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Australian rust expert helps train South Asian researchers

LEADING Australian rust expert Professor Robert Park, from the University of Sydney, joined colleagues from Pakistan, Nepal, India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Mexico and the US in Nepal recently for the Sixth South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation Wheat Rust Monitoring & Disease Management Course. The workshop was designed to foster regional collaboration and equip a new generation of South Asian scientists with the tools and knowledge to manage the threat of wheat rusts.

[Read the full story on the Borlaug Global Rust Initiative website \(excerpt below\):](#)

There were 24 course participants, of which five were women, including wheat scientists, technical and extension officers, graduate students, and research assistants. Trainees were exposed to rust pathology, pathogen surveillance, field and laboratory techniques, plant breeding, and statistics.

They learned to update global surveillance data using modern information technology tools known as the SAARC Toolbox, a kit that includes a Rust Survey app that works on hand-held tablets. The data is fed into each country's surveillance database, and ultimately into a global Rust Mapper.

Involved in the training were Baidya Nath Mahto and Sarala Sharma Lohani (NARC), Robert Park (University of Sydney, Australia), Sridhar Bhavani (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center – CIMMYT/Kenya), Maricelis Acevedo (DGGW), Zak Pretorius (University of the Free State, South Africa), and Dave Hodson (CIMMYT, Ethiopia), among others.

Using lectures and other materials from the 2015 SAARC course, multimedia specialists from Cornell University have also created an [online course](#) on the “Art and Science of Rust Pathology and Applied Plant Breeding” that is available to the global wheat community.



Photos: Professor Robert Park with international colleagues in Nepal.