable the how') - the seed, seedlings & young trees (from a project nursery) and published information (books, booklets, posters, etc.) that enable farmers and development workers to design and implement on their own land and in their communities the systems and actions they have *seen* (1) and *learnt about* (2).

A fourth activity is **RESEARCH** to identify useful new species and cropping patterns, or combinations of those existing traditionally, which are favoured and can be appropriated by local farmers for their own use.

**Sunrise Farm** (SF) is HPC's local office in Kathmandu, Nepal. Established by Sanu and Shyam Shrestha in 1995 after meeting Chris Evans, it has become an urban community demonstration and training centre in permaculture, sustainable and organic agriculture by applying this '1 + 2 + 3' HPC model.

## HPC's Ways of Achieving Good Practise: How It Is Done

HPC works to empower remote rural communities and inspire action to build resilience, knowledge and skills. It focuses on five main areas of activity:

1. Food security
2. Health
3. Education
4. Livelihoods
5. Capacity building

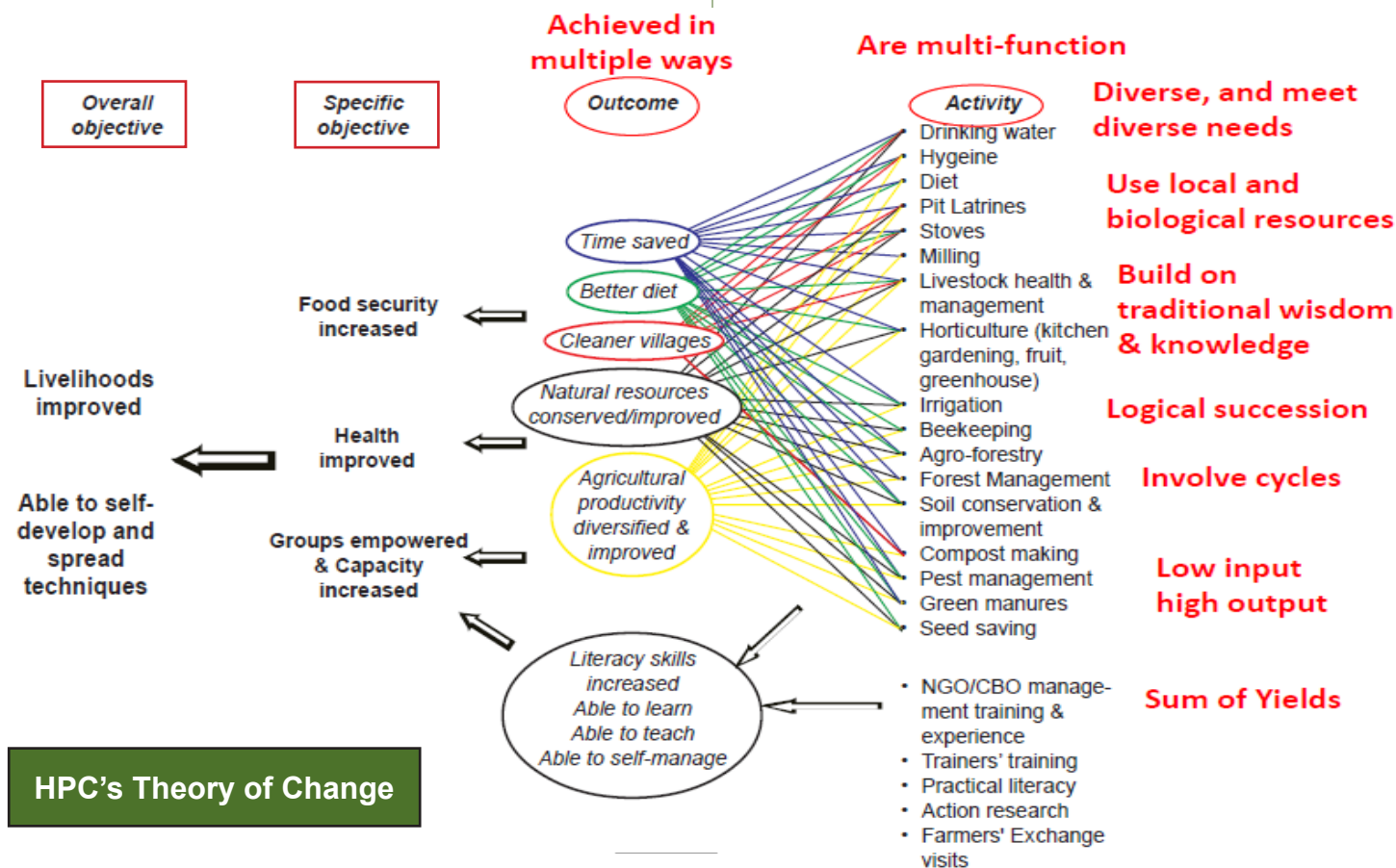
Three key examples of how HPC has worked are: The Farmers' Handbook, SRI and Barefoot Consultants.

**The Farmers' Handbook** published in the Nepali language in 2001 (7500 copies) has been a key output of HPC that brings together a wide range of highly practical appropriate technologies and approaches aimed at increasing domestic farm productivity and reducing its costs. Measured positive outcomes, such as increases in crop production, vegetable consumption, and reduced firewood use, have been demonstrated. The Farmers' Handbook is also used for practical literacy education.

**SRI (the System of Rice Intensification)** is a set of practices adapted to local conditions, with 4 major changes from conventional rice growing, leading the benefits of: rice production increased (over 16T/Ha has been documented); less water needed (around 15-25% of normal practice); less seed needed (about 12% of normal practice); no extra external inputs needed; can use local/traditional seed; due to better soil and water management there are: less pests and disease; better quality grains; more fertile soils; more straw.

**Barefoot Consultants (BC)** are an effective way to scale-up the benefits of HPC's successful program, which is based on 5 elements: Farmers' Training farmers; Developing the farmer's own land; Developing their own community; Training Trainers'; Permaculture Design Course (PDC). These farmer-trainers enact the same HPC strategies, adding their own successful experiences. These skills were highly valuable in the 2015 earthquake-affected region of Central Nepal.

Resilience building is evident in HPC's work through empowerment of people as individuals (their zone "00"), which enables them to communicate their needs and resources, enhancing their community resilience. For example, this led to an "improved beehive", where traditional and indigenous knowledge was upheld and improved on for the benefit of the bees and the farmers. Other examples include challenging traditional patriarchal structures with regards to women's restricted access to trainings and the Chhaupadi tradition that is rampant in West Nepal.



## Permaculture Principles & Design in Action

HPC reflects the practical application of ALL key permaculture principles.

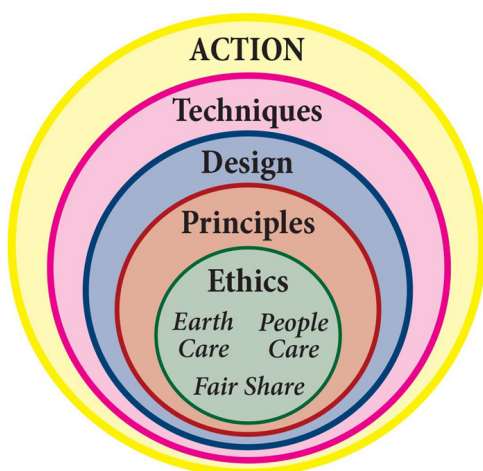
In particular it reflects and applies:

**Make the smallest change for the biggest effect**

**Apply Self Regulation and Accept Feedback**

**Removal of Limiting Factors:** for example by training communities on the permaculture principles, design and practices and providing a toolkit to remove factors that limit long term community resilience.

**Observe & interact**



## From Inspiration to Action

The values, principles and methods of HPC's work are a huge inspiration that permaculture projects and national permaculture movements can be inspired by, learn from, apply and adapt to their own context, and spread.

What experience from HPC could help your project, community or network to:

a) Develop a low-cost system and toolkit to grow farmer action, grassroots community capacity and build resilience

b) Increase literacy in communities through regenerative education.

c) Spread farmer-to-farmer training and provide enabling resources that lead people and communities to become active agents of change to create a more stable future for themselves.

*“One of HPC's main goals or principles is to **make villages attractive and flourishing... both economically and ecologically, so people don't want to leave.**”* The outcome when people stay is that they have a sense of place and can meet their varied needs, in terms of food, security or food sovereignty, water, settlement and livelihoods, and also companionship and cultural richness.

How can this approach be applied or adapted in your local area?

## The HPC Patterns To Copy & HPC Scalability

The key **HPC pattern** that can be replicated in many different climatic, economic and cultural contexts is HPC's 3-stranded approach that links:

- a) demonstration; b) training;
- and c) resources

by developing their own working farm resource centres and helping farmers to do the same in order to deliver improvements for households and communities in 5 key areas:

1. Food security;
2. Health;
3. Education;
4. Livelihoods;
5. Capacity building.

**HPC scaled-up** this pattern by training local farmers as “Barefoot Consultants” (BCs) in permaculture techniques (not by growing is central management).

**The SRI pattern** can be adapted for one or more staple crops by defining a set of practices with key changes from conventional growing, that seek to: increase production; cut water use; reduce seed needed; cut out external inputs; use local/traditional seed; improve soil and water management; reduce pests and disease; improve crop quality; improve soil fertility; increase organic matter for fertility building.

### HPC Outputs & Outcomes cont:

- 7 hydro-powered mills for flour, beaten rice and vegetable oil expelling installed & 5 biogas units installed benefitting 5380 people
- Micro-finance groups started in 32 villages that have provided loans of 1,741,795/- (US\$15,800) to over 1,000 households
- 7 low caste farmers trained to generate income from sewing & tailoring
- Cultivation of 39 types of local medicinal herbs, resulting in nearly 10,000 plants being established
- 4 handlooms constructed & operated producing cotton & nettle fibre cloth
- To support HPC project activities villagers have directly provided 6,237 person-days of voluntary labour contribution valued at 1,871,100/- (US\$17,000)

### Legal Status, Structure & Size: HPC start date: 2010

HPC is a grass roots non-government organisation (NGO) that is 3rd generation evolution first seeded from Jajarkot Permaculture Project (JPP) in 1988 and then from the Himalayan Permaculture Group (HPG) in 2002.

### Funding, Finance, Resources

Donations to HPC can be made via the Permaculture Association Britain [here](#).

### Potential Areas for Collaboration with HPC (Local, Regional, National or International)

**HPC Needs:** volunteer work areas include: digital mapping of HPC's farm (at Baragaun); farms and local area biodiversity surveys; photography / photo editing; health-related education (by skilled trainers, e.g. midwifery, first aid, herbalism); **etc.**

**Collaboration opportunities:** training in design & establishing resource centres and related training programs (with Nepali trainers in Nepal);

### Contact Information

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### International Permaculture Education Network (IPEN)

Increasing the effectiveness and coherence of permaculture education internationally

IPEN's work and its Case Studies have been supported & enabled by the Lush Spring Prize

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