

Parvati –

Parvati comes from an area called Bheerapani in Nainital district.

She is part of a community based organization called Mahila Jagriti Samuh, Nai. I worked in Nai area from 2001 to 2011 and coordinated , planned, implemented, guided the entire program on sustainable agriculture, gender, food and nutrition security based on traditional knowledge systems and practices . I was the Chief coordinator and one of the founder members of an organization called Community Awareness Centre .

When I started working in that area , farmers were :

- Growing primarily cash crops- cauliflower, peas, and potato using chemical fertilisers like urea and pesticides. They were growing traditional crops in very small quantities such as mandua, kauni , bhat, gahat . Many of the crops had disappeared like madira , paddy, ramdana and so on.

Gradual interactions, discussions, workshops, exposure trips, training programs changed people's attitude and mindset towards biodiversity based farming through ecologically friendly methods . They brought back traditional crops like cheena, madira, kauni , mandua in a big way. Increased the land under wheat cultivation . In other words food crops were brought back to take care of the food and nutrition requirements of people particularly women and children.

Vermicomposting and other better methods of composting were introduced to improve the fertility of the soil.

Women gradually (over a period of three to four years) switched over to organic methods of food production.

They still grow cash crops but very little and try and not use chemicals

- Forest was in a bad state in 2001.I did participatory rural appraisal with women . And women came up with plans at the end of workshops .

They formed forest protection committees and protected forests

- Women met forest panchayat members and finally elections were held and for the first time in the history of the villages in that area , Parvati was elected as the head of forest panchayat.
- Through women's efforts and constant facilitation by us , forest improved a great deal- both in density and composition
- IMPACT
  - It had various impacts , such as (Also Ask Parvati)
    - Workload of women decreased,
    - health of animals improved,
    - livelihood of people improved,
    - debt of people decreased ,
    - availability of water sources .....
    - dependence on forest has reduced
    -

- **Women's empowerment** : women started going to gram sabha meetings, decision was passed that unless a particular percentage of women are present , it would not be considered a meeting
- Women are now being called to various public meetings
- 

Kalawati:

- She comes from an area which is quite poor , in Almora district \
- She herself comes from a dalit family.
- Agro diversity is very high in Tola area. They created their traditional seed bank and
- We started working for improving the state of forest panchayat together with women but with forest panchayat being too big, it became very difficult. Various strategies were explored and finally women decided to meet the DM to ask for few compartments. It succeeded and they have been taking care of the forest for the past 8 years now. It has improved substantially.
- 

Amravati

- Area is famous for focusing on cash crops –such as potatoes, cauliflower, and tomatoes
- People generally practice chemical based farming with fertilisers and pesticides
- These are dalit families
- At the same time they grow mandua , gahat (lentil), bhat(lentil), wheat, ramdana. masoor etc for their household consumption. But unlike earliest times (30-40 years ago, and areas like Kalawati, these are being grown either in very small quantity or not being grown at all by many families.

Ever since we have started the discussions on the issue of local knowledge and food and nutrition security women have been trying to bring back many of these seeds and varieties to their fields . They are beginning to realise the importance of these things for their health and the health of animals and environment

- Workshops on biopesticides has also been done to make women and men understand the importance of chemical free pesticide and the method of their preparation
- They have begun to use them in their crops . this is the first season when they are doing it

- Forestry” women have had a long struggle to save their forest from degradation . They had begun the fight in 2001 , carried it forward till 2010 and then have begun again for the past one year ever since we started working here and talked ot women about forest related efforts going on in other areas
-