



## Engendering Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs): Strategies



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1. Collectivisation of Women Farmers



2. Women's Leadership



3. Capacity Building and Skill Up-gradation



4. Access to and Control over Resources



5. Technology, Tools and Implements



6. Business Linkages



7. Gender Audit



8. Recognition and Awards



9. Evidence based Policy Advocacy





# Backdrop

In India, women are the backbone of agriculture as farmers and agricultural workers. Constituting over 70% of the agricultural sector, women's contribution has been traditionally undervalued and invisible in various statistical measures. Women farmers have limited ownership of land and livestock, access to inputs, technology, credit and various services, as well as limited channels to receive education, information, training, extension and advisory services compared to their male counterparts. Their mobility is restricted to their home and farm. The representation and participation of women in cooperatives and farmers' organizations is also quite minimal and insignificant due to existing gender inequalities.

The above constraints hinder women's productivity and reduce their contribution to the economic and social development goals of the nation. The FAO has identified that overcoming gender inequalities in agriculture can reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 150 million. The increasing "feminisation" of agriculture in India, especially in the context of the emerging modern supply chains, calls for formulation of strategies and transforming gender roles in agriculture. The Farmer Producer Organisations is a potential tool and an emerging opportunity to enable and empower women in achieving food and economic security at the household level as well community and national level. In order to bridge the gender gaps in FPOs, APMAS has formulated the following strategies, which emerged through the consultation with the women and men farmers, the staff in the field and the key stakeholders.

The main objective of this strategy document is to achieve advancement and empowerment of women farmers in the FPOs formed, promoted and incubated by APMAS. The specific objectives are:

- Creating an enabling environment through positive discrimination for women farmers to realize their full potential and equal participation in all the activities of the FPOs across the value chain
- Ensuring equal access to and control over resources / services to all women members in the FPOs and creation of assets in the names of women
- Changing societal attitudes and practices by active participation and contribution of women farmers for the sustainability of FPOs
- Making it as commitment and responsibility of men farmers, the Board and staff in promotion of gender equality in FPOs as catalysts and change agents
- Evidence creation and advocacy for policy influencing to promote gender equality in the FPOs

## 1 Collectivisation of Women Farmers

To enhance the recognition, role, leadership and participation of women farmers in the FPOs and across the value chain activities the following interventions can be taken up:

- Gender sensitization of various stakeholders
- Promotion of all women FPOs and mixed-FPOs with at least 50% women membership with representation from all economic and social categories
- Networking with SHGs and SHG federations to mobilize women farmers into FPOs



## 2 Women's Leadership

For FPOs to grow into sustainable and viable business organizations, it is important to have equal and active participation and leadership of women farmers. This can be achieved through activities indicated below:

- Ensure at least 50% of women in FPO Board, sub-committees and as cheque signatories
- Skill development of potential women leaders
- Building leadership of women and men encouraging gender equality in FPOs
- Actively encourage women to participate in decision making and business activities





### 3 Capacity Building and Skill Up-gradation

To build knowledge and skills of women in leadership, governance and business management, ensure:

- Training and communication materials with gender perspective and sensitive language
- Ensuring participation of women farmers in meetings, trainings and exposure visits
- Building national and regional level resource pool on gender mainstreaming in FPOs through ToTs (Training of Trainers)
- Incubation of all women FPOs to provide handholding and mentoring support



### 4 Access to and Control over Resources

Women farmers holding assets and having access to resources will lead to improvement in their position in the family as well as in the society. FPOs, which work towards meeting their members needs, should promote women's access to resources and property through the following interventions:

- Awareness creation on women's right to property and resources
  - Asset creation for women and ensure equal access to FPO services and subsidies from the government
  - Promoting and supporting women-led and women-owned enterprises
  - Ensuring women farmers to actively participate and benefit from input and output marketing





## 5 Technology, Tools and Implements

FPOs shall promote women-friendly tools and implements as part of its services; provide training to improve women's access to technology, techniques, tools and equipments, smart phones, social media and internet

## 6 Business Linkages

Women FPOs have the potential to excel in the market but are constrained due to various factors. To address these constraints, provide necessary handholding support to women FPOs by:



- Facilitating business linkages between FPOs and SHG Federations
- Prioritizing and supporting all women and women led FPOs in establishing market linkages
- Ensuring partnership and interaction with various service providers, agri business and financial institutions

## 7 Gender Audit

Gender audit serves as a key tool in self-assessment, review of policy and performance of FPOs. Following are the main steps in the process of gender audit:

- Development of Gender Policy for FPOs
- Monitoring and review of FPOs on significant gender indicators
- Development of Gender Audit Tool and annual auditing of FPOs
- Gender as a regular agenda in all the meetings, events and reports



## 8 Recognition and Awards



Recognizing women farmers significant contribution to agriculture & FPOs in the form of women leadership awards will motivate other women farmers to become members and take up leadership roles. Recognition of men who promote women leadership in FPOs also needs to be instituted.



## 9 Evidence based Policy Advocacy

For advocacy with policy makers and the authorities at various levels to influence policies which promote and strengthen women's role, leadership and participation in value chain activities and FPOs, following activities are proposed:

- Documentation and dissemination of success stories and experiences of women farmers and women led FPOs
- Evidence creation through action research and impact studies
- Networking at various levels for linking and mutual learning



## About APMAS

APMAS, founded in 2001, gained credibility and reputation over the past two decades as a national level resource organisation that works for promoting and strengthening people's institutions (Self-Help Groups, FPOs and their federations) as self-reliant business organisations in India and other developing countries.

## About AGEEWA (Achieving Gender equality through empowerment of Women in Agriculture)

In a quest for women farmers' affirmation on land and farming, in the year 2017, AEIN and APMAS came together to implement the project 'AGEEWA'. The project is implemented in two states covering 4 Mandals (Dharmavaram & Ananthapuram Rural in Ananthapur district of Andhra Pradesh and Yadagirigutta & Bommalamaram in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district of Telangana). Currently the third phase of the project is under implementation (2021-2023) with the following main objectives:

- Achieve sustainability of 4 Women FPOs through capacity building, linkages and business activities
- Reduce gender barriers in 10 FPOs for women farmers entry, leadership and participation across the agricultural value chain through gender sensitization and capacity building
- Promote women's leadership in FPOs across India through knowledge management and evidence based advocacy.

Accion Fraterna & REDS in AP and PEACE & GMM in Telangana are providing handholding support to 4 Women FPOs (namely Bhumatha, Anantha Grameena, AGEEWA and Dheesali) with the Technical guidance and support from APMAS.



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