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# WOMEN, AGROECOLOGY & GENDER EQUALITY



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# WOMEN, AGROECOLOGY & GENDER EQUALITY

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# Women, Agroecology & Gender Equality

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# Introduction

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This booklet is intended to serve as a basic background resource for grassroots groups, to make links between gender and agroecology, and to understand agroecology's potential to address gender inequalities.

Agroecology is fast growing as a social movement around the world today. It is showing real potential in solving the multiple crises that our planet and humanity face—hunger, climate change, water scarcity, environmental contamination and unemployment. It is a true grassroots solution, accessible and affordable for the majority of the world's resource-poor rural communities. But, can it also make sure that both men and women benefit equally? Does it have the potential to challenge gender-based inequalities in societies? Can it ensure that women become decision makers at home and leaders in society just like men? If so, how? What would such agroecology projects look like?

We start with some very basic concepts about gender, patriarchy, gender roles, and how all these relate to agriculture. We then look at how capitalist developments in agriculture have intensified gender inequalities and marginalized women. Following this, we look at the current status of women in agriculture in India, including at their rights and entitlements as enshrined in the constitution of India. We then look at agroecology—its contested definitions today, and under what conditions it creates gender equality and when it does not. We look at its impacts at the household level and how it can create more opportunities for women at the community level.

Finally, we provide some success stories from India, where agroecology has proven to be a crucial vehicle for gender equality. The cases of Tamil Nadu Women's Collective, Kudumbashree, and Deccan Development Society show us examples of the most oppressed women—mainly women from particular castes and landless communities, shifting towards collective farming—are gaining access to land, learning agroecology, acquiring food autonomy, and turning into independent, bold, leaders and farmers of today. These experiences have also changed their position in the household. The case of the Manipur's Rural Women's Upliftment Society shows us that even in societies living under military occupation and violence, agroecology can provide spaces for women to work in solidarity and gain livelihoods, income and support. Such experiences also give women the confidence to do more political work and challenge unjust laws, including customary laws in their communities that they find to be discriminatory towards women.





Photo of a Woman farmer by Rucha Chitnis

## Some Basic Concepts about Gender

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*“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”* (Simone de Beauvoir 1953)

### a. What is Gender

Often there is the wrong idea that gender means woman, or that gender issues mean women's issues. Yes, many gender-oriented programs do focus on women specifically but that is because women tend to have less power in society, they face greater inequalities, and face structural and systemic discrimination. Of course not all women are the same, and least of all in India's agricultural societies, where class, caste and religion greatly affect one's place in society.

Everyone has a gender—whether man, woman, or others. Gender is not the same as biological sex; you can be born with male or female sexual characteristics but one's gender is the result of social construction. At birth, people are categorized as man or woman, and then face expectations as to how they should be and behave, what they should wear, what roles they are expected to play in the family and society, and how much power they have. Gender is therefore not about one's biological sex, it is more about one's position in society, it is about power relations, it is about equality or inequality

between women and men, and within social, economic and political systems.

In other words, society tells us what our gender is and defines our roles, tasks, functions, position, and other social, cultural and economic factors in public and private life. For e.g. one may be born a biological male, but may not feel like a man, or dress like a man, or want to do the things that men are supposed to do, and may not want to be a man at all. However, society ascribes masculine qualities to those born as biological males, and feminine qualities to those born as biological females. They believe that this is “natural,” but as we will see, this is not natural but learned through conditioning.

Gender is assigned and taught to us through socialization from when we are young. For example, girls are told what they can do and cannot do, how they should dress, how they should talk, they should play with dolls not tools, should be submissive, should learn housework. Or boys may be told from a young age that they should not cry, they should be “manly,” that they should be unemotional and aggressive, that they should not do housework and that they have to be sporty and not like dolls, etc. People learn such gender appropriate behaviors and attitudes from a young age through their families, religion, media, and other social institutions (even schools and colleges). When people are not able to fit into these stereotypes, it can cause stress, mental pressure, depression, rejection, and a host of other problems.

People who do not identify with the gender ascribed to them and live beyond the gender roles expected by society are called transgender. When people stray away from or try to step outside these stereotypical gender norms, there is usually a backlash from a conservative society. People generally do not like to accept something outside the norm. If a male in a family identifies as transgender, wears girls' clothes, then people may make fun of him, or his family may reject him. Similarly, if a woman tries to break the rules by doing “man's work,” wearing men's clothes, staying out late, rejecting housework, then people may raise their eyebrows. But, such negative attitudes are the result of social conditioning and a manufactured idea of what is normal and what is not. Such norms must be challenged, and attitudes changed.

Gender-based discrimination is built-in into certain traditions and customs and this makes it seem as if it were normal or natural. For example, families and communities often celebrate the birth of a baby boy for days, but the birth of a baby girl is treated with silence and sometimes with violence towards the mother as if it were a curse. Such discriminatory practices are taken as normal and hardly questioned (Purnima and Mamidipudi, 2015).

Even if they are the most common, man and woman are not the only two genders; some people do not identify with the strict binary division of man or women. For example, the *hijra* community in India is a third gender that does not fall into the categories of man or woman, and are today legally recognized. The Indian Supreme Court has stated that “it is the right of every human being to choose their gender”

(Bearak, 2016). Transgender has different names in different areas of India such as “hijra,” ”kothi,” “kinnar,” “shiv-shakti” or “aravani.” There is an entire gradient of genders and people who self-identify with various scales in between man or woman.

While gender is a very important part of everyone's identity, it cannot be separated from other categories such as caste, religion, class, etc. We must be able to look at all of these collectively as all of these impact one's place in society.



USAID Bangladesh - A group of hijras in Bangladesh

## b. Gender and Power

Society is full of hierarchical power relationships; for example, class and caste are just two types of hierarchical power relationships prevalent in India. These are relationships where some are more powerful than others, and exercise power over others. Gender is also one such category; it is one of the most persistent forms of invisible power in the world. Gender shapes power and gender relations are power relations (Koester 2015). Men exercise power over women not only in the private sphere of the household but also outside at the highest levels of decision-making. Men and women often consider women's lack of power as 'natural' and appropriate. This reduces significantly women's access to decision-making as they may lack the self-confidence to participate effectively, or are actively

prevented from speaking up in public meetings.

But, many challenge the idea that power is mostly viewed as “power-over”—which is getting someone to do something that one wants by using authority, domination and control. There are also alternative ideas of power—as “power to” do something, the ability to attain an end, or a “power-with” which describes a



Women leaving after a Self Help Group meeting in West Singhbhum, Jharkhand. Photo by Divya Jain

collective action or agency, or “power within,” which implies a sense of self-confidence, self-esteem and dignity (Miller and Vene Klasen, 2002).

Why is it important to view power differently? Well, because such alternative views of power show us that power does not always rest with the powerful, it is not always negative and oppressive. It can also be positive and such forms of power can be exercised by the disempowered as well. As Lukes points out, “how we think about power may serve to reproduce and reinforce power structures and relations, or alternatively it may challenge and subvert them (Lukes 2005).” Such alternative views of power are important for people trying to bring about social change, which includes social movements, as they show us that such power can be galvanized and used as a force for change.

### **c. What is Patriarchy**

Patriarchy literally means rule of the father. It is a social system where the woman is subordinate to man; she is controlled, discriminated against and her secondary status is established via control over her productive or labour power, reproductive power, sexuality, mobility, ownership and access to property and other resources (Purnima and Mamidipudi 2015).

Patriarchy pervades almost all societies of the world at varying levels and forms. In this system, men hold and exercise power and dominate over women both in the household and in public; they occupy public positions, inherit family property, and make household and societal decisions. Patriarchy is also about hierarchy. Not only do men control women, but older men dominate younger men. Both men and women play a role in sustaining patriarchal norms and values.

This does not mean that women do not have any power, women also exercise power according to what is allowed within the rules of patriarchy. A stereotypical example of this is a mother-in-law who dominates her daughter-in-law. Often, people think that the natural opposite concept of patriarchy is matriarchy. While this may be true in the sense of language, but when



**Women in a handloom cluster meeting near Bikaner, Rajasthan.  
Photo by Divya Jain**

seen from the perspective of power, this is not necessarily the case because patriarchy is also quite similar to patriarchy in that it is also about power, control and authority by one specific gender (Purnima and Mamidipudi 2015). A truly different system to patriarchy then is not patriarchy but gender equality where there is no discrimination or control over others based on one's gender.

Such ideas that men should control social, cultural, religious, economic and other institutions have emerged as a process throughout history. Religious texts such as the Vedas in Hinduism, and most other religions, have maintained men's control over women.

The Vedic Period (1500-800 BCE) saw women being 'honored' as sacred within the Hindu culture (Livne 2015). This meant that a woman was to serve as a beacon of chastity and purity. This period also saw the establishment of the institution of marriage which obliged women to remain in the household, and to birth a son. Following the Vedic Period, from around 500 BCE to 1850 CE, this dichotomous role for women (as sacred yet submissive) was further cemented. Women came to be regarded as both an object of control and one of worship. They were revered as goddesses yet were not allowed to participate in religious ceremonies, which were controlled by men. Women became defined by the standards set by their husbands and families, and had to adhere to these standards. Practices such as Sati further ingrained a woman's servile and devotional role to her husband, without whom she did not have a right to live.

In the Christian Bible too, there are examples of women's subordination, such as in the texts about the creation myth of Adam and Eve; that Eve was created from Adam's ribs and considered his subordinate. Most if not all religions prescribe behaviors and norms that maintain men's control over women.

Patriarchy is a political-social system of male domination that has impacts on multiple facets of individual and collective life. It is about the relations of power between and among men and women. Women's subjugation is heightened by the hierarchical conditions that apply to the class or caste they are identified with.

We can see this phenomenon expressed in values, different customs, expectations and the different institutions of the society. We can point towards some of the general characteristics of patriarchy (Comanne 2010, Serres 2017) :-



She has just finished preparing the yarn. Woman from Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh. Photo by Divya Jain

1. *Women are devalued* : Women have double-work burden; they perform hours and hours of unpaid household work, while many also work outside the household for additional income for their families. Women's housework, taken to be feminine work, does not receive the same status as men's work. There is an idea of a hierarchy here, where household work is lower and less valued as compared to men's work. Women's household work is expected and often taken for granted by their families. Most women are overworked if their double work burden are taken into account.
2. *Traditional masculine qualities are held up as central, while other feminine qualities are considered subordinate* : Masculinity and femininity are “qualities”, and there is a hierarchy- as in one is considered superior to the other in a patriarchal system. The so called traditional masculine qualities such as power, rationality, control, competitiveness are attributed to males and held as superior attributes in a patriarchal system. Feminine attributes such as being emotional, expressive, compassionate, and nurturing, are attributed to females and seen as subordinate qualities.
3. *Domination is represented as a natural reality* : The discourse that dominates patriarchy is that inequality is an unquestionable natural phenomenon. Such discourses can easily be internalized by the oppressed, and they can start to believe that they are indeed weaker because nature intended it so. It is not only men but also women who themselves believe that women are inferior and they keep other women in check. The presence of social struggles that put forth alternative discourses and viewpoints are crucial to countering this view.
4. *Lack of rights* : The fact that women can vote today may be taken for granted by many young women, but this right and others were attained after more than a century of women's struggle across the globe. In India, fortunately the constitution written by Ambedkar gave women equal human rights from the beginning. Newer laws have ensured that women have equal right to property, protection against exploitation, protection in marriage, protection against dowry and others. The reality however is different, because the subordinate status of women in society has made it impossible for them to realize their rights (School of Open Learning 2017).
5. *Violence against women* : Violence is a norm in patriarchy; it is the result of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, and the discrimination faced by women. Violence can be physical, such as domestic abuse or rape, but also psychological- such as blackmail, emotional abuse, stalking, intimidation. It can also manifest in financial and economic areas- such as denial of resources, lack of access to credit, unequal or no pay for equal work. Violence against women is a near universal reality today, existing in most societies, income brackets, classes and cultures. In India, the case of bride burning for dowry, consistent dowry related abuse, or acid attacks are rampant even today, and domestic violence and rape are also common. Female feticide continues, demonstrating violence before the women are even born.

#### **d. What are Gender Roles**

The term “gender role” refers to the traditional ideas of how society thinks men and women should behave. These are learned through socialization. Every society has a certain norm or rule as to how men and women should behave, if someone strays from those rules, they could face punishment from society- for e.g. people may make fun of them, or not support them etc.

Traditional gender roles in India for e.g could be that women are supposed to stay at home and take care of children, while men are supposed to work outside and bring home money. If a women from a conservative family tries to work outdoors, or stay out late, then she may face resistance from the family. Similarly if a man tries to stay at home and take care of the family and children, cook and clean instead of being the breadwinner, then he could be seen as “less manly” and face stigma.

#### **e. Gender Roles in Agriculture**

In all societies, there is a division of roles in agriculture. Traditionally, women performed certain tasks such as seed saving, processing, backyard livestock keeping while men performed others like plough operations. Such divisions differed across regions depending on their cultural values. For example in certain cultures, the plough was only used by men and women were expected to remain at home carrying out other work. In other cultures women had their own farming systems and commonly



**A woman farmer from Uttarakhand returning in the evening after collecting fodder for almost the whole day. Photo by Divya Jain**

worked outdoors. Today, as cultures have changed, such roles have also shifted, and women's roles in farming are increasing and there is a general underestimation and undervaluation of their work in development policies. In some of the farm activities like processing and storage, women predominate so strongly that man workers are numerically insignificant (Das 2015).

There continue to be differences between regions and cultures. In India, there are significant differences across caste and class. A general tendency is that agricultural labourers and agrarian working class women come from particular castes while women from other castes and landed families typically do not work outside the house in the fields, but they do play other roles in the agricultural operations with seeds, livestock, processing as some examples.

## How Capitalist Interventions/ Conventional Agriculture have changed Gender Relations and Dispossessed Women\_\_\_\_\_

Ester Boserup's (1970) seminal work on gender and agriculture looked at women's role in agriculture systems. It challenged the assumption that modernization will improve the position of women and argued that female farming systems, especially from Africa where she conducted research, were getting marginalized. She argued that capitalist penetration of subsistence agriculture in Africa had led to marginalization of subsistence agriculture in which women dominated. Capitalist agriculture recognized only male farming systems. Hence when colonizers trained farmers in modern technology and cash cropping they focused only on male farmers. This also reduced production. Further, the introduction of private ownership of land by colonizers marginalized women's position in rural areas as land was registered on men's names. From being cultivators they became unpaid workers. Boserup, back then urged for the inclusion of women in capitalist development, which was later challenged by many gender activists. But, her contribution in describing the marginalization and roles of women was very important.

Looking at the role of conventional farming in today's world, almost forty years after Boserup's work, we find that things are still not very different. In this list compiled by the IFOAM – we can see how conventional farming is a men's world and contributes to gender bias (IFOAM 2007) :-

- It creates obstacles for women to own farms due to high initial investments for machinery and external inputs such as pesticides, fertilizers, and genetically modified seeds.
- Compromises the health of workers through exposure to chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Pesticides are particularly damaging to women's reproductive health, causing increased incidences of miscarriages and birth defects.
- Weakens people's control over seeds and traditional knowledge through increased corporate control through patents. Companies today are gaining more and more control of seed, just ten corporations control more than 75% of the global seed market (Gura 2013).
- Causes environmental degradation and displacement that often disproportionately affects women and children.
- A focus on monoculture market oriented crops takes land and resources away from food, usually a responsibility of women.

## Women in Agriculture

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“In Indian Himalayas, a pair of bulls work 1,064 hours, a man 1,212 hours and a woman 3,485 hours in a year on a one hectare farm” (Shiva 1991)

### a. Status of Indian Women in Agriculture

(Kelkar 2007, Saxena 2012, Mun Ghosh and Ghosh 2014, MAKAAAM 2016)

1. *Feminization of agriculture* : As the agrarian crisis deepens and incomes from agriculture drop, many men have started to migrate in order to earn money for their families. In turn, women remain on the farm and

farming is increasingly becoming a women's activity. Today 48 percent of all male workers are in agriculture as against 75 percent of all female workers, and this gap is rising. This does not however imply that women have become empowered because they now possibly control farming operations, in fact the



Woman farmer from Manipur. Photo by Rucha Chitnis

opposite is true – women are taking up the tasks formerly done by men, such as land preparation, cultivation of crops, spraying pesticides, harvesting, post-harvesting and marketing of the produce, but at lower wages and fewer rights over productive resources and associated services.

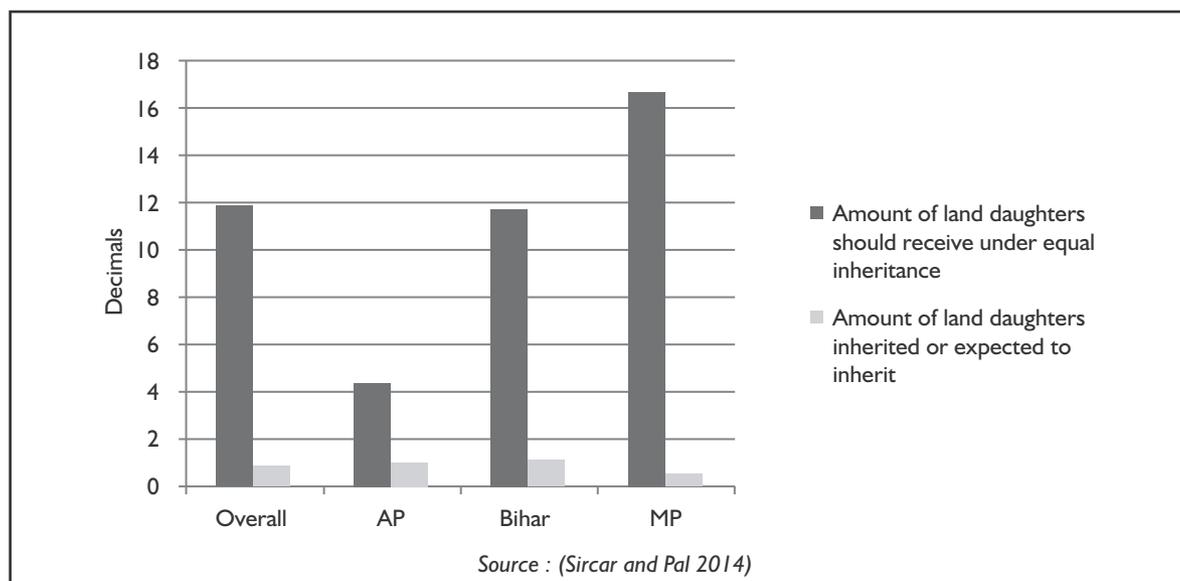
2. *Women's immense contribution to household food security in India remains largely invisible* : women's work is often informal, unpaid and considered an extension of domestic work. For example, women's work in livestock is usually considered as part of their household domestic work. Despite the fact that women contribute immensely to various food and farm activities—e.g. land preparation, seed selection, seedling production, sowing, applying manure, weeding, transplanting, threshing, winnowing and harvesting, their work is not recognized or valued sufficiently, and therefore is unpaid, or lowly paid. Women also improve family resources by collecting fuel, fodder, and drinking water. Mostly, women are not considered as farmers but

rather as helpers or laborers by male farmers, their families, and society at large, as they are not listed as the primary land owners and don't have access to other productive resources.

3. *Lack of access to land and productive resources* : Despite the fact that today women outnumber men in agricultural labour in India, they do not control land.

In 2005, India amended the Hindu Succession Act to give sons and daughters equal rights in inheriting agricultural land. (Five southern States—Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra – had already amended their State laws between 1986 and 1994.) However, eight years after its enactment, the ground reality is that women still do not inherit land on an equal basis with men. Societal practices exclude women from inheriting land. A Study by LANDESA revealed that only 10% of Indian women own land (Sircar and Pal 2014). There are significant gaps between women's legal rights and their actual inheritance of land, and between the limited ownership rights women do enjoy and their effective control over land. The gaps are by and large due to (a) gendered identities and practices, which often restrict women's ability to articulate as well as to exercise their right to inherit land; and (b) institutional practices, which are not gender neutral, but based on conventional male ideals.

**Figure 1 : Amount of Land Inherited by Daughters**



One of the classic arguments on why women do not inherit is that there is fragmentation of land when passed on to the daughter and her family, while the land stays within the family when the son inherits. This contention is misleading and cannot justify selectively disinheriting women (Velayudhan 2009). Fragmentation can occur even when sons inherit. In practice, many rural families continue to cultivate jointly even when parcels are owned individually. Another

argument is that women migrate on marriage. But one might ask: if men retain their claims despite job-related migration, why shouldn't women on marriage-related migration?

4. *Lack of access to institutional credit* : As most women are landless, they do not have access to credit beyond livestock rearing; credit is linked to land and asset ownership. This is a major problem, especially because in many states men's migration is high and women are left with the major burden of farming, but they cannot access credit or government schemes (Oxfam 2016).
5. *Gender wage differential* : This is a form of economic discrimination between men and women. Despite the fact that women contribute most of their income to household needs, including nutrition, their wages are significantly lower than men. According to the National Sample Survey Office's 68th round, women earn 20% lower than men at the national level (Jain 2014).

The gender wage gap is much starker in rural areas and differs between regions. The wage gap varied from 70-90% between different regions of India (see Figure 2 and Figure 3 below). The northern states in general have a much higher wage ratio than southern states which means that the wage difference is lower in the northern states, that is women earn more closer to what men earn than in the southern states. This is despite the fact that culturally women have more freedom to work outdoors in southern India due to cultural factors and also because of the dominant rice farming systems which are more dependent on women's labor. One hypothesis is that women's higher supply brings their wages comparatively lower (Mahajan 2011).

The tables below show the (1) average wage differences between men and women received by regular wage/ salaried employees (2009-10) (2) regional variation in wage ratios in India- we can see that the wage ratio is higher in the north than in the south. (3) Difference in wages between men and women for various agricultural occupations.

**Figure 2 : Average wage/salary earnings per day received by regular wage/salaried employees (2009-2010)**

STATE	RURAL		URBAN	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
Andhra Pradesh	198.31	93.84	341.63	248.05
Assam	248.31	95.00	491.19	380.92
Bihar	252.59	271.76	338.31	500.75
Gujarat	187.02	178.08	306.58	221.351
Haryana	299.11	202.04	316.91	330.10
Himachal Pradesh	360.08	224.78	487.56	435.70
Jammu & Kashmir	328.11	335.82	379.61	321.86

Karnataka	195.08	112.60	414.95	293.37
Kerala	290.79	213.29	450.76	320.61
Madhya Pradesh	154.03	138.15	325.15	230.33
Maharashtra	293.76	164.51	439.30	391.71
Orissa	293.76	151.72	358.89	238.48
Punjab	263.01	136.72	342.35	374.49
Rajasthan	261.55	112.99	374.42	317.85
Tamil Nadu	256.49	161.47	319.60	277.23
Uttar Pradesh	235.60	148.11	360.29	285.54
West Bengal	180.21	97.29	391.77	277.08
All India	249.15	155.87	377.16	308.79

Figure 3 : Regional variation in wage ratios, 2004

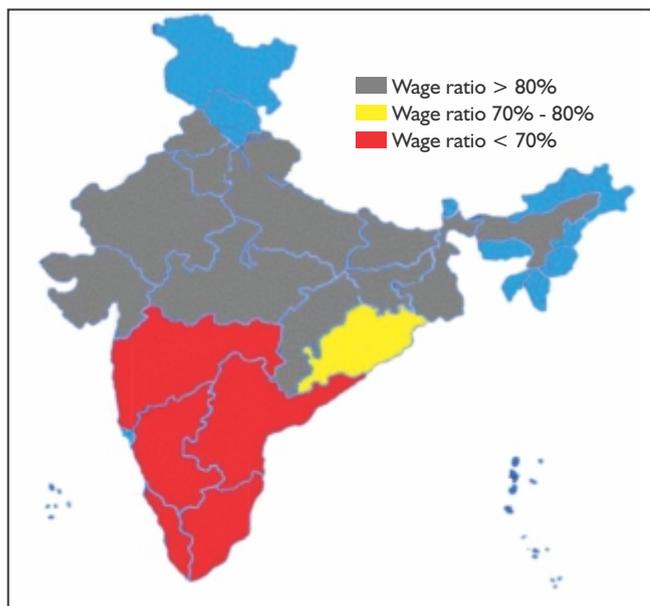


Figure 4 : All India Annual Average Daily Wage Rates in Agricultural Occupations During the year 2008-2009

OCCUPATION	MEN	WOMEN
Ploughing	102.90	55.43
Sowing	90.00	65.00
Threshing	85.06	67.66
Weeding	80.15	68.02
Picking	81.02	66.37

Source : Labour Bureau, RLE Reports on wages and Earnings of Rural Labour Household, 2009-10, Shimla

Source : Price & Wage in Rural India (New Series) NSSO

6. *Left out of extension services* : Because women are not perceived as farmers, agricultural extension and information are exclusively directed to men. Despite the fact that most agricultural work is done by women, there is a virtual absence of programs that are directed towards women. There is also an absence of women extension officers.

A Women Farmers' Entitlement Bill 2011, was first introduced by MS Swaminathan, a member of Rajya Sabha then, to provide women with legal rights and entitlements to mainly land, and other services

associated with land- credit, water, technology etc. This bill however lapsed in parliament, as no one took interest. The bill is now being redrafted by MAKAAAM, a network of over 70 women farmers' organizations across the country, with support from UN Women and the National Commission for Women . The bill if passed could fundamentally alter the status of women and agriculture and bring them the much-needed recognition and rights as farmers.

## b. Rural Women's Rights and Entitlements

(Purnima and Mamidipudi 2015)

All the citizens of India have guaranteed basic human rights under the constitution of India – these are called Fundamental Rights – they are the right to equality, the right to freedom, the right to freedom of religion, right to live without exploitation, right to food, right to education and employment, right to constitutional remedies. These are not charity, but rather the obligation of the state towards its citizens.

Women, as equal citizens of India, have the same fundamental rights as men. The government of India has created several entitlements for rural women, as a means to fulfill those rights. Other international legal instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also promote such rights as fundamental.

The Indian Constitution guarantees equality and equity for all, irrespective of their gender, religion, or caste. Women thus have a constitutional right to various entitlements related to the right to vote, food, property, work, social protection and financial inclusion among others. They should demand these from the state. Advocacy work around such demands can be led by women's collective actions via local community organizations, with support from NGOs and social movements. Any agroecology intervention related to gender must also ensure that discussions and initiatives around such rights, entitlements, and citizenship are a part of their action.



## Agroecology : Conformation versus Transformation

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Agroecology has evolved over the years and the synergies between scientists, farmers and consumer movements have taken it from the technical realm and turned it into a social and political movement. Like food sovereignty, agroecology has brought the political element back into farming. For many, it is closely linked to the idea of food sovereignty, and social justice is a fundamental part of that vision.

But agroecology does not mean the same thing everywhere. It is a contested term today: there are various definitions proposed by different groups and often these may not agree with each other. Definitions matter because not every kind of agroecology is automatically emancipating or has the intention to address social inequalities such as gender inequalities. Some conceptions of agroecology are purely technical in nature, while others are only concerned with adding a few ecological principles to a chemical model of production. Although there are superficial similarities between all these conceptions of agroecology, including on issues such as gender commitments, there are still fundamental differences. For example, just as the agroecology promoted by social movements has committed to gender equality, the corporate idea of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA), which includes agroecology in it, has also included gender equality as one of its key goals (World Bank et al. 2015). But, we will see later that both these efforts are fundamentally different.

For instance, the definition of agroecology by the state is very different from the definitions by social movements. Pimbert (2015) gives us an example from France. The French National Institute of Research in Agriculture (INRA) has introduced agro-ecology in its 2010–2020 strategic research plan but civil society groups and farmer networks argue that the French government proposes no-till methods with herbicide sprays, which are a

*“form of agroecology very distant from what is promoted by the grassroots groups who instead ask the French government to promote an agrarian reform that favours a diversified organic agriculture on a human scale. For them: 'Agroecology is synonymous with greater producer-consumer proximity, employment creation, a solidarity economy and diverse food products for citizens'”.*

Clearly the second version is more political and addresses the food system as a whole while the former just sees it as just one tool to green industrial agriculture.

Another similar example is the idea of agroecology at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which has recently started promoting it. While civil society agrees that such a space for agroecology is important and unprecedented they are also critical of FAO's approach to agroecology. The FAO, many academics, governments and the private sector, regard agroecology as one more farming option or tool with which to improve problems and deficiencies of industrial agriculture. They also include many new controversial and environmentally harmful technologies under the title Climate

Smart Agriculture, such as “no till” herbicide resistant crops, genetically modified crops and livestock, toxic insecticides and fungicides among others (Pimbert 2015). Agroecology is merely one component in the toolkit of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) and many of its other components directly undermine agroecology. This is profoundly different from the vision of social movements such as La Via Campesina for whom agroecology is a fundamental and unique alternative to transform the current agri-food system (Nicholls 2014). They see agroecology as the key solution to the climate, energy and economic crises, including social inequalities that have been deepened by industrial agriculture.

“Transform” is a key word here: agroecology from below seeks to transform the food system, while the institutional or corporate versions seek to “conform” agroecology to the current industrial model and paint it a little green.

As mentioned before, the World Bank and Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) proponents have begun talking about gender equality in CSA projects (World Bank et al. 2015). They speak about women's access to credit, land, resources, gender responsive agriculture policies etc. At first glance, these seem to have overlaps with the vision of agroecology, however one wonders how in the long run, CSA and especially the corporate version of CSA, are going to impact women and men when they promote business-as-usual practices of farmer dependence on external corporate technologies and products for farming, as well as technologies that erode the productive base of farming. Ultimately these are about profits for corporations rather than rights for people. These same business-as-usual practices have arguably led to increasing market/corporate dependence, debt, and one of India's greatest humanitarian crisis--the farmer suicides epidemic. Increased dependence on external corporate inputs and markets will not improve the lives of peasant families, especially women. On the other hand agroecology is about independence and autonomy. Autonomy means independence and self-reliance. When peasant families can rely on their own saved seeds, diverse food production, and low input agroecological production methods then they have an option to live outside the vicious cycle of loans, expensive inputs, and dangers to their health from chemicals. Agroecology is fundamentally about delinking peasants from corporate or external inputs and bringing self-reliance. In subsequent chapters we discuss how agroecology can be beneficial to women and show case studies where even those women without land ownership have succeeded to improve their lives through agroecology.

## Can Agroecology Create Gender Equality?

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*“If modernization transformed agricultural gender relations, and removed women from decision-making, then one might ask how alternative streams of agriculture, like agroecology create more power for women?” (Hall and Mogyorod 2007)*

Now that we have established that not all agroecologies are the same, it is also important to note, that social movements, NGOs, communities and activists committed to agroecology are not automatically making inroads into gender equality unless they purposefully make the commitment to do so. One of the key critiques of the agroecology/or organic farming movement by the women who are part of the moment is that there needs to be a more concerted effort on the gender front.

*The gender potential of organic farming (or agroecology) may not be realized unless there is a more concerted effort by committed alternative farmers and consumers to work to preserve organic farming, not only as an alternative agricultural movement, but also as a social justice movement dedicated explicitly to gender equality. (Mcmahon 2004)*

Despite the fact that many actors in the agroecology movement have made a commitment to social justice principles, including gender equality, women farmers note that these verbal commitments may not be very explicitly addressed in practice (Sumner and Llewelyn 2011). For example, a study on the now famous farmer-to-farmer agroecology movement in Cuba reveals that despite a heightened role by women in household decision making (explained in the next section), this did not lead to better gender balance in the agroecology movement itself. The authors show that the percentage of women at the leadership levels were significantly lower than men (Machín Sosa et al. 2010). The authors concluded that it was clear that the movement needed to make a more concerted effort to recruit and train women activists, especially as movement coordinators and leaders.

Similarly, in many other agroecology movements globally, including peasant movements, women may be present in high numbers, but tend to remain hidden as wives of farmers, rather than becoming leaders themselves, or are not able to promote any activities or spaces specifically for women, where they can have more freedom to share their concerns, hopes, create solidarity, and take decisions on what they want to do as women. This is one of the findings of a study on the Zero Budget Natural Farming movement in Karnataka state, which has been promoted by the peasant movement Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and many other allies (Khadse et al. 2017). The promoters of agroecology need to take responsibility and ensure that women have appropriate types of spaces to grow, lead, exchange, learn, earn, and other activities they want.

## Creating Gender Appropriate Spaces

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Sometimes, it may not be appropriate to have mixed gender spaces for women, and in such cases women-only spaces seem to be more effective to build and nurture women's leadership and decision-making potential. In India for instance, many women-only cooperatives, self-help groups, and other collective approaches with women of the same social background have turned out to be more beneficial for women's empowerment. In many Indian cooperatives although the entire family unit became a member of the cooperative, it was only men who participated and made decisions, while women had to take on the burden of additional work necessary for the cooperative (Agarwal 2010). In such cases, the peasant family may not always be the appropriate unit of action, as women tend to be housewives and perform unpaid or unappreciated labor (Agarwal 2014).

Or, having women of starkly different social backgrounds--such as from different castes, or a landed class and landless laborers in the same group project related to agroecology, could likely recreate the caste/class hierarchies within the group. This points to the fact that all women are not the same (Mi Young Park and White 2014), and that any effort at promoting agroecology must be aware of such power dynamics and not expect the same impacts on all women.

While the above phenomenon are not always the case and any gender related work must strive to involve both men, women, entire families and communities, there is also a case for thinking about approaches that ensure that social inequalities are not reproduced, but rather challenged via agroecology projects.

## Change Starts with Oneself – Critical Education

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*“This **daily struggle** already constitutes concrete advances towards the revolution's fulfillment.” (Georg Lukacs)*

In order to engage in collective action to address gender discrimination one effective approach is for subjects to start with oneself and one's own personal everyday experiences and struggles (Purnima and Mamidipudi 2015). This is an approach promoted by critical pedagogics; that education must involve analyzing one's own reality, a historical understanding of inequality/oppression, and must be political in nature- it should seek to transform reality, challenge inequalities with the aim of emancipation. Emancipation means the freedom from oppressive social relations. A process of conscientization is proposed, wherein subjects can see that the inequalities or oppression they face are not “natural”, or normal and do not have to be accepted. It is a means for subjects to understand their reality critically and be able to challenge it using their own agency and collective action. Many gender justice activists propose such methods in order to stimulate transformation and action. For example, ANANDI has proposed the following steps in their action tool (Purnima and Mamidipudi 2015):

- In order to challenge inequality and transform social relations, one should start with oneself.
- Do you want to stand up against discrimination? If yes, why and how?
- How will you socialize boys and girls in your family? Would it be a process based on the principles of equality, justice and rights, or would it be based on earlier considerations of discrimination and exploitation?
- Participants are asked if they have done something different in their family in relation to their son and daughter or daughter in law, especially to challenge any gender stereotypes.
- Alternatively, they are asked if anyone has done the same in their village.
- Participants are encouraged to draw up a concrete action plan at the end of the exercise. This may include, for example, establishment of a norm of sharing household work in their family between all adults

At Amrita Bhoomi, a peasants agroecology school established by the peasants movement Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, recent courses on Gender and Agriculture have asked students to focus on their own lives, and asked questions about how oppressive relations can be challenged at home and in their own lives, what expectations they themselves have of men and women in their lives (Amrita Bhoomi 2017) and how these might be changed.

For Brazil's Landless Peoples Movement (MST for its abbreviation in Portuguese), critical education is

central to their struggle against neoliberalism. MST has created various critical educational models on agroecology combined with gender-equality in which, women have played a central role. MST's education, focused on agroecology and accompanied by gender-oriented pedagogy, is empowering women and men to disrupt the traditional sexual division of labor in rural communities (Schwendler and Thompson 2017).

## Impacts of Agroecology at the Household Level \_\_\_\_\_

A study conducted by La Via Campesina and the Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (ANAP) in Cuba found that the shift away from traditional monoculture to agroecology challenged traditional gender roles and power relations inside peasant families (Rosset *et al.* 2011). Peasant women reported that in a conventional monoculture system, the crop belonged to the man. He drove the tractor, planted, applied chemicals, harvested and sold the crop. All the money went to him. “The man was King.” (Machín Sosa *et al.* 2013) But as the farms diversified through the farmer-to-farmer system, the roles and income earning opportunities for the different members of the nuclear and the extended family also became diversified. Men still managed some row crops but the addition of animals, vermiculture, medicinal plants etc., gave women control over decisions and income in those areas. Even adolescents and old people (grandparents) had a role to play, some animals were managed by children, some fruit trees by the grandparents, and so there was a dilution of patriarchy inside peasant families.

As discussed earlier, not all women enjoy similar power and freedoms inside a peasant family; they may have the responsibility of livestock for example, but may not get to keep the income from its milk. The family in many cases can be a space for patriarchal oppression. In the case above it became clear that participation in the farmer-to-farmer movement was fundamental in bringing issues of gender inequality to the forefront. All the peasant members of ANAP have exposure to gender issues during their agroecology movement programs, and this, in all probability, has helped to create better opportunities and income for the women in those households.

# How Agroecology/ Organic Farming can Create More Opportunities for Women

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(IFOAM 2007, Mpofu 2016)

1. *It creates meaningful work* : Because agroecology involves diverse working tasks, specialized skills and specific knowledge, women often have a more diversified role in the household economy. In contrast to conventional monoculture chemical farming, there are now a diversity of decision-making and income generating roles, all of which work to reduce the weight of patriarchy inside the family unit. Photo Credit: Rucha Chitnis – Women farmers waving. (Rosset et al. 2011)
2. *Learning, sharing and social cohesion are at the core of agroecology* : Because learning from each other and sharing are at the core of agroecology, it increases the spaces and opportunities for meeting, and builds social cohesion. Such spaces, especially women's spaces, provide opportunities for mobilizing for various causes, including for gender equality and strengthening their solidarity and social cohesion. On the other hand, agroecology inspires creativity, and is a more rewarding way of farming, strengthening women's creative skills and collective work.
3. *Offers economic opportunities* : Because it has low start-up and production costs, is simple and



Women farmers waving. Photo by Rucha Chitnis

effective, has stable yields over time, it makes farming less risky, more affordable and accessible to women. On the other hand, apart from household nutrition autonomy, agroecological produce can create high-value end products for the market and improved incomes. For e.g. there is high demand for organic food and value-added products in the market these days, which have created many opportunities for women to get involved. Agroecology also stresses on the integration of livestock with farming and produces fodder. Livestock especially has shown to be beneficial for women as it adds to nutrition, food and provides additional income for women.

4. *Supports health* : Prohibition of synthetic chemicals results in improved health of consumers and agriculture workers. Synthetic chemicals as in pesticides are associated with a host of illnesses such as cancer. Further, direct access to a diversity of crops, fruits and livestock products improves the nutritional autonomy of families.
5. *Encourages biodiversity and traditional knowledge* : Agroecology is fundamentally based on the improvement of functional biodiversity on the farm. It also encourages local seeds and crop varieties suited to the local climate and associated with the traditional peasant knowledge. This gives a greater role to women, who are traditionally the keepers of seeds and traditional knowledge.

## Case Studies

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### a. Tamil Nadu Women's Collective (TNWC)

*“If one uses chemicals, he can revive his soil, but if one introduces GMO seeds, there is no turning back to his traditional seeds.”*

- Sheelu Francis

The approximately 100,000 Women's Collective's members come from disenfranchised sectors of society, particularly the widowed, landless and Dalit women. Founded in 1994, the Collective has set up various initiatives to empower such women, including through agroecology, what they also call “natural farming” or “zero budget natural farming,” a method innovated by Subhash Palekar. The women are organized into village level collectives called “sangams” through which they carry out their programs at the grassroots level.

Agroecology is a key vehicle to increase their self-reliance and food autonomy. In doing so they focus on four levels: land, traditional seeds, animals and water. Although not all members of the collective are able to access, or lease land, they are encouraged to have an organic kitchen garden at home. They also carry out intensive water conservation practices, and use methods such as System of Rice Intensification (SRI)<sup>1</sup> in conjunction with zero budget natural farming.

Tamil Nadu Women's Collective members practice natural farming under both rain-fed and irrigated conditions. They have two demonstration farms for training purposes: one where irrigated agriculture is practiced; the other is in a semi-arid area with low to no irrigation. Both are training spots for new members to learn about zero budget natural farming. Apart from these, Women's Collective organizes various trainings and workshops, including woman farmer to woman farmer trainings on agroecology, nutrition and healthy soils. Farmers are trained in production of biological pesticides for plant protection and organic fertilizers. They learn to use locally available ingredients such as cow dung, urine and milk – thus reducing their dependence on external inputs and farming expenses.

Violence against women is a key focus of the collective. Violence against women occurs within multiple contexts: in the household, workplace, in the field, because of caste, within religious and communal conflicts, as well as caused by police and state officials. The Tamil Nadu Women's Collective members trained themselves in counseling, and initially provided legal aid for women who were victims of domestic violence and later sexual harassment. Gender analysis is an integral part of addressing the issue of domestic violence and understanding inequalities at the household level to address violence against women in general.

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*1. SRI is an agro-ecological methodology for increasing the productivity of irrigated rice by changing the management of plants, soil, water and nutrients. SRI originated in Madagascar in the 1980s and is based on the cropping principles of significantly reducing plant population.*

One of the great achievements of TNWC is their model of collective farming. Only one percent of the one-lakh (100,000) women of the collective own land; most of them lease land and work it collectively to grow food and millets.

The model collective farms serve as demonstration plots for collective farming, ecological farming techniques and seed banking to those who visit for training. They support women in starting new collective farms, thus directly addressing the problem of lack of access to productive resources and land by forming women's collectives. These collectives function as a way for women to gain access to land and provide food for their families through sharing a plot of land with other women in the community. Savings are also generated collectively thereby overcoming the problem of lack of access to credit. This model of implementing agroecology has ensured that women's empowerment is at the core of the process: they learn to work collectively, new agroecological techniques, to aggregate resources and gain access to their entitlements.

Their women-only space gives them encouragement, the freedom to express themselves and become leaders. Their network provides a safety net, a minimum level of food and financial/social support for women to stay out of absolute poverty. Their children grow up watching their sisters and mothers and women taking charge and being role models which continue to inspire younger women and challenging gender discrimination.

Before the introduction of agroecology, most of women's income was being used for medicines and health problems. This was why Sheelu Francis and her friends decided to go back to natural and traditional way of farming.

Women are encouraged to grow millets, which are rich in nutrients and suitable to local context and culture. In the TNWC experience, native seeds like millets are also climate resilient. Millets are the traditional foods in the region. But, green revolution agriculture had promoted conversion of traditional mixed farming to paddy cultivation. Importantly, in most districts of Tamil Nadu cultivating rice is difficult due to water scarcity. The TNWC therefore promoted cultivation of millets, as the women farmers would have fewer problems with water scarcity and malnutrition.

Growing millets is also seen as a way to reclaim their Dalit tradition and fight caste discrimination. According to Sheelu Francis, millets were seen as poor people's-or Dalits'-food. (Quinn-Thibodeau 2015).

*It is poor people's food. In the temple, they give rice as Prasad (a religious food offering to the gods). Paddy - white, shining rice - is seen as god's food. Racist thinking caused millet production and consumption to be marginalized.*

Many of the women of the Collective have also stood and won in local elections – this is a way for them to increase women's leadership in governance. Through all these initiatives WC has not only promoted agroecology to improve women's household and economic conditions, and increased their access to

land, but also trained them in gender equality and leadership.

### **b. Rural Women Upliftment Society, Manipur**

(Chitnis 2013, 2017, Rural Women Upliftment Society 2017)

The RWUS is a community-based organization in the state of Manipur. Aside from the regular problems faced by farmers related to volatile climate, lack of access to resources, and other opportunities, they also have to face violence resulting from the conflict between armed insurgencies and the military. Many indigenous women become widowed—called 'gun widows'—after their partners get killed in the violence, are left to fend for themselves and oftentimes ostracized in society. The military has extraordinary special powers under the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which allows them to use force, kill, torture, abduct, and search anyone, or any premises in order to suppress anti-state activities. Many Manipuri women have borne the brunt of this, and have been raped or tortured. From Sharmila, the famous Manipuri activist, had been on the longest ever hunger strike for 16 years to protest the AFSPA and violence in Manipur.

On the other hand, rampant ecological destruction is taking place through mining, large dams, timber and deforestation. Another ecological problem facing the region is climate change, which is making farming difficult due to weather uncertainties.

Within this setting, the Rural Women Upliftment Society works to holistically build the leadership of indigenous women, especially gun widows, women living in HIV, older women via various projects that include agroecology, forming women's collectives, increasing their livelihood and income options, increasing participation in local governance and leadership, fighting against domestic violence. They have been assisting more than 1000 farmers and families' blow poverty line by providing regular skill trainings, workshops and materials support. Some of the trainings they provide are on agroecology, SRI and climate change. They have also formed women into various collectives like self-help groups to collectively address their livelihood issues. At the village level, they have set up community Food Banks and Seed Banks which are important sources of food in times of scarcity. These are managed by farmers clubs and Women's Self-Help Groups.

Besides such groundwork, they are active in political campaigns for example they have analyzed and begun to realize that customary (long established local customs of a community) laws themselves are discriminatory against women. They are now campaigning for a strong gender law in the state and equal participation of women in decision-making and governance at local and state political institutions and including in religious bodies.

*Women are slowly realizing that the customary law is discriminatory. It needs to be reformed so that women can have equal access to property, political participation and other resources.*

- Mary Beth Sanate, leader, leader of 'Rural Womens Upliftment Society'

Recently, the Indian Intelligence and state have attacked them because of their alliance with campaigns against extractive industries in the North East (Singh 2014), the state sees such activities as anti-national and has tried to book them under disregard of foreign funding laws.

They have used innovative methods like Whatsapp technology to provide space for victims of domestic violence to stay connected and receive support (Sk 2017).

### c. Deccan Development Society

Much has been written about DDS's work on Dalit women and millets, and not without reason, because it is an exemplary case of addressing the most marginalized women's rights, agroecology and food autonomy as a holistic program.

DDS started with an aim to address the nutrition and food needs of the most vulnerable families in Andhra's Medak district, which is a drought prone region. The approach taken by DDS is to provide financial support via interest-free loans to Dalit women and families, who are the most marginalized sections of society. They first targeted the women in the families, empowered them and supported them to grow agroecologically produced nutritious food, as a tool to support the well-being of the entire communities.

The women are organized into “sangams” first for savings and credit activities. These same sangams also then carry out land-based cultivation activities. They carry out programs such as collective land leasing, community grain fund, seed bank. DDS supported the sangam women via loans in order to lease land and farm it collectively. Other grants were provided to fund farming operations. These loans and grants can be repaid in the form of grain or even labor if cash isn't possible. The grain goes into the community grain fund which is an alternative to the state-run public

distribution system (PDS), a program to provide subsidized grains to poor families. Unlike the top-down state-run PDS, DDS' community grain banks are completely decentralized and locally managed. This local PDS system provides a more diverse and nutritious food basket in comparison to the limited rice and wheat of the governments PDS system. The grain collected is sold at subsidized rates to those local community members whom the community members decide according to their own criteria



Deccan Development Society – DDS women display products of their organic brand – “Sangam Organics”

should be most eligible to receive food support. Furthermore, it relies on agroecological farming and provides livelihoods to community members by focusing on reviving fallow lands, which would have otherwise remained unused.

Through such programs, DDS has managed to firstly address the greatest challenge women in India – access to land and credit. They have managed to revive the most degraded lands which have traditionally belonged to low-caste Dalit populations. By supporting the sangams with loans, Dalit families have been able to revive and revitalize these lands and turned them productive.

The sangam women have also formed an uncustomary relationship with upper caste landlords, traditionally a group which has been in a class and caste conflict with the Dalits. Most landlords have come to see sangham members as reliable and preferable tenants, and over the years have sought them out to cultivate their unused lands (Khadse 2017).

The sanghams have created dramatic changes in the lives of their women members. None of these low-caste women could have purchased such land or learned the production skills on their own. Other gains that women report from group farming include improvement in family diets, health care, and children's education, enhanced respect in the community, and better spousal relations. Women now bargain for higher wages when they need supplementary work, since they have a livelihood choice. Bonded labour and caste indignities are also reported to have declined. Women also say that local government officials give them priority over individual men. Within the home, women report a decline in domestic violence and greater control over their own earnings.

#### **d. Kudumbashree's Work with Landless Women Farmers**

*While eating at home, I proudly remind my husband of the fact that the rice we are eating is the fruit of my efforts. It is Kudumbashree that gave me the confidence to voice my opinion in front of my husband. I have also become confident about engaging in collective farming and vegetable cultivation.*

-Usha, Kudumbashree (Anand and Maskara n.d.)

A serious problem among landless or very marginal land holding families in Kerala is their lack of stable livelihood and income. Wage labour is seasonal, while their own lands, if they owned any at all, are too small for subsistence. Many landlords who hire them have been leaving agriculture, or selling off their land, or leaving it fallow due to non-remunerative agriculture, leaving the laborers with fewer working options. At the end of the day, they are at the mercy of the landlords and their decisions. Kerala lost over 500,000 hectares of paddy fields between 1980 and 2007. Such women laborers are some that have been supported by Kudumbashree to take up collective agroecological farming to gain access to land, livelihood security, and food autonomy. They have been turned from laborers to farmers. "Kudumbashree", meaning prosperity of the family, is the state poverty eradication mission initiated in

1998 by the Government of Kerala. It is oriented towards women's empowerment, and today boasts of more than 40,000 hectares jointly cultivated by more than 16,000 landless women (Menon, 2016).

The program works through community organizations of women that work in collaboration with Local Self Governments (panchayat). While the program has a broad overarching structure and a variety of activities such as microfinance, micro-housing, and micro-enterprises, they have also carried out substantial collective work on agroecology farming.



**A nutritious mix that is being prepared for school meals at the local anganwadis. This center is completely run and managed by Kudumbashree women. Photo by Divya Jain**

Activities undertaken under the collective farming initiatives include identifying available land, selecting beneficiaries, clustering them into groups, giving training, distributing inputs and releasing incentives. The land identified may be government land lying fallow, or private land taken up for cultivation. Most of the farming carried out is under non-pesticide management. Some new programs have also been launched to promote Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) and other agroecological techniques by the members (Hindu 2012).

One of the key factors behind Kudumbashree's success in scaling up agroecology among women was their pre-existing social organization. Kudumbashree has a three-tier federated structure, from the state level, down to the neighborhood level where women are organized into Neighborhood Groups of 10-20 women each. They have already been engaging in other group activities like thrift and credit, which was a favorable condition to take on agroecology and farming initiatives. District level Community Development Societies (CDS) were able to negotiate with the panchayat to gain access to cultivable fallow land for collective farming purposes.

Like DDS, Kudumbashree also targeted fallow land that was available -both state owned or privately owned, and this was another enabling factor for the gender and agroecology process to succeed. The gram panchayat and CDS helped the women to enter into the leasing arrangements with landowners, and helped in the resolution of disputes.

Kudumbashree provided women with different types of incentives, with the assistance of the state government if food crops were grown; no incentives were provided for cash crops. Groups engaged in organic farming/agroecology were entitled to additional incentives.

Only group-based activities were promoted rather than individual farming activities. Such group activities were more conducive to learning, collaborating, and supported the food autonomy of many families together by growing a number of crops, dividing the tasks and supporting each other.

Kudumbashree engaged in various dialogues with Banks and the state to chalk out special policies for Access to cheap credit and subsidies to support the women to farm collectively.

Many women who have succeeded greatly at agroecology and other farming techniques have been given the role of “master farmers” - they share and teach other farmers and have become role models and leaders in their community and inspire other women laborers who can dream of becoming independent and successful like them and learn from their example.

Kudumbashree's collective agroecology and farming initiatives have had many dramatic impacts on the lives of the women. They have gone from being laborers dependent on seasonal work and landlords to becoming independent farmers and managers- this has led to an increase in confidence and dignity. It has taught them to work collectively and take key decisions in solidarity and collaboration with others. They have also now improved food autonomy as well as income; many of them say this has also improved their status within the household. Some of them have also managed to save and buy land of their own.



**An atta chakki enterprise started by few Kudumbashree women and it is completely managed by them. Photo by Divya Jain**

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## FOCUS ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH

### **Focus on the Global South**

Focus on the Global South is a policy research organisation based in Asia (Thailand, Philippines and India). Focus provides support to social movements and communities in India and the Global South by providing research and analysis on the political economy of globalisation and on the key institutions underlying this process. Focus' goals are the dismantling of oppressive economic and political structures and institutions, the creation of liberating structures and institutions, demilitarization, and the promotion of peace.



### **Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS)**

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) is a Germany-based foundation working in South Asia as in other parts of the world on the subjects of critical social analysis and civic education. It promotes a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic social order, and aims to present alternative approaches to society and decision-makers. Research organisations, groups for self-emancipation and social activists are supported in their initiatives to develop models which have the potential to deliver greater social and economic justice.