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South Asia Agriculture and
Rural Growth Discussion Note Series

Strategies to Increase Poor Farmers' Access to Land and Related Benefits in India

PROMISING STATE INITIATIVES TO INCREASE POOR FARMERS' ACCESS TO LAND AND AGRICULTURAL SERVICES

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PROMISING STATE INITIATIVES TO INCREASE POOR FARMERS' ACCESS TO LAND AND AGRICULTURAL SERVICES



Photo credit: Rohit Jain – The World Bank

This discussion note presents the summary learnings from seven case studies of government and non-governmental organization (NGO) initiatives to support land-poor farmers—especially the landless, tenants, and women—to access agricultural land, markets, finance, and services.

1. OVERVIEW

Context

- Rural landlessness is common and is a strong predictor of poverty and vulnerability in India.
- Although women's active participation in farming has increased (partly due to male out-migration from rural areas), they rarely have recorded land ownership rights, are not recognized as farmers, and lack access to agricultural entitlements linked to land ownership.
- Agricultural land leasing (tenancy) is an increasingly important strategy for land-poor farmers in India to access land on flexible terms and without a large capital investment.
- Land conflicts in tribal communities are becoming more frequent and intense in the absence of documented land rights, and farmers in these communities are increasingly demanding written documentation of their customary land rights.
- While states have made good progress with digitizing land records under the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP), in many cases, the data do not reflect the current owner and/or cultivator.
- Farmers without updated land records are often unable to access agricultural entitlements, credit, and other services that directly or indirectly use land records to determine eligibility.

Strategies to increase poor farmers' access to land and related benefits

- The case studies highlight the need to strengthen vulnerable farmers' understanding of their land rights and improve their access to land administration services, especially for landless, women, tenant, *Dalit*¹, and tribal farmers.
- 'Top down' legal and institutional reforms (including to facilitate legal agricultural land leasing²) may be needed to address some of these challenges.
- The selected case studies illustrate effective 'bottom up' strategies and activities that can increase vulnerable farmers' tenure security and access to agricultural entitlements within existing legal frameworks:
 - Increase Land Access for Land-Poor Women Farmers. Subsidize land purchases by poor women farmers and support women's Self-Help Groups to lease land informally;
 - Help Vulnerable Farmers Access Formal Land Records. Support landless families (including women) to obtain legal recognition of their informal land rights through government land allocation programs and joint titling;
 - Informally Register Farmers' Customary Land Rights in Tribal Areas. Support local tribal authorities to record farmers' long-term land rights and issue Land Tenure Certificates (LTCs); and
 - Build Farmers' Land Rights Awareness and Last-Mile Access to Legal Aid. Train vulnerable farmers on their land rights and eligibility for agricultural entitlements and provide legal support to help them resolve land disputes.

1 Lower caste in the Indian caste system, grouped as Scheduled Castes as per the Indian Constitution. Literally means 'oppressed', denoting their historical and societal suppression, marginalization, and alienation.

2 See the related discussion note: [Agricultural Land Leasing Reform in India](#).

2. INTRODUCTION

1. This discussion note presents the summary learnings from seven case studies that were documented as part of the World Bank study *Land Policy Reform for Agricultural Transformation in India*. The objective of this analysis was to evaluate lessons learned from recent government and non-governmental organization (NGO) initiatives to support land-poor farmers—especially the landless, tenants, and women—to access agricultural land, markets, finance, and services. This document summarizes seven case studies³ spanning formal and customary tenure regimes from six states of India, from Kerala in the south to Manipur in the north-east. The seven cases are:

- a Kudumbashree initiative to **lease land to women’s Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** in Kerala;
- b Indira Kranti Pratham (IKP)-Bhoomi program under the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) in Andhra Pradesh to **enhance access to land for poor households**⁴;
- c Landesa and Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Program (OTELP) partnership to **help landless families obtain formal land rights to homestead and agricultural land**;
- d Landesa and West Bengal State Rural Livelihoods Mission partnership to provide **legal training and assistance to help women register land in their names**;
- e Working Group of Women for Land Ownership (WGWLO) program in Gujarat to provide **legal training and assistance to help women claim their legal inheritance rights to land**;
- f Rongmei Naga Baptist Association (RNBA) and NRMCC Center for Land Governance pilot program to **assist tribal leaders to**

3 These case studies were selected based on their documented impacts and potential for scaling up across similar contexts in India.

4 Prior to bifurcation of the state.

record farmers’ customary land rights in the Manipur Hills; and

- g Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) program in Odisha to **help women’s SHGs access and cultivate leased-in land**.

2. The remainder of this note presents a brief summary of the land tenure and administration context⁵, followed by a matrix highlighting the key characteristics, impacts, and issues identified in the case studies and a discussion of some of the key lessons learned across these cases.

3. RURAL LAND TENURE AND ADMINISTRATION CONTEXT

Landlessness

3. **Rural landlessness is common and is a strong predictor of poverty and vulnerability in India.** According to the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC), over 56 percent of rural households do not own farmland (excluding homestead land adjacent to their house)⁶. Landlessness is particularly prevalent among members of Scheduled Castes (SC) (60 percent) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) (65 percent). The marginalization of *Dalits* in terms of land ownership, as well as their continued inability to possess lands allocated to them by the government, are well documented. Landlessness also continues to be prevalent in states with large tribal populations, despite legal provisions to protect tribal land rights and settle (allocate) government lands to them for farming and homesteads. Persistently high rates of landlessness—despite pro-poor legislation and government schemes to address

5 For more information, please see the related discussion note: [Agricultural Land Leasing Reform in India](#).

6 Government of India. 2011. Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011: Households Land Ownership Pattern (Rural). Accessed 18 May 2021 at: <https://secc.gov.in/statewiseLandOwnershipReport?reportType=Land%20Ownership>.

it—is a worrying trend given that landlessness is the best indicator of rural poverty in India⁷.

Women's Land Rights

4. **Similarly, although women's active participation in farming has increased (partly due to male out-migration from rural areas), they rarely have recorded land ownership rights, are not recognized as farmers, and lack access to agricultural entitlements linked to land ownership.** Women farmers face difficulties accessing land of sufficient size and quality, and their names are rarely reflected in the land records. In fact, most state land records lack a column for recording the owner's gender and do not always record titles jointly in the names of husbands and wives. Thus, while women constitute 65 percent of all agricultural workers in the country, they comprise only 14 percent of all landowners with formally recorded land rights. Without formal land records in their names, women farmers are not recognized as farmers and are typically excluded from public and private agricultural services and entitlements⁸. Women also typically have very limited awareness of their legal rights and face difficulties resolving land issues in the face of patriarchal customs, complex laws and administrative structures, and weak grievance redressal mechanisms.

Tenants' Rights

5. **Agricultural land leasing (tenancy) is an increasingly important strategy for land-poor farmers in India to access land on flexible terms and without a large capital investment⁹.** According to the 70th Round of the Land and Livestock Holdings Survey by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO),

almost 14 percent (nearly 21.3 million) rural households in India reported leasing in land in 2013. Most (86 percent) of these households are small and marginal farmers operating less than 2 hectares (ha). Moreover, tenancy incidence is likely under-reported due to state laws banning or heavily restricting agricultural land leasing. Despite these legal restrictions, both the proportion of tenants among rural households and the proportion of land cultivated on tenancy contracts increased between 2002-03 and 2012-13¹⁰. Thus, land leasing remains a crucial land access strategy for land-poor farmers. While gender-disaggregated statistics on tenancy are not available, anecdotal evidence suggests that landowners are reluctant to lease land to individual women farmers, who are seen as less capable farmers than men¹¹.

Customary Land Rights

6. **Land tenure and governance in the hilly areas of north-eastern India are governed under uncodified customary laws, with autonomy and protection under the Indian Constitution¹².** In these areas, land remains un-surveyed and lacks formal records and maps. Instead, land is legally administered according to customary tenure by tribal communities that have historically practiced *jhum* (shifting agriculture) under two different tenure systems: (i) community ownership of land in areas where *jhum* is practiced, with households enjoying the rights

7 Hanstad, T., Nielsen, R., and T. Haque. 2008. Improving Land Access for India's Rural Poor. *Economic and Political Weekly*: 43(10).

8 Deo, S. 2020. Women and land in India: Connects and Disconnects, Land in India- 2020. Accessed 17 May 2021 at: <https://www.centerforland.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Land-in-India-2020-28-FEB-2020.pdf>.

9 Deininger, K. 2003. Land Policies for Growth and Poverty Reduction. Washington, DC: World Bank.

10 Government of India. 2013. Household Ownership and Operational Holdings in India. National Sample Survey 70th Round. Accessed 17 May 2021 at: http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Report_571_15dec15_2.pdf.

11 See the related discussion note: [Agricultural Land Leasing Reform in India](#).

12 The Sixth Schedule under Article 244 (2) of the Constitution relates to those areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, and Mizoram that are declared as 'tribal areas' and provides for District or Regional Autonomous District Councils (ADC) for such areas that have wide ranging legislative, judicial, and executive powers over all types of land, except for reserve forests. These councils are given power to make law for, among others: (i) the allotment, occupation or use, or the setting apart of land, other than reserve forest, for agriculture or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural or any other purpose likely to promote the interests of the inhabitants of any village or town only except the compulsory acquisition of any land for public purposes by the government of the state; (ii) the management of any forest except a reserved forest; (iii) the regulation of the practice of *jhum* or other forms of shifting cultivation; and (iv) the inheritance of property.

to use the land allocated to them by a traditional authority (typically a tribal chief or leader) and (ii) individual ownership of land, which is transferable only within members of the local tribal community. Customary land rights are typically undocumented. Moreover, customary land governance structures often discriminate against women's ownership of land and their participation in land-related decisions.

7. **Land conflicts in tribal communities are becoming more frequent and intense in the absence of documented land rights, and farmers in these communities are increasingly demanding written documentation of their customary land rights.** For instance, at least one-third of the hill villages in Manipur are estimated to be affected by land disputes. The lack of proper documentation and enforcement of land rights is a major source of conflict within tribal communities. Most land conflicts are caused by boundary disputes between villages and individuals. These conflicts are directly proportional to the increasing number of development projects in these regions. In the absence of land records, compensation for compulsory land acquisition is typically paid to tribal leaders, and these funds are seldom shared equitably within the community. At the same time, farming systems in the tribal areas of Manipur analyzed in this study are changing from *jhum* to other land uses, such as horticulture and paddy terraces. These new land uses require longer-term rights and longer-term investments. Farmers in tribal areas would also like to benefit fully from public services and entitlements, such as subsidized

inputs, that are increasingly being linked to documented land rights (*see next paragraph*). These land use changes have led farmers in tribal areas to demand written documentation of their customary land rights.

Land Records

8. **While states have made good progress with digitizing land records under the DILRMP, in many cases, the data do not reflect the current owner and/or cultivator.** Over 91 percent of all villages across India now have digitized textual land records (typically known as the Record of Rights, RoR). However, the survey and re-survey process (which updates the RoR and cadastral maps based on the current ground realities) has been completed for roughly 3 percent of India's land area according to the Department of Land Resources as of April 2021. This could lead to problems, as many vulnerable farmers who do have land records lack the knowledge and/or resources to formally update their land records following an inheritance, sale, or other transfer. As such, the RoR may not reflect the name of the current owner(s), potentially leading to land disputes that are difficult to resolve. Moreover, most states only record land *ownership* rights in the RoR, leaving out land *use* rights, such as tenancies. And, as already noted, the land rights of women farmers and customary landowners are also typically not recorded in the RoR. Thus, although the Government of India has recognized the DILRMP as key to doubling farmers' income, the desired impacts may not be fully achieved unless the program explicitly promotes the inclusion of vulnerable farmers' land rights in the land records.

Access to Agricultural Support

9. **Farmers without updated land records are often unable to access agricultural entitlements, credit, and other services that directly or indirectly use land records to determine eligibility.** For example, many central and state direct benefit transfer programs—such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN) scheme—rely on the RoR to



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confirm applicants' status as farmers and/or the extent of their recorded land area. The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) crop insurance scheme and public grain procurement in some states that practice decentralized public procurement (for instance, Odisha) also use the RoR to determine farmers' eligibility. Many states also require that the leaders of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) submit copies of their land records as part of the FPO registration process. Furthermore, commercial banks typically require land rights documentation, usually the RoR, as a requirement to access institutional credit. Many of India's vulnerable farmers are therefore unable to fully benefit from agriculture and rural development programs, as they lack formal land records in their names. As a result, India's agricultural transformation risks leaving these farmers behind.

4. PROVEN STRATEGIES TO INCREASE POOR FARMERS' ACCESS TO LAND AND RELATED AGRICULTURAL ENTITLEMENTS

10. **The case studies highlight the need to strengthen vulnerable farmers' understanding of their land rights and improve their access to land administration services.** Vulnerable farmers—comprising landless, women, tenant, *Dalit*, and tribal farmers—generally have limited awareness and understanding of the laws governing agricultural land and limited access to legal services to resolve land disputes. Moreover, while many states have programs to support women and landless households to become landowners¹³, land administration services often struggle to effectively reach vulnerable farmers. Land Revenue Departments

¹³ See the related discussion note: [Help Vulnerable Farmers Access Formal Land Records](#).

in the states studied often have high vacancy rates and increasing responsibilities beyond land records management. As a result, these departments have limited capacity to proactively identify and support vulnerable farmers to (i) update their land records; (ii) access existing government programs meant to support them; or (iii) resolve complex land disputes.

11. **'Top down' legal and institutional reforms (including to facilitate legal agricultural land leasing¹⁴) will be needed to address some of these challenges. In the meantime, the selected case studies illustrate effective 'bottom up' strategies and activities that can increase vulnerable farmers' tenure security and access to agricultural entitlements within existing legal frameworks.** These strategies can be summarized as follows:

- a **Increase Land Access for Land-Poor Women Farmers.** Subsidize land purchases by poor women farmers and support women's Self-Help Groups to lease land informally;
- b **Help Vulnerable Farmers Access Formal Land Records.** Support landless families (including women) to obtain legal recognition of their informal land rights through government land allocation programs and joint titling;
- c **Informally Register Farmers' Customary Land Rights in Tribal Areas.** Support local tribal authorities to record farmers' long-term land rights and issue Land Tenure Certificates (LTCs); and
- d **Build Farmers' Land Rights Awareness and Last-Mile Access to Legal Aid.** Train vulnerable farmers on their land rights and eligibility for agricultural entitlements and provide legal support to help them resolve land disputes.

12. **Table 1 summarizes the key characteristics, impacts, and issues identified in the case studies.**

¹⁴ See the related discussion note: [Agricultural Land Leasing Reform in India](#).

Table 1: Key Characteristics, Impacts, and Issues Identified in the Case Studies

Strategy	Activities	Key Actors/Roles	Impacts/Issues	Examples
I. INCREASE LAND ACCESS FOR LAND-POOR WOMEN FARMERS				
Subsidize Land Purchases by Poor Women Farmers	Landless poor (mostly SC, ST) women supported to purchase land with 75 percent grant, 15 percent loan, and 10 percent of the total amount paid upfront by the beneficiary with registration fee, stamp duty, and transfer duty exempted	Village Organization: Identified land, supported rate negotiation, aided sale transaction District Purchase Committee (Chair: Joint Collector): Finalized sale and registered land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of landowners and average size of landholding Increased incomes by 30-75 percent and shifted income source from wages to cultivation (65-80 percent of total income) Increased food security and decreased seasonal migration Enhanced social status of beneficiaries as cultivators; decreased borrowing Land registered to women → improved status within the family 	IKP-Bhoomi – SERP (Andhra Pradesh, AP)
Subsidize Informal Group Land Leasing for Collective Farming	Provided lease fund to support landless poor women's SHGs to lease in farmland informally	IKP: Facilitated new draft legislation to allow SHGs to formally lease agricultural land Village Organization: Managed lease fund loans to SHG member families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to farmland for the poorest of the poor by 0.05 acres (average) Increased lease market participation Increased land productivity 	IKP-Bhoomi – SERP (Andhra Pradesh, AP)
Support Informal Group Land Leasing for Collective Farming	Assisted women's SHGs to informally lease contiguous land parcels from private owners or informally use government lands (commons) with village permission to facilitate farmland aggregation, economies of scale in production, and mechanization	NRLM: Supported SHGs to organize collective (group) farming in a cluster SHGs/Joint Liability Groups (JLGs): Organized farming education campaigns, resolved farming challenges, helped farmers access formal credit and some farm entitlements CBO/NGO: Helped SHGs identify land and negotiate with owners/village for its use Line Departments: Supplied subsidized inputs, credit, market linkages, capacity building (OD) Private Landowners: Negotiated leases Village: Allowed use of common land (OD) Panchayat: Mediated fallow land access and leasing negotiation, endorsed informal leases (KL) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS): Land development for JLGs (KL) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD): Subsidized loans for JLGs (KL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to farmland Increased productivity and farm income (up to 4x national average) (OD) Diversification into high-value crops Labor pooling reduced labor costs Landlords unwilling to lease for multiple seasons due to legal provisions → undermines long-term investment¹⁵ Lack of formal lease undermines tenure security and increases risks (for example, rent increases or non-renewal of lease) Informal lease prevents tenants from accessing government agriculture support programs (such as input subsidies) 	Kudumbashree (Kerala, KL) Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) (Odisha, OD) West Bengal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (WB)

¹⁵ To address this, a government order set a minimum 3-year lease period for land developed using MGNREGS funds with panchayat concurrence (KL).

Strategy	Activities	Key Actors/Roles	Impacts/Issues	Examples
II. HELP VULNERABLE FARMERS ACCESS FORMAL LAND RECORDS				
Support Landless Families to Regularize Government Land Possession and Claim Available Government Land as per Eligibility	Support landless families to obtain formal rights to government land they already possess and/or available government land through settlement under existing legal provisions; subsequent investments in watershed development	Community Resource Persons (CRPs) (literate youth): Supported households to legally claim land (for example, in preparing applications) NGO: Provided technical facilitation to overcome capacity limitations of the Land Revenue Department; developed standard data collection forms, tools, manuals OTELP: Provided additional technical expertise to support the Land Revenue Department (such as Data Entry Operators, retired Revenue Inspectors, Surveyors) Tehsildar: Reviewed applications and executed the process of land settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to agricultural and homestead land for 26,038 families Increased productivity by 140 percent on average Increased diversification into high-value crops Increased household income 18x Reduced soil erosion and runoff; increased infiltration and organic content of the soil Joint land titles for husband and wife → enables access to government schemes Land registered to women → improved their confidence 	Odisha Tribal Empowerment & Livelihoods Programme (OTELP) (Odisha, OD)
III. INFORMALLY REGISTER FARMERS' CUSTOMARY LAND RIGHTS IN TRIBAL AREAS				
Identify Tenants for Loan Eligibility	Identify tenant farmers and issue Loan Eligibility Cards (LECs)	Gram Sabha: Verified tenants' applications Revenue Officers: Reviewed applications and issued LECs Banks: Sanctioned loans to tenants with LECs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlord consent not mandatory, but many landlords blocked their tenants from accessing an LEC due to fear of losing their land under AP Tenancy Act, 1956 Limited loan issuance due to bankers' poor awareness of the Act/LECs 	IKP-Bhoomi – SERP (Andhra Pradesh, AP)
Issue Customary Land Tenure Certificates	Mapping of horticultural parcels, community lands, and village boundaries through DGPS-linked mobile application; traditional village authority issues Land Tenure Certificate (LTC), with joint titles for husbands/wives	Village Youth: Mapped parcels and collected landholder data using survey NGO/CSOs: Trained and provided technical support to youth surveyors; supported village leaders to develop community specific LTCs; liaised with government departments Village Chief/Council: Issued LTCs IT Consultants: Developed mapping app	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot completed in 5 districts with potential to scale up to meet farmers' demands for greater individual tenure security Involvement of traditional leaders critical to build trust and buy-in LTCs can be used to access agriculture programs and compensation; expected to increase investment incentives Greater involvement of government entities needed to ensure that LTCs are accepted as legitimate documentation 	Rongmei Naga Baptist Association (RNBA) (Manipur Hills)

Strategy	Activities	Key Actors/Roles	Impacts/Issues	Examples
IV. BUILD FARMERS' LAND RIGHTS AWARENESS AND LAST-MILE ACCESS TO LEGAL AID				
Support Women to Claim Inheritance	Create awareness on inheritance rights and related legal provisions; support women to negotiate with family and obtain legal heir rights	Paralegals (local women): Raised awareness and supported women throughout process Land Resource Center: Interfaced with block level government departments to resolve cases and helped women access agricultural training/programs NGOs: Trained paralegals and Revenue Officers and hosted Land Resource Centers Revenue Officers: Reviewed inheritance documentation, issued legal heir certificates WGWLO + Legal NGOs: Hosted legal clinics to build capacity of paralegals to address technically complicated inheritance disputes Line Departments/KVKs: Provided agricultural entitlements/training to farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8,818 women received inheritance rights and titles in their names, enabling 7,551 of them to access agricultural entitlements from 2013-19 From 2017-19, secured average of 0.60 acres per woman and government benefits totaling INR 61 lakh (USD 84,138) 7,241 landowner and non-landowner women farmers were trained by the Agricultural Technology Management Agency/Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) 2,575 women farmers adopted sustainable agriculture practices Reduced time and cost of securing land by 10-15x to INR 1,000 (USD 13.7)/person on an average Financial sustainability is a challenge, especially since Land Resource Centers operating from government offices cannot charge fees 	Working Group of Women for Land Ownership (WGWLO) (Gujarat)
Resolve Land Disputes, including to Enable Land Grant Beneficiaries to Benefit from their Land	Resolve land disputes and help land grant beneficiaries secure possession of lands legally allotted to them by the government by: developing a land inventory of the land rights of poor farmers, including SC/ST; providing free paralegal aid and technical and legal support; coordinating with government departments; facilitating convergence with MGNREGS for land development and with subsidized credit programs	Paralegals (community youth): Trained to help the poor resolve their land conflicts (AP) Community Surveyors (technically qualified youth): Developed land inventory with maps (AP) Village Conference: Redressed land-related grievances and apparent land disputes, protected legal land rights of the poor (AP) Legal Coordinators (law graduates): Supported paralegals and community surveyors (AP) Land Managers (retired Tehsildars or Deputy Collectors): Managed district land centers and liaised with the Land Revenue Department (AP) Revenue Divisional Officers: Deputed to project to coordinate with the Land Revenue Department (AP) Tehsildars: Deputed to project to supervise <i>mandal</i> (block) level work (AP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title and possession secured to 430,000 (4.3 lakh) households (AP) No transaction costs (reduced expenditure) (AP) On average 43,842 families each got 1.2 acres of land developed under MGNREGS (AP) 280,000 (2.8 lakh) families accessed credit (AP) Benefit-cost ratio: 9.24 (AP) State Government issued Government Order No. 1148 to constitute committees at various levels (state, district, divisional, <i>mandal</i>) and meet as often as needed to resolve the land issues of the poor identified by IKP land staff (AP) Title and possession secured for 17,427 tribal households (11 percent farmland and 89 percent homestead land) (OD) 	IKP-Bhoomi/IKP-Giri Nyayam ¹⁶ – SERP (Andhra Pradesh, AP) Odisha Tribal Empowerment & Livelihoods Programme (OTEPL) (Odisha, OD)

¹⁶ The IKP-Bhoomi program found that tribal people were not able to resolve their land disputes, despite the existence of strong legal protections and tribal development programs. As such, the SERP initiated a land dispute resolution program specifically focused on tribal communities called IKP-Giri Nyayam.

Strategy	Activities	Key Actors/Roles	Impacts/Issues	Examples
		<p>Zilla Samakhya: Hosted land centers to provide single window for land services (legal and survey assistance, records access) (AP)</p> <p>MGNREGS: Land development for the poor (AP)</p> <p>Law University: Trained Legal Coordinators and paralegals to support tribal cases (AP)</p> <p>CRPs (literate youth): Supported tribal landless households to legally claim rights to government land, including by inventorying their lands, helping them prepare their applications for government land grant programs, and following up with the Land Revenue Department on their applications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government of Odisha scaled up the work to 18,000 villages in 118 Tribal Sub Plan blocks across 12 districts in 2012 (OD) • Project (which also included watershed development activities) increased annual household farm production by 140 percent (OD) 	
<p>Build Legal Awareness of Women on Land Rights and Agricultural Entitlements</p>	<p>Trained women farmers on land issues, such as land uses, ownership, formal rights documentation and land transaction procedures, as well as on collective farming and their eligibility for land-related government schemes</p>	<p>Master Trainers: Trained SHG leaders at <i>Gram Panchayat</i> (cluster) level (WB)</p> <p>SHG Leaders: Trained their members (WB)</p> <p>NGO: Developed training content and trained district level (master) trainers (WB, GJ)</p> <p>State Rural Livelihood Mission: Managed program, human resources (WB)</p> <p>Paralegals: Built legal awareness and demand, assisted women with inheritance claim applications, provided legal aid, coordinated with government officials (GJ)</p> <p>Swa Bhoomi Kendras: Facilitated legal aid and access to land and farm entitlements, interfaced with government officials, promoted sustainable agriculture among women farmers (GJ)</p> <p>Legal Clinics: Addressed complicated cases (GJ)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased legal awareness and enhanced capacity of women farmers to access government services related to agricultural land • Increased access to agricultural land, credit, extension, markets, and diversification (in combination with informal leases – see above) • 8,818 women accessed inheritance rights to land, and 7,551 women claimed agriculture-based public services entitlements from 2013-19 (GJ) • Women farmers secured an average of 0.60 acres each and INR 61 lakh (USD 84,138) worth of public services were mobilized from 2017-19 (GJ) • 2,575 women farmers (of which two-thirds are tribal) shifted to sustainable agriculture practices from 2017-19 (GJ) • Land access cost reduced substantially (by a factor of 10); 40 percent of the respondents accessed land within 3 months and 78 percent within 12 months (GJ) • Created demand to scale up to 750,000 members across 106 blocks in 2020-21 	<p>West Bengal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (WB)</p> <p>Working Group of Women for Land Ownership (WGWLO) (Gujarat, GJ)</p>

5. LESSONS LEARNED

13. Looking across the case studies, it is clear there are solutions emerging to address the complex nature of developing inclusive and accurate land records that secure the rights of vulnerable farmers. Several common approaches can be scaled up to enhance vulnerable farmers' access to land and government agriculture support programs. They are as follows:

Expand Land Administration Resources, Capacity, and Services

- **Build government-NGO-community partnerships to improve land service delivery**
 - Provide a multi-level legal support structure aligned with the Land Revenue Department hierarchy (state, district, block, and village levels) to facilitate coordination.
 - Use existing community institutions (such as SHGs and JLGs) to provide legal training and aid.
 - Leverage retired officials, law graduates, and legal experts to provide on-going support and/or periodic legal clinics to resolve tough cases.
- **Build local capacity for gender-sensitive and pro-poor land service delivery**
 - Train local institutions (*Gram Panchayats*) and/or local resource persons to inventory government/fallow lands and landless/tenant farmers and support vulnerable farmers to: (i) secure land access arrangements; (ii) update their land records; and (iii) document and resolve land disputes at low cost.
 - Train revenue officials to resolve land issues facing vulnerable farmers, including women and SC/ST members.
 - Develop standard training manuals, data collection forms, and other tools, and build local capacity and institutions for their regular execution.

- **Build vulnerable farmers' awareness of their land rights, related laws, and agricultural topics**
 - Train women farmers on inheritance rights and procedures for claiming rights.
 - Train vulnerable farmers (especially women and SC/ST members) on relevant land laws and procedures to access land services and resolve land disputes.
 - Combine land-related training with training on sustainable production models, marketing, and agricultural entitlements linked to land (such as input subsidies and credit).

Increase Land Access and Tenure Security for Vulnerable Farmers

- Subsidize land purchases by land-poor farmers (especially SC/ST members and women), offer easy access to credit, and waive fees/duties (for example, stamp duty).
- Support group land leasing on private and government land for collective farming, and use government orders to bolster tenant farmers' rights and ensure their access to agricultural services.
 - Identify fallow private and government land for cultivation by landless/land-poor farmers.
 - Facilitate lease negotiation and enforcement.
 - Improve security of informal lease agreements through Gram Panchayat endorsement.
- Train local youth as CRPs (in line with the National Skill India Mission) to use low-cost technology (such as tablets) to inventory and survey land and provide simple land services, including dispute redressal, while also creating local livelihoods opportunities.
 - Support vulnerable landowners, especially women and SC/ST members, to resolve disputes and update their formal land records.

- Inventory landless households and government land and facilitate land grants and joint titles.
- Support customary authorities to document farmers' long-term rights to horticultural land in tribal areas (jointly for husbands and wives).
- Identify tenants for access to agricultural entitlements (such as LECs).
- Provide legal aid to support land grant beneficiaries to possess/benefit from their land.

Converge and Coordinate Delivery of Land and Agriculture Services

- Organize single window land service delivery at the local level (*Gram Panchayat*/block or *Tehsil*/district).
- Promote inclusive agricultural transformation by linking land access and tenure security schemes with government agriculture support schemes and assisting vulnerable farmers to access fallow land development (under MGNREGS), agricultural training, services (for example, credit and marketing), and other entitlements.

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION NOTE SERIES

This note is part of the South Asia Agriculture and Rural Growth Discussion Note Series, which seeks to disseminate operational learnings and implementation experiences from rural, agriculture, and food systems programs in South Asia. It is based on the findings of the ***Land Policy Reform for Agricultural Transformation in India Study*** under the India Agriculture and Rural Development Advisory Services and Analytical Program. The other notes in this series include:

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