



INDIA

INNOVATIONS IN AGROECOLOGY

SEEDS OF HOPE: ORGANIC FARMING, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR SMALL FARMERS

The Seeds of Hope project improves climate change resilience, food security and sovereignty and autonomy of small farmer communities in North India. It relies on the recognition of women's traditional knowledge. The project is led in partnership with the association Navdanya, founded by Dr Vandana Shiva. Direct beneficiaries include 745 farmers and their families in 31 villages.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INNOVATION

The activities developed benefit more than 700 farmers, 95 percent of whom are women, in 31 villages and their communities, with more than 20 000 people. Benefits are achieved through the development of a sustainable plan for ecological and economic security, including the identification and multiplication of climate resilient local seeds, training in agroecology, and income generating activities for women – 26 self-help groups have been formed, and more than 100 women have been trained in food processing.

The capacities of marginalized farmer communities are reinforced through sensitization on climate change and biodiversity preservation for more than 200 children and 20 000 people.



DESIGN AND SHARING OF THE INNOVATION

By focusing on women, their role in their communities has been reinforced and recognized. The project was awarded the Climate and Gender Prize 2017 by the Climate Gender Constituency of UNFCCC during COP23 in Bonn, for the significant progress made on the recognition of women's role in their communities.



BENEFIT FOR FAMILY FARMERS AND FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

The project promotes the key role that women play in subsistence farming and family nutrition in rural India. As owners of knowledge, natural resource conservation actors and seed keepers, as well as trainers in agroecology and micro-savings, women have gained a local political role, with improved living conditions and financial autonomy. The purchase of external seeds and vegetables has decreased by at least 50 percent. In addition, their production is more diversified: the production of vegetables in the zone went from 3 to 4 varieties to 27, ensuring more diverse and nutritious food for their families.

SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The project promotes an inclusive definition of organic farming which favours the recognition of its social, economic and environmental aspects. In addition to strengthening farmers' livelihoods, the project addresses both mitigation and adaptation: agroecology reinforces soil fertility and moisture (organic matter contents increased by 25 percent between 2011 and 2015); while seed conservation and reproduction ensure biodiversity rehabilitation and food sovereignty. Yields have improved by 20 percent, dependence on the purchase of seeds has lowered by 50 percent, and the quality and quantity of the food supply are progressing.



LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project's durability is ensured by a 10-year partnership between SOL and Navdanya. Its model builds on the communities' autonomy, from seed reproduction to short-circuit sale, and is easily replicable. By placing women at the core of our actions, the project allows the preservation of local biodiversity so that farmers can work with nature and not against it.