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Traditional Knowledge Systems in Adaptation to Climate Change: Insights from Indian Himalayan Region

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Abstract

Scientific evidences indicate that the Himalayan region is warming at much higher rate than average global rate making India as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. It is because of fact that the size of humanity (about 600 million) affected by the projected change, both within the region and the adjacent Gangetic Plains surpasses any other country/region across the globe. Traditional societies and indigenous peoples living in the Himalaya represent hundreds of yearlong natural experiments in securing livelihoods harmoniously in this fragile and marginal yet natural resource rich region of the world. Hence it is only wise to learn from those experiences that may help addressing multiple challenges that the climate change presents to the region. Local communities in the region have developed many local climateadaptive practices which emerged in response to changes in weather for centuries such as maintaining fragmented land holdings and genetic diversity in farming systems. A range of such practices concerning farming and natural resource management systems are being documented from selected eco-cultural zones in the Indian Himalayan Region. The aim is to bring forth the rich traditional knowledge systems in national climate change discourse and thus help integrate the “Best Practices” in the formal decision making systems for sustainable development of the region.

Keywords: Himalaya, Climate Change, Traditional Knowledge Systems, Adaptation