

Results

Women's Assessment of Technology

A total of 30 topics from the Regenerative Agriculture Kit and elsewhere were pre-selected for introduction to the women farmer participants, based on the project team's familiarity with their needs and priorities. In addition to 18 Kit topics, 12 other new topics were included that were not found in the Kit (Annex 2). These were introduced through two village workshops and through discussions with other women farmers. Most of these were demonstrated in the workshops and/or while on tour to other farms. After being introduced to the topics — techniques and rationale — the participants were given the option to choose which topics they would be interested in trying, with follow-up

training and resources provided by the Project agriculturalist. After a period of less than six months allocated for trials, the women selected 18 topics that they felt were worthy of trials, based on feasibility and usefulness. Many of these trials had already been initiated over the six-month project period.

Preference Ranking of Accepted Technologies

The women participants of Benigaon and Ranagaon were asked to rank technologies introduced and tested according to their preferences. The result is the following list.

- Optimum use of marginal land with agroforestry
- Multipurpose tree species and their uses
- Kitchen garden for better living
- Vegetables for human nutrition
- Liquid manure
- Preparation of organic manure
- Indigenous species for green manuring
- Propagation of fodder grasses
- Citrus nursery (oranges)
- Off-season onion cultivation
- Off-season vegetables
- Vegetable seed production
- Smokeless *chulo*
- Improved livestock shed
- Ayurvedic pest management
- Integrated pest management
- The pesticide problem
- Pressure cooker

Those technologies that were introduced, but deemed unsuitable for testing by the women, were rejected because of inadequate time for proper trials (given the fixed 6-month project period) or due to the season being inappropriate for trials. The unavailability of planting materials affected two technologies, and the perceived degree of complication determined the unacceptability of three mechanical tools.

Reasons for Accepting New Technologies

The women of the two villages discussed in small groups their reasons for finding the 18 selected technologies feasible and useful for their needs. This

process of selection clarified to the staff the real needs and constraints of these women. They desired simple technologies that they could easily understand and that could be put into practice with local materials. They sought to reduce their time and labour inputs, while gaining increased sources of biomass for fodder and fuelwood; multiple use products suited them best, and they perceived that propagating agroforestry plants could save them significant amounts of time. Vegetables were valued for their nutritive value and to both contribute to their self-sufficiency and provide a source of income. Women are also interested in protecting their forest resources and in improving soil fertility levels for future generations.

It was clear that these women were very much influenced by other female farmers' opinions and recommendations on technologies for adoption. They listened with great relish to the stories of the Lwang women, whom they visited as they recounted their accomplishments after organising themselves and working together to build roads, establish plantations, and construct toilets and gobar gas plants.

It is equally important, however, to understand the rationale of the 1/3 of the participants who chose not to conduct trials of any of the introduced technologies. These reasons include a low level of awareness of the project's work, a lack of free time to learn of new techniques, a resistance to change, and a low risk-bearing capacity due to poverty or low levels of confidence.

Visible Changes

Within the short span of six months, there emerged some visible changes in the lives of Benigaon and Ranagaon women who had participated in this Project's activities, and even in the lives of some who had not participated.

Some trials of agricultural and agroforestry technologies were started on private lands; vegetable gardens are now evident in several household compounds. A wall for the school was constructed, and a system of controlled grazing was agreed to and is now adhered to by community residents.

The smokeless *chulo* building activity was a big success, with almost 100 per cent of the houses requesting the local stove builder to construct at least one in their homes and paying for his services.

But of greater significance to the long-term continuation of the Gorkha women's new found confidence is the formation of an association to carry on

the work of bringing new technologies to the women of these two villages. Immediately upon return from their visit to Lwang, the women met to form their own organisation; this has now become a registered NGO that has even devised its objectives and a future plan of action. A review of this NGO's explicit objectives gives us again an idea of the desires of its members.

1. To reduce environmental problems and women's work load.
2. Irrespective of gender differences, honour and respect people according to their effort and work.
3. To look for new ways of labour division within the household, as presently women do more than 75 per cent of work in villages, e.g., fodder and fuelwood, collection fetching drinking water, grinding, milling, plastering, kitchen gardening, cooking, cleaning and child care. (This awareness came from the Time Allocation Study exercise.)
4. To make the local people aware of the interrelationship amongst village environment, vegetation, animals, and human beings.
5. To implement a sustainable agricultural programme, since agriculture is the basis for food production and sufficient food production for life sustenance is a serious problem in the villages, especially those of ethnic minority groups.
6. Take steps to solve local problems such as illegal settlement, grazing, deforestation, waste disposal, and social degeneration.
7. Pay special attention to improving the economic, social, educational, cultural, health, and employment scenario of the village.
8. Provide primary health care, reduce the child mortality rate, and promote animal health care since livestock is important for the welfare of farming life.
9. To provide appropriate education within the village in accordance to age. Also to guide people into suitable jobs according to their skill and capacities.

Together, members of this NGO (which has a rule that all office-bearers must be female) met to determine a workplan for one year, to be supported with funds left over from the Project. This plan is as follows.

1. Establishment of two Resource Centres which can serve to supply planting materials and seeds to the communities and act as focal points for activities
2. Agroforestry planting on private marginal lands
3. A Gobar Gas plant to be established on a trial basis in one village

4. Kharey Khola Plantation (community forest)

5. Training in:

a) Agricultural Technologies

b) Leadership/Community Development/Management

c) Human Health

d) Animal Health

6. Study Tours/Visits