

In a message dated 8/1/05 2:20:16 AM, bhardwaj\_s@vsnl.net writes

To: Sandy Schilen  
Seeds Editor,  
New York

Dear Ms. Sandy Schilen:

I am writing to share with you how significant and useful the Seeds publication "Are We Not Peasants Too?" by Bina Agarwal has proved for innumerable organizations and individuals in our region. In fact, the usefulness of this publication cannot be overstated. Our organisation – Sathi all for Partnerships, Consult for Women and Land Rights – and our many partners have used it like a primer for spreading awareness on the issue of women and land rights both locally and globally.

We have used this publication in workshops at the village level, for training NGO activists, and for lobbying the government and international agencies, so that they take up this issue in action and policy. Since it is available both in English and in the Hindi translation published here (as also in Gujarati), it has had an extensive reach and impact.

The village women consider the volume their prized possession. I have seen them carry the booklet in their bags for months after they have attended a workshop. They carry it around even though they cannot read it as they have memorized which page they may ask to be opened in a court room or during a village council (panchayat) meeting to get across the fact that women do have land rights. The size of the publication makes it easy to carry. The semi-hard cover preserves the text; and its translation into local languages makes it accessible also for the local officials to read.

We also deeply appreciate the fact that the booklet is distributed free of charge. It has thus helped non-funded groups to get copies through an agency that has a mandate for the issue.

The English version has been a ready reference for policy makers in the central and state governments and for UN agencies. The size of the publication helps it to be carried to international conferences as well to lobby events.

Some days ago our Prime Minister received a letter from the National Advisory Council chaired by The President of Congress Party that land rights and inheritance rights, especially on agriculture land for women, needs to be an issue of priority for our government. This significant move has been a result of the hard work of many individuals which has been captured very successfully in the Seeds publication. This body of knowledge has been turned into information that could be picked up to build an action agenda for activists and policy influencers.

The Seeds publication has been a pioneer. Indeed it is a jewel in the documentation that helps strengthen positive approaches for the realization of women's right to agricultural land.

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Subject: Translation of Bina Agarwal's book "Are We Not Peasants Too?"  
Date: Sun, 7 Aug 2005 21:18:31 +0530

To: Sandy Schilen

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New York

**Subject: translation of Bina Agarwal's book "Are We not Peasants too?" in Gujarati (Indian Language)**

Dear Sandy,

It gives me great pleasure to share with you the wonderful response we have got for the translation of Bina Agarwal's booklet "Are We Not Peasants too?" published in English by Seeds. As you may know, the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (India) had got it translated and published in Gujarati. Since Gujarati is one of India's foremost regional languages spoken by about 50 million people, the book has been able to make a significant mark in the development sector.

Land ownership for women is a relatively new issue for us in the development sector in Gujarat - as it is in India too. Just when the book was translated in Gujarati, a network of NGOs was set up in Gujarat to work on the issue, as a fall out of the workshop held by Professor Bina Agarwal in 2003. The translated book has been so very useful for ALL levels of our NGO staff. With the book giving not only conceptual understanding of the issue, but also dealing with barriers and ways to overcome the same, it has appealed to the grass roots level worker too. It has been possible to reach out to them only because it was in the local language, otherwise such wonderful books normally have limited readers and reach only the top persons of the organizations.

The book has been written so lucidly and with illustrations, that we have found it useful for different target groups: starting with NGOs, we have also given this in our kits for the press conferences to media and put it in folders given to government officials for advocacy. The Gujarati Media has quoted from the book extensively and it has also been very useful for us to showcase to the government what the issue related to the women's land ownership is and what can be done.

By publishing this wonderful book written in a simple manner, Seeds has contributed a lot to the development sector and to the cause of women's development and empowerment. The translation has enabled us to take development issues a step further and made it possible to reach out to a wider mass. We wish that this and similar books are translated in regional language more often so that such wonderful publications are accessible to more people. AKRSP(I) had published 500 copies of the same, which are now all exhausted. We want to reprint 1000 more copies, but do not have the money right now! I hope we would be able to manage it in some way in the near future.

I am also enclosing as an appendix a statement by Apoorva Oza, Chief Executive AKRSP(I) whose idea it was to get the book translated and which provided financial support for the translation of the booklet.

With regards

Shilpa Vasavada  
Convener, Working Group for women and land ownership  
Gujarat  
India

APPENDIX 1

**STATEMENT BY APOORVA OZA, CHIEF EXECUTIVE AKRSP(I), GUJARAT**

In India, development issues are of concern to some of the finest minds and therefore the quality of discourse and analysis leaves little to be desired. Unfortunately, the state has little capacity to convert some of the ideas to operational changes.

Bina Agarwal's book on land rights of rural women (*A Field of One's Own*) has broken new ground in understanding why many of the measures undertaken by the state and NGOs do not make any fundamental difference to the status of rural women. The lack of ownership of land, the only major source of income in rural areas, leads to a lack of security which no micro-finance or small scale intervention can compensate. For AKRSP(I) and all organisations working to empower rural women, understanding this fundamental issue and incorporating it in their work is of prime importance. Hence the translation serves to "spread the message" to a large number of field staff of NGO's and government and give them the basic conceptual tools to understand such issues.

Regards,

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