

## Cereal Systems Initiative for South Asia (CSISA)

Gender, Caste, and Asset Control: Implications for Agricultural Projects in Rice-Wheat Systems of Eastern India

**COUNTRY:** INDIA

**YEAR(S) OF PROJECT STUDY:** 2010-2012

**PROJECT CONTACT(S):** THELMA PARIS ([t.paris@irri.org](mailto:t.paris@irri.org))

### BACKGROUND

The CSISA project was launched in 2009 with the goal of reducing food and income insecurity in South Asia through accelerated development and deployment of new cereal varieties, sustainable crop and resource systems management practices, and better access to information. The project includes widespread delivery and adaptation of production and postharvest technologies to increase cereal production and raise income; and promotion of (i) crop and resource management practices, and (ii) high-yielding, stress tolerant and disease- and insect resistant rice, wheat and maize varieties and hybrids. GAAP looked at two different CSISA projects. This project focused on men's and women's different degrees of ownership, access, and decisionmaking in connection with key livelihood-sustaining assets and whether the introduction of new technologies influences these differences.

### METHODOLOGY

This study was focused on two areas of rural India where CSISA operates: Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. In 2010 a baseline survey was administered, which collected information on farming practices and various technologies. However, sex-disaggregated information on ownership and control of assets was not collected, so qualitative research and midline surveys were conducted in three areas with large areas devoted to rice-wheat farming systems: Maharajganj and Deoria in Uttar Pradesh and East Champaran in Bihar. Focus group discussions on assets were also conducted with single-sex groups from both upper and lower castes, as were in-depth interviews with the principal men and women in 60 households. Midline surveys for 318 households in 18 villages followed in 2012. This survey collected sex-disaggregated information on household composition and assets, as well as used pictures of assets to determine who in the household owns, uses, acquires, and decides to dispose of the asset. It is important to note that because the baseline did not contain sex-disaggregated asset information, the findings of this project are useful for diagnosis but do not necessarily reflect changes in assets attributable to the project.

### FINDINGS

Findings do demonstrate some trends in ownership and ranking of assets by sex. The most important assets identified by both men and women were farmland, dairy animals, house, mobile phones, gold jewelry, silver jewelry, and bicycles. Men ranked bicycles more highly while women ranked gold jewelry more highly, reflecting the fact that these assets were more likely to be controlled by men and women, respectively. Farmland was primarily owned by the principal male, though wives participated in decisions regarding land. Women were often not registered owners of land and thus had limited opportunities to receive inputs and partake in training.

Dairy animals were owned jointly or by the husband, and decisions to sell or buy dairy animals were mostly joint. Households that raised smaller livestock, where ownership, use and control were joint between husband and wife, tended to come from lower castes. Almost half of households with house made of local materials were jointly owned, and mobile phones were more commonly owned by men.

The majority of agricultural machinery was rented rather than owned, due to its high cost, and for the same reason more upper caste households had access to the machinery than lower caste households. Men also had more access to the machinery; no women owned, used, or controlled any agricultural machinery.

Interesting findings emerged between high and low castes with regards to differences in the quantity and value of assets owned, rather than differences in access to major assets. A higher percentage of upper caste farmers had large farms and more valuable dairy animals, houses, clothing, jewelry, televisions, and cell phones. A gender analysis showed that men's assets were of higher value than women's, and that gender gaps were more severe than suggested solely by ownership incidence measures alone. That is, not only were women usually less likely to own assets, but the assets they did own were usually fewer in number and less valuable than those of males.

The promotion of mechanization through this project resulted in limited adoption and high disadoption due to the small size of farms and the lack of capital among farmers to purchase large machinery. Future adoption will be dependent upon availability of service providers and farmers' access to other sources of income.

## FEEDBACK ON A CASE STUDY BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH THELMA PARIS

- Are there any particularities about the region or country of implementation which you think are important to recognize in relation to gender-asset indicators and that you think other researchers should be aware of? Did any of these context – or country – specific factors influence your GAAP case study or M&E implementation methodology, and how?
  - Our research team had already done a lot of work in India and knew a lot of the contextual factors that would be influencing our study areas. There has also been a lot of work done in the area on related issues, like labor and caste, for example. We knew going in that most households are headed by males and that the nuclear family structure is very important in this area. We also knew that the majority of farmers were smallholders and that there were very low literacy rates among women in Eastern India. All of these contextual factors helped to inform the design of a more appropriate set of tools.
- Was it difficult to hire enough qualified interviewers or field workers for the collection? Did you have equal numbers of male and female interviewers?
  - It was hard to find qualified young male interviewers; they were not used to administering surveys to women or to asking questions about either gender or assets. As for female interviewers, it was challenging to get enough of them because of safety concerns in some parts of rural India, especially travel at night. These are definitely factors to think about when considering who your enumerators will be.
- What kinds of tools did you use for data collection? Had you used these tools before?
  - One of the innovative tools that we used to collect data was pictures of assets. We showed these pictures to respondents when asking them if they owned the asset and also during the ranking exercises on which assets they considered important. This was not a new tool for us – we had used it during a participatory varietal selection activity in eastern India – but it was one that was particularly fitting for this context as many women in the area were illiterate. We also found that the use of focus group discussions and pictures made the discussion less tense, more relaxed, and allowed us to gain the respondents' trust.
- Which questions or modules were more confusing or problematic? Which questions were the easiest to administer?

There were some questions that were challenging for respondents. The questions about jewelry ownership and value, for example, were difficult because people were suspicious given that jewelry ownership is usually somewhat private information. In addition, the questions about who owns or uses an asset were difficult to answer. The question on owning opened discussions on undocumented ownership versus documented ownership and which one we were asking about. The issue of using an asset was challenging with regards to how it related to work. For example, in the case of women and land, working on land was not always necessarily considered to be “work”, but instead considered to be “helping her husband”. With regards to “access” to an asset, we found that we had to explicitly ask about the concept of renting. If we didn't ask about this we risked losing valuable information.

- What are the unique gender-asset questions/indicators that you either collected in your survey instrument that you would have implemented differently or you were not able to collect but which you would have liked to collect, and why?

In retrospect, I think we focused too much on assets such as land, large animals, houses, etc. and who owns, uses, and controls them. While this is definitely an important issue, CSISA as a project cannot provide or transfer these assets. We should have focused more on issues that the CSISA project can impact. For example, we should have asked more questions on men and women's access to farm-related resources such as seeds of improved crop varieties, farm inputs, and participation in training on new methods of crop production practices and management, and access to agricultural extension services. It would have been useful if the project had distributed improved seed varieties (rice, corn, wheat) to Women's Self Help Groups as well as trained them on how to produce high quality seeds. IRRI and CIMMYT could have reduced the asset/resources gaps through this kind of initiative.

Finally, the CSISA project could have given more attention to providing strategies for small and marginal farmers to access agricultural machinery and postharvest equipment that can reduce losses and drudgery to women. Moreover, it would have been better if there had been a longer period between the baseline and the mid-line surveys. As it was, the time period was too short to see much of a change in land ownership and other assets, which require high capital such as agricultural machinery, dairy animals, and houses.

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For questionnaire(s) and survey instrument(s), please visit: <http://gaap.ifpri.info/tools-used-by-gaap/csisa-tools/>

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**INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

2033 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006-1002 USA | T. +1.202.862.5600 | F. +1.202.467.4439 | [ifpri@cgiar.org](mailto:ifpri@cgiar.org) | [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)

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