

A woman with a bindi on her forehead, wearing a blue and orange sari, is looking at a smartphone. She is standing in front of a brick building with a white dome. The word "Solidaridad" is written in the top right corner.

# Solidaridad

*"We can now get fair value for the quality of milk and the amount is paid in our wallet. I can keep track of the volume and rate of milk supplied through my mobile. This brought prosperity in my household for which I can now buy quality feed for my cattle."*

**- Protiva Biswas**

## AFFIRMATIVE GENDER ACTION AND INCLUSIVITY

**REPORT | 2016-2020**



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Every year the Gender Annual Report gives us an opportunity to reflect on and learn from the successes and failures of the previous year. This time we are excited to deliberate on REC Asia's five-year multi-annual strategic plan-2 (MASP-2) around gender. Through this report, we intend to capture the main highlights on gender initiatives undertaken from the year 2016-2020 to serve as a testimony to Solidaridad Asia's commitment towards gender inclusivity.

Five years is long a journey that sometimes can be referred to as a roller coaster ride through the crests and the troughs. Nevertheless, it has been a journey of fulfilment, and in retrospect, full of optimism, learning and gratitude.

I express my heartfelt gratitude towards Dr Shatadru Chattopadhyay. Without his vision and commitment to work on gender-related gaps and issues, it would not have been possible to move in the direction of gender inclusivity. His consistent guidance paved the way and helped me to be more focussed on my approach.

I would like to thank Ms Njeri Kimotho for motivating me and believing in my ideas and supporting me at the network level with her expert advice whenever required.

I thank Mr. Nitin Rao, who has been a guide and support and for his insights and guidance without which achievements would have been impossible.

A special thanks to the Gender REC Asia team; people who have been my strength and who made the programme a success. We have travelled the journey together. Thank you for being a part of it.

Thanks to all country managers, programme and commodity leads and their team for implementing the gender action plans and working towards a gender inclusive program.

I also take the opportunity to thank the PMEL team for their continuous support.

Last but not least, thanks to all the women farmers from different projects, who came out of their comfort zone, challenged the norms and worked towards not just transforming their own lives but making a positive impact on the lives of others as well.

Hereby, presenting to all the REC Asia Gender Report for MASP-2 (2016-2020).



## GENDER INCLUSIVITY

“Gender Inclusivity” was included in a systemic and systematic manner by Solidaridad as one of the innovation areas in its Multi Annual Strategy Plan (MASP 2) during 2016-2020. Led by Dr Shatadru Chattopadhyay, gender as a recurring theme was integrated at three levels: 1. mainstreaming in projects, 2. standalone gender projects and 3. Inclusivity within organisation (Solidaridad).

Solidaridad Asia has been at the forefront of gender-inclusive actions. As we approach the end of MASP 2, it is imperative to look back, reflect and analyse the overall result, as well as learn and derive strategies for MASP 3. There can be many ways and formats to present a report with an overall objective to communicate the outcomes of the interventions and the strategies applied. But as I try to reflect on the last five years, it feels like ‘Gender Inclusivity’ has its own persona. It was born with MASP2 and has been growing ever since. Therefore, a better way to present the report would be through the eyes of ‘Gender Inclusivity’ (GI)! I take this opportunity to request GI to narrate her story through this report.

Over to you GI, but before that lets hear from our MD



**Dr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay**  
Managing Director, Asia

## FROM THE MD’S DESK

Dear friends,

The report showcases the many ways in which we support work in Asia to turn the aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into results for women and girls working closely with a wide range of partners to realise rights and build resilience. The report showcases how Solidaridad Asia integrated gender as a recurring theme at three levels: **1.** mainstreaming in projects, **2.** standalone gender projects and **3.** Inclusivity within organisation (Solidaridad).

Gender equality is one of the significant human development challenges around the world. Equality is not merely a political and ethical issue, but it also guarantees the effectiveness of development policies. Strengthening the rights of women and girls helps all of society move forward. In an innovative way, the report introduces the character Gender Inclusivity, a.k.a Miss GI, who narrates her journey of 5 years crisscrossing different Asian cultures, sharing the high and low points.

Miss GI reflects upon Solidaridad’s efforts to integrate her in business practices, entrepreneurship, technology, legislation and policies, leadership, financial services, health and nutrition and skill development.

Unfortunately, in the year 2020, Miss GI faced the most significant challenge of her life when she grappled with the Covid-19 pandemic. What she thought was a health crisis quickly became food security and economic crisis. Miss GI narrates how she and the other women faced adverse conditions and developed innovative solutions to adopt.

In the end, the report, Miss GI has suggested seven areas of intervention for Solidaridad Asia. Thank you, GI; we will not disappoint you.





### Thanks Shatadru & Neha!

Hi! Glad to meet you all. I am Gender Inclusivity, a.k.a GI. The difference between men and women in terms of social and economic participation is often referred to as the gender gap. My role is to reduce this gender gap by empowering women and girls with equitable access to resources and opportunities.

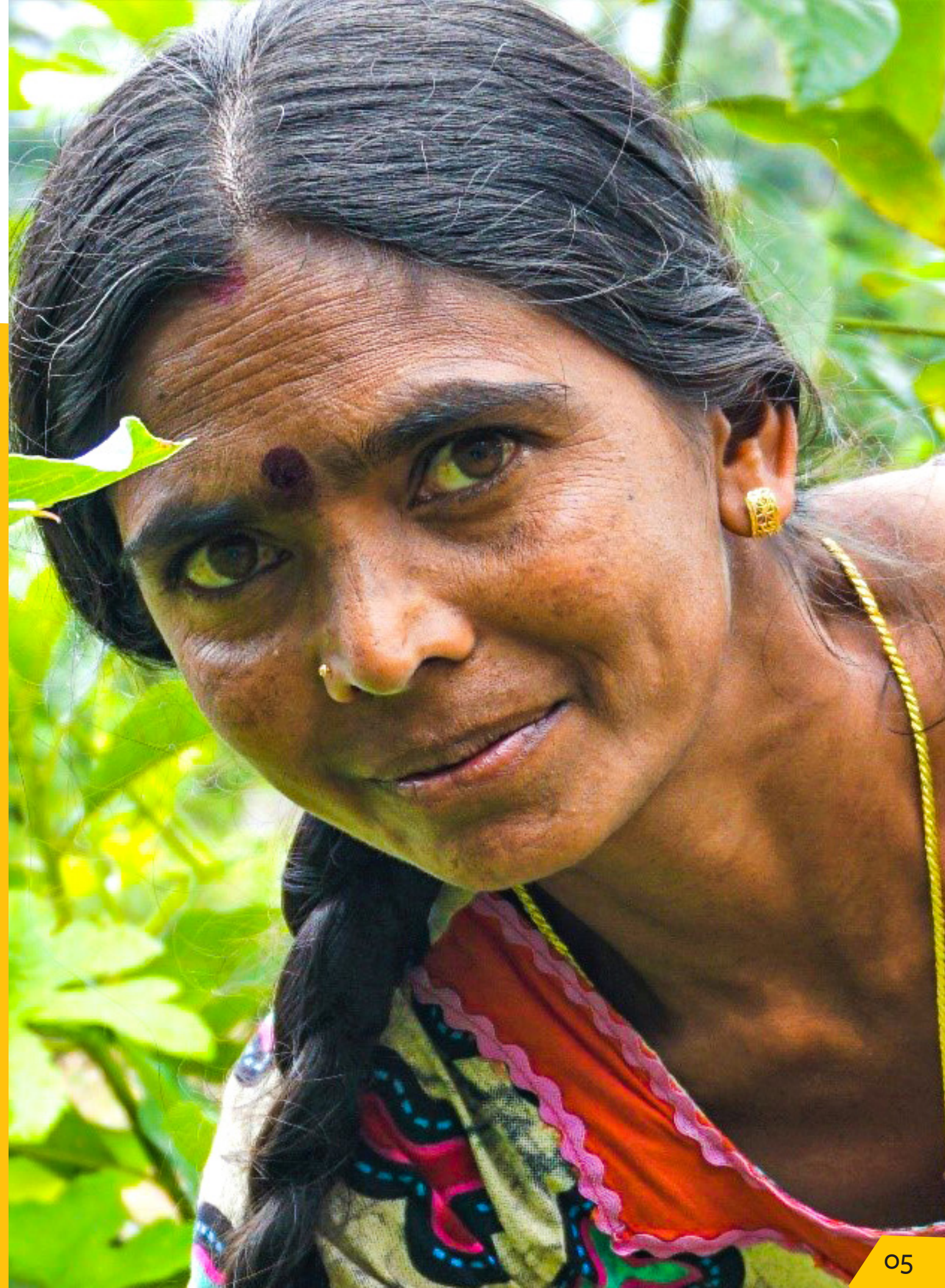
I was introduced to Solidaridad in 2016. It was a great start and I was looking at different kinds of approaches in which I could work and amalgamate myself within Solidaridad. Over the five years my journey has been nothing less than exciting and interesting.

In Asia, I have traversed across different countries and found my ground in multiple projects. I was tasked with four broad objectives: 1. to integrate myself within the projects, 2. to generate resources for gender-focussed projects, 3. to build a repository of knowledge and learnings and 4. to align Solidaridad Asia's internal policies and systems with my nature (gender-inclusive).

As I look back at the five remarkable years of myriad experiences, I feel humbled. I would like to sincerely thank all the women in our project areas who have painstakingly worked towards a better future for themselves; the men and community members who supported these women; Solidaridad Asia's staff and all the 'Gender Champions' across Asia whose work I proudly present through this report.

Over the next few pages, you will travel with me through the years, understanding me better, knowing about my highs and lows, and distilling my learning for a much focussed and sharper MASP-3 actions.

I will first take you through the key milestones that I take pride in from the period 2016-2020. Then I will tell you why I was institutionalized within Solidaridad Asia. My achievements that capture the stories of women will follow next, along with the many learnings I picked and implemented during the course of my journey with Solidaridad Asia.





# THE ASIA GENDER TEAM



**Neha**  
PME and Gender, Asia

Neha is working in the capacity of Assistant Programme Manager Gender and PME in Solidaridad Asia since 2016. She has an experience of about a decade to work on various issues of gender. In her present role, she is working towards gender inclusivity for all the programmes and projects of Solidaridad Asia.



**Taslima Islam**

Has over 7 years of experience in various areas of the development sector, including child and maternal health, disability, sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and adolescents, WASH, and women empowerment. She joined Bangladesh team of Solidaridad in the year 2020. She completed her Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and Master of Arts in History at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. She also did her Master of Arts in South Asian Studies at Pondicherry University, India.



**Samir Mirza**

Works with the sugarcane farmers to make the supply chain more sustainable. Prior to Solidaridad, he was working for CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) consultant designed proposal and managed projects about agriculture, water sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) and climate change. He acquired Master of Science in Land and Water Management from CULS, Prague, Czech Republic and attended Erasmus at Wageningen University, the Netherlands.



**Suksma Ratri**

Joined Solidaridad Indonesia in 2015. Prior to that, Ratri was working in several local and regional organizations focusing on health, harm reduction, gender, and human rights. She is currently handling the communication aspect as well as gender for Solidaridad in Indonesia.



**Heena Bhasin**

Is a developmental professional with a Master's degree in Human Resources. She brings on board more than six years of experience of working with premier executive search firms. She has experience in handling and delivering multiple projects and streams of work concurrently while applying excellent partner management and influencing skills. She supports employee and organizational development through training initiatives.



**Nandita Kandal**

Has been part of the Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning team of Solidaridad since the beginning of 2019. She supports the gender team within the realms of her PMEL role. Prior to joining Solidaridad, she worked in enabling technology driven English language learning in government schools. Her education background has always been in the fields of Economics and International Relations with the aim of working in the field of sustainability and development.



**Sakshi Chawla**

Holds a Master degree in Water Sciences and Governance and has been working with Solidaridad since the last 4.5 years on Leather and Dairy programs. She has also worked in Coca-Cola India Private Limited on various watershed management, replenishment projects and a WASH program called Support My School. She understands the importance of gender inclusive development and has keen interest to work on the same.



**Bernadine Yatawara**

Has been working as a development practitioner for over 25 years in Sri Lanka, with International NGOs, Foreign Mission and Multi-lateral Donor Organizations in the capacity of Project Manager and Director. At present I work as the Gender and Documentation Officer for the Reaching the Unreached (RTU) project with Solidaridad Network Asia Sri Lanka. She is tri-lingual and a Team Player. She is a strong supporter of Gender Mainstreaming



**Namrita Bhanweria**

Holds a post-graduate diploma in Rural Management and is working with Solidaridad since 2016. She manages programme activities related to sustainable rural livelihood by supporting the development and advancement of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), training and capacity building of farmers, especially for the women involved in agriculture and related activities, promotion of food and nutritional security aspects, and women empowerment related interventions.



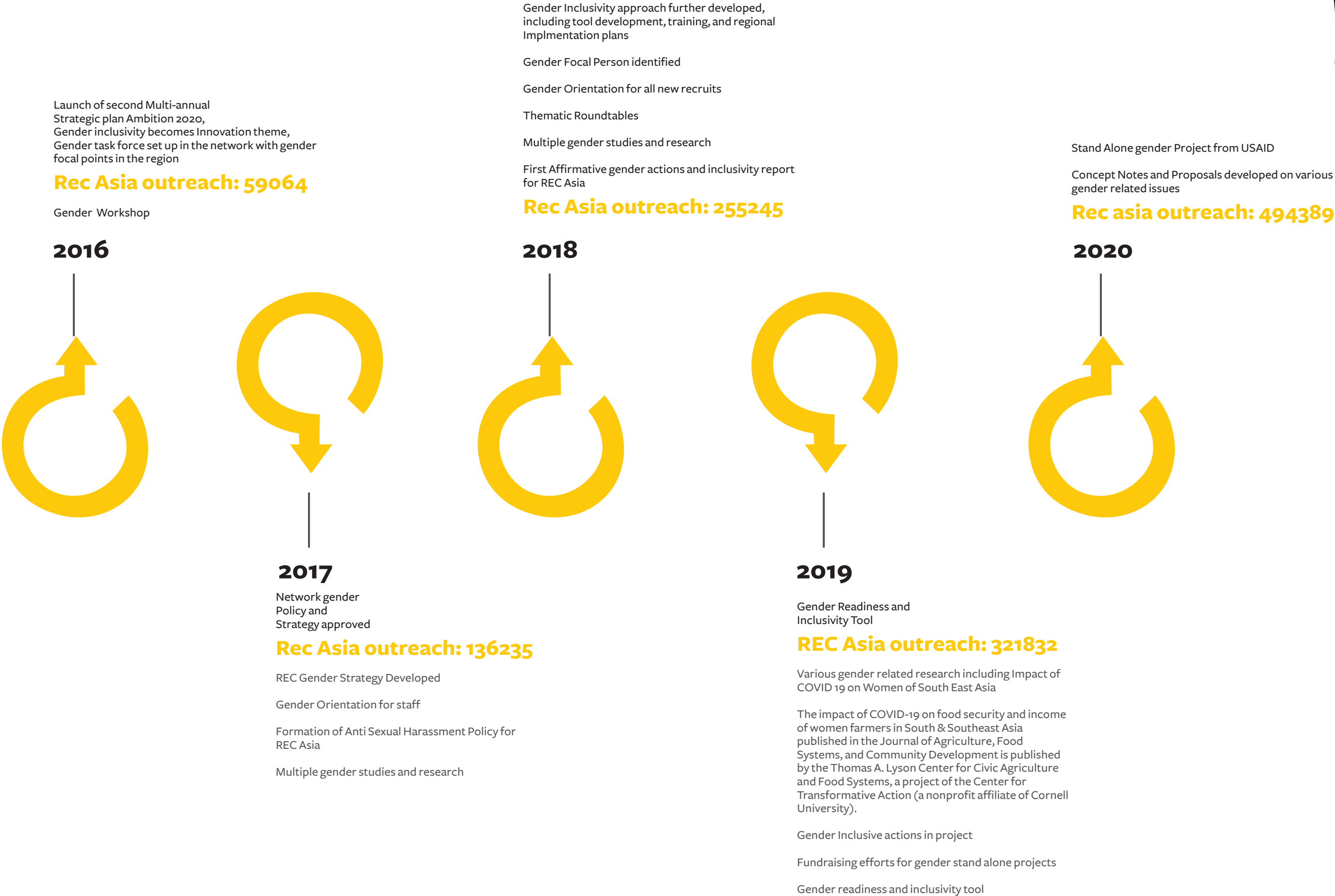
**Satabdi Mohapatra**

Joined Solidaridad Asia in 2019 in the Impact Investments team. She has led several national and international donors funded projects and research studies on natural capital valuation, Agroforestry, watershed management, climate resilient agriculture, Farmer Producer Organisation and women led businesses. Her current work at Solidaridad focuses on researching on Impact Investments, Gender lens Investments and support in designing investible propositions. Satabdi holds a Masters in Development policy with specialization in Sustainable Development from KDI school of Public Policy and Management, South Korea





# GENDER INCLUSIVITY MASP-2





# INTRODUCTION OF GENDER AS INNOVATION



## Strategic Choices

I am “complex” but you can hardly blame me for it. My complexity has been a result of societal norms, patriarchal systems of living, decades of disempowerment of women, misuse/use of religious practices, to list a few. To ensure that my complexities are well understood and addressed, one has to deep dive into the plethora of issues and challenges.

I understand that these cannot be achieved in a limited time frame and are resource-intensive. Therefore, any organisation that chooses to work with me has to understand itself first; that is, the organisation needs to realise its strengths and weaknesses. It needs to strategise its actions in a way that is most suited to deal with the issues in hand with its core strength.

To the credit of Solidaridad Asia, it not only had the clarity about making supply chain work for the poor as its core area of work, but also a clear vision about its path ahead. The organisation held multiple discussions, with the experts working in different regional offices, to arrive at a set of 11 buckets or themes that it aspired to work on. Here’s a quick summary of what these buckets are and what they mean.





## Market Level

**Business practices:** Around the world, women remain less likely to participate in the labour market than men (OECD, 2008). Labour force participation rate for women aged between 25 and 54 years is 63 per cent compared with 94 per cent for men. Understanding the needs of women and accordingly work towards implementing more inclusive business practices is required in order to increase participation of women. Solidaridad Asia has been working in the supply chain and with the industries, which gives it a unique position to negotiate with the partners on making business practices more inclusive. Besides focussing on creating inclusive business practices for producers, another important element of Solidaridad's work is lobbying for gender-inclusive standards and certification. Without a doubt, companies and sustainability standards have an important role to play in achieving inclusive business practices.

**Market engagement and Entrepreneurship:** Markets have proved to be unsuccessful in fair distribution of the gains from international trade, often leaving women behind (CIGI, 2018). Not a single country so far has managed to close the gender gap on economic participation and opportunity. A main distinction among entrepreneurs is whether they are 'survivalists' vs 'growth oriented'. In many cases, women belong to the group of so-called survival or necessity entrepreneurs. Women-owned or led SMEs face specific challenges to grow or access market opportunities. This is explained by various factors. Female entrepreneurship needs to be stimulated and facilitated. It is important to build stronger market linkages and enable better access to formal markets for women. Solidaridad's strength to work in the supply chain and with entrepreneurs at the grass root level gives us an opportunity to work towards specific needs of women entrepreneurs and bring them to the formal supply chain.

## Country Level

**Culture and Norms:** Culture and norms are essential elements in the pursuit of gender inclusivity in every setting. Particularly because culture and norms provide the social fabric within which individuals relate with one another. Culture provides a collective perception framework that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another (People.Tamu.Edu, n.d.). Culture and norms are different per context and influence social realities. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the culture and norms that are in place, as this influences Solidaridad's interventions.

**Legislations, Policies and sustainability Frameworks:** Laws and policies can provide a powerful framework for ensuring equal opportunities and protection of rights. Since legislation is reinforced by norms, beliefs, and culture, breaking harmful ste-

reotypes and promoting positive roles are important interventions that can accelerate change in household and community practices as well as in the wider society. It is therefore important to understand, in addition to barriers related to existing laws and regulations, who the different stakeholders are and what national (gender) policies are in place we can link up to. Solidaridad can contribute to a more gender inclusive enabling environment, by lobbying for a gender inclusive lens in relation to mandatory frameworks, laws, policies and sustainable frameworks.

## Landscape level

**Leadership and representation:** To ensure that our interventions benefit all involved stakeholders, the interests and perspectives of both women and men must be taken into account. As women are often not delegated or invited to the table as stakeholder representatives and sometimes are not even considered to be stakeholders, their specific problems, interests and views are generally not taken into account. Targeted activities are needed to increase female leadership and representation and to ensure that women are perceived as equal stakeholders and are enabled to perform as such. Solidaridad has been hosting various multistakeholder platforms and also formed.

## Producer and infrastructure level

**Time Savers:** Women around the world perform a disproportionate amount of unpaid, reproductive work in addition to their productive work — on average, almost two and a half times as much as men (World Bank, 2012). Most of this work burden is characterized by repetitive, tedious and cumbersome activities that are time consuming and unavoidable. In the literature this is referred to as 'time poverty' (Vickery, 1977). It is important for Solidaridad to be aware that our projects should not contribute to increasing the work burden for women, but should rather support interventions that will reduce it. On the one hand, this means the promotion of more equal sharing of household responsibilities among male and female family members. On the other hand, smart solutions such as the provision of technologies and innovations to reduce the workload can enable women to be part of the formal economy without being overburdened.

**Financial Services:** Financial services – such as bank accounts, loans, and insurance – play an increasingly prominent role in development efforts. The gap between access to finance has been established through various reports. Digital technology is increasingly reshaping the financial landscape, leading to the development of new savings, credit, and insurance products. As access to finance is also being addressed





in Solidaridad's projects, to catalyze small- and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) this theme has been chosen to work with strategies and interventions so that these financial services become more accessible by women.

**Land and input:** Women produce 13-25% less per hectare than men. As land size increases, this difference further increases up to 66%. If women would have better access to productive resources, it would raise global agricultural productivity by 2.5-4%. As working with farmers is one of the prime components of Solidaridad's work, this theme has been chosen.

**Knowledge and skills:** One key barrier to women's participation is the level of education. In developing countries, only one out of three girls completes secondary education<sup>7</sup>. Limited literacy, including in finance and business, is cited in gender analysis across Solidaridad's projects as key issue for women to be able to manage their farms and income. Moreover, women and girls often have lower levels of self-esteem and confidence, which makes them less likely to speak up in meetings and actively participate in decision making. The core business of Solidaridad is to transfer knowledge and skills through training. Therefore, when designing a training curriculum, recognizing the different levels of knowledge and skills between men and women is crucial. Moreover, if we do not take into account the different roles and responsibilities women and men have in society as well as in the supply chain, we risk giving people useless knowledge or inviting the wrong people to a training. In that case, our interventions will not reach the outcomes we strive for and in some cases may even put women and girls on a further disadvantage.

**Health and Nutrition :** An important aspect of health that is closely linked to the work of Solidaridad is food security and nutrition. Improving the food security and nutrition situation of smallholder farmers is a prominent part of Solidaridad's programming. women play an important role in ensuring food security and nutrition, as they are key actors in food crop production and in food preparation in their families. Issues related to health in Solidaridad's work are not limited to food and nutrition only. In many of our projects, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) forms part of our good practices training. Also here, there are gender-related differences. Because of their reproductive roles, women experience different health risks than men during work.

**Technology:** The digital revolution has changed the way we work, access information and connect with each other. Not only do modern and digital technology tools provide an opportunity for better quality farming, mining and industrial practices, they are also incentives for young people to take up agriculture, both as producers and service

providers. Although new technologies are reaching rural areas in many developing countries, a range of gender-related barriers exist that make it less likely for women to benefit from the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), including digital and mobile ICT to agricultural technology. An important aspect of Solidaridad's programming is improving the quality and sustainability of farming practices by bringing in ICT solutions. Hence this theme has been chosen so that the barriers which impede women to use technology can be overcome and women can benefit from it.



Wow! What an impressive list of themes and how relevant. Let's now look at what I achieved in the last 5 years. I might sound like a proud peacock, but pardon me for me self boosting about the outcomes that I achieved. I present this section to you that has a page dedicated to each of the 11 themes. To make it interesting, each page is divided into two sections: There is picture of my friends from different countries in Asia who have travelled the road less travelled and made a difference to themselves and the communities. The next section will provide you a glimpse of the outcomes achieved. Here we go.....!





# INCLUSIVE AREA OF WORK

## Business Practices

Women are overrepresented in informal, vulnerable and/or dangerous forms of work, where business practices are not usually a topic of discussion. Since Solidaridad has been working in mines and tea estates efforts were made to make the business practices more gender inclusive.



### Outcomes

Solidaridad Asia has been working with 55 Industrial Minerals sites and companies and through its sustainability certification programme has supported the companies to adopt business practices that are gender inclusive. Gender issues being addressed in this project include: No discrimination on grounds of sex (including other grounds) in payment of wages, other benefits, recruitment, promotions, training, better attention to their health & safety, etc. Specific provisions have been made to not discriminate against pregnant women, to provide gender-based toilets, etc. Gender inclusivity is expected to be further entrenched in the already certified entities and gradually become a culture across the sector.

### The key highlights of the business practices are:

- A grievance redressal mechanism is in place for employees. Reduction in instances of discrimination (based on gender, religion or caste)
- Basic facilities like separate toilets, drinking water and rest shelters are available at the workplace. This is all the more relevant keeping in mind the working conditions in opencast mines, especially in summers.

One of the important pillars of the programme is related to engagement with the local community. Taking this forward, some of the extractions sites continued to address the local needs which primarily related to health and education focusing on women and children.

- In 600 tea estates where Solidaridad intervened through the sustainability programme of Trustea, women workers have been provided with separate toilets, creches and medical facilities ensuring their differential needs.





# Market engagement and Entrepreneurship

According to WTO women constitute about one third of the entrepreneurs world wide. However, of this one third, women entrepreneurs are likely to be running micro-enterprises, operating mostly in the informal sector, engaging in low-value-added activities that reap marginal returns. Typically women start a small business, out of need and not out of choice. Women-owned or led SMEs face specific challenges to grow or access market opportunities. Understanding the specific needs of women entrepreneurs, various programs used different approaches to build capacities of women entrepreneurs.



## Outcome

From the year 2016 Solidaridad has been supporting a group of women tea farmers on good agricultural practices and then on starting their enterprise. Over the years through various capacity building trainings they have been able to launch their own brand of tea “Teh n Deso”

- 136 women undertook enterprise activities in Bangladesh, with an average increase of € 49.3 in their monthly income.
- 130 CNVs emerged as women entrepreneurs delivering health and nutrition services to rural communities saw their income increase from an average of 29 Euros to 57 Euros per month.
- 8000 women have been formally inducted in the dairy supply chain including financial and advisory services.
- In the soybean project in MP, India we have established a relationship with State Rural Livelihood Mission (MP-SRLM) which aims to support rural livelihoods and women self-help-groups (SHGs) focused on income generation aspects as well as nutrition. Under this program, the state government provides support to build capacity of women on the production of vegetables and other crops. It aims to link women producer groups to local, rural and (peri) urban markets.







## Technology

The digital revolution has changed the way we work, access information and connect with each other. Although new technologies are reaching rural areas in many developing countries, a range of gender-related barriers exist that make it less likely for women to benefit from the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), including digital and mobile ICT to agricultural technology. The access to information is a first step towards empowerment. Access to the phone and Internet has become increasingly important in driving economic growth and development. According to the Global System for Mobile Communication Association's (GSMA) Mobile Gender Gap Report released in 2020, the mobile gender gap is still substantial.



### Outcome

- Women centric program for dairy designed and implemented for 8000 women farmers. Digital medium has been used to overcome the challenges women face due to prevailing social norms. Advisory services on good dairy practices are provided to these farmers. Further, these farmers have been linked to mobile banking and mobile wallet which has led to having more control over their income.
- Human Centred study was done to design the technologies to suit the needs of women farmers.
- Across all the projects of Solidaridad Asia, digital medium is being used to impart training on agricultural good practices and nutrition to women.

## Time Savers

### Outcomes

Water accessibility is a major concern in Sri Lanka at the household level. The project executed by Solidaridad ensured that in 236 locations, covering 200,000 households, drinking water was made available and in more than 50 locations piped connections were established. This has resulted in reduced time to fetch water and has been reported by more than 90% of the women who were interviewed to assess the reduction in time for water access.





# Culture and Norms

Culture and norms act as hindrance for women empowerment at every level (social, educational, economic, political, and psychological). In all the interventions that have been done through various buckets, culture and norms play an important role. Challenging cultural norms which arise from deeply ingrained patriarchal mindset is the first step towards women empowerment.



## Outcomes

Over the years women have been kept away from male dominated platforms and activities and their participation was severely restricted. Solidaridad worked with community leaders, men and more specifically women to ensure that cultural and social norms that restrict women's participation in income generating activities are addressed.

- Mobility of women being one such hindrance, the project in the state of Madhya Pradesh empowered women to venture outside the village and as it stands, decade old social norm has been broken with increased mobility for women.
- Another aspect is the participation of women in local governance, community groups and platforms. Self Help Groups did provide the much needed platform for women, but when it comes to organizations and groups with men and women participating, the leadership positions are usually reserved for men. Early marriage and early pregnancy is a common sight in Asian countries. More than 100,000 households were trained including adolescent girls that helped reduce the incidence of early marriage as indicated by the evaluation conducted by PwC in Bangladesh.
- Women have been linked to the formal supply chain in Dairy and they receive money directly in their bank accounts breaking the social norm of depending on men in the household for financial support.
- To ensure active participation of women in Community Based Organisation they have been nominated for the leadership position in various CBOs.
- Women have undertaken various entrepreneurship activities defying the norms of the society.







# Legislation, Policies and Sustainability Frameworks

Since legislation is reinforced by norms, beliefs, and culture, breaking harmful stereotypes and promoting positive roles are important interventions that can accelerate change in household and community practices as well as in the wider society. Solidaridad contributes to a more gender inclusive enabling environment, by lobbying for a gender inclusive lens in relation to mandatory frameworks, laws, policies and sustainable frameworks.



## Outcomes

- Women in spite of being the backbone of agriculture are still not recognised as a farmer. Ownership of land is necessary for one to be considered as a ‘farmer’, but patriarchal norms oppose inheritance of land to women, leaving them unable to access benefits and rights. This not only denies women of land security but of credit, insurance, irrigation, and other entitlements of agriculture-related schemes. Solidaridad Asia took the initiative and developed a working series of “Hidden Farmer” that highlighted the engagement of women in agriculture. This was followed through a workshop involving women from the communities, Government officials, representatives from the civil society and the Embassy of Netherland.
- An analysis was done of some international and regional sustainability standards. The finding states that while the sustainability standards have attempted to consider legal complaint statutes, they remain oblivious to the needs of women and are largely gender non inclusive.

Organisation/standard	Overall score(Gender Inclusivity)		Management		Economic		Environment		Social	
RA	6.25	20%	1.5	17%	2.5	31%	1	20%	1.25	14%
UTZ	10	32%	4	44%	2.5	31%	0.5	10%	3	33%
Trustea	9	29%	4.5	50%	2	25%	0	0%	2.5	28%
Bonsucro	3	14%	NA		1	13%	0	0%	2	22%
Core	7	32%	NA		2	25%	0	0%	5	56%
Success	1.5	7%	NA		1	13%	0	0%	0.5	6%





# Leadership and representation



To ensure that our interventions benefit all involved stakeholders, the interests and perspectives of both women and men must be taken into account. It has been realised that women representation in various CBOs and multi stakeholder platforms is vital for the overall inclusive development and hence Solidaridad strives to ensure women representation and participation in and through its various programs.

## Outcome

- In Sri Lanka of 649 Community Based Organizations leaders 246 are women. The women specifically plan and monitor the work on Water, Sanitation and Nutrition.
- In Bangladesh 47% of producer groups are women (dairy 96%, horticulture 62%, aquaculture 29%) and 45% of leadership positions in the producer groups' executive committee are women. The groups are responsible for crop planning, agriculture advisory services and market linkages. These have been triggered through a non negotiable requirement embedded in the constitution of the groups.
- In Madhya Pradesh state of India, Solidaridad has ensured formation of women only Farmer Producer Organization with 750 women as its members. Additionally in 3 out of 10 Farmer Producer Organization promoted in the project, women occupy leadership positions.
- Women participation in local governance was facilitated in the state of Uttar Pradesh that ensured that voices of women are heard and they raise and tackle the issues of water use efficiency. This included a pledge undertaken by women and other members to promote and use water saving measures.







## Financial Services

Financial inclusion can drive development and strengthen women's economic positions. Increasing access to and use of financial products and services for women would not only make them more independent and able to take better care of themselves and their businesses, but also of their families. Solidaridad understands the gap in the access to financial services between men and women.



### Outcome

The financial services facilitated by Solidaridad included financial literacy training, linking with the financial institution and access to bank accounts and financial resources.

- Projects in India specifically working with women in Sugarcane in South of India, trained women on financial literacy.
- The capacities of 500 women in Indonesia and women in Bangladesh were built on managing finances at the household level. More than 50 women entrepreneurs were trained in business planning.
- Solidaridad Asia supported 1000 women by linking them to financial institutions for loans and worked with a women enterprise group in exploring avenues for financial access. The support included understanding the requirement, estimating the financial resources based on business projection and headhunting for financial institutions that can support the enterprises.
- 8000 women were linked to the formal dairy supply chain, ensuring that the revenue from the sale of milk is received in the bank accounts of women farmers.





# Knowledge and Skills

Women form the backbone of agriculture. Estimates show that women represent a substantial share of the total agricultural labour force, as individual food producers or as agricultural workers, around two-thirds of the female labour force in developing economies is engaged in agricultural work. Solidaridad through its various programs have been imparting technical knowledge to the women farmers. It is important to mention here that it was realised that due to certain prevailing social norms it was difficult to reach out to women farmers and provide them training and bring them to formal supply chains. Various methods are being tested and targeted interventions have been made to benefit the women farmers. Imparting technical knowhow to women benefits the sector and the economy on the whole. Therefore, while designing the training curriculum, recognizing the different levels of knowledge and skills between men and women is crucial.



## Outcome

The projects executed by Solidaridad in Asia supported more than 100,000 women in building their capacities, knowledge and skills.

- Increased participation of women in different livelihoods related activities. Empowering women by integrating them into economic/farming activities, increasing their access and control over economic resources. The study conducted by PWC shows involvement of women (women alone plus women jointly other members) in decision making with regards to farming at the aggregate level has increased to 96.3% of the households in the midline from 50.5 % in the baseline.
- The cotton programme has directly reached out 733 women farmers to adopt organic practices who were trained on latest and effective cotton production techniques, good agricultural practices, and information on agricultural schemes and subsidies. They have received training sessions periodically for the entire crop cycle falling in the reporting year, from land preparation, seed procurement till harvesting.
- The management of 75 mining companies were trained on various statutory compliances for the welfare of the workers resulting in ensuring minimum wages for workers, equal pay for equal work for women and women mining workers participating in unions.
- Women were provided with agricultural equipment that were specifically designed for use by women. The project on Soyabean in India, through its Gender Resource Centre demonstrated the use of the equipment.







## Health and Nutrition

Health is central to human happiness and well-being; it also contributes to economic progress. Healthy people are better able to contribute to the development of their country as they live longer, are more productive, and able to save more. Women play an important role in ensuring food security and nutrition, as they are key actors in food crop production and in food preparation in their families. It has been noted that significant improvements in nutrition outcomes, largely captured as changes in diet, are more consistently observed in those projects that explicitly include women. Health and Nutrition aspect of mine was implemented by Solidaridad Asia by ensuring awareness, affordability, availability and accessibility of nutritious food.



### Outcome

- In the tea gardens of India, women workers reported an increase of 1.2 food groups consumption. Training was imparted to 40,312 households (27,500 households in Tamil Nadu and 12,812 households in Assam).
- Project on Soyabean in India supported more than 3000 women to build their capacities on nutrition that included different recipes in accordance to the taste palate of the region. The women added soybean in their food for better nutrition. More than 200 kitchen gardens were established to ensure easier access and availability of nutritious food in Indonesia and Srilanka.
- The study conducted by PWC in Bangladesh, shows that mean HDDS for women has increased from 6.7 food groups to 7.5 and that the consumption of milk, milk products, and fish has increased. The improved household nutrition status was visible in 97% of the households (105,000).
- 75 mines producing industrial minerals in India adopted the recommendations to set up separate toilets for women as part their sustainability initiative.
- PWC study in Bangladesh shows a 1% decrease in prevalence of early marriage and 6% increase in breast feeding for children under 6 months.
- In Sri Lanka the installation of incinerator and training on menstrual hygiene has been reported to have resulted in improvement of health of female students.





# LEARNING



Having summarized my achievements and sitting back reflecting on the actions, the natural thought is to understand what I have learned. When I started documenting the learnings, it turned into a voluminous book. Trust me! It was a nightmare to summarize as each and every learning was a result of 5 years of hard work. I also understand that you being a reader would get bored if I handover the learning book, many of which you might feel..ah.. I know this one!. Therefore, I am attempting a bold move (true to my nature..!) to present to you 5 learnings that would probably ignite your grey cells and help you in integrating me in all of your work.

- Market lever for nutritional services work: Market Based models for nutritional services has greater potential to deliver results and sustenance of the project actions
- Data is not gender neutral: Disaggregated data on key performance and actions is not enough. If gender inclusivity has to become a reality in supply chains, data on preferences, behaviour, needs and choices made by women needs to be captured and analysed.
- Get Up-close: Choose the issues closer to the heart and comfort level of women and use it as a trigger to make a dent on societal change.
- Use strength of the organization to drive gender inclusion: For the organisations who do not directly work on social norms but work on supply chains, it is better to take a little conservative approach, which means empowering women through various interventions such as health and nutrition, digital and financial literacy and control over resources. This gives an opportunity to empower women to further challenge social norms.
- Sustainability Frameworks are incomplete: Sustainability without gender inclusivity is incomplete and the frameworks need gender overhaul.

# KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

## Understanding stunting and the common characteristic of households with a stunted child (Bangladesh)

Solidaridad conducted a research on “Understanding Stunting and the Common Characteristics of Households with a Stunted Child” in southwest Bangladesh. The purpose of the research was to find out if by making nutritious food available at an affordable price and creating awareness results in improvement of food and nutrition security of the households. The study highlighted that in spite of households having no incidence of food shortage through the year, 31% of the girls and 19% of boys were found to be moderately stunted.

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Understanding Stunting and the Common Characteristics of Households with a Stunted Child



## Research on female entrepreneurship and financial inclusion in the dairy industry in Bangladesh (2018)

This research was conducted by two interns from the Copenhagen Business School in collaboration with Solidaridad REC Asia. The focus of this research was on how contextualized financial services can contribute to the development of sustainable female entrepreneurship in the dairy industry in Bangladesh. The report points to the various issues pertaining to women dairy farmers. It specifically mentions how dairy farmers are predominantly women and yet all the benefits are passed to the male of the household. Emphasis was made on non accessibility of resources specifically knowledge of good dairy practices and financial services.

## Water, Migration and women

Ecological poverty is the lack of an ecologically healthy natural resource base that is needed for a human society's survival and development. Agriculture is still the most prevalent livelihood option in rural India and is heavily dependent on water. A study was undertaken to understand how the lack of resources is affecting male migration and in turn affecting the lives of women. The study establishes that in the water constrained regions men migrate for better livelihoods option leaving women behind with depleted resources to take care of the agriculture. This clearly states that women are the ones who mostly bear the brunt of ecological poverty.





GENDER ANALYSIS  
REPORT

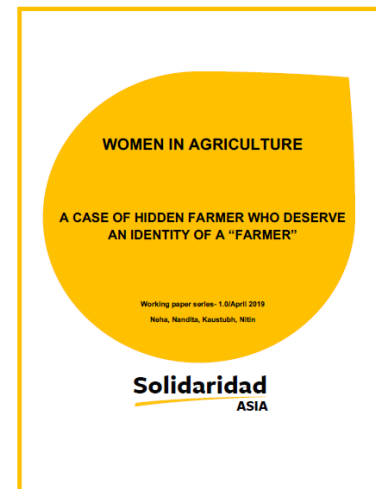
## Gender analysis (MP)

Gender analysis paves the way for inclusive programmes and actions by providing specific and relevant information on the status of women. The soy growing areas of Madhya Pradesh were selected given Solidaridad's long presence in the area and intentions to expand programming based on current data. Solidaridad used an adapted version of Oxfam and UN's gender analysis framework that looks at participation, access, control and welfare, and distills them to arrive at the level or degree of vulnerability and capability.

The findings suggest that women in the soybean producing areas of Madhya Pradesh are highly vulnerable. Despite active participation in agricultural activities, they are marginalised and side-lined.

## Hidden farmer

The intent of this working paper is to first, bring to light the existence of women in agriculture by taking the example of sugarcane farming in the state of Uttar Pradesh (India) where strong and traditional social norms suggest non-existence of the women farmers. The paper highlights the critical and transformative role women play in the agricultural growth of developing nations. Despite their huge presence, women farmers are conspicuously 'invisible' from the government policy canvas as they are neither recognized as farmers nor do they own productive assets (e.g. land or machine).



## Impact of COVID

The impact of 2020 coronavirus pandemic has been largely disruptive. By the end of August 2020, more than 25 million COVID 19 cases have been reported worldwide and more than 0.85 million people have died globally. A catastrophe of this level is sure to impact the weaker section of the society in a deleterious way. Across the globe, women earn less, save less, hold less secure jobs, are more likely to be employed in the informal sector.

They have less access to social protections. Their capacity to absorb economic shocks is therefore less than that of men", which makes them vulnerable and less resilient. Solidaridad as part of its initiative to not just understand the impact of Covid-19 on women but also to help find insights on the need for programming to negate the impact of pandemic, conducted a South Asia and SouthEast Asia wide study. The areas of the study were chosen after careful examination of the factors (lack of it) which are primarily causing the vulnerability.

## Annual Report

An Annual Report is a document produced to disseminate the results of all the activities designed and developed in the past twelve months. These reports are important for three main reasons: The reports give the opportunity to share with internal audience, donors and the wider audience the achievements of the organisation. Therefore, we have come up with a Gender Annual report since the year 2018.

## a. Affirmative Gender Actions and Inclusivity (2019)

A recent Mckinsey study suggesting that narrowing the global gender gap in work would not only be equitable in the broadest sense but could double the contribution of women to global GDP growth between 2014 and 2025. The Gender Inclusivity Report by Solidaridad Asia for the year 2019 discusses contributions to this growth. The building blocks were laid in 2017-2018, and create the foundation on which inclusivity actions for 2020 and beyond will be constructed.



## b. Affirmative Gender Actions and Inclusivity (2018)

In 2018 Solidaridad Asia implemented a range of gender-inclusive strategies to positively impact the lives of Asian women. The work carried out led to more inclusive and affirmative actions than ever before which, in the space of a year, have shown positive results and hold potential for larger-scale actions. The Gender Annual Report 2018, elaborates on the work done in the year 2018 and highlights the plan for 2019.





# Impact of Covid-19 on women-Stories of women- Journal Publication

The health impacts of COVID-19 have been pervasive in Asia and worldwide. Its effect on food security and economy was equally far-reaching and trying. The pandemic has strained supply chains, prevented agricultural activity, affected the sustainability of food systems, and caused economic slowdowns. Women, in particular, have faced the worst of the impact of COVID-19. The impact of COVID-19 on food security and income of women farmers in South & Southeast Asia published in the Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development is published by the Thomas A. Lyson Center for Civic Agriculture and Food Systems, a project of the Center for Transformative Action (a nonprofit affiliate of Cornell University).

## Booklet

Solidaridad recognises the potential of men, women and youth for being the drivers of change towards an inclusive economy and society. In order to recognise the success of the women from the community a Gender booklet is published which contains the success stories of these amazing women.



## Human Centered Design of the IVR system and Mobile App

Solidaridad developed a user-centric approach that underpins and guides the development of the digital tools, where the women dairy farmers in Bangladesh are the main users at the core of the solutions. While we had a good idea about what the tools needed to achieve, we intended to develop their functionalities and attributes based on the needs of the women farmers. Understanding the needs, concerns, and constraints of the women farmers would enable us to develop tools that are relevant to their lives, along with ensuring consistent use and impact. This report has been used to design the I2I (Inclusion through integration) application and IVR system as per the choice of women farmers of Bangladesh.

# Gender Inclusivity and Readiness tool

In order to augment the main streaming of gender, a technology enabled tool “gender inclusivity and readiness tool” that facilitates the incorporation of gender strategy, provides ease of mainstreaming and adds value to the project manager, has been introduced.

Gender Inclusivity Readiness Tool provides a quick and effective way to determine the extent to which a project embraces and integrates gender into its core activities. A unique feature of the readiness tool is that it draws attention to four aspects of the Solidaridad PCM cycle - Planning, Measurement, Learning, and Sharing. The categories represent areas in which efforts towards gender mainstreaming either are or should be taking place in a project. These four categories are considered core areas as they represent the foundational elements of a systematic gender mainstreaming. Without these firmly in place, gender mainstreaming implementation is highly likely to be haphazard and inconsistent, potentially jeopardizing the achievement of gender equality.

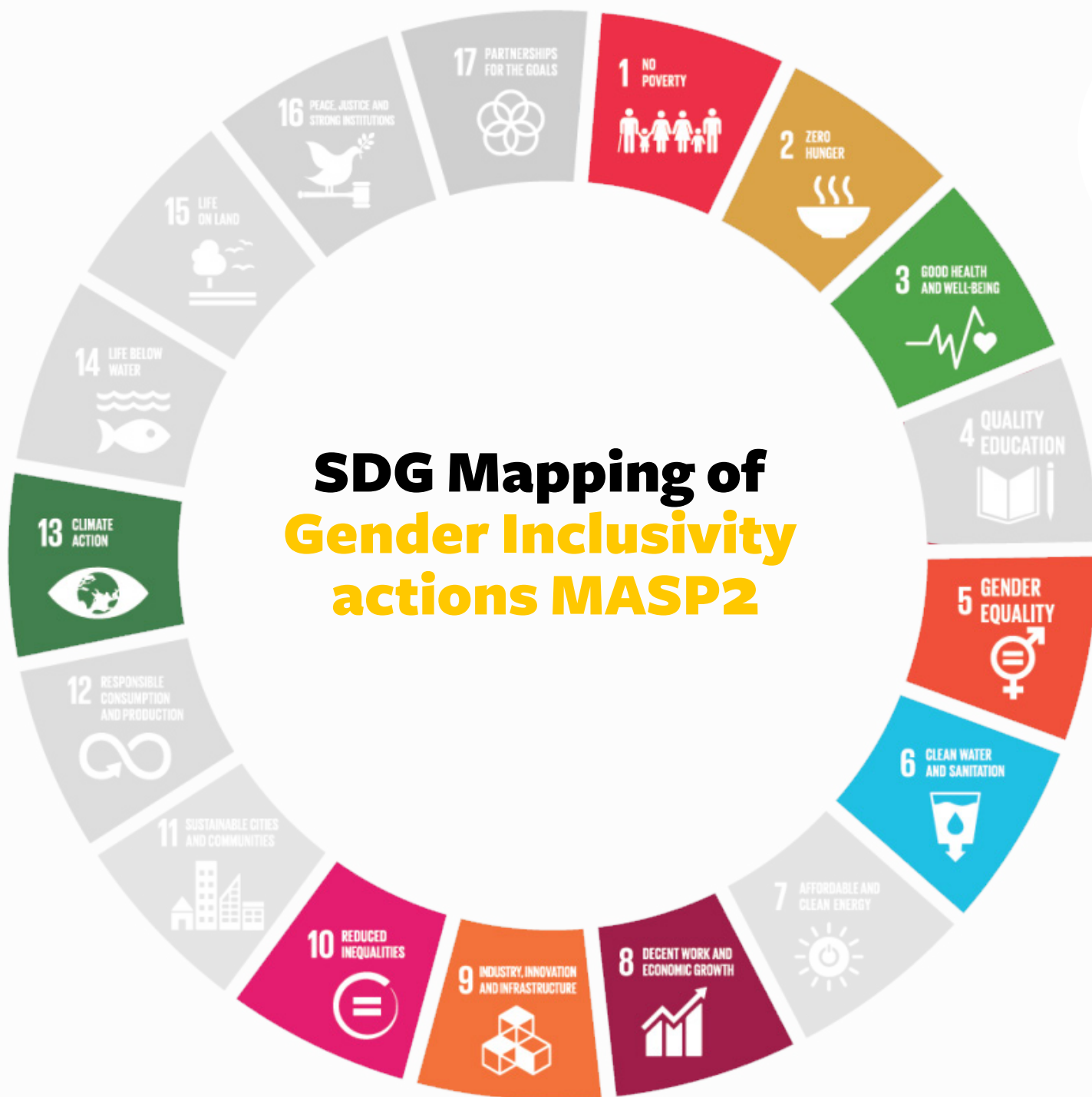
Looking at the growth of Solidaridad and the way it is expanding its operations we cannot deny the fact that a better strategy on information dissemination and gender mainstreaming was required to

- 1. Support managers to integrate gender while conceptualizing the projects
- 2. Support Managers to Integrate gender in the project yet to start/ just started
- 3. Support Managers to Integrate gender in their ongoing projects

The development of the tool was accomplished in three phases  
First Phase (Gender Readiness Tool): “How gender ready in your project?” The tool help in understanding the gender readiness of the project (for both new and one already under implementation) by responding to a set of statements.  
Second Phase: Second phase linked the results of the readiness and with few additional specifications provides a ready to use gender plan, actions and measurement.  
Third Phase: Create a web application space where the Gender Inclusivity tool and a resource Library has been added.







**Highlighted SDGs in the figure illustrates the ones Solidaridad Asia has contributed to through various gender inclusive actions.**

## Way Forward.....!



As I step into the next five years, Solidaridad Asia has given me a new avatar. I find that Solidaridad Asia has come up with “Reclaiming Sustainability” focussed MASP for 2021 to 2025. There are many new things that have been introduced which excites me. I am attempting to articulate some of my thoughts in terms of what I would be doing in the next five years which sets the tone for further actions. Would be happy to know from you what you think about it. Also invite discussion and suggestion to further make best use of the time and resources I have been allocated.

**Women in Supply Chain :** If women have to play role in supply chain, promotion of enterprises is one of the aspects, however it is the companies that have the muscle power and the leverage to drive this change at scale so I would like to work with the companies to see how women can be integrated into the formal supply chains and corporate policies, systems and practices can augment the integration.

**Mandatory Standards:** Sustainability without gender inclusivity is like a half baked cake, and hence would like to build on the analysis that was done in the last MASP on how inclusive these sustainability frameworks are. I aspire to come up with recommendations and advocate for a truly inclusive sustainability framework developed either by Solidaridad or by other agencies.

**Inclusivity in the programs:** I am building a digital application which would support the managers to understand how far they have been able to work towards including me in their work. There is an advisory section which would be a guidance for them and help them by pointing out the specifics and the how of integration aspects.

**Identity of a farmer:** Advocacy efforts to recognise women as farmers will continue. I would come up with the next series of hidden farmer working papers.

**Inclusion through Integration:** Digital integration for women is a must, I would continue to strive to generate resources that can establish pilots and proof of concepts on innovative ways of digital inclusion of women.

**Fair Data :** Solidaridad Asia is now pioneering the fair data movement. It is very evident that the data is not gender neutral. If the data has to be fair it has to do justice to both the sexes. Therefore it is essential to look at the needs of women and understand their preferences and choices and why those choices are made. Through the next 5 years, I will work with the Fair Data team to ensure that fair data generates fair value, fair voice and fair price for the women too.

**Gender Mainstreaming:** In the coming years I would advance from gender integration to gender mainstreaming. Methods and framework would be devised to mainstream gender in the projects and programs implemented by Solidaridad.







## **Solidaridad**

**NEHA**

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