



Project Journal: Gender Integration

ABSTRACT





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report and the underlying Action Learning Research project are the result of the strategic institutional initiative by Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB) India, which has prioritised participatory action developed to enrich the discourse on the intersections of gender, climate resilient agriculture and food security and a strategic call for action for gender responsive and transformative action.

Furthermore, this report is a synthesis of a collaborative journey and the insights within were co-created with 6000 farmers, 30 FPOs across Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Odisha, 40 internal team members, and

other ecosystem stakeholders by engaging them in the 'Pause-Reflect-Improve' cycle, ensuring the findings remain grounded in their lived realities. As the authors, Rashmi Sahu and Bharti, role has been to listen, document, and amplify their voices, and contributions. This work has also benefited from the technical inputs and guidance provided by Bharti. Our gratitude to Shilpa Vasavada for sharpening our focus towards gender integration in the project.

We hope this document serves as a valuable tool for stakeholders committed to building a more gender-transformative and resilient agricultural ecosystem.



INTRODUCTION

Context: Why Gender Integration Matters

Women contribute significantly to agriculture as farmers, labourers, small entrepreneurs and value-chain actors. However, due to entrenched socio-cultural norms, women have limited access to land, markets, technology, finance, and decision-making spaces, particularly within formal institutions such as Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), cooperatives, and other community organisations. Their contributions often remain underpaid and undervalued, leading to low visibility, weak bargaining power, and limited agency.

In such a scenario, there's a need to build a gender-integrated, sustainable agri-value chain. Integrating gender is critical because gender relations shape how agricultural **tasks, decisions, resources, and benefits** are distributed within households and communities. At the same time, increasing climate variability and natural resource degradation demand resilient, inclusive, and knowledge-intensive agricultural systems. Sustainability in agri-value chains, therefore, cannot be achieved without embedding gender equity alongside fostering climate resilience and supporting institutional strengthening.

The Project and its Objectives

The Project '**Gender Role in Agriculture, Climate change and Food Security**' under the Capacity-building and Climate Action

programme of Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB) is operating in four states of India: Andhra Pradesh (AP), Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Odisha. The project covers 30 FPOs and 22000+ farmers spread across nine districts, with direct implementation involving 6000 farmers, most of them women.

The project seeks to specifically address the following:

- **Embed** gender equality and social inclusion objectives throughout design, implementation, monitoring and reflection processes.
- Improve women's **equitable access** to capacity-building through knowledge, skills, finance services, technologies, networks, markets, institutional benefits and strengthen their leadership roles in FPO governance structures and value-chain activities.
- Integrate gender considerations in training, demonstrations, technology distribution, and FPO strengthening processes to ensure **equal and meaningful participation** of women and men across all project activities.
- Facilitate wider **convergence** to support gender-equitable outcomes.
- Strengthen **decision-making and agency** of women at the household, community and institutional levels.
- Create an **enabling ecosystem** to prevent resistance, backlash, or any unintended negative consequences as gender norms shift.

Gender Lens Integration in the Project Journey

This project adopts a **gender action learning approach**, positioning women and men as active change agents rather than passive beneficiaries. Through participatory visioning, reflection, and action planning, the approach enables the identification of context-specific gender-based constraints and supports collective efforts to dismantle them. By linking gender learning with climate-resilient and sustainable agriculture practices, the project aligns social inclusion with economic viability and environmental stewardship. As part of this, strengthening women's capacities and leadership within agri-collectives is essential to build **resilient and inclusive agri-enterprises**.

By recognising women as knowledge holders and change-makers, the project seeks to transform participation into influence, income, representation and leadership. Through targeted capacity-building initiatives, institutional support, and ecosystem engagement, the intervention aims to foster resilient agri-value chains that ensure equity and inclusion across processes and outcomes, while enhancing adaptive capacity in the face of climate and market uncertainties.

The Action Learning process adopts a '**Pause-Reflect-Improve**' rhythm, creating deliberate thinking around gender responsiveness under three iterative loops:

- **Design Rationale** - intentional considerations integrated from

consultations, scoping study, community conversations, micro and macro insights.

- **Implementation Appraisal** - Anatomisation of how women experienced the initiatives, including participation, resistance, learning, and transformation. This reflective exercise will also encompass a review of other similar interventions by ecosystem players to identify best practices and potential hindrances.
- **Feedback Loop** - Adapting and reforming strategies based on learnings to enhance gender responsiveness.

Thus, project actors¹ shift from **implementers/beneficiaries to champions** of gender equity, enabling systems change. This reflection process is not merely for reporting; it will be a process of **changing practice organically** through deep listening and co-creation. Gender is conceptualised as a relational and structural determinant that shapes access to resources, decision-making, and institutional participation. This will enable acknowledgement of women not just as participants, but as leaders, innovators, and co-architects of equitable and climate-resilient agricultural systems. **Empowerment won't be seen as an outcome alone, but rather as a continuous practice.** Gender lens integration ensures that the project moves beyond numbers to capture stories of change, grounded in women's voices, reality, and aspirations, creating **a model of agribusiness that is resilient, equitable and inclusive.**

¹Project team, farmers, FPO's, etc

Gender Action Plan (GAP)

GAP undertaken under the project aims to ensure **gender mainstreaming** as a core principle across all states and throughout the project lifecycle. GAP wouldn't be an add-on component; instead, it would mirror and reinforce project outputs, embedding gender-integration strategies into project **design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning**. It ensures that both women and men participate meaningfully, benefit equitably, and exercise agency in the context of climate-resilient agriculture and agri-collective structures.

The focus areas for actions to be considered as part of GAP include:

a. Access and Control- Mapping **gender roles** to identify tasks and activities performed and controlled by women and men in the community. Who does what, where, how, and when in project areas? Are there time, mobility, social, cultural, and economic constraints that may interfere with women's participation in project activities?

b. Decision-Making Power- Engage with women about the economic, cultural, social, legal, and other constraints limiting their participation in decision-making at the

household, community and institutional levels, or the use of resources and distribution of project-related benefits. Further, strengthening women's voice and autonomy in household and institutional spaces, including FPO Board, committees, etc., by facilitating collective strategies through FPOs/Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs)/Producer Groups (PGs)/Self Help Groups (SHGs) to negotiate change.

c. Needs and Priorities- Designing activities based on women's interests and aspirations, and ensuring integration of **voices** from diverse women: older/younger women, single/widowed, dalit/tribal, migrant families, differently-abled.

d. Capacity Building - Gender-Inclusive Checkpoints using training content, visuals, language and **pedagogy** reflective of both men and women. Ensuring women-friendly scheduling, seasonal workload, and location arrangements; increasing the number of women front-bench speakers, interactions and feedback; and encouraging trainers to be gender-sensitive and able to engage passive participants.

e. Grievance and Feedback Systems- Establishing mechanisms that prioritise women's feedback, dissent, and ideas; and looping reflection findings back into design and reform.

METHODOLOGY

This action research is developed using a **Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework** and **feminist action research principles**, which foreground power relations, reflexivity, and collective agency in agri-food systems. Methodically, the study employed qualitative methods, structured around capturing fluid, adaptive **'Pause-Reflect-Improve'** learning cycle. The methodology emphasises agency, transparency, and continuous learning, enabling both women and men to **articulate their aspirations, track progress, and adapt strategies as implementation progresses**. Insights generated through field engagement directly inform project adaptations, strengthening pathways toward equitable and climate-resilient agricultural development. This enabled participants to articulate a shared vision, track change and temporal shifts in agency/ leadership/institutional practices, and identify obstacles, including social norms and gender-based constraints, that hinder equitable participation, access to resources, and decision-making power.

This PAR framework has been operationalised through engagement with more than 30 Master Trainers (MTs), Nari Shakti Precursors (NSPs), FPO Leadership (CEOs/BoDs), and marginalised

women farmers (landless/smallholder/SC/ST/Single women) as knowledge-holders. The iterative process of reflection, action, analysis, planning, learning, and realignment is locally led through a combination of unstructured and semi-structured dialogue, group reflection exercises, and collaborative problem-solving methodologies that emphasise voice and relational learning.

Analysis: Thematic Pattern Recognition

The report used thematic pattern recognition to analyse behavioural trends (e.g., Participation vs influence, Adoption drivers, etc.). The field team's on-the-ground appraisal of each project activity, from mobilisation to Climate Smart and Resilient Agriculture (CSA) adoption, served as the basis for the analysis. Findings were deeply contextualised within local socio-cultural norms, comparing how caste, mobility, education, geography, commodity type, and gender roles influenced outcomes differently across the four states. This allowed the identification of 'Emerging Patterns' to inform the transition from gender-blind/discriminatory/ sensitive to gender-responsive/transformational strategies, enabling the project to pivot its strategy and ensure interventions were **contextually and behaviourally relevant**. This constant **feedback** mechanism transformed the project into an action-learning project.



CAPACITY BUILDING: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR GENDER INTEGRATION

The project adopts a **phased, practice-oriented, and gender-responsive capacity-building strategy** grounded in action research and contextual learning. It focuses on strengthening women's roles across the agriculture value chain, climate change adaptation, and food security through sustained engagement with FPOs, farmer collectives, households, and women farmers. It further emphasises women-centric and mixed learning spaces, peer learning, exposure visits, and hands-on demonstrations to promote learning-by-doing, visible outcomes, drudgery reduction, and confidence-building.

Capacity-building activities operate **at multiple levels, focusing on multiple factors with multiple actors** such as individual women farmers, collectives, and FPO institutions, and combine technical training on climate-resilient and sustainable agriculture with institutional strengthening in governance, financial management, enterprise development, and value-chain integration. In the initial phases,

capacity-building efforts concentrated on understanding gender roles, power relations, and climate vulnerabilities through scoping study, state consultations, and preliminary assessments, ensuring interventions are rooted in local realities. Subsequent phases prioritise **building technical, institutional, and leadership capacities**, placing women farmers at the centre of all interventions.

Training is aligned with women's availability and supported by continuous handholding and follow-up to reduce risk and fear of failure. Gender sensitisation, decision-making skills, and enterprise orientation are integrated throughout, ensuring women not only participate but also progressively assume leadership and economic roles. The continuous documentation, reflection, and evidence generation will guide adaptation, scale-up, and policy engagement, positioning women farmers and FPOs as agents of climate resilience and change.

KEY INSIGHTS - EMERGING TRENDS AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

This section highlights the project's experience and learnings, providing ample scope to further build on its achievements and expand them across other regions. It highlights several strategies to **scale out and sustain** the current levels of progress made in the four states.

To emphasise on the sustainability of agri-collectives and the security of vulnerable farmers' livelihoods against climate variability, it is suggested that resilience be built at different levels through a portfolio of complementary interventions. A holistic, comprehensive framework that drives implementation, therefore, empowers the development of climate-resilient farmer collectives and food systems. Some of the key points are shared as follows:

Inclusive Governance and Leadership

- **Women Leaders Thrive in Spaces Designed for Them:** In women-led/ women-majority FPOs, women seem more **assertive, informed, and confident**, but mostly remain quiet in mixed/men-dominated FPOs — demonstrating that only leadership attributes are not the barrier; the environment is. **Duality** highlights that women's leadership is usually context-sensitive, not really an indicator of deficiency in their capabilities.
- **Silent-Stakeholder Pattern:** In mixed-gender governance and technical meetings (especially in Gujarat and Odisha), women often wear a *ghoonghat* (veil) and exhibit limited participation. They **express disagreements in private** with the facilitators post the meeting, rather than during formal deliberations, indicating that 'attendance' does not always mean active engagement.
- **From Personality to System-Driven Governance:** Most FPOs are currently personality-driven, often led by a male CEO, even in women-majority FPOs. There is growing demand to **transition** to system-driven governance, with the help of sub-committees in which women hold specific portfolios, such as finance or marketing, to dismantle their perfunctory role of women on the BoD.
- **Tokenism:** FPOs often restrict decision-making at the management/CEO/BoD level, with women in leadership positions being tokenised and serving only as nominal/ dummy figures. However, the project found that women exhibit higher **operational efficiency and voice** when placed in women dominated board/ or women-led enterprise functional subcommittees— due to a **clear understanding of roles and responsibilities**, a higher **sense of ownership and liability**. The presence of male members in the group sometimes serves as a deterrent, as it is assumed they will take on certain responsibilities.
- **Shifting from Compliance Focus to Social Audit Introduction:** FPOs often check boxes for gender representation without genuine inclusion. To move beyond this **compliance mindset and 'gender washing'**, they can create **tangible metrics** in decision-making spaces such as Annual General Meetings (AGMs). Some of the metrics that can be included are the proportion of share capital contributed by women, the volume of produce procured from women, the representation of women in attendance, the agenda discussion points concerning women, maintaining women's representation in quorum, and the number of women-led motions passed, etc. This would ensure structural participation.



Participation

- **Gender and Social Norms Continue to Define Women's Participation:** The decision to attend meetings is subject to family approval, and segregated seating patterns are observed during training, revealing that **agency remains negotiated** rather than independent. They also have to manage all the assigned work before leaving. Women prefer to sit at the back or 'listen quietly' in mixed settings, indicating **internalised norms of deference** in the presence of men and community leaders. This suggests that the mainstreaming efforts should include Male Champion workshops at the household level to sustain institutional changes made at the FPO level.
- **Women Show High Willingness To Learn But Low Confidence In Public Spaces:** Higher engagement of women in small/women-only settings. In mixed settings, women refrain from expressing themselves freely due to **fear of judgment or being perceived as 'less knowledgeable'**. This results in a quiet yet visible pattern: **women's knowledge deepens, but their public confidence and decision-making voice lag.**
- **Caste-Geography Constraints:** SC/ST/OBC women were sometimes found to avoid attending meetings held in the other caste-dominated streets, and vice versa. This poses a risk to inclusive governance. It has been observed that in AP and Maharashtra, the choice of a meeting venue is sometimes influenced by local leaders' propaganda.
- **Delivery Format:** The theory-based training has limited uptake and lower active participation among women, especially older women farmers. When adopted, the **sequenced learning mode of delivery** shows a difference in participation enthusiasm. It is preferable to hold the concept-seeding session in women-only groups to create a conducive environment, limiting their fear of judgment/ridicule,

followed by a mixed-gender session of practical learning.

- **Community Leadership:** The deployment of NSPs demonstrated that information flows more effectively **through horizontal peer networks** than through vertical expert-to-farmer models. NSPs engaged in the project are acting as bridges, successfully disseminating technical subject requirements comprehensively and in vernacular languages and delivering them in line with women's availability and mobility.

Health and Nutrition

- **Participation Influenced by Lived Realities:** Women gravitate to sessions that include components on drudgery reduction, time savings, household well-being, and health — reflecting the practical, multi-burdened realities of rural women's lives. Program design must meet women where they are — not where we assume they should be. This requires a holistic focus, instead on singular linear direction.
- **Health over Yield:** One of the behavioural insights that emerged from the Climate Smart and Resilient Agriculture (CSA) training was that the men primarily attend training on topics related to crops which are sold by the household, not just for self-consumption. This was attributed to their **greater decision-making authority** over such crops. In contrast, women participated more actively, or even exclusively, if the crop was for household consumption only. Additionally, the women were keen to adopt a practice if it was low-cost, linked to health benefits, and reduced drudgery.
- **Health and Drudgery:** Participatory body-mapping revealed that women and men were largely aware that their **musculoskeletal and respiratory issues** were linked to specific agricultural drudgery. Once the health-drudgery link was visualised, interest in adopting labour-saving tools surged.

Value Chain and FPO Business

- **FPO Maturity Varies, but Aspirations are Growing:** FPOs express interest in market linkages, value addition, and business diversification — but also admit to **gaps in financial literacy and governance discipline**. Women farmers increasingly articulate aspirations such as ‘earning my own money,’ ‘selling my products in broader markets,’ and signalling a gradual shift from participation to aspiration.
- **Partnerships are Expanding Exposure and Breaking Isolation:** Exposure to universities, agricultural research institutes, and conferences has ignited ideas. Technical collaborations are bridging knowledge gaps and making farmers feel part of a larger agricultural ecosystem rather than isolated units.
- **Mobility as a Gatekeeper:** While women are eager for production-level training within the village, their involvement in value chain-related activities drops significantly when it involves interaction with distant markets. Thus, there’s a need for **institutionalising female market-facing roles**; otherwise, most women would remain trapped in production-only labour.
- **Hyper-Localising Value-addition:** Usually, due to **mobility-profit trade-offs**, women lose profit margins because produce has to be transported to distant markets, as they cannot accompany the goods (due to social norms/safety concerns), forcing them to rely on male intermediaries. Under the project, the development of the first-mile-processing node (such as buy-back partnership) within the village ensures that value addition happens within the women’s mobility radius, allowing them to control the grading/packaging quality and directly earn at the farm-gate, leading to bypassing mobility restrictions and enabling women to capture value before produce enters the male-dominated logistics chain.
- **Social Capital:** Building social capital by **reactivating current shareholders** and building on the existing vast network of SHGs/PGs/FIGs is seen as necessary for FPO’s growth acceleration and sustainability. It would increase farmers’ business transactions with FPOs, increasing turnover and profit margins. Also, diversify business opportunities, especially for women farmers.
- **Digital Gatekeeper:** In many places, smartphones remain in the hands of men or youth. This creates an **information lag/disruption for women**, who receive climate and market data second-hand, reducing their ability to make timely farm decisions.

Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture (CSA)

- **Scalable CSA Models Beyond Extension to Entrepreneurship:** While women adopt CSA practices such as bio-inputs for health reasons, this alone does not scale the FPO business, as it is mainly done at the individual level by women with restricted investment capacity. Women are more deeply engaged when CSA is converted into an enterprise or enhances earnings, rather than being limited to just a farm practice. This would also give women a financial stake in resilience and help elevate their role/status within the FPO. Also, **providing economic incentives** tied to improved incomes is a compelling incentive to adopt a collective approach for CSA-centric entrepreneurial activities.
- **Adoption of Practices is Embedded in Family Dynamics:** Adoption is not purely an individual choice but a **family-level negotiation** influenced by trust, risk perception, and social proof. Inclusive sensitisation is required to enable other family members to observe positive outcomes. Women are more likely to adopt new CSA technologies after seeing positive results from their neighbours or peers, as this provides them with bargaining power when proposing it to their families.
- **Convergence is key to building Climate resilience:** Schemes across several departments play an essential complementary role in promoting climate change adaptation interventions at different levels by providing information and access. A second pathway emerges from the convergence initiative, which has highlighted that despite the availability of several government schemes and programmes, their utilisation remains minimal. Several funds and schemes offered by agencies such as NABARD have significant potential to develop interventions to improve the climate resilience of India's agricultural systems. However, a lack of understanding and awareness among relevant stakeholders about targeting interventions to specific regions based on local requirements limits the efficient use of these funds.

Capacity Building

- **Confidence Threshold:** Women tend to show greater confidence in technical matters in women-only spaces, but often recede in mixed settings due to fear of being wrong or socially judged. Repeated, sequenced learning, where the trainer recapitulated information for their participants, helped clarify topics, encouraged questions that showed comprehension, and built confidence.
- **Lessons in institutional capacity building: 'Seeing is believing';** likewise, creating awareness through videos and evidence, especially for women farmers, so that technological adoption can enable faster mobilisation of farmers for institutional formation. Showing them what other farmers are doing and what technology can help them achieve it makes it more convincing to adopt innovations.
- **Capacity Building is Transforming the Project Team's Attitude and Ownership:** Team members are increasingly seeing themselves **as knowledge facilitators and ecosystem actors**, not just project implementers. Digitisation has increased confidence in presenting their field insights, as monitored data supports their intuition, improving cross-team credibility. Data help them identify drop-off patterns, non-participation clusters, or gendered differences in adoption. This is assisting FWFB in transitioning from an implementation role to an influencer and agenda-setter in gender- and climate-resilient agriculture.

Priority Tasks for Gender Integration in the Project

The reflection loop has helped identify a roadmap with steps to improve gender equity and inclusiveness by systematically recognising and accounting for gender-related issues across the project's core activities, including design, implementation, and monitoring. These are some key considerations for ensuring that women and men feel included and dignified in various project-related activities, participate meaningfully, and learn effectively.



Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
ELEVATING WOMEN'S ROLE		
Inclusive and Gender sensitive training planning/ design/ logistics/ content/ feedback	<p>Constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silence in mixed groups (fear of making mistakes). • <i>Ghoonghat</i> norms often restrict voice. • Women fear public ridicule, rejection and conflict. • Meeting location dictates attendance (SC women won't visit OBC streets vice-versa). • Caste-based seating lowers confidence for women from marginalised groups. The presence of dominant caste women makes women from marginalised communities hesitant to speak up. <p>Constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC/ST women participate better in decentralised small-group sessions. • Older women need repetition and a recap of the modules. • When female trainers lead, it increases women's attendance and their active participation. • Interactive tools (games) increase retention and engagement. • Women express a strong interest but avoid competitive/confrontational discussions in mixed groups. • Women participate in FPOs when the share capital is reduced. • Women prefer to share issues one-on-one in private meetings. 	<p>Inclusive designing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify women's and men's priorities, distinct needs, interests, experiences, and resource gaps related to agriculture, climate change, marketing, finance, and technology to develop relevant content for capacity-building initiatives. • Include perspectives from different age groups, castes, classes, educational backgrounds, and genders. • Respect the traditional knowledge and build on it. • Strengthen men's personal commitment to gender equality and equip them with the knowledge and skills to put that commitment into practice in their own lives. • Training through digital media platforms (using various information and communication technologies) to be considered during and after the training event. • Include aspects for addressing social, economic and legal barriers in women's decision-making and ownership of farm income. • Don't use language that promotes hierarchies of understanding, such as 'experts' and 'trainees.'

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<p>Inclusive and Gender sensitive training planning/ design/ logistics/ content/ feedback</p>		<p>Implementation for enhanced participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise micro-meetings at the hamlet level, especially for concept seeding. • Identify village leaders to give legitimacy and build trust for conducting meetings. • Women-only batches during initial training to enhance confidence and provide a safe space for learning. • Family engagement (husband/in-law) for greater sensitisation. • Involve community members who can inspire participants. • Schedule sessions during lean periods, post-domestic work. • Encourage women to sit in front and speak first, but don't put them on the spot. • Use institutional child care facilities such as Anganwadis to reduce the care work burden of women and increase their mobility. • Facilitate a safe space during training by setting some ground rules early. Participants are not to make fun of others' well-intentioned comments or repeat unflattering stories outside the workshop. Participants' privacy must be respected to enable e to enable experience sharing and learning. • Recognition campaigns to showcase women's contributions and achievements. • Discourage any disrupters when others are speaking. • Capacitate trainers to handle local gender norms. • Combine training with awareness about maintenance of bank KYC and documents for availing social welfare benefits.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
<p>Inclusive and Gender sensitive training planning/ design/ logistics/ content/ feedback</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct gender role training workshops/theatre that can shift the perceptions of men and boys at the household/FPO level about who does what, who is responsible, and who benefits. • Provide light refreshments to keep up energy levels and encourage group building. If lunch is required, pay local women entrepreneurs to provide it. Consider encouraging men/ male youth to cook and serve. Make sure women and men queue together, not separately. <p>Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback should be captured, analysed, and disaggregated by gender. • Participants commit themselves to one action immediately after the course and to share these with others. • Encourage women and men to comment openly on the event’s inclusion processes and on the training methods and content.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
Building a strong network	<p>Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have shared deterrents for networking, such as time poverty, drudgery, access and mobility issues. <p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions in collective groups increases interest (e.g., millet adoption in Amreli). • Women participate in FPOs when the share capital is reduced. 	<p>Economic and Institutional Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower share price for women shareholders. • Incentivise women’s direct dealings with FPOs. • Expand FPO’s network by including women involved in diverse. <p>Collective mobilisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank on existing collectives for mobilisation; if not available, encourage the formation of village-level collectives. • Share inspiring stories of women with similar backgrounds and conduct exposure visits.
Women Leadership Pipeline through Sub-committees	<p>Participation Dynamics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are stronger in field operations than market-facing roles, but rarely realise fair monetary benefits for their work. • Confidence rises with role clarity. • Women directorships persist without real power. • Care work and time poverty are the most significant deterrents. 	<p>Strengthen Leadership Structures and Ownership/Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a parallel leadership pipeline for women. • Target ≥1 woman member in each committee and women as committee heads. • Make committee head positions rotational, with written delegation of roles, quarterly reporting and as well as encourage reporting by women-led committees. • Replace defunct leadership/management members. • Institutionalise ‘women’s issue minutes’ in BoD agendas, particularly insights generated by NSPs during mobilisation meetings; create a follow-up tracker that links each issue to an action and owner.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
Women Leadership Pipeline through Sub-committees		<p>Redistributing workload and Incentivising Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-distribute operational load to avoid overburdening a single or a few individuals at the helm. • Recognise the contributions of active women leaders and foster others' motivation. • Engage male champions and encourage Household (HH)-level workload sharing. <p>Leadership Capacity Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up women's skills and confidence by enabling them to facilitate group discussions, act as note-takers, or give presentations on behalf of their groups. • Conduct more frequent capacity-building training, with lowered information density to encourage open discussions. • Use roleplay for building negotiation skills of women at the HH, community, and FPO levels. • Encourage gender-role reversal plays to foster shared work burden and recognise women's contribution. • Adopt structured facilitation approaches, such as alternating women's speaking turns during meetings. • Organise leadership labs to capacitate women with key leadership skills.

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<p>Digital Inclusion - Women as Information Receivers and Action Takers</p>	<p>Access, Usability, and Device-related Constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most women prefer voice/audio formats in their local language. • Many women often wait to use other family members' handsets, especially older women who need assistance operating the device. • Some apps that require a locked screen create barriers for women users. Many women hesitate to enable screen locks due to fear that family members may question their need for privacy. • Many miss out on notifications while they are out on the field, especially in challenging terrain and tribal areas. • Due to the heavy storage requirements and image downloads, some agro-advisory apps are not compatible with the available devices. • Although some women are already registered on advisory Apps, the advisory service provided is redundant or unsuitable due to its limited relevance to the hyperlocal agro-climatic contexts, heavy reliance on male members for decision-making, and peer validation. <p>Trust, Familiarity and Platform Preference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WhatsApp group participation shows more takers due to ease and familiarity. • Prevalence of high scepticism of unknown apps/digital services stemming from the possibility of digital fraud. 	<p>Improving Access and Digital Ownership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve women's access to mobile phones for receiving timely information, decision-making and networking. • Enable multiple household member registrations on applications to increase acceptance and shared use. • Integrate services for non-Android phones. <p>Making Services Relevant, Trustworthy, and User-friendly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring in timely, context-relevant digital tools and information, and build digital literacy alongside process literacy. • Design apps and services that are built on farmer familiar navigation. • Instead of multiple apps, streamline advisory through a common and popular medium, such as WhatsApp. • Send messages with lighter file sizes and schedule them in the evenings to improve reachability. <p>Ecosystem Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify gaps in digital services and share this feedback with service providers. • Conduct cyber awareness drives with the support of local banks. • Tracking of the impact of the action taken by the farmer based on the received digital information.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
Value-chain strengthening	<p>Gendered Market Dynamics and Negotiation Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets tend to reinforce male dominance due to the predominance of men in market-related transactions, unless consciously redesigned. Women are confident in product preparation, but remain hesitant in negotiation and market-facing roles. Product aesthetics and branding emerged as knowledge gaps. <p>Collective Business Roles, Entrepreneurial mindsets and Skill Demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group-led business roles in sorting, packaging, and machine operations are in high demand among women. Hands-on exposure to business processes significantly builds entrepreneurial confidence. Peer bonding has strengthened, contributing to a shift in mindset towards collective entrepreneurship. Women often propose initiatives and value-added ideas, many of which incorporate nutrition-related considerations. 	<p>Enterprise Strengthening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More training on value addition and eco-friendly packaging for business expansion. Identify institutional buyer connections, especially long-term contracts. Initiate a small pilot of a women-led input business, aligned with FPO's business interests. A 'Hub-and-Spoke Model' can be explored between smaller collectives and FPOs as a more decentralised and suitable alternative. <p>Strengthening Economic Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise women members to do business transactions with FPO. Direct bank payments to women to increase their agency.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
EMPOWERING FARMER COLLECTIVES AND EQUITABLE GOVERNANCE		
Governance and compliance	<p>Participation and Learning Dynamics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women seem disconnected/hesitant in technical/financial topics. • Comprehension improves with demonstrations and repetition • Women prefer hands-on, practical training; just theory is less effective. • Women huddle together, sit at the back or stay silent in mixed groups. • Women share disagreements or concerns privately with the facilitator after meetings, not during activities. <p>Structural and Social Barriers to Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s participation increases in women-majority FPOs when they are given committee roles. • Co-created plans increase accountability. • Peer recognition triggers confidence. • Meetings held in the evening or on short notice tend to exclude women and result in male-heavy attendance. • Caste dynamics, educational levels and financial status adversely affect attendance and voice. • Women without extensive formal education feel ‘unprepared’ to take on leadership roles have lower confidence. 	<p>Inclusive and Gender Integrated Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage inclusion and meaningful participation from diverse groups based on caste, class, education, age, locality, gender, and value-chain. • Integrate video formats in governance training modules. • Develop governance and compliance pedagogy for women with limited educational levels. • Guide FPOs with simplified compliance checklists. • Institutionalise gendered governance SOPs (quorum rules, agenda sharing, list name of the contributors on the document, etc.). • Encourage meeting the quorum, including women’s attendance • Set meetings during women-friendly hours and share the schedule and agenda well in advance. • Sequence complex content of the training into small modules for better comprehension. • Support and monitor governance meeting through - Training + handholding + MoM document verification. • Ensure ownership of FPO plans and vision document. • Reimbursement for travel to enable participation.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
Business development	<p>Enablers for business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women excel in grading, quality and hygiene maintenance. • Time flexibility and working near home align with women’s current responsibilities, making it more likely for them to avail business opportunities. • Participants involved in the exposure and setting up of businesses have gained operational confidence. • Practical skill-based training, when combined with exposure, becomes more productive for participants. • Quality Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and grading training for women are necessary to reduce potential risks and improve price realisation. • Cultural acceptance of women’s entrepreneurial endeavours is higher in group-based owned-business models. <p>Constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of market-facing tasks remains due to low confidence in their negotiation skills and low prior experience. 	<p>Enhancing FPO’s business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilise existing shareholders and conduct continuous awareness sessions to deepen their consistent engagement with FPO’s services. • Include explicit gender targets in business plans (% turnover from women-led products). • Increase FPO products’ outreach through media platforms (such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp) to expand market access and increase product visibility. • Identify more local buyers for accessible, sustainable, and economical market access, especially for women, by leveraging the local and sustained demand for products. • More refresher training to enhance business development skills. • Facilitate quicker, lower-interest-rate and credit support for working capital, infrastructure development, to enable entrepreneurial activity. • Expansion to more commodities with commercial value. • Greater focus on quality maintenance, processing, and standardisation of the products to achieve higher price realisation. • Support in increasing the turnover and net profit margin to make the FPOs self-reliant and reduce their dependency on external support.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH WOMEN-LED ACTION		
<p>Extension service- Access to information, training, skills, resources, services for CSA Adoption (Pre-production, Production, Post-production)</p>	<p>Adoption Drivers and Decision-making Dynamics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are comfortable asking questions in female-led training sessions. • Adoption of different practices and technologies is higher when there is peer validation, proof of success, and support through resources. • Women have a higher risk-taking aptitude, but a limited decision-making scope. • Men value yield; women value stability. • Women value health, time-saving and cost-saving adoption practices. • Women adopt organic/CSA when visible economic benefit and market assurance exist. • Need for market linkages for CSA produce. <p>Gendered Participation Patterns in Learning Spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender segregated participation is influenced by crop and the value-chain node (for market production crops, such as Groundnut=Men; For HH consumption crops such as Millets=Women). • Male participants' attendance and their engagement are higher than those of females in technical sessions related to pesticides, seeds, the market, etc. • Men initiate topics, women follow; sometimes men encourage women. 	<p>Learning Approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In parallel with lead-farmer models, explore horizontal knowledge-sharing models (peer-to-peer mentoring and replication, Farmer Field School - FFS) that promote group sharing and learning processes, both within and between groups. • Support backyard demonstration plots and technical sessions led by women. • Expand women-only CSA cohorts, especially in areas with low participation of women, and gradually integrate mixed groups to encourage joint decision-making. • Use of Decentralised Renewable Energy (DRE) technology through the demonstrations. <p>Linking CSA, Market, and Women's Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSA is integrated with business incentives. Pair each FFS with climate-market pilots (solar drying, etc.). • Institutional tie-ups and convergence. • Frame the development of women's knowledge and skills within broader goals centring on achieving the goals which the family considers essential (e.g., health, nutrition, and education). • Ensure direct links between women's contributions and their entitlements by building associations between women's improved economic contributions (income, food and nutrition security) and their rights to equitable benefits, voice in expenditure decisions, and inclusion of their own dreams and aspirations.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
EMPOWERING FARMER COLLECTIVES AND EQUITABLE GOVERNANCE		
Drudgery reduction	Benefit of Tools and Technologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks performed by women (such as sowing, weeding, and harvesting) become less time-intensive with tool adoption. • Women adopt technology when it reduces time/effort. • Access to improved tools reduces dependence on family members or hired labour in areas where there's a labour shortage, migration, high wage rate, peak agricultural season. • models. 	Demonstration and Institutional Linkages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine demonstrations with regular follow-up visits to support adoption and troubleshooting. • Establish linkages with relevant government schemes to enable access to subsidies, services, and support for accessing women-friendly farm machinery. • Set up Custom Hiring Centres to improve access to machinery and reduce individual investment risks. Targeting Drudgery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify tools and build service models focused on drudgery reduction for both on-farm and off-farm activities. • Identify and promote women-friendly farm machinery, particularly for activities with high participation by women, and ensure they fall within an affordable price range so women can purchase them.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
CSA enterprise	<p>Exposure and Confidence Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Seeing is believing’-practical exposure to successful business ventures accelerates adoption and confidence. • Women respond strongly to a combination of hands-on training and exposure visits. • Peer bonds strengthen through shared exposure, leading to greater trust in collective action. • Confidence shifts when women witness successful women-led agribusinesses, reinforcing the belief that ‘we can run units ourselves’. <p>Gender Norms Influencing Enterprise Choices and Capital Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-capital and home-based enterprises are more widely accepted among women. • Value-addition activities remain largely untapped without timely access to capital with feasible terms and conditions for repayment. • Women avoid negotiations due to the prevailing norm that ‘men handle money’ • Men tend to be supportive when it doesn’t disrupt women’s household roles and responsibilities 	<p>Agribusiness Model Development and System Linkages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote ‘Hub-and-Spoke Models’ between SHG/FIG-based enterprises and FPOs, along with the possibility of cluster-based branding. • Position FPOs as aggregators and providers of credit or capital support for smaller collective enterprises. • To market chemical-free or organic products, support FPO to meet regulatory, traceability and quality requirements through certifications, licenses and compliance. This will enable FPOs to move beyond local or informal sales and engage with buyers- such as organised retail, government procurement platforms, food processing companies, and export-oriented buyers- who can offer better prices, assured demand, and longer-term contracts. • Build enterprises based on hyperlocal demand and explore supply linkages at the hyperlocal level. • Link seed banks to women’s entrepreneurship (seed sales), identify pathways for bringing women into formal seed systems, and seed licenses for FPO/Collective. • Recognise and leverage women as an important consumer segment to expand and diversify market avenues by considering their preferences for product forms. E.g., some women prefer stable, resilient seed varieties rather than high-investment inputs.

Key issues/ areas	Emerging Patterns	Key Considerations for Learning
Risk mitigation Digital agro-advisory	Gender Norms and Climate Change's Influence Over Decision-making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone access and the digital literacy gap limit women's direct access to information. • Filtering of messages by men occurs when phones are shared. • Climate variability is altering cropping practices; this year's higher rainfall is shifting a significant number of millet farmers towards paddy cultivation in AP and Odisha. 	Risk Mitigation through Financial Resilience and Advisories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio format advisories in the vernacular are to be promoted. • Advisory on crop-loss risk warning should be combined with a timely follow-up. • Combine scientific forecasts with indigenous knowledge. • Raise awareness about climate risk mitigation efforts, such as crop insurance. • Increase convergence with social welfare schemes to reduce 'Out-Of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE)' and build resilience.





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