

Mountain Farming Systems



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Participatory Approaches to Agricultural Technology Promotion with Women in the Hills of Nepal

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Preface

Women's contributions are critical to the farming systems of the hills and mountains of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. Notwithstanding, the development of technologies specifically for women-specific tasks and the involvement of rural women in the development and transfer of such technologies have received little attention from research, training, and extension specialists.

In 1994, ICIMOD was awarded a grant by the Ford Foundation 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 the Nepal Rural Reconstruction Association in 1992. This work was carried out with the participation of women farmers in Nepal.

The principal objective was to disseminate practically useful technologies for agriculture-related work to farm women. In addition the project sought to identify technologies of value to farm women that were not contained in the kit. The kit was tested with a group of rural women to assess its usefulness in meeting their needs. It was subsequently translated into simple Nepali and training was offered on some of its contents. This discussion paper is about the project.

ICIMOD, by adopting an openness towards learning from the women and men of Gorkha was able to be responsive to their real constraints and ambitions; flexibility was key, along with patience. We learned much about what it takes for rural women to try and accept new agricultural technologies.

The challenge is not an easy one, and it will require additional resources and time, but the long-term gains of bringing mountain women farmers into the mainstream of agricultural development is a key strategy to achieving sustainable development.

The project field staff, Mr. Prem Gurung and Mrs. Saroj Pandey, are to be credited with conducting the field research and training as well as the participatory assessment. On behalf of ICIMOD, Jeannette Denholm Gurung coordinated the project.

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