

## Dialogue Report

# Women's Agency and Gender Equity in Food Systems



An Independent UN Sustainable Food Systems Summit Dialogue: Asia and Africa

### Organisers



Norwich Institute  
Sustainable Development



TIGR<sup>2</sup>ESS  
Transforming India's Green Revolution  
by Research and Empowerment for  
Sustainable food Supplies



**Date:**

10 June 2021, 14:00 - 16:00 IST

**Convened by:**

Norwich Institute for Sustainable Development (NISD)

Bharat Krishak Samaj

Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)

TIGR2ESS.

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## Acknowledgements

*The following are the words of Mr. Vijay Kumar Thallam, retired officer of the Indian Administrative Service (I.A.S.), who is Advisor to the Andhra Pradesh Government on Agriculture and Co-Vice Chairman of RySS. Mr Thallam is also the Vice-Chair on Production to the UNFSS Champions Network*

I commend the energy and preparedness of the participants of this Dialogue and thank them for their insightful contributions. I believe that the outcomes from the Dialogue will be valuable inputs for the UNFSS. My main takeaway from the discussion is the importance of involving marginalised urban women in the nutrition and food systems discourse and recognising the hidden capacities of women.

I express my hope that the group will continue to connect and engage over these issues in future. Thank you to the speakers for sharing their informative and inspiring work, along with the Facilitators and Rapporteurs who played a crucial role in making the Dialogue a success. I would like to conclude by expressing my conviction that building women's agency is equivalent to saving humanity. It is an end in itself, but also the only way to achieve the SDGs.

Thank you to those that took part, and to those reading this report.

On behalf of the organisers,

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of International  
Development, UEA;  
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**Ajay Vir Jakhar,**  
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Bharat Krishak Samaj

## Introduction

A broad understanding is emerging that our food systems are profoundly inequitable and play a major role in environmental degradation. The pandemic and its devastating impacts have brought these vulnerabilities into sharper focus. Yet, food systems also have immense potential to improve the health of our bodies, our economies and our environment. For this, it is vital to transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food.

In pursuit of this goal, the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 (UNFSS) is being convened as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Guided by five Action Tracks, the Summit will bring together key players from science, business, policy, healthcare and academia, as well as farmers, indigenous people, consumer groups, environmental activists, and other stakeholders. Food Systems Summit Dialogues are an important instrument for the same and are a unique opportunity to bring the perspectives of underrepresented food systems actors into the Summit process, helping guide individual and collective action towards a future of food that is sustainable, equitable and secure.

Women play vital roles within food systems, but are hardly recognised as crucial partners in making them resilient and sustainable. In this dialogue, we sought to explore the ways in which the concept of women's

agency (including empowerment) can be operationalised in food systems, in both policy and practice. Women's agency relates to the Gender lever of change that cuts across all Action Tracks.

Investing in women's agency is now urgent, as despite considerable global awareness and progress on gender equality over the past four decades, several challenges remain to the exercise of women's agency in food systems. These include the invisibility and devaluation of women's work, a lack of entitlements and unequal access to assets, lack of recognition of women's knowledges, low levels of leadership and representation in decision-making bodies, structural inequities, and a lack of investment in building women's collective agency for inclusion and equity.

Several ideas have emerged in the Wave 1 solutions of the UNFSS: around promoting women-led enterprises to grow and sell nutritious, neglected

crops ([AT1, 10, p. 31](#)), launch a new alliance to end anaemia ([AT1, 15, p. 44](#)), promote breastfeeding ([AT2, 9, p. 27](#)), women's empowerment ([AT2, 17, p. 50](#); [AT4, 19, p. 66](#)), strengthening labour regulations by placing people's dignity and rights at the centre ([AT4, 1, p. 5](#)), securing land tenure rights ([AT4, 4, p. 14](#)), farmer field and business schools ([AT4, 17, p. 56](#)), amongst others.

Based on these solutions, the need to rebalance agency amongst different stakeholders has emerged as an action area for radically transforming food systems. Key elements include social dialogue, mobilizing civil society, integrating gender transformative approaches in food systems and measurement of women's empowerment. Through this dialogue, we sought to clarify the theory of change, while also identifying strategies to strengthen and support women's agency in research, policy and practice.



## Method

The Dialogue was co-convened by the following organisations:

### Norwich Institute for Sustainable Development

The Norwich Institute for Sustainable Development (NISD), UK, is a world-leading research institute set up to foster sustainable development through transdisciplinary research and innovation. Based on the Norwich Research Park, the NISD unites researchers working across environmental, plant, microbial, food, health and social sciences.

### Rythu Sadhikara Samstha

Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) is a not-for-profit organization set up by the Andhra Pradesh government to work towards farmer's empowerment. It has pioneered the implementation of Community Managed Natural Farming (CMNF) across Andhra Pradesh through farmer-to-farmer dissemination and a network of Community Resource Persons (CRPs).

### Bharat Krishak Samaj

Bharat Krishak Samaj was founded as a non-political, non-sectarian association of agriculture producers on 3 April 1955. It advocates for farmer's welfare and prosperity, while providing a platform to discuss agrarian problems and their solutions, through meetings, conferences, and seminars.

### TIGR2ESS

TIGR2ESS (Transforming India's Green Revolution by Research and Empowerment for Sustainable food Supplies) is a Global Challenges Research Fund project, led by the University of Cambridge, UK. It aims to define a sustainable 'evergreen' revolution for India through research collaboration, exchanges and enhancing female empowerment.

## Structure and themes

The structure of the Dialogue closely followed the recommendations given in the Food Systems Dialogue Gateway. The Dialogue was organised around five major themes, which were discussed in smaller groups of 10-15 participants.

### Theme 1

#### Understanding Women's Agency in the Food System Discourse

The HLPE global narrative report 2030 (2020: p 7-8) emphasized that "agency" and "sustainability" are vital dimensions of food security that flow directly from the principle of the right to food, and while not new, they need to be elevated within conceptual and policy frameworks. Despite the recognition of women's central role in food production, the purchase and sale of food, processing, and ensuring adequate household consumption,

women confront a host of structural barriers that limit their agency within food systems. They have few rights to resources, including land, money and labour, are underrepresented in decision-making bodies within food systems and their priorities are hardly addressed. The critical role of women within food systems, including those in invisibilised communities such as migratory pastoralists, or indigenous groups, needs visibility.

### Theme 2

#### Building and investing in women's collective agency

Agency for poor rural women involves challenging multiple power hierarchies from the household and community levels to labour and product markets as well as state policies. Changing power relations including social norms requires collective action. Alongside traditional forms of sharing labour and resources, new models for exercising collective agency are emerging – ranging from self-help groups and cooperatives to producer organisations and social

entrepreneurship. However, given the diversity of women and contexts, while some form of organising is essential to guard against exploitation and ensure that rights are not violated, this process needs to be intentional and requires investment. Legal and policy frameworks that provide space for participation and enable agency are important, but these need to be operationalised through a process of social mobilisation, dialogue and training.

**Theme 3**  
**Strengthening the interface between women's knowledges and science**

Traditional crops, often nutritious, but considered low value and low status, generally lie in women's domain. Women possess deep knowledge of these crops, their growing conditions, seed selection, preservation and processing. Scientific research over the past few decades has engaged with many of these 'neglected' crops, whether millets or tubers and roots, selecting and developing traits to make them more resilient and profitable. Yet adoption has been slow, mainly due to the lack of engagement with both women's priorities and resource constraints. Where a mutually respectful interface between women farmers and science has been facilitated, however, such as through ICRISAT's Smart food campaign (AT1, 10), or peer learning through CARE's Farmer Field and Business Schools (AT4, 17), women's equitable participation has ensured the strengthening of agricultural knowledge and productivity enhancement.

**Theme 4**  
**Alternate pathways to improving nutritional outcomes**

A key challenge to improving nutritional outcomes, especially overcoming micronutrient deficiencies, is the lack of access to and affordability of diverse and healthy diets to a large majority of people (SOFI, 2020). Women's empowerment and control over the food system is central to addressing this problem. Entry-points can vary from breastfeeding to growing homestead gardens, the diversification of cropping systems on small plots of land, or the cultivation of naturally biofortified plants. All these require dialogue and critical questioning of culturally and contextually specific nutritional knowledge, alongside strategies that realign consumption practices to make diets more nutritious.

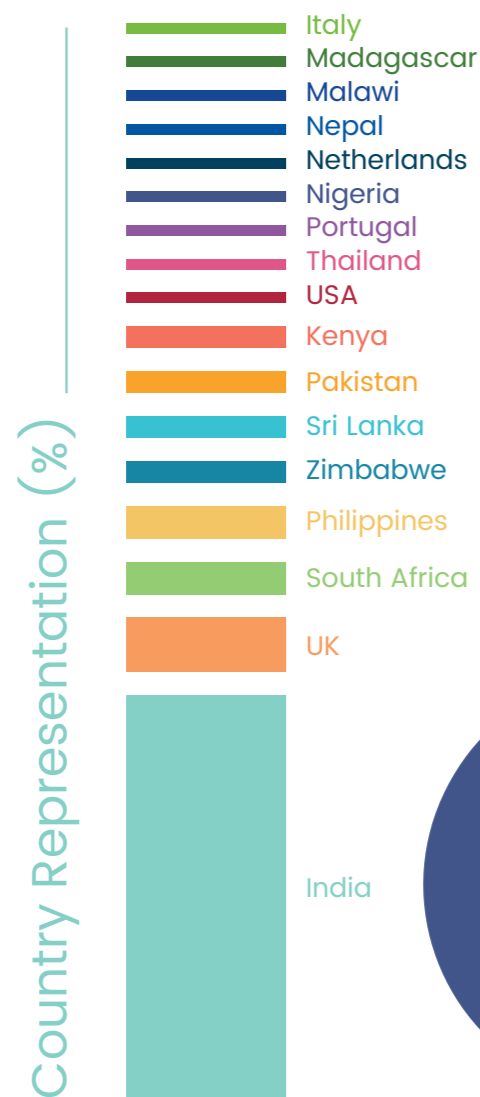
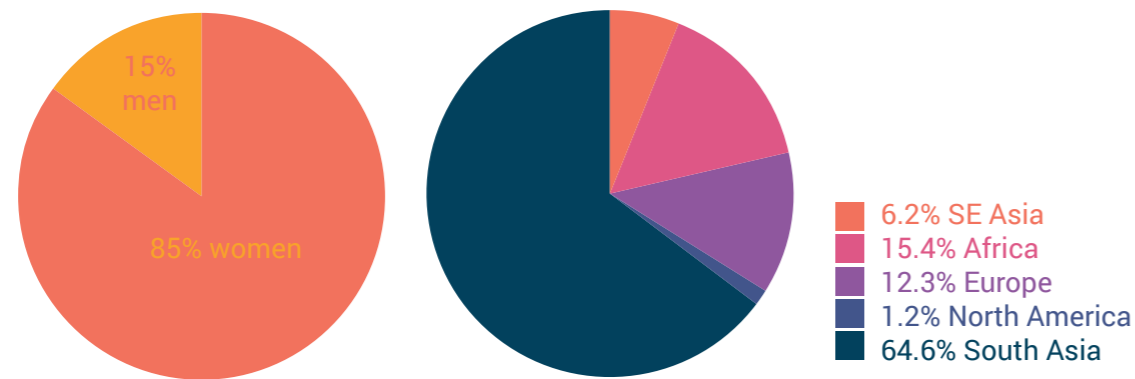


**Theme 5**  
**Rights, Entitlements and Representation**

Amartya Sen (1981) in his analysis of poverty and famines pointed to the importance of entitlements – in terms of ownership, exchange and legal rights – to ensure food security. Globally, women lack land rights, and linked to this, rights to water, credit, labour, extension services, membership in cooperatives and decision-making bodies. This needs to be changed. Laws and policies need to guarantee women's human rights, ensuring equal entitlements to resources as male 'farmers', and recognize women's paid and unpaid, productive, domestic and care labour, central to nutritional outcomes. Laws however need to be enforced to achieve gender equity and this requires not just recognition of women's contributions to food systems, but equally representation in decision-making bodies at all levels, whether related to policy-making, service provision, agricultural research or producer organisations.

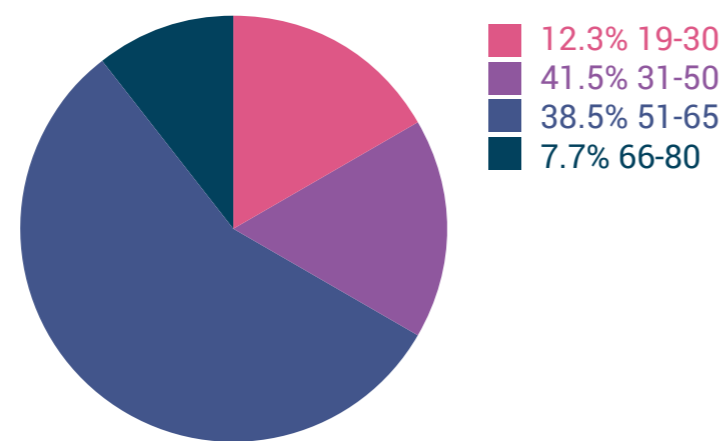
## Participant Information

The event had 91 registrations overall. Approximately 65 participants attended the Dialogue on 10 June. This number excludes the Guest Speaker, Conveners, Facilitators, technical team and note-takers (22 members in all).

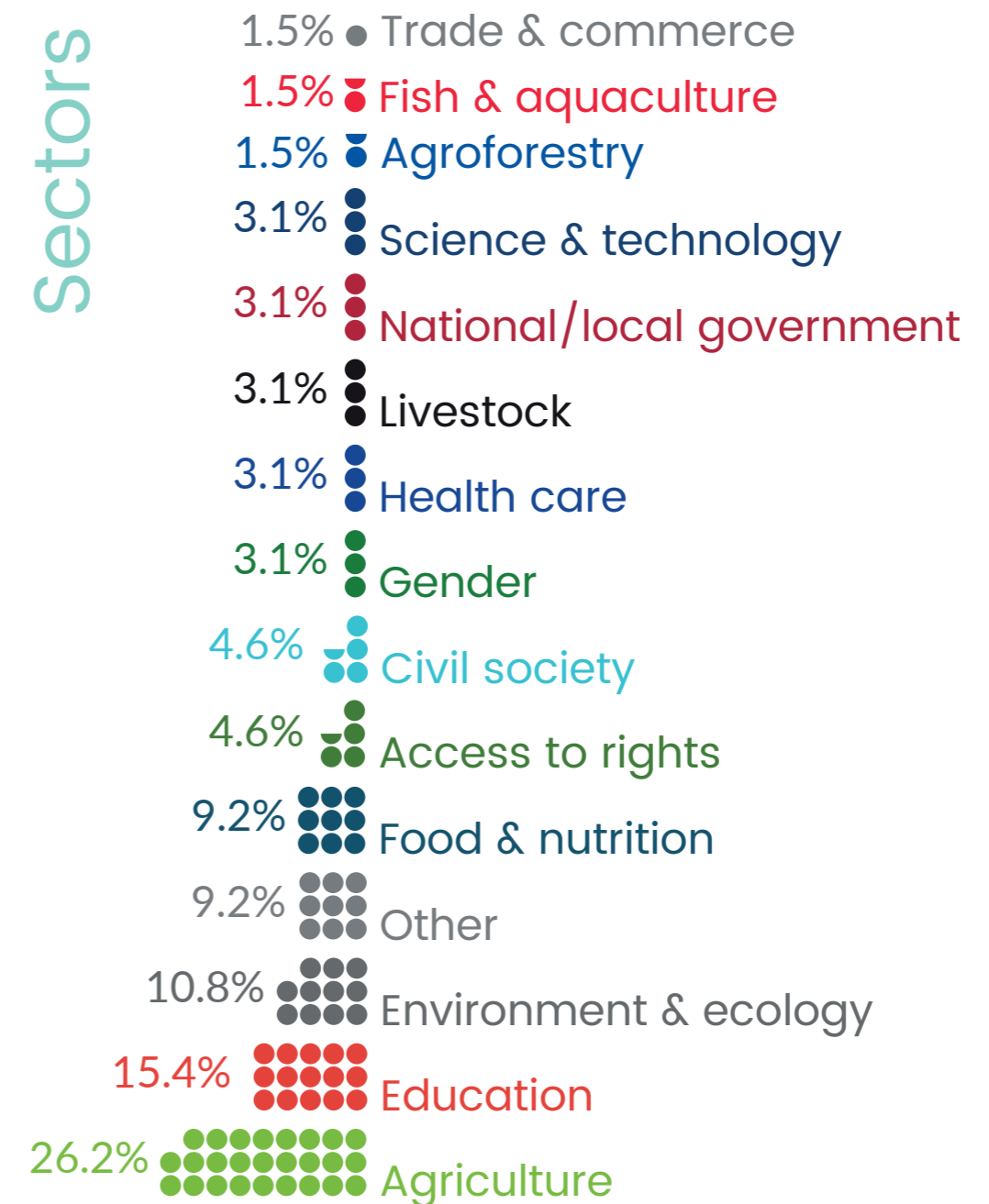


based on the attendee data, there was participation from 17 countries at the Dialogue. India was the most well represented country (over 50%), followed by the UK. Although the Dialogue's geographical scope was Asia and Africa, there were also participants from Europe and North America.

Most of the participants fell within the age ranges of 31-50 and 51-65. There were no participants in the age ranges of 0-18 or 80+.



## Sectors



In terms of gender, approximately 85% of respondents identified as female while only 15% identified as male. The sector diversity was quite high, with a large percentage of respondents working in the area of Agriculture, followed by Education and Environment & Ecology.

The largest stakeholder group among the respondents was Science and Academia, followed by International NGOs and Local NGOs.

## Dialogue Overview

The Dialogue began with opening remarks by Dr. Nitya Rao, Director of the Norwich Institute of Sustainable Development and Professor of Gender and Development at the University of East Anglia.

Dr. Rao welcomed the participants and thanked them for joining the Dialogue. She proceeded to give a conceptual overview of women's agency, drawing from the HLPE's Global Narrative Report 2020, which examines the impacts of various cultural, biophysical, demographic and socio-political factors on food systems, and its related aspects of nutrition, food production and sustainability. The report expands the dimensions of food security to agency, stability, sustainability, access, availability and utilisation, which flow directly from the right to food.

Agency goes beyond access to material resources to include empowerment, which is the ability to take actions to improve one's own wellbeing and participate in society. For food systems, women's agency signifies their autonomy over what kind of food is produced, processed, distributed, and consumed. It is

important to remember that women are not homogenous (intersectional approach) and their agency shifts in relation to social roles, is embedded in dynamic social power relations, situated in particular cultural and resource contexts and shaped by interactions of norms across institutional levels.

A recent study has found that the climate crisis dampens women's agency and increases poverty, but labour markets can also be constraints to the exercise of women's agency. Due to the climate crisis, household structures, although still patriarchal, are becoming more supportive of women's agency. The most important factors to the exercise of agency are social capital and social protection systems of the state.

Four areas that need to be strengthened to create an enabling environment for women's agency, which can help achieve the SDGs, include reciprocity in social relations, recognition of women's rights and contributions, redistribution of resources and representation of women's voices. Dialogues such as this can help understand how agency

can be operationalised in policy and practice.

Dr. Rao then invited Dr. Shakuntala Thilsted, Global Lead for Nutrition and Public Health at WorldFish and member of the HLPE. Dr. Thilsted is also the Vice-Chair for Action Track 4: Advance Equitable Livelihoods at the UNFSS. Recently, she was awarded the 2021 World Food Prize for her research insights and landmark innovations in developing holistic, nutrition-sensitive approaches to aquatic food systems.

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*Dialogues such as this can help understand how agency can be operationalised in policy and practice.*

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Dr. Thilsted spoke of the importance of women's empowerment and agency in mitigating food and nutritional insecurity. She gave examples of successful initiatives that she has helmed, such as the pond polyculture programme in Bangladesh. Earlier, women were only engaged in feeding the fish, but now they receive training, have access to credit and can participate in all parts of the production system. The programme also works with men so that they can understand and support the changing role of women. The *mola* carp nets, which sit permanently across the pond and can be pulled up using pulleys, have given women control over when they want to harvest and consume the fish. Many women are also engaging in sun-drying and smoking fish across coastal regions. With the use of solar tents, especially in Zambia, more fish

can be dried in less time and with less effort, ensuring high quality and high price in the market.

Dried fish is also used to make fish powder, which is used in school feeding and supplementary feeding programmes for children in Odisha. Here, the women have been given the right to use village tanks for pisciculture, this has spread quickly across Odisha and is now being scaled to other states in India.

Dr. Thilsted has also been involved in reviving traditional fish recipes in Zambia and Timor-Leste, through local language cookbooks. She also emphasised the importance of working on the field for young researchers. They should engage with the community in identifying not just their problems but also solutions. Dr. Thilsted saw her role as bringing the voices of women to the Food Systems Summit, which should be used to push for change and relevant solutions.

Dr. Rao then introduced Dr. Susan Kaaria, Senior Gender Officer in the Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division (ESP) of the FAO. She is the Gender lever head for Action Track 2.

Dr. Kaaria gave a brief overview of the gender lever structure and solution propositions that address gender inequality. The UNFSS has a Gender lever of change, headed by Jemimah Njuki, the Director for Africa at IFPRI, and represented by a Gender lever head for each of the five Action Tracks. The Gender lever aims to ensure that the solutions of each Action Track respond to the needs and realities of women, to identify problems that require standalone solutions, mobilise women's voices across the world



through dialogues and to elevate gender as a priority issue in the entire UNFSS process.

Dr. Kaaria highlighted the gender equity solutions in the Wave 1 propositions, including promoting women-led enterprises to grow and sell nutritious and neglected crops (AT1), women's economic empowerment for sustainable and healthy consumption patterns (AT2), integrating gender transformative approaches for equity and justice in food systems (AT4) and women's leadership in resilience programmes and policies (AT5). In Wave 2, the solutions included a Global Food Systems 20/20 initiative on creating an index of gender equality for global, national, regional organisations (AT1), a Global Data Hub for sex-disaggregated data to enable transformative food systems policies, women's rights to tenure, closing the gender gap in financial inclusion (AT4), gender responsive food systems policies and facilitating women innovators to develop solutions to food loss and waste and promote the circular economy (AT2).

Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar, the Chairman of Bharat Krishak Samaj and Vice-Chair of Action Track 2 on the Shift to Sustainable Consumption Patterns. Mr. Jakhar outlined the agenda for the day and the format of the Breakout Room discussions. He then introduced the facilitators for each Discussion Group. The participants were then allotted to a Breakout Room of their preference for a 50-minute discussion session.



1

### Discussion groups

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S AGENCY IN THE FOOD SYSTEMS DISCOURSE

2

BUILDING AND INVESTING IN WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE AGENCY

3

STRENGTHENING THE INTERFACE BETWEEN WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGES AND SCIENCE

4

ALTERNATE PATHWAYS TO IMPROVING NUTRITIONAL OUTCOMES

5

RIGHTS, ENTITLEMENTS AND REPRESENTATION



## Main Findings

The major recommendations from the Dialogue are detailed below:

1

**Collective Agency:** Collectivisation and mobilisation of women around their roles within food systems (as farmers, consumers, food systems workers) can help them exercise their agency even in the face of structural barriers and constraints. Cooperatives and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been successful models of collectivisation in the Global South and can be leveraged and scaled up further. In urban contexts, mobilisation of women around specific identities (migrant workers, informal workers, sex workers) should take place together with building alliances across larger interest groups (such as labour unions).

2

**Social Entrepreneurship:** Encouraging and facilitating mission-driven social enterprises that employ gender transformative approaches can enable women's economic empowerment and financial independence. A key factor in building successful and sustainable social enterprises is social capital, which includes networks, skills, advisory support, finance and market linkages.



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3

**Access to Resources and Entitlements:** To exercise agency, women need to have unmediated access as individual citizens to resources such as land, water, commons, housing, finance, knowledge, extension and technology. Policies need to ensure that women's rights to these entitlements are substantive and not merely nominal.

4

**Capacity and skill building:** Women in rural communities in the Global South often lack access to the resources required to build on their skills and capabilities. Capacity building of women in digital and financial literacy, marketing, non-traditional skills and leadership needs to be supported by governments, civil society and researchers. Women should also be enabled to participate in such activities, by being provided childcare services, transport, and doorstep extension, which can mitigate some of their constraints (such as time poverty, domestic responsibilities, etc.)

5

**Challenging Social Norms:** Women's agency in food systems is constrained by harmful social and cultural norms. These can affect their health, physical safety, nutrition, employment and reproductive autonomy. To effectively challenge these norms and social structures, we need to harness the power of women's collectives as well as sensitise men. The Gulabi Gang (Pink Saree Brigade) is an example of a women's collective that fights violence against women in rural Uttar Pradesh, India.

6

**Involve, Engage and Sensitise Men:** There is an urgent need to engage men in women's empowerment at all levels, from the household to the community to the institutional level. This can be done through gender sensitisation and training. Involving men in gender transformative partnerships and social enterprises can even improve gender relations and reduce the domestic burden on women, as seen in the work of the Altertrade Philippines Foundation. Additionally, there is a need to facilitate male allies in research and policy who can champion and mainstream gender issues.

7

**Representation of Women:** Increasing the representation of women in institutional structures, policymaking, finance, scientific research, and grassroots leadership is essential to develop their agency. Women need to be represented at all levels of leadership and policymaking, as men lack the lived experience of being a woman and can lack empathy for their challenges. It is important to go beyond tokenistic representation and incorporate intersectional concerns in women's representation. Research has shown that women leaders often support and enable other women to build and exercise their agency.

8

**Gender-sensitive Research and Policy:** A gender lens needs to be incorporated in research, data and policy. Research agendas and methodologies need to be more gender-specific, participatory and value women's knowledge. Gender-disaggregated data is essential for understanding women's challenges and can contribute to gender-sensitive policymaking that mainstreams women's concerns.



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## Discussion Group 1

### Understanding Women's Agency in the Food Systems Discourse

Facilitator - Alejandra Safa, Gender and Value Chain expert consultant at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

#### The questions that were addressed in the discussion include:

1. How might we further elaborate and complement the theory of change between women's agency and the transition to a more sustainable and equitable food system, contributing to SDG2?
2. What are some of the major roadblocks to developing women's agency in Africa and Asia (such as poverty, lack of resources, community structures, or the lack of recognition of women's unpaid domestic and care work)?
3. What kinds of policies can create an enabling environment for women's agency, especially in farming and allied systems, without reinforcing existing gender divisions of labour and rights?
4. Are there any successful ground-level examples/experiences of strategies that have enhanced women's agency and consequently ensured both nutrition and livelihood outcomes.

#### Role of Women's Agency in the Food System

The session began with discussing the role of women's agency in the discourse around food systems. Although women play important roles as producers, managers of supply chains and consumers in the food system, they face structural barriers that limit their agency. It

was acknowledged that women as producers often fall in the category of the poorly regulated informal sector. Women are more susceptible to domestic violence and malnutrition, even though they are major contributors towards food production.

## Challenges to Women's Agency in Food Systems:

- **Lack of Access to Entitlements:** Women in developing countries, especially those in rural areas, lack access to their entitlements for resources such as land, technology, finance, housing, etc. This prevents them from being able to exercise agency. For example, Punjab University conducted a study on women entrepreneurs, where they found the basic hurdle for women was financing. Women very rarely have access to entitlements as individual citizens, unmediated through their family or the head of the household. Although male outmigration from the rural areas is causing the feminisation of agriculture, with women undertaking most of the agricultural labour, access to resources, especially technology, remains a constraint. These technologies should be co-designed with women farmers to cater to their needs.
- **Social and Cultural Norms:** Social norms that reinforce gender inequality, and therefore constrain the exercise of women's agency, need to be addressed in women's empowerment. Some of the discourse around women's agency has been 'domesticated' and does not actively challenge patriarchal social structures. This may have adverse impacts on not just agency, but also health and nutrition. For example, in a study conducted among tribal women in Kandhamal district of Odisha, certain social taboos and norms regarding foods that can/cannot be eaten, especially during pregnancy, have long-term impacts on their nutrition. Additionally, social norms that devalue or fail to recognise the unpaid care and non-care work of women also impede their economic empowerment.
- **Violence against Women:** Women across the world face the threat of violence at home, during transit and at the workplace. This sustained fear of violence stifles their agency and limits their ability to take independent decisions or actions. It is important to create a safe environment for women to flourish. The prevalent social structures that are facilitating violence should be challenged by leveraging social communities or structures that safeguard women's rights.
- **Lack of Representation in Finance and Policy:** The lack of women in finance and leadership positions is a major hurdle for empowering women at the grassroots level. According to studies conducted by Punjab University, pitching ideas, networking and financing are the major challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. On the other hand, women in finance are more likely to finance women-led businesses than are male financiers. Thus, women-to-women financing and networks can be invaluable for empowering women through

entrepreneurship. For example, the Fund of Funds policy initiative of the Government of India, which provides financial support to nascent MSMEs by encouraging investment from venture capital or private equity. This scheme can be tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs. Similarly, women need to be represented at all levels of leadership and policymaking, from the village/community level to the district, state and national government. The lack of women at these levels to champion the cause of developing women's agency affects policymaking, as men do not have the lived experience of being a woman and can lack empathy for their challenges.

- **Conflict between Interests of Men and Women:** One of the participants spoke of the experience of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme in the Gujarat state of India. While many men are large farmers who are primarily interested in commercial production, women farmers have different concerns, such as nutrition and sustainability, which is becoming especially urgent due to the decreasing availability of water and soil fertility. Thus, it becomes difficult for the community to decide how much of their production should be commercial and how much should be for home consumption. This conflict prevents women from exercising their agency in deciding what and how to produce.





## Enablers of Women's Agency:

- **Social Enterprises:** Many participants pointed out that social enterprises are enablers of women's economic empowerment and financial independence. One of the participants stressed that it is not necessary for these enterprises to be women-only, as long as they are mission driven, generate income for women and employ gender transformative approaches. For example, the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia has built social enterprises and transformational partnerships for women's economic empowerment in agricultural value chains across four countries in South Asia.
- **Collectivisation and Social Capital:** The experience of the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation in facilitating social enterprises and collectives among women farmers has shown that nurturing social capital is key to their success. While it is relatively easy to launch a social enterprise or collective, it is difficult to continue and extend it across the value chain. While most projects have a time frame of 2-3 years, women need financial and advisory support over longer periods to build their agency and take ownership of their business/collective.
- **Capacity and Skill Building:** Women in rural areas also lack resources to enhance and build their capacities, which is essential to the development of agency. For example, the success of the Odisha Millets Mission in India was facilitated by the women themselves, who were trained in millets production, processing, marketing and preparing for consumption. The women developed their skills in cooking, packaging, finances and management and gained international exposure through millet stalls set up at large exhibitions such as at the World Hockey Cup. This not only empowered them but also increased the uptake of the scheme in their communities. Thus, skill building of women needs to be supported by the government, civil society and researchers.
- **Working together with Men:** Creating women-only collectives and enterprises are crucial affirmative actions to enhance their agency. However, this approach should be complemented with approaches

that involve both men and women, as the voices of men should also be heard. Many women negotiate and work with their husbands and other male family members in their daily lives. Thus, mixed-gender social enterprises that consciously empower women and employ gender transformative approaches can also be considered. For example, the Altertrade Foundation in the Philippines, which works with agrarian reform beneficiaries, provides gender sensitivity training, institutes the equal pay for equal work policy and ensures equal opportunities for women to participate in training and capacity building, such as by providing childcare services. One of the impacts of this approach was that, during Covid-19, there was no additional domestic burden on women, as men were sharing the household work in the communities empowered by Altertrade.

- **Challenging and Negotiating Social Norms:** Women negotiate with those who play important roles in their daily lives, including men. Thus, there is a need to understand the ways in which women themselves negotiate and how this changes after women's empowerment programmes. These interventions should aim to increase the bargaining power of women, enabling them to negotiate for better conditions in their everyday lives. For example, the Gulabi Gang (Pink Saree Brigade) fights violence against women, land, and corruption in feudal Uttar Pradesh, India. Through the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), many women are taking part in male-dominated agricultural work such as driving tractors and combine harvesters. Even though these women might still engage in domestic work, they have more say over consumption patterns at home. In Haryana, after the 2005 Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act was passed (which made daughters equal to sons as coparceners), rural women gained the confidence to speak up against domestic violence, because of their newly gained property rights. These are expressions of negotiation and manifestations of agency.

## Recommendations

1. Encourage not just women only enterprises, but also mixed gender social enterprises that employ gender transformative approaches. Gender inclusive enterprises facilitate gender sensitisation of men and empower women to negotiate and communicate with the important people in their lives, including men.
2. Increasing the representation of women in leadership positions in finance, policymaking and social enterprises, can help fund and empower other women.
3. Policies focusing on entitlements to land, housing, finance and technology for women should be redrafted to enable women's unmediated access to these resources as independent citizens.
4. Providing access to training in marketing, communication, management and finances to help develop the skills and confidence of women entrepreneurs.
5. Nurturing social capital by providing financial and advisory support to women over long periods of time. This social capital would enable women's enterprises and social collectives to evolve sustainably.
6. The right to life, security and safety need to be ensured for women to flourish and exercise their agency. Social structures and norms that facilitate violence against women need to be challenged by leveraging women's collectives and other community structures.

## Discussion Group 2

### Building and Investing in Women's Collective Agency

Facilitator - Dr. Nitya Rao, Director of the Norwich Institute of Sustainable Development (NISD) and Professor of Gender and Development at the University of East Anglia.

The discussion was guided by the following questions:

- I. Many interventions that seek to operationalise women's agency face backlash from traditional power structures including the extended family, the village council, and even the state. How can this be addressed effectively, by both grassroots organizations and local government institutions?
- II. Most models for building collective agency have been implemented in rural areas. Can these models be used in urban contexts for vulnerable groups of migrant workers, sex workers, transwomen and domestic help? What might be different in urban settings?
- III. What are the key resources required for sustaining women's collective agency?
- IV. Despite the centrality of women's agency to building sustainable food systems, this has not always translated into public/private investments. How can we make developing women's agency a policy priority and direct more funds and resources towards it

## Insights and outcomes

### Women as a Group

Women are not homogenous in terms of identity, access to information, knowledge and vulnerability. Different levels of inequality exist among them ranging from access to means of production to consumption. Models of inclusion are selective and often do not address the diversity of women's needs. Change can only happen when there is more representation and participation of women in institutional structures right from setting of agendas to budgets. For example, FPOs in India often fail to consider the heterogeneity amongst women. This is visible in the formation, function and inclusion of farmers in FPOs. Cotton cooperatives in Mali are another example, where even though women are the backbone of production, there are no women members. Women's mobilisation and collectivisation in farming is very critical.

### Moving Beyond Recognition to Action.

We need a strategic framework for building the capacities of institutions to address the differing needs of diverse women. The lessons we have learned across BRICS countries is that women have hidden capacities that need to be enabled and developed. Women are the gatekeepers of family health; therefore, they often bear the brunt of disease and climate injustice. Policy makers, including large corporate companies, should note that we need women-centered policy-making that actually addresses the specific needs of women.

### Building Women's Collective Agency.

**On building alliances:** Successful women's groups have been able to build alliances across the board. Power mapping can help women recognize the opposition on the ground and simultaneously realize the benefits of collectives. The male-centric model of development is an issue. How are projects being conceptualized? Are more feminist measures considered? Is gender only about women or are there diverse ways of constructing it? These questions have to be addressed.

**On training and capacity building:** Digital literacy, leadership development, training in marketing and similar



measures will help women in organizing, participating in and transforming institutional spaces, building solidarity and strengthening agendas. For example, SEWA has successfully demonstrated a model of collectivisation that can be scaled up. RySS in Andhra Pradesh is another example working on natural farming with 120,000 women SHGs, representing 1.3 million women.

### Challenging prejudices

Educational institutions can help break the androcentric perspective in agriculture. State institutions and corporate agencies should rethink their definition of a 'farmer', many of whom are women. Women also represent the household as a collective unit. We need to deconstruct and decolonize our views on women's collective agency in order to change social norms. There should be changes in the top down decision-making process. Capacity building of women in non-traditional sectors including agricultural marketing should be pursued. For example, currently only 2 to 10% of training via extension services is reaching women farmers. This has to change.

### Urban Collective Agency

**Invisibilities:** The lack of data is a key issue in identifying the challenges faced by specific groups and mobilizing them. It is important to build alliances with larger groups such as labour unions in cities. Migrant women have less access to their own kinship networks and men make decisions on movement- all of which undermine women's agency. Women's choices in shaping consumption and food security are overlooked by state programmes. Unpaid care work and women's work in the informal sector need to be recognized in light of women's collective action and women's rights.

**Strategies:** Inclusion of social movements, mobilizing groups, protesting and pressuring state governments is one way to improve consideration of women's needs at the policy level. A greater understanding of ethnic food preferences across caste, religion, etc. needs to be incorporated into food security programmes. For example, the use of dry fish by the urban poor among the fishing community in Maharashtra. The role of women in food security needs to be acknowledged in state-led



programmes as well as labour movements in urban areas. Proper state support and policy changes are required for scaling up of women led programmes. Kudumbashree in Kerala is an example of a women empowerment and poverty eradication programme, which has demonstrated sustainable scaling up with the help of state support. Increased role of CSR programmes, Akshayapatra etc. are commendable in this sector.

## Key Policy Priorities

**Material Access:** Women require access to forests, land, water, commons and food resources. In the context of Covid-19, women have been able to farm but not adequately in terms of choice of crops, quantity of food produced or profits made from farming activity. Access to finance, markets, non-GMO seeds etc. is needed even for household, communal and smallholder farmers. Livelihoods play a critical role in not only poverty alleviation but also in strengthening institutions such as SHGs. The effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, and lack of control over commons and food choices should be considered.

**Empowerment:** Women need to be supported in building agriculture knowledge, especially indigenous and agro-ecological ways of farming. Data systems need to reflect women's contributions as farmers. Strategies should be devised keeping in mind different categories, such as farming or non-farming HHs, landed or landless, etc. Adequate investment needs to be made in institutions and capacity building of women. Careful and effective monitoring and evaluation of women's collective action programmes, measured through indicators such as returns to the women, frequency of the board meetings, actions taken etc. should be considered. Audits and the right incentives can also play an important role in the regulation of programmes.

## Recommendations:

1. Evidence-based rigorous qualitative and quantitative research for identifying key issues and challenges faced by women in developing collective agency.
2. Documentation of successful cases and stories of women's collectives.
3. Proper scaling out of activities to be undertaken for generating better understanding, communication and mainstreaming of women's collective agencies.
4. Incentivizing investment and creating ecosystems for developing women's agency is the need of the hour.

## Discussion Group 3

### Strengthening the Interface between Women's Knowledges and Science

Facilitator - Dr. Kalpana Giri, Senior Program Officer at RECOFT (The Centre for People and Forests).

The discussion was guided by the following questions:

1. Women's knowledges span across several food systems domains, such as production (indigenous crops), collection (wild and forest produce), livestock rearing, consumption (traditional culinary knowledge) and processing (salting, drying, pickling). How can civil society, research and policy actors not only recognize and preserve, but also elevate the importance of these knowledges in the discourse around food systems?
2. How can scientists position the value of local women's knowledge as equally relevant to agriculture and food science?
3. How can policy makers and implementing agencies, through their extension and outreach activities, involve women as active agents in the production and dissemination of diverse knowledges about regenerative agricultural practices and localised food systems?
4. What are some successful examples/experiences of mutually collaborative practices between women's knowledge and science and technology, in agriculture, livestock rearing, food processing and consumption? How can we build on these?

## State of Women's Knowledge in Society, Science and Policy

The participants began the session by discussing how women's knowledge is perceived in the arenas of science and policy. They located women's knowledge within traditional and community knowledge, which is often ignored in the production of scientific knowledge and evidence-based policy. They also acknowledged that even within the society or community, women's knowledges are dismissed as trivial or irrelevant. The example of women livestock owners was brought up. Although women are often responsible for taking care of livestock, they are not acknowledged for these roles in pastoral communities. Traditionally, healers for livestock are men, so women's knowledge about livestock care is also not recognised. This is reflected in formal veterinary science as well.

### Challenges in Incorporating and Operationalising Women's Knowledge

The participants agreed that there were several challenges that precluded women's knowledge from being recognised as valid and important for science and policy. These included:

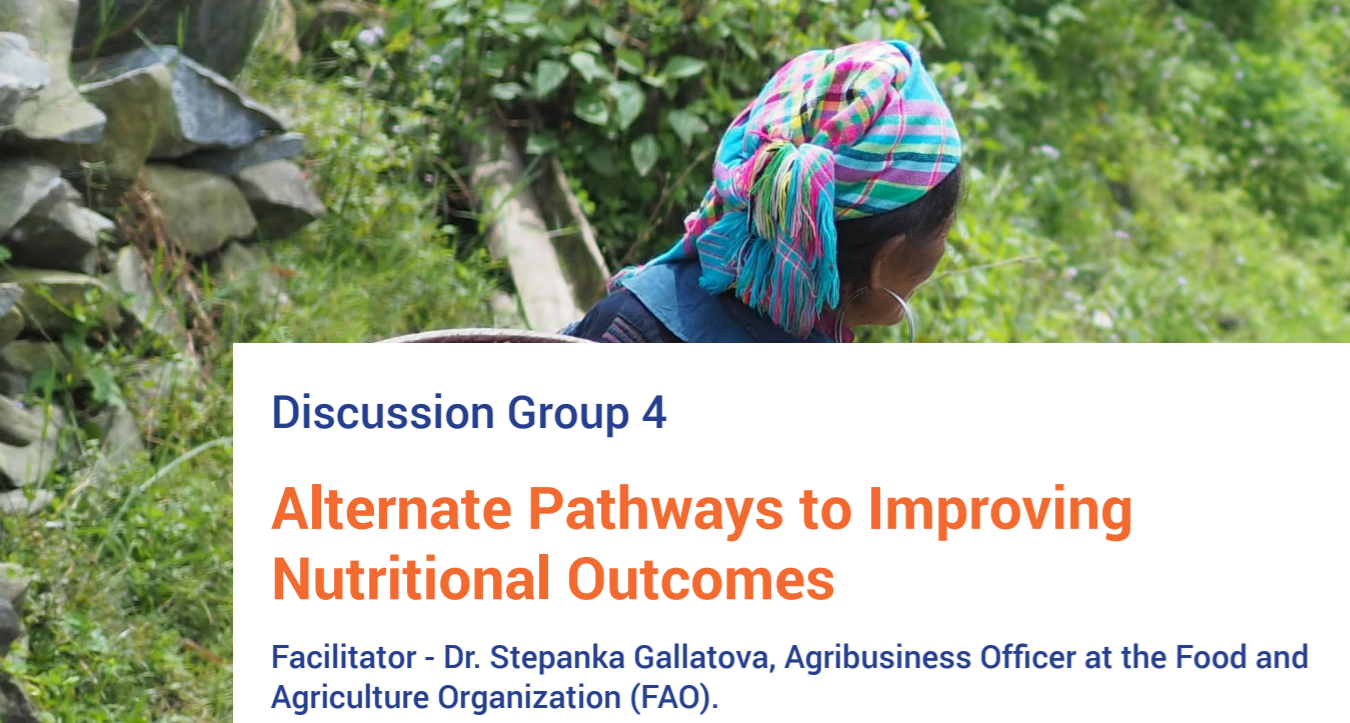
- **Cultural Attitudes and Knowledge Gaps** : Firstly, most scientists and policymakers held ingrained patriarchal attitudes that were prevalent in the society around them. As a result, most policy measures taken for women's inclusion were not meaningful in their design and implementation, and rarely went beyond 'box-ticking'. Some participants noted that, even if some policymakers and scientists were willing to make a change, they often lacked knowledge on the methods and processes for incorporating women's knowledge in their research. Another major obstacle was that women themselves do not understand the value of their knowledge, which was not surprising considering the lack of external recognition for it. Additionally, women are also often unable to take part in research and participatory activities due to their time poverty.
- **Hierarchical Structure of the Sciences**: The participants also discussed the hierarchical structure within the sciences and of the relationship between science and women's knowledge. Although many women are entering male-dominated fields such as agriculture and veterinary science, scientific research methodology still tends to be gender-blind. This can be observed in:

- a) **Data collection**: There is a scarcity of gender-disaggregated data on several issues that are important for gender equity. Without this kind of data, it would be difficult to design gender-sensitive policies.
- **Methodologies**: Although participatory tools are increasingly being employed in scientific research, many of them are gender-blind. Gender-specific methodologies such as focus group discussions (FGDs) need to be more widely used. For example, it was earlier considered unnecessary to specifically consult women farmers in plant-breeding research. However, the plant varieties developed through this process were hardly adopted by communities. Thus, today, women's trait preferences are being actively sought and integrated into seed production and plant breeding by CGIAR institutions. This leads to women's needs influencing the research agenda and investments. Facilitating a sense of ownership over seeds and engaging women as seed producers also results in increased agency, decision-making and higher incomes for the women.
- **Outcomes**: While there is some amount of research being done by women and about women in the sciences, this does not always translate seamlessly onto the platforms required by contemporary science, such as peer-reviewed journals. There is a need to create gender-specific platforms, such as women only peer reviewed journals, which can help reduce the entry barriers for grounded scientific research by and about women. There is also a need to improve the science policy interface to better communicate the outcomes of such research and their implications to the government.
- **Lack of Scientific Rigour** - A participant also brought in a different perspective to the problem of operationalising women's knowledge in the field. Although national policies have slowly shifted towards encouraging and relying on local knowledge systems (such as Ayurveda, local cattle breeds), they lack a systematic, evidence-based process for incorporating such knowledges into mainstream science. This often results in further polarisation of the two bodies of knowledge. The incorporation of women's knowledge must therefore avoid this situation and be undertaken in a rational manner to achieve true integration with conventional science.

- **Rigidity of Scientific Institutions/Norms/Systems:** Another challenge that is holding back the incorporation of women's knowledge is the rigid, inflexible approach of many scientific institutions, rules and systems. Even today, many scientific fields, such as the agricultural sciences, do not recognise women's knowledge or gender as an important aspect of knowledge production and dissemination. For example, the dominant measures used to estimate agricultural production, such as yield per hectare, are not used by women, who use a thousand grain weight instead. Similarly, the different conceptions of time (seasonal and intra-seasonal) in agrarian and pastoralist societies are not taught in the agricultural sciences. One of the participants also cited the example of the Centre for Gender Studies in Agriculture in Kerala Agricultural University, which started a course to bring in gender perspectives into the agricultural sciences curriculum, including genetics, plant breeding and soil sciences. This initiative was criticised and discontinued by the university as well as the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR). According to them, the agricultural sciences did not need gender in knowledge production and dissemination. Gender only became important in the transfer of knowledge and technologies to women producers, which needed to be gender sensitive. This illustrates that there is still a strong resistance to efforts to change the content of science to better reflect gender. This resistance can be understood if we look at the failures as well as the successes. Operationalisation of women's knowledge cannot be done without integration into scientific knowledge first.
- **Gender in Policy Support and Extension Services:** The participants also deliberated on the role of gender in policy and extension services in agriculture and animal husbandry. A participant spoke of the Sri Lankan situation: where extension services reach only the large and experienced farmers, who are mostly men, while women are usually smallholders. Extension agents do not feel their services are necessary for women farmers, who often produce only for home consumption. The extension agents are also mostly male, as the job involves travel to remote areas and interacting with various people. This acts as a barrier for women, who may be restricted by patriarchal norms from taking up such forms of employment.
- In the context of Punjab, India, although the ratio of men and women graduating from agricultural universities has greatly improved, there are very few women extension agents on the ground. This engenders further exclusion, as rural producers are often women themselves (due to male out migration) and would be more comfortable availing extension services from other women. Thus, governments need to enact policies that provide reservation for women in extension services. The inclusion of women as resource persons can also lead to more participatory extension services that are not merely knowledge transfers but can also inform science. At the same time, there is a need to sensitise and build the capacity of male extension agents to approach women farmers as well.

## Recommendations

1. Integrate women's knowledge into the scientific curriculum, especially in the agricultural sciences. Facilitate the scientific study of women's resilience strategies, their social networks of reciprocity and their exercise of agency in conditions of adversity.
2. While it is important to have women-only spaces to discuss gender issues, also involve and engage with men in their capacities as policymakers, extension agents and scientists. Encourage male champions in research and policy who can challenge the notion that gender research is for women only. This will help change ingrained patriarchal attitudes and amplify the importance of gender in policy and practice.
3. Research methodology in the sciences, including data collection, analysis and outcomes, need to inculcate a gender lens. This could involve gender-disaggregated data, use of participatory methods and providing platforms for dissemination and review that encourage gender-sensitive research. The science-policy interface for such research also needs to be strengthened to facilitate evidence-based policies.
4. Utilising the opportunities provided by the current moment of the pandemic to facilitate gender mainstreaming across interconnected issues such as health, nutrition and sustainability.
5. Study the failures as well as the successes among initiatives that integrate women's knowledge and science. This will help us understand not only what methods and strategies work, but also the reasons for the resistance and backlash that several interventions have to face.
6. Encourage and facilitate the appointment of more women as extension agents and resource persons to enable rural women producers to avail extension support. At the same time, sensitise and build the capacities of male agents to include women producers in their service delivery.



## Discussion Group 4

# Alternate Pathways to Improving Nutritional Outcomes

Facilitator - Dr. Stepanka Gallatova, Agribusiness Officer at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

This session was guided by four key questions

1. How can we improve women's access to the knowledge, resources and support they require to improve their family's food and nutrition security?
2. Can making women equal participants in the production and dissemination of context-specific nutrition information contribute to better adoption of dietary guidelines?
3. How can men be brought into the discourse around nutrition and household consumption, as they not just exercise control over family finances, but also help reproduce social norms contributing to the intergenerational cycles of malnutrition in women?
4. How can this be made a policy imperative, especially in LMICs?

In most parts of the world, women are responsible for household consumption and therefore nutrition.

The following pathways were suggested in the session to improve access to resources for women, enabling them to bring positive impacts in their family's food and nutrition security.

First, it is pertinent to understand women's knowledge, attitudes and practices towards food and nutrition before working towards improving that. Several participants highlighted the importance of data to develop contextual understanding and design effective measures.

Second, to ensure diversity in diet, efforts should be made to introduce and embed the idea of food groups, micronutrient content in different



food groups and the sources of various food groups in women's practices of household consumption.

Third, for improved nutritional outcomes, food should be consumed at the right time and in adequate quantity. Fourth, it is essential to break the stereotype or myth among women, especially from the remote and marginalized communities that nutrition is equal to health. This can be done by engaging women through conversations/discussions and various participatory methods to generate an understanding that having food with sufficient amounts of nutrition is equally important to staying free of illness and in good health.

Fifth, local governance bodies can act as platforms for improving access and participation of women by converging with health and education missions. The Kerala model of using Gram Sabhas as platforms to enable and encourage discussions around various developmental issues including food and nutrition, especially women, was noted.

Food-based dietary guidelines, while a useful standard, are often generalised and not accommodating of local cultures.

Participation of women is extremely important for accommodating local cultures, tastes and

preferences around food and consumption in dietary guidelines. Women should be provided with information to not only cook nutritious meals, but also supported with knowledge and skills to participate in all stages of the food value chain. Research conducted by the Tata Cornell Institute found that, for ensuring local accessibility and affordability of food, equal importance should be given to promoting interventions such as kitchen gardens as to market-based approaches. Based on the EAT-Lancet commission guidelines, estimates of the cost per person in rural India to buy food that meet dietary guidelines is extremely unaffordable, at 3 dollars per day, which is nearly double the poverty line at 1.90 dollars. Improving women's access to local markets can generate a thrust on growing and consuming locally grown food, playing a significant role in mitigating food insecurity. To support this, state and local bodies with NGOs need to strengthen the overall infrastructure of local markets to make it resilient, affordable for the community, and ensure year-round availability of nutritious food.

The role of women in agriculture across state institutions remains under-acknowledged and under-appreciated. Involvement of member-owned institutions like Self-Help Groups, Farmer Producers' Organizations in discussion

forums and engaging them across the whole food value chain can address that challenge to a great extent. Suggestions were given by participants to effectively utilise already existing models of collectives such as the Kudumbashree model in Kerala, NRLM and utilising Gram Panchayats as platforms for information dissemination. At the local community level, women can be educators and disseminators of best practices, enabling households to understand the importance of their food choices and embedding nutrition into that. An interesting suggestion was for women or SHGs to set up micro-entities and sell home-cooked meals at the village level or at local markets to enhance awareness of food and nutrition security.

Data on food and nutrition shows nutritional outcomes to have a persistent bias towards men, with significant inequality and micronutrient deficiency in women. On this question, the participants pointed out that a crucial step is to engage men at multiple levels:

- Household level, to ensure equitable distribution of food and recognise women's time use and the impacts these can have on improved nutrition of the women and of the household
- Community level, to shift the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the community at large
- Institutional level by generating awareness and ensuring men's participation in diversification of cropping systems, agriculture extension services and local markets.

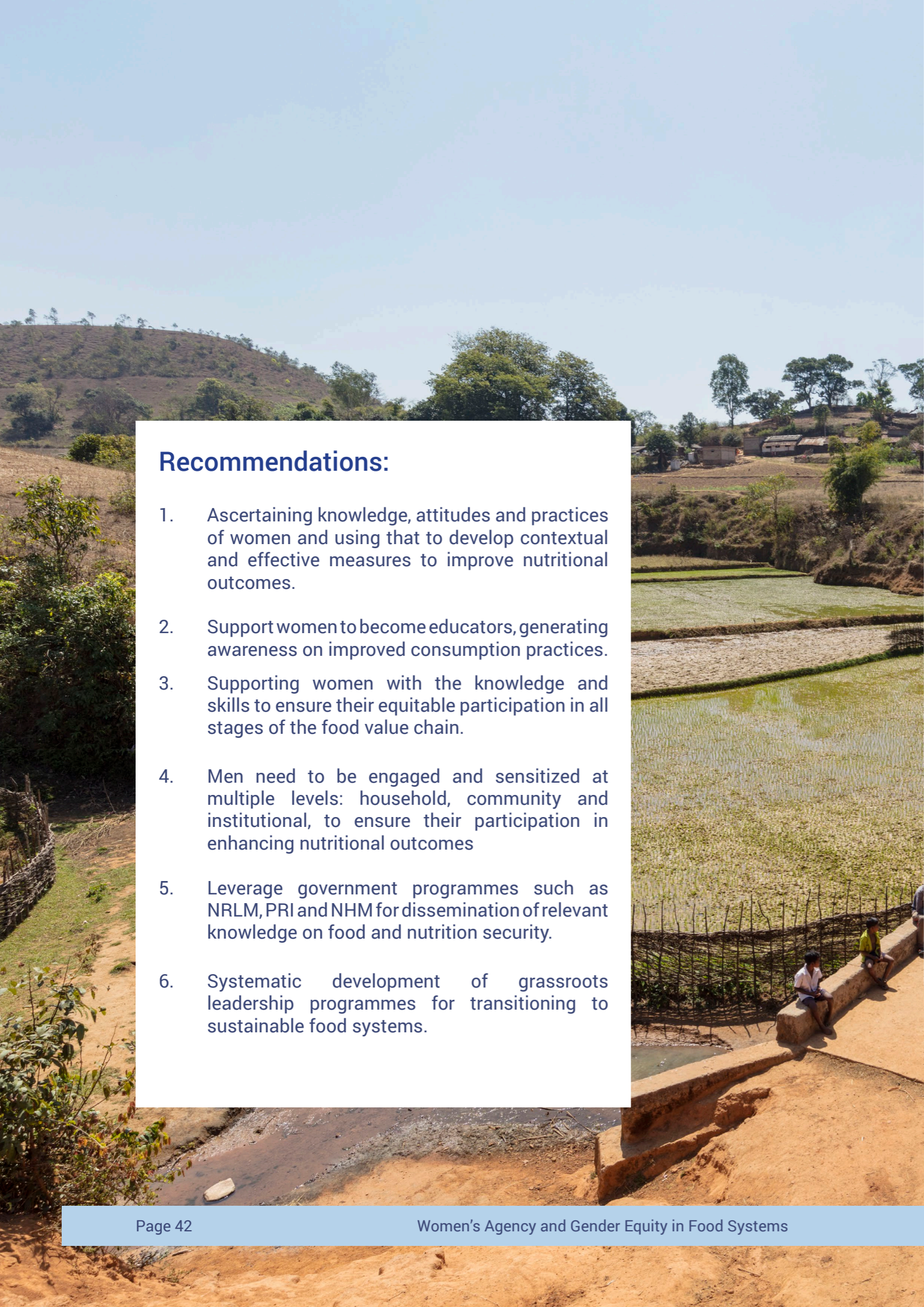
Participants acknowledged the urgent need for undoing the historical gender inequality and discrimination that has led to unequal consumption behavior and intergenerational cycles of malnutrition. Without the participation of men, this need will not be sustainably addressed.

Encouraging local production and consumption (through kitchen gardens, backyard poultry and community wet markets) can help increase women's autonomy over household consumption and reduce dependency on markets.

- Policy shift to millets and other local grains is crucial. Measures such as highlighting low glycaemic index of millets, promoting micro-enterprises run by women to cultivate local grains, promoting women-

focused technological innovations for production and processing of millets that retains nutritive value should be supported. An example from the Awadh region in Central Uttar Pradesh was given, where farmer collectives are encouraging farmers to grow millets, but even though farmers are interested, government policies are promoting rice and wheat with subsidies and price support.

- Support towards developing a short supply chain to take care of local consumers and producers, especially considering the pandemic's impacts.
- Developing a dataset on availability of land for people to develop kitchen gardens. Alternative methods to be developed for those with no land.
- Institutional convergence between the government programmes, with a special emphasis to embed local, nutritious agriculture. For example, a study in Uttarakhand showed that dietary intake improved for women and the household overall as a result of convergence of government programmes on improving food and nutrition security, as well as agriculture and livelihoods. Another example is from Andhra Pradesh, where the convergence of the Department of Rural Development with the Department of Agriculture transformed the choices made by farmers, helping them shift to organic farming. It also enabled the households to understand the importance of their food choices.
- The involvement of women in political and bureaucratic leadership at every level is important. To design programs to enable women, especially from the grassroots level, to participate at the leadership level
- Promoting local innovations involving women to not only improve food security and nutrition but also to empower the women by building their capacities and facilitating livelihood generation. NNEdPro's Mobile Teaching Kitchen is training volunteers, who in turn train women from marginalized communities to become health educators, sensitive to agriculture, food sourcing and nutrition. The initiative also opens up locally sourced components of meals to the wider public.



## Recommendations:

1. Ascertaining knowledge, attitudes and practices of women and using that to develop contextual and effective measures to improve nutritional outcomes.
2. Support women to become educators, generating awareness on improved consumption practices.
3. Supporting women with the knowledge and skills to ensure their equitable participation in all stages of the food value chain.
4. Men need to be engaged and sensitized at multiple levels: household, community and institutional, to ensure their participation in enhancing nutritional outcomes
5. Leverage government programmes such as NRLM, PRI and NHM for dissemination of relevant knowledge on food and nutrition security.
6. Systematic development of grassroots leadership programmes for transitioning to sustainable food systems.

## Discussion Group 5

### Rights, Entitlements and Representation

Facilitator - Dr. Susan Kaaria, Senior Gender Officer in the Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division (ESP) of the FAO

The discussion was structured around some key questions. The first part of the discussion focused on the following questions:

1. In several countries of Asia and Africa, women lack land rights, and therefore legal recognition as farmers. This exposes them to both exploitation of their labour and the threat of eviction. How can legal safeguards be granted, and their implementation monitored, particularly for women in remote rural communities?
2. What are the gaps in current legislation on women's rights and entitlements, especially in Asian and African countries, in relation to agriculture, nutrition and food systems? How can policies related to the food system be made more gender sensitive?

The second part of the discussion focused on the following question:

3. There have been many efforts to increase the representation of women in local decision-making bodies, including local governments, producer organisations, agriculture, nutrition and health extension, yet gendered power structures often work against women's voice and agency. How can representation be made substantive, and not merely nominal, for women?

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## Questions 1 & 2

Several participants pointed out that in many countries in Asia and Africa, women have land rights. However, there are challenges around implementation and patriarchal social norms. There is a need for better monitoring and building capacity and willingness for implementation, including at the lowest levels of the bureaucracy. At the same time, the social norms around marriage in countries like India where the woman has to move to her husband's place of residence weakens her claim and ability to control and manage the land.

It was also pointed out that land rights by themselves are not adequate and there is a need to disaggregate what this involves. In some contexts, women are given rights to the most degraded land. Moreover, these rights may be used as a pretext to tie women down to the land and land-based livelihoods. Therefore, firstly, we need to recognize that in food systems, women sustain themselves through a range of resources and livelihood activities. Therefore, our attention should be drawn to not only the ownership rights over land but also usufruct rights over other productive resources.

It was also pointed out that the sustainable development goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 5.4, point to women's unpaid care work. However, women also do a considerable amount of unpaid non-care work. This is particularly true for large parts of South Asia where specific castes and ethnic/religious communities are in any case landless due to inherited socio-economic hierarchies. Therefore, we need to recognize women's work for workers' rights as well. The labour rights framing was considered important especially for contexts such as tea plantations (e.g. in Sri Lanka) where the formal and informal sectors overlap and the plantation and agricultural economies intertwine to create difficult working and living conditions for women. It was noted that in Pakistan's Sindh a law has been passed recognizing the minimum wage rights of women agricultural workers.

In addition to access to land and other productive resources, there is also a need to create policy and programmatic tools to ensure that women have access to credit, technology and other assets or inputs

necessary that can help them obtain the necessary food and/or income from the land. A cautionary note was added here that the improvement of land through the aforementioned combination of inputs should not be seen in terms of mainstream ideas of productivity but rather, food and nutrition-centered agriculture. Relatedly, women work as farmers for not only profit but also other motives and beginning to value that could also

be a way of changing the paradigm of agricultural production.

Gender-disaggregated data was identified as a crucial piece for better policies and implementation. It was argued that good quality data would bring greater clarity to the question of disparity in access to resources not only by gender but also through intersectional categories of caste, class, race, age, ethnicity and religion.

## Question 3

The group agreed that women's representation was crucial to achieving any substantive progress. However, it was noted that this representation needed to be substantive and not nominal. There are a number of challenges in achieving this. Too often women are represented by male members of the family. Where women do reach representative positions, they are often stuck at lower levels of action and decision-making. Women's leadership may be captured by elite women. Finally, women leaders are often considered leaders of women rather than leaders of the community as a whole.

A crucial step would be to build women's capacity through appropriate budget allocations, creating collectives where they can make a case for and obtain better access to resources and spaces. The Odisha Millet Mission in India is one such example where women's Self Help Groups are playing an active role in building nutrition

awareness and negotiating better market access and wages for the millet they produce. Similarly, the Kenya National Farmers' Federation (KENAFF) is working to improve women's representation and capacity at all levels, from the grassroots to the national level, towards improved food systems and better access to credit and other inputs/services.

Finally, it was noted that women's representation is often taken to mean that women will fit into the mainstream model of development. However, this mainstream model systematically devalues women's situated knowledge. Business-as-usual in the form of intensive agriculture has led to severe agrarian distress in countries such as India. Thus, meaningful women's representation has to go hand-in-hand with the re-imagining of the development paradigm.

## Recommendations:

1. Strong regime of implementation of legal rights, including tenurial rights, usufruct rights and recognition of women farmers for workers' rights
2. Investments in farming systems to increase productivity in terms of food and nutrition centered agriculture and reduce women's drudgery on small and marginal farmland
3. Question of gender-segregated data to map access to land and other common and productive resources
4. Broad and inclusive definition of farmers, recognising the intersectionality of women
5. Creating space for alternative development paradigms and valuing women's knowledge
6. Intersectionality in women's informed representation





## Appendix

Name	Role	Country	Organisation
Shakuntala Thilsted	Guest Speaker	Denmark/ Trinidad & Tobago	WorldFish
Nitya Rao	Convenor/ Facilitator	India/ UK	Norwich Institute of Sustainable Development (NISD), University of East Anglia (UEA)
Vijay Kumar Thallam	Convenor	India	Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)
Ajay Vir Jakhar	Convenor	India	Bharat Krishak Samaj (BKS)
Alejandra Safa	Facilitator	Italy	FAO
Kalpana Giri	Facilitator	Thailand	RECOFTC
Stephanie Gallatova	Facilitator	Italy	FAO
Susan Kaaria	Facilitator/ Guest Speaker	Kenya	FAO
Andrew Mushita	Participant	Zimbabwe	Community Technology Development Trust
Aasha Kapur Mehta	Participant	India	Institute for Human Development
Amanjot Kaur	Participant	India	Panjab University Chandigarh
Ananya Chakraborty	Participant	India	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)
Ananya Mohapatra	Participant	India	BITS Pilani, Hyderabad Campus
Anuprita Shukla	Participant	UK	University of East Anglia
Beenita Meher	Participant	India	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
Chanda Gurung Goodrich	Participant	Nepal	International Center for Integrated Mountain Development
Christine Okali	Participant	UK	Institute of Development Studies, UK
Clara Malikula	Participant	Malawi	Nasfam
Cynthia Bantilan	Participant	Philippines	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)
D Parthasarathy	Participant	India	Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay
Dipa Sinha	Participant	India	Ambedkar University Delhi
Diptimayee Jena	Participant	India	Nabakrushna Choudhury Center for Development Studies (NCDS), Bhubaneswar
Dr Pratheepa	Participant	India	M S Swaminathan Research Foundation
FANJANIRINA	Participant	Madagascar	FIFATA

Name	Role	Country	Organisation
Gigi Manicad	Participant	Netherlands	Independent Consultant
Govind Kelkar	Participant	India	GenDev Centre for Research and Innovation
Hannah Gray	Participant	UK	University of East Anglia
Haris Gazdar	Participant	Pakistan	Social Protection Strategy Unit, Sindh
Helena Trigueiro	Participant	Portugal	NNEdPro Global Centre for Nutrition and Health
K. Vasuki	Participant	India	Government of India
Kavitha Kasala	Participant	India	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)
Mamata Pradhan	Participant	India	Independent Researcher (IFPRI)
Marie Lisa Dacanay	Participant	Philippines	Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia
Mihlali Xhala	Participant	South Africa	Agri SA
Muralidhar G M	Participant	India	Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)
Naushaba Khatoon	Participant	Pakistan	Jinnah Sindh Medical University
Neelam Patel	Participant	India	NITI Aayog
Neetha N.	Participant	India	Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS)
Nitya Ghotge	Participant	India	ANTHRA, Pune
Nkechi Nwankwo	Participant	Nigeria	Independent Gender and Economic Empowerment Specialist
Ntuthu Mbiko-Motshegoa	Participant	South Africa	African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA), National Women
Padmaja Ravula	Participant	India	ICRISAT
Paida Chadoka	Participant	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe Association of Dairy Farmers
Paola Termine	Participant	Italy	HLPE Secretariat / CFS hosted by FAO
Prof Shumone Ray	Participant	UK	NNEdPro Global Centre for Nutrition and Health
Prof Vidya Vemireddy	Participant	India	Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad
R. Gopinath	Participant	India	M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)
Rajeswari Raina	Participant	India	Shiv Nadar University
Rajkumar R.	Participant	India	M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)
Ramanjit K. Johal	Participant	India	Panjab University, Chandigarh
Ramon Mapa	Participant	Philippines	People's Initiative for Learning and Community Development
Ranjani K Murthy	Participant	India	Self employed
Ranjitha Puskur	Participant	Kenya	CGIAR, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)

Name	Role	Country	Organisation
Reema Nanavaty	Participant	India	Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
Reetu Sogani	Participant	India	Lok Chetna Manch
Rengalakshmi	Participant	India	M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)
Richa Kumar	Participant	India	Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi
Rupsi Garg	Participant	India	Kheti Virasat Mission
Sai Nellore	Participant	India	Sustainable India Finance Facility (SIFF)
Sarala Emmanuel	Participant	Sri Lanka	Affiliate Suriya Women's Development Center
Seema Kulkarni	Participant	India	SOPPECOM
Sejal Dand	Participant	India	ANANDI
Shilpa Vasavada	Participant	India	Independent, WGWLO
Sibu-Sandile Poswayo	Participant	South Africa	Inequality Movement
Simi Thambi	Participant	UK	UNEP
Soma Kishore Parthasarathy	Participant	India	Independent researcher/consultant
Soumya Gupta	Participant	USA	Tata Cornell Institute for Agriculture and Nutrition, Cornell University
Srijit Mishra	Participant	India	Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR)
Sujatha Wijetilake	Participant	Sri Lanka	NGO Mdc
Suveera Gill	Participant	India	Panjab University
Violet Kathambi	Participant	Kenya	Kenya National Farmers' Federation (KENAFF)
Ira Chowdhury	Participant	NA	NA
Maitri Sharma	Participant	NA	NA
Sami	Participant	NA	NA
Adrija Chaudhuri	Note-taker	India	Bharat Krishak Samaj (BKS)
Arundhita Bhanjdeo	Note-taker	India	PRADAN
Ayesha Pattnaik	Note-taker	India	PRADAN
Debottom	Note-taker	India	Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)
Diksha Shetty	Note-taker	India	Sustainable India Finance Facility (SIFF)
Jayna George	Note-taker	India	Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)
Karthik Pillai	Note-taker	India	Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)
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# Women's Agency and Gender Equity in Food Systems

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