

# CHAPTER: 16

## CASE STUDY ON PRAWAH MAHILA KISSAN PRODUCER COMPANY– FPO IN KHANDAR, SAWAI MADHOPUR, RAJASTHAN

KAJAL SITLANI

[kajal@iihmr.edu.in](mailto:kajal@iihmr.edu.in)

VANSHIKA AGARWAL

[aggarwalvani99@gmail](mailto:aggarwalvani99@gmail.com)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52458/9788196919535.nsp2024.eb.ch-16>

Ch.Id:- IIHMR/NSP/EB/USCIDI/2024/Ch-16

### ABSTRACT

India is an agriculture driven economy and women play a significant role in the agriculture-based activities. Khandar block in Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan is well known for agriculture. This case study delves on a transformative approach to bring change and empowerment of women. The study highlights the strategies as well as collaborative effort by Udyogini and Prawah. The study is based on qualitative analysis of data through Focused group discussion and key informant information. The study highlights the key challenges faced by the women in working and how Udyogini helped in reducing these along with Prawah mahila kissan producer company.

**Keywords:** Farmer Production Organization, Self-Help Group, Business Development Service Provider, Women Entrepreneurs Group, Rajasthan

### INTRODUCTION

Prawah Mahila Kissan Producer Company Ltd. is women-based farmer production organization (FPO) which is located in the Khandar block of Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan. The company aims to meet and address agricultural needs at the local level. It emphasized cattle feed production as well as chili processing and packaging. The study aims at exploring the internal challenges faced by the women associated with this FPO.

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The cattle feed initiative was supported under the CSR practices at Bajaj and further it was facilitated by Udyogoni. The emphasize of this woman led project on providing cattle feed that was highly nutritional. Whereas the chili processing and packaging unit got assistance from HDFC in 2020, and expedition was done by Udyogoni.

### Chili Production and Packaging

In the Khandar block cultivation of Desi as well as hybrid chilies is taking place. The desi chili was smaller in size and only grows twice every season. Whereas the hybrid variety also called as *commando* was easy to pick, being longer in size. Though the desi variety was more preferred being tastier and spicier, but farmers were not in favour of this variety. FPO concentrated on production of green and red chili powder.

Products made and packed in FPO like green chili powder, red chili powder, chili pickle, *Daals* are sold with the brand name '*Chokha*', which has a retail store in Sawai Madhopur. But, because of the gaps in the marketing level of the FPO produce, there is a reduction in the production of the products, because of which only one or two FPO members come to FPO.

## KHANDAR BLOCK

- a. **Environment:** Khandar is a block-level area under District Sawai Madhopur of Rajasthan, touching the borders of Madhya Pradesh. Being near Ranthambore national park this block attracts a bit of attention as it acquires places like Khandar fort, Gilai Sagar a dam with beautiful sightseeing. Not far from rivers like Banas, Seep, and Chambal, the people of Khandar do not face issues with water levels for agricultural purposes People of Khandar are living with threats to their lives by wild animals like tigers, bears, and *Sambhar* (deer-like species, bigger in size). Fear of being attacked by wild animals like tigers always prevails.

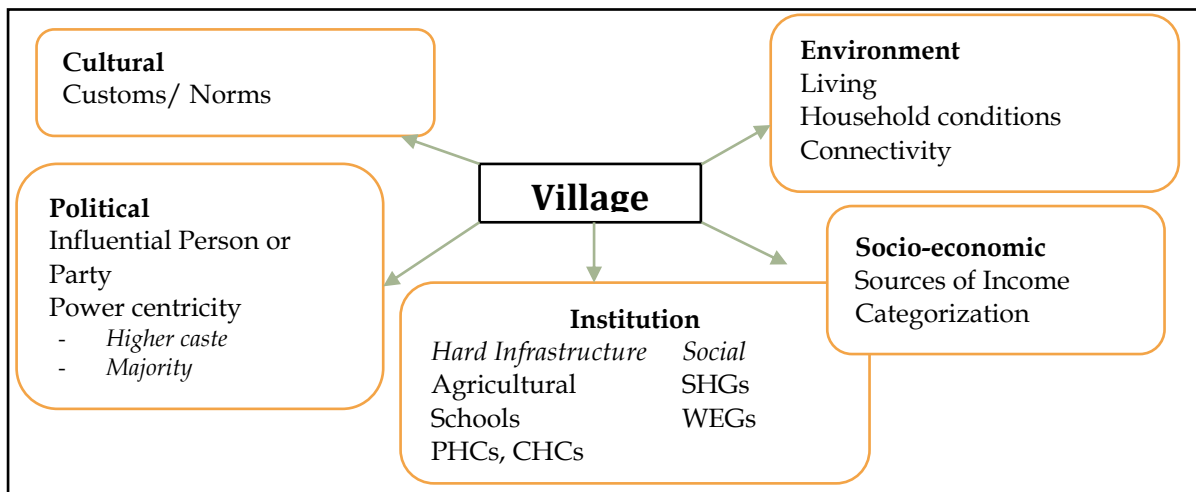


Figure 16.1: Village profile of Khandar block

- b. **Living:** The people of Khandar are living in a hot humid climate, with a normal temperature of 41-42 degrees during summers. Despite, such weather conditions women covered themselves from head to toe by keeping a *ghunghat* on their heads which covered them till neck, they wore blouse cum shirts and long skirts.
- c. **Household conditions:** The most common type of houses were the ones with a single floor, and a little less were double-story houses. The villages that come under Khandar had *kaccha pakka* houses, some were made of mud and covered with dry grass. Types of houses dependent upon the financial condition of the people.
- d. **Potential resources:** Block of Khandar was rich in the production of chili, wheat, mustard, guava, and several types of daals.
- e. **Socio-economic status:** The weather conditions there allowed people to be dependent upon mostly farm businesses, that is why most of the people owed their own lands, be it in a small area. Females were found to be working on their own fields not on land owned by someone else.
- f. **Source of income:** The most common source of income in Khandar is farming. Farmers here do not stick to the farming of one crop, they take measures for seasonal farming. Before the arrival of the rainy season, farmers start cleaning their farms for the appropriate yield of wheat and rice (the crops that grow richly during the rainy season), other than those times they focus on growing chili and daals. Farmers stay for three months without working on farms. Other than farming, grocery shops, stonework (*Kota stone*), etc. are some of the sources of income.
- g. **Categorization:** There is a categorization of the social status of people on a caste and financial basis, as we observed. People did not work for zamindars or to pay the debt. Even though they had small pieces of land, they owned it and did not work for someone else on a wage basis.
- h. **Hard infrastructure:** Khandar had an average infrastructure for facilitating the requirements of local people. There were schools till middle level (8<sup>th</sup> standard), CHC at the block level, and PHCs at village level for health purposes, small *dhabas*, and one or two restaurants.
- i. **Institutions**
  - 1. **Social groups:** While conducting FGD with women, it was found that SHG was formed on the guidance received by through NABARD. WEG (Women entrepreneur group) was another local body on the ground level set up with the help of Udyogini's field assistants, that worked in association with FPO for bringing raw materials.
  - 2. **Political influence:** Sarpanch, MP, and MLAs, belonging to different political parties influence the people.
  - 3. **Power centricity:** The most prominent caste is Gujjar followed by Bairvas and Chambal (people living or coming from the Chambal River region).
- j. **Culture**
  - 1. **Customs:** Rajasthan is known for its royal customs and traditions. Men wore white *dhoti* and *kurta* with colorful turbans while women wore *ghunghat* on their heads which covered them to the neck, blouse cum shirts, and long skirts.

2. **Norms:** Ghoonghat Pratha has marked its prevalence for years in Rajasthan which was well here. During FGDs women were seen in ‘ghoonghat’ if a man or elder passed by.

## FPO

**History of FPO:** This FPO started to set up in the year 2019 when Bajaj sponsored this project and it was facilitated by Udyogini ( 2017) to produce cattle feed. Here, women worked for 7 to 8 hours on days when the project was at its peak and produced cattle feed with high nutritional value. Women mostly focused on processing and producing the final cattle feed product. In the year 2020 FPO got its licenses, and HDFC sponsored the chili processing unit where they set up the machines for grinding red and green chili, refining seeds from chili, and drying up the chili through solar sheets. Here, FPO members took chili from women who were associated with WEG as raw material and processed them to finally make chili powder.

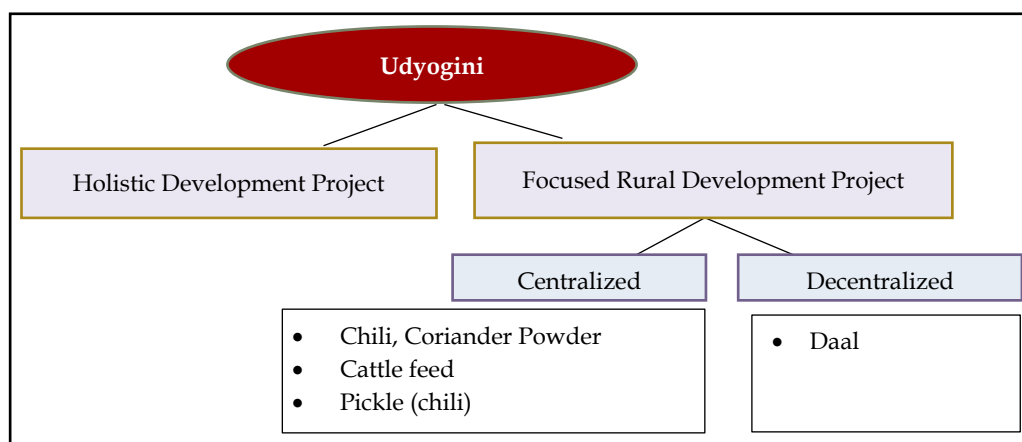


Figure 16.2: Structure and purpose of Udyogini

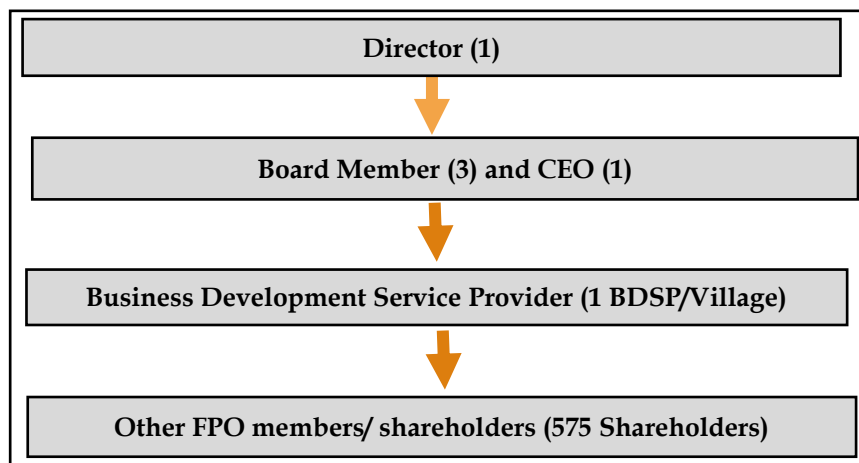
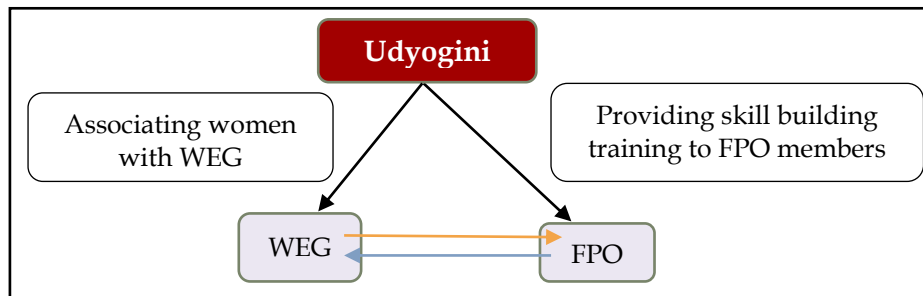


Figure 16.3: Structure of FPO

Here,

- **Director** of the FPO is elected by the field team (Udyogini) and other FPO members based on active participation, answerability to the questions asked during the meetings, and ideas suggested by the individual.
- **Board Members** - There are 3 active board members in the FPO out of 5(elected initially). They are selected because of active participation and their knowledge about FPO-related crops, and raw materials.
- **CEO** - Here, the CEO for the FPO was a team member of Udyogini who managed accounts in the system and supported FPO members from the backend.
- **BDSP** - FPO comprises shareholders belonging to different villages, in Prawah FPO women from almost 20+ villages are shareholders, and to represent each village a BDSP is appointed. BDSP attends the FPO meeting on regular basis, becomes part of the training conducted at FPO, first learns what has been taught, and then teaches that procedure to the women of the village for their better participation.
- **Other FPO members** - Some FPO members who were associated with the WEG as well, brought chili to the FPO as raw material for making chili powder and pickles, while some brought daal for packaging purposes.



**Figure 16.4: Structure of working in FPO**

- (collecting and bringing raw material like chili (desi and hybrid) for processing at negotiable price with better quality and making chili powder and daal (mung, masoor, chana(least) for packaging)
- Giving wages to women for their contribution from which they buy seeds and putting solar fencing to protect their agricultural land.

## STUDY OBJECTIVE

To identify the internal challenges faced by women of Khandar and in what ways it affects the flow of operation of FPO.

## METHODOLOGY

Qualitative analysis was being carried out through focused group discussions and Key informant interview (KII) as information was required to be gathered in a detailed manner. Questions were designed to collect information through these qualitative tools. Secondary data was used to prepare the questions based on earlier research on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and 10 women in an FGD with Prawah.

**Data collection:** FGD’s helped to gather information about the current situation of the FPO’s and the key informant interview used aided in gaining detailed insight on the on the practical aspect of the challenges experienced by women.

- Three FGD’s were conducted involving the following -
- FGD with UUS involved 10 women and 11 women in FGD with Vrunda
- Key informant interview was done from the Director of Prawah and another with A woman participant of Prawah.

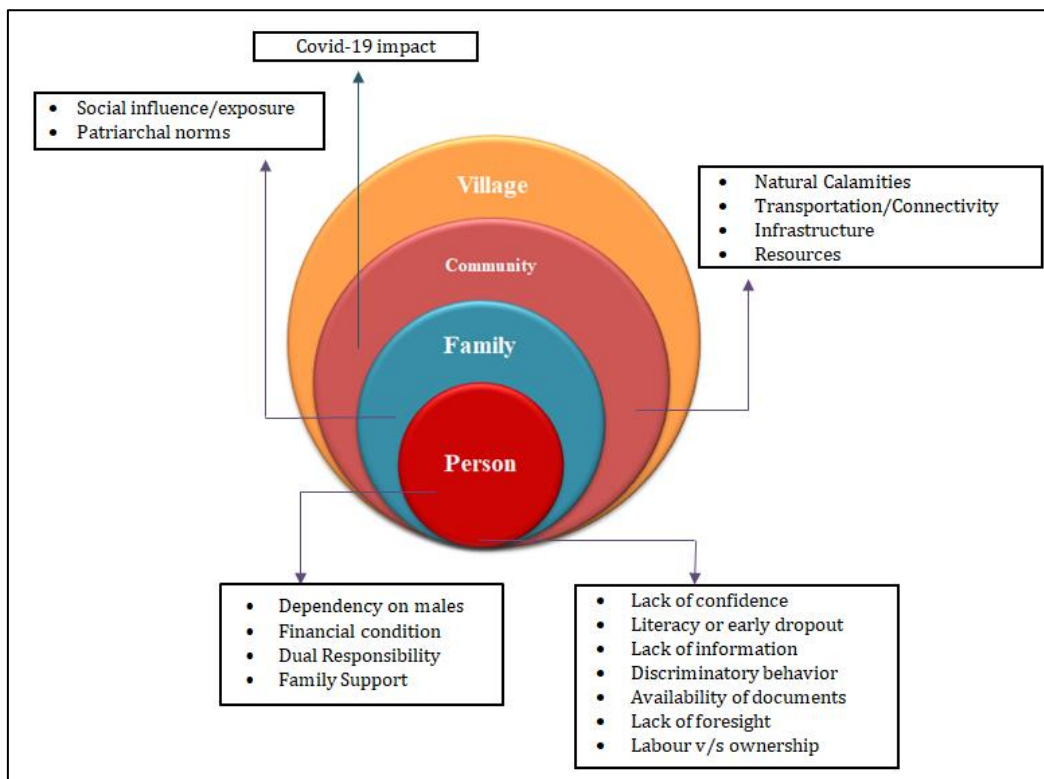
## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- **Challenges in FPO:** Despite making unquestionable premium quality products, FPO was unable to collect a no profit, no loss amount for its product. Women are good on the part of cultivating raw goods, processing, and packing them but they struggle on the part of marketing their products or doing something for gaining recognition for it.
- **Categorization of challenges:** Analyzing the status of women who are FPO (2019) members and the different hardships they face in day-to-day life, we have tried to categorize their challenges into internal and external challenges, where internal challenges are mostly person focused and external challenges are market or system focused.

**Table 16.1: Internal and external challenges of FPO**

Internal Challenges	External Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of motivation and confidence (individual)</li> <li>• Balancing business with family (Family)</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge, incomplete education, or early dropout (family, community)</li> <li>• Unavailability of important documents</li> <li>• Unawareness of banking and loans systems</li> <li>• Impact of covid-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unawareness of market system and the latest market trends</li> <li>• Production challenges</li> <li>• Marketing challenges</li> <li>• Technological challenges</li> <li>• Accessing government and state policies</li> <li>• Impact of covid-19</li> </ul>

- **Internal challenges – Individual, family, community, village:** We have tried to sectionalize the internal challenges for better and in-depth understanding of them.



**Figure 16.5: Impact of Covid-19 on FPO**

**Challenges faced by women:** The study highlighted the challenges faced by women at individual, family, community, and village level that has obstructed their growth while working with FPO.

- **Individual level challenges:** Women were facing following challenges at personal level –
- **Lack of confidence / motivation:** It was found that the societal norms are hampering the motivation and confidence with which females should take decisions and contribute to the FPO's. There were restrictions imposed on them, decisions even at the household level were not taken by them. Lack of confidence further weakens their interpersonal skills which hampers their contribution to the FPO.
- **Literacy or early dropout:** The study reveals that most of them were early dropouts. It was very well articulated by them during the conversation that their level of literacy is a pivotal factor in hindering their market accessibility and confidence level.
- **Lack of information:** There were women who were confident to start or become a part of something. Even though they had the zeal to do so, but lack of information did not work in their favor. For example, there are women who are associated with SHG and are making lemon pickle but limited exposure to market trends and practice restricted their sale.

- **Discriminatory behaviour:** Women as well as teenage girls were expected to follow societal norms like keeping 'ghoonghat', silver ornaments etc.
- **Operating bank accounts:** The challenges they faced in operating their bank accounts were, their requests were procrastinated by bank officials, they were asked to come again and again for small-small formalities.
- **Lack of foresightedness:** They lacked a visionary approach to run an enterprise or an FPO. Women working in FPO, were having a hard time thinking about the measures for sustainability of themselves and FPO's.
- **Lack of ownership:** The lack of foresightedness factor talks about how women are afraid of taking responsibility for any task or initiate by themselves. They are solely dependent on the FPO for an initiative.

**Family:** Challenges faced by women at family level, focuses on:

- **Dependency on males:** Women at Khandar were mostly dependent on males (2023) for market-related chores like buying seeds for farming, bringing daily basis grocery and other market interactive works, going to banks or schools was mostly carried out by males of the family. Even decisions to be a part of FPO were based on the consent of their husband, they told us that for joining FPO initially they had to ask about it their husband or head of household.
- **Poor financial conditions:** These women were unable to spend time for FPO meeting as they had to go for earning the daily wages. The poor financial condition was one of the factors that hampered their work.
- **Dual responsibility:** Women are always expected to manage household chores on a prior basis, and then something which is related to their individual work-related growth. Here, they need to finish their morning farming routine early to come to the FPO. But, after a while, they stopped coming to FPO until a meeting was called or there was some work. Family and home activities hindered their regular visit to the FPO.
- **Lack of family support:** In the initial stages of joining FPO, family members restricted women from joining it. It could be a lack of information or the awareness of the family, that made them stop women from engaging in such organizations. Later on, with the awareness created by Udyogini reduced this resistance.

**Community:** Challenges faced by women at community level, focus on:

- **Social exposure:** Surroundings at Khandar had exposure to very limited possibilities for their development at the social and individual levels.
- **Patriarchal norms:** The Patriarchal norms existing in the community was hindering their communication with the outside world. They had covered their faces when any male passes by. The power or self-control a person has over himself/herself was hardly a part of their lives. The decisions

they took were mostly family, husband, or any norm driven which they practice in day-to-day lives. Their activities were based on keeping these in mind.

**Village:** Challenges faced by women at the village level focus on:

- **Natural calamities:** The weather conditions of the village were mostly favorable for the farming of several crops. Only during heavy rainfall there is a risk of destruction of crops, as the storage facilities were unsystematic.
- **Transportation/ Connectivity:** Khandar was not well connected to nearby cities. If the connectivity to other places is better that will provide them better growth opportunities.
- **Infrastructure:** Lack of educational and health facilities in this area was impacting these females.
- **Potential resources:** The most common source of income was through farming means, and this was done based on potential resources like green chili, *urad* daal, soybean, guava, cauliflower, and in the rainy season it was rice. Women engaged most of their time in farming activities as it was season requirement. And, in a year they did not do any farming related activities for around three months.

## **CONCLUSION**

The case study of Prawah Mahila Kissan Producer Company (FPO) in Khandar, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan throws light on transformative efforts to empower women in agriculture. The FPO, founded in 2019 with funding from Bajaj and facilitated by Udyogini, focuses on cattle feed production and chili processing, with a focus on nutritional value. Despite great product quality, the FPO has marketing and recognition issues. The study categorizes women's issues at the individual, family, community, and village levels. Individuals' engagement is hampered by issues such as a lack of confidence, literacy deficits, and discriminating conduct. Dependence on males, financial limits, dual duties, and, at first, a lack of family support are all family-level obstacles. Community-level issues focus around restricted social exposure and patriarchal values. Natural disasters, transportation/connectivity concerns, and poor infrastructure are examples of village-level challenges. Internal obstacles such as a lack of desire, knowledge gaps, and the influence of COVID-19 are identified.

To overcome these issues, efforts should emphasize increasing women's confidence, offering education and training, improving financial literacy, and increasing community awareness. Initiatives such as Women Entrepreneur Groups (WEG) and engagement with organization like Udyogini would facilitate to overcome these challenges at the ground level. Empowering women in agriculture not only benefits individual progress but also promotes long-term rural development in places like Khandar, Rajasthan. The resistance of females to work with FPO was greatly reduced by Udyogini. Lot of efforts were taken to overcome these obstacles and challenges. Multifaceted approach that includes community awareness, skill development, and strategic collaborations can contribute further.