



WOMEN-LED CLIMATE RESILIENT FARMING

DE-RISKING AGRICULTURE



Context

SSP works with the landless and marginalized farmer households and, among these with women, who face the most challenging social and economic situations.

With high reliance on chemical inputs and alarming drift towards cash crops, small and marginal farmers have become food poor and vulnerable to climate shocks. Marathwada (where this model was developed) faces crippling water shortages coupled with extremely low coverage of irrigation pose more risks than rewards for the farmers growing cash crops. Farmers have faced acute economic, social and ecological challenges due to failure of their crops. A resilient farming model goes a long way in helping the farmers of Marathwada to improve their agriculture practices. When women are empowered to decide what to grow, what inputs to use, when and where to sell – key shifts happen in agriculture and livelihood.

Evolution of the Model

In 2014, SSP teams evolved this approach with an aim to promote participation of leadership of women to ensure food and income security among marginal farmer households. In 2016, the partnership with Government of Maharashtra came as an opportunity to scale up the approach through building a cadre of agriculture leaders as Community Resource Persons to further train and handhold women farmers.

The Model

The Women-led Climate Resilient Farming (WCRF) model attempts to reposition women as farmers, leaders and change agents who adopt food secure and climate smart practices on their farms. The model focuses on four key dimensions: Market Linkages, Federating Women Farmers, Technology Integration and Water efficient micro irrigation models. Along with being mindful of the natural resources, it improves productivity, increases income, enhances health and nutrition of the family and builds resilience.

Empowerment

Grassroots women farmers and entrepreneurs taking up new roles as changemakers



Livelihoods

Enhanced income security by diversifying into livestock and agri-allied enterprises



Food Security

Shift from cash crops to diversified food crops, now women and households have food from their own farms



Natural Resources

Protection of soil, water and land through bio-farming, water harvesting and afforestation



Build

Creating a Conducive Ecosystem

Empower

Handholding to Collectivizing

SUSTAIN

Enabling to Continue

The WCRF model keeps women at its centre and transforms them into changemakers in agriculture with a view to promote resilient livelihoods. To operate the model, SSP has designed an enabling ecosystem with the government, agro-tech partners, training partners and knowledge & resource partners to empower women through farm literacy, decision making abilities, access to land and leadership skills. On ground, the women take a center-stage in disseminating the model and act as a constant linkage between the model ecosystem and women farmers.

By adopting this model, women farmers are silently fighting climate change, building enterprises and boosting local economies. SSP has been awarded the United Nations Development Program's Equator Prize 2017 and the Global Local Adaptation (CGA)'s Local Adaptation Award for Capacity and Knowledge (Women Led Climate Resilient Farming Model) at COP27 in November 2022 for devising an ecologically sustainable agriculture model to combat the adverse impacts of drought.

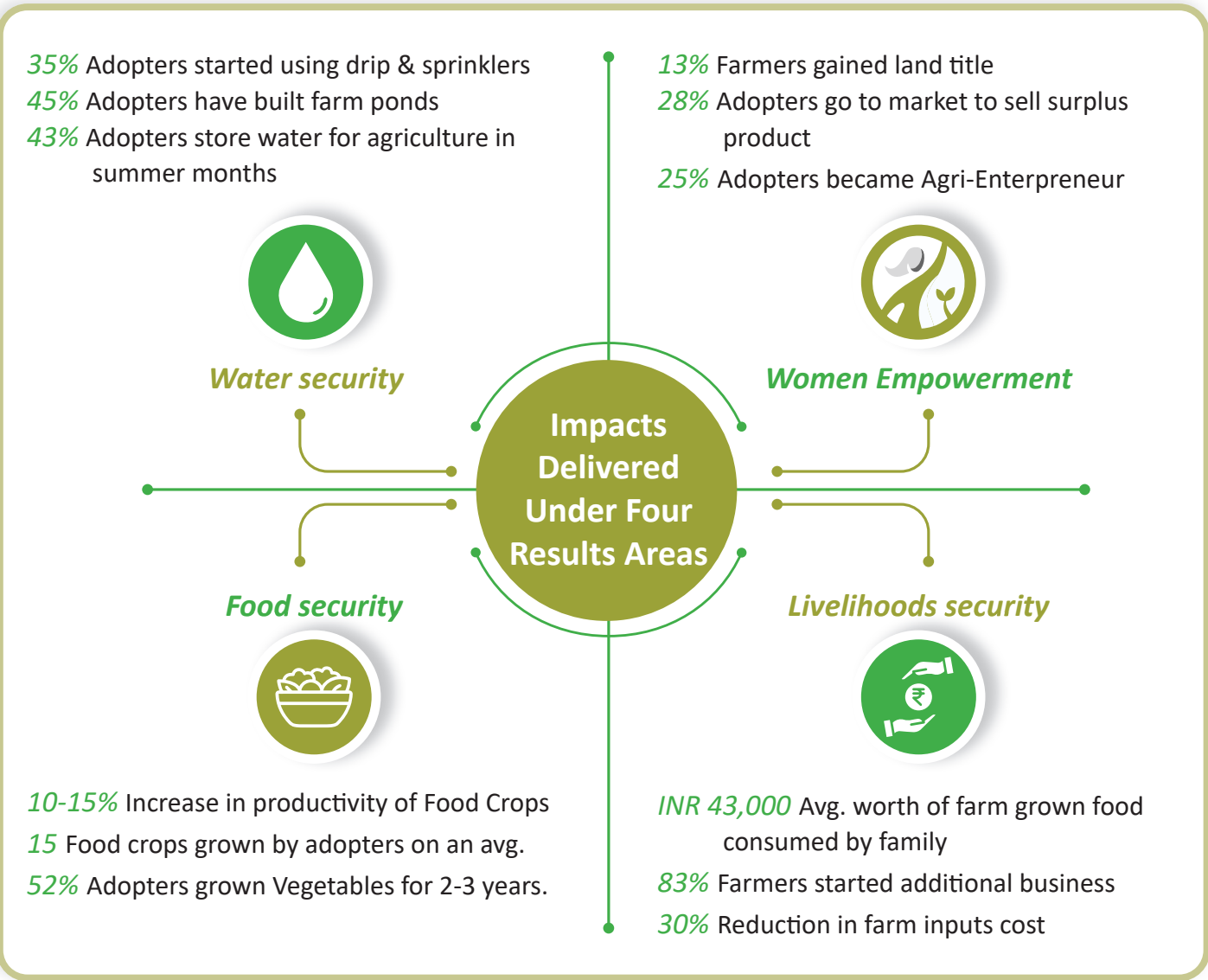
"This climate resilient farming initiative is positioning women as farmers, enabling them to take informed decisions on what to grow, what to consume and how much to sell. It addresses the issues of food and income security, natural resource management and empowerment — all at the same time."
Prema Gopalan, Founder of SSP

"From a single identity as farm labour, women have now taken on multiple roles and gained new economic and social identities, as a farmer and decision maker in her household, as an entrepreneur, a grassroots advocate and a climate leader." **Prema Gopalan, Founder of SSP**



Impact & Scaling Up

In the last seven years, 135,000 women farmers and households have begun the shift towards climate resilient farming across Osmanabad, Latur, Solapur and Nanded districts of Maharashtra. This model is currently in the process of scaling up to Jalna, Ahmednagar and Aurangabad districts and also to Bihar and Kerala states in India. This program has transformed over two lakhs acres of farmland by growing food crops using exclusive bio-inputs. The unique cascading approach in ground deployment of the model makes it scalable, replicable and efficient. Through this process, SSP is also organizing the women farmers into collectives and providing support to gain land rights so that they take up new roles as leaders and entrepreneurs and develop partnership with the government to lead sustainable community development.



The Change

The WCRF model delivers social, economic and ecological resilience to small and marginal farming community in drought-prone Marathwada who are vulnerable to acute climate shocks. By empowering women as change-makers in agriculture, it promotes resilient livelihoods for farming households and ensures that farming becomes an economically viable venture. The changes brought about through the model are:

Women empowerment

Improving access to land for women and advocating for their cultivation rights. Increasing recognition of women as farmers in the community and to the Government. Improved decision making at families and communities.

Income security

Increasing financial independence by facilitation of marketing their farm produce. Improving the participation of grassroot women in the entire value chain from farming to food processing, supply, distribution and consumers. Women small holder farmers increase their income and their families' food security and nutrition.

Environment protection

By switching to organic farming and utilising soil management and water conservation techniques, the WCRF promotes natural resource management.



Partnerships

Key Partners: Misereor Germany, Huairou Commission, Welthungerhilfe-GIZ, UMED-Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission - Govt. of Maharashtra, Hindustan Unilever Foundation, ASHOKA, HSBC and NABARD.

Key Partners	Engagement Model
Government Agriculture Department	SSP closely works with the Block Agriculture Office to access key agriculture schemes especially subsidies on water conservation and harvesting systems for the adopter farmers. In turn, SSP has been helping the department in increasing the uptake of the program for women farmers. Mahesh Kheersagar Block Agriculture Office from Latur shared, <i>"SSP has extended Much-needed cooperation in taking our schemes to the farmers. Furthermore, as 30% of the schemes are reserved for women, SSP's contribution has been pivotal for us in achieving that."</i>
Agriculture Technology & Management Agency (ATMA)	Sharing a common goal of promoting chemical less farming, SSP has partnered with ATMA since the inception of the program. SSP has leveraged the longstanding partnership by conducting ATMA led exposure visits and training for adopter farmers, accessing special schemes on bio-inputs, fodder etc. and registering the village level farmer groups created by SSP with the district ATMA office for different schemes.
Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)	KVK has been a strong training partner for SSP's WCRF program and had imparted classroom and practical training sessions for key resources of SSP. Besides, KVK has conducted several farmers training on growing traditional crops, preparing bio-inputs, and key components of climate resilient farming.
Umed Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission	The collaboration with Umed MSRLM has helped the program in promotion and linkages to farm allied livelihoods for the adopter farmers.
Knowledge Partners	SSP has collaborated with knowledge and strategy partners to shape the operations planning, gather field insights and assess the progress of the program.



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