

Facilitator:

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Introduction

- In rural India, 41% of women and 51% of children under 5 are undernourished
- Over last 20 years, India's per capita consumption of calories and proteins has DECREASED
- Need to shift focus from food security to nutrition security

20-30% of households depend on self-grown staples

Producers consume 50% more than non-producers

Who produces food for consumption?

- Predominantly women (except held-back items)
- ~30% of rural women do consumption farming
- Greater involvement in nutrient-rich produce
- Belong to most marginalized households

We can engage women as producers who produce for the market as well as for self-consumption

When women produce for market, this results in an increase in household income, which has a weak relationship with improving household nutrition

However if women produce for consumption and grow nutrient-rich foods then this will improve household nutrition by 1.5 times

The improved income, if accompanied with women's control over income and women's empowerment will result in an 11 times improvement in children's nutrition

There is therefore an opportunity because:

- ~30% of rural households consume something they produce
- Consumption farming is done by women

- By focusing on women farmers, we can self-select the most marginalized households

Women farmers face several constraints compared to men:

- Literacy: 34% for women, 26% for women farmers and 66% for men
- Mobility: 51% for women and 100% for men
- Time available for economic activities: 5 hours for women and 8 hours for men
- Asset ownership: 9% for women and 91% for men

As a result, only 8-10% of women farmers have access to agri-information, from any source (including their husbands)

Ashoka Women in agriculture survey

- 1000+ survey responses
- 100+ field visits, farmer groups, stakeholder interviews
- Statistical trends

Women want more information:

63% of cultivators want more information

- 95% of them want it on better seed varieties and 60% on better use of fertilizers

77% of livestock keepers want more information

- 93% want it on better animal breeds and 76% want it on proper milking

While technology is a popular solution, it is not gender neutral, 81% of women farmers have access to a mobile phone. Of these 62% use it for less than 3 hours a day.

Less than 1% know how to send or receive text messages

The challenge is to improve nutrition by finding creative ways to reach women farmers so that they can be provided information and support for agri activities

Working with women farmers has a multi-level impact

Ashoka and Ashoka Fellows are codifying and co-designing replicable techniques for working with women farmers such as:

- Providing information via phones at the appropriate time of day – 3 pm to 5 pm in off season and between 9pm to 11 pm
- Fruits are a luxury - Indigenous nutrient-rich fruit trees on common land or on boundary of fields
- Leverage SHGs Overcome constraints faced by women farmers by disseminating agri info through SHGs (self help groups)

There are many opportunities for collaboration:

- Conduct studies and surveys
- Design, adapt and replicate initiatives
- Scale the work of Ashoka Fellows
- Fund programs and initiatives