



Gender Mainstreaming in Agricultural Extension Services

"AGRIEQUALS: TRANSFORMING FIELDS, TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES"

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Introduction



Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for a large segment of the population, with women contributing significantly across all the agricultural activities. Despite women comprising nearly half of the agricultural workforce, they face critical barriers in accessing essential resources, training, and decision-making opportunities. This lack of access not only limits their productivity but also hinders the sector's overall growth potential.

Gender mainstreaming in agricultural extension services is essential for addressing these disparities. By ensuring that both men and women benefit equally from agricultural support services, knowledge dissemination, and access to technology, gender-sensitive extension services can play a transformative role in rural livelihoods. However, existing cultural norms, limited mobility, and restricted access to land and financial resources continue to pose substantial obstacles for women in agriculture.



Globally, gender mainstreaming in agricultural extension services has become a central focus for organizations like Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These entities recognize that empowering women in agriculture directly influences food security, poverty reduction, and rural development. Research shows that women constitute, on an average, 43.0 percent of the agricultural labor force in developing countries, yet they face systematic discrimination in accessing resources such as land, credit, and agricultural training. This gap impacts not only the individual livelihoods but also the national economies; as studies estimate that closing the gender gap in agriculture could increase agricultural productivity by 20-30 percent in many countries.

BARRIERS

Institutional Barriers: Agricultural institutions have imbedded structural weaknesses that impede gender mainstreaming efforts:



- Inadequate gender-responsive budgeting for activities
- Insufficient fund allocation for women-focused programs
- Limited representation of women in agricultural decision-making bodies
- Weak institutional frameworks for monitoring gender integration
- Absence of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data collection system
- Limited institutional capacity for gender-responsive program design
- Fragmented policy implementation frameworks

Sociocultural Barriers : Deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms create significant obstacles to gender integration:



- Gender stereotype attitudes restrict women's participation in agricultural activities
- Cultural constraints limits women's mobility and public engagement
- Male resistance to women's inclusion in agricultural decision-making
- Gender-based discrimination in agricultural activities
- Social stigma associated with women's leadership in farming
- Limited societal approval for women's participation in agricultural marketing
- Cultural norms prioritize male authority in agricultural decisions

Economic Barriers: Women face substantial economic constraints that limit their agricultural participation:



- Restricted access to financial resources and services
- Limited land ownership and inheritance rights
- Systematic exclusion from agricultural credit facilities
- Inadequate access to agricultural inputs
- Limited control over agricultural income
- Restricted market access opportunities
- Economic dependence impacts decision-making autonomy

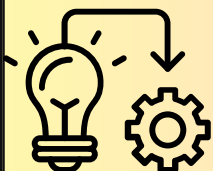
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Technical and Operational Barriers: Operational challenges significantly impact implementation effectiveness:

- Limited mobility due to inadequate transport infrastructure
- Insufficient number of female extension workers
- Communication barriers in dissemination of agricultural know-how
- Limited access to digital agricultural resources
- Technical capacity gaps in modern farming methods
- Inadequate agricultural technology adoption support
- Poor infrastructure for agricultural information dissemination

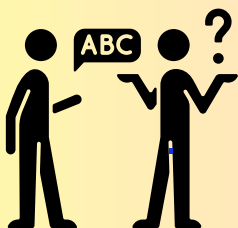
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Implementation Barriers : Programme execution faces significant operational challenges:

- Competing demands between household and agricultural responsibilities
- Limited awareness of gender mainstreaming principles
- Poor coordination among implementing agencies
- Inadequate monitoring and evaluation system
- Inadequate stakeholder engagement mechanisms
- Weak enforcement of existing gender policies
- Limited resources for sustained program implementation

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Cross-Cutting Barriers Several barriers intersect across multiple domains:

- Limited political will for gender mainstreaming
- Insufficient resource allocation for gender initiatives
- Weak coordination between stakeholders
- Inadequate data for evidence-based decision making
- Limited capacity for gender-responsive planning
- Poor integration of gender considerations in program design
- Insufficient accountability mechanisms

RECOMMENDED

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Institutional Reforms

- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting:** Ensure dedicated funding for women-focused agricultural initiatives.
- **Increase Female Representation:** Set specific representation of women in agricultural decision-making roles, in all schemes, and extension field functionaries.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Implement systems for gender-disaggregated data collection to monitor gender equity in program outcomes.



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Community Engagement and Sociocultural Change

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to shift norms around women's roles in agriculture, with male ally engagement.
- **Effective Gender-responsive Policies:** Bringing more effective and meaningful gender-responsive policies to address specific need of men and women farmers.



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Economic Empowerment

- **Access to Credit and Financial Services:** Partner with financial institutions to design accessible loan products for women farmers.
- **Land Rights Advocacy:** Reforming the existing land ownership and definition of farmers to increase women's land ownership and inheritance rights.
- **Market Access Support:** Establish cooperatives and link women farmers to market opportunities.



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Technical and Operational Capacity Building

- **Recruit Female Extension Workers:** Increase recruitment and training of female extension officers to reach out to women farmers.
- **Expand Digital Resource Access:** Provide mobile-based agricultural information for women with mobility constraints.
- **Promote Technology Access:** Technology and training for women farmers, on latest emerging areas, such as, climate-resilient farming practices etc. to be organized for the women farmers and by the women farmers.



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Implementation and Accountability

- **Inter-Agency Coordination:** Form gender task forces for coordination across government, NGOs, and the private sector.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Embed gender-specific indicators in program evaluations and publish report outcomes.
- **Sustained Funding:** Ensure long-term budget commitments to support gender-focused programs in agriculture.



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Cross-Cutting Measures

- **Political Commitment:** Align gender initiatives with national and international commitments, such as the SDGs.
- **Institutional Accountability:** The institutions should be made accountable for gender mainstreaming outcomes and enforcing it with sincere commitments.



Expected Outcome:

The expected outcomes of implementing gender mainstreaming strategies in agricultural extension services include enhanced participation of women, leading to greater inclusivity and empowerment. Improved access to resources and financial support will enable women farmers to utilize modern agricultural technologies, resulting in increased productivity and income. Additionally, awareness campaigns will help reduce gender stereotypes, fostering respect and collaboration between genders. Strengthened institutional support through gender-responsive policies will ensure that the specific needs of women are addressed effectively. Increased female leadership will empower women to take on decision-making roles, contributing to balanced governance. Finally, expanded support systems through collaborations with NGOs and women's organizations will provide essential training and resources, creating a sustainable network that bolsters the capabilities of women farmers.



[Complete report on “Gender Mainstreaming in Agricultural Extension Services’ is available at www.manage.gov.in]

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