

# Solidaridad

## GENDER ANALYSIS REPORT



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Gender Analysis Study, conducted by Solidaridad Asia in Madhya Pradesh, is a testimony to the organisation's commitment to ensure gender inclusivity in its strategies and programmes. As the first step in this direction, the study provides insights on the factors that enable or disable inclusive actions, which will eventually support in designing programmes.

The study would not have been possible without the expert guidance of Dr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay, Managing Director, Solidaridad Asia. His support has paved the way for the first gender analysis study by Solidaridad in the Asia region.

Dr. Suresh Motwani, General Manager, Solidaridad Asia, provided support in Madhya Pradesh and helped refine the study factors. The team in Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Himanshu Bias and Ms. Priya Pagnis ably supported the study. Ms. Namrata Bhanweria led the community engagement and data collection and was instrumental in ensuring successful completion of the study. Her involvement was vital and her experience of working with communities added tremendous value in designing the study. The questionnaire development and data analysis support was provided by Mr. Sanjay Chaubey, Data Analyst and Mr. Kaustubh Kumar, Assistant Manager of Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PMEL) team, Solidaridad Asia.

The study was encouraged by Ms. Njeri Kimotho, Global Gender Task Force Leader, Solidaridad Network, who also periodically reviewed the progress of the study.

Finally, we acknowledge the women, who participated in the study, provided their views on their roles responsibilities and shared their experiences with obstacles and success. Without them, this study would not have been possible, and it is with the intent that the findings of this study will lead to their empowerment, we present the Gender Analysis Report for soy growing areas in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India.

The report begins with providing a context of Madhya Pradesh and Solidaridad's programme. It emphasises the need for gender analysis and gender analysis framework adopted for the study. The study focuses on areas where there is no intervention of Solidaridad Asia to understand the overall status of women in the area. In the following sections, the report elaborates on various issues and challenges faced by women, the work executed by them and their own perception of self. We hope that the findings and recommendations will be used for designing future programmes in the state.

### NEHA

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Gender analysis paves the way for inclusive programmes and actions by providing specific and relevant information on the status of women. The soy growing areas of Madhya Pradesh were selected to understand and assess the prevalent situation of women. Given that Solidaridad has been working in select locations for nearly five years and wishes to expand its operation through new grants, there was an urgency to dig deeper into different aspects of women inclusivity, such as understanding their capabilities, decision-making power and involvement in economic activities. This would support the project to be more inclusive and impactful.

While there are many different approaches to conduct gender analysis, Solidaridad Asia has used an adapted version of Oxfam and UN's gender analysis framework that looks at participation, access, control and welfare, and distils them to arrive at the level or degree of vulnerability and capability. A sample of 153 women from the Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh, largely known for soybean production, was chosen for the study. The women were from villages where Solidaridad Asia didn't have any programmes or interventions running. A structured questionnaire was adopted coupled with in-depth discussions with the women.

Overall, the findings of the study suggest that women in the soybean producing areas of Madhya Pradesh are highly vulnerable and ignored. Despite active participation in agricultural activities, they are marginalised and side-lined. With hardly any decision-making abilities and power; no control over assets; low level of engagement in community groups lack of access to knowledge on agricultural practices and participation in capacity building efforts and a dire state of menstrual hygiene and practices, women in the area are subject to extreme hardship and bear the brunt of an unequal society.

The study findings indicate the following:

### **A.Participation:**

1. 90% of women reported participating in agricultural activities and nearly 50% of them reported to have participated in animal husbandry as an income generating activity. The women reported growing wheat as the primary crop, followed by soybean, chickpeas, onion, garlic and vegetables.
2. Women are largely involved in almost all the agricultural activities; however, their involvement in decision-making is seen to be minimalistic. Only 19% of the women said that they make decisions by themselves, that too, only for seed treatment. In rest of the activities, their decision-making influence was less than 3%.
3. Even for activities that the women perform along with their husbands, their participation in decision-making was seen to be only in half of the incidences, with least participation in decisions regarding harvesting.
4. Women reported that household decisions are either made by the male member or discussed with women (which women consider as joint decision-making).
5. More than 80% of women reported having no membership, participation or leadership in any groups. Only in case of saving groups, 30% of women mentioned that they are members.

### **B.Access:**

1. While 81% of women had access to mobile phones, only 30% had smartphones. Among 81% women who had mobile phone, 60% of them had no control over their phones — for making calls or text, they had to seek permission from their husband and support from other family members.
2. Of all the women interviewed, 80% of them reported having bank accounts in their name and around 4% have joint accounts with their husbands. However, 17% of women had no bank accounts, either in their name or as joint accounts. Among women with bank accounts, 90% reported to have had made banking transactions, but only with the help of their husband.
3. When asked if they received any subsidies in their account, 90% of women replied in negative, which indicated that although they were involved in agricultural activities and had bank accounts, yet without land ownership, women are not able to access the subsidies from the government.
4. 90% of the women did not have insurance cover. Among other reasons, lack of awareness, competing priorities for money to be paid as premium and a dwindling

trust on the insurance companies in honouring the claims were cited as the primary reasons for not having insurance cover.

## C.Control

1. Only a miniscule percentage (less than 10%) of women reported having ownership to any of the assets or consumer durables. The highest percentage of ownership was reported for mobile phones.
2. When it came to decision-making for buying and selling of assets, the situation was no better with less than 10% of women deciding on their own. More than 40% of women reported men having a major say in the decision and another 30% said that the decision was made jointly by women and men.
3. Women in soy growing areas of Madhya Pradesh travel, when accompanied by male members of the household for religious purposes, meeting relatives and for purchase of household items. However, when it comes to travel for buying and selling of agricultural produce and inputs or purchase of assets, the women in the area are not involved in the discussions or associated travels.

## D.Welfare

1. While 22% of the women respondents were found to be illiterate, 15% had attended only primary level of education, and another 14% completed education upto eighth standard (grade 8). A meagre 5% (8 among 153) had completed graduation.
2. Absence of higher educational institutions in the vicinity of the village, early marriage and the need to support mothers at home were cited as the primary reasons for low literacy rate among women.
3. More than 80% of women used cloth materials or rags during menstruation and a very small number (12%) of women used sanitary pads. The women revealed that cost and habit are the primary reasons for them to continue using cloth. 50% of the women cited unavailability of sanitary pads as the reason for using other unhygienic alternatives.
4. While 48% of women said they disposed of the used cloth, another 45% of women said they burnt it. A small percentage of women (3%) washed and reused it.
5. Unfortunately, 82% of women indicated never having participated in any training or awareness programmes on menstrual hygiene.
6. The dietary diversity among women was found to be extremely low, with 56% of the women respondents reporting that mostly they consumed only two varieties of food on any day: cereals (wheat) and lentils.

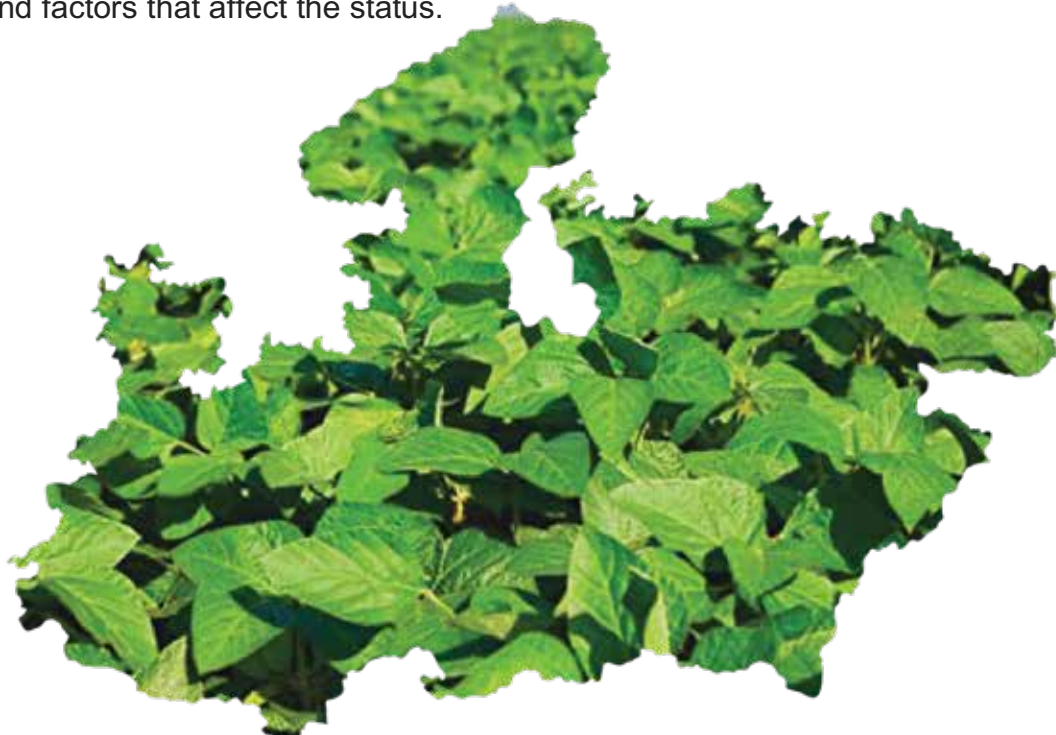
## CONTEXT: MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh (MP) is the second largest state in India with a total land area of 308,000 sq. km and 72 million people. Being centrally located, the state is endowed with natural resources of minerals, forest cover and abundant water resources. Despite its abounding natural resources, the state ranked 10<sup>th</sup> with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 4.26%. The low growth rate has also impacted the status of women, as out of the 72 million people, 49% are women. The life expectancy of women is 56.7 years against the national average of 63.3 years. According to the National Family Health Survey NFHS-3, the body mass index of women is below normal is 40.1% (44.2% among rural women). The data of NFHS-3 indicated that 84% of all rural women and 52% of urban women were married before the age of 18.

Further, the Madhya Pradesh Planning Commission acknowledges that the role and contributions of women are understated in the state. It states “The persistent differences in men's and women's pay, unequal access to stable employment, the perpetuation and sometimes the accentuation of job segregation, and the growth of “ghost work” (i.e. hidden work, unpaid but economically necessary, in the domestic, agricultural and informal sectors) are the other reasons as captured in a study of International Labour Organisation. In MP, a large percent of population is dependent on agriculture, as cultivators and agricultural labourers. Further, studies have shown that women as cultivators, labourers or as unpaid labourers in their own farm land do the quantum of work in agriculture sector, which is much higher and more tedious than that of men. Women play significant role in sowing, weeding, harvesting and maintenance of the harvest while other supportive tasks like transportation and marketing are exclusively performed by men”.

The worker participation ratio has not changed since 1991 and has remained at 42.74%. Among the total female workers, the Madhya Pradesh Planning Commission report points to the existence of 47.43% marginal workers.

Undoubtedly, multiple factors have led to marginalisation of women in Madhya Pradesh, and therefore, it is critical that any intervention that is planned for empowerment of women or any programme that intends to make it inclusive, needs to understand the status of women and factors that affect the status.



## CONTEXT: SOLIDARIDAD PROJECT

### “SUSTAINABLE SOY PRODUCTION”

Besides the dire status of women, Madhya Pradesh also faces a critical challenge of malnutrition among children below 5 years of age. The NFHS indicates that more than 40% of the children below the age of 5 are either stunted or wasted. Ironically Madhya Pradesh is also the largest soybean producer in India. Soybean, known for its protein content, is grown by a large number of producers but is used for animal feed and oil extraction rather than human consumption. The farmers of Madhya Pradesh derive a yield of 1 to 1.9 tonne per hectare of land, which is far lower than the potential of 3 tonne per hectare. The lack of adoption of better practices, coupled with the high intensity farming techniques have put the land at risk.

The project by Solidaridad Asia aims at enhancing the livelihood of soy smallholders through promotion of sustainable farming practices and appropriate technologies that can optimise the productivity and increase their income. The ‘good practices, promoted through the project are designed based on principles of ‘more with less’ and scientifically sound and validated technologies, which would contribute to achieving sustainable production and improving profitability of smallholders.

The project also facilitates promotion of farmer producer organisations (FPOs) for efficient extension, access to quality inputs and market linkages. The formation of 10 FPOs facilitates input trade and the collectivisation of demand and supplies, which is likely to reduce the cost of soy cultivation (estimated 10% reduction). Combining these with the increase in productivity and reduced cost, the project is likely to attain the 2020 target of average increase of 30% in income.

Understanding the role of women in ensuring nutritional outcomes and in economic activities, the project has engaged women farmers who are not only trained in agricultural practice, but are also capacitated on nutritional requirements through women cadre promoted as Nutri Sakhi (friends for nutrition) for better nutritional outcomes. They are encouraged to participate in decision-making roles in local government bodies.

By the end of 2020, the project would have built capacities of 35,000 farmers (15% being women).

Before we delve deep into the findings from the study, it is vital to understand what gender analysis is and how it helps a programme. The following sections in the report explain gender analysis, its need, objectives, methodology and findings.



## **WHAT IS GENDER ANALYSIS?**

Gender analysis is a process of finding out how gender relations impact development in a region. As defined by the USAID, “it is an analytic, social science tool, used to identify, understand and explain gaps between male and female that exist in households, communities, and countries, and the relevance of gender norms and power relations in a specific context. Such analysis typically involves examining differences in the status of women and men on their differential access to assets, resources, opportunities, and services; the influence of gender roles and norms on the division of time between paid employment, unpaid work (including subsistence production and care for family members), and volunteer activities; the influence of gender roles and norms on leadership roles and decision-making; constraints, opportunities, and entry points for narrowing gender gaps and empowering females; and potential differential impacts of development policies and programs on males and females, including unintended or negative consequences.”

## **WHY IS GENDER ANALYSIS NEEDED?**

The significance of gender analysis stems from the concern that a policy or programme design that lacks the understanding of factors affecting women participation is in actuality ignoring almost half of the workers in the economic activities of the state. Hence, there is a greater need for garnering deeper insights about the gender issues that prevail in a particular geographic area/thematic area.. Unless the evidence base is established, it is mighty difficult to build a case for gender inclusion in the programme or facilitate designing of gender inclusive strategies.

## **OBJECTIVE OF GENDER ANALYSIS STUDY**

The objective of the Gender Analysis Study in a soy growing area of Madhya Pradesh was to identify opportunities, constraints and experiences of women in the socio-economic spheres of their life. The study intends to support and provide evidence for planning strategies and actions in initiating and sustaining gender inclusive social change programmes.

## **GENDER ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK**

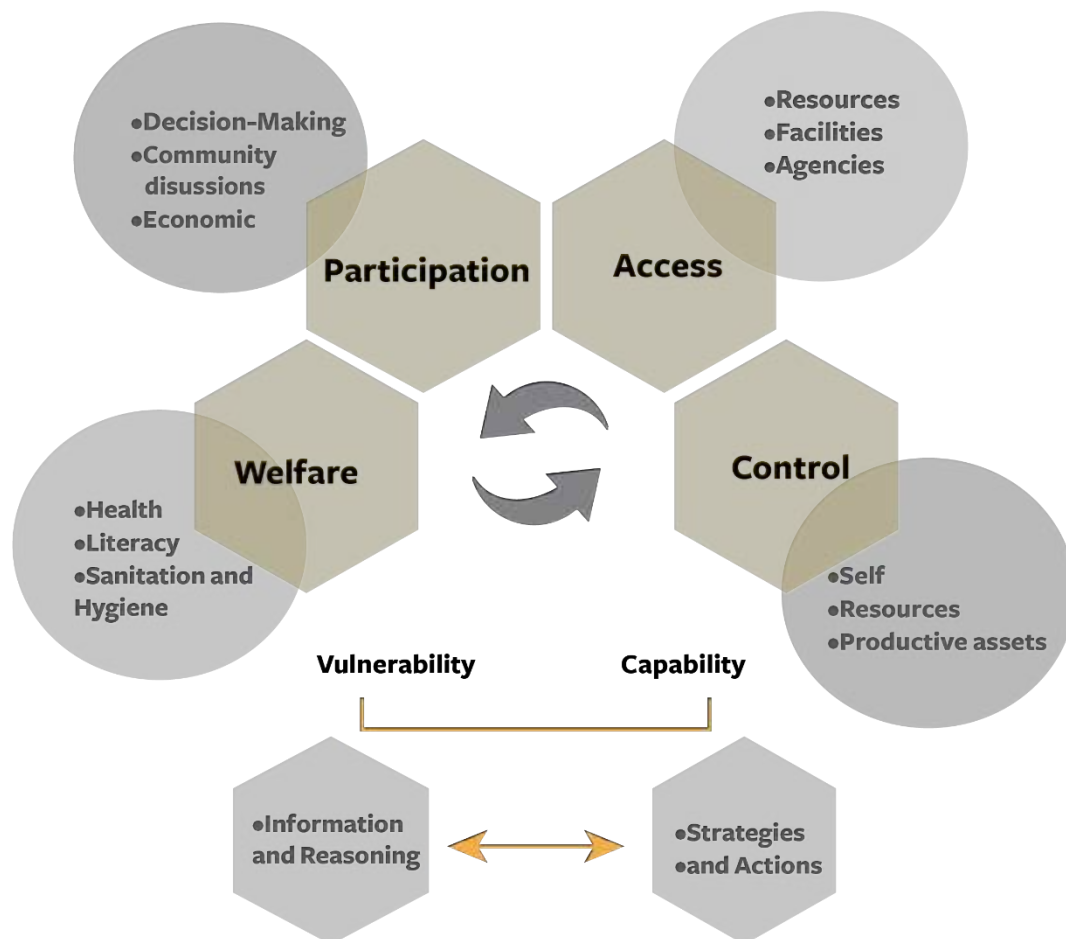
There are numerous frameworks that have been adopted for gender analysis. It is critical to adopt a framework that supports and augments the strategic choices and thematic areas of Solidaridad Asia. For the purpose of this study, the framework was developed taking inspiration from UNDP’s gender framework and Oxfam guide for gender analysis.

The adapted Gender Analysis Framework of Solidaridad Asia looks at the parameters of capability and vulnerability. The capability parameters provide insights into the nature of economic activities women are engaged in, skilling of women, access to market, decision-making powers and opportunities and control over resources. The vulnerability parameter is understood better through deeper understanding of social norms and stigma, areas of marginalisation and lack of identity and self-confidence.

The two parameters are then further bifurcated into four sub-parameters of:

- a. Access to resources, agencies and facilities
- b. Control over personal decision-making, resources and productive assets
- c. Participation in community engagement, household decision-making and economic activities
- d. Welfare of health, sanitation and literacy

The information, thus gathered, is synthesised for information and evidence generation, leading to inclusive strategies and actions.



## METHODOLOGY

A quantitative dominant study was undertaken with a sample of female members of the community. The methodology included a structured questionnaire covering the areas of:

1. Economic activities
2. Use of digital technology
3. Access to capacity enhancement services
4. Financial inclusion
5. Leadership and representation
6. Entrepreneurship
7. Mobility
8. Asset ownership
9. Household decision-making
10. Health and nutrition

## SAMPLE

The study was conducted with 153 female respondents. They were selected randomly across 14 different village panchayats in one soya growing district of Madhya Pradesh. Solidaridad did not have any programmes or interventions in the villages chosen for the survey. Study on such a sample would help to understand the situation of women in the Soy growing area better and support not just to be more inclusive in the present project but also design the projects in accordance to the identified needs of women.

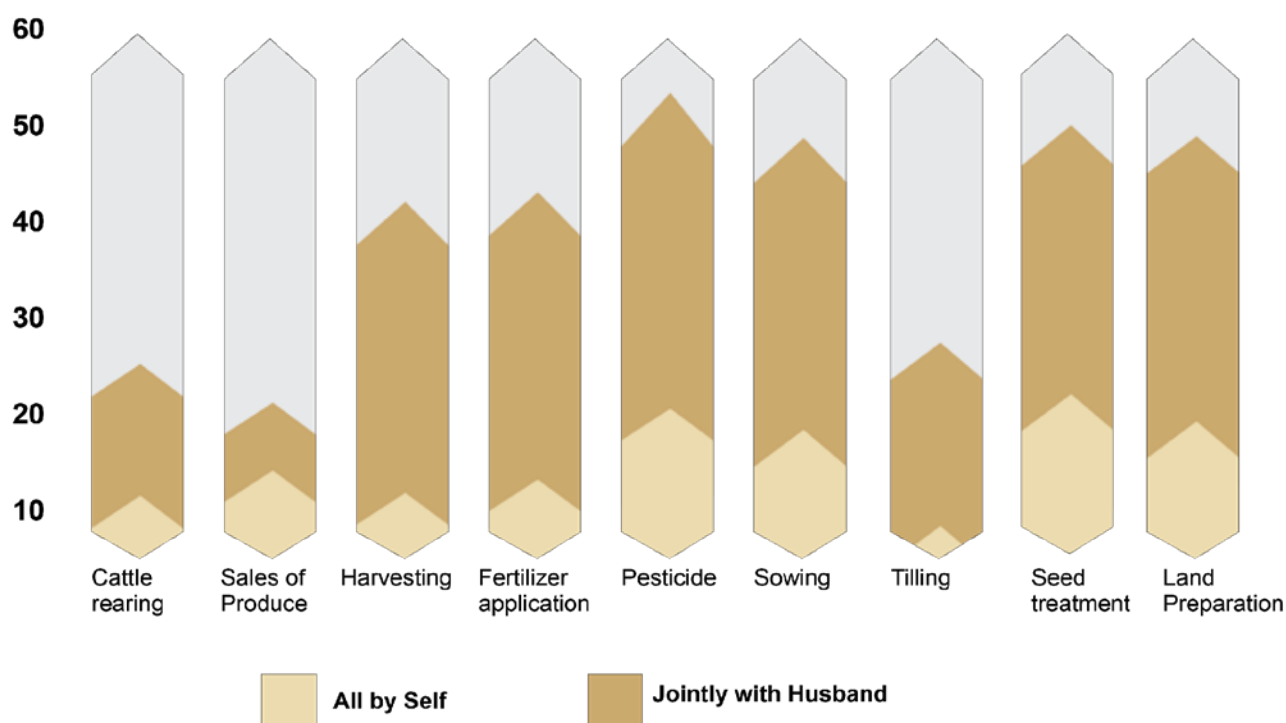


# THE GENDER ANALYSIS

## PARTICIPATION

### Engagement in Economic Activities

#### Participation of women in agricultural activities



***Women participation in agricultural activities is well known, but highly under-recognised and unacknowledged. The findings of the study validates it.***

While 90% of women reported participating in income-generating activities of agriculture, nearly 50% reported participation in animal husbandry as an income-generating activity. Wheat (as the primary crop), soybean, chickpeas, onion, garlic and vegetables are the most common crops grown in the study area. When enquired on the income and expenses, the women were unable to estimate the earnings or expenditure. This is due to the fact that though they participate in cultivation, the women neither have any information on the prices nor do they participate in selling of produce and buying of inputs.

When enquired on the areas of involvement, 100% of women said that they engage in one or the other agricultural activities and 53% of them reported that they participate along with their husbands for land preparation, seed treatment and sowing. A meagre 24% of women participate in the sale of produce along with their husband. Further, when the women were asked if they participated in the cultivation process independently, without

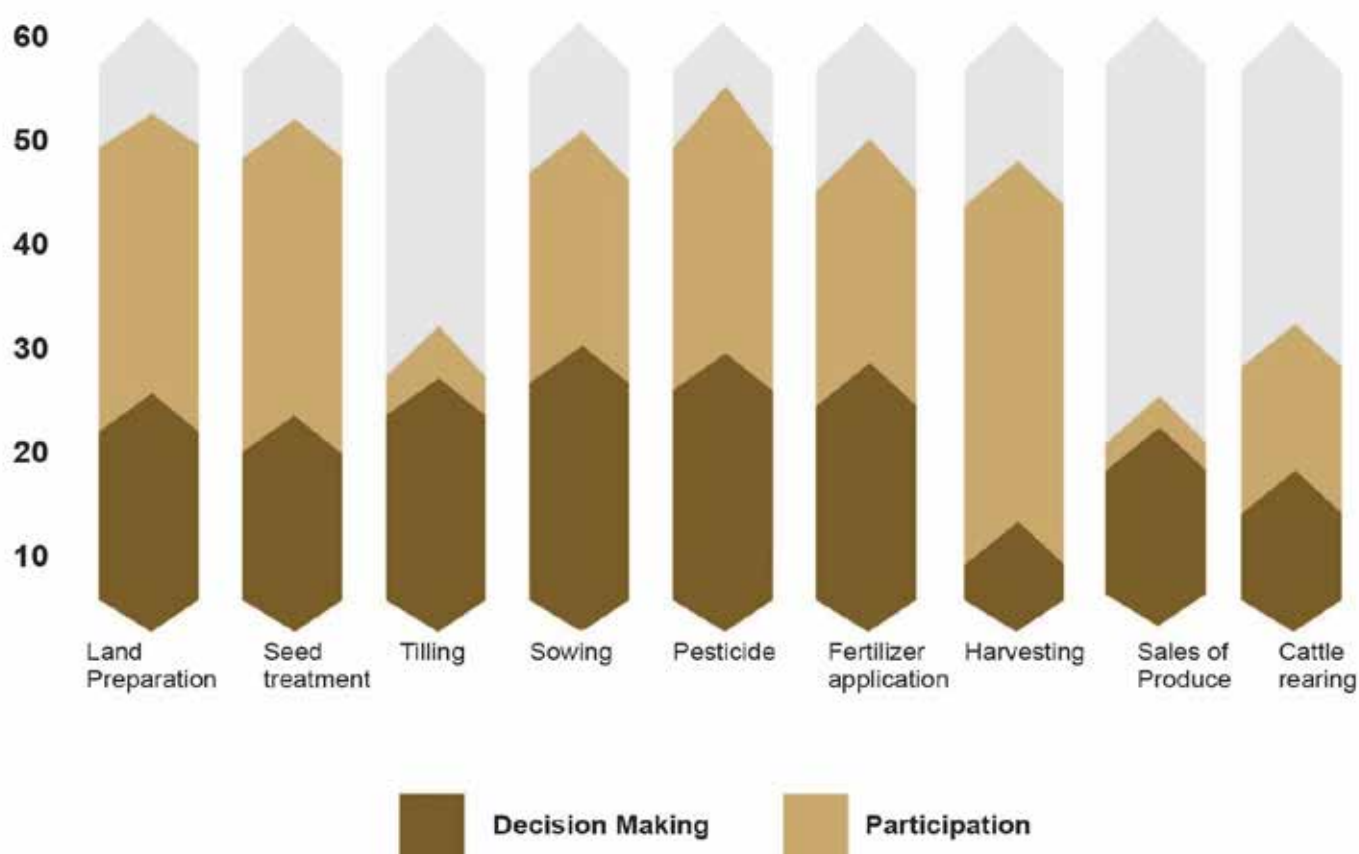
any support from their respective husbands or family members, 19% of them indicated practising seed treatment, 17% said land preparation and 1% indicated tilling.

The analysis suggests that while women are engaged in almost all the agricultural activities, most of them participate along with their family members. The activities that entail strength, or lifting of heavy objects or driving of tractors, women participation has been limited.

There is a need to introduce technologies and equipment that are women-friendly.

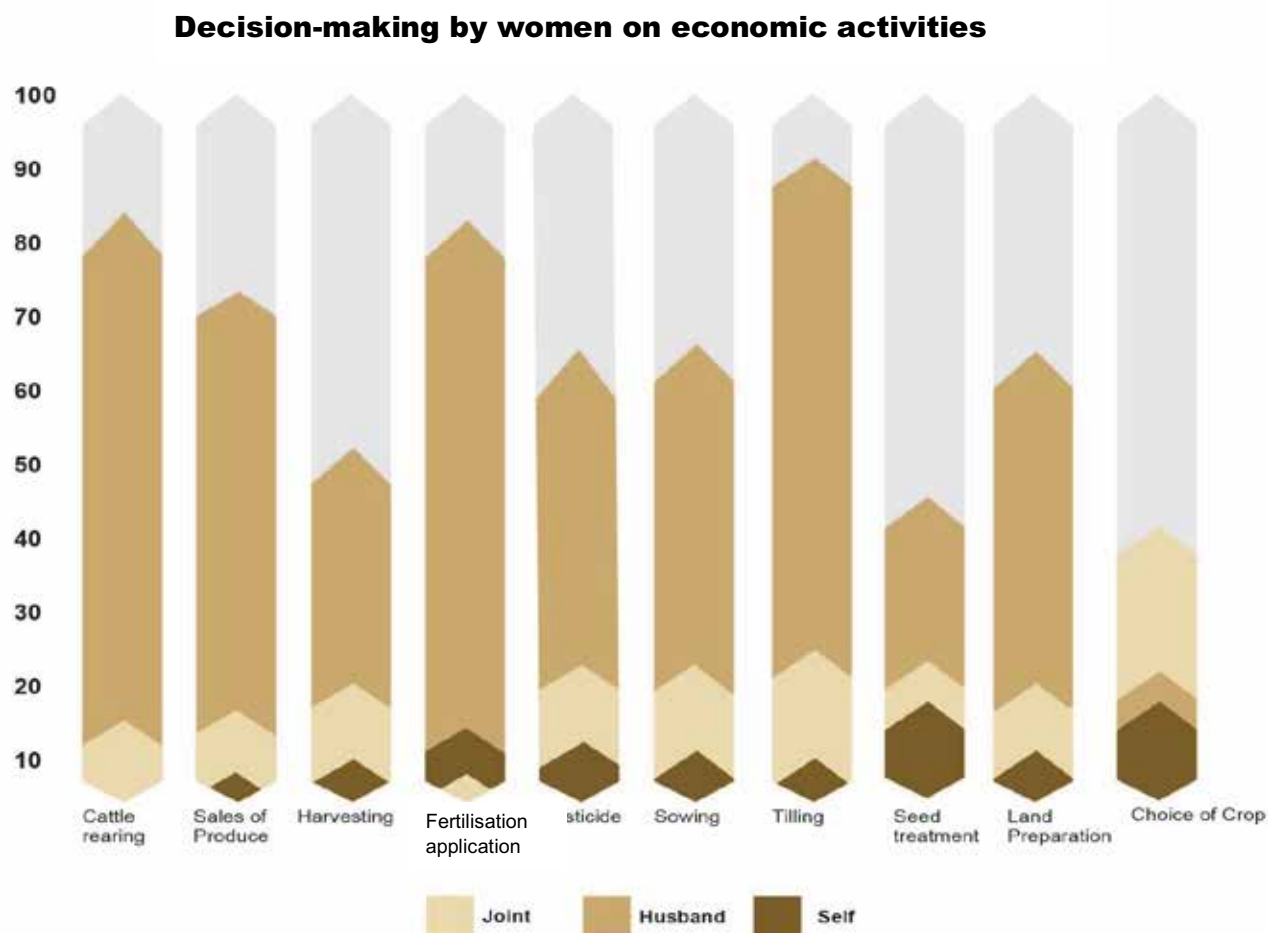
Additionally, if women are empowered to participate in the sale of produce and buying of inputs, they will be in a better position to record the earnings and expenses and have better control over the finances.

### Jointly with Husband - Participation Vs Decision Making



## DECISION-MAKING ON ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

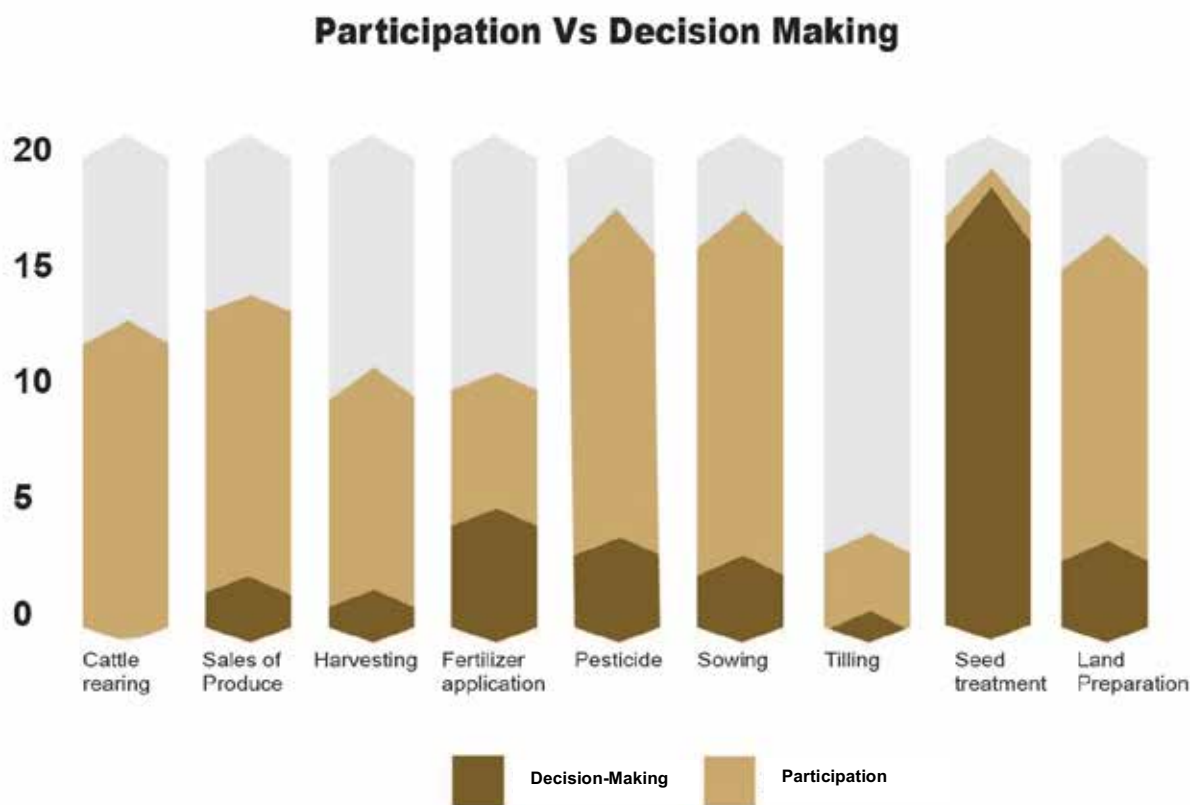
**Limited decision-making powers among women with respect to economic activities indicate extremely low level of empowerment.**



The earlier section highlighte **Decision-Making** women in agricultural activities either by themselves or accompanying their husbands. The data highlighted that women are largely involved in almost all the agricultural activities, however their involvement in decision-making is seen to be minimalistic. Only 19% of the women responded that they take decisions by themselves only for seed treatment and in rest of the activities, their decision-making influence is less than 3%.

When the data was analysed in the light of women participating independently in agricultural activities versus their decision-making power related to the same activities, it was evident that women do not have control over decision-making even though they carry out farming activities. Only exception was in the case of seed treatment where women (19%) said they have control over decision-making. In rest of the case, the decision-making control was mentioned in less than 3% of the cases.

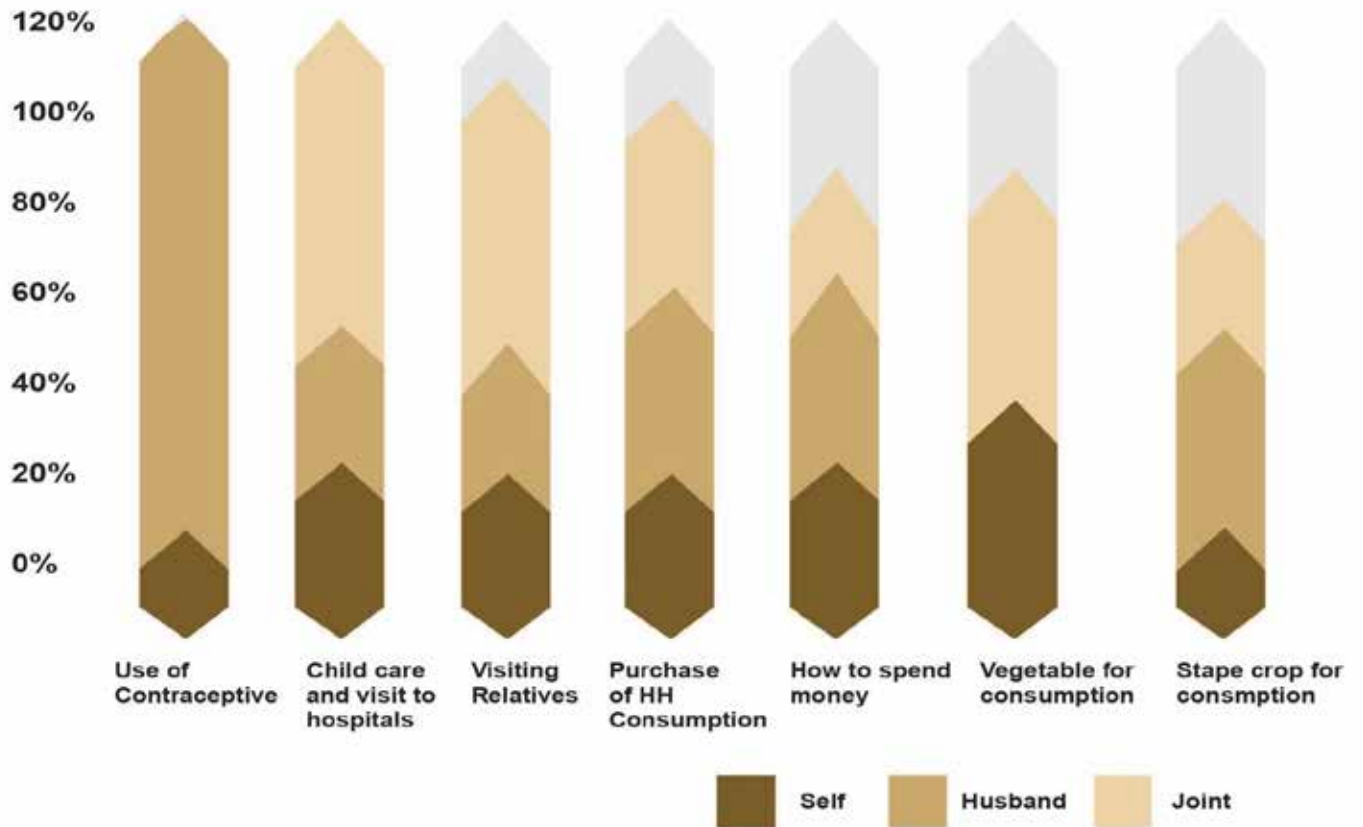
The activities which women perform along with their husbands, the participation of women in decision-making was seen to be only by 50 percent of the respondents, with least participation in decision regarding harvesting.



The data from the study highlights a pertinent problem that has been a part of women empowerment discourses. It was also previously reported by Pandey et al. (2011), Chayal et al. (2013), Mulugeta and Tadesse (2014). Patel et al. (1995) and Parveen (2007) also found that decisions on cropping pattern and marketing of produce were made solely by men. Therefore, what is of grave concern is that no significant impact has been achieved regarding women’s participation in decision-making despite several years of programme to empower women. While there are no ready-made answers, it is critical to observe that engagement of civil society only with an intent to increase yield has not and will never support the cause of women and increase their participation.



## DECISION-MAKING



## HOUSEHOLD DECISION-MAKING

### *Male domination in the household decision-making continues*

At any given time, when an individual has the power to decide on their own either knowing fully about the consequences and follow it up with actions, is referred to be in a state of empowerment. Thus, decision-making ability and power is often used to understand the degree or level of empowerment and used by development agencies to assess the change. In a patriarchal society like India, women have often been left out of the decision-making process and have negligible freedom to decide on their own.

The situation with women in soy growing areas in Madhya Pradesh is no different. Data suggests that almost all household decisions are taken by only the male member and sometimes in discussion with women (which the women consider as joint decision-making). The study attempted to understand the role of women in decision-making in the areas of quantum of produce to be sold or kept for household consumption, money to be spent, purchase of household consumption materials, visit to other family members, number of children to be borne and use of contraceptives.

In most cases, women suggested that they decide jointly on most of these aspects. However, when upon further probe, most of them confirmed that usually the men decide first and later consult with women about their decision. In most cases, the women agree with the husband's decision, which they presume to be a decision taken jointly. The decision with regard to use of contraceptives is taken only by men, indicating the deeply embedded social norm that the power to decide on having children lay with men. In general, it can be observed that women by themselves have either no or very little decision-making power on household matters.

## LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

***Majority of the women have no voice in matters concerning their community***

Leadership or representation of women in community groups represents acceptance of society for women to have a voice on issues concerning their group or community. More than 80% of women reported having no membership, participation or leadership in any groups. Only in case of saving groups, 30% of women mentioned them being members.

## ACCESS

### Use of digital technology

***Limited access to phones in 60% of the women indicates social alienation***

The study assessed the use of technology by women in the soy growing areas of Madhya Pradesh. Apart from mobile phones, women had no access to any other technology or digital instrument. While 81% of women had access to mobile phones, only 30% had smartphones. When enquired on the usage of phone, 60% of them had no control over the phones and had to take permission from their husband and seek support from other family members for making calls or sending text messages.

## FINANCIAL INCLUSION

***In spite of having bank accounts, women are not entitled to subsidies and loans from banks***

***Mary Ellen Iskenderun***, President and CEO, Women's World Banking, says "There is a strong connection between women's access to financial products and services and greater opportunity not only for that woman herself, her family and her community, but really for the nation as a whole".

An article by a member of NITI Aayog said, "The greater financial inclusion of women can go a long way in closing the gender gap. Financial inclusion of women enhances their self-confidence and places financial decision-making power in their hands resulting in large developmental payoffs. It is often cited as an essential tool in helping women in particular rise from poverty. Currently, the contribution of Indian women to the GDP (17%), is not only far below the global average (37 per cent), but is also less than that of China (41%) and sub-Saharan Africa (39%)."

In the context of the current study, aspects like having bank accounts, making banking transactions, availing loans and subsidies and having insurance cover for self, family and crop were explored.

The drive for women to have bank accounts by the Central Government seems to have yielded positive results with 80% of women reporting having bank accounts in their name and around 4% holding the bank accounts jointly with their husbands. The study found that 17% of women had no bank accounts either independently or jointly. For the women who had bank accounts, 90% reported to be making banking transactions. However, they also highlighted that the transactions were done with the help of their husbands.

When the question was posed on whether they received any subsidies in their account, 90% of women replied in negative. This indicates that without having any collateral, especially ownership of land, and in spite of having bank accounts, women involved in agricultural activities are not able to access government subsidies.

While 41% of women indicated that they have availed loans, only 28% of them had taken it from banks. Majority of women preferred taking loans from self-help groups (SHGs). Meeting household financial requirements was cited as the major reason for availing the loans.

The study found that 90% of women did not have insurance cover for self. Among others, lack of awareness, competing priorities for money to be paid as premium and lack of trust on insurance companies to honour the claims were cited as the prime reasons for not having insurance cover. A similar experience was shared when they were enquired about insurance cover for any of the family members or for crop losses.

## **ACCESS TO CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT SERVICES**

***Majority of women are untouched by the efforts of government or civil society towards capacity building on agricultural practices***

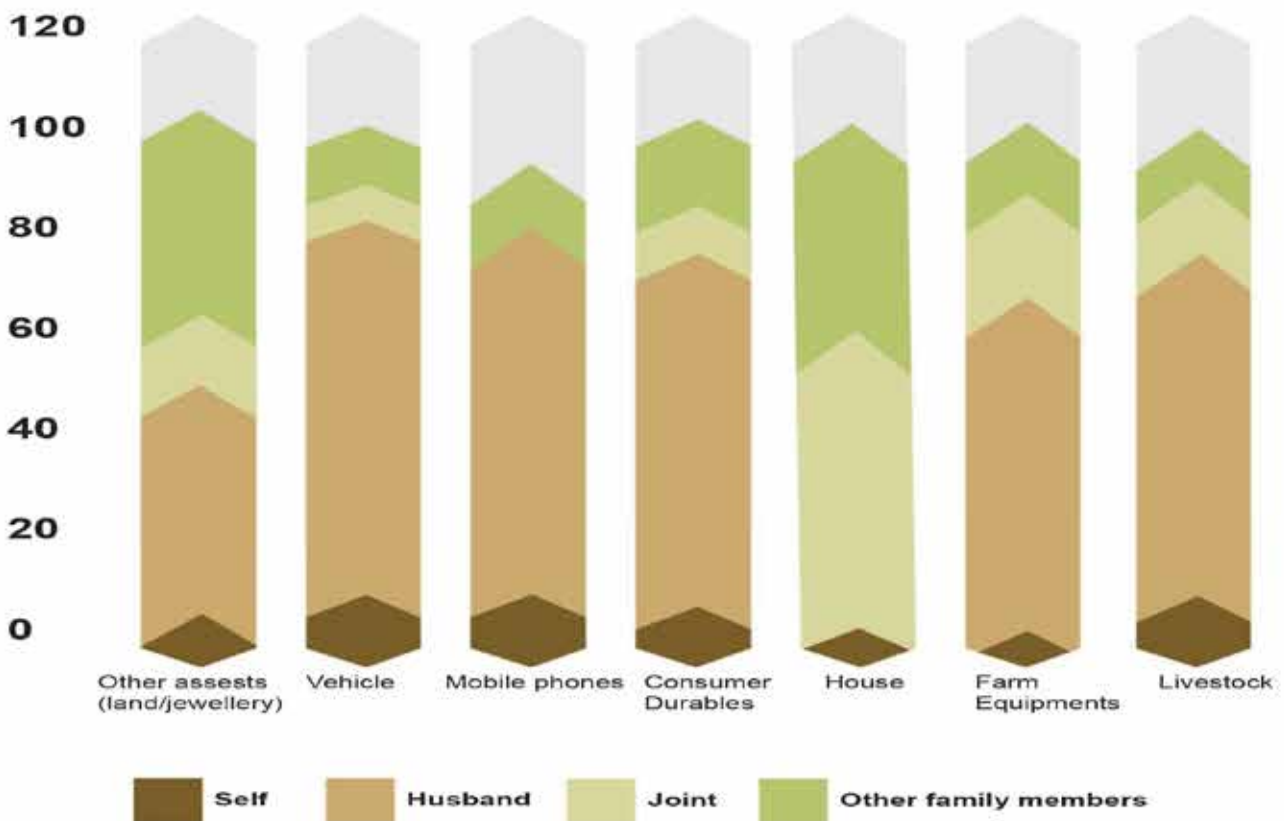
Women were asked if they are exposed to any capacity enhancement services on agricultural activities. More than 80% of them reported in negative. It is ironic that in spite of participating in all the agricultural activities, women are left behind when it comes to capacity building. It is critical to observe that engagement of civil society with an intent to increase yield will no longer support the cause of women and increase their participation. The programme design needs transformative actions moving beyond capacity building on good agricultural practices.

## **CONTROL**

### **Asset Ownership**

***Higher vulnerability among women due to lack of ownership of household or productive assets***

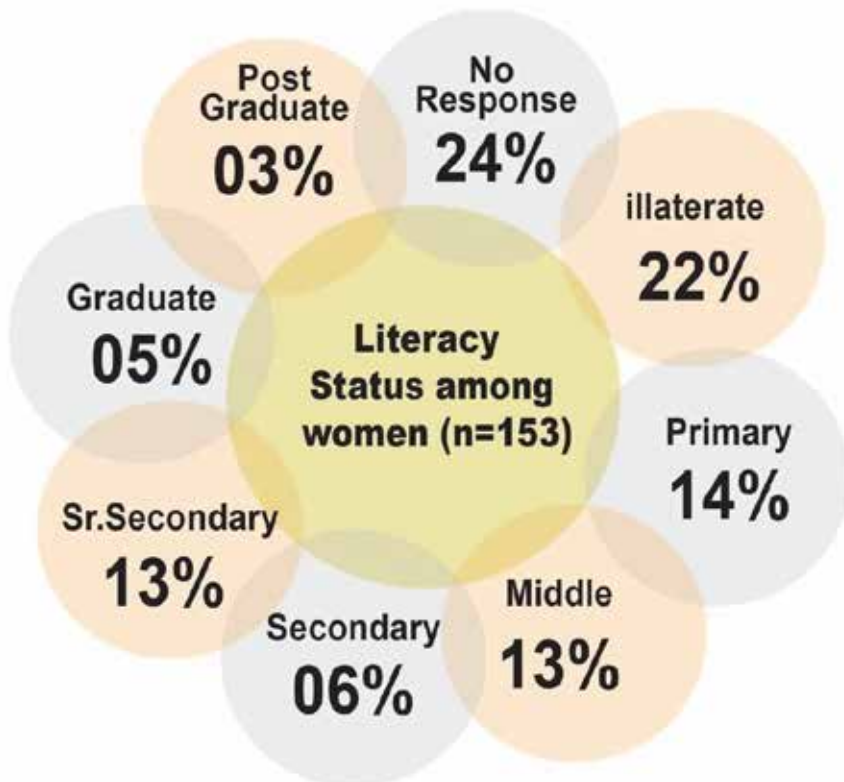
## OWNERSHIP OF ASSESTS



Asset ownership in the form of land, house, jewellery, agricultural equipment is known to provide safety, social status and sense of empowerment among individuals; more so for women as having assets in their name can reduce their vulnerability. A study by Panda and Agarwal in 2005, indicated that 49% of women experienced physical violence and 84% experienced psychological violence. In contrast, those who owned both land and house reported dramatically less physical as well as psychological violence (7% and 16% respectively).

The study attempted at assessing the asset ownership and the decision-making process to procure assets in the household in the soy-growing areas of Madhya Pradesh. Very few women had ownership of any of the assets or consumer durables, with a high percentage of ownership of mobile phones. When enquired further, the women suggested that the ownership of asset in their name is largely because of government subsidies or lesser rate of interest from banks (if asset is procured in women name).

Women were asked about their role in decision-making regarding buying and selling of assets. The situation was equally concerning with less than 10% of women deciding on their own. More than 40% of women reported men having a major say in the decisions, while 30% claimed the decisions were taken jointly by women and men.



## MOBILITY

***High dependency on male members to accompany women to venture out of their villages***

Women in rural India are generally home bound and have restricted travel movement. Travel restrictions are largely due to social norms around a woman's exposure to the outside world and safety concerns along with a lack of self confidence to travel alone.

Data from the study reveals that the women in soy growing areas of Madhya Pradesh travel for religious purposes, meeting relatives and for purchase of household items, but only when accompanied by any of the male members of the house. However, when it comes to travel for buying and selling of agricultural produce and inputs, purchase of assets, the women in the area do not get involved in travel or discussions. Not a single woman who said that she travels outside her village alone for any purpose.

## WELFARE

### Literacy

***Low literacy levels act as a barrier for women empowerment and require programmes to include actions on changing social norms and doing advocacy with male members for inclusion of women in economic and decision-making activities.***

The respondents interviewed for the purpose of the study were largely (84%) in productive age group of 22 to 56 years. Among them, 38% of the women respondent (n=153) were in the age group of 21 to 32 years and another 33% in the age group of 33 to 44 years. Age of the respondents is important in the context of their participation in the economic activities and the household decision-making.

Given that the large part of the sample was in the productive age and part of a changing (relatively more exposed to concepts of empowerment) society, it was crucial to assess their literacy levels. Literacy plays an important role in ensuring that women understand the consequences of marginalization and the steps to be taken for empowerment. The

study found that 22% of the women respondents (n=153) were illiterate, 15% attended only primary level of education and 14% completed education upto 8th standard/grade. Only 5% (8 among 153) had completed graduation. A staggering 23% of women were hesitant in providing their educational status, fearing social stigma.

When compared with the literacy level of men (n=49), it was found that 50% or more of them had either studied till 12<sup>th</sup> standard or are graduates, a stark contrast to women, where 50% of them were found to have educational levels below 10th standard.

When enquired further, the women spoke about absence of higher educational institutions in the vicinity of the village, the need to support mother at home and early marriage as the prime reasons for low levels of literacy. Literacy has a huge implication on the engagement of women in economic activities, their control over resources and decision-making abilities.

## **HEALTH AND HEALTH SERVICES**

### ***Majority of women use cloth during periods and either burn or throw it after use***

Menstrual health and hygiene has gained prominence considering that several studies in India highlighted the plight of women and inadequate understanding of good hygiene practices. In recent times, there has been heightened efforts by the government and civil society to address menstrual hygiene with capacity building and availability of low cost sanitary pads.

Under these circumstances, the study intended to understand the status of menstrual practices in the Soy growing areas of Madhya Pradesh and assess if women in these regions are aware and adopt better menstrual hygiene practices.

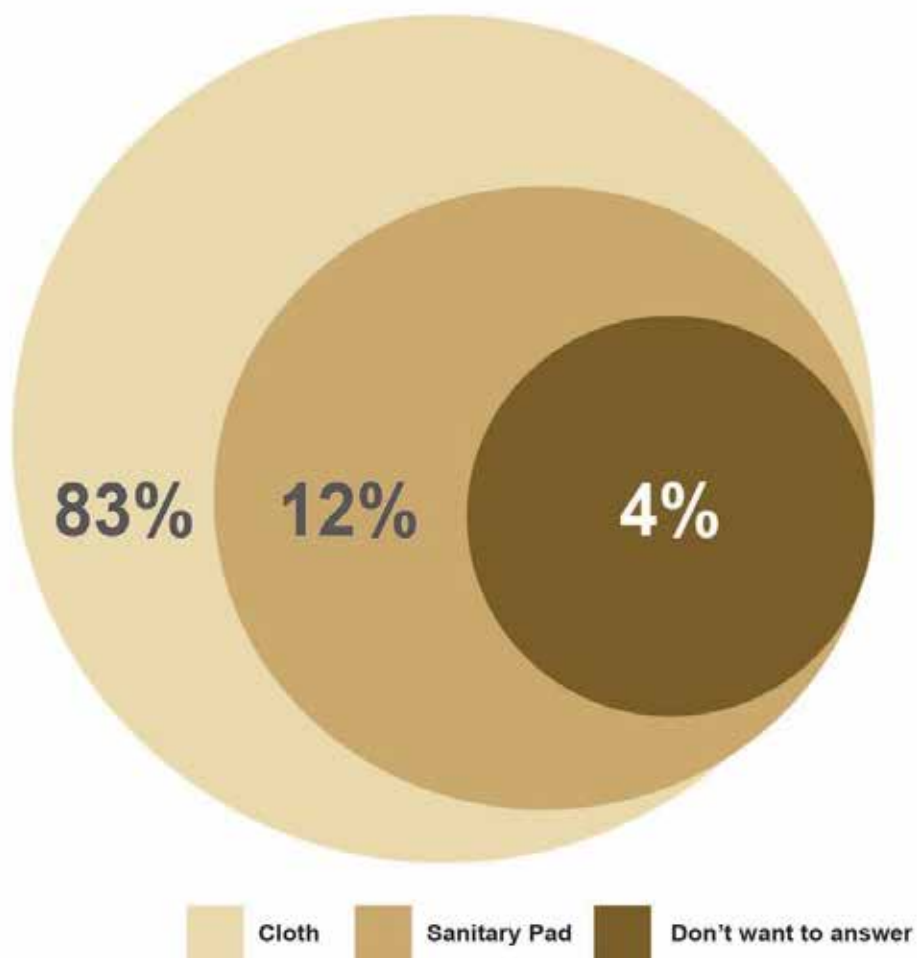
Ironically, the findings of the study indicate that more than 80% of women (n=114) use cloth materials or rags during menstruation and a very small number (12%) use sanitary pads. On probing further, the women revealed that cost and habit are the main reasons for them to continue using cloth. Unavailability of sanitary pads was mentioned by 50% of women. It was revealed that 48% of women disposed of the used cloth and 45% of women burnt it. A small percentage of women (3%) washed and reused it.

On asked if the women had ever received any awareness or capacity building training on menstrual hygiene, 82% of women responded in negative.

Data suggests severe lack of awareness, low of hygienic practices and poor disposal of used cloth. With 80% or more of women using cloth, the women in soy growing area of Madhya Pradesh is negating the trend of positive changes in women health.

Having understood the menstrual hygiene practices, the study further enquired on the availability of medical services in or nearby the village they inhabit. The responses from women about availability of medical facilities and affordability showed a positive trend. Two-thirds of women indicated the presence of ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers in the village, access to public health centres and access to ambulances.

However, three-fourths of women respondents reported that they do not have access to good medical services in the village and have to travel to nearby town for medical treatment. The study further attempted to understand if women had the decision-making power to decide for themselves when to see a doctor or do they depend on husband or family members to get themselves treated for any ailment. Only 20% of women (n=148) are able to decide for themselves, indicating severe levels of vulnerability and disempowerment among women.



## NUTRITION

### *Extremely low levels of dietary diversity among women*

Madhya Pradesh is known as the Soy Bowl of India, by virtue of being the largest soy producing state. It ranks fourth in the overall vegetable production in the country. In spite of this, the state has widespread malnourishment, specifically among women and children. The study interviewed women to understand the diversity in their diet and assess how many food groups they consume in a day.

Dietary diversity is considered a quick proxy measure to understand the nutritional status of individuals. FAO describes nine different food groups to assess the diversity, specifically among women. In a 24-hour recall, women respondents were asked on their food consumption throughout the day. The data is analysed by bracketing the food consumed under nine different food groups. According to the FAO, consumption of at least five food groups is a good diversity for better nutritional outcomes.



56% of women respondents in the study reported consumption of only two varieties in their diet. The most prominent ones are cereals (wheat) and lentils. It is a social norm in India, where women are supposed to eat after everyone else. Hence, their consumption of vegetables is low. Only 29% of women reported of consuming three food groups. The data validates the findings other studies that pointed out extremely low level of nutrition among women in Madhya Pradesh.



# GENDER ANALYSIS

## SANPSHOT

### PARTICIPATION

The study establishes the participation of women in agriculture. But even after their active participation in agriculture they are hardly involved in any decision making. Even at the house hold level women do not take decisions on their own. Participation in different types groups is also very limited.

- Women grow wheat as the primary crop, followed by soybean, chickpeas, onion, garlic and vegetable
- 19% of the women responded that they make decision by themselves
- decision making influence was less than 3%.
- Women reported that household decisions are either made by the male member or discussed with women
- 80% of women reported having no membership, participation or leadership in any groups.
- 30% of women mentioned they being the member of Savings group

### ACCESS

In the study it was found that women have access to a few resources. Majority of women own a phone and has bank account in their name. But when it comes to other productive assets such as land, agriculture equipment etc less than 10% women reported to own them. In spite of having bank account 90% women never received any subsidy. This indicates that without having ownership to land and inspite of having bank accounts, women even though engaging themselves in the agricultural activities are not able to access the subsidies of the government.

- 81% of the women had access to mobile phone of which only 30% had smart phones
- 80% of women reported having bank accounts in their name, 4% are holding the bank account along with their husbands
- 17% of women had no bank accounts
- 90% of the women who has bank account, reported to have had made banking transactions
- 90% of women never received any subsidies in their account
- 90% of women did not have insurance cover.
- Less than 10% of the women reported to have ownership to any assets or consumer durables.

## CONTROL

Women though have an access to a few resources have been found to have almost no control over it. They depend on male members of the family for using the phone or doing banking transactions. The mobility of women is majorly restricted to visiting religious places and meeting relatives that too they would be accompanied by a male member.

- 60% of them who had mobile phone, has no control over the phones
- The decision making of buying and selling of assets, less than 10% of women decided on their own. More than 40% of women reported men having a major say in the decision and another 30% felt the decision was made jointly by women and men
- Women travel for religious purposes, meeting relatives and for purchase of household items. However, when it comes to travel for buying and selling of agricultural produce and inputs, purchase of assets, the women in the area do not get involved in travel or in the discussions. Further, the women reported to travel only when accompanied by male members of the house.

## Welfare

Literacy amongst women was found to be low with only 5% who had completed the graduation and 22% being illiterate. Menstrual hygiene and nutrition level was also found to be in a dismal state.

- 22% of the women respondents were found to be illiterate, 15% having attended school only uptill primary level of education, and another 14% having completed education upto standard/grade 8<sup>th</sup>. A meagre 5% (8 among 153) had completed graduation.
- More than 80% of women use cloths or rags during menstruation and a very small number 12% use sanitary pads.
- 48% of women said they throw the used cloth and another 45% of women burn it. A small percentage of women (3%) wash and reuse it.
- 82% of women indicated never having received any training or awareness programmes on menstrual hygiene.
- Dietary diversity among women to be extremely low with 56% of women respondents reporting consumption of only two varieties in their diet. The most prominent ones are cereals (wheat) and Lentils.

## CONCLUSION

There is an urgent need to address the issues highlighted across all aspects mentioned in this report. The insights from the study is of a grave concern and it appears that across all the important aspects of women involvement, capacity and capability. Even after efforts from different agencies there is either very limited or absolutely no movement towards empowering women. Hence it is highly recommended that the programme management team of Solidaridad develop a comprehensive gender inclusive strategies and back it up with appropriate actions.





**Solidaridad**