



# **Recognizing and Enhancing Women's role in Conservation and Management of CPR in Rajasthan**

**Role of Rural Women in conservation of Common Property Resources  
in Rajasthan.**

**A Study for Rajmeru, Jaipur, Rajasthan**

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## **1. Executive Summary**

This study delves into the intricate dynamics of women's involvement in managing Common Property Resources (CPRs) across selected regions in Rajasthan, India. CPRs, including land, water, and forests, are vital for rural livelihoods, providing essential resources for survival and economic sustenance. However, despite the critical role women play in utilizing CPRs, their participation in decision-making processes related to resource management is often limited. Patriarchal norms and traditional social structures exclude women from formal decision-making bodies, hindering their agency and influence.

The study employs a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative data collection methods such as interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques. This comprehensive approach aims to capture a nuanced understanding of women's participation, decision-making authority, and access to CPRs. In other words, the study focuses on an in-depth analysis of women's involvement in managing Common Property Resources (CPRs) across Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) regions in Rajasthan, India.

The majority of respondents covered by the study belong to the 26-35 age group, with females representing 85% of the total sample. Most respondents have attained at least primary education, and agriculture is the predominant sector of employment. While the majority belong to the Above Poverty Line (APL) category, a significant portion faces economic challenges as Below Poverty Line (BPL) respondents.

The study explores women's roles in utilizing water, land for grazing, and forests, highlighting their status towards sustaining and managing the CPRs of which they are the major users. The findings highlight the barriers in women's decision making such as limited awareness, power dynamics, and access barriers which influence women's participation in resource governance.

The findings also highlight the importance of recognizing and enhancing women's involvement in CPR management bring to the forefront, women's understanding of the strategies to address challenges and promote gender-inclusive approaches which are imperative for fostering equitable and sustainable resource governance systems in rural Rajasthan. It identifies several strategies to enhance women's empowerment and agency in CPR management. These include increasing access to women empowerment programs, financial resources, and CPRs themselves, raising awareness about gender equity, collaborating with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), providing education and training, and promoting leadership skills among women.

## 2. Acknowledgement

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated leaders and field teams of the following organizations for their unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions to the study:

1. Sangharsh Manch, Sangarsh Sansthan, Dudu
2. Samudaik Pairwi Manch, Idea Sansthan, Balotra
3. Ramdev Jan chetna manch, SAMPARC, Kuchaman
4. Bhakar Bheetrot Adivasi Vikas Manch, Jan Chetna Sansthan, Abu Road
5. Adhivasi Mahila Vikas Manch, Jhadol

Their hard work and tireless efforts in the field have been instrumental in gathering the data and insights necessary for this research.

We also express our immense gratitude for the support and guidance provided by:

1. Shri Dinesh Vyas, Rajmeru Jaipur
2. Ms. Shweta Tripathi, Rajmeru Jaipur

Their expertise and support has been pivotal in shaping the directions and outcomes of this research.

Lastly and most importantly, we extend our sincere appreciation to all the respondents of the study. Their willingness to share their experiences and insights has been invaluable.

Study team

Abhigyan<sup>1</sup>, Udaipur

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<sup>1</sup> Abhigyan is a support and consultancy firm established in 2018 and dedicated to work with development organization/CSR/funding agencies for increasing the impact of investment in the social sector. It is a “Process” oriented organization which values result based approach, excellence and innovation and is committed to LEAN, creative problem solving and continual improvement. Our focus is to bring in efficiency in targeted delivery of benefits to society through capacity building, effective monitoring, reporting as well as suggesting course correction to executing agency. We provide customized Primary Research services to help CSOs find insights that Matter. Our experts endeavor to understand CSO needs and accordingly design custom research surveys, we scientifically collect high quality data using modern technology, and use cutting edge data analysis and visualization tools to bring out insights and present them so they can help your development goals.

### 3. Introduction

#### Definition of CPRs

Common Property Resources (CPRs), encompassing land, water, and forests, serve as lifelines for millions of individuals across India, especially in rural regions. These resources are not only essential for basic survival but also for economic sustenance and cultural identity. They fulfill Community needs and are shared among villagers. Examples of CPRs in Rajasthan include village pastures, grazing land, Sacred Groves (Oran's), forests, woodlands, government-owned forests (both protected and unclassified), fisheries, wastelands, watershed drainage, ponds, tanks, rivers, rivulets, groundwater, reservoirs, canals, and irrigation channels. They form an integral part of the livelihood strategies of rural communities, providing essential resources such as fuelwood, fodder, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and water.



#### Historical Context

In pre-British India, local communities exercised substantial control over natural resources. CPRs have historically contributed significantly to rural economies, with older generations recalling more efficient land management practices during the pre-British era. Colonial policies and land tenure systems have left lasting legacies on CPR management in India and Rajasthan. Centralized control over natural resources and the displacement of indigenous communities continue to shape access rights and governance structures. This historical context informs contemporary policy and legal frameworks, such as the Forest Rights Act (2006) and the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (1996), which seek to recognize and secure community rights over CPRs. However, the effectiveness of these policies varies across regions and communities, influencing CPR governance dynamics.

In-fact, post-Independence, the common resources have deteriorated over time, with most of them experiencing decreased productivity due to issues such as excessive grazing, soil erosion, and neglect by the community.

#### Reasons for Depletion

- Exploitation: Some individuals exploit CPRs for personal gain, disregarding the collective welfare.

- Ineffective Policies: State government policies and the role of Panchayats have been ineffective in preserving and managing these resources.
- Environmental challenges: Climate change including population growth, deforestation, land degradation, pose significant threats to CPR sustainability.
- Increasing encroachment on Commons

#### Some common Examples of Degradation

- Land degradation resulting from water erosion, salinity, and waterlogging.
- Overgrazing leading to the depletion of community pastures.
- Illicit felling and indiscriminate cutting in community forests.
- Pollution of rivers and lakes.
- Over-exploitation and depletion of community fisheries.
- Groundwater depletion in arid and semi-arid regions due to population growth and development activities.
- Mismanagement and ineffective development of CPRs

## 4. Review of Literature

The literature on the role of women in the management of Common Property Resources (CPR) in India highlights the significance of women's involvement in decision-making, economic activities, and empowerment within the context of resource management. Several studies emphasize the importance of recognizing women's contributions to CPR management and the impact of their participation on community development and sustainability.

A study by P. Murugesan and D. Namasivayam focuses on women's empowerment and the utilization of CPR in tribal and non-tribal areas of Tamil Nadu, India. It underlines the need to empower women economically and socially, emphasizing their role in decision-making, economic self-reliance, and equal treatment. The study explores how women's income, including earnings from agricultural and non-farm sources, influences their empowerment levels, particularly in tribal regions<sup>2</sup>.

Another study by Dr. Gautam Purkayastha sheds light on the significant role these resources play in the lives of various demographic groups, particularly women, children, and senior citizens in Assam. The study emphasized the vital contribution of CPRs to the livelihoods of females, minors, and even senior citizens within the rural context. The study demonstrated conventional notions by highlighting the disappearance of the gender gap in market participation rates when it comes to the utilization of CPRs. This work contributes valuable insights into the socio-economic dynamics offering a nuanced understanding of how CPRs shape the livelihoods and well-being of diverse population segments.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> P. Murugesan, B.Sc., and D. Namasivayam, **Women Empowerment and Common Property Resources – A Study of Factors Determining the Levels of Empowerment in Tribal and Non-Tribal Areas of Tamil Nadu, India**, March 2012. Source: Language in India, Vol. 12, No. 3, March 2012  
<http://www.languageinindia.com/march2012/murugesantribal.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> **Dr Gautam Purkayastha, CPRs in Everyday Life of Rural People in Assam**, October 01, 2013 | Dr Gautam Purkayastha, <http://yojana.gov.in/cpr-in-everyday-life.asp>



Another research paper discusses the contemporary perspectives and experiences of women in managing land-based CPR in India. It delves into the historical context of CPR access in India, highlighting the traditional norms and legal frameworks that have shaped women's involvement in resource management. The paper emphasizes the importance of community participation, especially that of women, in sustainable resource management and the challenges faced by rural women in accessing and utilizing CPR for income generation and subsistence<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, Sucharita Sen's study in 2021 on the scarcity of CPR in rural India sheds light on the spatiality of women's livelihoods and the impact of CPR depletion on women's unpaid work. This research points towards the critical role of CPR in supporting women's livelihoods and the need for sustainable management practices to ensure equitable access to resources for women in rural areas<sup>5</sup>.

Moreover, another article referred for this present study, uncovers the notion that the link among gender, caste and access to common property resources (CPRs) are deeply rooted in the power dynamics of the caste-based operating system at the informal level. Drawing on intersectionality perspective, the article explains through ethnographic data collected over a period, in a small rural community in Gujarat, India, that women's social location/standing leads them to have multiple identities, which defines and alters their gender relations, norms, negotiations and access to resources, in context to land grab of CPRs. Consequently, the article argues that group-based social differences and power structures ultimately determine access to natural resources and institutional base for women from different strata of society wherein the governance structure may fall short of addressing these issues<sup>6</sup>.

These studies collectively contribute to the understanding of women's roles in CPR management in India, highlighting the importance of gender-inclusive approaches to resource governance and the empowerment of women within the context of sustainable development.

## **5. Policy Analysis Related to Common Property Resources (CPR) in Rajasthan, India and International Context**

### **Rajasthan-Specific Policies**

1. **Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act (1994):** Amended to delegate more powers to Gram Panchayats in managing common lands, water bodies, and other community resources. It recognizes the role of village assemblies and councils in managing CPRs.
2. **Rajasthan State Water Policy (2010):** This policy provides guidelines for the effective management of water resources, with an emphasis on community-based approaches in water management

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<sup>4</sup> "The Role of Women In Common Property Resource Management: Experiences From India." - [https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/2388/The\\_Role\\_of\\_Women\\_in\\_Common\\_Property\\_Resource\\_Management\\_Experiences\\_From\\_India.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1](https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/2388/The_Role_of_Women_in_Common_Property_Resource_Management_Experiences_From_India.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1)

<sup>5</sup> Sucharita Sen, "Scarcity of Common Property Resources and Spatiality of Women's Livelihood in Rural India", August 2021, In book: Reflections on 21st Century Human Habitats in India (pp.77-112)

<sup>6</sup> Between Khet (Field) and Factory, Gaanv (Village) and Sheher (City): Caste, Gender and the (Re)shaping of Migrant Identities in Urban India, Eesha Kunduri

including rejuvenation of traditional water harvesting structures like Johads and Talabs which are crucial CPRs.

3. **Rajasthan Forest Policy (2010):** The policy emphasizes community participation in the management of forest resources, supporting the establishment of Joint Forest Management Committees which include representatives from local communities to ensure sustainable forest management.

#### **India-Wide Policies**

1. **Forest Rights Act (2006):** The Forest Rights Act (FRA) recognizes the rights of indigenous and other forest-dwelling communities over forest resources which include the right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.
2. **Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (1996):** This Act extends the provisions of Part IX of the Indian Constitution to the Scheduled Areas with modifications related to the management of natural resources. It empowers local communities and their governance bodies to prevent alienation of land and manage community resources.
3. **National Forest Policy (1988):** The National Forest Policy of 1988 emphasizes the protection, conservation, and development of forests. Its focus is on ensuring environmental stability and maintaining ecological balance including atmospheric equilibrium, which are vital for sustenance of all life forms, human, animal, and plant.

#### **International Policies**

1. **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (1992):** This international agreement advocates for the sustainable management of biological resources, including CPRs. It encourages countries to respect, preserve, and maintain knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.
2. **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Particularly Goals 15 (Life on Land) and 11 (Sustainable Regions and Communities), which promote the sustainable management of forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss, all encouraging sustainable use of common property resources.

### **6. Significance of CPRs in the life of women in Rajasthan**

In rural Rajasthan, where a significant portion of the population relies on agriculture and natural resource-based livelihoods, CPRs are integral to everyday life. Women are deeply engaged in the utilization of these resources. For Instance, they are often the primary gatherers of water for household needs, collectors of fodder for livestock, and harvesters of fuelwood from forests. Additionally, women contribute significantly to agricultural activities on common lands, undertaking tasks such as weeding, harvesting, and processing crops.

However, despite the critical role that women play in utilizing the CPRs, their participation in management and decision-making processes related to these resources is often limited and marginalized. Women's agency and decision-making power concerning CPRs are frequently overlooked. Patriarchal norms and



traditional social structures often exclude women from formal decision-making bodies such as village councils, where crucial discussions regarding CPR management take place. Furthermore, women's limited access to land ownership rights further diminishes their ability to assert their influence in resource management decisions.

With this understanding, a study has been commissioned by Rajmeru and conducted by Abhigyan to explore the agency and decision-making power of women in CPR management, highlighting the challenges they face due to patriarchal norms and traditional social structures that exclude them from formal decision-making bodies.

## 7. Study Methodology

The study methodology was designed in consultation with Rajmeru. The objective and the research questions are as follows:

Research Questions	Objectives
What is the extent of women's involvement in CPR management in rural India?	1. To assess the level of participation of women in CPR governance.
What are the factors influencing women's participation in CPR management?	2. To identify socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors shaping women's roles in CPR governance.
How do gender inequalities manifest in access to and control over CPRs?	3. To examine disparities in women's access to and decision-making authority regarding CPRs compared to men.
What are the barriers to women's effective participation in CPR management?	4. To explore challenges and constraints faced by women in engaging with CPR governance processes.
What strategies can enhance women's empowerment and agency in CPR management?	5. To propose actionable recommendations for promoting women's empowerment and inclusion in CPR management initiatives.

The research design for investigating the role of women in CPR (Common Property Resources) management in India involved adopting a mixed-method approach. This approach integrated qualitative and quantitative methodologies to comprehensively explore the multifaceted dimensions of women's involvement in CPR governance. By employing both quantitative surveys and qualitative data collection methods such as interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques, the study aimed to capture a holistic understanding of women's participation, decision-making authority, and access to CPRs.

## 8. Study Sample

This present study seeks to explore the nuanced and multifaceted involvement of 750 women in CPR management within the context of Rajasthan and other stakeholders such as Sarpanch, Ward Panch, BDOs, Forest Department, MNREGA, PHED, Teachers, CSOs, WUGs. It collects evidence from selected villages of the following three regions:

Region	Block and district	Agro-climatic Zones
Southern Region - (Udaipur)	Abu road, Sirohi	Transitional Plain of Luni Basin
	Jhadol, Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur)	Sub Humid Southern Plain
Western Region- (Jodhpur)	Balotra, Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur)	Transitional Plain of Luni Basin
	Kuchaman, Nagaur	Transitional plain of Inland Drainage
Eastern Region - (Jaipur)	Dudu, Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur)	Semi Arid Eastern Plain
	Patan	

The diverse climatic zones of Rajasthan shape the types and management practices of common property resources (CPRs) across the region. Here's an overview of how these resources are utilized and managed in various zones and regions:

### Southern Region

1. Transitional Plain of Luni Basin in Southern Rajasthan: Abu Road fall within this region and boasts CPRs such as grazing lands, village pastures, community forests, and water bodies. These resources are traditionally managed by local tribal communities and play a vital role in their economic, social, and cultural activities.
2. Sub Humid Southern Plain: In the Sub Humid Southern Plain around the Southern Rajasthan, particularly in regions like Jhadol, Udaipur, CPRs such as forests, grazing lands, and water bodies are crucial for local communities. Efforts to combat desertification and restore common lands underscore the importance of these resources for both livelihoods and environmental sustainability.

### Western Region

1. Arid and Semi Arid Zone: This arid and semi-arid zone, including areas like Balotra, features CPRs adapted to its harsh climatic conditions. Key resources include grazing lands, village pastures, and orans, which are essential for the sustenance of pastoral communities and their livestock.
2. Transitional Plain: Kuchaman, the Transitional plain Zone, has CPRs that reflect its transitional nature. These include village pastures, community forests, and water bodies. Managed by local communities, these resources meet various needs and support the local way of life.

### Eastern Region

1. Semi Arid Eastern Plains: Areas like Dudu and Kishangarh fall within this zone. Here, irrigation practices significantly influence the nature and management of CPRs. The mix of resources

includes common lands and water bodies, which are managed by local communities to suit the irrigated landscape.

Each climatic zone in Rajasthan presents unique challenges and opportunities for the management of CPRs. Understanding these variations is essential for sustainable resource management and for supporting the livelihoods of the communities that depend on them.

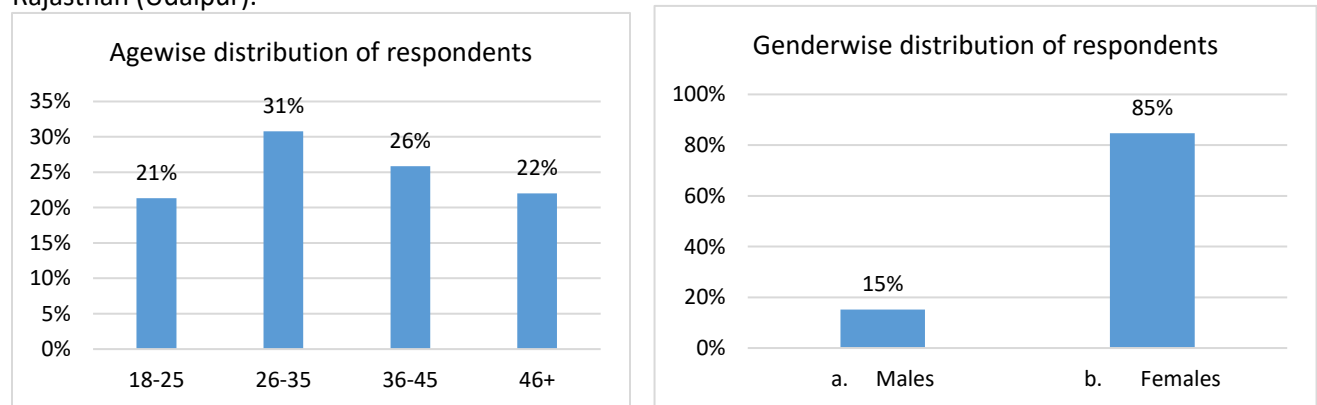
Through study, we aim to shed light on the intricate dynamics of women's involvement in CPR management in the above-mentioned regions. By examining their roles, challenges, and potential contributions, we can identify avenues for promoting gender equity and enhancing sustainable resource management practices. Recognizing and amplifying the voices of women in CPR management is not only essential for ensuring their rights and empowerment but also for fostering more inclusive and effective resource governance systems.

## 9. Profile of the respondents covered by the study

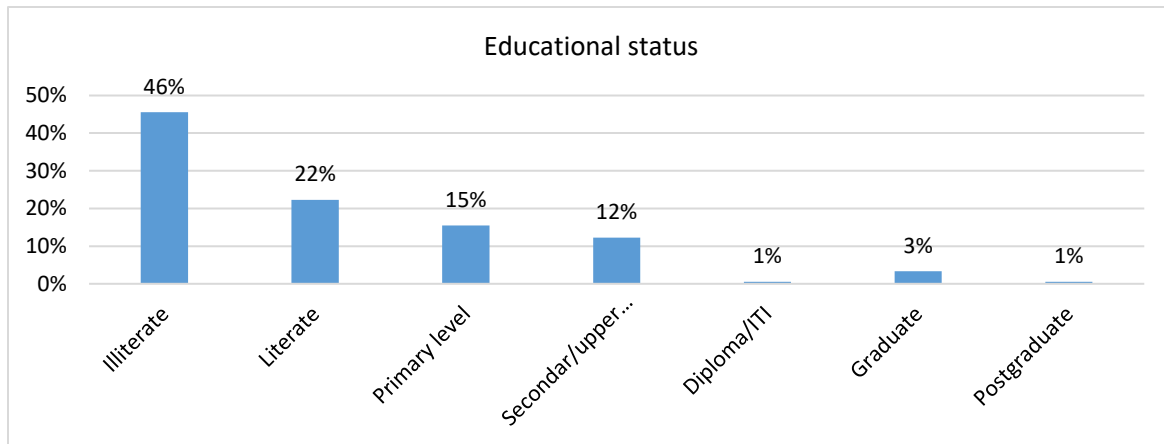
The data collected under the study offers a detailed breakdown of demographic characteristics across various categories such as age, gender, education, occupation, economic status, and caste affiliation for respondents in the regions of Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur).

In terms of age distribution, the largest percentage of respondents falls within the 26-35 age group across all three regions, comprising 31% of the total sample. Conversely, the 18-25 age group represents the smallest proportion of respondents, constituting only 21% across all regions.

Gender distribution reveals a significant majority of female respondents, comprising 85% of the total sample, with males accounting for the remaining 15%. Interestingly, Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) exhibits a slightly higher percentage of male respondents compared to Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur).

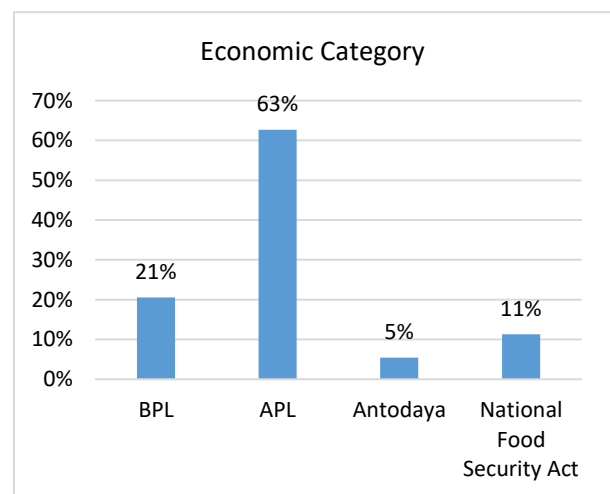
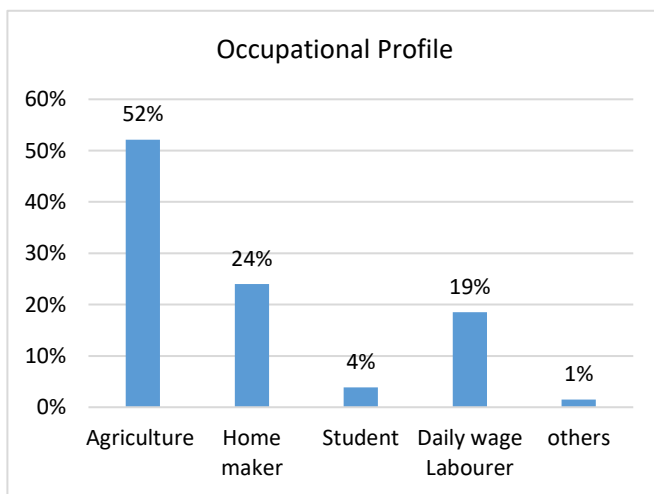


Regarding education levels, the data indicates that the majority of respondents have attained at least primary education or higher, with 46% having completed primary education, 22% being literate, and 15% having achieved secondary or upper secondary education. Notably, only 12% of respondents are categorized as illiterate.

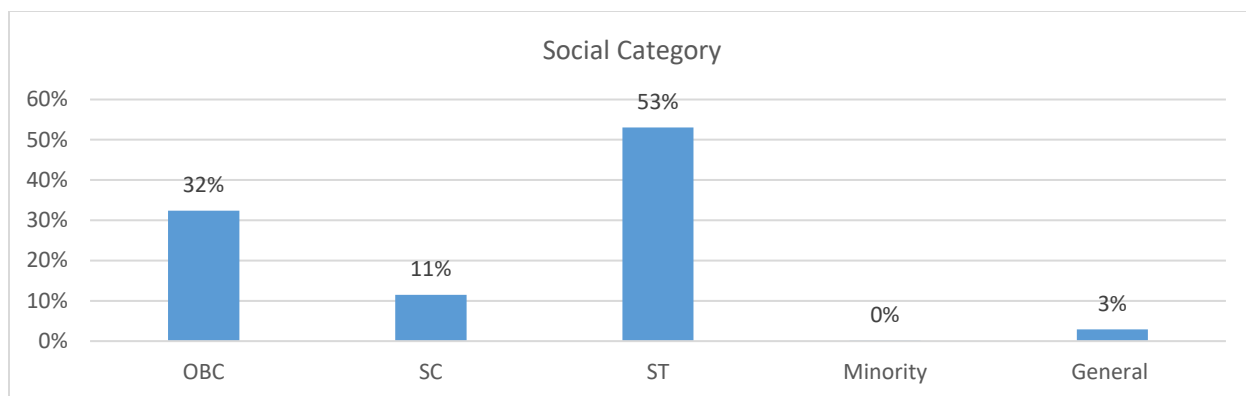


Occupational distribution portrays agriculture as the predominant sector of employment, encompassing 52% of the total sample. Home makers represent the second-largest occupational group, constituting 24% of respondents, indicating a significant portion of the population engaged in household duties.

Economic category distribution reveals that the majority of respondents belong to the APL (Above Poverty Line) category, comprising 63% of the total sample. Conversely, BPL (Below Poverty Line) respondents represent 21% of the total sample, indicating a substantial portion of the population facing economic challenges.

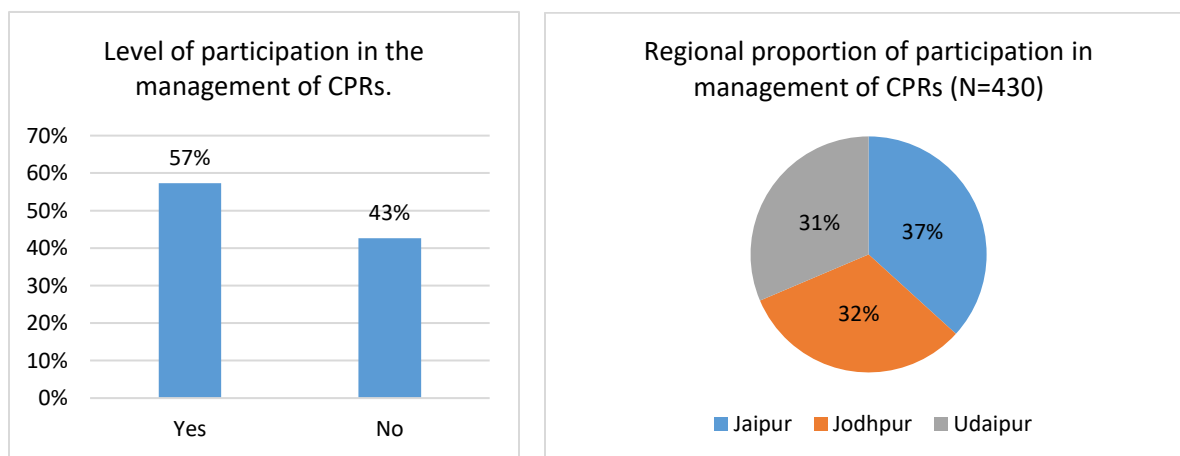


Caste category distribution depicts variations across regions, with the ST (Scheduled Tribe) category exhibiting the highest representation in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), accounting for 33% of the total sample in that city. OBC (Other Backward Classes) respondents constitute the majority in Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) (22%) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) (10%), reflecting diverse caste affiliations among the surveyed population.



## 10. Community engagement in managing CPRs (both male and female)

The data indicates the level of community engagement in managing common resources. Across all regions, a substantial number of respondents (57%) have answered "Yes," indicating active involvement in managing common resources. While an equally large number of respondents have answered "no", indicating that they never participated in the management of CPRs of their own village. On the regional basis the largest share of participants active in management of CPRs goes to Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) where 375 of the total sample of respondents for the study answer "yes". However, looking at each region separately, in Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), 158 out of 250 respondents (63%) have managed common resources, while in Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), 137 out of 250 respondents (55%) have done so. Similarly, in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), 135 out of 250 respondents (54%) have engaged in managing common resources.

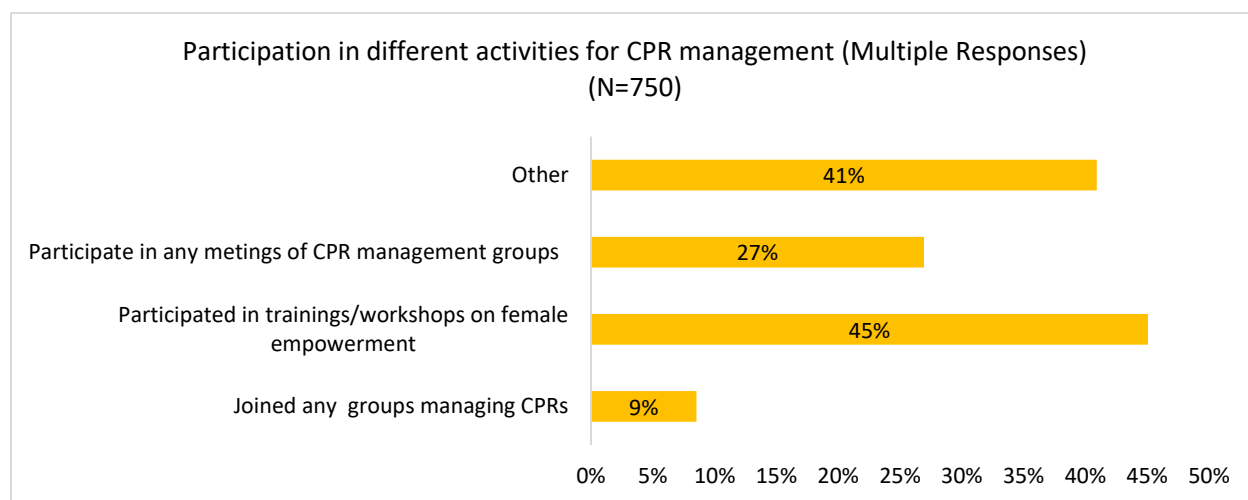


While the differences are not substantial, they may reflect varying levels of community participation and awareness of common resource management practices in different regions. The relatively high proportion of respondents who have managed common resources suggests a potential for community-based resource management initiatives in these regions. Communities appear to be actively involved in the management of resources such as grazing lands, water bodies, and forests, which are essential for their livelihoods and well-being.

While the data provides insights into the level of community engagement in managing common resources, further investigation was done under the study to understand the specific types of resources being managed by women, the effectiveness of existing management practices, and the challenges faced by

communities in resource management. A detailed explanation of the insights into this aspect has been discussed at the later stage of this report.

In summary, the data implies a significant level of community engagement in managing common resources across the studied regions, highlighting the **potential for community-based resource management initiatives**.



The above graph provides insight into community engagement regarding CPR management across Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) regions. It reveals varying levels of participation in different activities related to CPR management although a considerable number of respondents in all regions have participated in trainings and workshops on female empowerment.

## 11. Common Perception about the Use of CPRs by Women

Women's engagement with Common Property Resources (CPRs) in Rajasthan encompasses various domains, including water resources, land resources for grazing, and forests. Their roles in utilizing and managing these resources are integral to sustaining livelihoods and ensuring community well-being, particularly in rural areas.

### Water Resources

Women play a pivotal role in accessing and managing water resources, which are essential for domestic, agricultural, and livestock-related activities. Their responsibilities include:

- **Water Collection:** Women often bear the primary responsibility for collecting water for household use. They travel to nearby water sources, such as rivers, ponds, or community wells, sometimes over long distances. Carrying heavy containers, they fetch water for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and other domestic chores.

### Land Resources (Grazing)

Common land resources, particularly grazing lands, are vital for livestock rearing, a significant source of livelihood for many rural households. Women's roles in managing these resources include:



- **Grazing Management:** Women often oversee the grazing of livestock on common lands, ensuring that animals have access to adequate pasture and forage. They may coordinate grazing schedules, monitor livestock health, and prevent overgrazing to maintain the sustainability of grazing lands.
- **Fodder Collection:** Women gather fodder from common grazing lands to feed their livestock. They collect grasses, leaves, and other vegetation, supplementing the diet of cattle, goats, and other animals. Fodder collection is a labor-intensive task that requires knowledge of local plant species and sustainable harvesting practices.
- **Livestock Care:** Women are responsible for the care and management of livestock, including feeding, watering, and sheltering animals. They play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being of livestock, which are valuable assets for rural households.

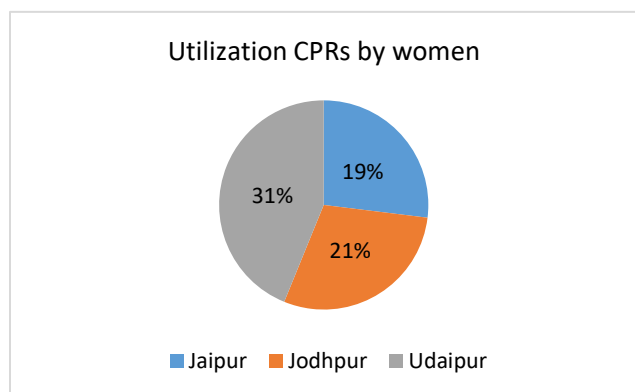
## Forest Resources

Forests provide a range of ecosystem services and resources that are essential for livelihoods, including timber, fuelwood, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and ecosystem stability. Women's involvement in forest management includes:

- **Fuelwood Collection:** Women gather fuelwood from forests for cooking and heating purposes, particularly in areas where access to alternative energy sources is limited. They may face challenges such as deforestation, degradation of forest resources, and conflicts over resource access.
- **NTFP Harvesting:** Women collect a variety of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for consumption and income generation. These products include fruits, nuts, medicinal plants, honey, and bamboo shoots, which contribute to household food security and local economies.

The data provided indicates the utilization of common resources in respondents' communities, with Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) showing a lower percentage of utilization compared to Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) regions.

Overall, 527 (70%) of respondents across all regions believe that women actively utilized common resources in their communities, while 30% have not. However, when broken down by region, Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) demonstrates the lowest utilization rate by 142 (19% of the total respondents) followed by Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) by 154 (21% of the total respondents) and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) by 231 (31% of the total respondent).



This discrepancy in utilization rates between Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) and the other regions may be attributed to several factors:

The geographic and environmental characteristics of Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) impacts the higher use of CPRs compared to other regions like Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur). Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), located in the southern part of Rajasthan, is characterized by a more rugged and hilly terrain compared to the relatively flat Irrigated Northwestern Plain where Eastern Rajasthan

(Jaipur) is situated. This diverse landscape often supports a greater variety of CPRs such as forests, perennial rivers, and ponds, which are crucial for meeting various needs of the local communities which are largely tribal. These tribes have preserved traditional livelihood practices that are closely tied to the utilization of CPRs. For example, communities rely on grazing lands for livestock rearing, forests for NTFPs, fuelwood and timber. Moreover, with numerous sacred groves (Orans) and temples dotting the landscape. These areas often have cultural significance and are protected by local communities, leading to sustained utilization of CPRs for religious ceremonies, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

The tribals have **stronger community governance structures and traditional management practices** in place for CPRs compared to non-tribal regions like Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur). Local tribal communities often have established rules and norms for sustainable utilization of common resources, ensuring their equitable distribution and long-term conservation.

Overall, the geographic and environmental characteristics of Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) region, including its topography, water availability, cultural practices, and community governance, likely contribute to a higher utilization of CPRs by local communities compared to regions with different ecological and socio-economic contexts.

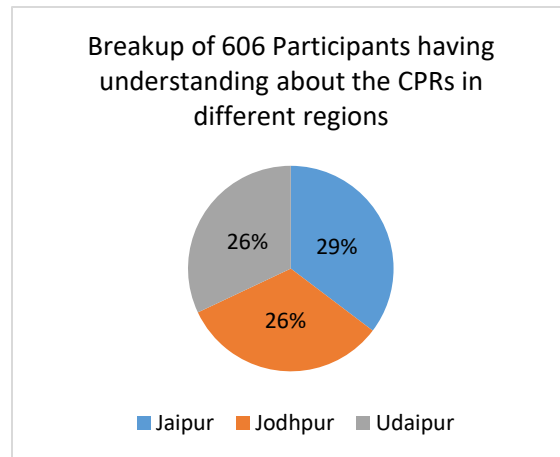
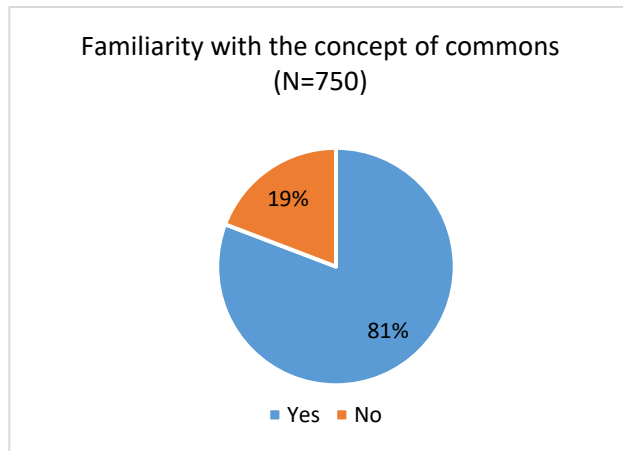
Nevertheless, as highlighted earlier, a significant majority of 527 respondents (70%) from diverse regions have actively engaged with Community resources within their communities. The research specifically gathered insights on the following aspects:

1. **The level of awareness among women regarding Community resources.**
2. **Their contributions to the preservation and administration of these shared resources.**
3. **The power dynamics influencing decision-making processes of women.**
4. **Their perspectives on strategies to enhance their involvement in decision-making processes.**

## **12. Measuring Women's Engagement with CPRs: Insights from Diverse Regions**

### **12.1 Women's familiarity with the concept of commons**

The field data give evidence of the respondents' (of which majority are female) familiarity with the concept of commons and the types of common resources available in their villages. 606 respondents (81%) across all villages are familiar with the concept of commons, while 19% are not. This indicates a widespread awareness of common resources among the surveyed population. It is noteworthy that among these 606 respondents, the understanding is more or less of the same level in all the three regions, Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) being just marginally higher.



Analyzing the types of common resources in different regions, the data reveals a variety of resources utilized by communities which are as follows:

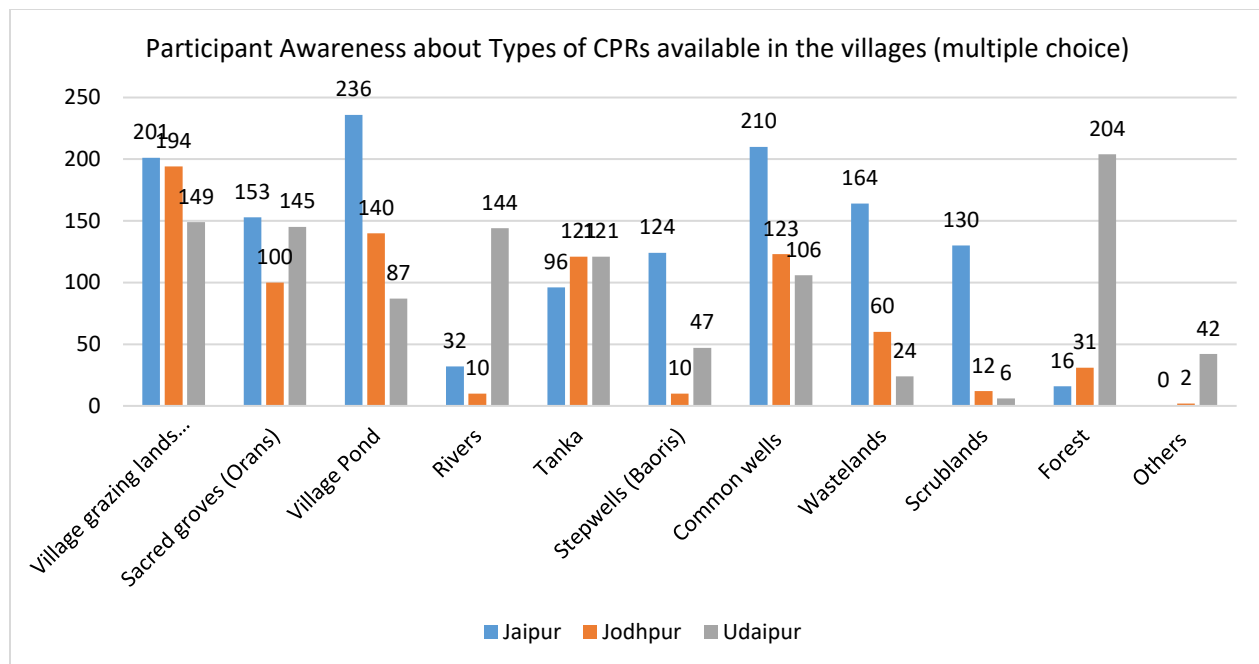
- Village grazing lands (Gauchar/charagah/charnot), village ponds, and common wells emerge as the most prevalent common resources across all villages, with high percentages of respondents indicating their presence.
- Sacred groves (Orans) and forests are also significant common resources, particularly in Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), where they exhibit substantial representation. This suggests the cultural and ecological significance of these areas within the village landscape.
- Rivers and tankas are notable common resources, albeit with lower representation compared to other categories. This variation may reflect geographical differences in the availability of water bodies and traditional water harvesting structures across different regions.
- Wastelands and scrublands are identified as common resources in all regions, albeit with lower percentages. This highlights the importance of utilizing and managing marginal lands for various community needs, including grazing and resource collection.



*Common Nadis*



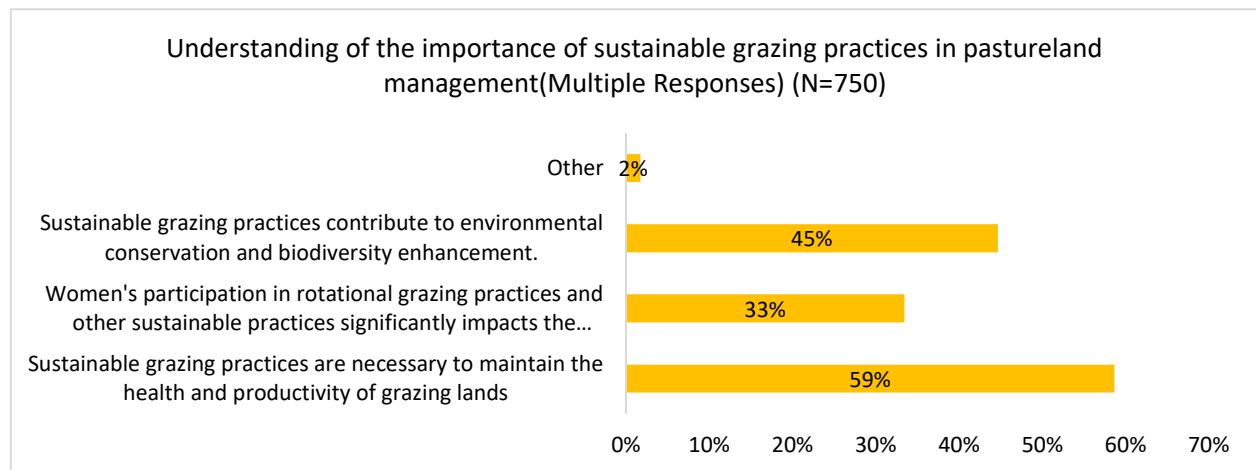
*Common Forests*



There are variations in the abundance of specific common resources across the three regions. For instance, Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) has higher counts of respondents mentioning about the availability of village ponds (31%), common wells (28%), wastelands (22%) and scrublands (17%) compared to Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur). On the other hand, Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) has fewer village ponds (19%), while Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) has a higher count of respondents mentioning about the availability of rivers (19%) and forests (27%).

Implications of this data include the importance of recognizing and preserving common resources as vital components of rural livelihoods and community well-being. Efforts to sustainably manage and conserve these resources should consider local needs, traditional knowledge, and community participation to ensure equitable access and long-term sustainability. Additionally, policies and interventions aimed at commons management should be informed by local contexts and actively involve communities in decision-making processes to safeguard these valuable assets for future generations.

## Understanding of women about the importance of sustainable grazing practices in pastureland management



The field data indicates that there is a significant understanding of the importance of sustainable land management practices, particularly in the context of grazing lands (charagah). The responses highlight various aspects of the significance of sustainable grazing practices:

1. Importance for Maintaining Land Health and Productivity: Across all regions, a total of 440 respondents (Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur): 203, Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur): 128, Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur): 109) emphasized the necessity of sustainable grazing practices for maintaining the health and productivity of grazing lands. This indicates a widespread recognition of the critical role that sustainable grazing plays in preserving the functionality of these lands.
2. Importance of Women's Participation in Rotational Grazing: A total of 251 respondents (Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur): 76, Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur): 151, Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur): 24) highlighted the importance of women's participation in rotational or rotational grazing practices. This indicates varying levels of awareness regarding the role of women in ensuring the stability and resilience of grazing lands through their involvement in rotational grazing practices.
3. Contribution to Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity Enhancement: Across all regions, a total of 335 respondents (Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur): 118, Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur): 54, Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur): 163) emphasized how sustainable grazing practices contribute to environmental conservation and biodiversity enhancement. This suggests a widespread understanding of the broader ecological benefits associated with sustainable land management practices.

Overall, the data suggests a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted benefits of sustainable grazing practices, including maintaining land health, involving women in management, and promoting environmental conservation. These insights are crucial for formulating effective policies and interventions aimed at promoting sustainable land management practices in rural areas.

During the FGDs some example of sustainable grazing practices were given by the women - Some examples of sustainable grazing practices include:

1. Rotational Grazing practices: Dividing the land into segments and rotating grazing animals between them every few days to allow forage grasses to rejuvenate, leading to healthier grasslands and reduced soil erosion.

2. Traditional practices: Traditional Grazing and pasturing methods that recycle animal wastes back into the soil have the potential to regenerate and transform vast amounts of coarse, sustainably grown forage into food for animals and for humans. These traditional systems are more productive and less destructive.

### Understanding of women about the Forests as CPRs

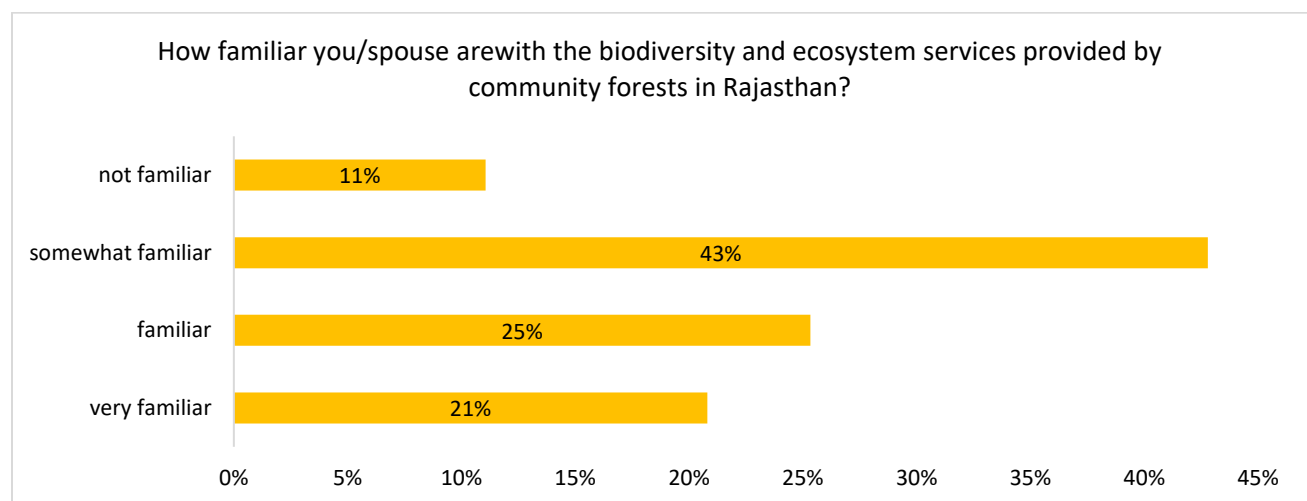
Overall, 156 respondents (21%) across all regions indicated being very familiar with the concept of biodiversity and ecosystem services. It was found that in Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), 84 respondents (11%) expressed being very familiar with the biodiversity and ecosystem services provided by community forests. In Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), this figure stands at 56 respondents (7%), while in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), it is notably lower at 16 respondents (2%).

The number of respondents who consider themselves familiar with the biodiversity and ecosystem services varies across regions. In Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), 110 respondents (15%) fall into this category, compared to 61 respondents (8%) in Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) and 19 respondents (3%) in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur). In total, 190 respondents (25%) expressed familiarity with these concepts.

A larger proportion of respondents in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), 186 (25%), indicated being somewhat familiar with biodiversity and ecosystem services compared to Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) (52 respondents, 7%) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) (83 respondents, 11%). This suggests a higher level of awareness or exposure to these concepts in the Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) region.

Across all regions, a total of 83 respondents (11%) indicated not being familiar with biodiversity and ecosystem services. The proportion of respondents in this category is relatively low compared to those who expressed some level of familiarity.

Overall, the data suggests varying levels of understanding of the biodiversity and ecosystem services provided by community forests across different regions of Rajasthan. While some respondents are very familiar or familiar with these concepts, a significant portion, especially in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), indicated being somewhat familiar or not familiar. This highlights the need for targeted awareness programs and educational initiatives to enhance understanding and appreciation of the importance of community forests and their ecological services.





The implications of the data on familiarity with biodiversity and ecosystem services provided by community forests in Rajasthan are significant:

**Education and Awareness Campaigns:** The relatively low levels of familiarity, especially in regions like Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), suggest a need for extensive education and awareness campaigns. These campaigns can focus on highlighting the importance of community forests in preserving biodiversity and providing essential ecosystem services. Targeted efforts should be made to reach out to communities in areas where awareness levels are low.

**Capacity Building:** There is a clear need for capacity building initiatives to enhance understanding and knowledge about biodiversity and ecosystem services among residents, particularly in regions where familiarity is lacking. Workshops, training programs, and community engagement activities can be organized to empower local communities to better manage and conserve their community forests.

**Partnerships and Collaboration:** Collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, research institutions, and local communities is essential to address gaps in awareness and understanding of biodiversity and ecosystem services. By working together, stakeholders can develop comprehensive strategies and action plans to promote sustainable forest management practices and enhance ecosystem resilience.

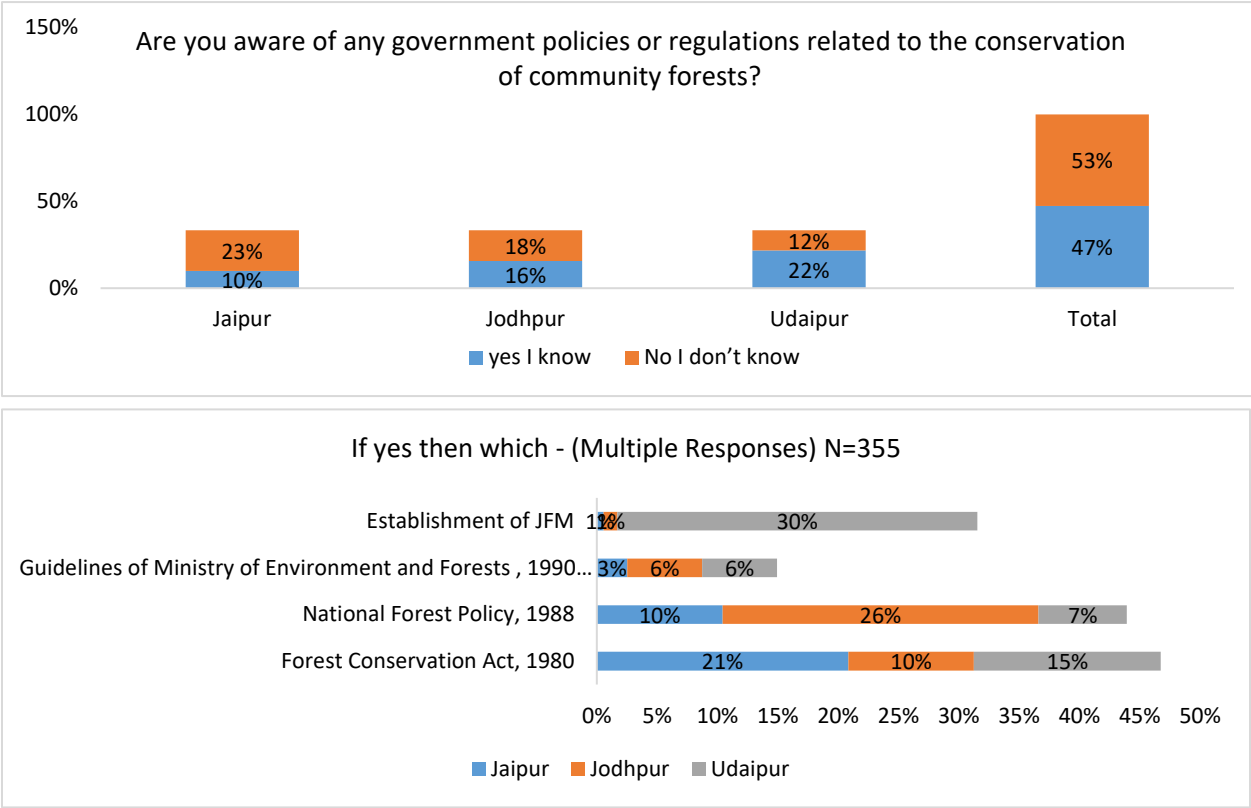
**Long-term Sustainability:** Building a strong foundation of knowledge and awareness among communities is crucial for the long-term sustainability of community forests. By investing in education, capacity building, and community engagement, stakeholders can foster a culture of conservation and stewardship that benefits both present and future generations.

Overall, the data highlights the importance of enhancing familiarity with biodiversity and ecosystem services among communities in Rajasthan to ensure the effective management and conservation of community forests. By addressing knowledge gaps and promoting community engagement, stakeholders can work towards a more sustainable and resilient forest ecosystem in the region.

#### **Awareness of Government Policies related to Forest conservation-**

The data regarding awareness of government policies or laws related to the conservation of community forests in Rajasthan provides several insights. Approximately 47% of the respondents across all regions claimed to be familiar with government policies or laws related to community forest conservation. This suggests a moderate level of awareness among the surveyed population. However, a significant portion (53%) indicated a lack of knowledge about such policies or laws, highlighting the need for increased awareness-raising efforts.

Among those who claimed familiarity with government policies or laws, the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 and the National Forest Policy of 1988 are the most widely recognized across all regions. However, there are variations in awareness of other policies or guidelines. For example, in Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), a significant portion of respondents mentioned awareness of the Forest Conservation Act and the National Forest Policy but had limited knowledge of other guidelines. Conversely, in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), awareness of the Joint Forest Management (JFM) program is notably higher compared to other regions.



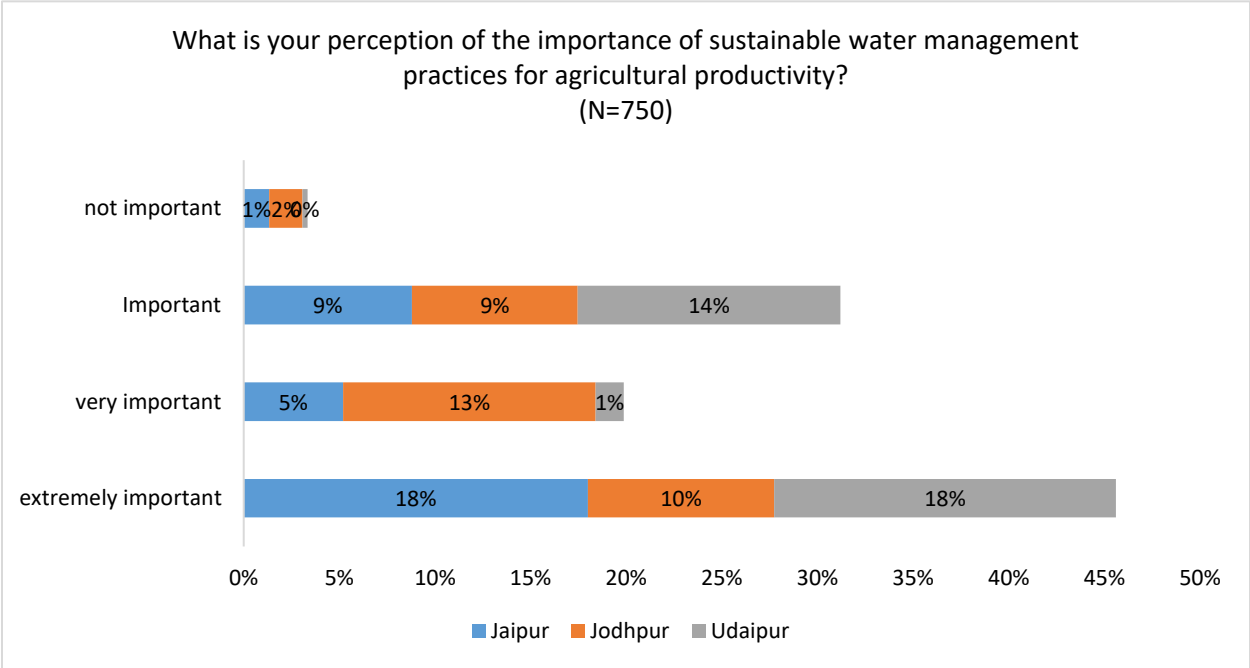
There are noticeable differences in awareness levels across regions. Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) exhibits the highest awareness level, with 22% of the total aware respondents claiming to know about relevant government policies or laws. In contrast, Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) have lower awareness levels, with only 10% and 16% of respondents, respectively, claiming knowledge about these policies or laws. This regional disparity points towards the importance of targeted awareness campaigns tailored to specific regions.

The data suggests that while some government policies or laws related to community forest conservation are relatively well-known among the surveyed population, there are gaps in awareness, particularly in certain regions and regarding specific policies or guidelines. Addressing these gaps through targeted awareness campaigns and educational initiatives can enhance community participation and cooperation in the implementation of relevant policies, thereby promoting more effective conservation efforts and sustainable management of community forests across Rajasthan.

**Awareness about Water Resources**

The data provided sheds light on the perceptions and understanding of environmental water management practices and the identification of key factors contributing to water scarcity in different regions of Rajasthan. Most respondents across all regions perceive environmental water management techniques as significant for agricultural productivity. In total, 46% consider it extremely important, with 20% viewing it as very important. This indicates a strong recognition of the vital role that environmental water management plays in sustaining agricultural activities and ensuring water availability for farming.

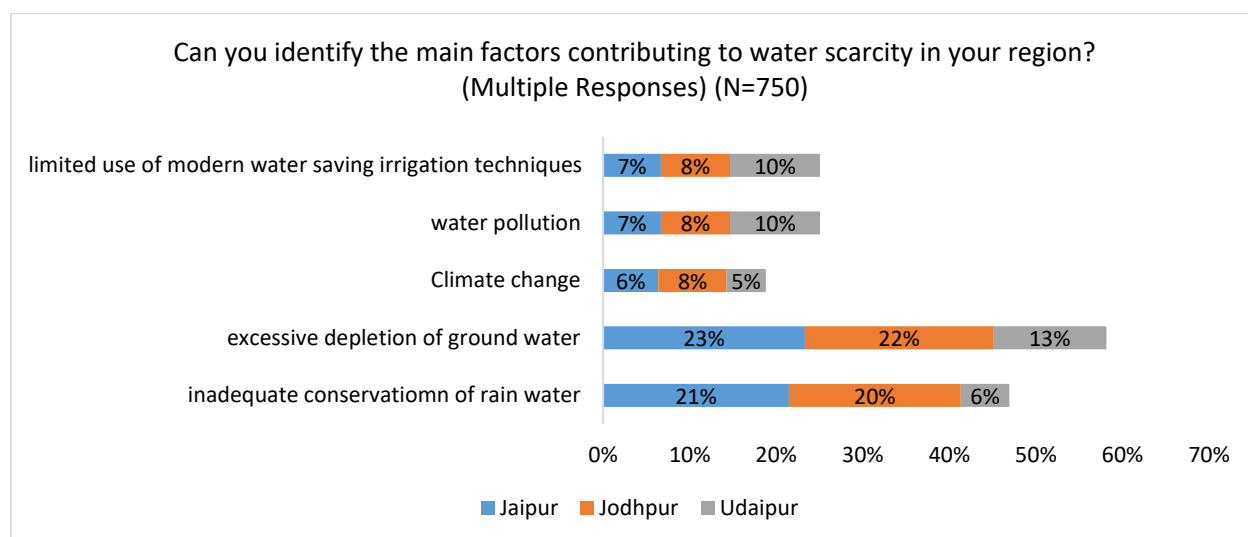
There are noticeable differences in the perception of the importance of environmental water management across regions. Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) exhibit higher proportions of respondents considering it extremely important (18% and 18%, respectively), compared to Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) (10%). Conversely, Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) has the highest percentage of respondents who view it as very important (13%), suggesting varying degrees of awareness and



understanding of the significance of water management practices among different communities.

**Identification of Water Scarcity Factors:**

Regarding the recognition of key factors contributing to water scarcity, inadequate conservation of rainwater emerges as the most identified factor across all regions, with 47% of respondents acknowledging its significance. Excessive depletion of groundwater and climate change are also widely recognized, with 58% and 19% of respondents, respectively, identifying these factors. This suggests a relatively high level of awareness among the surveyed population regarding the multifaceted nature of water scarcity and its underlying causes.



The data highlights the importance of promoting environmental water management practices and raising awareness about the factors contributing to water scarcity. **Addressing these issues requires comprehensive strategies that integrate rainwater harvesting, sustainable groundwater management, climate resilience measures, and pollution control initiatives.** By prioritizing these aspects and implementing effective water resource management policies, Rajasthan can mitigate water scarcity challenges and enhance agricultural sustainability, thereby ensuring the resilience of rural livelihoods and ecosystems in the face of changing environmental conditions.

## 12.2 Management of CPRs by Women: Highlighting Unique Contributions

Women's involvement in managing Common Property Resources (CPRs) in Rajasthan is characterized by their distinctive contributions across categories such as water, land (grazing), and forests. The study explored the diverse roles and approaches of women in sustaining these vital resources, emphasizing their indigenous knowledge, conservation efforts, and collective action through self-help groups, water user groups, forest conservation committees, etc.

### Indigenous Knowledge:

Across all CPR categories, women possess a wealth of indigenous knowledge honed through generations of close interaction with their environments. They have an intimate understanding of local water sources, grazing lands, and forest ecosystems, including seasonal variations, biodiversity, and traditional management practices. They hold detailed knowledge of local water sources, understanding their significance, quality, and seasonal variations. This knowledge allows them to make informed decisions on water usage and conservation, ensuring sustainable access for their communities.

- Through traditional practices, women possess in-depth knowledge of grazing lands, including vegetation types, carrying capacities, and grazing patterns. This understanding enables them to manage livestock sustainably, preserving the health of the land for future generations. Drawing from ancestral knowledge, women implement traditional management practices that prioritize ecological preservation. These practices often involve community-based approaches, collective decision-making, and respect for the interconnectedness of all living beings.
 

"Our ways might not be written down, but they're still important. We've been taking care of this land for generations, and we know what works. They need to respect that, and help us keep doing what we've always done" – A women farmer from Jhadol
- Women have a holistic understanding of forest ecosystems, recognizing diverse plant and animal species, seasonal changes, and the interconnectedness of flora and fauna. This knowledge guides them in sustainable harvesting practices, promoting biodiversity conservation. Indigenous women closely observe and interpret seasonal changes and their awareness of seasonal patterns informs decisions on planting, harvesting, and conservation efforts, aligning human activities with nature's rhythms.
 

"Our health is tied to the forest. When we take care of it, it takes care of us. We've got what we need right here. Our forest keeps us healthy, and we need to keep it safe"- A woman farmer from Abu Road
- A very different perspective was highlighted in Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) region, participants of FGDs were not much aware about traditional water conservation practices, nor any evidence could be collected in this context.
 

"It is the government's duty to maintain the Common properties, water supply is the responsibility of government, we don't have the capacity or understanding about the maintenance of water resources "- A woman respondent from Patan

**This indigenous wisdom forms the foundation for sustainable resource utilization**, guiding women in making informed decisions that balance human needs with ecological preservation. Practices of indigenous women's practices in CPRs reflect a deep-rooted connection to their environments, emphasizing sustainability, biodiversity conservation, and the harmonious coexistence of human activities with nature.

During the focus group discussions (FGDs) with women's groups conducted in various areas, a notable trend emerged regarding **recently increased participation** of women in local governance forums such as **gram sabhas and mahila choupals**. In these discussions, it was observed that a significant number of women have begun actively engaging in these community gatherings, where they voice concerns and raise issues related to the deterioration of CPRs.

This shift in participation reflects a growing awareness and recognition among women regarding the importance of CPRs for their communities' well-being and sustainability. By participating in gram sabhas and mahila choupals, women get a platform for not only asserting their presence in decision-making processes but also for advocating for the preservation and sustainable management of vital resources like grazing lands, water bodies, and forests. Their involvement is very recent but it signifies scope for a broader movement towards inclusive governance and highlights the crucial role of women in environmental conservation and community development efforts.

**Additionally, this newfound participation suggests an opportunity for fostering dialogue and collaboration between different stakeholders to address CPR-related challenges effectively,** thereby contributing to the overall resilience and prosperity of the community.



Women are at the forefront of conservation efforts in CPR management. The data collected from the field reflect that 100 % of respondents believe that women actively engage in initiatives such as water conservation, land restoration, and forest protection to mitigate environmental degradation and promote a resilient ecosystem. Through their commitment to sustainable practices and community-based approaches, women contribute significantly to the preservation of biodiversity, soil fertility, and water quality in their localities.

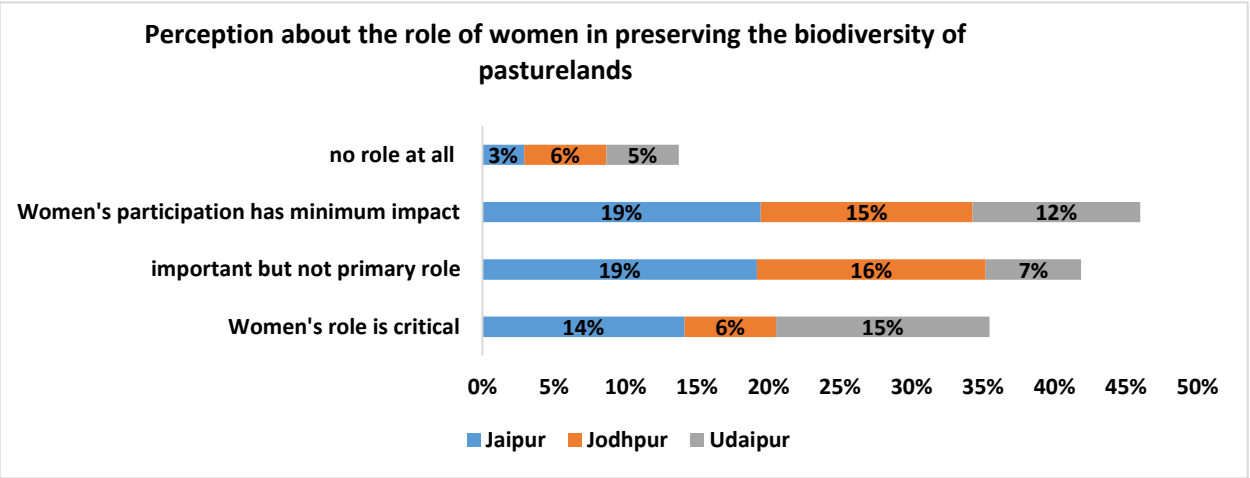
### **Role of women in Pastureland (charagah) management and conservation**

Overall, there is a recognition of the importance of women's role in grazing land management across regions. Across all regions, 35% of respondents perceive women's role as critical in grazing land management. A slightly higher percentage, 42%, believe that women have an important but not primary role in grazing land management. Approximately 46% of respondents feel that women's participation has a minimum impact on grazing land management. A smaller percentage, 14%, think that women have no role at all in grazing land management.

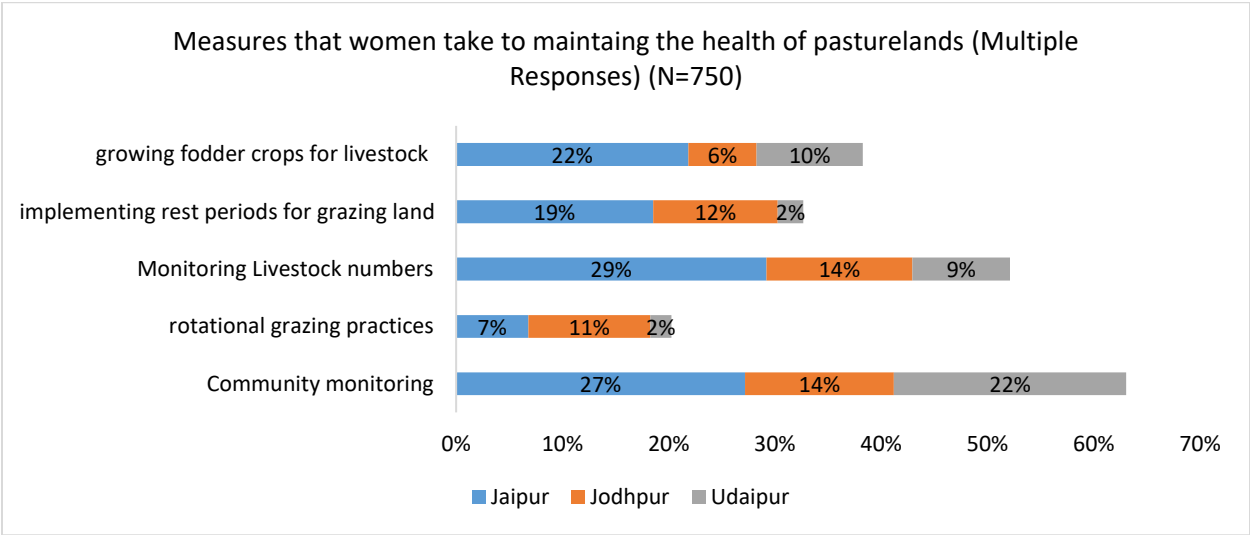
However, there are disparities in perceptions, with some regions showing higher levels of awareness and recognition compared to others. These disparities may stem from various factors, including cultural norms, access to resources, and levels of education and awareness within communities. Addressing these disparities may require targeted interventions and awareness-raising efforts tailored to the specific needs and contexts of each region. In Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), 35% of respondents perceive women's role as critical, while 19% consider it an important but not primary role. However, a considerable proportion, 19%, believes that women's participation has a minimum impact. In Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), only 6% perceive women's role as critical, while 16% believe it is an important but not primary role. Interestingly, 15% feel that women's participation has a minimum impact, indicating a higher awareness compared to Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur).



In Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), 15% view women's role as critical, while 7% consider it an important but not primary role. However, 12% believe that women's participation has a minimum impact, indicating some disparities within the region itself.



The graph given below presents responses about that women in their community take to prevent overgrazing and maintain the health of pasturelands. This was a multiple answer question, a total of 473 respondents, representing 63% of the total, reported engagement in community monitoring activities. 152 respondents, accounting for 20% of the total, indicated involvement in rotational grazing practices. 391 respondents, comprising 52% of the total, reported monitoring livestock numbers, 245 respondents, representing 33% of the total, reported participation in implementing rest periods for grazing land and 287 respondents, making up 38% of the total, indicated involvement in growing fodder crops for livestock.



Overall, the data suggests a positive trend of community engagement in sustainable practices related to Community resource management. However, there are notable variations among regions, highlighting the importance of tailored interventions and capacity-building efforts to promote more widespread adoption of these practices, particularly in areas with lower participation rates.

**Community Monitoring:** Across all regions, a substantial number of respondents indicated involvement in community monitoring activities. Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) had the highest participation with 27%, followed by Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) (22%) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) (14%). This indicates a widespread recognition of the importance of collective oversight in preserving Community resources.

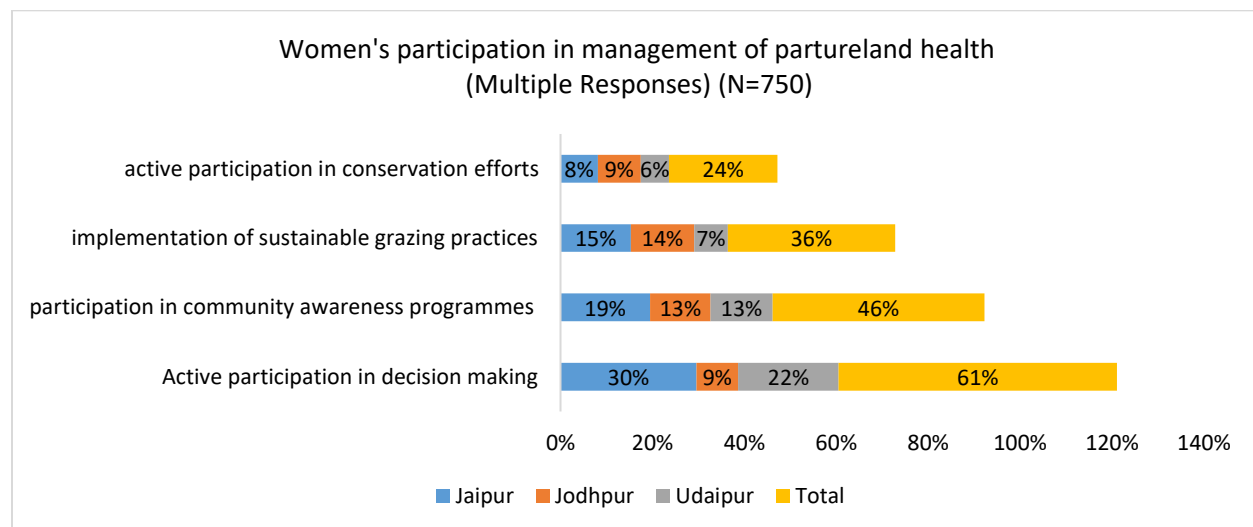
**Rotational Grazing Practices:** Rotational grazing is a crucial method to prevent overgrazing and maintain the health of grazing lands. Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) regions showed similar levels of engagement in this practice, with 7% and 11% participation, respectively. However, Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) exhibited notably lower involvement at just 2%.

**Monitoring Livestock Numbers:** Monitoring the number of livestock is essential for sustainable grazing practices. Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) had the highest participation in this activity (29%), followed by Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) (14%) and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) (9%). This indicates a significant level of awareness regarding the importance of managing livestock populations.

**Implementing Rest Periods for Grazing Land:** All regions showed relatively high involvement in implementing rest periods for grazing land. Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) had the highest participation at 19%, followed by Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) (12%) and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) (2%). This practice reflects an understanding of the need for land regeneration to maintain its productivity.

**Growing Fodder Crops for Livestock:** Providing alternative fodder sources can reduce pressure on grazing lands. Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) had the highest participation in growing fodder crops (22%), followed by Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) (10%) and Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) (6%). This indicates varying levels of adoption of supplementary feeding practices across regions.

Given these methods, the data indicates varying levels of women's participation in the management and conservation of grazing lands within their communities. Overall, 61% of the respondents reported active involvement in decision-making processes related to grazing land management. A substantial 46% of respondents participated in community awareness programs aimed at grazing land management. Around 36% of respondents indicated the implementation of one or more sustainable grazing practices mentioned above within their communities. Approximately 24% of respondents reported active participation in conservation efforts focused on grazing lands.



This overall trend suggests a considerable level of engagement and awareness among women regarding the importance of sustainable practices in grazing land management. However, there may be variations in participation levels across different regions, indicating potential areas for targeted interventions or further research to understand underlying factors influencing participation.

**Active Participation in Decision Making:** In Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), 30% of respondents reported active involvement in decision-making processes related to grazing land management, while in Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) and Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), the percentages were lower at 9% and 22%, respectively.

**Participation in Community Awareness Programmes:** Across all regions, a substantial portion of respondents participated in community awareness programs. In Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), 19% reported participation, compared to 13% in Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) and 13% in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur).

**Implementation of Sustainable Grazing Practices:** Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) had 15% of respondents indicating the implementation of sustainable grazing practices, while the figures were higher in Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur) (14%) and lower in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) (7%).

**Active Participation in Conservation Efforts:** About 8% of respondents in Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), 9% in Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), and 6% in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur) reported active participation in conservation efforts related to grazing lands.

## **Forest resources**

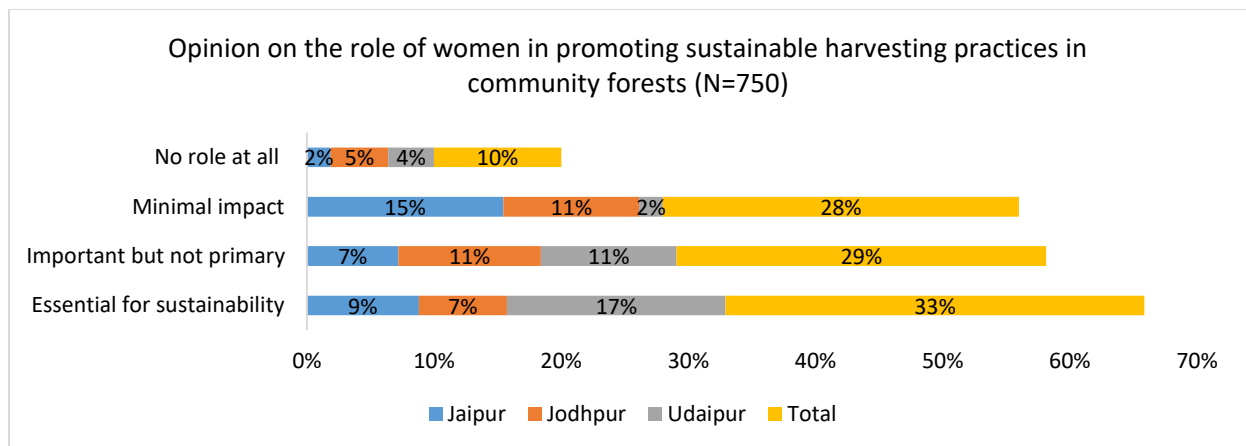
### **Opinion on the Role of Women in Promoting Sustainable Harvesting Practices:**

Across diverse regions, the perception of women's role in promoting sustainable harvesting practices in community forests varies. A significant proportion, constituting 33% of respondents, acknowledges the important role women play in ensuring the sustainability of forest resources.

Another notable segment, comprising approximately 29% of respondents view women's role as important but not primary in promoting sustainable harvesting practices. While they recognize the contributions of women, they may not prioritize them as the primary drivers of sustainability in community forests, indicating a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in resource management.

However, a concerning finding is that about 28% of respondents perceive women's participation to have minimal impact on promoting sustainable harvesting practices. This perspective suggests a potential underestimation of the significant contributions that women make to forest conservation and highlights the need for greater awareness and recognition of their valuable role in this aspect.

Moreover, a smaller yet notable proportion, accounting for 10% of respondents, believes that women have no role at all in promoting sustainable harvesting practices. This viewpoint may stem from entrenched gender biases or a lack of understanding of women's capabilities and contributions in forest management, highlighting the need for enhanced gender mainstreaming efforts in environmental conservation initiatives.

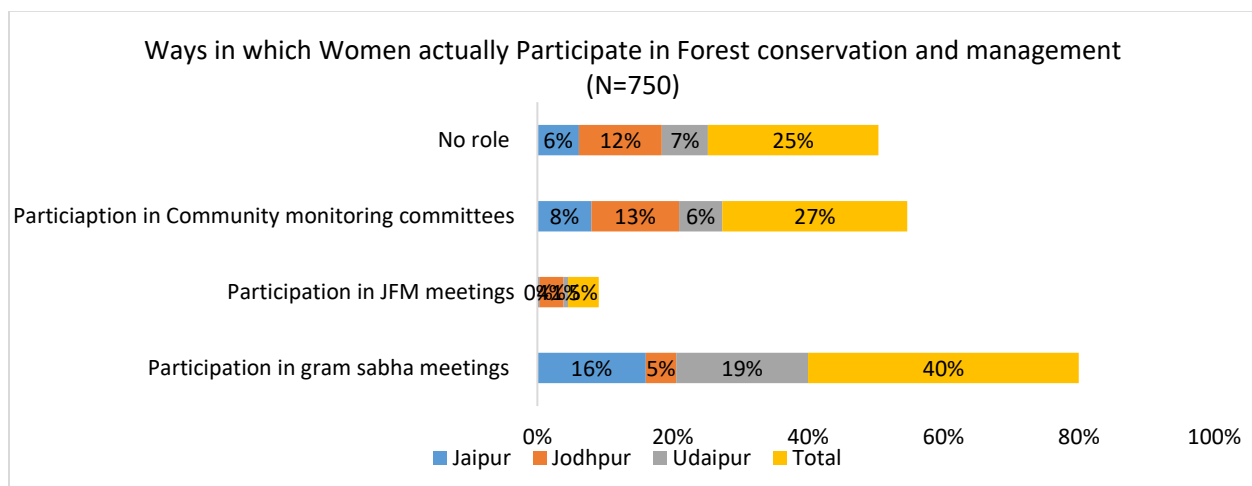


### Ways in which Women Participate in Forest conservation and management:

In terms of participation in decision-making processes related to community forests, the data reveals diverse patterns across regions. A significant proportion, constituting 40% of respondents, reports that women actively participate in gram sabha meetings, indicating their involvement in local-level decision-making processes regarding forest management and conservation.

However, a smaller percentage, only 5%, mention women's participation in Joint Forest Management (JFM) meetings, which are crucial for collaborative efforts in forest management. This suggests a potential area for improvement in ensuring women's inclusion in collaborative initiatives aimed at sustainable forest management.

Moreover, approximately 27% of respondents state that women participate in community monitoring committees, highlighting their role in overseeing and managing forest resources. This indicates that women are actively engaged in monitoring and safeguarding the health of community forests, contributing to their sustainable management.



Despite these positive aspects, there is still room for improvement, as 25% of respondents perceive that women have no role in decision-making processes related to community forests. This highlights the need for concerted efforts to enhance gender inclusivity and empower women to participate effectively in forest management initiatives, ultimately contributing to the sustainable conservation of forest resources.

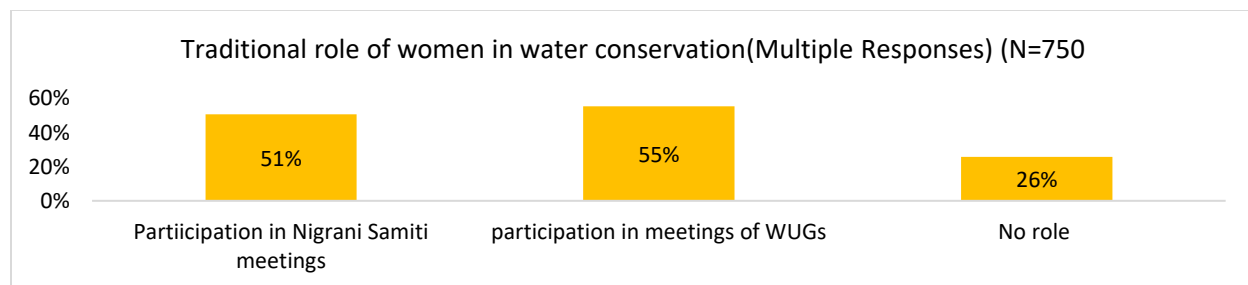
*During Meeting with PRI members in Abu road a major issue of encroach of forest lands came to the forefront. Forest encroachment significantly impacts the role of women in forest conservation by exacerbating existing challenges and inequalities. “When forest land is encroached upon, it directly leads to a scarcity of fuelwood, fodder, and other forest products, forcing women to travel longer distances and spend more time collecting these resources”.*

*“As forests degrade, the availability of forest-based ecosystem services diminish, impacting women's access to essential resources. Women's active involvement in sustainable forest management is crucial for maintaining critical ecosystem services, but encroachment undermines their ability to fulfill this role effectively. Addressing forest encroachment is essential not only for environmental conservation but also for empowering women to play a more effective and meaningful role in preserving forest ecosystems.”- Sarpanch Nichlagarh*

*“The encroachment of orans (sacred groves) significantly impacts the role of women in managing and accessing common property resources (CPRs). The degradation of orans due to encroachment also disrupts the traditional knowledge and practices that women have developed over generations for the sustainable management of these resources. Women's active involvement in the conservation and protection of orans is crucial, as they possess deep understanding of the local ecology and the importance of these community-managed forests. The loss of orans erodes women's decision-making power and agency in the management of CPRs.” – Forest Officer, Kuchaman*

## Water resources -

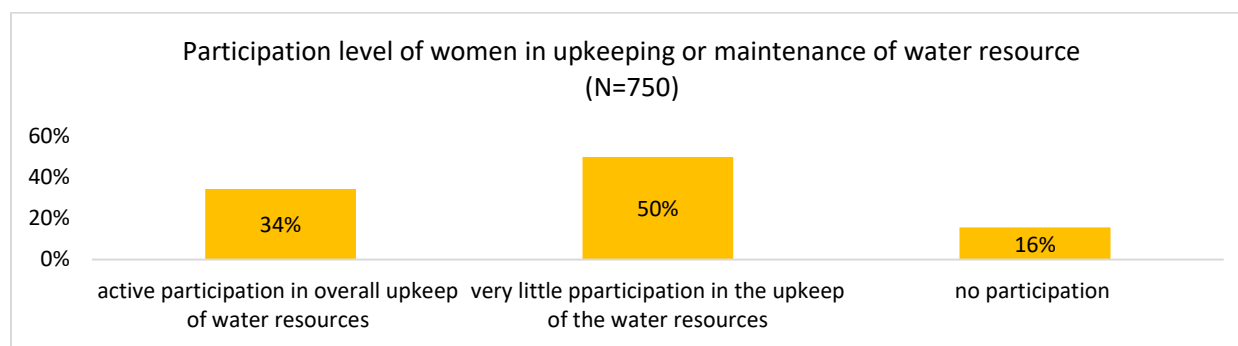
In addition to collecting water, women are involved in managing water sources within their communities. They may participate in activities such as maintaining wells, repairing water infrastructure, and ensuring equitable distribution of water among households. Women contribute to water conservation efforts by promoting sustainable water use practices within their households and communities. They may advocate for the adoption of rainwater harvesting techniques, the construction of water storage facilities, and the implementation of water-saving measures in agriculture.



The data reveals that a total of 380 (51%) respondents across all regions report participating in Nigrani Samiti meetings, while 416 (55%) respondents mention participation in meetings of Water User Groups (WUGs). This indicates a significant level of engagement in decision-making processes related to forest management in these forums. However, 193 (23%) respondents perceive that women have no role in these decision-making processes, suggesting a potential gap in inclusivity and representation that needs to be addressed.

Overall, across all regions, there is a significant level of participation in Nigrani Samiti meetings and meetings of WUGs, indicating women's engagement in decision-making processes related to forest management. However, there remains a notable proportion of respondents who perceive that women have no role in these forums, suggesting the need for greater efforts to promote gender inclusivity and empower women to participate meaningfully in forest management initiatives.

#### Participation level of women



The data presents insights into the level of participation of women in the upkeep or maintenance of water resources across different regions. Overall, across all regions, 258 (34%) respondents report active participation, while a larger proportion of 375 (50%) respondents indicate very little participation, and 117 (16%) respondents mention no participation in the upkeep of water resources. This highlights a concerning trend of limited engagement of women in water resource maintenance, particularly in terms of actively participating.

In Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), 141 respondents indicate active participation in overall upkeep, while 98 respondents report very little participation, and only 11 respondents mention no participation in water resource maintenance. This suggests a relatively higher level of involvement among women in Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur) compared to other regions. In contrast, in Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), there is a notable disparity, with 143 respondents reporting very little participation and 58 respondents indicating no participation, indicating a significant portion of women being less engaged in water resource maintenance. In Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), the trend is similar to Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), with 134 respondents reporting very little participation and 48 respondents indicating no participation.

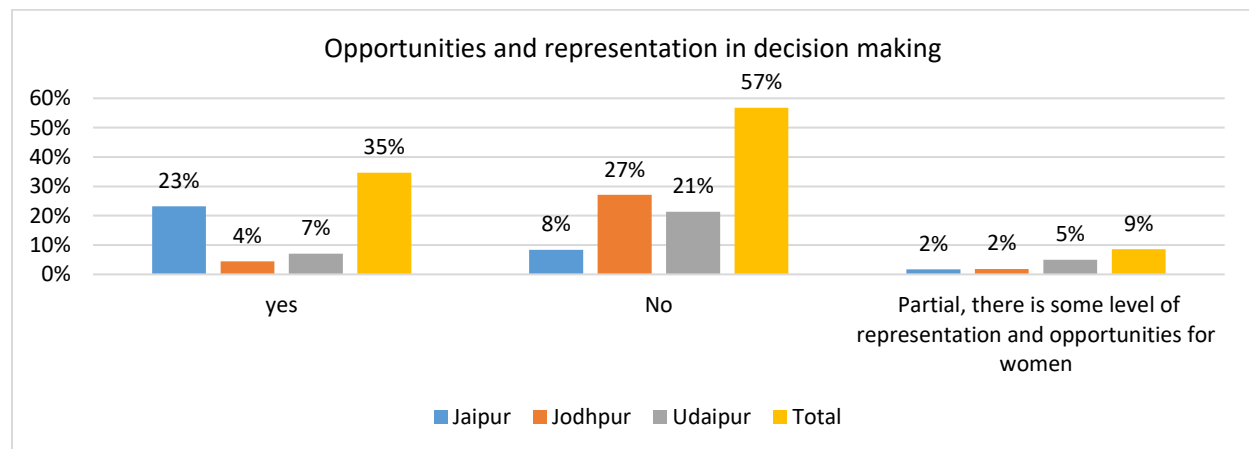
Such regional disparities point towards the importance of implementing initiatives to enhance the involvement of women in water resource management activities. Empowering women to take on more active roles in safeguarding and maintaining water resources is crucial for ensuring sustainable water management practices and addressing challenges related to water scarcity and quality. Additionally, fostering awareness and providing opportunities for skill-building and leadership development among women can contribute to more equitable and effective water resource management strategies.



## 12.3 The power dynamics influencing decision-making processes of women

### a. Opportunities and representation in decision making

The data indicates a disturbing trend regarding women's participation and representation in meetings/discussions related to CPR management. In total, 57% of the respondents perceive that women do not have equal opportunities for participation and representation, while only 35% believe that they do. Additionally, 9% of respondents feel that there is only partial representation and opportunities for women in such meetings.



In Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), 63 respondents (8%) believe that women do not have equal opportunities for participation and representation, while 13 respondents (2%) perceive only partial representation and opportunities. This suggests that a significant portion of respondents in Eastern Rajasthan (Jaipur), totaling 91 (12%), feel that women are not adequately represented in meetings/discussions related to CPR management.

In Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur), the disparity is even more pronounced, with 203 respondents (27%) indicating that women do not have equal opportunities for participation and representation. Only 33 respondents (4%) believe that women do have equal opportunities, and 14 respondents (2%) perceive partial representation. This highlights a substantial gap in gender inclusivity in CPR management discussions in Western Rajasthan (Jodhpur).

Similarly, in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur), 160 respondents (21%) feel that women lack equal opportunities for participation and representation, while 37 respondents (5%) perceive partial representation. This indicates a significant portion of respondents recognizing the inadequacy of gender inclusivity in meetings/discussions related to CPR management in Southern Rajasthan (Udaipur).

Overall, the data highlights the need for deliberate efforts to address gender disparities and promote inclusivity in decision-making processes related to CPR management. Ensuring equal opportunities and representation for women in such discussions is crucial for fostering sustainable and equitable resource management practices. Efforts to increase awareness, provide training, and establish policies that promote gender equality can help bridge this gap and empower women to contribute meaningfully to CPR management decisions.

## **b. Challenges in Decision-Making**

Despite the significant contributions of women to the management of Common Property Resources (CPRs) in India, several challenges hinder their effective participation in decision-making processes. These challenges stem from patriarchal norms, limited land ownership rights, and insufficient awareness among women regarding their rights and the benefits associated with CPRs:

### **a. Patriarchal Norms**

Traditional societal structures in many rural communities uphold patriarchal norms that marginalize women from formal decision-making bodies, such as village councils. These patriarchal systems often prioritize the voices and interests of men over women, relegating women to subordinate roles in discussions and decisions related to CPR utilization. Women's exclusion from village councils deprives them of opportunities to contribute their perspectives.

The impact of societal structures was highly visible in a focused group discussion at Hirani, Kuchaman which highlights the perspective of women. Some voices of women from Hirani village:

*"In our community, men dominate the decision-making processes, especially when it comes to managing common resources like grazing lands and water bodies,"*

*"Women are rarely given a chance to voice their concerns or ideas in the gram sabha meetings, where we sit with a Ghoonghat". This exclusion not only undermines the contributions of women but also hampers our ability to address critical issues like sustainable resource utilization."*

*"Gender inequality persists in our village, especially in decision-making forums where women's voices are often sidelined,"*

*"As a woman living in a rural community, I've witnessed firsthand the disparities in decision-making power between men and women."*

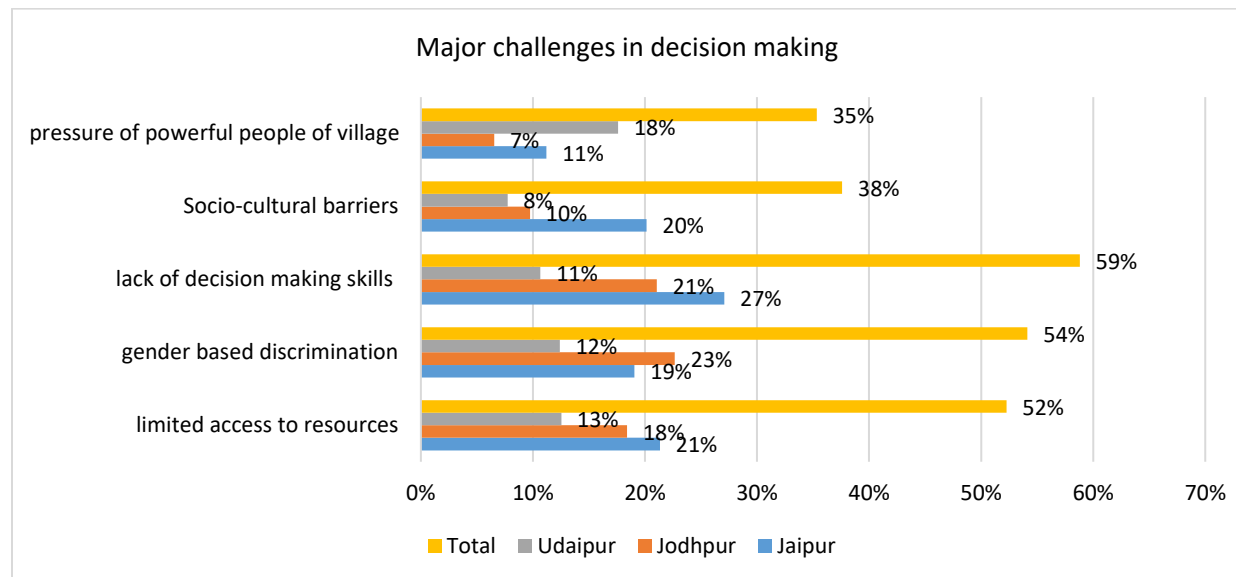
*Views of some women from the village*

### **b. Limited Awareness**

A lack of awareness among women regarding their rights and the legalities associated with CPRs further exacerbates their marginalization in decision-making processes. Women may not fully understand the legal frameworks and policies governing CPRs, including their entitlements to access, use, and manage these resources. This limited awareness hampers women's ability to assert their rights, advocate for their interests, and actively participate in discussions on CPR governance. Moreover, inadequate awareness may perpetuate misconceptions and reinforce traditional gender roles, hindering efforts to promote gender equality and empower women as key stakeholders in CPR management.

The data reveals several major challenges in decision-making processes related to CPR management, as perceived by respondents across different regions. The most prominent challenges identified include

limited access to resources, gender-based discrimination, lack of decision-making skills, socio-cultural barriers, and pressure from powerful individuals within the village.



In total, 59% of respondents identified limited access to resources as a significant challenge. This suggests that a substantial portion of the population faces barriers in accessing essential resources needed for effective participation in decision-making processes related to CPR management. This challenge could hinder marginalized communities, particularly women and vulnerable groups, from actively engaging in resource management discussions.

### c. Gender-based discrimination

This emerged as another prevalent challenge, with 54% of respondents indicating its significance. Gender disparities in decision-making spaces can marginalize women and restrict their ability to contribute meaningfully to CPR management discussions. Addressing gender discrimination is crucial for promoting inclusivity and ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making processes.

Lack of decision-making skills was identified as a challenge by 38% of respondents. This highlights the importance of capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing individuals' skills and knowledge related to CPR management. Improving decision-making skills among community members can empower them to actively participate in discussions, formulate informed decisions, and contribute effectively to sustainable resource management practices.

Socio-cultural barriers, cited by 35% of respondents, represent challenges rooted in cultural norms, traditions, and practices that may limit individuals' participation in decision-making processes. Overcoming these barriers requires efforts to promote cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and respect for diverse perspectives within community governance structures.

Lastly, the influence of powerful individuals within the village, identified by 52% of respondents, poses a significant challenge to inclusive decision-making processes. The dominance of influential figures can undermine the voices of marginalized groups and hinder democratic participation in resource

management decisions. Addressing power dynamics and promoting equitable representation in decision-making forums are essential for fostering transparency, accountability, and social justice.

Overall, addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that prioritize inclusivity, capacity building, gender equality, cultural sensitivity, and community empowerment. By overcoming these obstacles, communities can create more effective and sustainable mechanisms for managing CPRs, thereby promoting environmental conservation and social equity.

#### **d. The Intersection of Caste and gender in CPR Management Practices**

The intersection of caste and gender profoundly influences CPR management practices, shaping access to resources, decision-making dynamics, and socio-economic outcomes for women belonging to marginalized communities.

During the focused group discussion at Patan and Jhadol, Caste-based hierarchies intersecting with gender inequalities was brought to light, providing evidence for differential access to and control over CPRs for women from marginalized castes. Women belonging to lower castes face multiple barriers, including landlessness, restricted mobility, and social exclusion, which limit their ability to participate in resource governance and benefit from CPRs.

"The perpetuation of caste-based inequalities in resource management not only violates principles of social justice but also hinders overall community development. Policies and interventions must be designed to promote inclusive governance mechanisms that prioritize the voices and needs of marginalized women." - Richa Audichya, Social Activist - Jan Chetna Sansthan

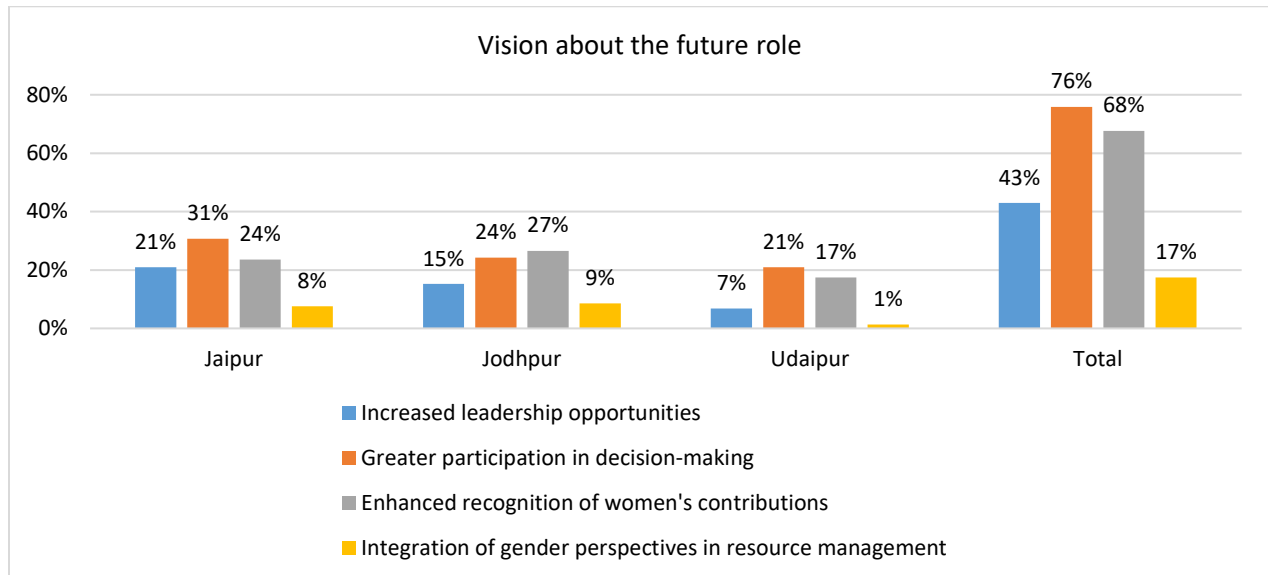
**Double Marginalization:** Women from lower castes face intersecting disadvantages due to their gender and caste identities. They are often excluded from village councils based on their caste status and lack the social capital needed to advocate for their rights within these spaces.

**Exploitation:** Women from marginalized castes are frequently relegated to menial labor roles related to CPRs, such as water or firewood collection, without having decision-making authority over resource use. This exploitation reinforces their marginalized status and limits their agency in CPR management.

Addressing the intersection of caste and gender in CPR management practices requires comprehensive strategies that challenge entrenched power dynamics, promote social inclusion, and empower marginalized women to assert their rights.

## 12.4 Perspectives on strategies to enhance their involvement in the decision-making processes

### a. Vision about the role in future



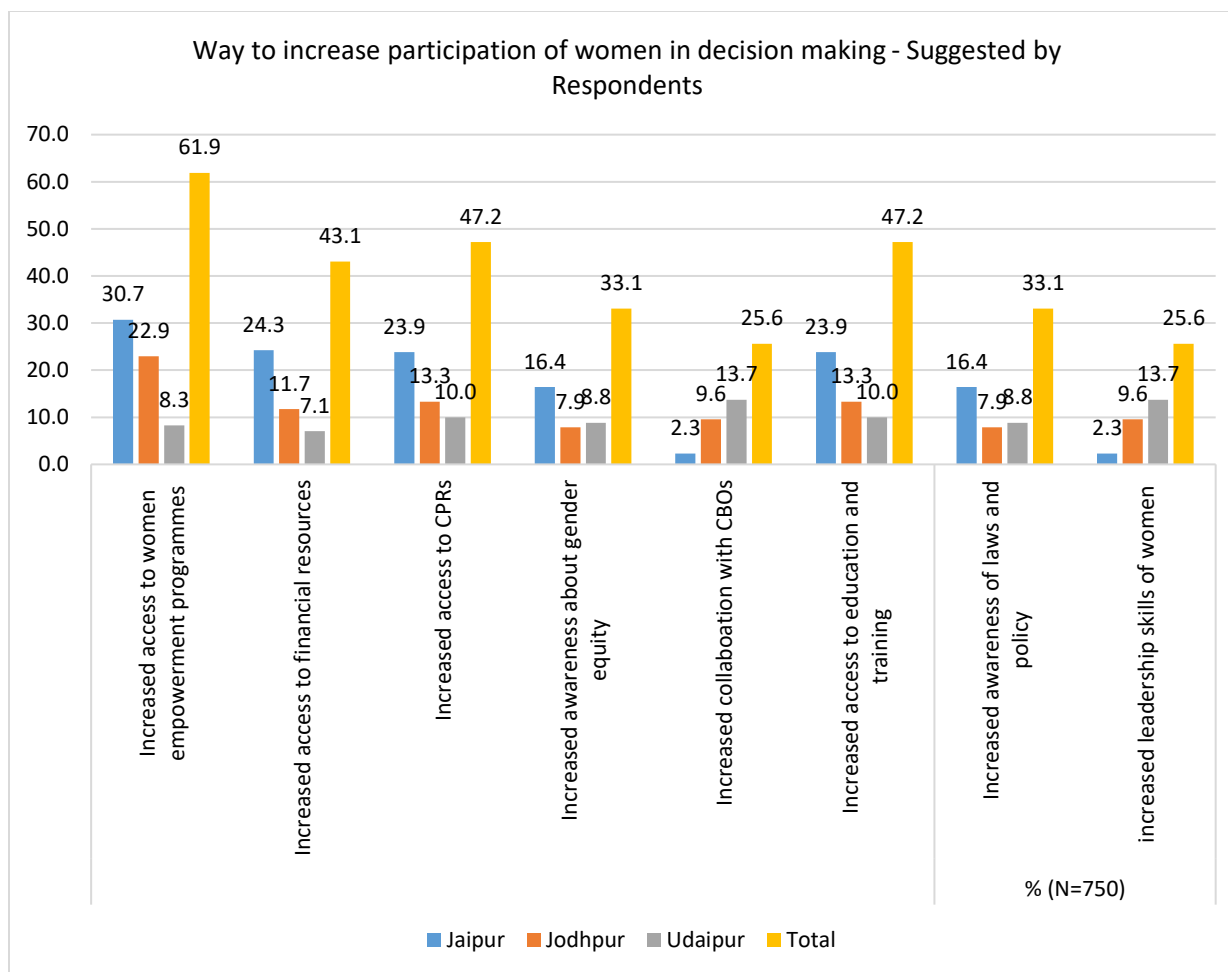
The graph illustrates the perceptions of women regarding the potential benefits of enhancing their roles and participation in decision-making processes. The reasons which they provide include increased leadership opportunities, greater participation in decision-making, enhanced recognition of women's contributions, and the integration of gender perspectives in resource management.

Across all regions, most respondents recognize the potential benefits of empowering women in resource management. 76% believes that greater participation of women in decision-making processes would lead to positive outcomes. 68% of respondents understand the importance of enhancing recognition of women's contributions. Integration of gender perspectives in resource management is also considered as essential by 17% of respondents. This suggests that there is an understanding of the need to consider gender dynamics, roles, and inequalities when designing and implementing policies and practices related to natural resource management. 43% of respondents identify increased leadership opportunities for women as an important direction.

Overall, the data highlights the importance of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in CPR management. By providing women with greater opportunities for leadership, participation, recognition, and the integration of gender perspectives, communities can enhance their resilience, equity, and sustainability in managing natural resources.

### b. Ways for empowering women

Efforts were done to understand the how the women perceive about the ways their participation can be increased, this is illustrated in the graph below:



The above graph presents different strategies which can enable an increase in their participation in decision-making processes and CPR management. There suggestions included increased access to

- Women empowerment programs,
- Financial resources,
- Awareness about gender equity,
- Collaboration with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs),
- Education and training,
- Awareness of laws and policies,
- Development of women's leadership skills.

Across all regions, the most quoted strategy is **increased access to women empowerment programs** (61.9%). By providing women with resources, knowledge, and support, they can be empowered to actively engage in decision-making processes and take on leadership roles within their communities.

**Access to financial resources** is also considered crucial by 43.1% of the total respondents. These women believe that economic empowerment can enable them to assert greater independence, invest in their own development, and contribute to household and community decision-making.

Similarly, **increased access to CPRs** is identified as an essential strategy by 47.2% of respondents recognize its importance. Access to CPRs such as grazing lands, water bodies, and forests is vital for rural women's livelihoods. Ensuring equitable access to and equal participation in management of CPRs can empower women economically and socially.

Furthermore, **raising awareness about gender equity and women's rights** has been considered crucial by 33.1% of respondents. By challenging traditional gender norms and promoting gender-sensitive attitudes and behaviors, communities can create an enabling ecosystem promoting their participation and leadership.

**Collaboration with CBOs** is also seen as valuable by 25.6% of respondents. By partnering with CBOs, women can leverage their expertise, networks, and resources to amplify their voices in decision-making processes.

Overall, the data highlights the multifaceted nature of efforts to increase women's participation in community governance and resource management. By implementing a combination of strategies that address economic, social, and institutional barriers, communities can create more inclusive and equitable environments where women can fully participate, contribute, and lead towards sustainable development.

### **c. The Impact of Specific Government Programs on Women's Participation in CPR Management**

#### **Researchers' Observation**

In the Indian context, government initiatives aimed at bolstering women's engagement in Common Property Resource (CPR) management have demonstrated varied impacts on resource governance. Programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), and watershed development projects have strived to empower women by expanding their access to and control over CPRs.

These initiatives have spurred women's involvement in CPR management through several avenues:

**Employment Opportunities:** MGNREGA provisions 100 days of employment to rural households, allocating a significant share to water conservation and land development endeavors. Through active participation in these projects, women acquire valuable skills and expertise in CPR management, thereby augmenting their capacity to engage in decision-making processes.

**Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs):** Government interventions often facilitate the establishment and reinforcement of women's SHGs, serving as platforms for collective empowerment. These groups offer training, financial aid, and technical assistance, enabling women to undertake income-generating activities linked to CPR utilization, such as watershed management and agroforestry.

**Capacity Building:** Numerous government programs prioritize capacity enhancement initiatives tailored for women, encompassing training sessions, workshops, and awareness campaigns on sustainable CPR management practices. These endeavors aim to bolster women's knowledge, skills, and confidence, fostering their active involvement in CPR governance and decision-making.

**Convergence of different stakeholder:** the study also found some references of Convergence between Forest Department and PRI in the form of development of Pasturelands and Orans for a fixed period of time resulting in improvement of land health.

Despite notable advancements, challenges persist in ensuring the efficacy of these initiatives. Implementation gaps, resource inadequacies, and institutional barriers often impede women's meaningful engagement in resource governance. Moreover, the sustainability and impact of these programs hinge on their inclusivity, responsiveness to women's needs, and the extent of women's participation in decision-making forums across all levels.

In sum, while government efforts have made significant headway in promoting women's participation in CPR management, continued endeavors are imperative to overcome existing obstacles and advance gender-inclusive approaches to CPR governance in India.

### **13. Actionable Recommendations and way forward**

#### **Enhancing Familiarity with Commons**

- Targeted Awareness Campaigns: Organize awareness campaigns to increase women's about issues related with common resources, vocabulary of commons and their importance for the communities, with a special focus on regions showing lower levels of familiarity.
- Knowledge building Initiatives: Promote capacity building training programs to empower women with the knowledge and skills required for sustainable and contextually relevant
  - grazing management practices (land Literacy)
  - biodiversity, forest and environmental conservation,
  - rainwater harvesting, identifying and addressing water scarcity factors, water budgeting, and sustainable groundwater management practices
- Knowledge Exchange: Facilitate knowledge exchange through exposure visits so that women can share and learn traditional practices and innovative approaches for sustainable water, forest and land management.
- Community Engagement: Collaborate with local institutions, NGOs, and community-based organizations to deliver targeted messages, behavioural prompts, etc. and facilitate community engagement in land, water and forest conservation efforts.

#### **Strengthen Women's Leadership Skills**

- Implement targeted training programs to enhance women's leadership and decision-making skills. These programs should focus on CPR management, governance, and sustainable practices, empowering women to take active roles in local bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
- Ensure Inclusive Planning and Decision-Making: Mandate the inclusion of women in all stages of planning, decision-making, and implementation of development plans related to CPRs. Establish quotas or reserved seats for women in village councils and committees to ensure their voices are represented and heard.

#### **Promote Participatory Implementation**

- Facilitate participatory approaches in the management and restoration of CPRs by involving women at the grassroots level. Encourage community meetings, workshops, and forums where women can share their insights and contribute to sustainable development practices.



### **Improving Knowledge of Government Policies**

- **User-Friendly IEC Materials:** Develop user-friendly IEC materials, guidelines and resources to disseminate information about relevant government policies and laws related to CPRs.
- **Workshops and Training Sessions:** Organize workshops, training sessions, and community meetings to facilitate dialogue and awareness building of government policies and their implications for local communities.
- **Partnerships and Communication:** Foster partnerships between government agencies, civil society organizations, and community representatives to ensure effective communication and convergent implementation of policies at the grassroots level.

### **Promoting Gender Inclusivity**

- **Gender Sensitization Workshops:** Conduct gender sensitization workshops and training programs for community leaders, decision-makers, and stakeholders to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality and inclusivity in decision-making processes.
- **Gender-Responsive Approaches:** Advocate for integration of gender-responsive approaches into CPR management policies and programs to ensure women's meaningful participation and equitable access to resources.
- **Institution building:** Promote formation and strengthening of community institutions like Jagrukh mahila samiti, SHGs, etc.
- **Male Champions for Gender Equality:** Engage men and boys as allies in promoting gender inclusivity and dismantling patriarchal structures by fostering discussions on the benefits of women's participation in decision-making processes.

### **Capacity Building for Women and addressing Patriarchal norms**

- **Leadership Development:** Provide training and capacity-building programs focused on leadership development, negotiation skills, and decision-making processes designed specifically for women.
- **Community Dialogues:** Challenge patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes through community dialogues, awareness campaigns, and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.
- **Enhanced Access to Information:** Enhance women's access to information about their rights, entitlements, and legal frameworks governing CPR management through community workshops, information campaigns, and outreach activities.

### **Ensuring Access to Resources**

- **Improved Access to Resources:** Improve women's access to resources such as CPRs, credit, and technology (like GPS based tools), through targeted interventions and policy measures that address gender disparities in asset ownership and control.
- **Improve access to financial resources, training, and capacity-building initiatives** to ensure women have the necessary tools and knowledge to effectively manage and sustain CPRs.
- **Transparent Communication Channels:** Establish mechanisms for transparent and inclusive communication channels that facilitate the exchange of information and decision-making processes among all stakeholders, including women and marginalized groups.

- Partnerships with Local Organizations: Foster partnerships with local NGOs, grassroots organizations, and community leaders to amplify the voices of marginalized women and ensure their meaningful participation in CPR management.