



# Analysis of women’s role in agriculture in the Eastern Gangetic Plains

## Overview

In understanding the role of women in agriculture in the Eastern Gangetic Plains (EGP), there is a mismatch between macro and micro level research findings. Macro data highlights the withdrawal of women from the labour force and hence a consistent de-feminization in the case of India, while the literature on Nepal and Bangladesh hints at feminization primarily as a response to male-selective outmigration.

The micro evidence, however, begins with the assumption of feminization and proceeds to enquire into its impact. From macro information in India, there is some evidence that women from poorer households are withdrawing out of the workforce at a higher rate compared to those from better off households. The EGP as a region acquires prominence as it faces the brunt of agrarian poverty. Apart from inconsistencies between the macro and micro findings, the regional context of the EGP does not seem to have been understood adequately.

This could be due to existing heterogeneities that could hide potential homogeneities and vice versa, in their histories, cultures, nature of migration and gendered patterns across and within parts of India, Nepal and Bangladesh. There is thus a need to critically revisit the role of women in agriculture in the EGP.

ACIAR project number	C000337
Start date and duration (years)	March 2018 (1 year)
Location	West Bengal, Bihar, Bangladesh and Nepal
Budget	AU \$78,000

### Project leader(s) and Commissioned Organisation

Dr Sucharita Sen, SaciWATERS

### Partner country project leaders and their institutions

None

### ACIAR Research Program Manager

Dr Robyn Johnston



## Research

Given the gaps in understanding the EGP as a region and the role of women in agriculture within the region, the research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the rationale behind characterization of EGP as a region, particularly in terms of its gendered context?
  - » Based on a combination of physical, agro-climatic, socio-economic and policy milieu what are the different meso regions within the EGP?
  - » How can we characterise these meso regions based on patterns in employment and demography across gender?
2. How can we critically understand the role of women in agriculture in the EGP? What are the similarities and dissimilarities within the region?
  - » What is the nature and trend of employment in different agricultural activities that women are engaged in?
  - » How do these trends differ across different socio-economic sections (across caste, ethnicity, kinship, religion, land size class, status of land ownership by women, education, migration status etc.)?
3. What are the processes that affect these patterns and how do these processes explain them?
  - » What is the role that emerging growth paradigm and associated employment environment, nature of urbanization, rural-urban migration, agricultural development, rural institutions, social mobility of women, and policy processes etc. in explaining these trends in women employment?
  - » What role has policy played in shaping these trends? What are the gaps in policy incorporating and responding to these trends?

## Anticipated outcomes/ Achievements

After two months of the project the following activities are in process or have been completed:

1. Secondary data sets at the unit level have been procured and preliminary analysis of trends of female workforce in agriculture are in process. Currently, the team is working on the comparability of measurement of work across three countries. There are differences in terms of the measurement, and the team is documenting these differences. The trends of feminization and defeminization has been done in India, as also the regional and sub-sectoral trends differences. Gender gaps in work like wage-rate and participation rates across social groups have been worked out.
2. Policy analysis of now gender has been incorporated in development and specifically in agriculture for India, Nepal, and Bangladesh are in process. The aim is to understand the policy intent and whether these can address the nature of problems that would be identified by the study.

