

Gender-Sensitive Modules

for One Acre Food Forest
Program (1AFF)



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Contents

03 Acknowledgements

04 Introduction

04 Context Setting & Problem Statements

14 Raah's Existing Intervention: 1AFF

16 Why do we need gender-sensitive modules?

19 Module Integration Principles for Raah Field Team

21 Logistical Framework

26 Modules for Gender Sensitivity Integration

25 Agency-Affirming Practices

26 Sharing Circles

28 Event Structure

30 Session Structure

32 Post-Event Follow-Up

33 What Success of the Sharing Circle Looks Like

34 Equitable Resource Distribution

35 Role Play: From Harvest to Plate

37 Event Structure

38 Role Play Structure

44 Reflective Discussion Structure

47 Post-Event Follow-Up

48 What Success of the Implementation Looks Like

49 Recognizing Invisible Labour & Gaining Men's Allyship

50 End-of-Year Community Celebration

51 Event Structure

52 Achievement Sharing Exercise

53 Day-in-the-Life Visibility Exercise

56 Community Meal

57 Post-Event Follow-Up

58 What Success of the Implementation Looks Like

59 Concluding Remarks: Change Takes Time

61 Appendix

62 Inspiration Behind Our Interventions

63 Role-Play: From Harvest to Plate Pre-Session Preparation Checklist

64 Achievement Sharing Prompts

66 End-of-Year Community Celebration Preparation Checklist

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“ We are deeply grateful to the indigenous women of Palghar who welcomed us with open hearts and chose to share their stories with us. We would also like to thank the Raah Foundation for facilitating our interactions with the indigenous women and providing context about Palghar. Additionally, we are grateful to Professor David Roberts, Professor Aditi Mehta, and our TA Abigale MacEwen for their academic support in this project.

These training modules have been created as part of the School of Cities International Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Capstone Project (IMUCP) course, facilitated by the University of Toronto India Foundation (UTIF). ”



IMUCP Team at the Site Visit to Palghar
in October 2025

Context Setting & Problem Statements



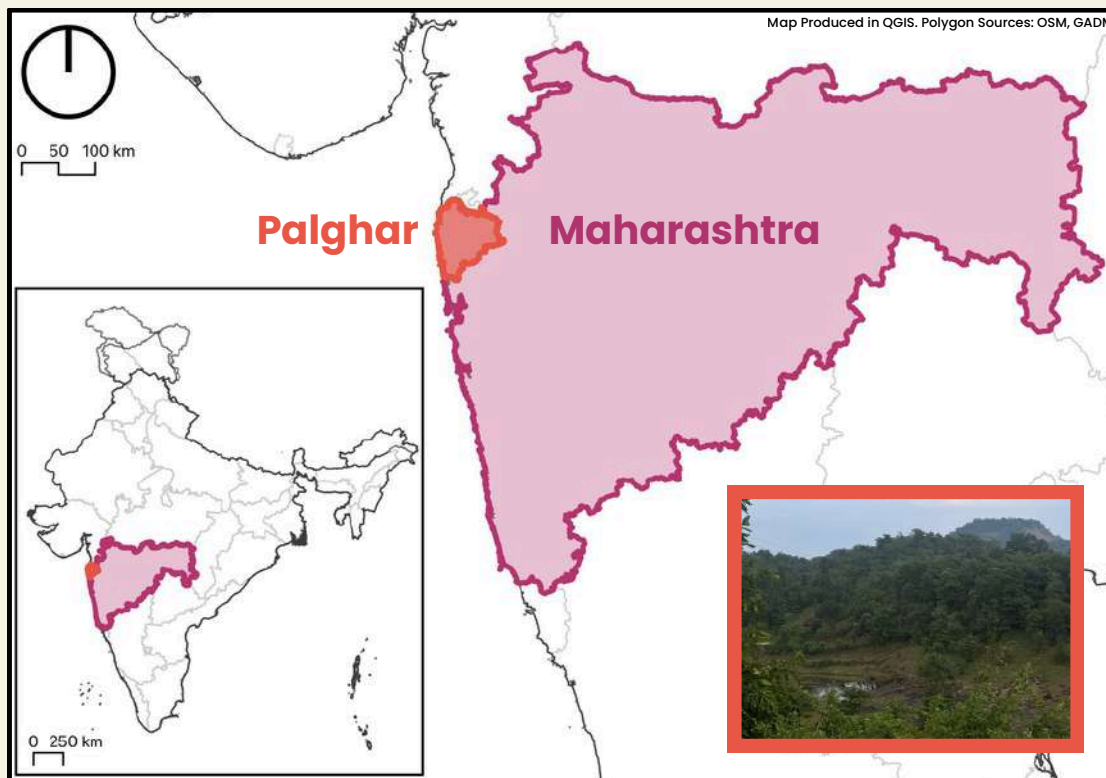
Purpose of the Modules

These gender-sensitive modules are designed to support **Raah Foundation's** field team, working in the **tribal communities of Palghar**, in implementing their **One Acre Food Forest (1AFF) program** through an even more **gender-sensitive lens**. While current efforts align with the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)—focusing on agency, confidence, and agricultural resource decision-making—these modules aim to evolve that work into a gender-transformative approach by explicitly challenging the deep-rooted power dynamics and systemic causes of gender inequality.

By providing women with the space to recognize these underlying disparities, **this module seeks to plant the 'first seed' of self-advocacy and systemic change**. Addressing these core issues will amplify 1AFF's goals, particularly in improving women's nutritional status. Furthermore, **this framework serves as a scalable model for non-profits across India and South Asia** operating in similar patriarchal contexts, allowing them to adapt these strategies to their own local realities.

Palghar's Context & Fieldwork

Located in the extension of the Western Ghats within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Palghar has a tribal population constituting approximately 37% of the region¹, with livelihoods primarily dependent on rain-fed crops like paddy, fruits like mango, and flowers like jasmine.



The Map of Palghar, Maharashtra & Site Visit Photo of Palghar's Nature.

¹About District | District Palghar, Government of Maharashtra | India. (n.d.). <https://palghar.gov.in/en/about-district/>

Field observations in Palghar indicate a concerning paradox: **while women are the primary architects of household food systems, they remain the most marginalized actors within them.** Their lives are defined by a **double burden**: beginning before sunrise with domestic chores and water collection, extending into long hours of agricultural labor, and concluding with evening care work.

Despite this extensive contribution, **women's rights** over land and assets remain limited. Moreover, during Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) within the community on October 31, 2025, active participation was frequently dominated by husbands instead of them, indicating **invisible gender norms** that shape their everyday lives.

These social disparities are now being exacerbated by **environmental pressures**. Erratic rainfall and water scarcity have not only threatened crop yields but have translated into **heavier agricultural labor for women**. Moreover, government frontline health workers, including Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Anganwadi workers (AWWs), report **high rates of anemia and inadequate dietary intake** among pregnant and lactating women in Palghar. As these community health leaders are the primary link between the district and the healthcare system, their observations provide direct local accounts of worsening nutritional status.

These intersecting stressors create a cycle of disparity that cannot be fixed by simple inclusion. There is a critical need for an intervention that moves beyond mere participation toward systemic gender sensitivity. **This requires** not only acknowledging these stressors but also **explicitly challenging the underlying norms that cause them.**

To address these gaps, we have identified **three core structural problems** that can be integrated within the 1AFF program:

I. Lack of Agency

II. Inequitable Resource Distribution

III. Invisibilised Labour

Note on Photovoice

Photovoice is a **participatory research method** where **community members** use photography to **document their lived experiences** and share the stories behind their images.

This process **empowers participants** to visualize their perspectives, bringing hidden issues to light to better inform researchers and policymakers.¹ To capture these lived realities, we integrated this approach into our study.

The photovoice images that we have incorporated into the modules do more than document chores; they **make visible the often-unrecognized labor that sustains household nutrition while reflecting the community's resilience, resourcefulness and continued reliance on local food systems.**



¹Kate Sinclair et al., "Women's Autonomy and Food Security: Connecting the Dots from the Perspective of Indigenous Women in Rural Colombia," SSM - Qualitative Research in Health 2 (2022): 100078, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmqr.2022.100078>.

I. Lack of Agency:



Agency is not absent but negotiated:

Women thus only act as stand-in managers and not autonomous decision-makers.

46.7% of women who were surveyed report that **decisions around crop selection are made jointly by husbands and wives**, while an equal proportion report **joint decision-making in household spending**.

However, the extent of the agency is shaped by patriarchal norms where **women still consult their husbands for larger spending decisions**.

Additionally, majority of the community **men migrate to cities** to look for work, and it is then that the **women** of the family **step in to manage the household**, especially the day-to-day spending on food.



Time and Mobility as Barriers to Agency:

Meaningful agency requires time, which most of the women don't have.

Even if women have access to some joint decision-making power within the family, they are often too exhausted by their day's work due to the double responsibilities they bear.

Additionally, **mobility constraints** due to **ration shops** being situated almost **3 km away** and **healthcare** requiring a travel of **5-35 km**, cause women to be further dependent on the male members of their family.



Knowledge and Access Gap:

Agency is further limited by **internalized constraints**.

This is not just due to a lack of awareness, but a deeper issue related to **limited exposure to systems** or internalised constraints that prevent them from developing the ability to influence systems.

In Focus Group

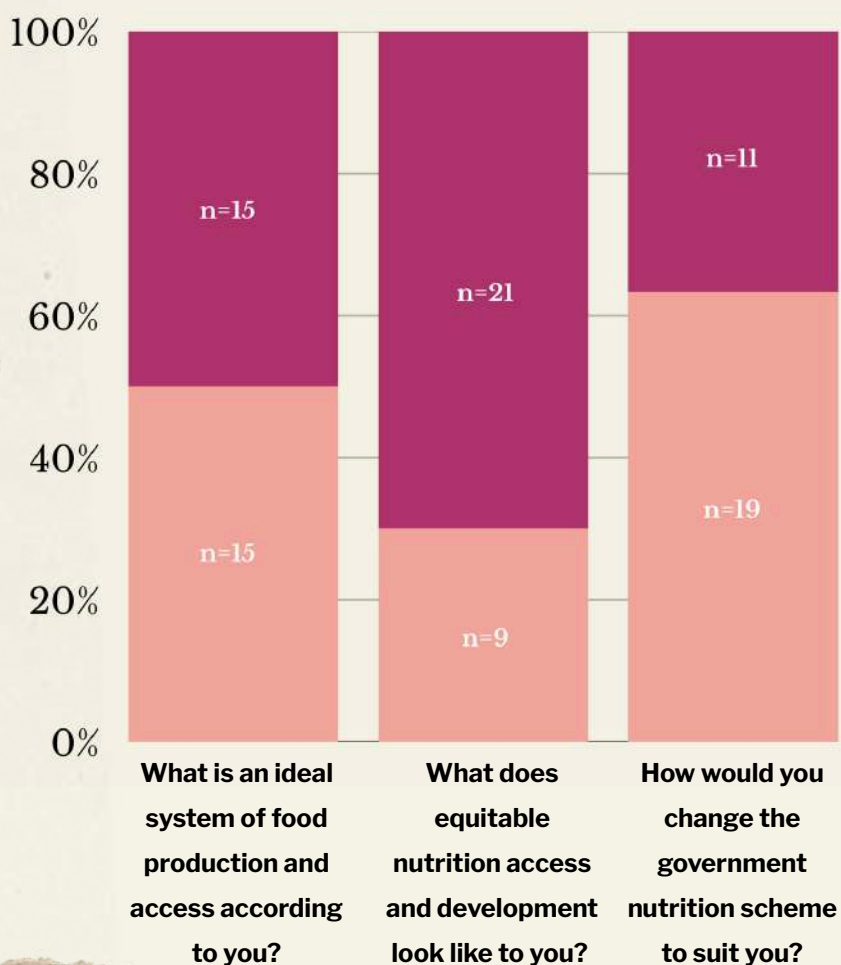
Discussions as well, the women came to the gatherings with their husbands and were not speaking up without glancing at their husbands or without their encouragement to speak.



Survey data reveals a significant issue:

- 50% of Palghar women gave no response on ideal food systems
- 30% gave no response on equitable nutrition
- 63% gave no suggestions to improve policy schemes.

● Answered the question ● No/No Information



Agency is aspiration in action. It equips people with the confidence to voice perspectives and needs that can inspire change.

II. Inequitable Resource Distribution:



Participation vs Power:

High labour contribution does not grant equal control over output.

Although survey data shows that 76.7% of households rely on both **husband and wife** for farming, women often lack the power to decide how resources are consumed or sold.

While they share the work, they **do not share the executive power over the fruits of that labor.**



Consumption Disparities within the Household:

Nutritional intake follows a household hierarchy.

In the survey, **27% women reported that the household head consumes special or more nutritious food** that they do not.

Moreover, women stated during interviews that **during male migration, meal quality for the remaining family often drops.**

Meals tend to become simpler and luxury food items are usually not consumed, suggesting that these **high-quality items are reserved for men.**

This inequity is so systemic that Anganwadi workers mentioned that they have to ensure women finish supplementary meals on-site to prevent them from sharing their nutrition with other family members at the cost of their own health.



"Ideal Woman" Construct:

Social conditioning dictates that a "good" woman is one who sacrifices her needs for her family.

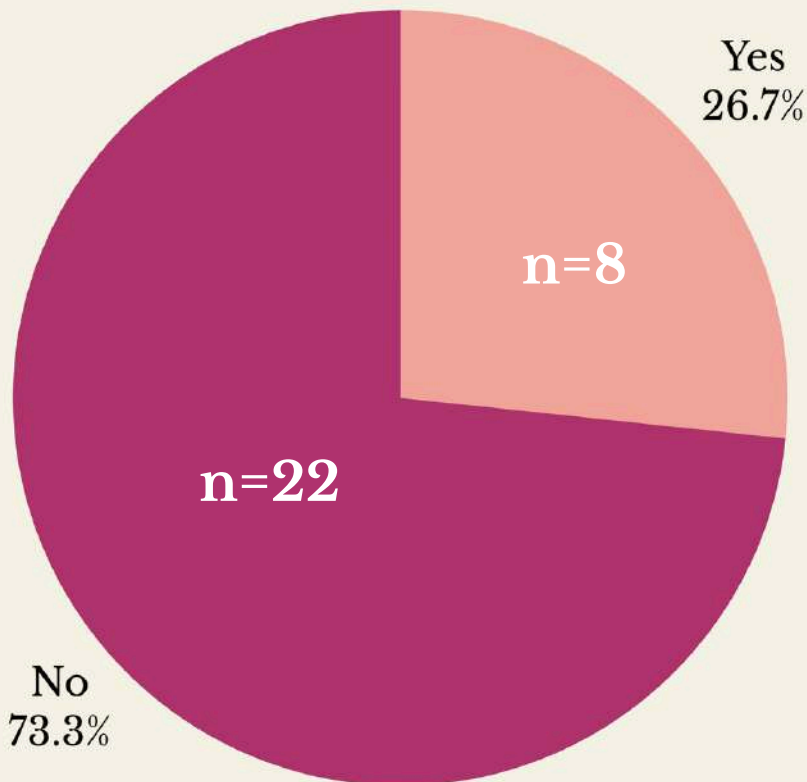
This **internalized de-prioritization** makes self-care feel like one is being a "bad mother/wife/sister/daughter, when the same resource could be utilised by other family members like the children, in-laws or husband.

Due to this, even when food is available, **women often prioritize the family's nutritional wellbeing over their own.**

Furthermore, because women's work is categorized as "household responsibility" rather than "professional labor," their claim to the physical rewards of that labor is systemically weakened.

Survey Data reveals food consumption disparities:

27% women mentioned that the head of the household consumes special or more nutritious food that they do not



Does the Head of the Household consume foods you don't?



III. Invisibilised Labour:



Women work more than men:

Women in Palghar consistently perform more labor than men, yet it remains unrecorded.

They are equally involved in farming, if not more.

In addition, they **hold primary responsibility for food procurement** according to survey data (23% women-only or head of household, 63% shared, but no husband).

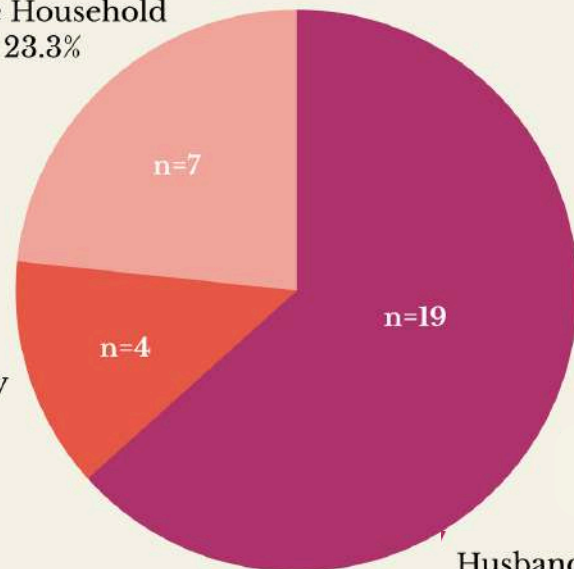
While men's work is often external (migration for extra income), women's work is a 15-hour cycle.

Starting at 5:00 AM, they manage water collection, cooking, and childcare before spending 5 hours on food production in the fields, only to return to more domestic responsibilities until nightfall.

Who in your family goes to collect or buy food?

Women or Head of the Household
23.3%

Family
13.3%



Husband & Wife
63.3%

Survey Data reveals disparities in food procurement responsibilities





Lack of Recognition of Women's Contribution:

There is a stark disconnect between the labor women provide and the nutrition they receive.

Some women report that their workload is so significant they **lack the time to even consume their own meals.**

Their contribution to the household's survival is not recognized in the nutritional value they receive in the household.

They still often eat less quality and quantity of food, compared to other family members.



The Need for External Validation:

Because their work is often taken for granted at home, women in Palghar expressed a distinct need for other systems to acknowledge their worth.

The women are the backbone of the local food systems as farmers and cooks for their families, yet their contributions remain unrecognized.

For these women, support from the government or Raah is not just about resources; it is about finally having their essential labor recognized as a fundamental right rather than a silent obligation.





Raah's Existing Intervention: 1AFF

The **One Acre Food Forest Program (1AFF)** is a collaborative initiative between the Raah Foundation and the Gates Foundation designed to address gender inequities in household and community agency over food production. The program **provides 540 women in the Palghar district with individual ownership of one acre of land.**

Guided by the Raah Foundation's field team and equipped with the Foundation's resources, each woman cultivates produce that meets both her nutritional and financial needs. These food forests are expected to **generate sustainable income for at least 20 years** and serve as a primary food source for the women and their families.

The curriculum follows the natural agricultural cycle to ensure that the learning is practical:

Quarter	Focus Theme	Key Activities
Q1 (Jan-Mar)	Stress Readiness	Managing Rabi harvests, heat and water stress planning, income protection
Q2 (Apr-Jun)	Rights & Roles	Introduction to land-use rights, FIG formation, shift from helpers to decision-makers
Q3 (Jul-Sep)	Production & Health	Pest management, linking food forests to anemia reduction, guest sessions with ASHA workers
Q4 (Oct-Dec)	Economics & Agency	Market exposure visits, collective selling, applying for government schemes, leadership training
Q5 (Next year: Jan-Mar)	Inspiration & Next-Year Planning	Interaction with successful women farmers, heat stress preparation, review and next year planning

A group of people, including men and women, are standing in a circle in an outdoor courtyard. They are holding hands, suggesting a community or group activity. The women are wearing colorful saris in shades of blue, yellow, red, and grey. The men are wearing white shirts and light blue trousers. The background shows a building with a balcony and a paved ground.

**Why do we need
gender-sensitive
modules?**

While the 1AFF program makes significant strides in gender mainstreaming, particularly through land ownership and capacity-building, it remains limited in its ability to challenge existing household power dynamics.

As observed in the Palghar context, **ownership does not automatically translate into control**. Women may cultivate the land, but decisions regarding crop choice, consumption, and income utilization often remain influenced (or even controlled) by male household members.

This gap underscores the importance of integrating gender sensitivity as a continuous, practice-based approach within the program.

Gender sensitivity, in this context, goes beyond acknowledging women as beneficiaries; it **actively engages with the subtle, everyday negotiations through which power operates in households**.

Without this layer, interventions risk reinforcing a model where women take on additional labour without corresponding decision-making authority.

Women know, produce and sustain, and yet remain unheard

1. Converting Ownership into Real Agency

Drawing from Naila Kabeer's work on resources and female agency, ownership alone does not ensure decision-making power for women.¹ Gender-sensitive tools like role play and reflective discussions help women recognise and gradually challenge constraints in household decision-making.

2. Addressing Nutritional Inequities

As seen during our field visits, women often prioritise household needs over their own, redistributing both food and income. Using roleplays and sharing circles will help women understand their disproportional nutritional access and empower them to bridge it.

3. Addressing Income Inequalities

Practices like decision-making make these inequalities visible and encourage more equitable outcomes. Drawing on Diane Elson's argument that making women's contributions and labour visible is essential to addressing gendered economic inequalities.²

4. Engaging the Household, Not Just Women

Focusing only on women can limit impact. Including husbands and elders through inclusive dialogue helps build support for women's nutrition and decision-making by framing it in terms of family wellbeing and productivity³.

5. Shifting Training from Instruction to Empowerment

Once again, drawing from Naila Kabeer's work¹, gender-sensitive facilitation emphasises empathy and suggestion rather than instruction, enabling women to navigate social pressures and build confidence as decision-makers.

¹Kabeer N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Dev. Change* 30 435–464. [10.1111/1467-7660.00125](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00125)

²Elson, D. (1999). Labor Markets as Gendered Institutions: Equality, Efficiency and Empowerment Issues. *World Development*, 3, 611–627. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0305-750x\(98\)00147-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0305-750x(98)00147-8)

³Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Based Inequity in Health: Evidence from Programme Interventions

Module Integration Principles for Raah Field Team



Use non-judgemental tone and language

Encourage women for every achievement, even if small

Acknowledge that these are difficult conversations, that take time

Be present and appreciative of their effort

Listen

Do not interrupt

Pay attention to what women are saying, the words they use

Show that you are listening with your body language (e.g., nodding, eye contact if appropriate)

Do not impose your perspective or opinions

Ask follow-up questions

Clarify the meaning of the words the women use

Use their words when summarizing group discussions and helping identify patterns.

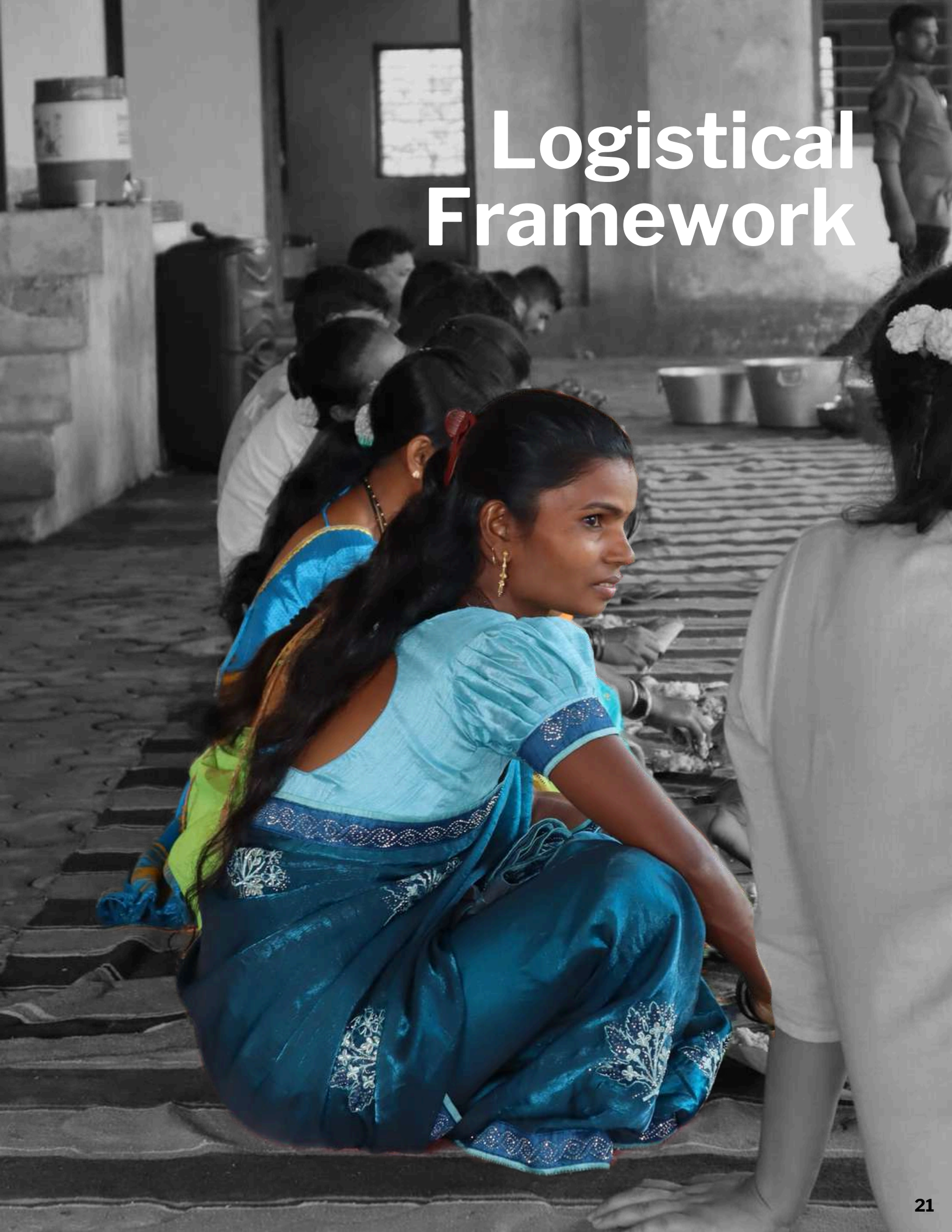
Be empathetic

"I hear you"

"I see you"

"Thank you for sharing"

Logistical Framework



For gender sensitivity to be effectively integrated into 1AFF, it is essential to address the time and mobility constraints faced by women

Observations from the field show that **a woman's day is packed with both domestic work and agricultural responsibilities.**

The training program must therefore be designed to **align with women's existing routines**, rather than placing additional demands on their time.

Field-Based Interventions

Instead of the women leaving their work or travelling long distances, **training sessions can be conducted directly in the fields.** Short sessions can be **integrated into natural breaks during agricultural work** to avoid creating an additional time burden for women.

Conduct short **participatory surveys or time-use mapping** exercises to understand women's daily work patterns.

This allows the program to identify **realistic training windows** and schedule sessions at times that **minimise conflicts with domestic and farm responsibilities.**

Leveraging Existing Institutional Spaces

Instead of requiring women to attend separate meetings, program outreach and training can be embedded within existing community platforms where women already gather, such as:

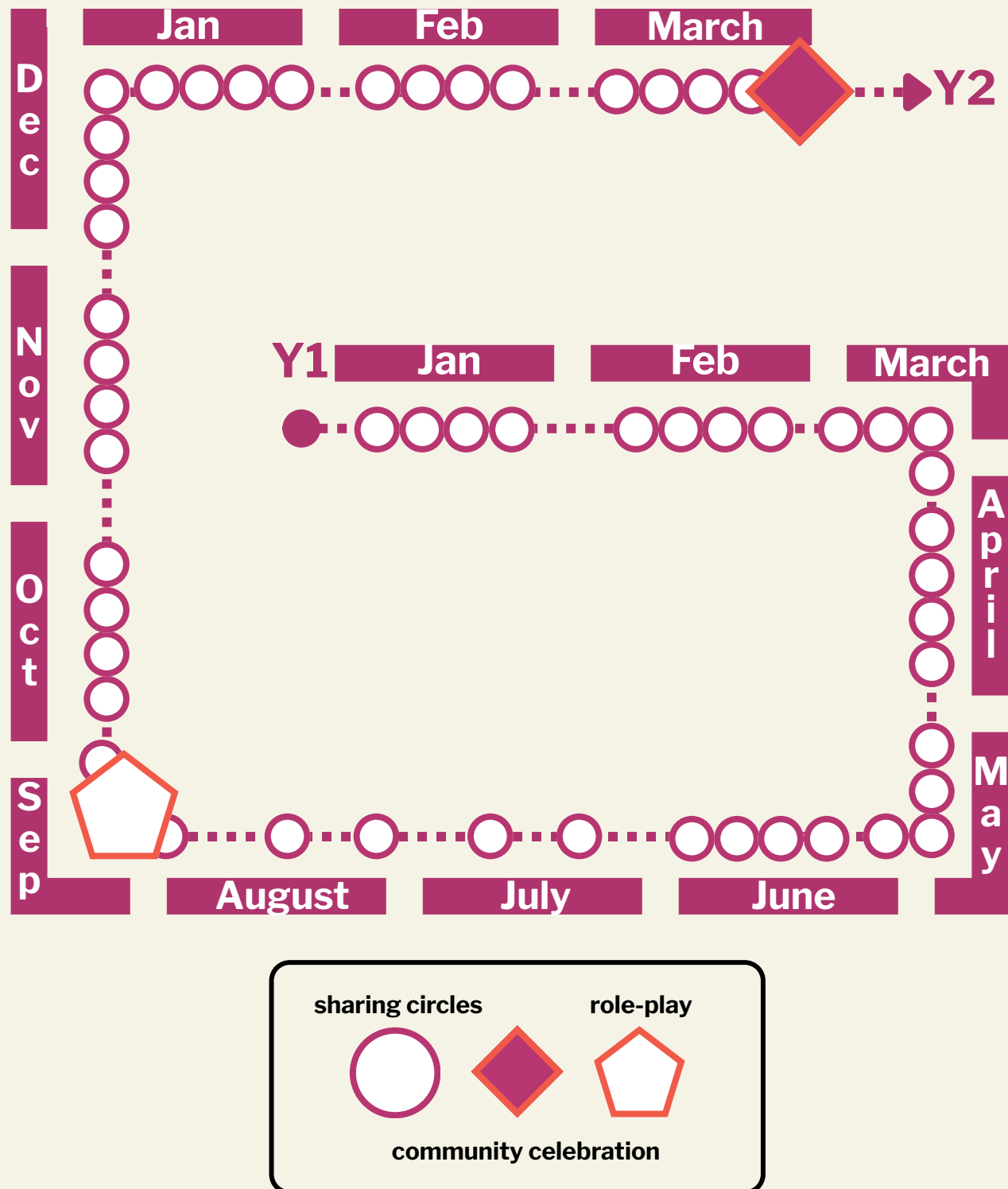
1. Self-Help Group (SHG) meetings
2. Anganwadi meetings
3. *Panchayat* (local-level government) or village-level gathering



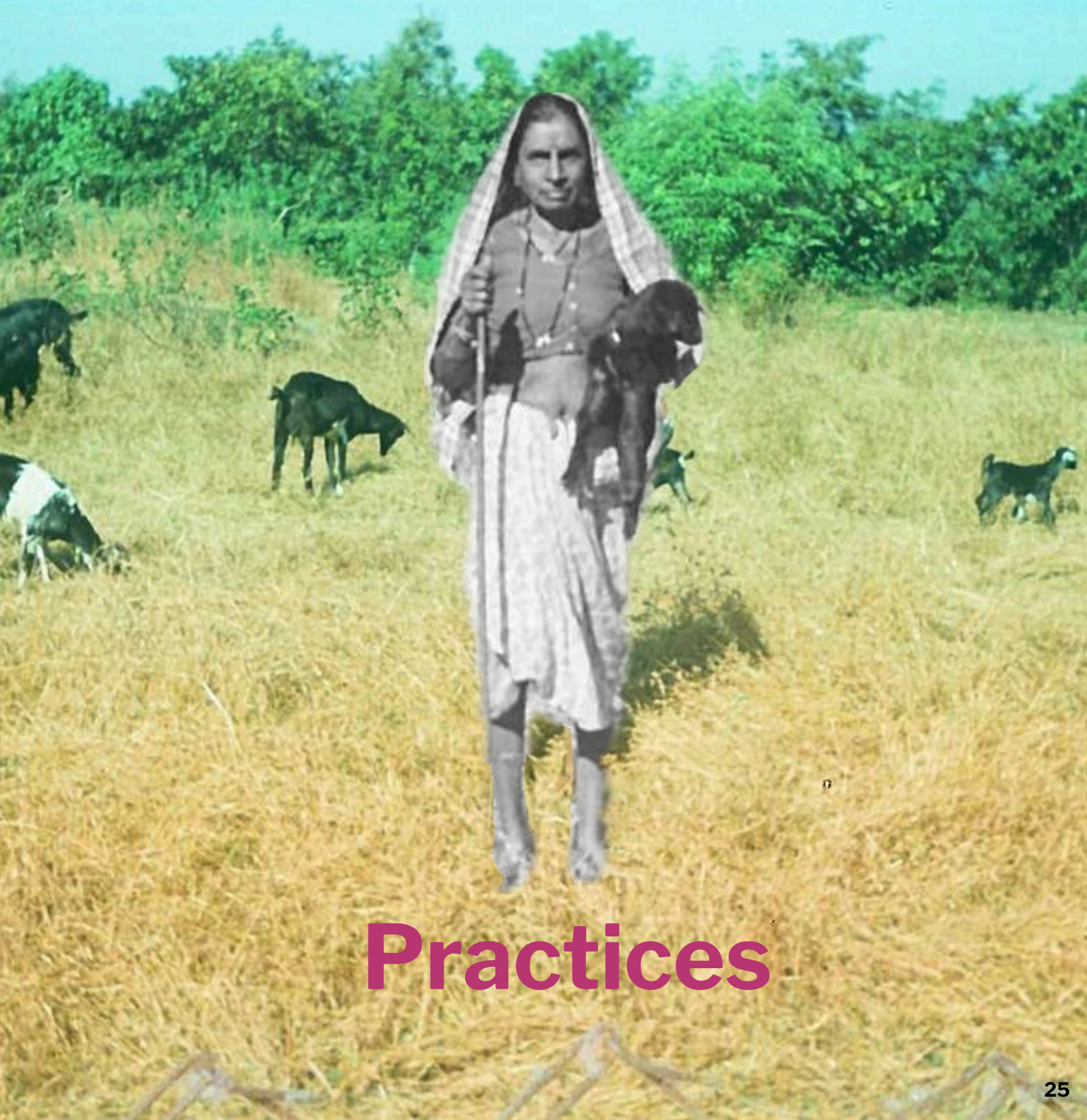
Embedding the program within panchayat institutions (say, through presentations at *Panchayat* meetings, collaboration with elected representatives, or alignment with village-level planning) can help legitimise women's participation in food forest farming within the broader community.

Modules Integration in the 1AFF Timeline

The time and frequency for module implementation are aligned with the existing 1AFF training calendar. This timeline reflects how the three modules can be implemented simultaneously within one training cycle of 1AFF.



Agency-Affirming



Practices



Sharing Circles

The solution to the agency problem is to shift women's role in household decision-making from negotiated participation to recognised authority. Sharing circles will allow women to gain confidence and build courage in expressing their opinions within the household, especially during farming decisions, which they contribute the most to.

When?

1. January-March: Weekly mini circles after crop trainings
2. April-June: Mini circles before/after farm planning & intercropping decisions (integration with FIG)
3. July-September: 1 circle every 2 weeks on issues like workload sharing, problem solving, etc.
4. October-March (Y2): circles around money control and management (resume to one per week)

For Who?

Facilitator: Raah's field team (preferably a woman for the community or a woman the 1AFF women are comfortable with)

Participants of the sharing circles: 1AFF women

Purpose

1. Ensuring that the women have **time to build relationships with other women** as **economic agents** and not just community members
2. Find the **confidence to voice their concerns or opinions** during household decision-making tasks
3. Have the **temporal bandwidth to engage in meaningful learning sessions** that make their work better
4. Women are able to see themselves as not just those who are executing the work, but also as **strategic decision makers**

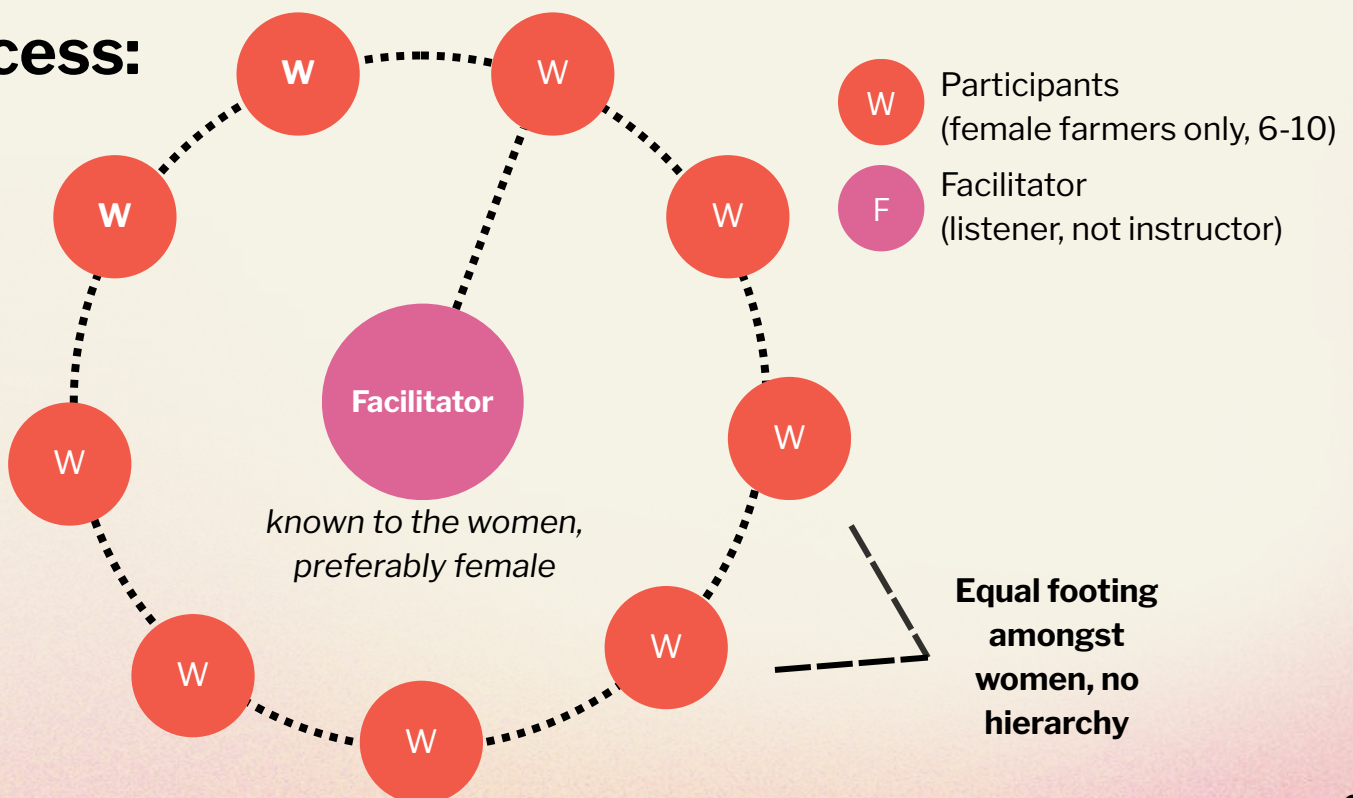
Integration within 1AFF Program

The current 1AFF model already includes technical trainings (crop care, soil, nutrition, etc.) and some reflective spaces like FIG discussions and review meetings. However, **these assume that women can speak, reflect, and act on knowledge**, which is often not true due to internalised and social constraints.

Gender Sensitivity: A Transformative Approach

- Builds the **ability of women to speak, question, and engage** in existing technical trainings.
- **Creates a safe space to share failures and learn collectively**, preventing confidence loss in high-stakes seasons, especially during farming and cropping periods.
- Helps women realise that they are **independent economic agents** and not just stand in managers.

Process:



Event structure

Warm Up Exercises	 10 minutes  facilitated by Raah Field Team for 1AFF women
Deeper Questions	 20-25 minutes  facilitated by Raah Field Team for 1AFF women
Identification of Patterned Responses	 10-15 minutes  Raah Field Team
Agency Building Prompts	 20-25 minutes  facilitated by Raah Field Team for 1AFF women
Ending Exercise - Tarpa	 5-10 minutes  1AFF women

Session Structure

1. Warm up:

Start with easy prompts to get the women to warm up.

Starting the session on a mellow note is important to ensure that women open up and remove the fear of ‘wrong answers.’



Some starting prompts include:

- What did you cook yesterday?
- How was your day?
- What work have you done since morning?
- How are your children doing (if the women are mothers)?

2. Move to slightly deeper prompts, building upon the opening question:



Some prompts include:

- Who usually decides what is cooked in your house?
- When money becomes less available, how do you decide what to buy and what not to buy?
- Has there been a time when you wanted something else, but your husband/father wanted something else? If yes, what was the resolution of the disagreement?

All women must get the opportunity to speak in the session. So, responses should be taken one after the other in a circle.

The facilitator should try to gently probe by asking relevant follow-up questions to encourage the women to speak more about their opinions.

3. Identify patterns in responses:

This is an important step for the facilitator to take to ensure that the women feel like their voices and problems are shared and not isolated.

But ensure that the facilitator does not tell them these conclusions, but that these are figured out by the women themselves.

 How the facilitator can proceed:

Step 1:

Start by **summarising what all the women have said**

("I heard some of you say that decisions are taken together").

It is important to use *their* words and not your interpretation.
Keep your tone non-judgmental.

Step 2:

Ask comparison questions:

- "Are these experiences similar for most of you, or different?"
- "How many of you feel decisions are truly equal?"
- "In which situations do you feel you decide more? In which less?"

Step 3:

Break down their responses by asking more layered questions:

- "When you say 'together,' what does that look like?"
- "Do both people's opinions carry the same weight in the house?"
- "Who takes the final decision if there is disagreement?"

Step 4:

Introduce contrasts:

- "What changes when your husband is not at home?"
- "When you are managing alone, do you feel more freedom?"

Keep summarising their responses to ensure that women themselves see the connections between their experiences or any patterns, if they exist

Remember:

Keep using their words and not your interpretations!
Keep your tone non-judgmental!

4. Introduce agency-building prompts

These prompts will **allow women to think differently** and imagine what they would want to change about their households.

Some guiding prompts include:

“What is one decision you wish you could take on your own?”

If you could decide freely, what would you change in your household?”

End the session by summarising the learnings from today and a less heavy activity like singing a song or doing their traditional community dance – the tarpa, to build a sense of community and allyship amongst the women.

Tarpa community dance performed during the IMUCP students’ Paglhar site visit in November 2025



Post-Event Follow-up

Before every sharing circle, take feedback on previous

Raah Field Team to ask 1AFF event participants:

- 
- *How did you feel speaking and listening during the Sharing Circle?*
 - *Did you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts or experiences? Why or why not?*
 - *Did you relate to other women's experiences? What stood out to you?*
 - *Have you spoken about the Sharing Circle with your family? What was their response?*



Recognize small changes amongst women!

Acknowledge small shifts in confidence!



Notice & Appreciate Women When They:

- *Volunteer to speak in the sharing circle first*
- *Agree/disagree with each other openly*
- *Support other women's stories*
- *Share experiences outside the session*

What Success of the Sharing Circle Looks Like:

Women feel **safe & comfortable** during the session

Women actively **listen & respond** to each other

Women **identify common challenges** in discussions

The facilitator guides discussions without dominating them

Silence reduces over sessions, and more women speak over time

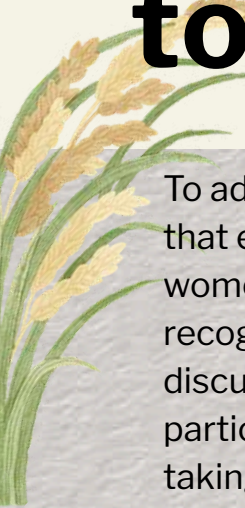
Women begin to **reflect on their own roles and decisions**

Women **continue conversations** beyond the session and **build collective support** (informal discussions, encourage others to speak & revisit previous topics)

Equitable Resource Distribution



Roleplay: From Harvest to Plate



To address equitable resource distribution, it is important to ensure that external beliefs of inequitable distribution are not imposed on women. The participatory roleplay, hence, enables women to recognize these disparities themselves. The guided reflective discussion and accountability pairs activity further encourage participants to move from critical observation and thinking to taking the first step toward equitable resource distribution.



When?

End of **September** (1- 2 weeks post the completion of: 1AFF's harvest, cooking demo and women's nutritional health module)

For who?

Facilitator: Raah's 1AFF field staff workers (preferably a woman)

Participants: 1AFF women farmers

Purpose

The primary goal is to encourage **translation of resource ownership to resource control**.

- **Encourage Equity:** Motivate women to think critically about how resources are distributed within their homes.
- **Reap Equal Benefits:** Encourage women to equally consume and benefit from the nutritious outputs of their own labor.
- **Ensure Nutritional Security:** Bridge the gap between "growing food" and "eating food" to improve long-term health outcomes.
- **Interconnectedness:** Through interconnectedness with our module on improving general agency, it aims to increase women's agency over the distribution of nutrition generated from their labour.

Integration within 1AFF Program

- It ensures that **1AFF's goal of producing crops to meet women's nutritional needs** is actually fulfilled at the consumption stage.
- It links to **other 1AFF tools** focussed on **improving general agency and leadership** to build a woman's confidence over time.

Gender Sensitivity: A Transformative Approach

This module ensures that the 1AFF program is not only gender-sensitive but directly **challenges** the effect of lack of agency on 1AFF outcomes. It plants the seed of change and **positions the woman** not just as a "laborer" for the family's food, but **as a primary stakeholder who has a right to the highest-quality outputs** of her own work.

- **Facilitated Self-Realization:** Rather than "lecturing" on gender rights, the module uses role-play to allow women to see disparities for themselves. This prevents the feeling of being "taught" external beliefs that may clash with their current reality.
- **Building Internal Conviction:** By giving women the space to come to their own realizations, the module fosters a deeper, more personal commitment to change that is more sustainable than external instruction.
- **Peer Validation:** Using a group setting allows women to see that their struggles with agency are shared, reducing individual guilt or shame.



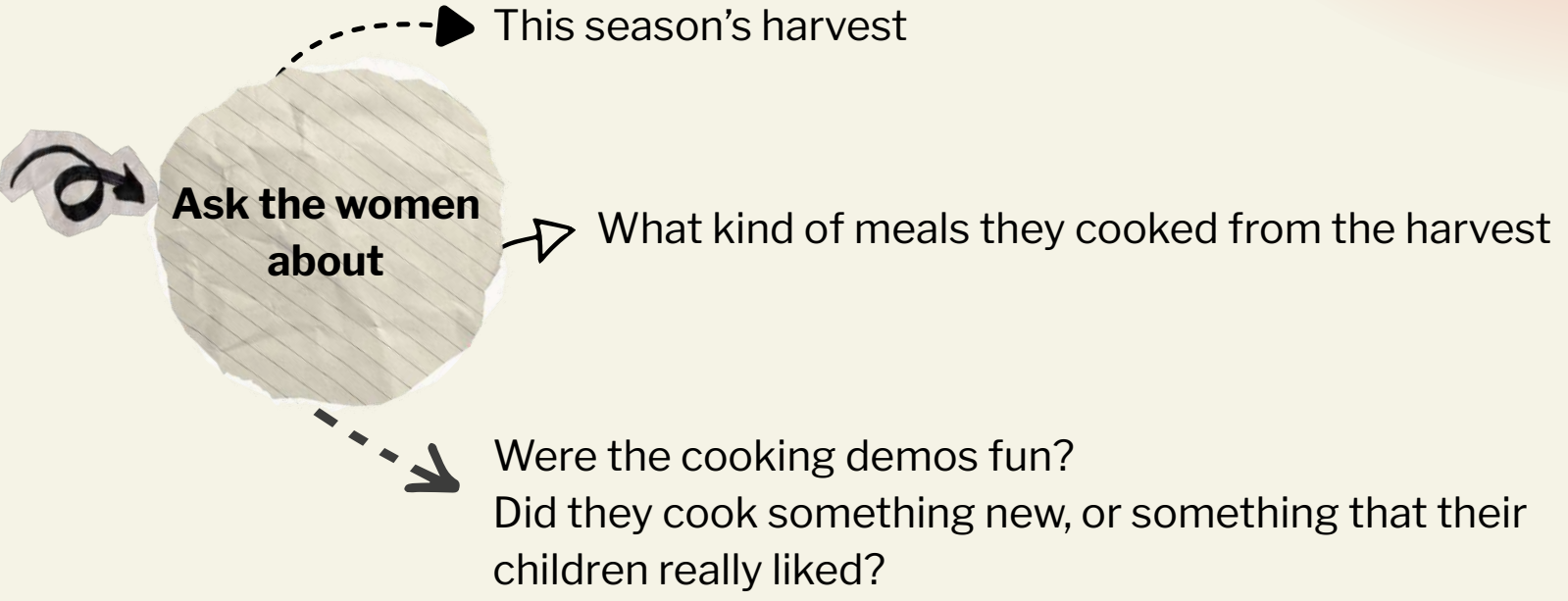
Event structure

Opening → Role Play Group Formation	 20-25 minutes  by Raah Field Team
Role Play Planning	 15 minutes  by 1 AFF women
Role Play Performances	 8-10 minutes per group  7-10 1AFF women per group
Reflective Discussion	 40-50 minutes  facilitated by Raah Field Team members Discussion between 1AFF women
Accountability Pair Activity	 20-30 minutes  facilitated by Raah Field Team members Discussion between 1AFF women
Closing	 10-15 minutes  facilitated by Raah Field Team members Activity participants: 1AFF women

Role Play

Phase 1 (Opening):

Open the session with **light-hearted conversation**.



Ask the women
about

► This season's harvest

➤ What kind of meals they cooked from the harvest

➤ Were the cooking demos fun?
Did they cook something new, or something that their
children really liked?

Phase 2 (Activity Explanation):

Explain the activity.

Division into 3 groups.

Each group enacts their dinner scene from the recent harvest
(along with versions of specifications)- serving food to eating.

Everyone plays a different family member.

Important:

“Show us the truth. Not how things
should be - how they actually are.”

Phase 3 (Group Formation)

Step 1. Explain the three scenarios:

Theme 1: Regular Dinner

"Evening after regular harvest from 1AFF food forest. You brought home fresh vegetables, and made the dish from our cooking demo (or otherwise). Show exactly what happens from start to finish."

Theme 2: Husband away for work

"Husband has been away for intermittent migration work. You harvested crops from 1AFF forest, cooked them using our demo recipe (or otherwise). No chicken or fish this month. Mother-in-law and father-in-law present. Children present. Dinner time. Show what happens."

Theme 3: Guests are coming

"You harvested foods from 1AFF forest. You made the recipe from our cooking demo (or otherwise).

But today guests (father-in-law's relatives) are coming.

Not enough of the special dish for everyone to have equal portions. Show what happens."

Step 2. Ask women to raise their hand if their husbands were away or guests came recently for dinner.

Step 3. Form groups based on recent real experiences post harvest:

Group 1:
Women whose
husbands were
away

Group 2:
Women who
had guests

Group 3:
Everyone
else

Step 4. If a scenario didn't occur for a large number of women, **group remaining women randomly** by counting off by threes. All ones together, twos together, threes together.

Note: Explain that each group must enact **real stories** of those who **recently experienced** the scenario.

Step 5. Assign the following **roles** for every group:

The woman
(who farmed and cooked)

Husband

Mother-in-law

Father-in-law

Young child
(< 7 years old)

Adolescent son

Adolescent daughter

Phase 4 (Planning - 15 min):

Women are given 15 minutes to plan the scenario before enacting.

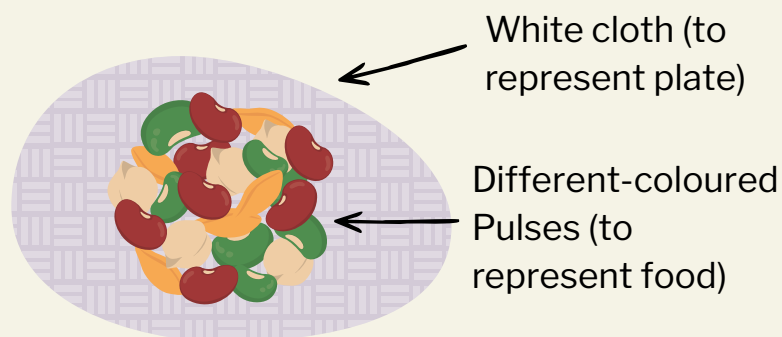
Remind the participants that they should try and **enact everything** including seating and types of food eaten according to the **real** scenarios!

Prompts women can discuss for easier planning:

- "In this situation, what actually happened/happens in most of our households?"
- "Who serves the food?"
- "Who gets served first? What is the general order?"
- "How is everyone seated?"
- "Who eats what and how much?"
- "When there are special foods like eggs or the cooking demo dish, who gets them or who gets (/generally just likes to eat) more?"

Women can use **supporting material** like cloth and pulses/stones to represent different types of food eaten.

Ask them to **explain the food being distributed and dishes cooked during the role-play.**



Phase 5 (Performances: 8-10 minutes per group):

The Role-Play Performance should show:

Beginning: Finishing cooking (briefly)



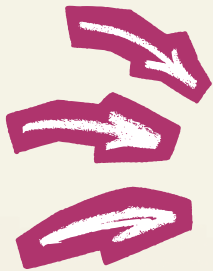
Middle: Serving process - use coloured stones/pulses to show portions, who gets what



Eating: Where everyone sits/stands, when woman eats

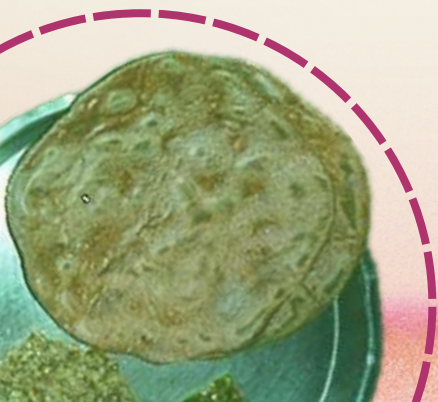


End: Cleaning up (briefly), what woman eats (if not yet)



Follow each performance with **clapping** to increase confidence.

Field staff should observe and note common patterns and differences between scenarios.





Reflective Discussion

Everyone sits in a circle, including field staff

Phase 1 (Observing Patterns):

Field staff should **ask women** whether they **observed any patterns or differences**.

IF they don't respond, field staff can state 1-2 patterns/differences that they themselves observed (but then ask women if they also observed these/what they think about them).

Possible prompts:

- 
- *What did you observe? Any similarities, differences?*
 - *When there was a shortage of food due to guests?*
 - *When men were away? How did this change the eating patterns?*
 - *Were there any differences between what you ate versus what your children ate? [to not make it too invasive at first]*
 - *Were there any differences between what you ate versus what your husband or in-laws ate?*
 - *What was your favourite food from the meal served? Who ate most of that food?*
 - *Do you think you felt full with the food you ate? If there was more food for the family (in case of shortage scenario), would you eat more?*
 - *Were there special foods eaten by you or other family members?*
 - *What was the order of eating?*
- 

Note: This section will vary according to the role-play. Hence, the field staff must be **attentive** and try to facilitate discussion according to the trends they observed.

Phase 2 (Reasons behind Inequitable Distribution):

Ask the women: “Why do you think you did not eat as much as others?”

Gender-equitable follow-up responses to their possible answers:

Their Reason	Facilitator's Possible Response
Men work harder	Women are responsible for both household and farm responsibilities.
Children need nutrition	If a woman doesn't eat enough, she cannot care well for her children.
Respect for elders	While respect is important, it is important to understand that your health also matters. You will not be able to care for those you care about, if your health is not okay.
Culture/Tradition	Do you think this tradition is right, even if it is at the cost of your (and hence your family's) wellbeing?
A good wife or mother does this	A good wife/mother cannot care for her husband/child if she is not well.

Phase 3 (Importance of Equitable Distribution):

Restatement of importance of women's nutrition (from the prior session on women and child's nutrition)

Anaemia



Impact on **productivity** in the field and household work

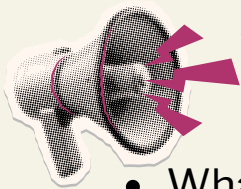
Cost in terms of long-term health issues which could require **hospitalisation**

“The family cannot be at their healthiest without you being healthy. **Your wellbeing is important**, how can you ensure your **child and family's wellbeing** otherwise?”

“If your produce doesn't result in equitable consumption, you are putting your own health at risk. **This is not only a concern for you, but also your family.**”

These prompts include **impacts** of nutritional insecurity that the **women may care more deeply about.**





**Encourage
discussions on:**

Phase 4 (Envisioning Change):

- What would fair distribution look like?
- How would you change the current scenario?

Accountability Pair Activity:

Step 1:

Women tell their
neighbour:

- One small change they will try (have some more of their favourite food/keep one egg for themselves, etc.)
- How they will do it

Ensure to explain that this has to be a very small change that feels most comfortable to them at this stage.

Step 2:

Ask any 2 pairs to volunteer and tell what they discussed. The partner will serve as an accountability buddy.

Step 3:

In the next session, ask women to share if they were able to implement that small change.

Phase 5 (Closing):

The facilitator should:

- Summarise patterns observed, and reasons for inequitable distribution as discussed by women
- Restate that **“Your body needs to stay healthy to be able to work and care for your family”**

End with a small activity:

Ask all participants to mention one thing they liked about their neighbour today (ideally the accountability partner).



This could be:

- Their courage in pointing something out
- A response during the discussion
- Their enactment
- Or something as simple as their clothes.

This **builds community** and **closer relationships** with other women.

Post-Event Follow-up

In the next 1AFF meeting (2-3 weeks after the event)



Raah Field Team to ask 1AFF event participants:

- How did you feel about the event?
- Is there anything you would want to happen differently in the event?
- Was anyone able to make that small change in their eating?
- Did you discuss about these changes with other women?

After women respond:

- **Celebrate success (even if it is tiny)** by giving flowers to all participants. One individual's success should be considered the entire group's success, since these issues are deeply rooted and not easily changeable. Hence, mention that **"if even one woman is able to bring a small change in her life, it is a success for all the women here."**
- **Encourage women to keep on making small changes** whenever they feel that they are deprioritizing their nutritional health, and ask for advice and accountability from their accountability partner.

6 months after the event

- *Have you been continuing to make any small changes?*
- *What do you think about sacrificing your food for others now? Is that always right?*

What Success of the Implementation Looks Like:

Women have **fun** during the session,
interacting with each other

Women enact **real** dinner situations

Women **participate** in discussions and
slowly **recognize patterns**

The facilitator does not lecture but **lets**
the crowd arrive at conclusions

Atleast one woman mentions how she would
change the current scenario

Atleast one woman is able to make a **small**
change by the follow-up session

Women **keep on making small changes**
and **discussing** these changes with
other women

Recognizing Invisible Labour & Gaining Men's Allyship



End-of-year Community Celebration

When?

end of **March** (Review, Recognition & Next-Year Planning stage of 1AFF Annual Training Calendar)

For who?

Facilitator:

- Raah's 1AFF field staff workers (preferably a woman)

Participants:

- 1AFF **women**
- their family members esp. their **husbands**
- community **leaders**

Goals

- **Visibilize women's labour**
- Publicly recognize and appreciate women's role in the community
- **Build allyships** with men in the community (husbands, community leaders)

How does this connect to 1AFF?

- directly **connects to the end-of-year** work recognition **goals**
- being seen and recognized by the community **encourages women to stay in the program**, which guarantees the goal of 1AFF generating sustainable income for 20 years

What is gender-sensitive about it?

- the event activities **centre women's voices and perspectives**
- the activities publicly **recognize women's daily input** in the community and the household with the goal of being seen and appreciated
- the event activities **address power dynamics** without confrontation but **to raise awareness about women's contributions and build allyships with men**



Event structure

Setting Up & Food Preparation	 1-2 hours  by Raah Field Team
Welcome Speeches	 10 minutes  Raah Field Team (pref. women) Community Leaders
Achievement Sharing	 10-30 minutes  5-15 1AFF women
Day-in-the-Life Visibility Exercise	 30-60 minutes  facilitated by Field Team members completed by 3-5 couples: 1AFF women & their husbands
Community Meal	 1-2 hours  1AFF women, their husbands, other family members, community leaders

Achievement Sharing

Presenter Criteria – 1AFF women who:

- are active in self-help groups, anganwadis, or village meetings, i.e. those who have public speaking experience and trust within the community
- showed significant success in the program
- volunteer to present



One by one (or in small groups), women come forward to share their agricultural and economic success for the year.

Sharing Prompts*

"My name is _____. This year I grew _____."

"With the crops I sold, I earned enough to help my family"

"I used the money to _____."

"My family ate _____ from my food forest."

"With this acre of land my family had _____ more food than before"

"Next year I want to _____."

See more prompts in the Appendix.

Why this matters

Women speaking publicly about their production, their income, and their plans positions them as farmers, as leaders.

Using "I" and "my" verbally reinforces agency and decision-making, which will be heard by the rest of the community.

*The information shared by the women is based on the farm and income review that are part of the 1AFF calendar and precede this event. Additionally, the 1AFF participants will have gone through the leadership training in December, which should have taught them public speaking and leadership skills.

Day-in-the-Life Visibility Exercise

We have heard amazing stories, and behind every vegetable harvested, every rupee earned, there are hours of work. Work that often happens before sunrise, after dark, and in between everything else

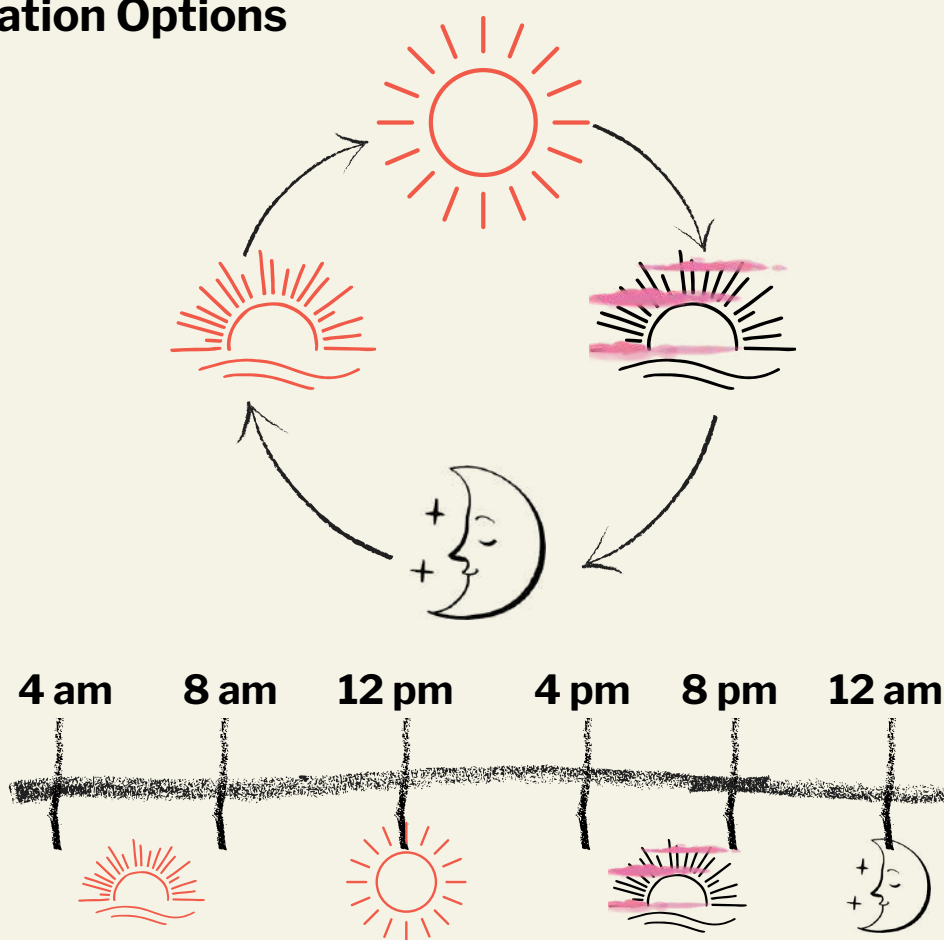
Step 1. Call for volunteers:

3-5 couples

(1AFF women + their husbands)

Step 2. Set up the timeline of the day

Visualization Options



1 visualization per person or 1 visualization per couple

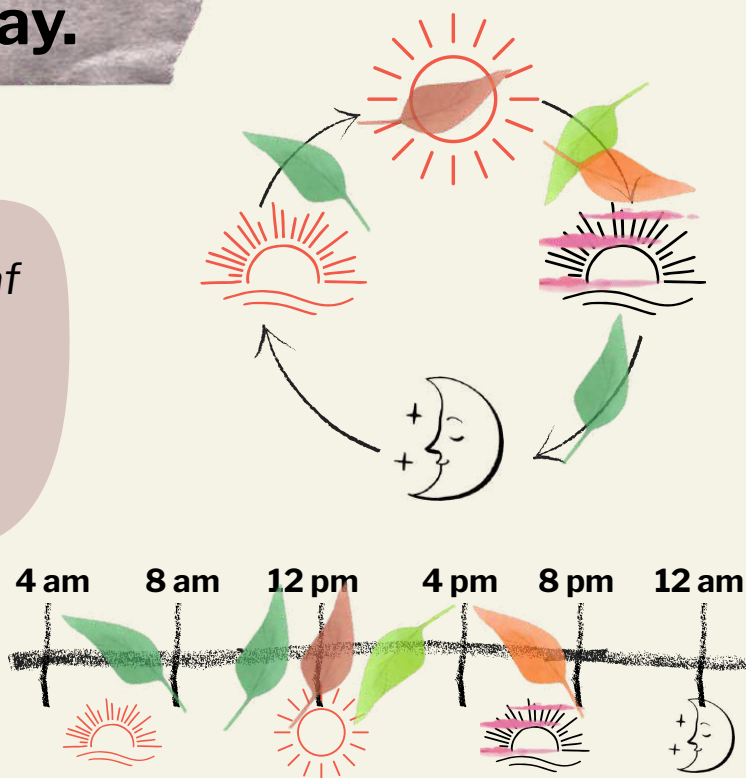
visualizations can be printed/drawn on big sheets paper (A3-A2) or drawn on the ground)

Step 3. Map the men's day.

Give each man a handful of leaves.

"Men: show us your day. Place a leaf at the time you wake up. When you go to the field. When you take care of the crops, of the cattle, etc."

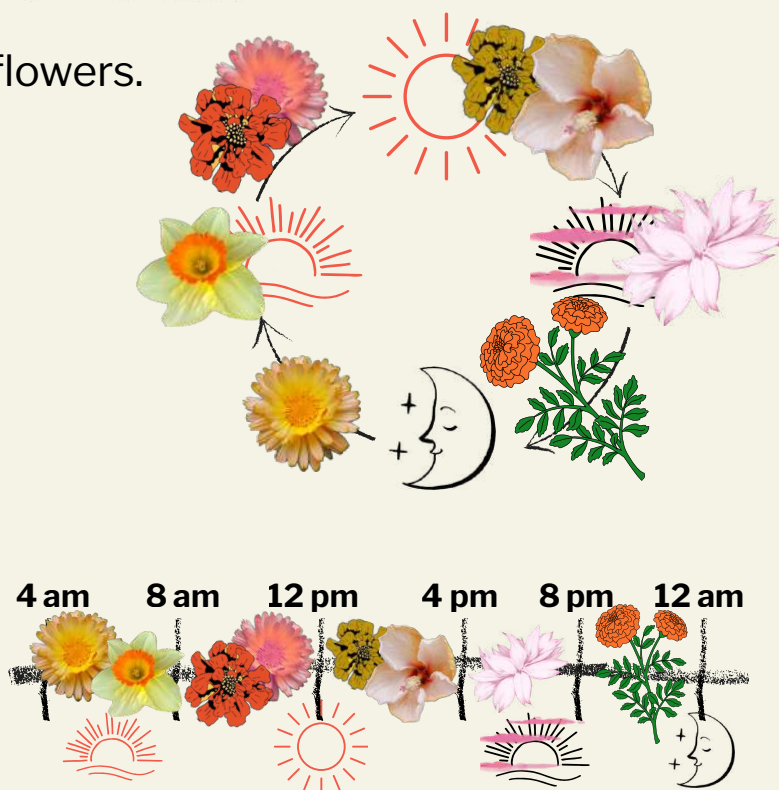
The men place leaves.
The timeline fills.



Step 4. Map the women's day.

Give each woman a handful of flowers.

"Women: your turn. Place a flower at the time you wake up. Then at the time you cook. When you go to the field. When you fetch water. When you cook again. When you serve food. When you take care of your children, etc."



Step 5. Observations

The facilitator asks the crowd **what they notice**.

There is **more flowers** than leaves in the timeline.

Our **women have more responsibilities** than men,
every day they are working really hard.

Our women are **farmers**.

They are **cooks**.

They are **carers**.

Step 6. Discussion

*Men: is there one small
thing you would do to
make her day less busy?
Just one thing you can
take on that would give her
even a little more rest?*

Things to Note

This exercise is **not** intended to
confront men.

The goal is to **visualize the invisible
labour** women do everyday; to think
together about how to share the load
the women take on.

Silence or laughter are totally fine—
this is a new activity, and **the
reactions could vary**. Regardless of
the reaction, the exercise raises
awareness about gendered inequities
in the household labour division.



Community Meal



Food prepared: { with 1AFF produce that women are willing to share with the community
by Raah Field Team (preferably men)

Men serve the food* a symbolic **reversal of household norms**, where men serve their wives, mothers, and children. This arrangement must be organized beforehand (identifying willing men, explaining the significance of the action).

Women eat first, or at least with everyone, not after. The facilitators quietly ensure this happens. If possible, women eat sitting next to their husbands and other family members, **not separate from the men.**

Toasts or thanks: Before eating, invite a few men to stand and say:

***"Today I want to thank my wife for her work.
I see how much she contributes to our family and our community."***



**If at this stage, husbands are not willing to do that, it is the men from the Raah Field team who serve the food.*



Post-Event Follow-up

In the next 1AFF meeting (2-4 weeks after the event)

Raah Field Team to ask 1AFF event participants:

- 
- *How did you feel after the event?*
 - *Did your husband or other family members ever talk about the event? If so, in what context? What did they say?*
 - *Did you find that your family members started treating you differently after the event?*
 - *Did you notice your role in the family has become more recognized?*
 - *Did this event change the way you think about your work and contributions?*



Recognize & celebrate success however small it may be.

It could be in the form of verbal acknowledgement or flower gifting.



6 months after the event

- *Do you think that this event had a positive influence on you and your family?*
- *Would you like to have this event happen again?*
- *Is there anything you would want to happen differently in the event?*

What Success of the Implementation Looks Like:

Women speak publicly using "I" statements

Men participate willingly in the timeline

At least one man offers a concrete "small shift" during the timeline activity

The facilitator does not lecture but lets the crowd arrive at conclusions

Women eat first or with their husbands

Husbands thank their wives

Families talk about the event afterward

Months later, **women** say they **want the event again**

Concluding Remarks: Change Takes Time



These gender-sensitive modules (which include sharing circles, role plays, & community participation) **are** not standalone practices but a **continuous process that aims to strengthen the 1AFF program.**

The issues of limited agency, invisibilised labour, and unequal resource distribution that these modules (and Raah Foundation in general) engage with **are deeply rooted in societal norms and lived experiences.** These realities cannot be transformed with one session, one conversation, or one activity.

In this sense, **meaningful change is incremental and cumulative** as each sharing circle, each roleplay, and each discussion builds on previous interactions.

A session that may begin as silence may transform into small participations, then repeated involvement, and eventually assertion.

The aim, thus, is to empower and **equip women to** gradually and on their own **negotiate their positions within existing structures** in ways that are possible.

These modules aim to plant these seeds of change.

Appendix



Inspiration Behind Our Interventions

Sharing Circles:

Sharing circles have been a popular intervention to help women gain agency around their bodies and sexuality.¹ Extending this to Palghar's context, we wanted to design a similar intervention that allows women to become more comfortable with their opinions, especially over things that they govern within the household. This intervention is also inspired by our field visit in Palghar, where we saw women being hesitant in expressing their opinions during our Focused Group Discussions (FGDs).

Roleplays:

The structure of the roleplays (division into smaller groups and assignment of different prompts) has been inspired from **South Sudan's Gender-Based Violence Pocket Guide.**²

Community Celebrations:

The visibility/day in the life exercise has been inspired by **The Gender Centre's training manual for trainers on gender response governance.**³

Community Feast:

Inspired by the field visit in Palghar, where we have witnessed the potential for social roles transformation in this gathering and the potential benefit of it for women: men served food, a husband and wife sat together; however, when there was not enough space, some women ended up eating last, something to recognise and reconsider.

Achievement Sharing:

Grounded in 1AFF's existing structure, especially in farm reviews and December leadership trainings. This approach is supported by evidence from the **Women's Leadership Schools run by the Sehgal Foundation,**⁴ which focuses on structured achievements sharing for building agency and confidence amongst women in leadership roles.

¹Longman, C. (2018). Women's Circles and the Rise of the New Feminine: Reclaiming Sisterhood, Spirituality, and Wellbeing. Religions, 1, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9010009>

²National Gender Centre. (2019). TRAINING MANUAL FOR TRAINERS ON GENDER RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE. Lbsnaa.Gov.In. https://www.lbsnaa.gov.in/storage/uploads/pdf_data/1740378804_Training%20Manual%202019-%20NGC-%20Report%20No%204_6th%20draft.pdf

³Be the Change Group. Gender-Based Violence Visual Pocket Guide TRAINING OF TRAINERS MANUAL. <https://gbvguidelines.Org>. Retrieved March 23, 2026, from https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ToT-Manual_SouthSudan_LowRes.pdf

⁴Mubashir, E., & Singh, A. (n.d.). Women's Leadership School - S M Sehgal Foundation. S M Sehgal Foundation. Retrieved March 23, 2026, from <https://www.smsfoundation.org/stories/womens-leadership-school/>

Role Play: From Harvest to Plate

Pre-Session Preparation Checklist

(to be filled by 1AFF field staff workers)

➔ Materials Checklist ➔

	Colored stones/seeds/pulses for food representation	The materials for representation can be chosen according to availability. However, there should be multiple distinct choices. Color-wise utilization could look like: green = vegetables, brown = grains/roti, yellow = dal/pulses, red = high-nutrient foods (eggs, chicken, fish, milk), white = other items
	Cloth/paper for plate representation	The material for plate representation can again be chosen according to availability. Cloth and paper may be more financially feasible. Otherwise, paper or steel plates can also be utilized.
	Cleared space	There should be a clear space for this session, so that women can freely enact the dinner scene as realistically as possible.
	Optional: Fake moustaches or beards	This is completely optional. Since women will be playing the role of men as well, a fake prop like moustache or beard may add humor to the enactment and higher attention retention. It should be completely up to the women whether they want to use this prop.

Mental Preparation Checklist

	Facilitate self-realization, don't lecture. Keep a non-judgemental and empathetic tone.
	Women may resist at first. Gently encourage them with the listed questions.

Achievement Sharing Prompts

Introduction

"My name is _____. I am a farmer.

I have been in the 1AFF program for __ years."

Agricultural Achievements

"This year I grew _____. I harvested _____ kilograms."

"This year I grew _____ for the first time. I never grew it before"

"This year I grew _____. It was hard because _____, but I did it."

Financial Success

"With the crops I sold, I earned __ more than ever/last year"

"With the crops I sold, I earned enough to help my family."

"For the first time, I earned money from my own land."

Financial Agency

"I used the money to _____."

"I kept some money for myself and bought _____."

Nutritional Contribution to the Family

"My family ate _____ from my food forest."

"My family ate vegetables like _____ from my food forest.
We didn't have to buy them from the market."

"With this acre of land my family had _____ more food than
before"

"With this acre of land, my family never went hungry this year."

Future Planning

"Next year I want to grow _____."

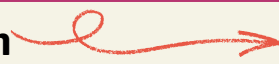
"Next year I want to buy _____."

"Next year I want to learn how to _____."

"Next year I want to sell at the market myself."

End-of-Year Community Celebration

Preparation Checklist

 Goal	Alternative Approach 
In December, remind women: "In March, you will speak publicly about your achievements. Start thinking about what you want to say."	If women are hesitant to present, devote time to role play the event or practice the achievement sharing to increase their confidence.
In February/March, conduct farm and income reviews so women have their data ready.	Should be achieved through existing 1AFF activities. If not achieved, discuss personal achievements in the program with the participants generally, to prepare them for the sharing.
Identify 7-15 men willing to serve food at the feast. Brief these men beforehand: why this matters, what they will do, how to serve.	If men in the community are not willing, consider the men in the Raah Field Team.
Identify 3-5 husbands willing to give a short thank-you toast.	If husbands are not willing to do that, delegate this to the community leader, or Raah Field Team leader.
Practice the timeline demonstration with another Field Team member.	If difficulties in realization occur, consider a different timeline structure (two versions suggested earlier), the use of different objects, or different discussion questions.
Invite community leaders personally—explain why this event matters.	If the community leader is unwilling to participate, consider inviting other influential representatives (government workers, female leaders in SHGs/Anganwadis, or Raah staff members – e.g., Field Team Supervisor).
Prepare a camera to capture photos/videos (for documentation and future motivation).	If no camera is available, the Field Team can use personal phones with community members' consent.