

Research Semester and Internship in Kolkata: Oct'16 – Feb'17

What makes women's Self-Help-Groups successful?

Internship

- Between Oct'16 and Feb'17 in Kolkata, India
- SOCEO gGmbH is a non-for-profit consulting and research agency, based in Bonn, but mainly active in India.
- My main tasks included: editing and proof reading of articles, preparing and organising events.

- The internship allowed me to gain workexperience in an intercultural context.
- The work connected me to the people needed to conduct my research.

Research

Setting:

- My area of research was the **Sundarbans**, one of the largest mangrove forest in the world, located approximately 80 km south of Kolkata. The area is characterized by poverty, lack of infrastructure and is economically very weak. The inhabitants come from various cultural and religious backgrounds.
- I did research in **two villages**, which are comparable in terms of number of inhabitants and households, literacy rate and the implementation of SHGs.

Methods:

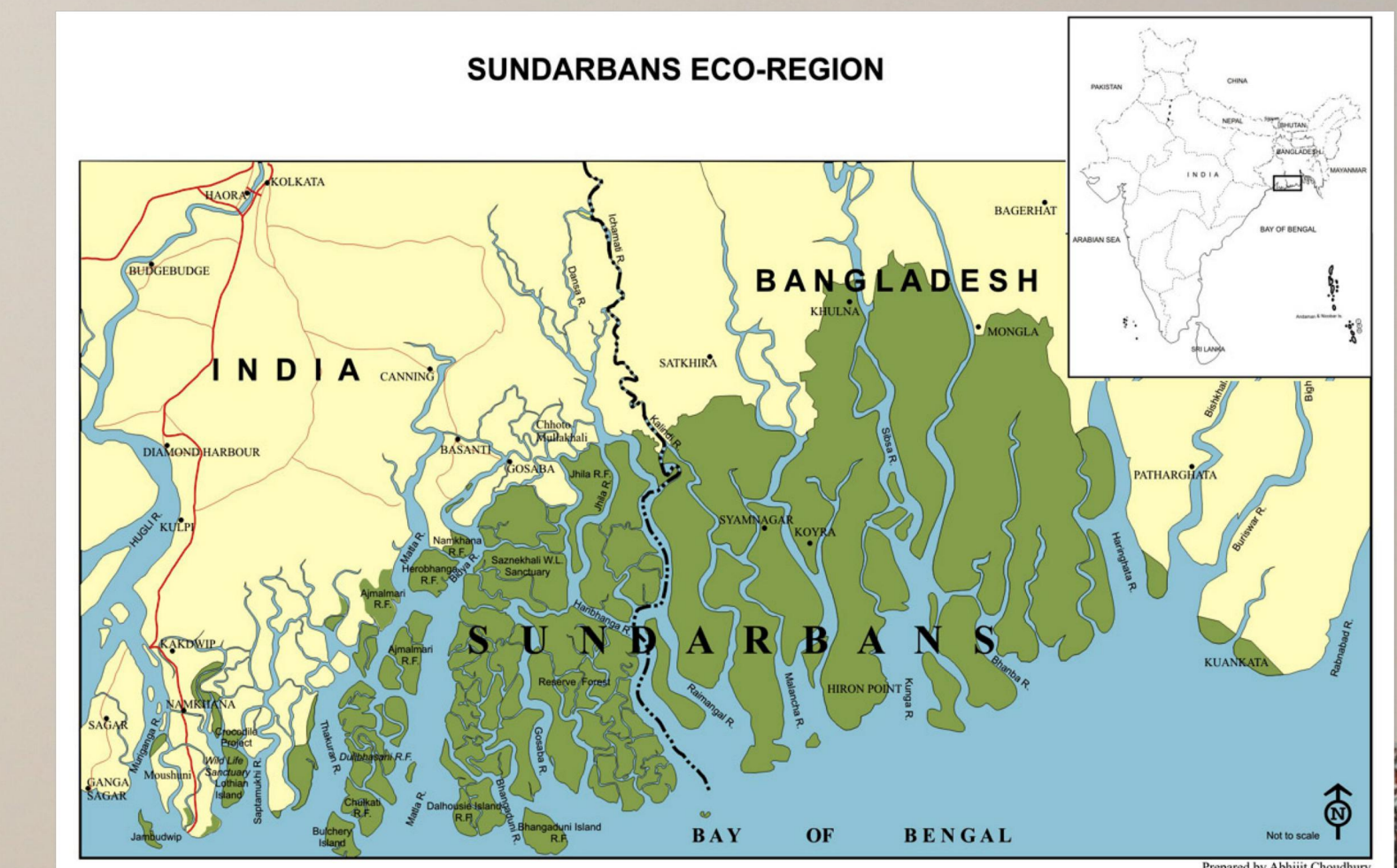
- Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, expert interviews, participant observation

Research question:

Which factors influence the success of Self-Help-Groups in the Sundarbans?

Hypothesis of the research:

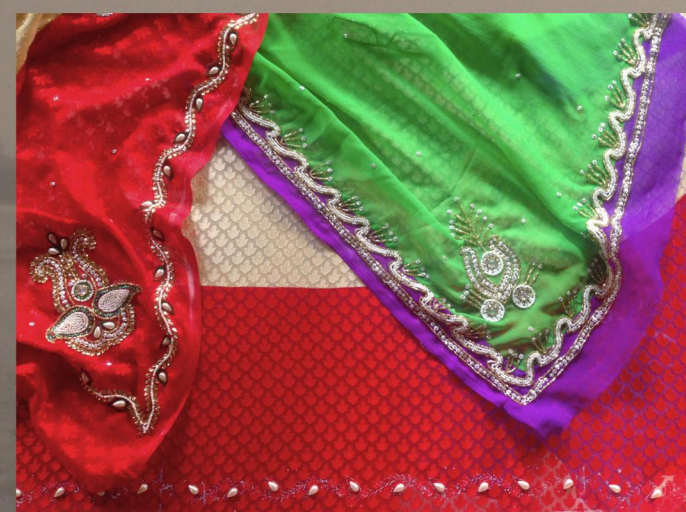
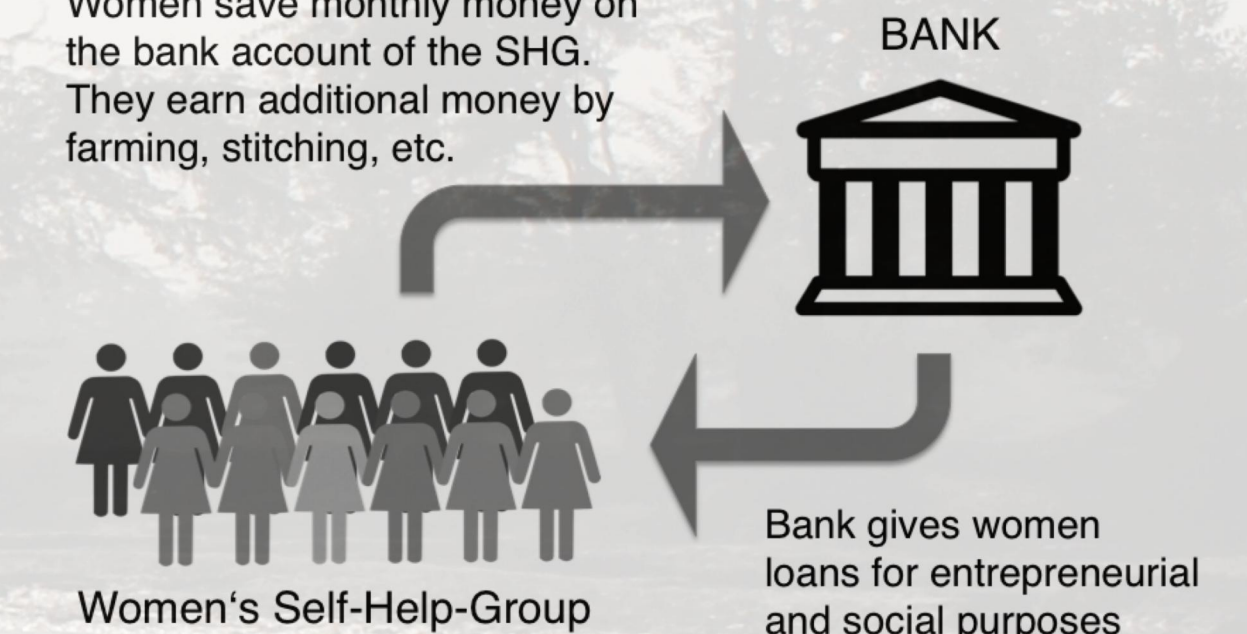
Economical upliftment of underprivileged women doesn't just improve their financial situation, but has a positive impact on other areas, such as education of the children, health, gender equality and overall empowerment. Looking at SHG in India, the aim is to identify different factors which influence the impact of SHG beyond access to financial sources.



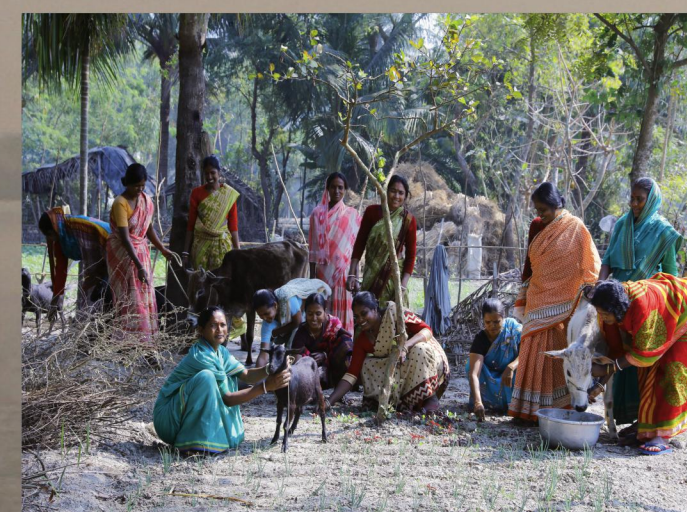
http://www.wvfindia.org/about_wvf/critical_regions/sundarbans3/about_sundarbans

What is a Self-Help-Group?

Women save monthly money on the bank account of the SHG. They earn additional money by farming, stitching, etc.



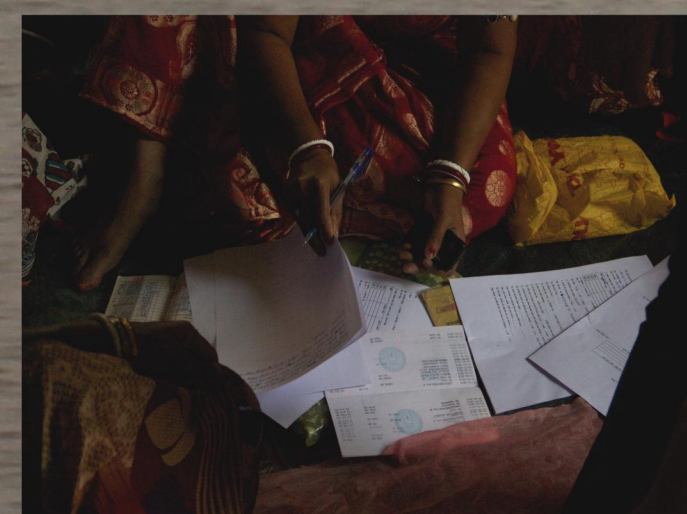
Embroidery done by women in SHGs



SHG active in farming and livestock farming



Women filling out questionnaires



Women showing their SHG's account

Findings for the Master Thesis

- The impact of the women's activities in the SHGs varied among the two villages compared.
- Village A was better connected to Kolkata and had rather urban characteristics. The connection among the SHGs was weak and SHGs were seen mainly as a financial scheme. There was little awareness about additional governmental schemes.
- Village B was badly connected to Kolkata and can be characterized as rural. The leaders of SHGs were well connected, which is one of the reasons why SHG schemes impacted the life of the women more positively. The social ties were stronger amongst the women and they participated together in additional governmental programs to improve their situation.



Women of a Self-Help-Group working together to increase their income

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