



the sustainable
trade initiative

BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP

Field-level stories resulting
from IDH's gender
sensitization training in
2019





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

Implementing Partner: Ambuja Cement Foundation (ACF)

1. A field facilitator uses what he learned from training to sensitize farmers in his project

Dineshbhai Mohanbhai, Singod Field Facilitator



“As an FF when I started forming farmer groups, I faced a lot of resistance from the women farmers. They did not attend meetings and said they will tell their husbands to join the project rather than joining themselves.”

Dineshbhai Mohanbhai

Dinesh joined ACF as a field facilitator (FF) in 2018. He works with a total of 505 farmers in the Kesariya village in Gujarat, of which only 22 are women. He says, “As an FF when I started forming farmer groups, I faced a lot of resistance from the women farmers. They did not attend meetings and said they will tell their husbands to join the project rather than joining themselves.”

“Women also never gave their mobile numbers; they only gave their husband’s numbers so calling them for the meeting was also difficult. They would only attend the meeting [if] their husbands asked them to.”

Dinesh attended the gender-sensitization training by IDH and learned practical ideas on how to involve women farmers in the project. When he returned to his project area after the training, he created a women’s group, gave them training on gender and

explained their contribution to agriculture. The participants realized women do more work than the male farmers, but only male farmers are involved in decision-making.

Dinesh continues, “After I gave this training at village level, women are also participating in decision-making for some tasks. I also spoke to the husbands to accept their thoughts on farming. Women are also now coming to the office, though training

time for them is shorter due to their other engagements [at] home and farm. This year demo plots have been given to women farmers in Sonari and Siloj villages and training has also been provided to them to manage the demo plot.”

Dinesh reports he and his producer unit (PU) staff will continue to sensitize the farmers on gender-related issues for their effective participation in farming.

2. A woman farmer benefits from the gender training delivered by FFs who participated in the gender-sensitization workshop

Lashuben Ranabhai, Singod farmer, Kesariya village



Lashuben joined the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) project being implemented by Ambuja Cement Foundation three years ago; she has three bighas of land and has been farming for many years. Throughout that time, Lashuben, along with her six family members, have been farming traditionally. Since joining the project, she has attended several trainings on crop cultivation using scientific methods and biological inputs for the fields, but has been unable to make new implementations on her field as she had no role in decision-making on the farm.

The field facilitators and PU managers for the region attended gender-sensitization training in 2018. The extension workers

applied the trainings’ lessons during farmer-training sessions organized by them at the village level.

Lashuben attended one such training. On her experience, she recalls, “During the training, we realized how much work we actually did. I also informed my husband and he was very supportive. He also realized that I am doing all the housework, taking care of my father-in-law and mother-in-law, taking care of our two children and with all this, also working in the farm.”

“We have decided to take decisions collectively and also attend the trainings together so we can both increase our knowledge.”

3. A woman field facilitator in Maharashtra helps to empower women in her project

Harsh Gautam, Field Facilitator

Harsh Gautam is a field facilitator with Ambuja Cement Foundation in Chandrapur, Maharashtra. She has done extensive work towards enhancing the livelihoods of women in the Jiwati area in the region. She attended the gender-sensitization workshop and she is working proactively in her project area.

Middlemen in supply chains are common in the Jiwati block. Farmers cultivate land in the absence of legal ownership and need to rely on private moneylenders for crop credit; subsequently, they need to pay a high rate of interest. Simultaneously, farmers have to sell their crops to the same moneylenders. Due to the moneylenders' autonomy, farmers receive a lesser rate compared to market rates.

Harsha discussed this with other women farmers and motivated them to procure cotton collectively through a Self-Help Group (SHG) - Divya Shakti.

She informed the women farmers how the procurement process would work. Last year, women farmers collected almost 30 quintals of cotton to sell directly to the market. They expect to get at least 500 rupees (Rs.) per quintal more than the price at which they previously sold it.

This became an inspiration for others and subsequently 32 more SHGs started the process of collective cotton procurement.

4. A male farmer is now including his wife in all decision-making tasks and sharing the work burden with her

Ram Niwas, Farmer, Indokali village

“We received gender training in which we learned about gender discrimination, equal wage for equal work and importance of participation of women in decision-making.”

Ram Niwas

Ram Niwas has been associated with the BCI project implemented by Ambuja Cement Foundation in his village, for the past three years. He attended gender trainings conducted by one of the FFs in his village. He writes, “We received gender training in which we learned about gender discrimination, equal wage for equal work and importance of participation of women in decision-making.”

“During the meeting we learnt that if men and women take decisions together, chances of failure are lesser. I take my wife's suggestion on any decision that needs to be taken. I also help my wife in the housework and after that both of us do the field work together so [our] workload is equally divided. We also go to the market together to purchase farm inputs.”

5. A field facilitator has been able to increase women participation in farmer-training substantially

Ummed Ram, Field Facilitator, Marwar Mundwa



Ummed Ram has worked as a field facilitator with Ambuja Cement Foundation in Rajasthan for the past three years. He provides extension services to 537 farmers, which includes 50 women farmers. He attended the gender-sensitization workshop conducted by IDH and used what he learned to organize a training for the farmers.

He comments, “During the trainings that we conducted, we focused on equal treatment of men and women. We also conducted activities to inform the farmers that both men and women should be a part of decision-making.”

Over the season, the farmers implemented what they learned during the training. Men are taking opinion from their wives and women are also taking part in business activities and working alongside men. This implies positive response of the training.”

“ Earlier, women participation in the trainings that we used to give was limited. Their participation is now increasing. As compared to last year, 30-40% more women are now attending the farmer trainings and are showing increased interest towards farming techniques.”

Ummed Ram

6. A field facilitator has been able to sensitize farmers in the village to give equal status to women

Parmeshwar Bhakal, Field Facilitator



Parmeshwar Bhakal has been working with Ambuja Cement Foundation for the past five years and has been associated with the BCI project for the past three. He takes care of 550 farmers in the Deshwal and Indokali villages and assists an additional 100 women who are not part of the BCI project.

He noticed the villages he works in are male-dominated – women are considered to be weak and to lack decision-making power. Furthermore, a village in which he works has a veil system; as a result, women have to cover their face and cannot talk in front of men.

Sharing his experience in working in these villages, “when we used to visit their homes for updating FFB data, they would not entertain us if the husbands were not home. They never participated in any business activities and whatever little involvement they had was only in the presence of their husbands.”

Parmeshwar and other FFs in his project attended the gender-sensitization workshop. “We realized that women do more work than men as they are engaged in field work as well as housework. Men, on the other hand, work for only 3-4 hours in a day. Earlier, we used to focus on male farmers

more but now we are also trying to reach the women farmers. Through training I learnt that woman should [be] aware about the business and farm-related things too along with man.”

Parmeshwar also organized gender training at the village level to sensitize farmers about this. “I did face some challenges while organizing the training. It was difficult to gather women for the training as women did not generally go out of their homes without their husband’s permission and most men did not allow them. We had to first take permission from men to allow their wives to attend the training. Women also do not have enough time to attend meetings as they are always busy in their respective work.”

Despite the challenges, the training was conducted by Parmeshwar. He remarks, “We told male and female farmers that the society can develop if men and women are treated equally and have equal participation in decision-making. This year I have seen improvement as comparison to last year in participation of [women] in various activities. Men are also helping to decrease workload of women and there is increased participation of women in decision-making. Now when she goes to the market, she also buys seeds and other items.”

Implementing Partner: Action for Food Production (AFPRO)

1. A field facilitator in Wankaner is changing mindsets to promote gender equality

Mohamad Safi Sherasiya, Field Facilitator



Mohamad Safi Sherasiya is a field facilitator for the BCI project being implemented by AFPRO (Action for Food Production) in Wankaner, Gujarat. He works with 600 farmers, educating them on sustainable agricultural practices.

Regarding the gender-related issues in his project area, he maintains, “men typically are considered to be the farmers and women to be only their helpers. Women are supposed to be doing mainly household chores. The societal gender norms, the social determinants and the skewed traditions of the patriarchal society in India also affect women’s assertion of their identity as farmers and decision-makers. Because of these traditional norms and stereotypes, participation of women is a common problem as they are busy in household activities.”

Mohamad Safi participated in the gender-sensitization training organized by IDH on September 12, 2018. He noted his perspective changed after this workshop. “[During the workshop] all participants

had gone through many role-play activities and I realized that [women’s] role must be recognized in farming. Women are responsible for both farming operations and household activities and still, they don’t have decision-making power. I had been giving training to farmers on best agricultural practices but after the gender workshop, I am also sensitizing them about the gender issues.”

“Earlier, I was only engaging with the women farmers under the project to make them aware about health and hygiene practices and decent work. It also used to be difficult to gather both male and female farmers at the same place. However, this year, I am able to bring both men and women together at the same place for a common training on gender. I got the courage and conviction to do so after attending the gender-sensitization training – to talk about women farmers and their role in farming.”

He pointed out the men and women farmers initially hesitated to attend the trainings

together but he was able to convince them with a help of a woman field facilitator from AFPRO.

“After giving training to more than 600 farmers including 120 women farmers, I can now confirm that farmers have started understanding the roles of women in farming. Furthermore, women are getting

opportunities to take decision in farm operation. Men farmers now also understand their responsibility in helping their wives in the household chores and more women are increasingly participating in the training on health and safety, farm practices and gender sensitivity so that they can assert themselves in decision-making of farm operations.”

2. A farmer shares his experience of realizing the gender issues existing in his village

Gulam Badi, Farmer, Kothi Village, Wankaner



Gulam has been registered with the BCI project implemented by AFPRO for the last five years. He attended the gender-training program organized by field facilitator Mohamad Safi. Sharing his experience, “Mohamad Safi started the training by describing the gender issues that exist - I was shocked to hear as we had not thought from that perspective. It was a realization to all of us. Later we realized that he was talking on an important and sensitive issue that we had been ignoring for years. I realized that our community women do hard work in the field and as well as at home, but we don't acknowledge their contribution.”

“Mohamad Safi's convincing talk on gender equality enabled us to reflect ourselves how we treat our women in the society who are

invisible workers of our farm operations. I felt there are many farm operations that are performed by women like sowing, weeding, intercultural operations, picking in cotton and all are done manually by women. Besides, they also do household chores which are taken for granted. Now we realized that they also need recognition and equal status like men in the society. They also have a life to live with equal dignity and freedom. Now farmers like me started helping the females of our house. I do take responsibility for doing household activities like cattle feeding, fetching water, dropping the children to school, etc.”

3. Mr. Raju Sriramji Wankhede, Field Facilitator, Sawarkheda, Maharashtra

Raju is a field facilitator engaged with AFPRO in Sawarkheda, Maharashtra, working with a total of 420 farmers – 64 are women farmers. Additionally, he engages with 257 farm laborers, including 130 women laborers.

Speaking about gender-related challenges at the village level, “People in the village are not very educated and that is the main reason for gender challenges there. Some of these issues include most of the landholdings are in name of men, women have lower participation in decision-making, women are not ready to participate in training programs along with men, they have family responsibilities and have a busy work schedule.”

He, along with other FFs in the project, attended the gender-training workshop organized in 2018. Relating to the workshop, “In the training, we learned basic concept of gender and related issues. The workshop helped [improve] our awareness about the issue and in the planning of training program for gender-sensitization at the field level. Based on our learnings, we created a gender module in our training program.”



“The module trainings focused on training on application of fertilizers, pest identification and understanding of intensity of pest, intercultural operations and mulching of residues, cotton picking and precautions to be taken while picking and storage, and sensitization of hazardous pesticides’ effects on human and animal health. We have also engaged with both male and female farmers to discuss issues such as participation of women in decision-making, equal opportunities, health and sanitation and education.”

4. Jagadish Lakshettivar, Field Facilitator, Wagholi, Maharashtra

Jagadish is working as a field facilitator with AFPRO in Maharashtra, engaging with a total of 402 farmers in his project, among which 48 are women farmers and 199 farm laborers, including 109 women.

After attending the training, he and the others FFs conducted gender-sensitization programs in all the villages in which they work. He remarks, “We realized [the] importance of gender mainstreaming in planning and implementation processes and how gender mainstreaming can be more measurable in the socio-economic life of farmer and labour[er]. Hence, we have imbibed gender approach in our training programs.”

Speaking about gender issues in villages, “Women in villages have limited scope to speak openly in their community and hence, response of their presence in the development program becomes lower. The traditional mentality and low literacy levels are the major obstacles in the growth of women in all respect. We have sensitized farmers on these issues through our gender programs at village level and advocated equal role of male and female in the work, home and society.”

Basil Commodities

1. Amin Parmar, Field Facilitator

Amin Parmar has been a field facilitator since 2018 for the BCI project implemented by Basil Commodities. He works in two villages with 478 male farmers and two women farmers.

Speaking about his experience on attending the gender training, “I participated in gender-sensitization workshop organized by IDH. After the training, I conducted village survey on gender issues and found that the mindset of men is that they have to work more compared to women and women have to look only after the house.”

“After this, we planned a gender-sensitization training in the villages that I was working in with help of the Producer Unit. During the workshop I had attended, we did an activity that demonstrated the workload women in villages have. I did the same activity with the farmers and they realized that the work done by women is much more than men as they work in the farm, at home and look after family members. Women are also happy that their work is now being appreciated.”

“I am very happy to see these positive changes in my village. We are also planning to do a workshop in schools to bring awareness [to] them about gender equality.”

2. Deepa Chauhan, Field Facilitator

Deepa Chauhan is a field facilitator with the BCI project implemented by Basil Commodities. She works with 480 farmers, including 99 women farmers in three villages. Regarding gender issues in these villages, she reports, “When I started to work in these villages, I realized that many females are involved in agriculture work as co-farmers. But these female farmers are not involved in decision-making about inputs, purchase or sale or any other agriculture-related work. When I discussed this with the farmers and female co-farmers, I found that due to lack of knowledge about pests, pesticides, fertilizers, seed varieties, and market information they are not involved in decision-making.”

“I then planned training of female co-farmers with the help of the Producer Unit on pests, pesticides, fertilizers, seed varieties and also share market information with them. However, their participation was still limited. We realized it was also the people’s mindset that limited the role of women in decision-making.”



Deepa attended the gender-sensitization workshop organized by IDH. After attending the training, she decided to organize a sensitization training for the farmers. “I did an activity with the farmers that we did in the workshop. It helped them to understand how much work women co-farmers are doing in cotton farming. After the training a male farmer said to me – ‘we never had a realization that females are also involved in agriculture activities as much as we are’ and a female farmer came to me and said – ‘because of you my respect in my family has increased and everyone in my family has realized my importance.’ I am very happy with these changes happening at the village level.”

3. Bhupatbhai Manjibhai Zapadiya, Farmer, Toda Village, Amreli

Bhupatbhai is a 40-year-old cotton farmer with five family members. Cotton is his main source of income and he has been a part of the BCI project in his area since 2015.

He attended the training on gender-sensitization organized by the Deepaben (the field facilitator in his village). On his experience he summarizes, “I never realized the gender divide in this way. Women in my village are equally involved in agriculture but not in decision-making for agriculture. During the workshop, we did group activity listing all works that is done in farming by men and women. We realized women are performing equal tasks but have no role in decision-making.”

“On speaking to Deepaben, we realized that women farmers have also been trained



on cotton-farming practices and have good knowledge about it. After this training I am working together with my wife for any decision that we need to take for our farm.”

His wife Dakshaben Zapadiya also attended the training. She states, “I am very happy that my opinion is now being valued. I also now feel more confident.”

CottonConnect

1. Sunil Kamble, Field Facilitator



Sunil works as a field facilitator with CottonConnect in Wardha, Maharashtra, with 510 farmers in total, including 12 women across six villages in Wardha's Hinganghat block.

About his work, he comments, "In villages, I conduct farmer learning-group training on different sustainable practices and Better Cotton Standard System. In cotton farming, most of the work at field level is done by women farmers and workers, but women farmers [do] not get recognition for their work. All the decisions related to farming are taken by only male farmers."

He attended the gender training conducted by IDH in August 2018. Speaking about what he learned there, "In training, Dr. Sangita Shete explained what gender is and how female farmers are important in cotton farming. I also learnt how to explain the

importance of decision-making by women in farming and how it will reduce the poverty of farmers or increase their net income. In addition to this, I also realized importance of gender inclusion and how to conduct training for female farmers in a better way. So, I have added the gender topic in my training programs and interestingly, in addition to male farmers, female farmers have also attended the trainings with zeal."

He continues, "Before gender training, many times we demonstrated the preparation of homemade pesticides and bio-dynamic composting but farmers did not adopt it. As female farmers started attending the training, they have easily adopted this practice and some of them have started using homemade pesticides. With increased awareness on gender equality we really can increase adoption level of sustainable farming practices."

Deshpande Foundation

1. Rajnikar Reddy, Cotton farmer, Nangnoor village



Rajnikar Reddy owns six acres of land where he grows cotton and paddy. He has been a part of the BCI project for the last two years. Over this time, he attended trainings conducted by Deshpande Foundation on sustainable farming practices. He is also a part of the Farmer Producer Organization in his village and last year, he received training on gender sensitization there.

Regarding his experience, “At village meetings we got suggestions on best practices of cotton and we [discussed] innovative methods of farming. This year, we also discussed contribution of women in farming, access of opportunities for them, and their role in decision-making in families. Before training, we never gave

much thought about these things and never discussed it with fellow farmers. I have also started observing how young girls are not provided equal opportunities as boys.”

He continues, “These kind [of] meetings were very helpful for my community and I want attend more in coming days. I also motivated my wife to be a member of FPO. She has joined FPO and is now playing an active role in its operations.”

2. S. Ramachandran, Field Facilitator

S. Ramachandran has been a field facilitator with the BCI project implemented by Deshpande Foundation for the last two years. He aids 309 farmers, which includes 11 women farmers.

He attended the gender training in 2018. Summarizing his learnings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), he comments, “[During the training,] I learnt about gender disparity in cotton sector and how we should plan our extension activities to overcome them. This year we have targeted trainings like eradication of Moncrotophos and awareness on minimum PPE mainly to women. This is because women are more concerned about health issues and family safety. We also learnt that we need to change our style and use more sensitive language when we give training at the field level.”

“During LG meetings, we see less participation of women as they have very less time due to farm work and household chores. Even when they attend, we mostly see them as bystanders. They don’t actively participate in discussions and feel shy to sit in front of village elders and men.”



“We conducted gender training at village level, and the farmers have now started to acknowledge the existence of gender bias. In some cases, we observed there is participation of women in discussions related to farming (input purchases, financials). But men still have final say in decision.”

“Due to the complex nature of issues, norms and discomfort in discussing them, a long-term engagement is required. We are working consistently to produce visible results. We want to learn about case studies, impact stories on gender sensitization from other projects and IPs.”

K.K. Fibers

1. Kaluram More. Field Facilitator



Kaluram More is a field facilitator with K. K. Fibers, supporting 601 farmers – including 207 women farmers. He participated in the gender-sensitization training in 2018 and since then has included gender as part of the trainings he delivers at the field level to the farmer and farm workers.

Speaking about this, “Attending the gender-sensitization training was very rewarding, I learnt that women are par with men. Based on the training we attended, we have conducted village-level trainings. In some places, we faced some social problems. But with the cooperation of local men and women we completed our work and gave our message to the community. The people appreciated the work and said that such trainings on social issues should be done regularly.”

“Attending the gender-sensitization training was very rewarding, I learnt that women are par with men. Based on the training we attended, we have conducted village-level trainings.”

Kaluram

Lupin Foundation

1. Satish Sonawane, Field Facilitator

Satish has been working as a field facilitator with Lupin Foundation for approximately two years, engaging with 516 farmers, out of which only six are women. Gender issues were evident in the villages in which he works. Even before attending the training, he was aware of the issues of women participating in decision-making, landholdings owned only by male members, unequal farm wages for both men and women workers and people's attitude in general towards educating women.

After attending the training, Satish learned how to address these issues and create sensitivity at the village level. "I received knowledge on how to plan my agenda and work with the farmers to increase their understanding of the issue. We organized training for women and for mixed groups of men and women, too. We collaborated with Anganwadi and ASHA workers to create awareness through rallies and campaigning."

Women SHGs in the villages where Satish works collaborated with Lupin Foundation to conduct gender-sensitization trainings in the villages.

While people in the villages mostly responded positively, it was not easy for Satish as he faced several issues including conventional mindsets towards women's participation in events and the existing workload of women.

Satish comments, "to overcome these hurdles, I conducted meetings with the farmers I engage with and made them understand the importance of women in the economy and society. I tried to change the general perception of women. Some educated and village leaders also helped me in this task. People in Balvuke village are now more sensitized. They are concerned about education and health of ... [girls] as well and are promoting women to participate in the all events and decisions of the families."

2. Bhatu Hari Patil, Cotton farmer, Sutrepada village

Bhatu Patil is a cotton farmer in the Sutrepada village and has been part of the BCI project for the last two years. He attended the gender-sensitization workshop conducted by a Lupin Foundation field facilitator at the village along with his wife.

Regarding gender issues at the village level, they observed there are some intrinsic challenges in the village such as the early marriage of girls, reluctance in providing higher education to girls and the negligence of these issues by village leaders. They also determined unequal wages are paid to women workers as compared to men and most women in the village have limited role in decision-making.



Speaking about the gender-sensitization workshop conducted at the village, Bhatu comments, "We learnt many things such as how early marriages have an adverse [effect] on girls' health, importance of education for girls, supporting income from work done by women and importance of her views in the decision-making."

3. Naina Mukesh Patil, Participant at gender-sensitization workshop conducted by FFs in the Mandal village



Lupin Foundation field facilitators who attended gender training conducted by IDH conducted gender workshops at the village level with the farmers and their families with whom they work. Naina attended the workshop along with her husband. Speaking about the workshop, she emphasizes that “this training changed the way my family thinks. I get importance when making any decisions now and my husband has also distributed work and responsibility of our farm.”

Naina is also an active member of the village’s SHG. She has taken initiative to promote the education of girls and convince families who are reluctant to do so. She has also been encouraging girls in her village to participate in skills’ trainings organized by various skill-development agencies in the area.

“Lupin Foundation, with BCI and SHG activities, is bringing a change in life of many women like me”

Naina

PRDIS - Participatory Rural Development Initiatives Society

1. Thirupathi Reddy, Field Facilitator

Thirupathi has been working as a field facilitator in the Konanki village in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh since 2015. After undergoing gender-mainstreaming training from IDH, he has persisted in including female farmers into the BCI project, making them more active and increasing their participation in trainings.

He has influenced five women farmers in his village – B. Lakshmi, Y. Lakshmi, V. Anasuyamma, N. Kotamma and N. Koteswaramma. Previously, women’s participation in trainings was minimal as the women would only sit in a corner and listen. However, in 2019-20, he provided

proper training to all five women farmers (along with other male farmers) on field observations, water conservation practices, fiber quality and use of minimum personal protective equipment. Thirupathi concluded, “The women farmers were able to identify pests and defender insects in the field. They discussed pesticides’ spraying with their spouses which resulted in decrease in random spraying in their fields. They also ensured use of PPE by their spouses while spraying. Since they were trained on fiber quality, they harvested cotton through a grading process which fetched them Rs. 800 per quintal more than the average cotton rate.”

2. Shaik Dhariyabee, Cotton Farmer, Turakapalem village in Guntur

Shaik Dhariyabee has been growing cotton on her two-acre land since 2017. She interacted with the field staff of PRDIS concerning gender-related challenges in her village. She observed, “Men mostly work with machinery and equipment which are heavy for women to handle, while women perform more laborious tasks such as picking and weeding. In addition, women discuss farm operations with their spouses, but final decision is taken by husbands on inputs, farm management and marketing which indicates gender bias in prevailing farming families.”

She attended the gender-analysis activity and sensitization workshop conducted by the field team of PRDIS. She noted, “After the workshop I have started participating in farm operations regularly along with my husband. We are taking decisions on pest management and chemical sprays together. We have saved Rs. 1500 in our total cultivation cost. I also learnt how to prepare and apply Neem Seed Kernal Extract for sucking pest management and ensure that my husband wears PPE while spraying.”

