

INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

*Institutionalizing Gender-responsive Research & Development in Agriculture and Natural
Resource Management through Women's Networks*
October 2005 – August 2006

**Report submitted to the CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and
Gender Analysis for Technology Development and Institutional Innovation (PRGA)**

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Table of Contents

	PAGE
1 Background	3
2 Activities and Outcomes to Support Project Objectives	5
3 Research findings and dissemination	9
4 Project outputs and dissemination	9
5 Information Sharing	10
6 Training/Capacity Building	10
7 Outcomes	10
8 Project implementation and management	10
9 Recommendations	11
Appendix I	11
Appendix II	12

Institutionalizing Gender-responsive Research & Development in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management through Women's Networks

1. Background

This project – initially entitled “**Institutionalizing SA/GA for Poverty Alleviation in Agricultural Research and Development in the Eastern Himalayan Region**”- builds on an earlier IDRC-supported project, “Building Capacity in Social/Gender Analysis in the Eastern Himalayas”, led by both PRGA and WOCAN directors from 2003 -2005. This 18 month project addressed a gap in the expertise within the eastern Himalayan region to integrate and practically apply social/gender analysis in natural resource management (NRM) related projects by providing training on gender and social analysis methods and approaches in order to understand differential impacts of resource degradation and NRM practices on different segments of the population, with an aim towards developing transformative and innovative solutions. It supported the integration and practical application of SA/GA in 13 organizations in Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, and Nepal through an iterative training process with 15 female and male researchers from these organizations. The project's objectives were to develop culturally appropriate approaches and tools for SAGA in NRM, document progress and practices, and build capacity within organizations to mainstream gender in project activities, using training processes and materials and research methodologies appropriate to the region, and establishing peer-support and networking mechanisms for researchers.

During a review meeting at this previous project's completion, partners concluded that although considerable progress was made with integrating issues of social/gender equity into applied research, the goal now is to strengthen their own and their organisation's capacities to institutionalise this approach, as well generate stronger research results in the current projects. They agreed that though strengthening organizational SA/GA capacities has not been addressed in any systematic way in the program to date, this should be the focus of a further project, as it remains an important issue and major (research) challenge.

A further need identified in this project was a focus on enhanced women's participation in the research process itself, by strengthening their capacity to organise, both at the rural and organisational levels. This awareness is supported by a globally increasing demand on agricultural and NRM research and development organizations to address the needs of those constituents who are highly vulnerable to the effects of poverty, land degradation, climate change and HIV/AIDS. A stronger focus on poverty alleviation was advised, by building a model to strengthen women's capacities to organise around agriculture and NRM to improve their livelihoods and status through initiatives to empower local women's groups and transform related organisations to respond to their needs. Hence this project was designed to build on the lessons and experiences of the previous project to strengthen the capacities of women agricultural and NRM professionals AND rural women's groups to themselves control the process of research, while simultaneously building their capabilities and power to demand agricultural and NRM development on their own terms; this is an approach that meets both practical and strategic needs of poor rural women for empowerment and poverty alleviating technologies.

Three partners from the earlier project, from Sikkim, Bhutan, and Meghalaya, were selected as initial partners; added to these were partners from key organizations in Nepal and NE India (WOCAN Nepal and Indian Council of Agricultural Research). All partners had received training on SA/GA and conducted participatory research as part of the project “Building Capacity for Social and Gender Analysis (SA/GA) in Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity in the Eastern Himalayan region”. A supplementary grant provided by CIDA for this project enabled the participation of an additional partner, CARE Laos- an organization that had received training on gender mainstreaming by the WOCAN Director and has been actively engaged in a process of organizational change for gender equality. Because of the involvement of partners from Laos, the project’s initial geographical focus on the eastern Himalayas was changed to the Eastern Himalayas and Laos in the project’s title.

Both PRGA and WOCAN have roles in leading this project, with WOCAN taking on the primary implementation responsibility. At least two consultants with extensive international expertise in agro-enterprise and participatory plant breeding were selected to provide training and advice. WOCAN Nepal was selected to coordinate the project activities and communication.

The project works with ten partner organizations in Asia:

- Northeast Network, Shillong, Meghalaya, India
- Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Meghalaya, India
- Department of Agriculture of the State of Meghalaya, India
- Dept for Horticulture and Cash Crop Development of Sikkim, India
- ECOHIMAL, Sikkim, India
- Renewable Natural Resources Research Center, Royal Government of Bhutan Wengkhar, Bhutan
- Crop Development Directorate of the Department of Agriculture, Nepal
- WOCAN Nepal
- CARE Laos
- Phongsaly Provincial Agricultural and Forestry Office, Lao PDR

Five of the partners (from the Northeast Network, ECOHIMAL, CARE Laos, Renewable Natural Resources Research Center and WOCAN Nepal) herewith called ‘primary partners’ act in the capacity of “brokers”, assisting the other partners and their organizations by acting as facilitators, trainers, and coaches. These five have benefited from participation in earlier SA/GA and gender mainstreaming projects and trainings conducted by WOCAN and PRGA, and have gained experience that is brought to bear on behalf of their national government partners, providing them with one –on-one assistance while conducting similar work in their own organizations as well.

Partners prepare reports, plans of action, and evaluate their impacts while acting as change agents in their own organizations. WOCAN and PRGA directors travel to each partner’s organization at least twice over the project period to meet senior management staff, and

generally support the work of the project partner to influence his/her colleagues to support organizational change for gender equality.

2. Activities and Outcomes to Support Project Objectives

During this first half of the project implementation, from October 2005 to August 2006, the focus was on capacity building of the partners themselves in gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and organizational analysis, and on building the support for their Action Plans and activities within their own organizations. This was done through three workshops: one preliminary planning workshop with just the primary partners from Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim, Meghalaya and Laos (all of who were knowledgeable about social analysis/gender analysis (SAGA) due to their participation in the earlier project, “Building Capacity in Social/Gender Analysis in the Eastern Himalayas” and own experiences); one to build capabilities for gender and organizational analysis with the new partners of agriculture and natural resource management organizations in Nepal, Sikkim, Meghalaya and Laos; and one to share the research results and develop indicators and Plans of Action. Site visits were completed by the PRGA and WOCAN directors in Nepal, Sikkim, Meghalaya and Laos to meet senior managers and staff in order to build political support for the project’s activities and goals.

Thus significant progress was made to address Objective 2. In the process, experience has been gained, and lessons for ‘good practices’ have emerged, as per Objective 3. In this second half of the project, the focus is now shifting to building the capabilities of the rural women’s groups through agro-enterprise development, to address Objective 1. This work begins in September, with a training for the partners to become trainers themselves for rural women on agro-enterprise development.

The specific activities and outcomes that addressed project objectives as described below:

Objective 1) To build the capacities of rural women in the Eastern Himalayas and Laos to meet their needs for food security and income generating opportunities through local organizations and agro-enterprise development. Project partners identified the existing women’s groups engaged in agriculture and NRM to receive training on women’s leadership, agro-enterprise development and participatory plant breeding, seed production, marketing, etc. Activities with these women’s groups are being further specified by the partners in conjunction with their colleagues as part of an activity of participatory planning in their organizations. Those aspects of the project that relate to rural women’s groups are now being enacted, after the development of the Action Plan and indicators. The first such activity will be held in September, 2006, as a training in agro-enterprise, soon to be followed by a training on participatory plant breeding and varietal selection.

Objective 2) To support partner agricultural and NRM organizations in the Eastern Himalayas and Laos to institutionalize a planning and delivery process that is more responsive to the needs of rural women through facilitating organizational change

A. Planning Meeting, Bangkok, October 2005

Eight participants from partner organizations in Nepal, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Laos joined the PRGA and WOCAN directors in this planning meeting to: 1) orient

participants to Project goals and activities, 2) develop criteria for selecting partner organizations, research sites and rural women's networks, and 3) develop a Project Plan of Action with workshops dates and venues, deadlines for meetings with partners of agriculture and NRM organizations and reporting on assessment of training needs. The Bhutan partner was unable to attend.

During this meeting, partners confirmed specific objectives of the project as:

- 1) To build the capacities of rural women to meet their needs for food security and income generating opportunities through local organizations and agro-enterprise development.
- 2) To support partner agricultural and NRM organizations to institutionalize a planning and delivery process that is more responsive to the needs of rural women through facilitating organizational change; and
- 3) To generate a viable set of 'good practices' for mainstreaming gender-sensitive participatory R & D approaches within selected organizations through action research and assessing the impacts of these methodologies for learning and change;

The following research questions were reviewed and agreed to by the group:

- ❖ What type of changes are required/sufficient to mainstream PR and SA/GA approaches and move toward an 'interactive' innovation paradigm?
- ❖ What are the practices that are most effective to drive the process of organizational change from within and externally?
- ❖ What are the principle factors that motivate organizational management and members to change?
- ❖ How can a client group such as that of rural women affect the process of change within an organization?
- ❖ What will those changes entail, how would an organization that has institutionalized PR and SA/GA appear?
- ❖ What are the links between organizational change and poverty alleviation? Can organizational change engender positive outcomes for poor rural women in relation to increasing their access and control over agriculture and natural resources?

A review about the last question provoked a debate about the title of the project. Until this time, two different titles were used: "Institutionalizing SA/GA for Poverty Alleviation in Agricultural Research and Development in the Eastern Himalayan Region" for IDRC, and "Targeting Agricultural R and D for Poverty Alleviation through Women's Networks", used by WOCAN with other donors (CIDA and IFAD) it is trying to engage in this project..

The participants developed a set of 'buzz words' that were relevant to this project, and constructed their own title using those words. The result was a new title, "**Institutionalizing gender responsive R&D in Agriculture and NRM through women's networks**"; the group felt that by creating a new title for the project, they were already engaging in a "shift in definition" that is the first stage in bringing about social change, as per 'Making the Case' – a tool learned at the AWID Forum described below.

B. Participation in the AWID Forum, Bangkok

Prior to this meeting, the group participated in the 10th International AWID Forum on **How Does Change Happen?** This meeting of over 1800 participants from 120 countries, focusing on processes of change for gender equality, was a serendipitous opportunity for partners to attend numerous workshops and discussions, with feminists from around the world, to gain exposure, skills and knowledge. For some, it offered unique experiences to see the world from women's perspectives, generating questions such as: "how can men use this to experience to feel how women feel in their male dominated organizations?" and "how can we push for gender equality diplomatically in our country (Laos) where activism is not welcome?" One partner noted that "what we learned at the AWID Forum reminded us of the political nature of this struggle, that this is not about technical fixes; therefore, we are not limited to using the usual language of development." Many speakers questioned the strategy of gender mainstreaming, and stimulated partners to consider the limitations of this approach. Finally, the group noted how few AWID sessions discussed the link between women's rights and NRM, which is a true reflection of the broader context for gender and environmental movements.

A discussion of the tools/methodologies picked up from the Forum, and how they could be used in this project generated a table of Key Ideas (Appendix 1). One particularly useful tool was that of Making the Case, used by the Women's Funding Network. Partners considered the 5 Indicators of Social Change, defined here, to be most useful to this project.

1. shifts in definitions
2. shifts in behaviour
3. shifts in engagement of community
4. shifts in policy
5. maintaining past gains

The group discussed these various forms of social change, and related their own experiences to these various stages; some had achieved gains in behavioral change, others in community engagement. All agreed that this framework was a useful way to develop indicators for change within this project, and there was much interest in putting these to use immediately.

C. Capacity Building/Planning Workshop, February 2006, Kathmandu

A 10 day capacity building workshop on gender and organizations was held for primary partners and their selected partners from agriculture and NRM organizations, using the same methodology used for the previous project and for other purposes by both PRGA and WOCAN. These partners – women and men working inside the agricultural research and development organizations who act as the brokers between the organizations and the rural women's groups- gained skills for organizational analysis, gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and organizational change in a training program designed to build their capabilities as researchers and change agents within their organizations. The workshop also included an orientation to participatory plant breeding and agro-enterprise in relation to project goals.

MOUs were drawn up for each organization, indicating the payment schedule and conditions for the Small Grants. Plans were made at this time for the site visits by the PRGA and WOCAN Directors to occur in July and August, to visit partner organizations to build support for the project's activities in whatever ways determined by the partners to be most beneficial.

D. *Organizational Analysis, March to July 2006, Kathmandu*

After the completion of the course in February, partners returned to their “home” organizations to assess the level of gender awareness and responsiveness within their own organizations using the 9 Box Framework for Organizational Analysis and research questions. In the process, they scouted for other insiders who could become allies, prepared reports on these organizational analyses, and begin to conceive of activities to make step by step progress towards organizational change for gender equality. Key to the success of these activities was the guidance and engagement of the primary partners – those five men and women with knowledge and experience from the previous IDRC sponsored project or similar work in gender mainstreaming, who are outsiders to the agriculture and NRM organisations, but who work in NGOs within the same context.

E. *Research Feedback and Planning Workshop, July 2006, Kathmandu*

Partners returned to Kathmandu in July for the second part of the training program, to share their results of their organizational research, and to learn and apply the SWOT tool for analysis and planning to develop a Plan of Action for their organization and for the women's groups. A framework for gender mainstreaming was introduced that kept the participants' attention focused on strategically critical activities of gender mainstreaming and community level outcomes.

A particularly valuable aspect of the workshop was the training on **Outcome Mapping**. One of the partners who had attended the IDRC training on this in the spring assisted the workshop facilitators to present this tool to the group; all of the partners then produced vision and mission statements, listed boundary partners, identified outcome challenges and graduated progress markers and developed a strategy map for their organizations. These tools provide the indicators that will be used to measure outcomes for the remainder of the project.

Each organization was then provided with a payment towards the Small Grant of USD 4,000 to implement their Action Plans for the organization and the women's groups.

F. *Site Visits by PRGA and WOCAN Directors*

In order to build political support for each partner and his/her Plan of Action, the PRGA and WOCAN Directors visited partner organizations in Nepal, Shillong (2), Sikkim, and Laos in July and August. During each of these visits, meetings were held with the senior managers, other colleagues, and women staff. In Shillong, two seminars were organized to share the results of the organizational analyses and generate discussions with colleagues to gauge their understanding and commitment; in Nepal, smaller meetings were organised with the Director

General and then with potential members of the gender group. In Laos, visits were made to meet members of the women's groups, as well as meetings with the senior managers. In Sikkim, a consultation meeting was conducted with project staff and colleagues. It was decided that another meeting with senior planners from the government and political leadership would be convened in January 2007.

Objective 3: To generate a viable set of 'good practices' for mainstreaming gender-sensitive participatory R & D approaches within selected organizations through action research and assessing the impacts of these methodologies for learning and change. The best practices are beginning to emerge through the ongoing activities of capacity building through training and mentoring/coaching, and through the research on organizations. It is too early to now assess the impacts of the capacity building of both rural and professional women, the benefits and limitations of partnership between these two groups, and the action plans to institutionalize the mainstreaming of gender-sensitive participatory R & D approaches; this will be possible only after another year or more of activities. But one good practice that has emerged is the pairing of an outsider with an insider for this process of organizational change. The insider has the in depth knowledge of his/her organizational culture, processes and the personalities of its members; the outsider, who are NGO members with training on gender and social analyses, has a different perspective on participation, development and how things need to happen in organizations. The outsiders seem to be given more space to be critical, and are able to say things that insiders hesitate to say. They are also able to share with the insiders their networks and resources that are otherwise unknown, thus broadening their exposure beyond the narrow confines of their sectoral agencies. This may represent the strengths that can be obtained through a state and civil society collaborative relationship.

3. Research findings and dissemination

Partners have produced six organizational analyses in order to gain an understanding of the ways in which gender affects organizational outcomes and the lives of their members. These studies reveal quite a range of gender responsiveness; in Nepal, the Department of Agriculture has structures, policies and personnel that are attending to gender inequalities in programs and are aware of the need for more equality in the organization as well. But other partners have as yet, paid scant attention to gender, and have devoted almost no resources to ensuring that gender expertise exists and is used within their organizations. Most of these do have targets for delivering training and other inputs to rural women, but do not have structures and personnel that are specific to gender. Yet in all the organizations, partners identified people, policies and structures that can be used to support the project's objectives.

Due to the sensitive nature of organizational analysis, not all partner organizations are willing to share the results publicly. Instead, at the end of the project, these analyses will be amalgamated in a way that brings out the salient findings without identifying the source. This will be a publication.

4. Project outputs and dissemination

In addition to the publication of research findings, a major output of the project will be a manual for this approach of capacity building and implementation at two levels: rural

women's groups and professional women and men of agriculture and NRM organizations. Upon completion of the project, the manual will be finalized and ready for dissemination.

5. Information sharing

Information sharing within this project takes numerous forms. First, partners received handouts on gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and organizational change used in the training courses, aiding their knowledge and skill development. Second, consultants provided all participants with knowledge about participatory plant breeding and agro-enterprise development. Third, information sharing amongst partners has been frequent since the first planning workshop, as they share reflections, progress reports, challenges and even personal stories over the email. Fourth has been the information passed on by the PRGA and WOCAN directors about other gender-related tools and relevant websites, opportunities for grants for project implementation, training and research, relevant meetings, organizations related to women and gender in the field of NRM, etc.

6. Training/Capacity Building

The project is primarily a capacity building activity, so partners have gained new knowledge, skills, and tools to conduct gender and organizational research, develop strategic plans using Outcome Mapping and determine indicators of success. Supervision and assistance from the PRGA and WOCAN resource team members has also been provided on an 'as-needed basis' over the email and in person when traveling together.

Most partners have shared information and knowledge gained in the Training Workshop with others in their organizations, either formally or informally.

In addition to these, they will learn the skills of facilitation and communication for influencing organizational change in a workshop to be held in January, 2007. This workshop will feature sessions on leadership as well as facilitation skills.

7. Outcomes

The impact to date has been related to bringing about new levels of awareness of social and gender issues to professional women and men in agriculture and NRM organizations in the eastern Himalayas and Laos. In the workshop evaluation, many reported gaining a new and deeper understanding of these issues, methods of analyzing them and bringing them into their own organizations, and a need for social transformation. This project has so far stimulated some partners to take on leadership roles to influence their organizations to make significant changes for gender equality, and to better address the needs of women in the communities that they work with, including groups of resource-poor ethnic minority women. These outcomes will be monitored and documented using Outcome Mapping tools.

8. Project Design and Management

One aspect of the project management that has required adjustment in the budget is the need for separate funds for the primary partners to supplement their normal salaries. As these partners are from NGOs, their time spent on this project needed to be paid for, especially when the goals of this project are not understood by senior managers to be part and parcel of the organization's normal work. The partners themselves agreed on an amount that was

deemed reasonable by the project directors; this amount was then subtracted from the small grants, as it is seen as part of the backstopping of the Plan of Action for each organization.

The original budget was not sufficient to include the two organizations in Laos, nor to hold the fourth workshop, to build facilitation capacities. Fortunately, the supplemental budget provided by CIDA allowed these to be included.

In addition, the lack of an administrative budget for WOCAN in this project meant that the resources of the primary implementing organization were not budgeted for, except for some partial payment to the staff as consultants.

9. Recommendations

Though it is early in the project stage to offer concrete recommendations, it is already possible to state that the project would be greatly enhanced by larger amounts of funds for the Small Grants. The amount is considered to be insignificant by some organizational actors, meaning that the project and its goals are not taken as seriously as desired. A doubling of the amount would provide more flexibility and resources to be used for the activities directly linked to rural women's groups, while enhancing the profile of the project and the partners within their organizations.

Appendix 1: Key Ideas from the AWID Forum

Key ideas	Empowering Education	Tools	Relevance to Project	Who said it?
Impact of social change		Making the Case framework	Targeting change in planning; evaluation	
REFLECT	Action Aid	reflection	Institutional analysis; approach for partners and rural women	
Impact of social change	IAC/WAV	Cube with dimensions of Place, Power and Spaces	Planning and M & E	
Building strong organizations		Open Space Technology	Framework	CREA (to be investigated by Nawraj)
Mentoring, selfless leadership			Capacity building	
Leadership and change	www.empedu.civicua.org	Empowering Education	Capacity development @ grassroots	
What are we trying to change?	Gender at Work	Quadrant for areas of change	Institutional assessment	Aruna Rao and David Kelleher
Resource mobilization			Capacity development @grassroots	
Changing women's lives	ADCWNSP	GEM	Evaluation	
Women's creative ways to get around cultural obstacles in institutions and communities	UNIFEM; Gender Community (India)	narratives	Research	
Communicating from rural women to	PRGA	Participatory video	Capacity building	

institutions				
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Appendix 2: Gender Mainstreaming Framework

1. POLITICAL COMMITMENT

What the leadership must do

- Realign the organization's mission statement with gender equality, such as viewing it as integral to poverty reduction

Change Policies, Procedures, & Systems

- Develop a gender action plan that includes the 4 elements of the mainstreaming framework
- Communicate the gender policy to all partner organizations

Actions to Expand Awareness Externally in Country

- Promote the link between gender equality and poverty alleviation in public

2. TECHNICAL CAPACITY

Assess capacity, Knowledge & Perception of staff about Gender issues

- Conduct a gender audit to assess the current level of gender awareness, knowledge, and skills in gender issues

Increase Gender expertise on staff

- Employ gender trainers to increase staff capacity at all levels
- Ensure all senior managers are included in training

Produce and Utilise Gender Analysis and Training Materials

Make Changes in Technical or Project approaches

- Disaggregate project data, including participation of women and men, not solely collecting data on women

- Identify how gender factors have hampered achievements of project goals
- Identify women and men most affected by project interventions and ensure their input and full participation (including sex disaggregated focus groups)
- Examine access and control issues regarding resources in projects for gender factors
- Identify harmful cultural practices that might be supported by projects and analyze how organizational policies can be used as a leverage to introduce social change
- Make a concerted effort to identify women for participation and leadership in non-traditional areas of projects
- Extend the gender training to organizational partners
- Partner with other organizations to secure advice and expertise
- Consult with external groups which can assist with strategic planning to change attitudes and increase acceptance

3. ACCOUNTABILITY – Carrot and Sticks

- Require gender indicators for M&E of project processes and outcomes
- Build indicators for demonstrating commitment to gender equality into performance reviews
- Have proposals screened and reports for including the participation of women and men at equitable levels and examining the impact of results on power relationships between men and women
- Tie gender integration to funding for partners
- Ensure that gender factors are included in all Logical Frameworks or similar project planning documents for projects

4. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE – Change in mindsets and Values

- Provide public recognition of staff who are positive gender role models
- Implement systemic changes in policies, contracts and grants to challenge harmful cultural practices
- Disseminate information on success and challenges, including household and community improvements
- Ensure individual and collective gender action through a personal platform for action in individual performance plans

ANNEX 1.

		J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
		Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
1	Identification of resources		X			X																			
2	Selection of participants - identify pool - applications - review & selection		X X X	X	X	X	X																		
3	Needs Assessment						X																		
4	Design Curriculum - Mtg/Workshop							X																	
5	Training Workshop - preparations - workshop							X	X																
6	Networking - identify needs - email listserver - info/outreach						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7	Establish doc control	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	Implement small grants								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							

	- site visits										X	X	X	X	X	X							
	- mentoring										X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
9	Small group meetings														X	X	X	X					
10	Writing Workshop - writing period																		X	X	X		
11	Final Workshop																					X	
12	Dissemination																						X
13	PM+E						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
14	Doc of process				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
15	Interim Reports Final Reports											X											X

