

The last mile: novel strategies for reaching farm women

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Last mile....

- A phrase used in the telecommunications and technology industries to describe the technologies and processes used to connect the end customer to a communications network.
- The last mile is often stated in terms of the "last-mile problem", because the end link between consumers and connectivity has proved to be disproportionately expensive to solve.



CONTD..

- The last mile: a metaphorical phrase that implies the end of a journey, the completion of a task, a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.
- But it also carries with it the tenor of urgency and challenge .
- The term "last mile" is said to have originated in the telecommunications industry, representing the final leg of delivering connectivity from a communications provider to a customer.
- In recent years it has made its way into almost all fields.

'last mile delivery'

- One of the greatest constraints that farmers face to improving their farming practices and productivity is availability of information and agri-inputs.
- Known as 'last mile delivery' (LMD), it means reaching farmers with appropriate and timely advice and enabling them to access the inputs they require.
- LMD is an on-going challenge for private and public sector providers

Farm Women –the last mile?

- The role of women in improving food security is well-established. A 2011 FAO report found that women produce over half of the world's food and comprise 43 per cent of the global agricultural labour force.
- Feminization of agriculture, in India, has been caused by increased "casualization" of work, unprofitable crop production and distress migration of men "for higher casual work in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors",
- Women have now become custodians of the family land, in the absence of men.

Work participation rate of women

Year	Work participation rate of women(%)	
	total	rural
1981	19.7	23.1
1991	22.3	26.8
2001	25.7	31.0
2011	39.8	30.0

GOI, NSSO, Employment & unemployment report :537,2010 & Census 2011

Feminization ..of Agriculture

	Cultivators(%)		C+AL (females)	Agricultural labour		females ↑
	Male	female		Male	female	
A.P	31.5	16.5	83.8	46.4	67.3	20.9%
Bihar	24.9	16.0	79.4	54.3	63.4	9.1%
Tamilnadu	22.1	18.4	73.9	37.1	55.5	18.4%
India	35.2	28.8	77.3	34.4	48.5	14.1%

Calculated from census 2011 data

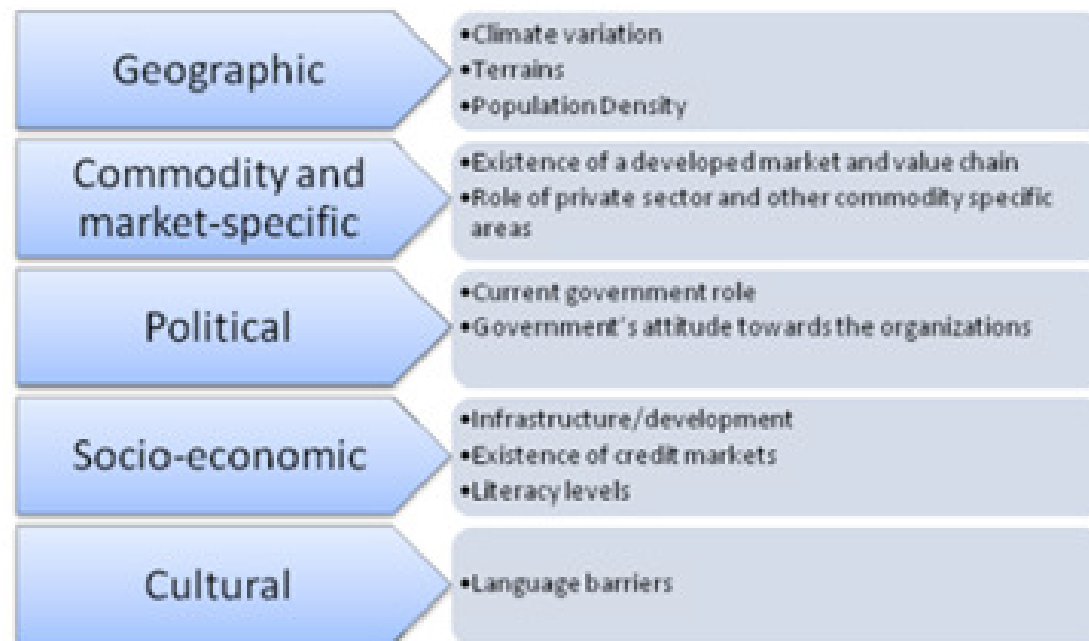
Targeting women farmers

- Targeting women farmers can be challenging, because they may not be active in farmers' organisations, and they often produce crops for household consumption rather than for sale.
- Additionally, women farmers take on different and often overlapping roles – contributing their labour as unpaid family workers, taking on farm work as casual agricultural labourers and sometimes as the principal producers of crops.
- Women in the different roles will have different needs and interests and it is important to target support accordingly.

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- women farmers have as much right to agricultural information as men – but also because better RAS for women would likely result in better production and productivity.
- A recent review of global statistics showed that there are clear gender differences in the productivity of male and female-headed farming households, with the yield of the latter often being 20-30% lower.

CHALLENGES



Contd..

- Particularly in India, to overcome the challenge of the last mile, two major issues have to be taken care of: linguistic diversity and geographical distance.
- The mainland of India has large geographical variance with terrains ranging from mountains to plateaus, plains and even coastal areas. This makes accessibility a major concern.

Training needs identified

- Suitable varieties to be grown-48%
- Water saving technology(SRI)-21%
- Quality seed-27%
- Insect pest management-39%
- 3 training programs were organized in tribal district of AP-Nalgonda
- strategy used:distribution of inputs based on training attendance-seeds, drum seeders, weeders & vermicompost units

Skill training on use of drum seeder

Focus group discussion



Vermicompost preparation



Capacity building of farm women



Training on package of practices



Seed distribution



Training on line sowing

Use of mechanical weeder



weed management -ICT's

Novel strategies-to reach the unreached

- **Collective action** - in the form of co-operatives, producer or micro-finance groups - is recognised as a vehicle for increasing smallholder power, and therefore as an important site of intervention for development actors
- Different types of collective action groups bring different benefits to women smallholders.
- Formal vs. informal groups, women-only vs. mixed.
- Large, formal groups have wider access to inputs, services and government support.

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- Some small, informal groups benefit from having one or two male members who undertake tasks that women are typically barred from, such as transporting goods to market.
- The most effective way to ensure maximum benefits for women, particularly regarding empowerment, is to facilitate links between different types of groups and build on existing informal collective action, as well as ensuring transparent governance and gender-responsive leadership.

community seed bank

- Community Seed Banks (CSBs) are places of storage where indigenous seed varieties are conserved and managed by community members.
- These ex-situ conservation sites provide farmers with free and easy access to traditional seeds under the condition that a farmer returns twice the amount of seeds he or she borrowed.
- They not only reduce farmers' dependence on seed companies but also help conserve the agro-biodiversity of their villages.



Functioning of a seed bank

- When setting up a seed bank, members of existing women's Self Help Groups within a community are invited to a meeting.
- A group is then selected from among these members to manage the bank. Meetings are held regularly in order to carry out the seed bank functions.
- Functions of a CSB include: storing seeds in the proper manner, lending seeds to those who request them and keeping records of seeds returned.
- These members are responsible for maintaining the purity of seeds by monitoring the farming methods of members who contribute to the seed bank and ensuring that they employ organic farming method.
- They are trained in seed selection and storage techniques.



Efficiency gains in increasing poor women's access to resources

- *Evidence suggest that explicitly targeting women farmers with increased access to assets*
 - *. . . could potentially increase agricultural productivity by 10–20 percent (Alderman, Haddad and Udry 1996)*
 - *. . . has positive effects on a number of important development outcomes, including food security, child nutrition, and education (Quisumbing 2003)*
- *Addressing gender issues in agricultural projects can increase sustainability by 16 percent (Meinzen-Dick and Quisumbing 2009)*



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- setting quotas on the number of women versus men who should receive training, and who should be in executive positions in farmer groups.
- Participatory experiments, training programs and exposure visits enhance women's technical knowledge and skills.
- conducting specific training for women in leadership and similar skills
- Training extension staff in gender sensitivity, and promoting this actively (in performance assessment, etc).

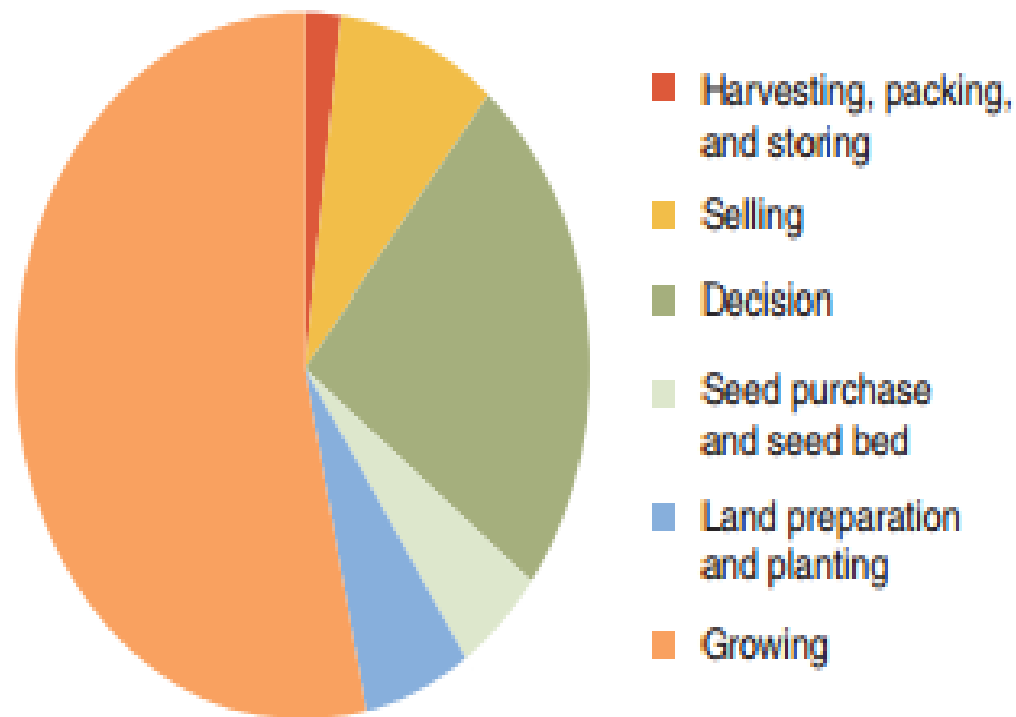
Equipment and capacity development

- **Labour and time-saving technologies** and practices that contribute to reducing women's workload and save them time are an important aspect to address if market development programmes are to succeed in empowering women, both socially and economically
- Women also need assistance to develop the capacity necessary in order to increase their incomes. For this, a vital first step is to provide them with training as well as agricultural inputs and credit so that they can produce more, aggregate their crops, and market them collectively.

Women Extension Volunteer (WEV)

- Women Extension Volunteer (WEV) Approach in Ghana has put a great emphasis on placing female farmers at the core of the advisory service.
- This innovative extension approach was designed with the aim of providing affordable extension delivery systems and increasing EAS coverage to female farmers
- their role is complementary to that of public extension agents in that they can expand gender-specific extension services by liaising between service providers and women farmers in areas already being served and helping facilitate dissemination of information in their communities
- **ADARSHA RYTU-use more effectively**

FIGURE 3.2: Information Search Cost by Stage of Farming



Source: Adapted from De Silva and Ratnadiwakara 2008.

ICT's

- Using ICTs to reach women farmers could contribute to improving farming practices and close gender gaps in yields and productivity if they are designed and used to overcome gender-specific constraints.
- **Reuters Market Light** (RML) is a subscription-based SMS service providing Indian farmers with information that helps them increase productivity, maximize revenue, manage risk, and reduce waste. The service provides localized and personalized information on commodity prices, crop cultivation (covering 17 crops), and the weather. Mobile telecommunication was the obvious platform for providing this service, as India has one of the fastest-growing mobile markets in the world, with over 427 million mobile connections.
- **IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited** (IKSL). In addition to crop advice and the weather, IKSL provides advice on animal husbandry, rural health initiatives, and the availability of products such as fertilizer. Unlike RML, IKSL's information arrives via voice rather than text message.

Mobile telephony

- Affordability: The many pricing models offer affordability and choice, even for very low-income customers (cheap handsets, micro prepayments, top-up cards).
- reduction of transportation costs, improvements in the information flows between buyers and sellers allow for the efficient trading of information without the traveling.
- This is particularly significant in rural areas, where traders would have needed to travel to urban areas to check for demand and negotiate on price, this business is now conducted on the mobile.
- in certain circumstances, mobile phones can allow the 'middle man' to be cut out.
- **gender digital divide and information poverty is to be overcome.**



CONTD..

- **Farmer's Friend** is mobile phone application by Grameen Foundation's AppLab, it provides information on demand for farmers. In addition to weather forecasts and agricultural advice, includes health tips, a clinic finder, a Google trading service for agricultural commodities, and other products.
- This innovation differs from RML and IKSL in that it is not prepaid; the system is a search engine, and the user pays for each query at the point of purchase.
- Customers text their query and location and receive a nearly instant reply. The service is currently free from Google, but customers are charged by their network operator for each query.

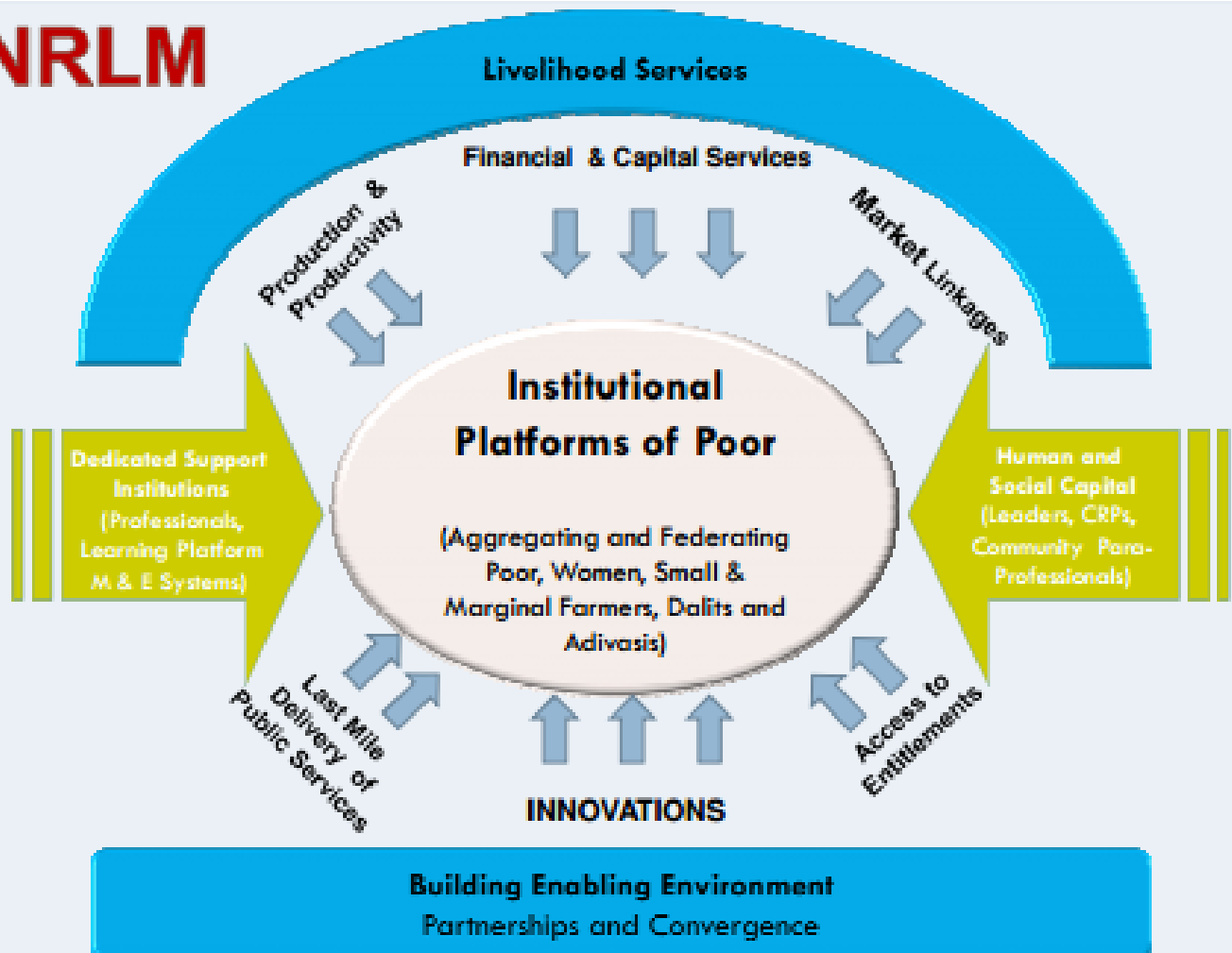
**What I hear I forget.
What I see I remember.
What I do I learn.”**

(A peasant proverb)

Reiterate...

- The cost of last mile delivery is significant so we have to create partnerships. Platforms for LMD should allow for different disciplines and stakeholders to adapt to the needs of farmers, as these vary from region to region.
- All the solutions under one roof, viz. agri-inputs, free technical guidance/agri advisory, consumer products and services with focus to facilitate financial, healthcare, education and entertainment services etc.

NRLM



*“Where women are the majority of smallholder farmers, failure to release their full potential in agriculture is a contributing factor to low growth and food insecurity.”
(WDR 2008)*



thanks