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ABSTRACT



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Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Natural Resource Management and Socio-Economic Development of Local Communities: A Case Study of Western Himalaya, India

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Indigenous communities have sound understanding about their immediate environment to survive and secure livelihoods in marginal and fragile Himalayan region. This understanding is reflected in their robust traditional knowledge systems. However, in the present times these systems are facing numerous challenges from various quarters including that from climate change. The rich traditional knowledge of the Himalayan people needs to be preserved and protected for harnessing its potential for sustainable development. Accordingly, a study was conducted to document traditional ecological knowledge concerning natural resource use and management by indigenous Kanaura community comprising Kanet and Baeru societies and their subsections inhabiting three high altitude villages (2800 to 3400 m asl) in Sangla valley in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh, India using various standard methods of information collection following integrated approach. The present paper describes a whole range of traditional knowledge associated with farming systems such as crop and animal husbandry, health care and natural resource conservation and management. A few of the traditional best practices such as specifically related to transhumance pastoralism, handicrafts and handlooms are described in the present paper have tremendous potential for replication in other areas in the Himalayas even under present scenario for creating sustainable livelihoods.

Key words: Indigenous Communities, Livelihood, Western Himalaya