



Fund for Innovation
and Transformation

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COADY INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE

Farmer-led Tools, Dashboard Development, and the Future of Farming

Context

Smallholder farmers are at centre of major transformations shaping agriculture through innovations in technology, the entrepreneurship ecosystem, access to markets, farmer organizations and policy. Women farmers are experiencing these changes firsthand. Farming labour provided by women is rarely considered in economic terms and remains much less visible than the transactional, market-based roles held by men. Women also face gender barriers that impact decision-making and opportunities, such as limited access to loans. In addition, much of the buying and selling of produce happens at night, an unsafe time for women to travel to markets.

The Innovative Solution

Coady International Institute, Self Employed Women's Association (India) and ICRAF (World Agroforestry Centre) (Kenya) tested an innovative solution aimed at enhancing farm productivity and increasing income for women farmers, while building their confidence and capacity to influence farming and marketing decisions. The innovation put smallholder women farmers at the centre of the agricultural value chain, examined barriers they face, and helped identify strategies for improving their position. Participants were empowered with financial literacy skills, as well as tools to collect data and track their income and expenses. This included 'Leaky Bucket' tool, a participatory exercise that uses the notion of a bucket with inflows (representing farm income) and leakages (representing expenses) to measure profitability.

Advancing Gender Equality

Coady engaged with women farmers as well as with other family members of the household including men and boys so that both men and women would be involved in the transformation process. As part of the innovation, focus group discussions on gender were held to examine gender relations, women's decision-making power in the home and domestic gender roles.



COUNTRY
India and Kenya

AMOUNT
\$236,000

TESTING PERIOD
15 months
Ended June 2022



GENDER RESPONSIVE (GE2)

THEME: AGRICULTURE

Testing Framework

The testing of farmer-driven process and tools took place with local partners in India and Kenya. The producer-led value chain analysis (PLVCA) began by collecting farmer-level gender segregated data on the household as well as their enterprises. The tools are used to collect data on income and expenditures, including care work which is often not accounted for. One of the key advances in this innovation is further refining and adapting gender mapping in the value chain. This provided initial insights into the role of women in the value chain and their participation in the market system. Data was updated regularly throughout the project lifecycle to track changes in value chains, diversification and changes in income, profitability, and new buyers/trade agreements. Progress Markers were also developed and assessed at key milestones as well as at the end of the project.

Results and Impact

Data results demonstrated that the participating women farmers learned about the opportunities in aggregation, storage, packaging and other forms of value additions as well as strategies to reduce post-harvest losses. Data also indicated that many of the women producers took leadership in converting some of these opportunities into tangible gains. One example of this involves 100 women farmers in Gujarat, India who began aggregating and collectively storing their potatoes and then subsequently used their pooled produce to secure better markets, thereby increasing their income by more than 50%. Yet, the women producers reported what they valued the most were the “intangibles” such as their recognition as economic contributors both in agriculture and care work, increased economic independence, mobility, inclusion in decision making, respect and self-confidence.

Of note:

- In Kenya, by endline all 100% of 104 (47M, 57F) participants reported improved livelihoods (greater income, more diversified income, reduced expenditures, new businesses) and wellbeing (improved gender relations, status in community, ability to pay for school fees, healthier diets).
- In both Kenya and India, 100% participant reported greater understanding of different value chains while 80% (Kenya) and 100% (India) of participants reported increased participation in value chains.
- 100% of farmers in both countries found the Leaky Bucket tool useful and would like to continue having an organized way of tracking their expenses, income and labour, exceeding the target of 50%

Key Lessons

1. Keeping a written record of their income and expenses is not common for most farmers, so in many cases this was the first time this concept was introduced.
2. Recognizing women’s invisible/undervalued work is key to gender equality. This proved a very important element to the women participants.
3. Organizing, aggregation and integration of the value chain is key for enhancing women’s inclusion and agency in agriculture.

“Thankful for training because it has made me independent, unlike earlier days when I used to depend on people to assist me in terms of finances. I waited for things to be brought to me. Now I am independent, and this has made a big difference to me and my family.”

- Woman Participant

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Self Employed Women’s Association (India)

ICRAF (World Agroforestry Centre) (Kenya)

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

1400 farmers

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ABOUT FIT

The Fund for Innovation and Transformation supports Canadian small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) testing innovative solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South.



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