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Methods in Applied Ethnobotany

Lessons from the Field

Ajaya Rastogi

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Preface

Part of the mandate of the Mountain Natural Resources' Division of ICIMOD is to examine how people interact with their environment and the use they make of the resources it provides.

The current paper is a result of the applied ethnobotany project that began in 1995 as a joint undertaking between ICIMOD and UNESCO and implemented within the broad framework of the People and Plants' Initiative with a view to promoting institutional capabilities and improving the skills of young botanists for integrated conservation and development research.

The project held training workshops at national and subregional levels and published proceedings and synthesis reports on the use of medicinal plants and traditional resource management systems in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

The Mountain Natural Resources' Division is publishing the current paper in its discussion paper series in order to share the knowledge gained with those interested in ethnobotany and those who are considering its value in mountain natural resource management.

We appreciate the funds provided by UNESCO through the trust fund established by DANIDA. From MNR ICIMOD, Mr. Ajaya Restogi, has performed an exemplary job in putting the paper together in its present form.

An applied ethnobotany project was launched in July 1995 in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region as a joint operation of UNESCO and ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development). This project, which ended in September 1998, was implemented within the larger framework of the People and Plants' Initiative. The aim of the project, which had a duration of three years, was to build up capacities of and capabilities in institutions, improve the skills of young ethnobotanists, and bring ethnobotany into the mainstream in integrated conservation and development research. The programme was funded by UNESCO with trust funds provided by DANIDA. The countries involved were India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and China.

The principal activities of the programme were training workshops at national and subregional levels; publication of proceedings from these to be used as resource materials; a programme of small grants for young ethnobotanists from the region; and production of synthesis reports on methods and approaches. In addition, a synthesis report on lessons learned from the case studies on the use of medicinal plants and a synthesis report on lessons learned from case studies on traditional resource management systems in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas were also produced.

The diversity of themes and subjects; academic backgrounds and capabilities of the researchers; and the biologically, culturally, and geographically varied sites for research resulted in the use of a variety of methods. This experience has been summarised in one section of this paper. There is an overall gradual convergence in the approach to community-based research and, therefore, another section briefly describes some of the most frequently used methods in order to share information on methods of applied ethnobotany. The last section contains information on recent developments in ethical guidelines for ethnobiological research and information on the important issue of the protection of intellectual property rights of local communities.

GIS	Key Informant Survey
LE	Landscape Elements
NEPPE	Natural Environment Protection and Economic Development
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NFP	Non-timber Forest Products
PRDP	People and Resource Dynamics Project
PR	People's Biodiversity Registers
PR	People's Biodiversity Rights
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASOMPS	Asian Symposium on Medicinal Plants, Species, and Other Natural Products
BFRI	Bangladesh Forest Research Institute
BSP	Biodiversity Support Programme
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
cbh	circumference at breast height
dbh	diameter at breast height
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GIS	Geographic Information System
HHS	Household Survey
HKH	Hindu Kush-Himalayas
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge System
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
ISE	International Society of Ethnobiology
IVI	Importance Value Index
KIS	Key Informant Survey
LSE	Landscape Elements
NEPED	Nagaland Environmental Protection and Economic Development
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NTFP	Non-timber Forest Products
PARDYP	People and Resource Dynamics' Project
PBR	People's Biodiversity Registers
PBR	Plant Breeders' Rights
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal

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