

Does increase in income of women lead to their improved status in family and community?

An exploratory study in three districts of Odisha State in India

Report by:

Ms Emma Yingst



Commissioned by:

MADHYAM FOUNDATION

N3/202, IRC Village, Bhubaneswar,

Dist: Khurda, Odisha, India

Website: www.madhyamfoundation.org.in



Acknowledgement

Without the support of the Madhyam Foundation and its staff, this report would not have been possible. I would like to express my gratitude to the Singhdeo family for hosting me, and for providing guidance throughout my time here. From Mrs. Singhdeo for showing me life outside of the office, and to Mr. Singhdeo who guided me in my research and in my work in the office. I am thankful to Kartikeya Panigrahi and Aparupa Jena for accompanying me to various villages to fill out surveys, host group discussions, and execute interviews. From translating to creating a fun atmosphere, their help was invaluable. Also, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Jayshree Sahu for introducing me to her friends and family and for traveling to various places with me; Bhubaneswar truly became a home away from home. Additionally, I would like to thank the various NGOs who aided in the completion of surveys in Malkangiri (PUSPAC, Parivartan, and SOMKS) and Kalahandi, (DAPTA and Lok Yojana) and Darbar Sahitya Sansad (DSS) who facilitated our visits to different villages in Khurda. Finally, I would like to thank all the women who took part in this study. I am grateful for their cooperation, friendly attitudes, patience, and willingness to share their experiences—it was a pleasure working with them, as well as the rest of the Madhyam staff.

Ms. Emma Yingst

Undergraduate student, School of International Service
American University, Washington DC, USA
21 June 2017

Content

Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1: Background Information.....	5
1.1 About Madhyam Foundation’s Work.....	5
1.2 About Project SAHAJOG.....	5
1.3 Focus of the Study.....	7
1.4 Tools for Data Collection.....	7
1.5 Limitations of the Study.....	8
Chapter 2: Findings.....	9
2.1 Benefits of being Members of a Co-operative.....	9
2.1.1 Increase in Household Income.....	9
2.1.2 Participation in the Local Decision Making Institutions.....	10
2.1.3 Gender Discrimination.....	11
2.1.4 Domestic Violence.....	14
2.1.4.1 Vigilance Committee.....	15
Chapter 3: Conclusion and Recommendations.....	17
3.1 Empowerment.....	17
3.2 Changing Norms.....	18
3.3 Recommendations.....	18

Charts

Chart 1: Income Level Leads to Greater Respect from Family and Community.....	9
Chart 2: Views on Women Participating in Local Decision Making Institutions.....	11
Chart 3: Larger Income Empowers Women to Become More Involved.....	11
Chart 4: Gender Discrimination.....	12
Chart 5: Change in Discrimination After Income Increased.....	12
Chart 6: Level of Discrimination Due to Income.....	13
Chart 7: Gender Based Discrimination.....	14
Chart 8: Expression of Domestic Violence.....	15
Chart 9: How Co-operative Members Acted when Witnessing Domestic Violence.....	15
References.....	20
Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire.....	21

Introduction

This report gauges the correlation between women's income and their status in the family and community. Data is ascertained from three districts in Odisha, India, with a focus on rural and tribal villages, as well as in reports and research already done on the topic. The Madhyam Foundation based in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, implemented a project named SAHAJOG that aims to improve livelihoods through vegetable growers' co-operatives. This livelihood objective aims to increase women farmers' income and also reduce domestic violence and gender discrimination. This report analyzes the beneficiaries of the project to see if any change has occurred in the targeted women's lifestyles and in how members of the women's families and communities perceive them. This topic is important to study, because much of the rural and tribal population of India live below the poverty line, and discrimination against women is prevalent in many of the villages and cities. Such type of research is needed to understand what practices are successful in increasing income and in decreasing discrimination against women.

Chapter 1: Background Information

1.1 About Madhyam Foundation's Work

The Madhyam Foundation was established in 2004, and is a society based in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Madhyam has primarily been engaged in securing and promoting livelihoods and dignified lifestyles for small and marginal farmers, landless sharecroppers, and wage-dependent families. The foundation works to increase the targeted group's economic opportunities, power in the market, income, and good quality of life through direct action projects focused on various agricultural sub-sectors.¹ Madhyam also focuses on lessening gender discrimination and domestic violence by creating awareness programs and Vigilance Committees. Currently, Madhyam reaches out to over 40,000 marginalized and resource-poor households across 8 districts of Odisha state.²

1.2 About Project SAHAJOG

In collaboration with nine local NGOs and with the support of AWO International, Germany, Madhyam has been implementing Project SAHAJOG (Promoting Livelihood Security through Vegetable Growers' Co-operatives). Co-operatives are coined as:

voluntary autonomous associations of people designed to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs through a jointly owned and democratically managed organization. Cooperative movement can be defined as a voluntary movement of people to carry out a given economic activity through a democratically controlled enterprise by pooling together their resources with the purpose of securing certain benefits to the members and promoting certain values such as mutual help, self-reliance, self-management and general good for all.³

In Madhyam's project SAHAJOG, thirty vegetable grower co-operatives comprising of 8388 women members have been promoted, according to the most recent 2015-2016 report.⁴

¹*Strategic Plan 2012-2017*. Rep. Bhubaneswar: Madhyam Foundation. 16

²*Annual Report: 2015-2016*. Rep. Bhubaneswar: Madhyam Foundation, 2014. Print. 2

³Patra, Rabi N., and Mahendra P. Agasty. "Cooperatives, Agriculture and Rural Development: Role, Issues and Policy Implications." *IOSR J. Hum. Soc. Sci* 13.2 (2013): 15

⁴*Annual Report*, 5

The project was first implemented in 2009 in three districts: Khurda, Kalahandi and Malkangiri. By intervening at different stages, productivity was able to be maximized for women vegetable growers having landholding of less than two acres. In the pre-production stage, new growers were enrolled, soil was tested and treated, a household level crop plan and a seed bank were created, and the women farmers were provided support by community service providers. In the production stage, the seeds were treated, working capital loan was mobilized, organic manures and pesticides were promoted, and irrigation support and on-site guidance were given by experts. In the post-production stage, the vegetables were sorted, graded, washed, stored, and then marketed. In the end, the targeted households were able to earn around 40,000 to 45,000 rupees out of vegetable cultivation during the year.⁵ This is a substantial increase from their previous annual income of around 10,000 to 20,000 rupees.⁶ Since 2014, a new phase of the project started with an additional focus on promoting women participation in local decision making institutions, minimizing gender based discrimination, and reducing domestic violence.

In regard to gender discrimination, women are generally expected to carry out “duties towards housework, procreation and care-giving for family members”, with those being their primary tasks, while men are entitled to exercise power over the women to carry out said tasks.⁷ Men are generally seen as more valuable than women in India. This stems from the tradition of men carrying on the line and family name, performing ancestor worship, and taking care of their aging parents. Having a son also helps improve the wife’s status in the family as well as the man’s masculinity and reputation in the community.⁸ A study done by the *ICRW* (International Center for Research on Women) shows that around two out of five men in Odisha believe that women should neither be seen nor heard.⁹ Even so, with Madhyam’s project SAHAJOG intervention, 3327 women vegetable growers now actively participate in various local decision making institutions.¹⁰

Project SAHAJOG also focuses on domestic violence, because women’s security is at risk in many of the villages and tribes. An *ICRW* study from 2013 shows that 75 percent of the women surveyed in Odisha have experienced intimate partner violence. Of the men surveyed in Odisha, 58.1 percent admitted to perpetrating emotional abuse, 12.7 percent economic abuse, 51.6 percent physical abuse, 31.7 percent sexual abuse, and 74.7 percent admitted to perpetrating any form of abuse. On the other hand, of the women surveyed in Odisha, 69.8 percent stated to experiencing emotional abuse, 24.8 percent economic abuse, 54.8 percent physical abuse, and 38.6 percent sexual abuse. Out of the states surveyed, Odisha has one of the highest incidences of partner violence.¹¹ Along with these statistics, the *Indian National Family Health Survey-4* conducted for 2015-2016 in Odisha details that 37.9 percent of women in rural villages who have ever been married have experienced spousal violence.¹² Not only is

⁵*Ibid*, 5

⁶*Empowering Women Farmers in Kalahandi, Malkangiri and Khurda District of Odisha*. Rep. Bhubaneswar: Madhyam Foundation, 2014 Web. VII

⁷Nanda, Priya, et al. "Masculinity, son preference & intimate partner violence." (2013) 3

⁸*Ibid*, 3

⁹"UNFPA Press Release: UNFPA-ICRW Study Deconstructs The Mind Of The 'Masculine' Indian Male." *ICRW*. Web. June 2017

¹⁰ *Annual Report*, 5

¹¹Nanda 39

¹²India. Government of India. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. *National Family Health Survey 4: 2015-16*. Mumbai: International Institute for Population Sciences, 2016. 4

domestic violence an issue in Odisha, but it is not always recognized as criminal due to little knowledge about laws prohibiting domestic violence or due to cultural upbringing. The *Indian National Family Health Survey-3* conducted between 2005 and 2006 gives greater insight into how domestic violence is perceived, showcasing that 61.2 percent of women and 41.6 percent of men surveyed in Odisha, both ages fifteen through forty-nine, agree with wife beating for one or more reasons.¹³ Domestic violence is rationalized as a means to protect family honor or for a man to demonstrate his “manhood” over the woman. Therefore, there is an expectation laid upon the woman that to keep family relations normal, she must endure her husband’s behavior.¹⁴ However, with Madhyam’s introduction of Vigilance Committees in Project SAHAJOG, 194 domestic violence cases have been resolved as of Madhyam’s 2015-2016 report.¹⁵

Madhyam Foundation has been addressing these issues by undertaking a host of measures, such as conducting awareness campaigns on gender discrimination for women and men, promoting women’s participation in various local decision making processes, facilitating coverage of women under various social security measures, forming Vigilance Committees comprised of co-operative women, creating publications on gender discrimination, and orienting representatives of local self-government about issues of gender discrimination.

1.3 Focus of the Study

After learning about Madhyam’s Project SAHAJOG, I became intrigued at the prospect of co-operatives shaping more than just one’s income. Therefore, I developed a study centered on the question, does increase in income of women lead to their improved status in family and community? I explored this question in the three districts where Project SAHAJOG was implemented: Khurda, Malkangiri, and Kalahandi. From my question, I derived three hypotheses, which are as follow:

- Women vegetable growers who have increased income are less likely to face gender based discrimination at their home & community.
- Women vegetable growers who are organized into co-operatives participate more in local decision making institutions.
- Women with increased income are less likely to allow domestic violence to occur in their homes or others.

1.4 Tools for Data Collection

Data was collected through three different methods; a 20 questionnaire survey which was conducted in-person in Khurda and mailed to Madhyam’s partner NGOs in Malkangiri and Kalahandi (the partner NGOs then conducted the surveys and sent them back to Madhyam via email), a group discussion, and interviews. Due to time constraints, a small sample of co-operative members was randomly selected to survey. An overall of 59 women vegetable growers were selected, with 29 from Khurda and 15 from both Kalahandi and Malkangiri. I could only physically go to Khurda, because I would need permission from the government (which is rarely given to foreigners) to go to the other two districts which are mostly tribal-dominated areas. I wanted to be there in person to monitor how the surveys were being conducted and give direction when needed, and so more surveys were done in Khurda.

¹³Kishor, Sunita, and Kamla Gupta. "Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in India. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) India 2005-06." (2009). 81

¹⁴Nanda, 3

¹⁵*Annual Report*, 5

In each district, co-operative members from multiple villages were surveyed, representing a total of 5 villages in Khurda, 12 in Malkangiri, and 8 in Kalahandi. In Khurda, two Vigilance Committee members and one representative of Gram Panchayat were interviewed from Jahangiri Patana village, and the 25 or so co-operatives members who participated in the group discussion reside in that same village as well. The group discussion and interviews allowed for more in-depth questions, and gave a perception of the group dynamic. Questionnaires were completed either by Madhyam staff or partner NGO staff, and group discussion was facilitated by Madhyam staff, with myself asking the questions in English first; the interviews were conducted in a similar fashion as the group discussion. Therefore, the data collected for this report comes from the surveys, taking notes from the group discussion and the interviews, and from outside research in the form of scholarly research papers, reports, journals, and data from the Madhyam Foundation.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

A few key limitations were mobility, time, language, and space. I was only able to travel to Khurda, and so was not able to compare face-to-face interactions between all three districts. Time was another major factor; I was only in Odisha, India for a little over a month, and so the amount of data I was able to collect reflects that. Another hindrance is that I only speak English, and most of the villagers only speak Oriya and possibly Hindi. Therefore, a few things were lost in translation since I was given a summary of what the women said rather than a translation of each individual comment; this was done for the purpose of conversational flow and time. Finally, the issue of space. Due to the culture of the villages, surveying was never truly “one-on-one”. As a result, it is possible that the women may have felt a certain pressure from their peers to answer a certain way. However, even though the individual surveys tended to show major similarities when comparing individuals from the same villages, there were still enough variances to show that the women spoke from their own experiences.

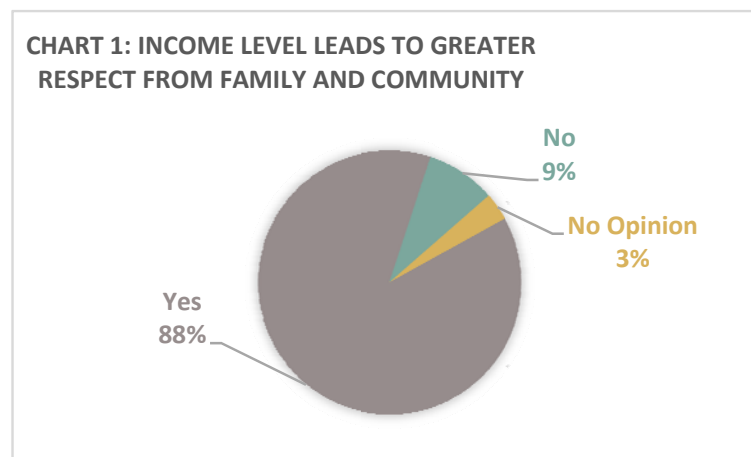
Chapter 2: Findings of the Study

2.1 Benefits of being Members of a Co-operative

As part of a co-operative, all of the women surveyed have found their income to have increased substantially. With this increased income, they may now be the bread-winners of the household or on an equal playing field in terms of income with their husband. 37 percent of women surveyed have an income that is greater, 36 percent have an income that is less than, and 27 percent have an income that is equal to their husbands. Part of the co-operative women's increased income comes from a new knowledge of marketing, which makes them able to side-step the middle man for information on the worth of their goods. In the group discussion, the women said that they did not have knowledge of the market prices and did not know the weight of their goods before. Therefore, a middle man who marketed their goods would tell the women prices that were lower than the actual worth of the vegetables, and then profit the remaining money. When the co-operative was set up, Madhyam introduced a scale and the knowledge of market prices, and so the women now know the worth of their goods and pocket the correct values. Input cost is also now reduced for these women because of Madhyam's intervention of organic manure and pesticides during the production stage. Overall, all the co-operative members surveyed or interviewed found that being a part of a co-operative has impacted their standard of living positively and increased their collective bargaining power.

2.1.1 Increase in Household Income

When a co-operative woman's income increases, her household income does too. Therefore, the whole household benefits from her profits. In the group discussion, the women spoke about how their husband's and sons' attitudes towards them have changed since the women started contributing more money to their household's overall income. The women feel that they are better recognized and have more of a say than they did before. A majority of the women surveyed (88%) feel that income level leads to greater respect and treatment from family members and the community (chart 1). Along with this, 79.7 percent of the husbands approve of their wife's income, while 11.9 percent show no opinion, and 3.4 disapprove. For the other 5.1 percent, this question was not applicable.



Not only have the husband's and sons' opinions changed, but the communities' opinions of these women. The women in the group discussion feel that their role has changed in the community. For example, co-operative members cited how members of the Village Development Committee are recognizing their presence and position to talk. Before, they had not received this type of response from

the committee. By earning a larger income in their household, they are being perceived as more worthwhile by their family and community.

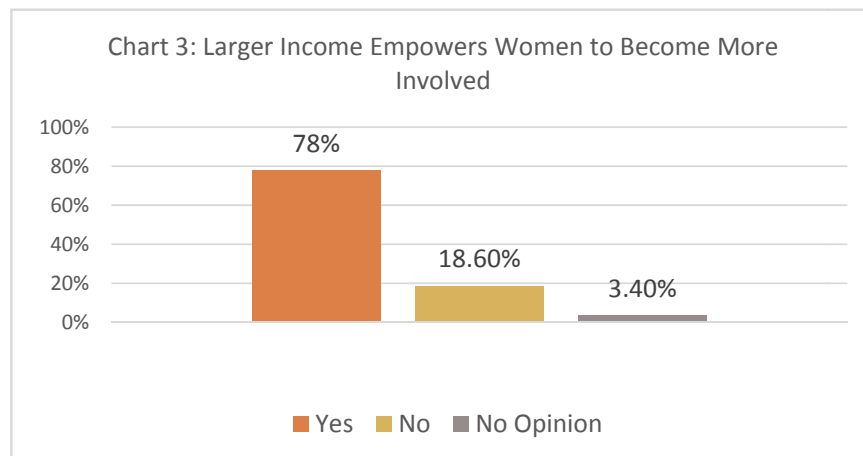
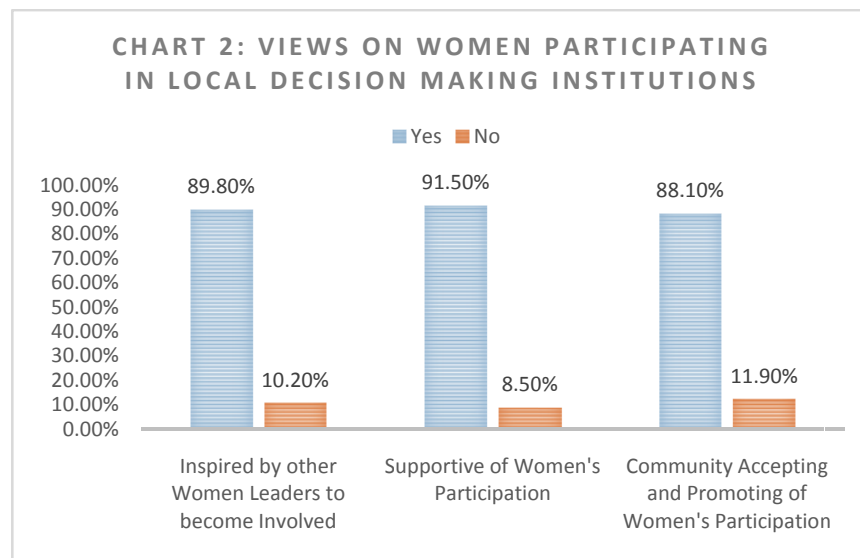
2.1.2 Participation in the Local Decision Making Institutions

This recognition and respect given by their household and community may have made it an easier task for women co-operative members to join and hold positions in their community's local decision making institutions. Some examples of local decision making institutions are Gram Panchayat, Village Development Committees, Village Education Committees, Mid-Day Meal Management Committee, and Rogi Kalayan Samity, among others. The women in the group discussion said that they are interested in becoming more involved in these institutions and in the community as a whole. In a sense they have always wanted to get involved, because the human mind is set to want to increase one's place in the world. However, they never truly perceived it as a possibility and so didn't put much thought into it. It was not until they left their homes and worked more outside in the co-operative that they formed such interest in their minds and thought to act upon it.

Many of the women are interested in the Gram Panchayat. This body "constitutes the basis of rural local government".¹⁶ The Gram Panchayat has a variety of duties, with their primary function being rural development. This includes the construction and maintenance of roads, streets, public places, and public wells, as well as for the provision of medical relief, regulating festivals, taking steps for social welfare, and more. The Gram Panchayat is a major force at the village level, usually consisting of eight to fifteen villages. There are also Panchayats at the intermediate and district levels. One-third of the seats used to be reserved for women belonging to scheduled castes and tribes in Odisha, though a recent ruling in Odisha now reserves 50 percent of those seats for women. The women find interest in the Gram Panchayat partially because of this new ruling. The opening of seats for women and being a part of a co-operative has created an atmosphere conducive for the women to think about becoming further involved in local decision making institutions.

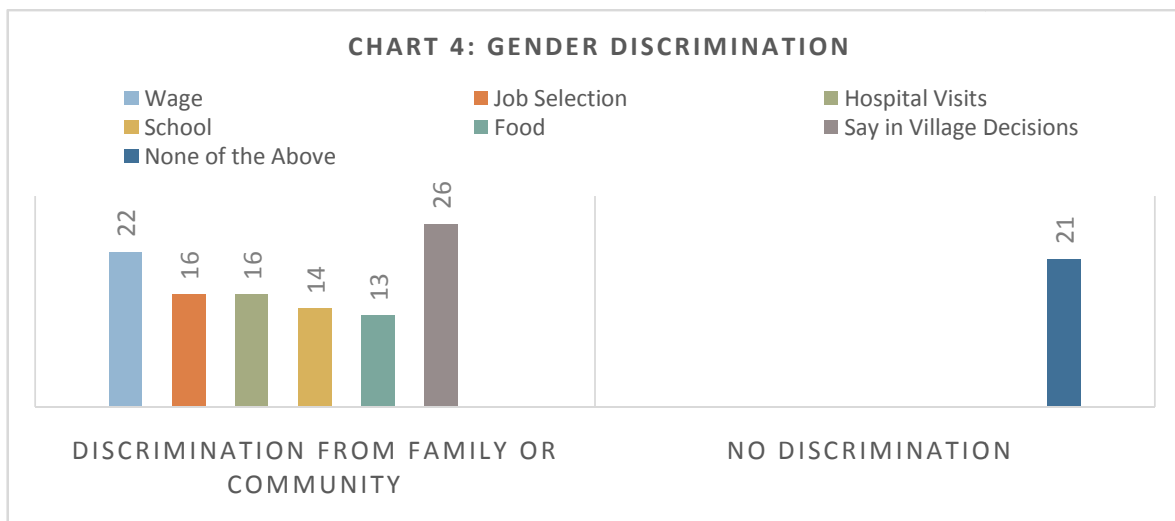
Women said that they feel inspired seeing other women participate, and that they, as well as the community, support women's participation in the local decision making institutions. 89.8 percent of the women surveyed said that seeing women in the various local decision making institutions inspires them to become involved in such institutions, and 91.5 percent support and advocate for the participation of women in their community (chart 2). 88.1 percent feel that the community is accepting and promoting of women's participation in the local decision making institutions (chart 2). Along with this, 78 percent of the women surveyed feel that a larger income empowers women to become more involved in decision making within their families and various local decision making bodies (chart 3). This data shows that a possible domino effect may be happening. If women are inspired to become more involved by seeing other women involved, then the number of women participants should increase as time goes on. As more women participate in these institutions, their voices will hold more power, and they will stand a better chance in enacting the change that they want seen.

¹⁶Behuria, Rabindra Kumar. "Gram Panchayat in Orissa." *ORISSA REVIEW* (2011): 46



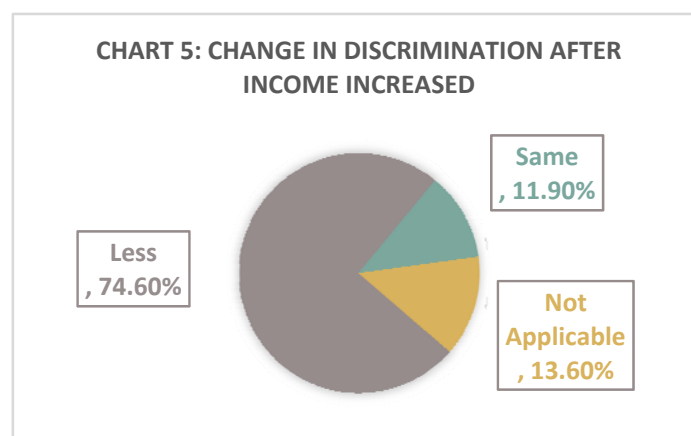
2.1.3 Gender Discrimination

The participation of women in these institutions is lessening the divide between men and women created by gender norms. However, there are still large gaps between men and women in the villages and tribes, with women falling on the shorter end of the stick in most situations. 64.4 percent of the co-operative members have seen members of their family and the community discriminate against women and treat women as less valuable than men. The surveyed co-operative members have noticed the following types of discrimination, with the number of times it was chosen in parentheses: smaller wage rate given to women for the same job done by men (22), men and women not allowed to perform a certain job done by the opposite sex (16), men given priority for hospital visits (16), girls having to help their mothers in the house while boys play and go to school (14), boys given a larger portion of food (13), and women given less of a say or no say in village decisions (26)—chart 4. Wage and say in village decisions were the most common answers chosen by the co-operative women. Out of the 59 surveyed, 21 felt that there is either no gender discrimination or that there are micro-issues within the community and family. They don't find these micro-issues to be big enough issues, and so answered no gender-discrimination with that added note. Therefore, out of the 59 surveyed, 35.6 percent of them stated that there is no gender-based discrimination or that the issues are too small to be defined as such.



The co-operative members who find there to be discrimination in their community are not sitting idly by. Instead, they feel empowered by the co-operative to go against social norms. Those in the group discussion stated that they feel empowered in being a part of a unit, and find strength and pride in it. For example, coming together for a group discussion with me at that time was a sign in and of itself of change. Even though it was cooking time, the women were sitting and speaking with me. Along those lines, they are a large group of women meeting with no men involved, and they all also meet once in a fortnight. Previously, this was not a thing that the women did or thought to do.

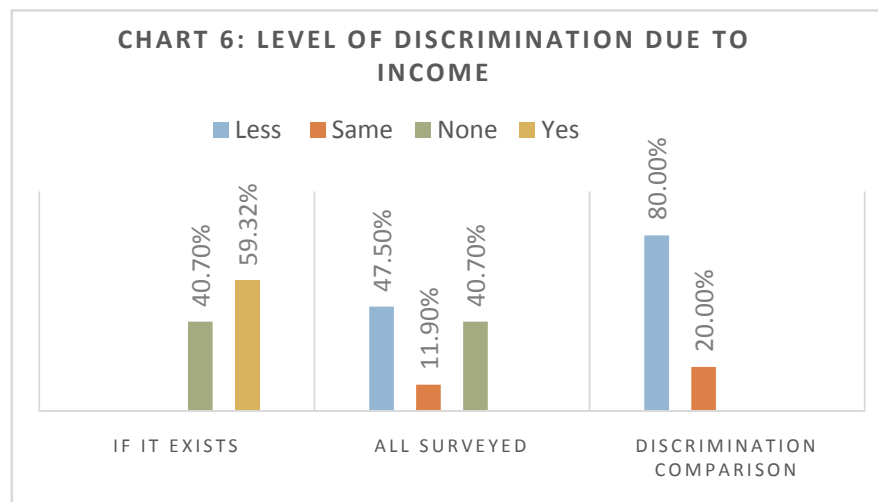
Along with this sense of collective strength born from the co-operative comes a change in treatment towards these women due to their increased income. 74.6 percent of the surveyed women feel that they are discriminated against less when their income grew compared to women who still make the same wage or no wage at all. 11.9 percent feel that they are discriminated against the same, and 13.6 percent found this question to not be applicable (chart 5). Those who found it not to be applicable wrote that discrimination does not exist in their community.



There is a slight discrepancy between this data and the data previously mentioned in chart 4 on gender discrimination. I think the discrepancy lies in a misunderstanding of the question. The women may have viewed discrimination as not just gender discrimination, but their treatment in general. I noticed this discrepancy when viewing how some women wrote no gender discrimination, but then answered less

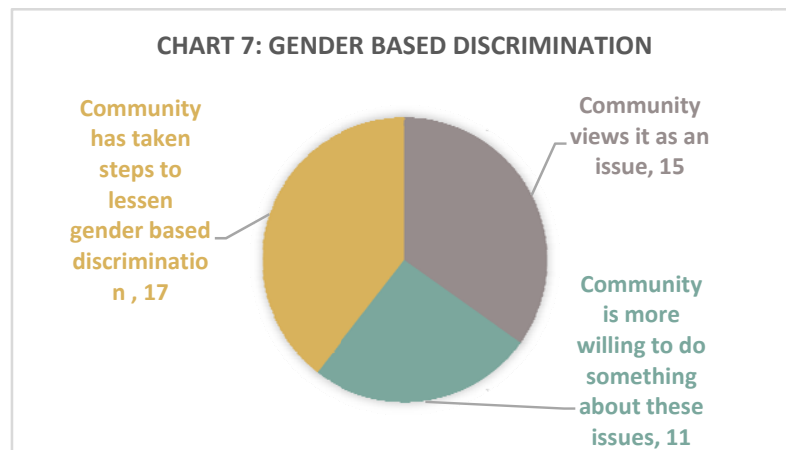
discrimination for the question relating to chart 5. Therefore, there was a clear miscommunication. However, this data is still valid. Taking all of the surveys who put no discrimination for one question while also putting less discrimination for this question into the not applicable category creates a new set of data which better resembles the previous data on gender discrimination.

In chart 6 in the first column titled “if it exists”, I combined those who answered that they are discriminated against the same and less and measured it against not applicable with the numbers from the new set of data. This better resembles chart 4, where 35.6 percent of those surveyed feel that gender discrimination doesn’t exist in their household or community. The data from chart 6 shows that 40.7 percent perceive gender discrimination as not existing, and 59.32 percent (compared to 64.4 percent in chart 4) perceive gender discrimination as existing. Less, same, and no discrimination with this new data is represented in chart 6 in the middle column titled “all surveyed”. In this same chart in the column to the far right titled “discrimination comparison”, I only compare those who view gender discrimination as existing. The discrimination comparison shows that 80 percent view discrimination as lessening when income increases. Therefore, the correlation can be made that with increased income, gender discrimination tends to lessen for the said individual.



In the villages, gender discrimination is not always fully understood. To some, gender discrimination practices are normalized and unknown to be anything but a common way of life. Therefore, Madhyam Foundation implemented awareness programs on gender discrimination as well as other social issues. In the survey, the women are asked if they have participated in such programs. This question is meant to get an idea of their level of understanding of gender discrimination. This isn’t to say that those who haven’t participated don’t know what gender discrimination is, but they may not, or they may not have a clear understanding of it. Out of the 59 surveyed, 78 percent said that they have participated in such programs, leaving 22 percent who have never participated. When asked if these gender-based discrimination and social issues programs have created any change in the community, 62.7 percent answered that they have in some form, and 37.3 percent have not seen any change. Some participants answered that they haven’t seen any change, because they don’t view gender discrimination as an issue in their community. This correlates with data found in chart 4, where 35.6 percent of the surveyed women do not view gender discrimination as an issue or as something that takes place.

When asked what forms of change took place, those surveyed could circle more than one. The options were: the community views gender based discrimination as an issue, the community is more willing to do something about these issues, and the community has taken steps to lessen gender based discrimination. These can be seen in chart 7. They were all chosen a similar amount of times, however the most people view the community as having taken steps to lessen gender based discrimination. This is important, because it demonstrates the community's willingness to change long-standing norms. It is important to note that those who view gender discrimination as not existing all come from Khurda. By being closer to Bhubaneswar, these villages have views that are more in sync with the progressiveness of the city, and therefore experience less gender discrimination than tribal areas which are more rigid in their cultural norms.



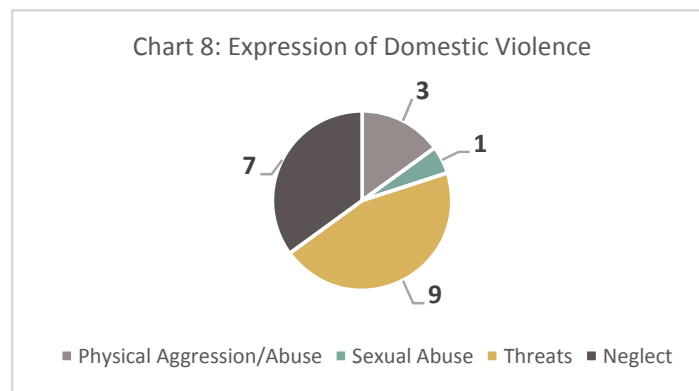
2.1.4 Domestic Violence

Compared to gender discrimination, domestic violence is just as much as an issue. 66.1 percent surveyed have witnessed domestic violence in another's household or their own and have done something about it, and 30.5 percent have experienced domestic violence in their own household at least once. This correlates with Odisha's *National Family Health Survey-4* for 2015-2016 that states that 37.9 percent of rural women in Odisha that have ever been married have experienced spousal violence.¹⁷ A few co-operative members did not state whether they have experienced domestic violence, but put that the main causes of domestic violence are poverty, income, and income source. This would make sense considering that domestic violence tends to occur more in rural areas,¹⁸ with rural poverty being at 60.8 percent and urban poverty at 37.6 percent in Odisha.¹⁹ The following is a list of the types of domestic violence prevalent in the households, with the number of times it was listed by the co-operative members in parentheses: Physical aggression/abuse (3), sexual abuse (1), threats (9), and neglect (7)—chart 8. Threats and neglect are found to be the most common forms of domestic violence in the households of those surveyed.

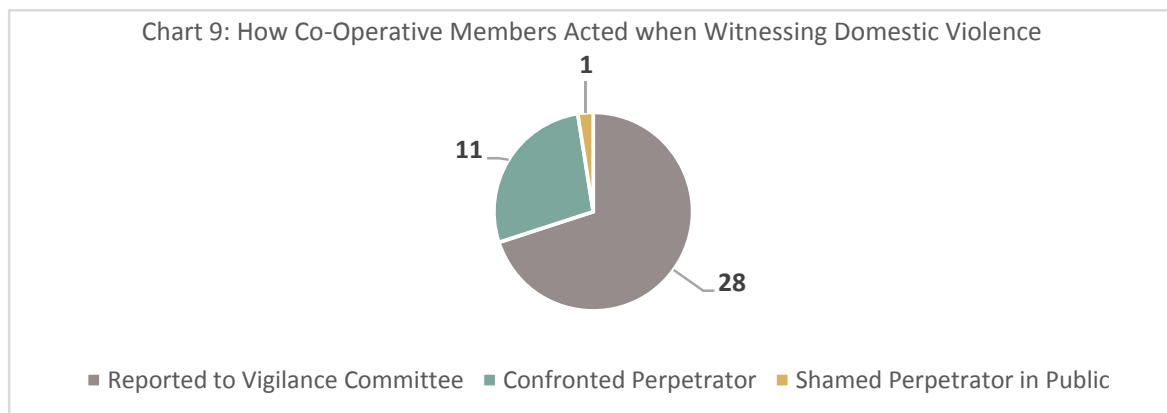
¹⁷*National Family Health Survey 4*. 4

¹⁸*Ibid*, 4

¹⁹*Empowering Women Farmers in Kalahandi, Malkangiri and Khurda District of Odisha*. Rep. Bhubaneswar: Madhyam Foundation, 2014 Web. 1



Those who witnessed domestic violence and acted did one or a few of the following, with the number of times it was listed in parentheses: reported the domestic violence case to a Vigilance Committee member (28), confronted whoever was creating the domestic violence in the household (11), and shamed whoever perpetrated domestic violence in public (1)—chart 9. The majority chose reporting the case to a Vigilance Committee member.



2.1.4.1 Vigilance Committee

The idea of Vigilance Committees was introduced by the Madhyam Foundation. They are comprised of 10 co-operative women, and at least one member from each village is supposed to be represented in the committee. One Vigilance Committee represents around ten to twelve villages. Meetings are held bi-monthly, with the meeting venue on a rotational basis. The committee's purpose is to act as a body to go to if one witnesses or experiences domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking, and gender discrimination. The committee's duties are to: act as whistle blower, act as arbitrator, receive applications and information from victims of domestic violence, take up the matter to counsel all parties involved, and then if need be take or place the issue before the co-operative, Village Development Committee, the Gram Panchayat, the police station, the TLSC (Taluk Legal Settlement Counsel), or the JMFC (Judicial Magistrate Fast Track Court). The committee itself will not enter into any legal dispute cases, and will first try to solve the issue in the community.²⁰

It makes sense that most people went to the Vigilance Committee, since out of all the surveyed, 88.1 percent feel that the Vigilance Committee has power in the community to settle domestic violence cases. Vigilance Committee members believe that the community utilizes the committee, as is

²⁰ "Guidelines for Vigilance Committee." Madhyam Foundation.

represented by the data. However, they are still working on getting the Vigilance Committee known by all, since there are still households in the community who do not know of its existence. A few co-operative members who feel that the Vigilance Committee does not have power in the community wrote so because they noted that they do not know what a Vigilance Committee is.

The women in the group discussion believe that the Vigilance Committee has been helpful in their community. The women would rather have the cases and incidents of domestic violence not go outside of the village, and so by having a Vigilance Committee, they can solve disputes and decide what course of action to take in the village boundary. They rather solve issues inside the village, because they view the police station as a bad place for women. The women stated that they are treated with shame by the police. Also, it disrupts the community to go to outsiders for help.

Overall, because of the introduction of co-operatives and Vigilance Committees, there may now be a decline in domestic violence. Along with this, the Gram Panchayat representative feels that co-operative members are less vulnerable to domestic violence. She believes that they are less vulnerable due to their exposure to outside sources through their co-operatives and because of initiatives taken by Project SAHAJOG. These initiatives increased knowledge on social issues such as gender-discrimination and domestic violence. Therefore, because of this knowledge, domestic violence is a more sensitized issue to the co-operative member and their family.

Another reason why co-operative members may now experience less domestic violence is because of being empowered by their raised income and new status in the household and community. 89.8 percent of the surveyed believe that women with larger income have more power, or feel more comfortable, to stand up for themselves against domestic violence. This shows that income empowers women to stand up for themselves and perhaps others.

Chapter 3: Conclusion and Recommendations

3.1 Empowerment

All of the surveyed answered that they feel a sense of empowerment in both the community and household from being a part of their co-operative. However, what is “empowerment”?

The term has come to denote women’s increased control over their own lives, bodies, and environments. Further, the concept of empowerment encompasses “a growing intrinsic capability—greater self-confidence and an inner transformation of one’s consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers...” (Sen and Batliwala, 2000). Greater control and increased capabilities to overcome barriers all translate into increased agency or the ability to make and implement choices. An important indicator of agency is decision making power.²¹

Being a part of a co-operative creates a conducive environment to develop this decision making power, not just in tasks related to the co-operative, but in everyday life. This is demonstrated in the three hypotheses that were formed at the beginning of the study.

One of the hypotheses states that women vegetable growers who have increased income are less likely to face gender based discrimination at their home and community. 80 percent of women who believe that gender based discrimination exists in their community have found that making a larger income decreases the discrimination they face. Also, the women from the group discussion stated that they feel empowered to go against social norms because of the strength they have gained from the co-operative, with an example being them sitting and speaking with me during their cooking time. Therefore, the co-operative women are facing less gender discrimination because of their new status (derived from their increased income) and their empowerment, which is leading to an overall shift in cultural norms.

This is witnessed in the other hypothesis, that women vegetable growers who are organized into co-operatives participate more in local decision making institutions. It is unclear on whether they participate more or less, but it is clear from the data that they have a desire to participate more since joining the co-operative. When the women from the group discussion became members of the co-operative, they spent less time in their households, and their minds opened to involving themselves further in the community. Making a larger income, which garners more respect in the community and household, and working outside the house in a co-operative, creates a conducive environment for the co-operative women to join local decision making institutions and actually have their voices heard versus other women who are stuck in their houses and in gender norms.

Along with gender norms comes the last hypothesis, which states that women with increased income are less likely to allow domestic violence to occur in their homes or others; the findings of this study validate this hypothesis. The women who did something about the domestic violence they witnessed mostly went to the Vigilance Committee, a body made up of other co-operative women. From what I gleaned, the co-operative women know each other extremely well. Having that understanding and trust already established may make it easier to approach such a committee when domestic violence occurs. Even if you approach and speak with a Vigilance Committee member who is not a part of the same co-operative, they are still a part of a co-operative, and having that position creates a similarity and bond between the women.

²¹Kishor, 84

The women in the Vigilance Committee stated that they feel more empowered and that their confidence has increased, both in their fellow members to back them up and in other issues in their lives. One of the Vigilance Committee members mentioned that she feels empowered now to educate her children. This has nothing to do with the Vigilance Committee, but everything to do with the empowerment she has received from it. Overall, a general sense of empowerment has been created among the women by working together and prospering together; the co-operative women have developed a sense of confidence and trust in each other that they can be a successful team both on and off the field and in their personal lives.

3.2 Changing Norms

Along with this sense of empowerment is a shift in norms. These can be gleaned from the hypotheses that show a changing of attitude of the families and communities. However, this shift in norms is an ongoing process, and takes time, since these norms are deeply rooted into their society. For example, the Vigilance Committee women stated that their husbands originally felt some resentment towards them for joining and entering other people's business, but now they are changing their minds and attitudes as the committee becomes more recognized in the community. Also, the Vigilance Committee members stated that it took time for the Vigilance Committee to be accepted and utilized; people were originally afraid to make use of the committee, and the people did not have much faith in them. However, as time went on, the community became more comfortable with the idea of the committee and what it is capable of. Now, many people approach the Vigilance Committee when domestic violence occurs. Also, the co-operative women in the group discussion said that their husbands were originally not happy about the Vigilance Committee, because the committee shut down the liquor shop in their village. However, as more people became involved and their husbands saw the committee's good work, their perceptions changed.

The people or crowd that you surround yourself with influences your thinking and conduct; this is demonstrated in the changing views of the villages where project SAHAJOG was implemented. Communities consisting of women who take an active role in bringing in income, who care about domestic violence and gender discrimination, and who take it upon themselves to implement change are communities that can no longer stay passive to social issues and pre-prescribed gender norms that hurt women.

3.3 Recommendations

Therefore, a clear domino effect is taking place from these women who are joining co-operatives and involving themselves in the community. They are fostering inspiration in other women to become involved in the local decision making institutions, and as seen with the Vigilance Committee, the more people who become involved the more accepted the practice becomes. These women are paving the way for a general shift in how the community perceives women and incidences of gender discrimination and domestic violence.

As a result, I recommend that these co-operative women continue to be educated in what domestic violence and gender discrimination is as well as the rest of the villagers be educated in such matters. Along with this, the women should be encouraged to spread the word and the NGOs expand the villages being targeted, creating fieldtrips for the women to go to other villages to advocate for co-operatives or to speak to the members of co-operatives in other villages. That way, these co-operative women can share their stories with each other as well as with those who may be in the dark about the co-operative system. The women should have the chance, if they desire, to teach other women about the skills, production methods, and tools introduced by the Madhyam Foundation.

These women have increased their influence in the community and household by being major contributors to their household's income, and some have used this influence to become representatives in their local self-governments, to become leaders of their co-operative, to become members of Vigilance Committees, and to bring awareness to social issues through programs in the villages. Overall, Madhyam Foundation has demonstrated through its carefully thought-out interventions in Project SAHAJOG a framework that enhances the income of unorganized women vegetable growers. This endeavor has led to spiraling effects in terms of minimizing domestic violence, reducing gender discrimination, and improving self-respect and dignity of women in their household and community. However, the question remains of how far these women will go in enacting change; not just for themselves, but for the rest of their communities and beyond.

References

- Annual Report: 2015-2016*. Rep. Bhubaneswar: Madhyam Foundation, 2014. Print. 1-32
- Empowering Women Farmers in Kalahandi, Malkangiri and Khurda District of Odisha*. Rep. Bhubaneswar: Madhyam Foundation, 2014 Web. 1-35
- "Guidance for Vigilance Committee." Madhyam Foundation. 1
- India. Government of India. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. *National Family Health Survey 4: 2015-16*. Mumbai: International Institute for Population Sciences, 2016. Web. 1-4
- Nanda, Priya, et al. "Masculinity, son preference & intimate partner violence." (2013). 1-116
- Patra, Rabi N., and Mahendra P. Agasty. "Cooperatives, Agriculture and Rural Development: Role, Issues and Policy Implications." *IOSR J. Hum. Soc. Sci* 13.2 (2013): 14-25
- Kishor, Sunita, and Kamla Gupta. "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) India 2005-06." (2009). 1-132
- Strategic Plan 2012-2017*. Rep. Bhubaneswar: Madhyam Foundation. 1-24
- "UNFPA Press Release: UNFPA-ICRW Study Deconstructs The Mind Of The 'Masculine' Indian Male." *ICRW*. Web. June 2017

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Name of the respondent: _____

Village: _____ Block: _____ District _____

The survey should take less than 15 minutes. Thank you for taking the time to fill it out.

- 1) Are you a member of a co-operative?
 - A) Yes
 - B) No

- 2) Has becoming a member of a co-operative increased your income and impacted your standard of living positively or not at all?
 - A) Positively
 - B) Not at all

- 3) Has being a member of a co-operative increased your collective bargaining power, subsequently creating a sense of empowerment in the community and household?
 - A) Yes
 - B) No
 - C) No opinion

- 4) Do you feel that a larger income empowers women to become more involved in decision making within their families or in various local decision making bodies such as Gram Panchayat, Village Development Committees, Village Education Committees, Mid-Day meal management Committees, Rogi Kalayan Samity etc.
 - A) Yes
 - B) No
 - C) No opinion

- 5) Does seeing women in the various local decision making institutions inspire you to become involved in such institutions as well?
 - A) Yes
 - B) No

- 6) Do you support and advocate for the participation of women in the local decision making institutions in your community?
 - A) Yes
 - B) No

- 7) Do you feel that the community is accepting and promoting of women's participation (and yours in particular if you do participate) in the local decision making institutions?
 - A) Yes
 - B) No

- 8) Do you feel that women are treated with more respect and with what they say taken into more consideration by family members and community members if they bring in a certain level of income?
- A) Yes
 - B) No
 - C) No opinion
- 9) Have you noticed members of your family and the community discriminating against women and treating women as less valuable than men? For example, circle the ones you have seen below:
- A) Smaller wage rate for same job
 - B) Job selection: Men given certain jobs that women aren't, and vice versa
 - C) Men given priority for hospital visits
 - D) Girls helping mothers while boys play/go to school
 - E) Boys given bigger portion of food
 - F) Women given less of a say or no say in village decisions
 - G) None of the above
 - H) Other

If other, please elaborate:

- 10) If a woman's income grew due to increased vegetable cultivation (from the practices and tools introduced by the Madhyam Foundation), do you feel that these women are discriminated against less than women who still make the same wage or no wage at all?
- A) Less discrimination
 - B) Same discrimination
 - C) Not applicable
- 11) Have you participated in awareness programs on gender based discrimination and on social issues?
- A) Yes
 - B) No
- 12) Have these gender based discrimination and social issue programs created any change in the community? Circle which ones apply below:
- A) Community views gender based discrimination as an issue
 - B) Community is more willing to do something about these issues
 - C) Community has taken steps to lessen gender based discrimination
 - D) None of the above
 - E) Other

If other, please elaborate:

- 13) Do you make an income that is equal to, greater than, or less than your husband's?
- A) Greater than
 - B) Less than
 - C) Equal to
- 14) Does he approve of your income, disapprove, or show no opinion of the money you make? If he disapproves, circle which way he demonstrates disapproval.
- A) Approves
 - B) Disapproves (angry words, physical violence, other)
 - C) No opinion
 - D) Not applicable

If you circled **other** for disapproves, please elaborate:

- 15) In your household, have there been cases of domestic violence? These may be caused due to alcoholism of your husband, bringing less dowry at the time of your marriage, giving birth to a female child, etc.(Circle all forms of domestic violence that have occurred).
- A) Physical aggression/abuse
 - B) Sexual abuse
 - C) Threats
 - D) Neglect
 - E) Not applicable
 - F) Any Other (Please specify)

- 16) If you have witnessed domestic violence in your household or in another's household, have you done anything to protect yourself or your community members?
- A) Reported the domestic violence case to a Vigilance Committee member
 - B) Confronted whoever was creating the domestic violence in the household
 - C) Shamed whoever perpetrated domestic violence in public
 - D) Not applicable
 - E) Other

If other, please elaborate:

- 17) If you go to the Vigilance Committee when domestic violence occurs, do you feel that they have power in the community to settle the issue?
- A) Yes
 - B) No
- 18) Do you feel that women with larger income have more power, or feel more comfortable, to stand up for themselves against domestic violence?
- A) Yes
 - B) No

- 19) Does the community condone domestic violence, accept it, or do barely anything to nothing about it?
- A) Condone it
 - B) Accepts it
 - C) Does barely anything
 - D) Does nothing
- 20) Overall, do you feel that income is a major factor for men and women to attain respect and prestige in the community and family?
- A) Only female
 - B) Only male
 - C) Females and males
 - D) None
