

BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP

Field-level stories resulting
from IDH's gender
sensitization training in
2018





Introduction

Gender discrimination is one of the biggest challenges for workplace equality in the Indian agriculture sector. Despite the crucial role women play in agriculture in India, they are generally paid less than their male co-workers. Rural women, who work on smallholder farms, often provide substantial labor as 'unpaid' family labor or low-paid day labor. They regularly undertake some of the most arduous tasks, with an increasing number of them employed in manual work such as picking and weeding. They face a greater risk of harassment and are less likely to be considered for benefits and opportunities, including gaining access to credit, and their views may be overlooked in decision-making. This could be partially attributed to the fact that gender systems are diverse and complex and are determined by community norms and values¹.

An FAO report² found that "If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on farms by 20 to 30 percent, raising total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent". It is estimated that women comprise half or more² of the agricultural labor force in many developing countries. However only 5% of women have access to agriculture extension resources with only 2% possessing land titles³.

These challenges drove IDH to make a difference at the field level in promoting gender equality within its programs. Over a period of three months from July to September 2018, IDH Gender Consultant Sangita Shete conducted gender sensitization trainings with IDH's 19 Implementing Partners in 30 locations across India, training around 2000 field-level workers, who provide extension service to over a million farmers.

Gender empowerment is necessary when working in global supply chains that frequently rely on women workers, while structurally disadvantaging them. We believe that applying a gender lens will multiply impact through more cost-efficient interventions, higher adoption rates of trainings, improved worker satisfaction, and better family incomes.

Through the training, field extension workers were made aware of mainstreaming gender equality in their work, labor division based on gender, access to resources, decision making, gender awareness in project activities, and project planning for gender inclusion. The workers who participated in the trainings were able to implement these learnings over the cotton season in 2019. This document captures their experiences and highlights the field-level impact of the exercise.

¹ Mason and Smith, 2013

² FAO, 2011

³ World Economic Forum, 2013

A female field-facilitator's experience in breaking barriers at field-level



Ujiben is a Field Facilitator (FF) at Ambuja Cement Foundation in Ambujanagar, Gujarat. She is working with 503 farmers in the region, which includes 103 male farmers and 400 female farmers. She was one of the field facilitators who participated in the gender sensitization training conducted by IDH.

“During my field trainings, I explained to the farmers that women contribute heavily in farm activity and if the decision is taken together, it will be beneficial for everyone.”

Ujiben

Speaking about her experience she says, “I understood the gap that exists at the grassroots level, between male and female farmers and the daily work that they do.”

But when Ujiben took this learning to the farmers, she faced challenges due to the ingrained gender bias, not just among the male workers, but also the female ones. She says, “Women farmers recognized their contribution in the farm as well as household work, but they did not want to participate in decision making as they felt this is only for the male members of the house. During my field trainings, I explained to the farmers that women contribute heavily in farm activity and due to their experience in farming, including them in decision-making will be beneficial for everyone.”



Before the gender sensitization training, she says that she wasn't confident in training male farmers. However, after becoming more aware of the role women play at the grassroots level, she gathered the confidence and now works with three male farmer groups. The impact of her work is steadily

visible in her project area and she says that there is awareness among both male and female farmers. Women in the village are now stepping forward to attend trainings, and they are increasingly getting involved in decision making at the farm as well as the household level.

Lalitaben is a farmer in Ujiben's project area. While she used to attend every meeting, she did not have any role in decision making in farming, as it was her husband's role. From her learnings at the field extension trainings, she advised her husband to apply SSP fertilizer instead of DAP. Though he did not completely agree to do this, they eventually decided to try it on 7 acres of land, out of their total 17 acres. While the production on the whole field remained unchanged, expenses on the area of land where the SSP fertilizer was used were less than the other. The husband-wife duo is now applying SSP in the entire field. Lalitaben is also now a shareholder in Somnath Farmers Producer Company Limited, a farmer producer organization in Gujarat.

Ujiben says that she has to work more on gender sensitization in all villages that she works in. She believes it is important that both male and female farmers and in many cases husbands and wives are trained together so they can understand and appreciate each other's role and contribution.

A male field facilitator in Madhya Pradesh fights resistance to change



Shantilal Rathod is a field facilitator working with K.K. Fibers in Lohari, in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh. He is working with 376 farmers in his operational area in the project and in addition, has trained 193 female co-farmers.

“In my project area, there was a general perception of women being weaker than men.”

Shantilal Rathod

One of the participants in the gender sensitization training, Shantilal has been able to translate his learning's to create gender training programs for the farmers. While he was appreciated in the village for his efforts, initially he faced issues in making the farmers understand the importance of discussing and recognizing the role of women in farming.

He says, “In my project area, there was a general perception of women being weaker than men. While women played a limited role in decision making, there was also more emphasis on educating the son than the daughter. In view of

this, we prepared training programs based on IDH's gender sensitization trainings. This helped us in training farmers, women and laborers this season and make them aware of gender equality.”

“At the field-level, we faced issues in some places, where we were asked why we are organizing such type of training, which can cause quarrel in our families. Nevertheless, most of the farmers, women and laborers have appreciated our efforts and responded positively by actively participation in the gender training conducted by our team.”

The efforts have started to show impact at the field level. Shantilal says, “Women and men are sitting together for combined training in our project areas. Earlier participation of women in the training organized by KK Fiber team was less, but nowadays they are coming forward to participate. We will now use videos and success stories of our intervention on gender sensitization to further encourage women farmers and create awareness on gender inclusion in our project.”

A female farmer shares her story of transformation within her family



Shalu Shrikant Gaurkar is a female farmer in Yavatmal, Maharashtra. She has a total of eight members in her family and farms on 4.5 acre of land along with her husband. The 33-year old also does sewing work to support her family.

“We learnt how men and women are capable to perform the same tasks, but it is the village culture and traditional approach towards women which limits their role.”

Shalu Shrikant Gaurkar

Speaking about her experience, Shalu says, “My husband has been associated with APPRO project in Yavatmal for the last four years. I always used to discuss with my husband regarding his participation in trainings and what benefits obtained to them through these kinds of programs, but my engagement was limited as I used to be busy in household work and working on the farm.”

With learnings from the gender sensitization training, the field facilitator and Project Unit Manager working in her project area reached out

to the women farmers there to explain to them the importance of being included in decision-making. A gender training session was also conducted in the area for the farmers to create awareness on contribution of women in farming and in household activities.

Shalu attended the training along with her husband. Sharing her experience, she says, “We learnt how men and women are capable to perform the same tasks, but it is the village culture and traditional approach towards women which limits their role.” She further adds, “After attending the training, my husband includes me not only in farming activities, but also when we have to take decisions regarding farming or at domestic level.”

She further says, “I have also started a small business of sewing ladies wear, from which I get a monthly income of Rs. 1,200 to Rs. 1,500. I am happy to see that the social and traditional barriers are being broken today by coming together and creating awareness. A woman plays an important role in the economic development of the family if their efforts are nurtured equally.”

A Project Unit Manager shares his story of how driving change at management level can result in grassroots level impact



Arvinbhai Govindbhai Patel is a Project Unit Manager with AFPRO in Surendernagar, Gujarat. He has been leading his Project Unit and working with the farmers in the region since 2016.

“After attending the training, my attitude towards women’s participation in farming changed.”

Arvinbhai Govindbhai Patel

Sharing his experience on the training Arvinbhai says, “Before the training, I did not engage with a lot of women farmers and had no female field facilitators. But after the training, I realized their role in farming and in overall social development and have been working to engage them more within the program.”

He explains, “We noticed that women hesitated to participate with men in common trainings and would not speak in front of male members. To overcome this, I recruited a female field facilitator and created women learning groups to ensure their inclusion in the program.

“After attending the training, my attitude towards women’s participation in farming changed. Though women are doing more manual labor in the farm, they have less representation in decision making. While trying to create more awareness around this, we are also starting to observe some changes. For instance, earlier, the male farmers did not like to send their wives for the training, but now they are supportive and are also encouraging them to attend the trainings.”

Field facilitators in Telangana are exploring new ways to reach women farmers to train them on sustainable farming practices

S. Sridhar is a field facilitator at Deshpande Foundation in Telangana. He has been working for the project since 2015, and this was the first time he had attended a training on gender sensitization.

Sharing his experience on the training, Sridhar says, “(in the training) I learnt about contribution of women in farming, existing gender discrimination and why is it important to include them in our program.”

Speaking about gender-based challenges at the field level, he says, “Participation of women in the learning group meetings is one of the main issues. Women working in the farm have double the burden as they are also doing the household chores. This spares her no time to attend meetings or trainings. They are also discouraged to go out of village when it is not related to work.”

After attending the trainings, S. Sridhar and other field facilitators in the project area are trying to address the issue differently. “This year we have targeted trainings like eradication of Monocrotophos and awareness on minimum PPE mainly to women. We have

“I learnt about contribution of women in farming, existing gender discrimination and why is it important to include them in our program.”

S. Sridhar

also started approaching self-help groups (SHGs) in our area. In these meetings women interact freely without any hesitation. We have also been able to reach a large group of women at a time through these meetings.”

“Such methods have helped us discuss critical issues related to farming with the women groups, and we have received positive feedback on our work so far,” he further said.



An Implementing Partner for Better Cotton Growth & Innovation Fund program is making gender more visible in its projects



IDH organized gender sensitization trainings for Better Cotton Growth & Innovation Fund projects being implemented by WWF in Punjab, Maharashtra, and Telangana. The trainings helped in creating awareness among the field level staff of these projects about women's role and value in farm-related activities and the need for their greater participation in training programs.

In Punjab, where the sensitization trainings were organized on August 9-10, 2018, Field Facilitator (FFs) learnt for the first time the concept of gender and the need for capacity building of women to enable them to be equal partners in farming.

However, much more needs to be done before women farmers in Punjab get their due. Over a year later, they have yet to be inducted into training programmes that are held for the men. "We are planning to involve the local Asha workers (community health workers accredited by India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare) to conduct trainings for the women," explains Prem Kumar, a field facilitator of Mehta village in Bhatinda district. "With the awareness generated through the training programmes, women are now being paid the same as men for farm-related activities," he adds.

In Maharashtra and Telangana, the results have been more promising. In Jalna district of Maharashtra where the IDH training was held on 26th July last year, FF Dyaneshwar Dasal got greater clarity on gender issues. "Women play an important role in farming but they are neglected in terms of capacity

“With the awareness generated through the training programmes, women are now being paid the same as men for farm-related activities.”

Prem Kumar

building. I now address these issues in the villages and sensitize both male and female farmers on gender equality for the betterment of the family as well as society," he remarks.

Maroti Nana Nagwe of Khamkheda village in Jalna district is among the farmers who have keenly attended Dyaneshwar Dasal's counselling on these issues. He observes that in rural areas women were never considered a part of decision-making in any family matter or even allowed to venture outdoors except for working on their farms.



“After listening to the FF's talks, I have realized that women play an important role in farming and must be given exposure through trainings.”

Dyaneshwar Dasal

"After listening to the FF's talks, I have realized that women play an important role in farming and must be given exposure through trainings," he says, further admitting that women deserve equal treatment and rights in day-to-day life.

In Telangana, the workshop was held in September 2018. Subsequently, Learning Group (LG) trainings were conducted by Field Facilitators in Papaiahapalli village in Jammikunta district on topics relating to gender sensitization and other social issues.

The trainings provided much food for thought to farmers like G. Venu of Papaiahapalli village who would earlier never consult his wife on farm-related matters as he felt she had nothing to contribute on the subject. "I did not value her opinion, but now I know that women are actually the backbone of agriculture and play an important role in the cultivation process like sowing, weeding, fertilizer application and harvesting," he confesses.

Farmer Sujatha, from the same village, was able to identify the main challenges that women farmers face. "They do most of the work in the cotton fields and all the household chores, thus giving them no leisure time," she points out. "They also lack technical know-how, though their participation has improved, and we have some exclusive LGs with women who are the sole decision-makers pertaining to the cotton crop. Women are now being respected for their contribution to the family."

A female farmer in Maharashtra is increasingly participating in decision-making at her home and farm

Manisha Vinod Dhandade is a 38 year-old woman farmer from Dighi village in Wardha District of Maharashtra, living with her husband and their two children. She and her husband grow cotton on a 3-acre land and have joined the CottonConnect project in the region.

Manisha attended a gender sensitization training by Sachin Wadatkar, the CottonConnect Field Facilitator in her village. Sachin was one of the participants at the gender sensitization training conducted by IDH and decided to take his learnings to the field level by conducting a gender workshop for the farmers he is working with.

Speaking about the training, she says, "All the decisions at our home and for farming were taken by my husband. While I was doing a lot of work in the farm such as weeding, fertilizer application and picking, along with female farm workers, I never made any contribution in the decisions related to farming. During the training we learnt that including women in decision-making can increase the overall profitability."

"Now my husband listens to my ideas on farming. I also regularly attend trainings conducted by CottonConnect

“Now my husband listens to my ideas on farming. I also regularly attend trainings to increase my knowledge about cotton farming.”

Manisha Vinod Dhandade

to increase my knowledge about cotton farming. I prepare natural pesticides at home and ask him to use at the farm. From these trainings I have also understood the importance of personal protection equipment while spraying and, after my repeated insistence, my husband has started to use it. I feel confident with the exposure I receive through the trainings and am happy to contribute towards the development of our household."



