

THE EDGAR GRAHAM BOOK PRIZE 1996

A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia

CITATION

"The judges were unanimous that this book will become a classic landmark work of reference.

Professor Agarwal's book gives a masterly review and analysis of women's property rights in South Asia. It goes into the detailed legal, historical, cultural and other roots of women's access to land. It analyses the implications of women's property rights in both formal and customary law, for farming systems, household economies and livelihoods of the most vulnerable. It looks at their response to past development and change. It shows how the political and social subordination of women in South Asia is bound up with their lack of property rights in land, and why even where they own land they often lack effective control.

Professor Agarwal's wide ranging and stimulating overview combines an enormous breadth of sources including her own fieldwork, with a clear, broad based and rigorous analytical framework. She does this with clarity, precision and in a most readable style, so that the reader is drawn into a wealth of case study detail and a fascinating breadth of interdisciplinary synthesis without ever losing sight of the issues or of the central argument. The book ends with a clear exposition and analysis of pathways to empowerment through law reform, administrative change and women's groups. It is not only a superb analysis of a major barrier to development but a powerful contribution to overcoming that barrier.

The judges were unanimous in choosing this book for the Edgar Graham prize. Not only is it an outstanding scholarly work, but it has central relevance to applied development. It is central in terms of the conditions of the prize: its geographical area, its subject matter and its applied aims. Change in the area of women's land rights in South Asia will affect social and agricultural development for a very large sector of the world's population, a sector that comprises seriously disadvantaged groups. This scholarly book will be a lasting milestone on the way to achieving such change."

[Delivered by Professor Katherine Homewood at a reception held on 2 June 1997]

The Judges:

Prof. Philip Scott, Department of Geography, SOAS, University of London
Prof. Frances Stewart, IDC Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford
Professor John Toye, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex
Prof. B.R. Tomlinson, Department of History, University of Strathclyde
Prof. Paul Richards, Department of Anthropology, University College London
Prof. Katherine Homewood, Department of Anthropology, University College London.