

Addressing Gendered Inequities in Nutritional Access in Indigenous Tribes in Palghar, India through Design Justice

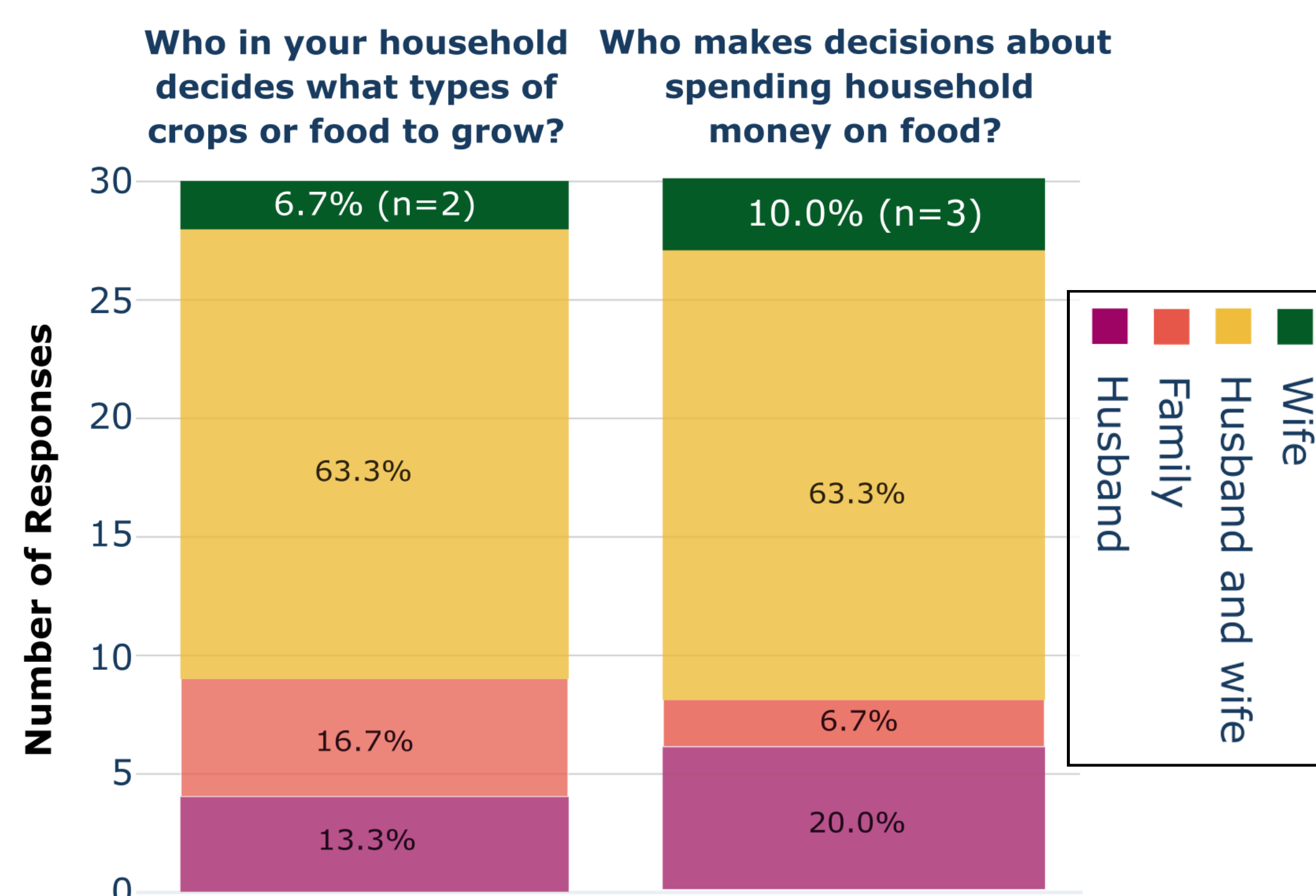
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About Raah Foundation

Raah Foundation is a philanthropic organization that operates across the Northern Western Ghats to improve Indigenous livelihoods. In Palghar, Raah works with Indigenous women to improve their agency over harvesting, consumption and distribution of food sources.

Regional & Social Context

- Palghar is a peri-urban district in Maharashtra that faces poverty, malnutrition, climate vulnerability, and persistent shortages in infrastructure, education, and healthcare for Indigenous communities.
- Indigenous women in Palghar experience unequal land ownership, limited access to resources, and patriarchal household norms that restrict their agency and lead to higher rates of malnutrition, contributing to intergenerational consequences.



Survey data from Indigenous women in Palghar that reflects how patriarchal household norms may restrict women's agency

Problem Statement

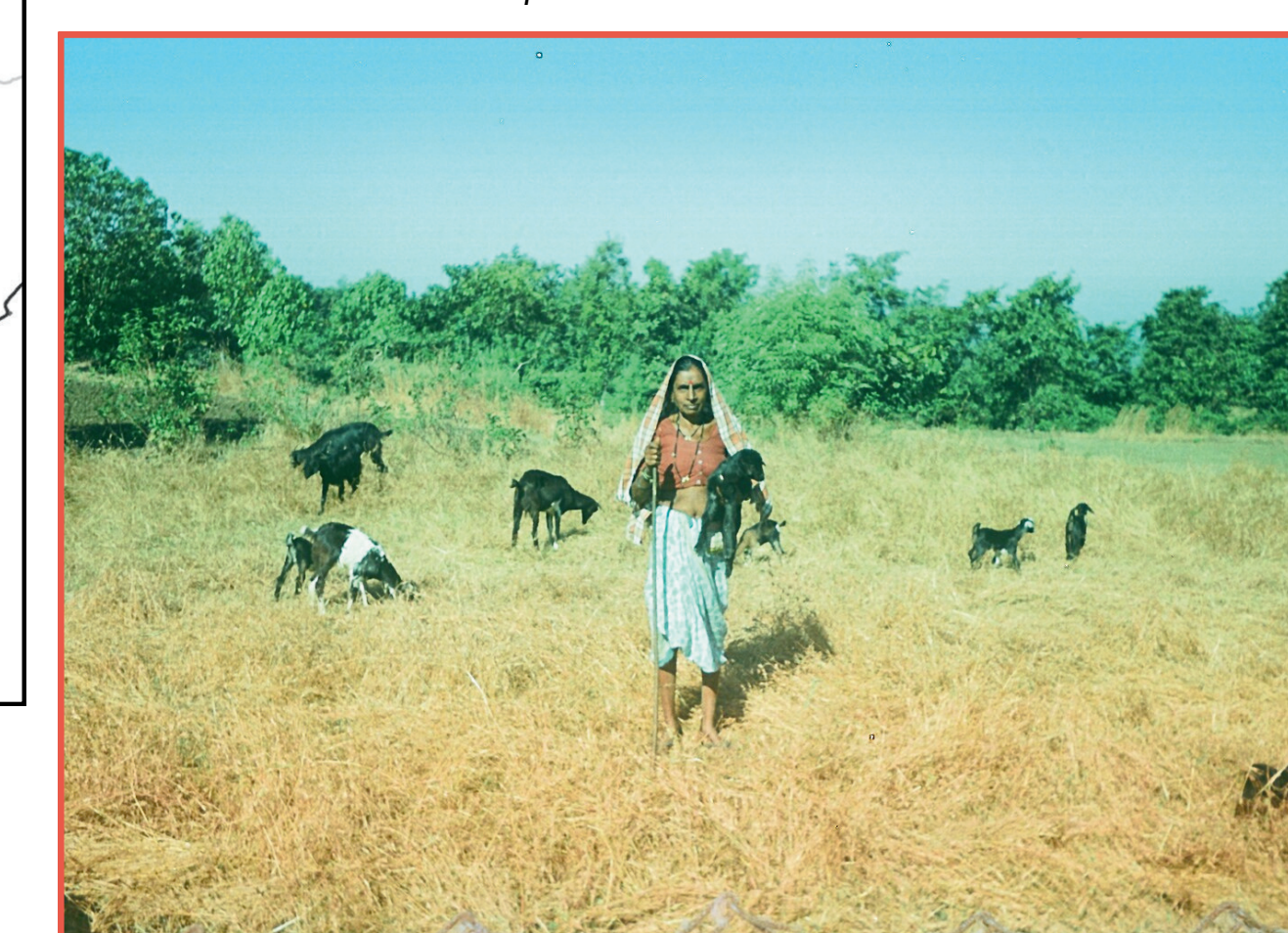
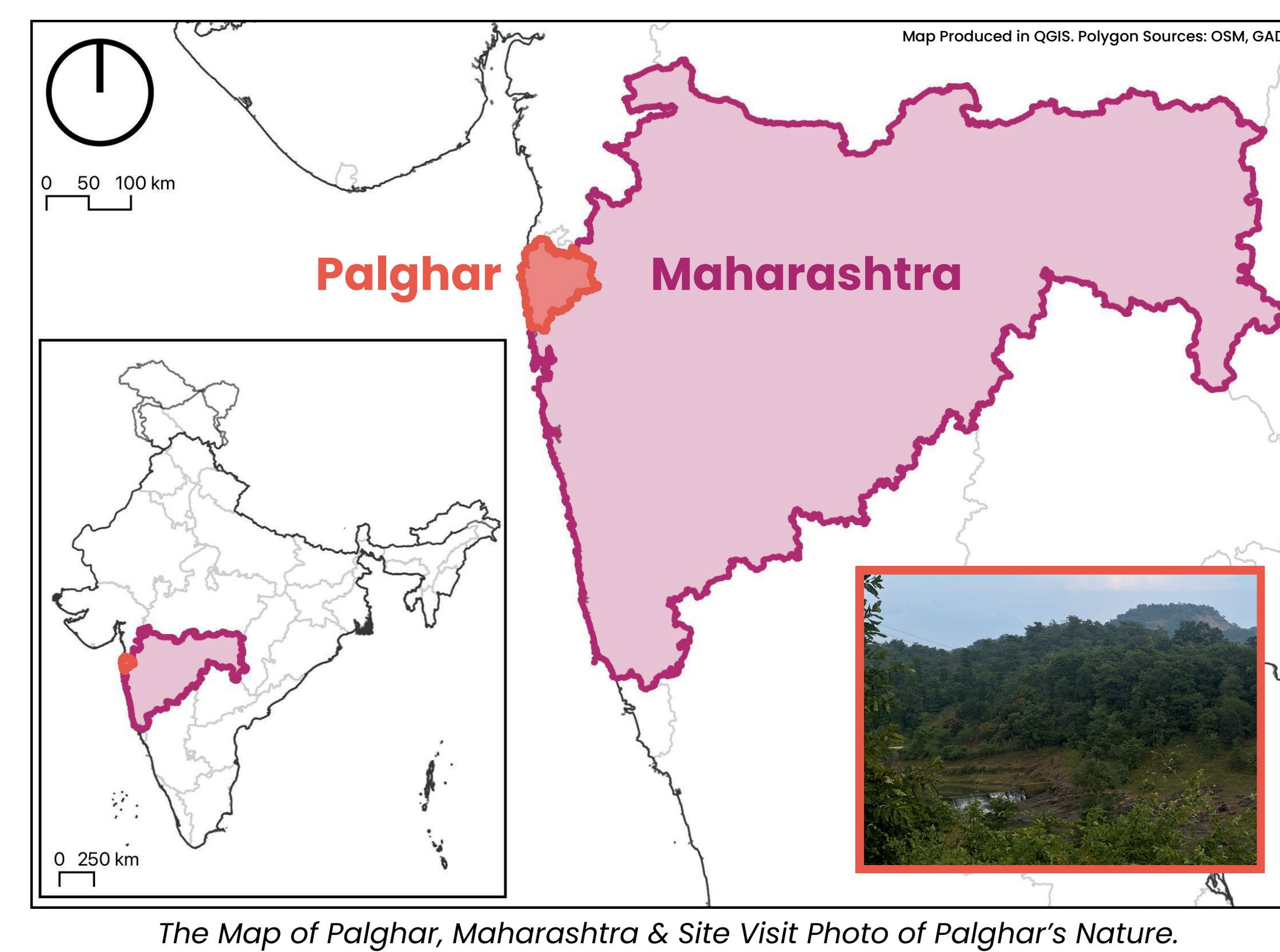
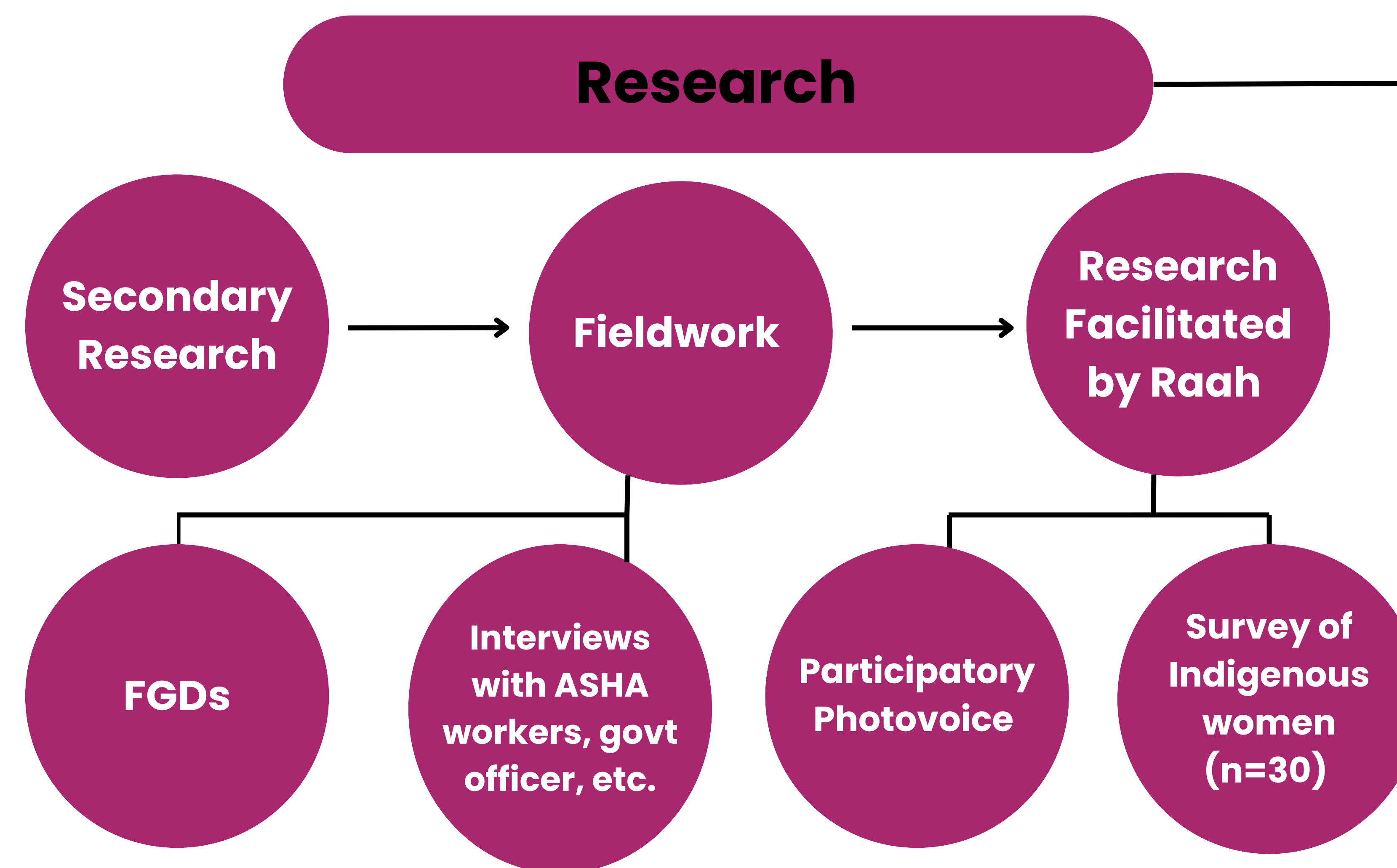
How can our team help Raah Foundation better advocate for an improved nutritional status for tribal women of Palghar in ways that:

- highlight Indigenous women's perspectives and,
- encourage agency and a collective consciousness?

Design Justice

– A framework that prioritizes community over outsider expertise and rethinks design processes to center people who are normally marginalized by design.

By centring Palghar women's voices as the primary stakeholder, we have strived to prioritize the design's impact on the community through an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process. Based on these principles and the rich primary data collected during research that allows us to highlight Palghar women's experiences and needs, our team finalized a **Policy Analysis Report** and **Gender Sensitive Training Materials** as the final deliverables.



Policy Analysis Report

Data insights reveal a significant disparity between tribal communities in Palghar heavily relying on government food access schemes while continuously facing nutritional insecurity. Evidently, there is a gap in the nutritional needs of Palghar's tribes and the implementation of government food support schemes.

Our policy analysis report is a systems-level intervention that contributes to the development of Indigenous women's access to nutrition, health, and safety. Focusing on the Maharashtra schemes and their de facto implementation, we identify structural barriers, such as funding gaps, and other tensions that limit a system that is meant to represent the community's voices but fails to meet their needs.

Outcomes:

- Strengthen government accountability
- Track evolution and real-time implementation of key government schemes
- Translate community experiences into actionable insights
- Elevate Indigenous women's voices in policy evaluation and reform processes

Gender-Sensitive Training for Krishi Sakhis & IAFF participants

This deliverable is designed for Raah's Field Team who train and mentor Krishi Sakhis (government extension workers in agriculture) in Palghar.

Our toolkit proposes specific ways of embedding a gender-sensitive lens into the One Acre Food Forest – Palghar-based program that provides 540 women with individually owned one acre of land each to teach them agricultural skills that will allow them to meet their nutritional and financial needs.

Outcomes:

1. Technical:

- Ability to identify households' power hierarchies
- Ability to engage the men of the household
- Track gendered nutrition gaps
- Ability to link women/households to different schemes

2. Behavioral

- Ability to conduct empathetic counselling
- Build women's confidence
- Support women's autonomy and decision-making in the household

Citations

Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). Design justice: community-led practices to build the worlds we need. The MIT Press.

Acknowledgements

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