



Women, Food Security and **Climate Change**

Building Women Farmers Solidarity and Capacities

PROCESS REPORT OF A
TRAINING PROGRAMME



Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group

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Building Women Farmers Solidarity and Capacities

- Process Documentation -



Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group



Women's Earth Alliance

Women, Food Security and Climate Change :
Building Women Farmers Solidarity and Capacities

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Report Prepared by Amit Mitra
based on the documentation in Hindi by GEAG

Assisted by

Dr. Seema Tripathi

Cover Photographs

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Layout and Type Setting

Raj Kanti Gupta

Project implemented by

Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group
224 Purdilpur
MG College Road
Gorakhpur 273001, India
Phone # 0551 2230004, Fax # 0551 2230005
Email geag@geagindia.org
Website : geagindia.org

Supported by

Women's Earth Alliance
2150 Allston Way, Ste.460
Berkeley, CA 94704, USA
www.womensearthalliance.org

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Participants after the first phase training (April, 2011)

Introduction

In April 2011, the Gorakhpur Environmental Association (GEAG), in association with the Women's Earth Alliance (WEA) launched the India Women, Food Security and Climate Change Training programme. The yearlong training programme focused on a) building the resilience of women farmers in the face of climate change and b) improving the food and economic security of women farmers that is threatened annually by floods in the Gangetic plains. This report is a summary of the process followed and the implications of the same for replication elsewhere. The detailed proceedings and processes have been documented in meticulous detail in Hindi by GEAG. The present report does not seek to duplicate that work, but rather crystallise the key principles and issues, including methodological ones of training processes. Although some of the development outcomes of the training programme have been summarized for illustrative purposes, the focus is more on the training processes and ideologies, as well as the underlying theories of change and praxes. The report, based on the documentation in Hindi, is divided into the following sections :

- Section 2 : Feminisation of Indian Agriculture
- Section 3 : Objectives of the Training Programme
- Section 4 : Selection of Participants, Civil Society Organisations and Venues
- Section 5 : The Teaching Learning Process
- Section 6 : Common Issues and Problems
- Section 7 : Lessons Learnt for the Development of an Effective Training Programme

Feminisation of Indian Agriculture

Agriculture contributes about one-fifth of India's GDP. Women comprise more than 50 per cent of India's farmers and about 60 per cent of the workforce in the agricultural sector. India is a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979, which calls for elimination of all forms of discrimination of women by ensuring equal access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes.

Going beyond the official data, women perform almost all tasks related to agriculture, including weeding, transplanting, levelling, watering crops, threshing, harvesting and even carrying the crop back home. Most of the work related to animal husbandry and pisci-culture (except drawing nets) is done by women. There is a social taboo on it so women are spared the task of ploughing. In a situation of

increasing feminisation of agriculture due to migration of men, the distinction between women's productive and reproductive work gets increasingly blurred as looking after the family farm and the cattle become a part of the "household" work (Rao, 2012).

Yet, women are not considered agriculturists or farmers and are excluded from most decision-making processes. Their role in food production and contribution to the nation's food security or to the creation of the 75 million buffer stocks of food grains is not recognised. They are denied access to credit, information, and marketing facilities. Their entitlements to land and asset ownership, despite a supportive legislative framework, goes largely unrecognised. Sometimes women themselves do not recognise the importance of their contribution to the national economy. Women may also underestimate the enormous range of burdens they bear; they may harbour negative images about themselves and may not view themselves as strong and effective survivors, managing a wide spectrum of household responsibilities," (Parasuraman and Unnikrishnan, 2000: p11). Across the world, despite the work women do in agriculture, a farmer is associated with a man. Thus, in the training programme being discussed, the 36 women, all selected because of their association with agriculture, were asked to sketch a farmer in the very first working session. Thirty of the 36 drew the image of a man (GEAG, 2011a, p.4).

The adverse impact of climate change and the increasing frequency of droughts, floods, changes in the weather cycles are aggravating the crises faced by the women. Thus, in the eastern Gangetic plains, or eastern Uttar Pradesh(U.P), in the last



Mixed farming promoted by trainees

several decades, the ferocity and frequency of floods increased considerably, recurring every 3-4 years. At places, it has even become a regular, annual feature, which greatly affects the livelihood of the people. The people inhabiting the flood-affected regions attribute this to climate change. Indeed, the climate of eastern U.P has undergone a definite change in the last few years. For example, it has now become normal for the temperature to cross 45° centigrade and remain so for long periods during the summers. Such temperature rise causes rapid melting of glaciers, which is increasing the water level in the rivers. On the other hand, there has been a significant change in the monsoon period. The timings of rain have become very unpredictable. While earlier, August-September was the usual period of flood, today it is not.

What is remarkable is that it is the women farmers who are leading the struggle to adapt to and build up resilience to climate change. Yet, by and large, such efforts are not acknowledged. It is against this background that GEAG, based on its 25 years of work with promoting the rights of women farmers, in association with the Women's Earth Alliance, USA, launched a year long programme of enhancing the capacities of women farmer leaders to build up processes of other women farmers in their respective villages in sustainable agriculture.

In a sense it was a training of trainers, with a clear objective: the trained women would go back and facilitate other women to practice sustainable ecological agriculture and enhance their food, economic, livelihood and social security and in the process develop resilience to climate change and reduce the risks of disasters.

Goals and Objectives of the Training Programme

Goals of the Training Program

1. Improve the food and economic security of women farmers in the face of climate change by building a cadre of empowered and resourced rural women trainers who will spread critical knowledge to their networks and communities.
2. Build the political will of grassroots rural women by connecting them to advocacy and campaigns to assert their rights as farmers.

The primary objectives of the programme were:

- ♦ Training women in sustainable agriculture
- ♦ Creating awareness about women's rights and entitlements

- ♦ Generating knowledge on resource mobilization and fund raising so that the women's food and economic security is enhanced, the environment protected sustainably and in the process the women are empowered to demand their entitlements from the state.



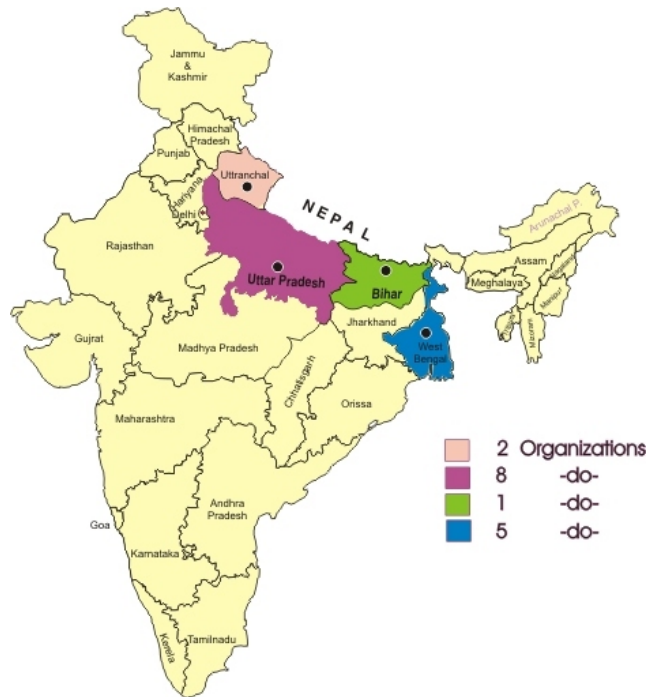
Training Session

Thus the programme had ecological, social, economic and political objectives, all inter-linked and geared towards women's empowerment and higher gender equity.

Selection of Participants, Civil Society Organisations and Venues

The training was unique in many ways. In a sharp departure from the usual NGO-led trainings, it was a) demand driven and b) had a process orientation. Instead of a one-off affair, it was decided to conduct a four-stage training, involving the same women.

It was decided to focus on the northern and eastern states of the country that are affected by soil erosion, riverine erosion, floods, cyclones but are in the same agro-climatic zone so that there is a



similarity in socio-economic and ecological, including agricultural conditions. Thus Uttarakhand, UP, Bihar and West Bengal (WB) were chosen as the focal states. Uttarakhand, being a mountainous state, faces massive soil erosion and the adverse impact of unplanned industrialization whereas the other three states are plagued by floods and droughts. All the four states are facing the adverse impacts of climate change. The women in all these states are the mainstay of agriculture.

In terms of actual selection of the participants it was decided to select NGOs in the four states who were actively involved in actualizing women farmer's rights and enhancing food and livelihood security through ecological or low external input sustainable agriculture (LEISA) practices. It was decided to invite one woman farmer who was already playing a leader's role in these processes and one woman representative from the NGO. The four venues (one in WB and 3 in U.P) were hosted by four allies and like-minded civil society groups on the basis of relevant field experience on the ground, accessibility and also the willingness and ability to host the training with the organisation actually participating in the process. The venues were not pre-determined but selected during the previous training and finalised after a site visit by GEAG staff (GEAG, 2012b).

The participants were selected on the basis of open call (on website of GEAG, WEA, circulation of letters to almost 90 NGOs and donors working in the four states) and after that short listing, on the basis of a short essay on why they wanted to participate in the training and the credentials of the organisation according to the information collected by GEAG. Through this process, a total of 36 participants and four venues were finalised (See Appendix 1 for details of the participants and the resource persons).

The Teaching Learning Processes

The training was organised in four interconnected phases. This was done so that the lessons learnt in terms of actualizing the learnings of each phase could be followed up so that a refined overall strategy could be formulated. The thrust was not just on techniques, but on overall social and economic empowerment so that the techniques could be practiced by the women farmers.

The four phases of the training were:

Phase 1 : Campierganj, Gorakhpur District, 18-22 April, 2011, hosted by GEAG (Six days). In this phase, based on GEAG's experience, the teaching learning processes involved building a common understanding of climate change, disaster risk reduction and the role and importance of women farmers in developing climate resilient agricultural practices. Training materials were collectively developed for each of the topics. The training process involved three days of field visits and interactions with women farmers practicing climate resilient agriculture based on LEISA practices. GEAG's rich experience of developing various models of sustainable agriculture, combining women farmers' indigenous knowledge with the best of contemporary science and technology was very useful. The importance of simultaneously stressing on agronomic techniques as well as social empowerment through organizing the women into collectives was imparted to the trainees.

The trainees returned to their areas of work after this phase, having planned for the next one, and also formulating action plans for implementation.

Phase 2 : 24 Parganas District; West Bengal, 22-24 September, 2011, hosted by Development Research Communications & Services Center(DRCSC), Kolkata (three days). In this phase, the learnings of the previous phase were recapitulated and the experiences of attempts to implement the action plans based on them were shared. Of special importance was the focus on the issues and problems related to implementation and how they could be resolved. Site visits were organized for participants to see how farmers were practicing agriculture in an area prone to natural disasters and see their strategies to improve their food security. The practices observed were integrated farming practices, seed saving of flood-resistant indigenous seeds, generation of renewable fuel using biogas plants on farms using cow and human manure and reducing carbon footprint and improving women's health by the use of smokeless chulahs. These farmer-to-farmer exchanges highlighted the innovations of the farmers, as well as practical implementation of agro-ecological practices. Future strategies and action plans were formulated.

Phase 3 : Saharanpur, UP, 14-16 November, 2011, hosted by DishaSamajikSansthan, Saharanpur (Three days). This phase began with the usual recapitulation and sharing of experiences and new problems that arose in some cases. This was followed by teaching learning and experience sharing on advocacy, movements and campaigns, so that the participants could develop their own localized strategies as well as participate /or join wider state, national and global movements and campaigns. The importance of developing solid and effective networks was a part of the curriculum of this phase, but at the same time GEAG's basic thrust of forming robust institutions of the poor , thereby organizing the unorganized, was reiterated. It was also emphasized that the local people are the best advocates of their causes, and the external agency has to look on itself as just a facilitator.

Phase 4 : Kushinagar, UP, 5-7 April, 2012, hosted by Nari Kalyan Sewa Sansthan, Kushinagar (Three days). This was the concluding phase where the experiences and lessons of the previous phases were recapitulated and shared. The participants also highlighted their implementation success and discussed the lessons they could learn from their failures.

Apart from GEAG staff, external experts were invited as resource persons for each of the workshops (see Appendix 1). But most importantly each of the participants were themselves were resource persons, given that the workshops were conducted in a sharing and not lecture mode. In that sense the external resource persons were facilitators. In each phase, teaching learning materials were prepared in a participatory manner and disseminated among participants.

The teaching learning process followed was andragogical, in the sense that it was decided to build up on the existing knowledge and experience of the participating women, given that each of them had been through a process of struggle and had a rich personal history of being involved with development processes and engaging with the issues involved in a rights framework. Each phase involved reporting, intense discussions and analysis as well as finding solutions to the emerging problems.

For all the regions, the participants discussed the prevalent critical issues. In the next section, the issues common to all the regions are highlighted.

Common Issues and Problems

Cutting across the four states, the participating women farmers isolated 12 common problems that need immediate attention (GEAG, 2012b, p.5). These are:

1. Scarcity of good seeds with high germination ratios, caused by the disappearance of traditional seeds due to the introduction of hybrids.
2. Declining soil fertility caused by increasing application of synthetic fertilisers.
3. Increasing problems of women due to commercialization of agriculture and market dependence.
4. Falling incomes from agriculture (due to enhanced dependence of high cost external inputs) leading to increased male migration.
5. Lack of women farmers' access to credit.
6. Changing rainfall patterns leading to lower output.
7. Fuel and fodder shortages due to forest degradation.
8. Declining cattle stock
9. Reduced livelihood options
10. Soil erosion and riverine erosion
11. Meandering rivers and formation of land banks (*chars*)
12. Biodiversity and agro-biodiversity reduction

What was implicit in the delineation of the critical issues was the non-recognition of women as farmers and as vital contributors to the nation's food security. Also implicit was that many of the above crises were originally caused by the introduction of capitalist agriculture introduced in the late 1960s under the aegis of India's so-called Green Revolution. The social and gender implications of this were indeed deleterious. With the introduction of commercial crops and the associated package, the market penetration ensured the breakdown of community institutions that regulated natural resource use on the one hand and greater individualization on the other.

This was accompanied by the decline and in many cases the collapse of the diverse cultures of sharing, including that of labour and food, adversely impacting the rural poor, mostly the small and marginal farmers and the landless. Most of the latter belonged to the downtrodden castes and tribes, or what are popularly known as SCs and STs. Needless to say, the women suffered the most and continue to do so. While climate change and the accompanying disasters accentuate the problems women

face, it has to be recognized that individualized solutions will not work and collective, institutionalized approaches need to be developed, the organisational form being shaped by situational exigencies. However, such organisation/ institution building processes have to be accompanied by demonstrable and sustainable processes of economic empowerment.

Achievements of the Programme

The training catered to 36 women farmers and rural field activists from four flood affected states : Uttar Pradesh (U.P), Bihar, West Bengal (WB) and Uttarakhand (UK). These trainees are all working to enhance the resilience of women farmers in a context of rapid climate crises, such as recurring droughts, floods and changes in the timing of the monsoons. These changes adversely impact the health, well-being and economic security of the women.

As discussed in section 5, the training was essentially an action oriented one, where the women farmers would go back to their bases and implement the plans and strategies they formulated and evolved for their respective areas. Care was taken to avoid a one size fits all approach. The stress was more on institution building and collectivisation not individual action. Despite the short time that has passed after the completion of the training, the entire process has led to the following material outcomes :

- ◆ Creation of an innovative curriculum based on the perspectives and priorities of women farmers to improve their food security in a context of climate change.
- ◆ Four educational films for dissemination of the learnings from the programme.
- ◆ Publication of a training manual on climate change, food security and sustainable agriculture.
- ◆ Disbursement of seed grants to all the participants who went through rigorous action planning to implement farm and community based projects to build capacities of other women farmers in the respective areas.
- ◆ 8200 saplings of indigenous trees were planted by the trainees through their network of women's groups and supporting NGOs.
- ◆ 2400 women farmers were trained and their capacities built in low external input sustainable agriculture (LEISA) and climate change awareness activities
- ◆ 1825 additional farmers adopted climate change adaptive farming techniques.
- ◆ 6550 women farmers have now been connected with this process.
- ◆ The direct participants signed a declaration on women farmers that will be circulated to appropriate ministries, government departments and civil society groups.



Low tunnel Poly house developed by women farmer

But much more than these material outcomes, the strategic ones were critical. The lessons learnt and principles isolated from the experience of GEAG in empowering women farmers and building up their resilience to climate change or reducing risks of disasters formed the cornerstone of the training process. This is elaborated on briefly in section 8.

GEAG's Intervention Strategy

It is essential to highlight the critical principles of GEAG's intervention strategy, based on more than two decades of practical experience in UP, in building women's food security and developing resilience to climate change. At the core of it lies a strategy to empower women.

♦ Gendered Interventions need to be holistic

With an intense and active presence in 140 villages across the state, but stronger in eastern U.P, GEAG has always stood for the rights of the poor and the excluded. Over the years, since its inception in 1992 as an implementing NGO, it has championed the rights of women. To empower women socially, politically and economically, its field-based work is based on a three-pronged strategy :

- Social mobilisation through development of SHGs, village to state level

morchas (struggle units) and village level federations bringing the two together

- Sustainable agriculture interventions (techniques, marketing and service centres)
- Micro savings and credit programmes in which finance is used as a means to organise the unorganised and is not an end in itself.

GEAG recognises women as farmers and has a strong emphasis on holistically promoting their rights. In recognising the women as farmers, GEAG has given them an identity and boosted their creativity. Thus one of the implications of the teaching learning programme discussed here, based on GEAG's experience, is that it is important to enable women to assert their identities, without instrumentalising them. For GEAG, the consequences of this have been far reaching. Its political and social mobilization takes the form of organizing the women in not only credit groups but true self help ones and joining them in the Laghu Simant Krishak Morcha (LSKM). The LSKM, set up in 2000, is the only independent registered trade union of small and marginal farmers in the country that was initiated by an NGO (GEAG). Out of its present 132000 members, 60 per cent are women. The LSKM has a presence in almost every village GEAG works in, as well as other villages outside GEAG's area of work and takes up issues ranging from malfunctioning schools and dispensaries to combatting upper caste high-handedness. Errant and corrupt officials are often challenged (Dogra, undated).



Millets re-established as a climate resilient activity

The economic empowerment takes place through improved farming techniques, marketing channels and awareness building, the focus being on the women. Note that improved here doesn't imply improvement in the Green Revolution sense of using higher doses of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides but a return to the roots: low external input sustainable agriculture (LEISA). The LSKM plays an important role in the propagation of these practices, led by model farmers, many of whom are women. Before discussing the agricultural models, it is important to note that over centuries local people, especially women, have developed their own ways and means to deal with floods and other disasters. These measures and techniques are locale specific, requiring no external help or support and are inherently scientific. These indigenous techniques have shaped people's lifestyles in these regions and strengthened their adaptive capabilities. Such adaptive capabilities of the local communities assume extreme importance in dealing with floods, water-logging and climate change. Needless to say, women play a very important role, both potentially and actually, in the creation and dissemination of such knowledge, but it is important that they be recognized and given the space or else such knowledge will disappear.

◆ **The Community's Adaptation Capacities**

GEAG's long-term involvement and research has shown that a community's adaptive capacities to climate change and hence reducing the risks from disasters need to take into consideration the following factors :

- The state of natural resources in the area.
- The livelihood system and opportunities at the local level.
- Income generating opportunities outside, in the nearby areas.
- Basic physical infrastructure, services and amenities like roads, housing, drinking water, sanitation and electrification at the local level.
- The area's socio-economic and gender sensitivities.
- People's accessibility to information and know-how.
- Social capital in the community, like the existence of social infrastructure as well as networking with government and formal sector organizations like bank, government departments and CSOs.

As such, in order for people to deal better with critical ecological crises like floods and their changing character, one of the ways is to build people's adaptive capabilities through raising their awareness, knowledge base and capacities to earn a living through a selection of appropriate crops and techniques. This is essential, but as much a challenge in practice as well as methods of awareness raising and training. The latter necessitates building up on people's own knowledge that is using andragogical instead of pedagogical principles. The actualisation of the training necessitates collective action instead of individual approaches as in the relief mode, such collective action undertaken through people's democratic institutions, as GEAG's two decades experience shows.

Essentially, in this model, the intervening agency acts as a catalyst, and the people through their institutions solve their own problems and educate each other. Thus, over the years, GEAG has developed an alternate people's extension model, in which farmers teach and learn from each other, with women playing a lead role.

◆ **GEAG's Agricultural Intervention Model**

Learning from and building upon the farmers, especially the women farmers' indigenous knowledge, GEAG has near perfected the following agronomic practices to adapt with the vagaries of the weather, floods and droughts and climate change (cf. Bhat, 2012) :

- Time and space management
- Crop diversification
- Mixed cropping
- Inter-cropping
- Multi-layered cropping
- Raised nurseries
- Floating nurseries

The package includes water resistant crop varieties, early varieties, using organic manures and indigenous seeds. The women farmers choose their own techniques depending on the situational exigencies. Appropriately located village resource centres provide the necessary information. But foremost is the emphasis on forming institutions, led by women, some exclusively for women. GEAG socially targets the hitherto excluded, that is the small and marginal farmers and the landless, most of them Dalits.

Thus, the critical elements of success comprise 1) a complex and detailed situation analysis; 2) working out a detailed but workable plan of action that simultaneously addresses ecological, social and economic issues and actualizing the plan of action through 3) appropriately formed peoples (women's) institutions. In all this it is important to cater to local contextual requirements instead of a mega plan that does not address the women's needs.

This was the ideological core of the training programme.

Lessons Learned for the Development of an Effective Training Programme

The success of any initiative can be measured in many ways. A common one, often resorted to in development interventions, is to isolate a few successful “case studies”

and present them as boxes to illustrate the effectiveness of the intervention. This has its limitations in the sense that the same cases are highlighted in report after report on the intervention, as though others did not exist. This method has the potential danger of creating divisions in the community too. Another method is to examine whether the some essential principles and models can be isolated from the intervention that can be replicated. In this report, the latter method has been chosen, more so because it is a training programme. It would be difficult to say, for instance, if the former method were chosen, that a particular woman got out of difficult circumstances because of the participation of one of the trainees in the programme. Saying so would then mean that the hypothetical woman (the one who arose from difficult circumstances) would remain where she was if the present training had not been organised. This would be undermining the other development interventions of the NGO in question. Also, the impacts of a training programme become visible in the long run, and not necessarily in the short duration in which it was conducted.

In discussing any training programme and assessing its impacts and outcomes or deriving lessons for replication, some basic questions need to be asked on the meaning of training and skill-building. Included in this is the very fundamental issue of training for what and what kind of training for whom and how the training has to be provided /sequenced? There may be a wide range of training needs, given the heterogeneity of the agriculture across the four states, the similarities



Trainings helping the women farmers as trainers

notwithstanding. The heterogeneities exist amongst the participants of any training programme too. However, it is useful to conceptualise training as an input for empowerment, with the caveat that a one to one correspondence need not exist between the two (Mitra, 2002). Given this, the major lessons that can be derived from the present programme can be conceptualised as follows:

1. The training package has to be holistic and based on solid ground level experiences over a long duration. Piecemeal stand-alone training, like say in the cultivation of a particular crop or extracting fruit juices or canning is insufficient and a loss of time and money unless nested in robust allround training.
2. The training has to be for empowerment and not just increasing agricultural production as that would be only a mechanical process.
3. Such training has to be based on critical situational analysis of the ground level realities in terms of how ordinary people understand and not esoteric academic exercises.
4. Training for empowerment necessitates creating an enabling environment, which is abig challenge in itself and takes time. For instance, it took GEAG nearly two decades to get to the stage where it is today. Such training has many facets, but begins with building up the self-imageand confidence of trainees. Enhancing



Raised beds helped in flood affected areas

social and negotiating skills, or organisation ones as well as skills to adopt LEISA cannot be a one-time intervention but a prolonged process.

5. The nuances of the teaching learning methods (commonly known as pedagogy) are important. The



Drainage helped women farmers in early sowing of Rabi crops

teaching learning methods here have to be *andragogical*. In training for empowerment and creating an enabling environment, external inputs, in the form of trainers are needed, but they have to play a facilitative role, to enable the women to learn on their own and from each other. Highly skilled resource persons, who constantly upgrade their own skills, are required, and they have to be accountable to the community. The andragogy of this training process stresses co-learning and sharing with peers, which brings about crucial linkages and contacts with markets and the supply chain. The process stresses creating "spaces", so that the women can exercise all the necessary freedoms and choices they are entitled to.

6. The upgrading of skills, too, takes place in this context through the collective giving the individual the space to grow. In fact, a major part of the capacity building, training and so on for these groups takes place on a day-to-day basis, where the members themselves set the agenda, according to their needs.
7. Creating the necessary social spaces, enabling the women farmers to develop their own models of social, environmental and economic security and support, have to be a part of the capacity building process.
8. The change agents, or the developmental NGOs, have a critical role to play in this process. The success of the intervention crucially depends on their perception of both the problem and the solution, and what is required in a particular context. This in itself has to be based on a thorough understanding and respect of the



Traditional Seeds of Vegetables and Millets helping in climate adaptation

culture of the women farmers in particular contexts, their belief systems and agronomic practices as well as ideas about work and leisure as well as their dignity. A respect for traditions and the inherent science involved has to be integrated with the best in contemporary science and technology. Moreover, the training programme would have to move beyond narrow project cycle horizons and have a long term perspective.

9. Inherent in all this is the theory of change of the intervening organisation and how squarely it is based on the key principles of good governance: accountability, transparency and equity. These constitute the basis on which the training is directed towards the creation of a situation where the people (women in this case) not only get their entitlements but are in effective control over their lives and environment social, physical and natural.

To conclude, it can be said that the success of the training programme conducted by GEAG lies in the above major lessons. To apply them in praxis, it would be essential to first replicate GEAG's commitment and accountability to small and marginal women farmers.

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Appendix 1

List of Participants Affiliated Organisations and Resource Persons.

S.N.	Name	Organizational Affiliation	State
1.	Smt. Sarita Sarivastava Smt. Geeta Devi	Aadhaar, Gorakhpur Aadhaar, Gorakhpur	Uttar Pradesh Uttar Pradesh
2.	Smt. Shahnaz Banoo Smt. Prabha Singh	Aadhaar, Kanpur Aadhaar, Kanpur	Uttar Pradesh Uttar Pradesh
3.	Smt. Rookmini Devi Smt. Shanti Devi	Bhartiya Jan Kalyan Evam Prashikshan Sansthan Bhartiya Jan Kalyan Evam Prashikshan Sansthan	Uttar Pradesh Uttar Pradesh
4.	Smt. Munni Devi Smt. Rekha	Bihar Sewa Samiti Bihar Sewa Samiti	Bihar Bihar
5.	Smt. Reena Kumari Smt. Nirmala Sinha	C-Dot C-Dot	Bihar Bihar
6.	Ms. Soma Ms. Tumpa Biswas	DRCSC DRCSC	West Bengal West Bengal
7.	Smt. Ranjana Rana Smt. Bala Thakur	Disha Samajik Sangathan Disha Samajik Sangathan	Uttarakhand Uttarakhand
8.	Smt. Asha Singh Smt. Sita Devi	Gramin Development Services Gramin Development Services	Bihar Bihar
9.	Smt. Vimala Singh Smt. Lilavati Devi	Lok Vikas Samiti Lok Vikas Samiti	Uttar Pradesh Uttar Pradesh
10.	Smt. Manju Devi Ms. Shobha Kumari	Nav Jagritee Nav Jagritee	Bihar Bihar
11.	Smt. Mani Devi Smt. Indrawati Devi	Nari Kalyan Sewa Sansthan Nari Kalyan Sewa Sansthan	Uttar Pradesh Uttar Pradesh

S.N.	Name	Organizational Affiliation	State
12.	Smt. Kusumlata Smt. Shanti Devi	Purvanchal Gramin Seva Sansthan Purvanchal Gramin Seva Sansthan	Uttar Pradesh Uttar Pradesh
13.	Smt. Nirjala Verma Smt. Mamta Devi	Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan	Uttar Pradesh Uttar Pradesh
14.	Smt. Shashikala Srivastava Smt. Chandrawati Devi	Shohratgarh Environmental Society Shohratgarh Environmental Society	Uttar Pradesh Uttar Pradesh
15.	Smt. Radha Khanka Smt. Asha Devi	Uttarpath Sewa Sansthan Uttarpath Sewa Sansthan	Uttarakhand Uttarakhand
<u>Resource Persons</u>			
1.	Ms. Aditi Kapoor	Alternative Futures	Delhi
2.	Mr. Ardhendu Chatterjee	DRCSC	West Bengal
3.	Ms. Abha Bhaiya	Jagori	Uttar Pradesh
4.	Ms. Ranjini Krishnamurti	Independent Consultant	Chennai
5.	Ms. Shivani Bhardwaj	Sathi for all	Delhi
6.	Dr. Shiraz Wajih	GEAG	Uttar Pradesh
7.	Mr. Vijay Pandey	GEAG	Uttar Pradesh
8.	Ms. Neelam Prabhat	GEAG	Uttar Pradesh



Women, Food, and Climate Change Training Program



A Collaboration of Women's Earth Alliance, USA. and Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group, India

Declaration of Women Farmers

We, the women farmers from Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttarakhand, observe that the climate of North India is changing fast and is having an adverse impact on our food and economic security.

We wish to articulate that the climate and environmental crises are disproportionately affecting women and girls, leaving us more vulnerable. We are the farmers, seed savers, caregivers, water stewards and energy and fuel wood managers of our communities. As women farmers, we struggle to access basic education, information, trainings and opportunities to build our capacities, leadership and to improve our economic security. These inequalities are further leaving us vulnerable in the face of the climate crises and are having a devastating impact on our health, well-being and is increasing our labor burden. We believe that the livelihood and food security of our families can be sustained only through low external input, non-chemical farming and for this it is important that our natural resources like land, forests, water bodies and pastures lands are conserved. We can overcome and adapt to changing climate conditions through sustainable agriculture, which integrates local natural resources and local wisdom.

In the third phase of the Women, Food Security and Climate Change Training program, we, the women farmers of North India, appeal to the government of India, the state governments, donors and civil society that the following key priorities need to be enforced to ensure that women farmers can improve their food security in the face of climate change:

- Conservation of our land and natural resources and ensuring women have access and control over such resources
- Integration of gender in national, state and local climate plans and policies needs to be enforced. It is necessary that the local area developmental plans are developed with the integration of gender equity on resources.
- Women are the primary seed savers of their communities and are the stewards of India's biological diversity of crops. In this regard, we believe that our traditional knowledge systems related to indigenous and climate friendly seeds and crops must be promoted and documented to improve the self-reliance of farmers. Also, it is essential to revitalize sustainable traditional approaches to farming, along with appropriate technologies and innovations.
- It is important that research and extension on climate resilient agriculture is strengthened, which address the needs and priorities of small women farmers and ensures our participation.
- It is important that more coordinated efforts are made to organize the women farmers of North India and the issues related to rights and interests of women farmers, which help them to deal with climate change impacts and food security, are integrated in the campaigns and movements for women's rights.
- Pass a law on related to increasing resources in favor of women to enhance their role in the agriculture sector to provide for entitlements in the form of land, credit, services and infrastructure.
- Set aside a training budget for women farmers to work closely with the village Panchayat and District Rural Developmental Agency to make convergence work with regular social audits on who should receive benefits from government schemes and plans.

Yes, women are farmers!

The struggle to reclaim our rights and identity as women farmers is among the most important struggles in India today. Women hold the key to food security, and it is important that women's contributions to agriculture and food security are documented, recognized and celebrated.

We are the women farmers of North India.

The declaration was signed at the third phase of the Women, Food Security and Training Program, a collaboration of Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group and Women's Earth Alliance.

Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh
16 November 2011

Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG)

GEAG is a voluntary organization working in the field of environment and sustainable development since 1975. Ever since its inception, GEAG has been actively engaged in implementing several development projects addressing livelihood issues of small and marginal farmers, particularly women based on ecological principles and gender sensitive participatory approach. Besides, GEAG has accomplished several appraisals, studies, researches at the micro & macro levels as well as successfully conducted a number of capacity building programmes for various stakeholders including women farmers, civil societies groups and government officials etc.

Today, GEAG has established its identity in North India as a leading resource institution on sustainable Agriculture, Participatory approaches, methodologies and Gender. Acknowledging its achievements, efforts and expertise United Nation's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) accorded GEAG special consultative status in the year 2000. GEAG has also been recognized recently as North India hub for interSard, South Asia a network to facilitate information sharing on issues of concern.

Women's Earth Alliance (WEA)

WEA builds innovative solutions to issues of water access, food security and land rights in under served communities world wide through providing training, funding and advocacy support to grassroots women leaders. Over the last 5 years, WEA's Africa Program has forged partnerships with 30 community-based organizations across 13 African nations providing water technology training, economic development and seed capital to over 75 communities. WEA's North America program mobilizes support for the environmental justice campaigns of our 12 Native American partner organizations through WEA's Advocacy Network of legal, policy and business experts. And WEA's newest India Program will provide funding and training on rights education, ecological farming and appropriate technology to grassroots Indian women leaders to improve food and economic security of local communities, preserve the environment and traditional knowledge systems and build political will.



Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group

Post Box #60, Gorakhpur-273001
Tel : 91 551 2230004, Fax : 91 551 2230005
E-mail : geag@geagindia.org; geagindia@gmail.com
www.geagindia.org



Women's Earth Alliance

2150 Allston Way, Ste. 460
Berkeley, CA 94704, USA
www.womensearthalliance.org