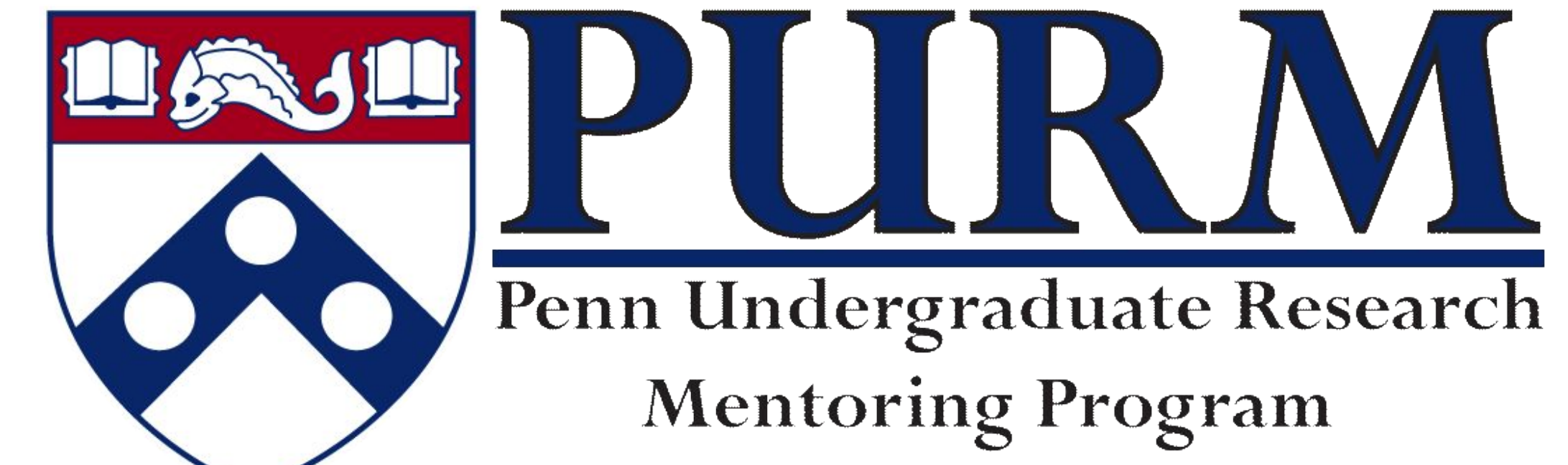


# Tiger Widows in the Sundarbans: Gender, Conservation, and Culture

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## Context

### Imperialism, Colonialism, NGOs, and Conservation

- Conservation that forces people off of their land and criminalizes the use of that land is a direct legacy of colonial and imperial forces in India, Africa, and the Americas.
- Western NGOs continued involvement in countries in the global south perpetuates this dynamic, especially through the criminalization of indigenous hunting practices.
- Some NGOs have promoted shoot to kill and other extreme violent tactics as methods of policing conservation spaces.

### Climate Change and Environmental Destruction

- Human development, production, and expansion is directly involved in the harm occurring to the environment and animals.
- The current extinction rate is hundreds or possibly thousands of times higher than its past base line.

## Definition and Method

### Two Key Values

- We as humans have a responsibility towards animals and the environment.
- We as humans have responsibilities towards each other.

### What is feminism?

- Defining feminism is a key debate in modern feminist theory.
- For my purposes, I used Khader's definition of feminism
- Feminism - at its core is opposition to sexist oppression
- Khader's definition attempts to give feminist theory a normative ethic that is anti-imperialist but still universal.

### Attempting to define gender

- Gender is a complex, non-binary social structure
- With the complexity of gender in mind, for this piece and conservation to date has been focused on man/woman relations.
- My discussion is as such confined to these binaries

## The Tiger Widows

- In the Sundarbans tiger attacks are common and increasing due to the success of conservation efforts to increase tiger populations.
- There is a cultural stigma towards women whose husband are killed by tigers that is tied to religious beliefs.
- widows/widowers are disqualified from governmental support if the attack occurred on protected lands or if there was not proof the attack occurred in sanctioned spaces.

### A man's wife is killed by a tiger

- Some social stigma towards the widower but generally still accepted into the community.
- If not socially accepted, there are clear and accessible avenues for work and support outside of the community

### A woman's husband is killed by a tiger

- Ostracized from the community entirely.
- Unable to gather food or supplies from the same places the larger community does and barred from using the same equipment.
- Kicked out of her home by her husband's family along with any female children.
- Unable to access work or stability outside of the community due to lack of previous experience and gendered labor forces
- Manipulated/forced into sex work and other dangerous, low paying jobs.

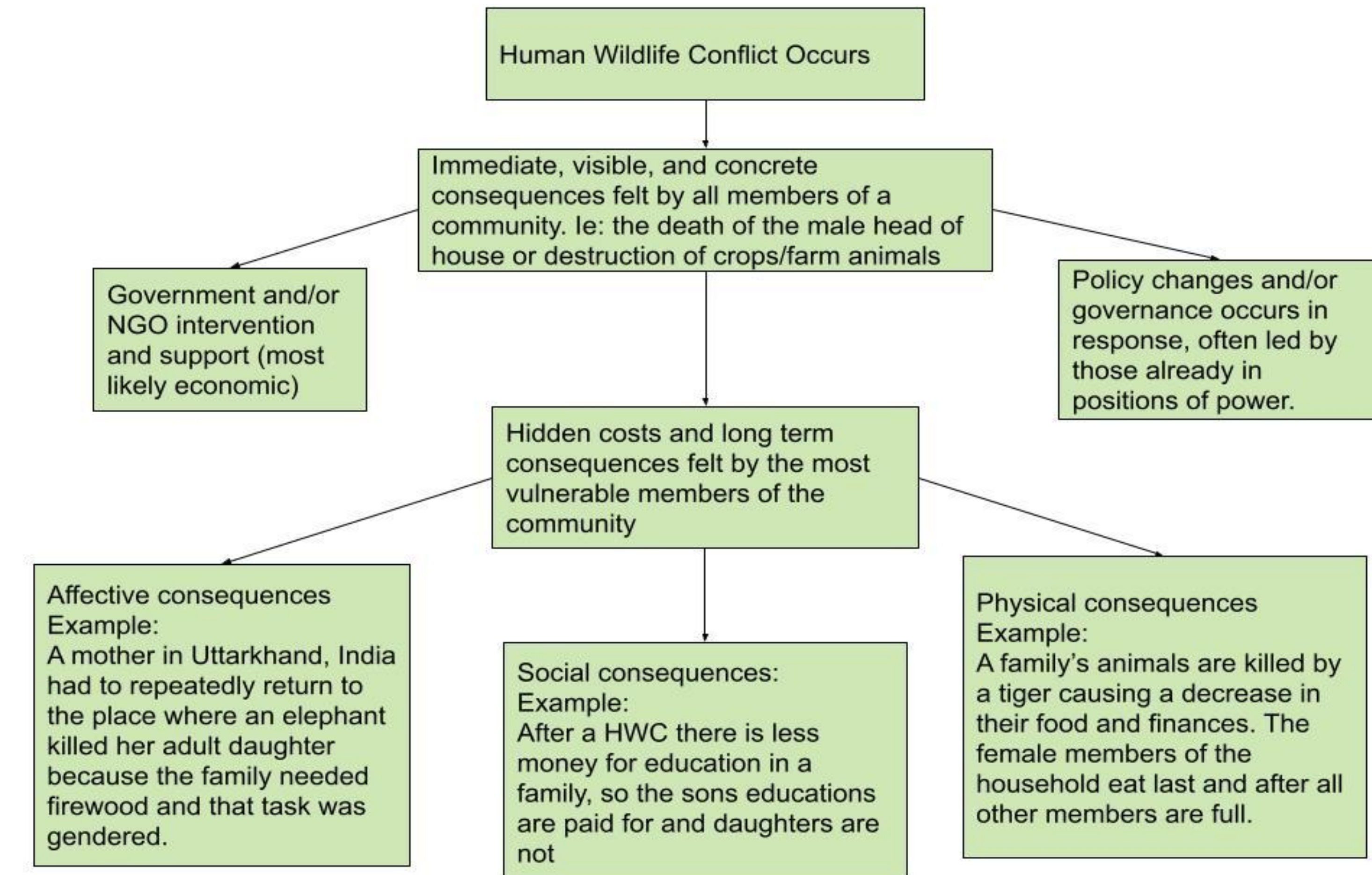


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## Solutions and Questions

### Tiger Widows

- A group of conservationists with the help of local community, created a community for these women: conserving the mangrove forest and trying to save the sundari plant.
- Includes women from their late teens to 70s
- provide some economic stability along with community

### Principles for conservation

- Keep gender and other identities in mind when creating policy and look for the invisible impacts
- collaborate with local communities in conservation
- promote a caring collaborative environmental justice

### Autonomy, Animals, and

- How can you balance the need for quick decisive action to mitigate climate change with the necessary thoughtfulness to not cause more harm?
- How do we balance the autonomy of animals in comparison to people?
- Who gets to decide who is in danger?

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