

A female field-facilitator's experience in breaking barriers at field-level



Ujiben is a Field Facilitator (FF) at Ambuja Cement Foundation in Ambujanagar, Gujarat. She is working with 503 farmers in the region, which includes 103 male farmers and 400 female farmers. She was one of the field facilitators who participated in the gender sensitization training conducted by IDH.

“During my field trainings, I explained to the farmers that women contribute heavily in farm activity and if the decision is taken together, it will be beneficial for everyone.”

Ujiben

Speaking about her experience she says, “I understood the gap that exists at the grassroots level, between male and female farmers and the daily work that they do.”

But when Ujiben took this learning to the farmers, she faced challenges due to the ingrained gender bias, not just among the male workers, but also the female ones. She says, “Women farmers recognized their contribution in the farm as well as household work, but they did not want to participate in decision making as they felt this is only for the male members of the house. During my field trainings, I explained to the farmers that women contribute heavily in farm activity and due to their experience in farming, including them in decision-making will be beneficial for everyone.”



Before the gender sensitization training, she says that she wasn't confident in training male farmers. However, after becoming more aware of the role women play at the grassroots level, she gathered the confidence and now works with three male farmer groups. The impact of her work is steadily

visible in her project area and she says that there is awareness among both male and female farmers. Women in the village are now stepping forward to attend trainings, and they are increasingly getting involved in decision making at the farm as well as the household level.

Lalitaben is a farmer in Ujiben's project area. While she used to attend every meeting, she did not have any role in decision making in farming, as it was her husband's role. From her learnings at the field extension trainings, she advised her husband to apply SSP fertilizer instead of DAP. Though he did not completely agree to do this, they eventually decided to try it on 7 acres of land, out of their total 17 acres. While the production on the whole field remained unchanged, expenses on the area of land where the SSP fertilizer was used were less than the other. The husband-wife duo is now applying SSP in the entire field. Lalitaben is also now a shareholder in Somnath Farmers Producer Company Limited, a farmer producer organization in Gujarat.

Ujiben says that she has to work more on gender sensitization in all villages that she works in. She believes it is important that both male and female farmers and in many cases husbands and wives are trained together so they can understand and appreciate each other's role and contribution.