

Background, Objectives and Structure of the Workshop

In recent years, the mountain economies of several areas in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region have experienced diversification from subsistence-oriented food crop-based production to enterprise based market-oriented production. Some new activities have emerged and some old ones are increasingly being carried out for sale in the market. Vegetable and fruit production, commercially-oriented livestock holdings, sericulture, bee-keeping, products based on non-timber forest resources including medicinal herbs and plants, woollen products, tourism, and handicrafts for wider markets are some of the activities that have led to a substantial increase in the incomes of many mountain households.

The participation of, and benefits to, women in enterprise-based diversification vary in different areas and among different activities and products. In some cases, women have participated actively in the new activities and made a significant contribution to household incomes and family welfare, while in others they have been by-passed by these new developments. There are situations in which women have been able to achieve a degree of economic emancipation and control over the new incomes, and others in which the new activities have only led to an increased workload without any improvement in status and power. In most cases, enterprises run by women face more serious problems in accessing inputs and markets than do those run by men because of women's lack of mobility and control over assets and the necessity of combining household work with enterprise activities.

A number of initiatives has been taken in different countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region by government agencies, non-government organizations, development banks, and financial institutions, as well as organizations of women entrepreneurs themselves, to promote enterprises run by women through integrated projects, credit, entrepreneurship training, and promotion of collective marketing. These have had a varying impact on enterprise development and sustained income enhancement of mountain women and their households. The regional workshop on Women Entrepreneurs in Mountain Areas was organized by the Mountain Enterprise and Infrastructure Division of ICIMOD from 21-23 December, 1999, with the aim of sharing and documenting these experiences and thus learning about the processes and factors that determine the success of women entrepreneurs and the outcomes of

different programme initiatives, exploring possibilities for replicating the successful experiences, and identifying the elements of policy that are conducive to the promotion of enterprises among women in mountain areas. In his opening speech, Mr. Egbert Pelinck, the then Director General of ICIMOD, stressed that the workshop was intended to provide an opportunity, both for the participants to exchange experiences among themselves and for ICIMOD to learn about the constraints, opportunities, and facilitating factors in the development of entrepreneurship among mountain women.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the workshop were

- to facilitate exchange of experiences of enterprise development among women entrepreneurs and organizations engaged in the promotion of enterprises among women in mountain areas;
- to identify constraints to, and the factors and circumstances favourable for, the development of women's entrepreneurship in these areas; and,
- to make specific suggestions on policies and programmes related to credit, skill, and entrepreneurship development training and marketing for the promotion of women's entrepreneurship in mountain areas.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the workshop included women entrepreneurs and representatives of organizations of women entrepreneurs and of government and non-government organizations engaged in the promotion of enterprises among mountain women from Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Altogether there were 26 participants from different countries and several staff members from ICIMOD (Annex 1).

DOCUMENTATION

ICIMOD has documented experiences of enterprise development in mountain areas through about a dozen case studies conducted over the past two years. Most of these covered issues related to women's participation in enterprises. The background material for the workshop was a paper summarising the trends and issues relating to women in mountain enterprises as revealed by these studies. Highlights of the paper, as presented in the workshop, are summarised in Chapter 2 of this report.

The participants presented brief accounts of their own experiences or the experience of their organizations, highlighting facilitating factors and obstacles and policies and programmes for the development of women's entrepreneurship. These presentations are summarised in Chapter 3 of this report.

METHODOLOGY AND PROGRAMME OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop programme is shown in Annex 2. Workshop discussions took place in plenary sessions and working groups. Following the opening session and the ICIMOD background presentation on trends and issues, the plenary sessions on the first day and a part of the second day were devoted to presentations by the participants. Most of the second day and a part of the third day were taken up by discussions in working groups on the subjects and issues identified during the plenary session. (Annex 3 shows the terms of reference and composition of working groups.) The final session on the third day was devoted to presentation of the working group reports and finalisation of the recommendations. Participants visited local enterprises run by women in the afternoon.

Structure of the Report

The report is divided into four parts. Chapter 1 describes the background to and organization of the workshop, Chapter 2 describes the major premises and emerging issues related to women's entrepreneurship based on the opening remarks of the Director General, ICIMOD, and the presentation by the workshop coordinator, Chapter 3 summarises the individual presentations by the participants, and Chapter 4 summarises the conclusions and recommendations.