



Women farmers' land rights and access to entitlements in India

Gaps and Promising Solutions

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Study overview



1. **AGF GP initiated a study in 2020 to better understand legal and institutional frameworks governing access to farmland and agricultural entitlements in India**
2. **Key outputs**
 - a. **National background report** (draft at <https://centerforland.org/land-policy-reform/>)
 - b. **7 case studies of pilots to increase poor farmers' access to land, agric. benefits** (6 states - **Annex**)
 - c. 3 state level reports (Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha)
 - d. 2 project level analyses (SMART in Odisha and NRETP in Odisha)
 - e. Legal analysis of the Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act
 - f. Policy and discussion notes on key cross-cutting themes, including strengthening women's land rights

Women farmers in India continue to face gender gaps in productivity and land access



1. **Gender productivity gap of 7% (Mahajan 2018) based on national data (IHDS)**
2. **Women's limited land access (despite progressive laws) likely contributes**
 - a. Women often do not claim their legal inheritance rights due to poor awareness and social customs
 - b. Women face social and financial barriers to purchasing land independently, despite govt incentives
 - c. Joint titling largely limited to government land allocation beneficiaries
 - d. Landowners often hesitant to lease land to women farmers due to their perceived low capacity
3. **Women are not recognized as farmers, in part due to lack of land ownership**
 - a. Constitute **65 percent of all agricultural workers** but only **14 percent of all formal landholders**
 - b. Caveat: Most states **do not record landowner's gender in the land records**

Women are likely excluded from agriculture entitlements linked to land records



- 1. Most govt agriculture schemes use land ownership records to identify farmers**
 - a. Cash transfers (incl. PM KISAN)
 - b. Subsidized crop loans and crop insurance
 - c. Farmer Producer Organization officer registration
 - d. Decentralized public grain procurement in some states
- 2. Women (and tenant) farmers are thus often ineligible for these entitlements**
 - a. Study used program eligibility criteria and publicly available data to estimate tenants' exclusion
 - i. Estimated 36% of tenant farmers (i.e. those that own no land) would be excluded from PM KISAN
 - b. Not possible to quantify women's exclusion due to lack of gender-disaggregated land records

Four key strategies to enhance women farmers' rights and benefits in case studies



1. Increase land access by supporting land purchase and group land leasing
2. Formally record informal land rights through government land allocation
3. Issue alternative documentation for existing customary rights
4. Provide legal aid and increase awareness of laws and entitlements

1. Increase land access



1. Subsidize land purchases by poor women farmers (AP)

- a. WB project provided financing and technical assistance to help landless poor women purchase land
- b. Impacts:
 - i. Increased number of landowners and average landholding size
 - ii. Increased incomes by 30-75% and shifted primary income source from wages to cultivation
 - iii. Increased food security and decreased seasonal migration
 - iv. Enhanced women's social status as farmers and their status within the family

2. Support women's SHGs to lease land for collective farming (AP, KE, OD, WB)

- a. CBOs/NGOs helped SHGs identify available fallow land, negotiate leases with owners/village, and register eligible (landowning) member farmers to access agricultural entitlements and extension
- b. Impacts
 - i. Increased productivity, farm income (up to 4x national avg in Odisha), high value crop adoption

2. Formally record existing land rights



1. **Support landless families to formalize their informal rights and claim available government land, including through joint titles (OD)**
 - a. Govt. project and NGO provided technical facilitation to identify landless families using government land informally who could receive formal rights under existing govt. programs
 - b. Impacts:
 - i. Increased access to agricultural and homestead land
 - ii. Increased productivity (on average 140%), household income (18x) and high value crop adoption
 - iii. Joint land titles enabled women to access govt. agriculture schemes and improved confidence

3. Issue alternative documentation



1. Issue customary land tenure certificates in customary areas (MN)

- a. CBOs and NGOs worked with customary authorities to use low-cost digital technologies to map customary lands and issue informal land tenure certificates, including jointly for husbands and wives
- b. Impacts:
 - i. Similar certificates have been used to access government agriculture schemes and compensation in case of government land acquisition
 - ii. Pilot created further demand from farmers for certificates to strengthen individual tenure security

4. Provide legal aid/increase legal awareness



1. Build awareness and support women to claim their lawful inheritance (GU, WB)

- a. NGOs trained women on land laws, trained women paralegals to help women file inheritance claims, hosted legal clinics, linked women farmers with agricultural entitlements/services
- b. Impacts:
 - i. Increased women's legal awareness, access to agricultural entitlements, credit, extension, markets
 - ii. Reduced time and cost of securing land by 10-15x to USD 14/person on average (GJ)

2. Support women to resolve disputes and access public land devt. support (AP, OD)

- a. NGOs trained local paralegals and community surveyors to inventory land rights of poor families and help them resolve land disputes, enabled them to access public land development support and credit
- b. Impacts:
 - i. Increased land, credit access; increased HH farm production 140% (OD); benefit cost ratio 9.24 (AP)

Key messages



- 1. Women farmers face gaps in access to land and farmer entitlements in India**
- 2. WB projects can leverage tested strategies for closing these gaps**
 - a. Increase land access by supporting land purchase and leasing
 - b. Formally record informal land rights through government land allocation
 - c. Issue alternative documentation for existing (informal, unrecorded) rights
 - d. Provide legal aid/increase awareness of laws and entitlements
- 3. Increasing women farmers' access to land and entitlements has positive impacts**
 - a. Productivity
 - b. Income
 - c. Food security
 - d. Empowerment

Thank you



Questions?

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Watch this space:

<https://collaboration.worldbank.org/content/sites/collaboration-for-development/en/groups/south-asia-agriculture-policy.html>

ANNEX

7 case studies highlight ways to strengthen women's land rights, access to entitlements



1. Kudumbashree initiative to **lease land to women's self-help groups** (Kerala, KE)
2. Indira Kranti Pratham (IKP)-Bhoomi program under Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty to **enhance access to land by poor households** (Andhra Pradesh, AP)
3. Landesa and Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Program Partnership to **enhance women's land rights over homestead and agricultural land** (Odisha, OD)
4. Landesa and West Bengal State Rural Livelihoods Mission Partnership to **provide legal training and assistance to help women register land in their names** (WB)
5. Working Group of Women for Land Ownership (WGWLO) program to **enhance the agricultural land rights of women** (Gujarat, GU)
6. Rongmei Naga Baptist Association (RNBA) and NRMCC Center for Land Governance pilot to **assist traditional leaders to document farmers' land rights** (Manipur, MN)
7. Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) program to **help women's groups access and farm leased-in land** (Odisha, OD)