

Background

An interest in searching for approaches that could ease the work load of rural women led ICIMOD to the development of an action research project to assess technologies and practices while developing methods for extending new knowledge to women who are mostly illiterate and have little spare time for training. In 1994, ICIMOD was awarded a grant to support the testing, refining, translation into Nepali, and publication of an existing Regenerative Agriculture Technologies for the Hill Farmers of Nepal: An Information Kit (produced by NERRA, the Nepal Rural Reconstruction Association in 1992)

with women farmers in Nepal, and thus introduced the "Agricultural Technologies for Farm Women in Nepal Project" . The main objective of this project was to disseminate practically useful technologies for agriculture-related work to mountain women. More specifically, it attempted to use the Regenerative Agriculture Kit by testing it with a group of rural women to assess its utility in meeting their agricultural needs. To make the Kit's information accessible to rural women, it was necessary to first translate it into simple Nepali and offer training on some of its contents.

An additional goal was to identify technologies not contained in the Kit that could be valuable for farm women, particularly those that could reduce their work loads and drudgery stemming from household and farm management tasks.

Two villages in south-east Gorkha district in Central Nepal were selected as project sites. The decision to work in Gorkha was based on the presence of a large project there, with a mandate to address the needs of women in the area, and on a stated interest to support action research activities. Because of the short-term nature of this ICIMOD project, the promise made by the staff of this project to continue with the implementation of 'women and agriculture' activities in the two villages, after the termination of the ICIMOD six-month phase, was a crucial reason for selection of the site in Gorkha.

Two full-time project staff were hired to conduct activities in Gorkha - one female researcher and one male agronomist. They were posted in one of the villages, where they remained for the entire six months.