



Responsible Land Governance: Towards an Evidence Based Approach

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RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE TO SECURE LAND RIGHTS OF SINGLE-WOMEN – AN EXAMPLE FROM ODISHA (INDIA)

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Abstract

The state's land and welfare programs in Odisha (India) leave behind a group that remains "invisible" to policymakers: rural single women. In strongly patriarchal societies, these women end up being "absorbed" by a larger household which denies them exclusive rights to access land and other public entitlements. Landesa, in partnership with the state government, designed an approach to identify women in this category of risk by establishing a Women Support Centre (WSC) that operates from the sub-district level land administration office and facilitating their entitlements. Initially, the program was piloted in one sub-district and subsequently scaled to seven districts with 88 WSCs.

Using field data and qualitative information from four districts, this paper (i) describes the enumeration mechanism introduced to count the women who previously remained invisible to the system and how they are then assisted to be included in both land and social security programs; (ii) presents the successes and challenges in implementing this approach to date; (iii) discusses how an effective management information system (MIS) developed is helping to improve governance by allowing easy access to information about beneficiaries across programs; (iv) describes what it would take to scale it to other settings; and (v) makes policy recommendations.

KEY WORDS

"Gender and land rights," "women's land rights," "responsible governance," "gender equitable land governance," "single-women's land rights"

1. Introduction

The state land allocation and regularization programs in Odisha, an eastern state of India, have in the past granted land documents to household heads, typically the men. Over the years, these programs have adjusted their guidelines to include women in at least two ways: by ensuring that the documents issued went beyond the “male head” and included the wives and by expanding their reach to include female-headed households. However, by and large, these progressive programs continue to ignore a group of women that is often invisible to policymakers: rural women, who remain single, are divorced or widowed, and due to social pressure are “absorbed” by a larger household, within a strongly patriarchal society.

The land laws of the state mandate that the state should enumerate poor “households” in rural areas who do not own any homestead, and provides them with 4 to 10 cents¹ of land suitable for housing and a backyard garden. Women who are single, divorced or widowed are only considered as beneficiaries when they live on their own. If they live with other family members, they are considered to be part of a household and are therefore not eligible for land. These women’s land rights are “subsumed” within the rights of the head of the household on which they depend on for a living. As a result, a land program that is intended to address needs and reduce the vulnerability of poor ends up excluding a poor and highly vulnerable group. These women remain invisible to the system and are deprived of their rights. Besides, lack of awareness and prevailing socio-cultural practice of patriarchy further push them into a corner in the matters of land rights. These women account for an estimated 12%² of the rural women population of the state.

To contribute to responsible land governance by reaching out and serving the needs of this typically invisible vulnerable group of women, Landesa and the District Administration of Ganjam, a district in Odisha, partnered to create the Women Support Centers (WSC). The WSCs were initially piloted in one *tehsil* (sub-district). They were subsequently implemented in other areas of the district as well as scaled up to six other districts. Today, there are 88 WSCs functioning in seven districts - Ganjam, Mayurbhanj, Koraput, Kalahandi and Gajapati, Dhenkanal and Sambalpur – of the state.

The WSCs have been designed to operate within the existing infrastructure and institutional framework of the state’s land administration, without any additional resources. The district administration (Collector

¹ A cent is an Indian measure of land equal to 1/100 of an acre or 435.5 sq. ft.

² As per the field survey data from four districts of the state

and District Magistrate) creates provisions to bring together the Revenue Department and the Women and Child Development Department (WCD) in the creation of the WSCs.

An important step in serving these invisible women is identifying them. *Anganwadi*³ workers from the village level WCD centers are tasked with identifying and enumerating women who had been left out in the general process of enumeration of the landless. The WSCs, exclusive cells from the Revenue Department at the *tehsil level*, with a female Nodal Officer, are then tasked with ensuring that the claims of all identified women for land are duly filed, that their cases are prioritized for in-field-verification by field-level revenue (land) officials, that suitable homestead land is identified near the village, and finally that *pattas* (land titles) to small plots of land measuring 4 to 10 cents are issued in their names.

This paper discusses Landesa's and the State's experience with the implementing the WSCs program in Odisha. It takes a closer look into key features of the WSC: (i) discusses about the creation of a responsible institutional space for prioritizing land rights to the single women; ii) describes the enumeration mechanism introduced to count the women who previously remained invisible to the system and how they are then assisted to be included in both land and social security programs; (iii) discusses how an effective management information system (MIS) developed is helping to improve governance of local public services by allowing easy access to information about beneficiaries across programs;(iv) describes how it has strengthened the capacities and operations of implementing agencies and the local governments. Besides, it also presents a summary of challenges in implementing this model to date; describes what it would take to scale it to other settings; and makes policy recommendations.

This paper uses the following quantitative and qualitative data to discuss the implementation of the WSC program model as well as the challenges faced during implementation: (a) primary data describing single women and their situation, and summarizing how the program has reached out to the single women who had been previously left out by the state's general enumeration of the landless; (b) qualitative information collected through interviews conducted by the author with the different stakeholders involved in program implementation.

The quantitative data have been sourced from purposive survey data of the single women from four districts of the state – Ganjam, Mayurbhanj, Koraput and Kalahandi. The data have been collected by

³ *Anganwadi* workers are village level female mother and child health and nutrition workers of Women and Child Development Department of Government of Odisha

the *Anganwadi* workers who have been trained on the data collection by door-to-door survey under supervision of Landesa's monitoring and evaluation team.

To understand the functioning of the program model, the finer details around perception, practices, norms, issues and challenges in implementing it, qualitative data have been gathered by the author through personal interviews with 12 *Anganwadi* workers, 12 WSC Nodal Officers, 12 Tehsildars (Sub-District Revenue Administrators), four Child Development Project Officers of WCD, eight Block Development Officers, and two Collector and District Magistrates, four key informants in the four districts; with five Landesa Project Managers; and two gender and land right experts.

Separate sets of questions have been used for each category of stakeholders, for example, the *Anganwadi* workers have been asked about the process they adopted for data collection, did they encounter any challenge in accessing the women, their own perception around the issue; the women Nodal Officers have been asked about how they are prioritizing the cases of single women in processing the land rights, overall their role in managing the centers; the Tehsildars have been asked about the functioning of WSCs, their perceptions around the issue, operational details of WSCs, challenges in allocating land to single women with respect to fresh land and also addressing the inheritance rights through partition and mutation, systemic challenges; the Block Development Officers have been asked the questions about how they are processing the cases for various social security and livelihood programs, housing and sanitation schemes. The Collector and District Magistrates have been interviewed with the questions around the implementing process and the challenges in it.

By discussing the process of creating WSC program model and the various steps of its implementation, this paper contributes to policy discussions around the issue of land ownership rights of the single women in India.

2. Background

2.1 *Why Land Rights Matter for Women, More so for “Single Women”*

Land is not just an economic asset but land ownership has extremely strong social, cultural and political implications. Land is a composite asset that not only serves as a source of income and livelihood, but provides identity, address and social status. Ownership of land and the rights to access and control over it are synonymous with “power”. It is the “power” that not only enables one to exercise rights to the piece of land, but empowers one to lead a life of dignity (Das and Mishra, 2015).

Therefore, it is not only important that households have secure rights to land, but also that women hold these rights. When a woman’s name is on the document of land rights, jointly or individually, it tends to be broadly empowering for her both within the household and the community. This can be reflected in the making of farming decisions, on matters such as decisions on child-bearing and school attendance, in the incidence of spousal abuse or unsafe sex, and in the extent of women’s community engagement, such as participation in self-help groups (Allendorf, 2007). Strengthening women’s secure rights to land can help empower them to reach their potential as citizens and as economic actors, and enable them to take control over their own lives.

Secure land right not only ensures women’s equality and empowerment, but also lifts households out of poverty. According to a World Bank report, “only independent or joint ownership can ensure that women have access to [and] control over land-based earnings,” (World Bank, 2005). Additionally, as the World Bank recognizes, “[r]ights to land and natural resources increase a woman’s bargaining power within the household, which results in increased allocation of household resources to children and women as well as increased household welfare.” When men alone enjoy secure rights, women and their children may not be able to reap the benefits fully (Expert Committee on Gender and Land Rights, National Commission for Women, India, 2014). Research has shown that women tend to spend most of the income they control on household needs, whereas men spend a significant portion on personal goods. Hence, when women have secure land and property rights, the improvements in household welfare are even more pronounced (Gomez and Tran, 2012).

Women’s land rights have been prioritized in the global development agenda, and land rights have been integrated very prominently in the Sustainable Development Goals⁴ related to poverty, food security, and

⁴ Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and

gender equality. The governments around the world, including India, are now accountable for taking action to meet specific targets on land rights over the next 15 years.

India's National Policy for Women states, "Regarding resource rights of women, efforts will be made to prioritize women in all government land redistribution, land purchase and land lease schemes to enable women to own and control land through issue of individual or joint land *pattas*. In the case of private land, joint registration of land with spouses or registration solely in the name of women will be encouraged along with measures such as concessions in registration fee and stamp duty etc. to incentivize land transfers to women" (National Policy for Women India (Draft), 2016).

What even more important in India is the land right of a group of women who are "single" and without any support and they noticeably or invisibly act as *de facto* household heads when husband dies, migrates or disappears. In India, 20 to 35 percent of rural households are headed by women (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1999). These women are the widowed, separated, divorced, never married older women and women with physical disability, who are among the poorest and most vulnerable. Without legal rights to land such rural poor single women are compelled to live a life of "less dignity" and have very few sustainable options for improving their situation. The meagre income that these women earn is not sufficient to meet the two ends compelling them to take up low paid and informal employment that makes them vulnerable and perpetuate poverty without having any way out to escape from this vicious circle (Rao, 2011). Undoubtedly, when such a woman owns land, it can reduce her dependence on her family or her husband's family and create the ability "to form a viable, self-reliant household" (Giovarelli, 2009) and can help her escape both vulnerability and poverty.

Therefore, securing land rights for these "single" women would be fundamental to the achievement of a series of desired outcomes: improved income; better food security and education for children; giving

other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target 5.a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws

SDG Indicators under 1.4 and 5a:

1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure.

5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

women a voice within the family; empowerment within the community (Prosterman, 2013); and accessing opportunities to build their own and children's future.

2.2 Odisha - Progressive Laws; Invisible Exclusions

Odisha's economy, like most of the Indian states', is agrarian where land ownership is integrally linked to economic prosperity, social security and status in the society. In this eastern Indian state, three out of four rural women are in agriculture and six out of ten are marginalized laborer - (Economic Survey of Odisha 2013-14). However, the women's land right scenario in Odisha is very fragile. According to a study conducted in the state with support from the World Bank in 2015, only 3.3% of land in Odisha is owned by women, which is much less than the national average of 13% (Choudhury *et al*, 2014).

Women's land rights in Odisha is highly dependent on their marital status like their identity – a woman lacks individual identity of her own and is identified as married, widowed, divorced, separated, second wife (with first wife being alive), unmarried and never married. Due to deep seated patriarchy, the socio-cultural norms are male centric and they discriminate women from exercising their right to land.

Commonly it is assumed that a woman cannot take charge of her own life, she needs to be taken care of by men and her land right is subsumed within that of her husband, father, or father-in-law. When a father or husband dies, his self-earned as well as family property pass on to the male heirs with or without correction of land records and issue of land titles. The family is silent about the share of daughter or the wife (widowed, separated, second wife) and excludes them immaculately if they do not ask for it; denies it when asked for, even ruthlessly disown or expel them. Therefore, these “single women” who do not have any support tend to internalize the imposed social-cultural restrictions and stigma. They willingly or unwillingly accept to live a life of an “unrecognized dependent” and take shelter under the roof of their brothers, father-in-law, or relatives for a “notional” economic and social support. Lack of dignity, identity and independence in terms of income, decision making and movement further push them into a corner. They are unaware of their own legal rights; ways and means of seeking their rights or accessing government programs are usually out of their reach.

The governance of tenure, therefore, is a crucial element in determining if and how women, particularly the single women, are able to acquire rights to access, use and control land. The land governance in Odisha is basically guided by the laws and policy directives of the state that are derived from the national laws and policies of India.

The Indian Constitution prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the basis of gender by the State. Its article 15(3) enjoins the state to make special provisions for the weaker sections of the society like women and children. The country's Directive Principles of State Policy, which also act as guidelines, stipulate in article 39(a) that the state shall direct its policy towards securing adequate means of livelihood for both men and women equally. Therefore, constitutionally the single women should not be deprived of exercising their legitimate rights to access, use and control land; but in reality they are.

The state's laws have created provisions for inheritance rights of both men and women to family land and property through "partition of property" as per the Section 19 (1)-c of the Odisha Land Reforms (OLRA) 1960 which is also favorable for the single women. Also, single women can inherit land through the "mutation" process which needs amending the government records to reflect the change in ownership or other rights in land through sale/purchase, gift, inheritance or mortgage. So, these legal instruments certainly create space for inheritance rights of the single women who are widowed, separated, divorced or remained unmarried. Similarly, in order to give preference to single women such as widowed, unmarried women, and women living below poverty line, the government of Odisha in 2002 decided that at least 40% of ceiling surplus land be earmarked for allotting to women. However, the implementation of such laws on the ground is fragile due to numerous gaps in the legal frameworks, absence of a gender segregated data and absence of systematic implementation guideline for "*suo motu*" instituting and disbursing the cases of partition and mutation, gender biased discriminations and seclusion practices.

In Odisha where 54% of rural households are landless (Socio Economic Caste Census of India 2011) and poverty headcount ratio is 32.59% (as per Odisha Economic Survey 2014-15), poor single women's access, ownership and *usufruct* rights in land through government's land allocation and regularization programs are critical to their lives and livelihood. Undoubtedly, the state government of Odisha has prioritized to secure land rights of the poor and the marginalized. The Odisha Government Land Settlement Act (1962) clearly outlines about allocation of government waste land to the landless households and the Odisha Prevention of Land Encroachment Act (1972) emphasizes on regularizing the land-holding status of households occupying government land while executing the evictions provided these households do not have title to any homestead or farm land. The state has also introduced the *Vasundhara*⁵ program in 2005 to allocate government land (4 to 10 cents) to rural landless households whose income is less than 40,000 INR annual (amended from 24,000 INR in 2014).

⁵ The state government launched the *Vasundhara* scheme in 2005-06 with an objective to provide an estimated 2,49,334 homesteadless families with house sites within a span of three years. The state

These land allocation and regularization programs invariably targets households and to grant documents to household heads, typically the men. Over the years, these programs have adjusted their guidelines to include women in at least two ways: by ensuring that the documents issued went beyond the “male head” and included his wife (wives) and by expanding their reach to include female-headed households. However, by and large, these progressive programs continue to ignore a group of women that is often “invisible” to policymakers: rural single women, the women who remain single, are divorced or widowed. In strongly patriarchal societies, these women are “absorbed” by a larger household which denies them exclusive rights to access land and other public entitlements. As a result, a land program that is intended to address needs and reduce the vulnerability of poor ends up excluding a poor and highly vulnerable group. These single women remain “invisible” to the system and are deprived of their rights.

Therefore, the load of patriarchy and persistent overlook by the state in terms of including them in state land programs leave the single women with double jeopardy – in one hand they are deprived from seeking their legitimate rights to family land, they are also bypassed by the state’s schemes and programs, on the other. Moreover, absence of focused attention by the government to address the issues and gaps, have made it more challenging for the single women to benefit from the laws and programs, and this has led to by and large “invisible exclusions” of the single women.

3. Implementation of a Model Exclusively Designed to Secure Land Rights of Single Women

Landesa has partnered with some District Administrations in Odisha to address the issues around securing land rights of the rural single women who have remained “invisible” to the government system. Landesa designed an approach to identify women in this category of risk that involved establishing a Women Support Centre (WSC) that operates from the sub-district level land administration office with the following objectives – 1) to ensure enumeration and inclusion of poor “single women” in government’s land allocation / regularization program; 2) to ensure secure ownership rights of “single women” over land through inheritance by the mutation and partition⁶ processes; and 3) to connect the enumerated “single women” with government’s social security and livelihood programs.

enhanced the limit of land allocation to 10 cents from 4 cents vide Revenue and Disaster Management Department Notification No. LD/25/2008- 28733 Dt. 03.07.2008.

⁶ As per a recent government order, the tehsil office needs to institute the cases of mutation and partition and report the progress on monthly basis.

3.1 Intervention Genesis - The Pilot

Based on its Theory of Change⁷, Landesa carried out a situation analysis of the land rights issue of “single women”. While supporting the implementation of the state’s land allocation and regularization programs, Landesa identified that the enumeration of the landless did not include women like Sasmita (32), a separated woman who with her two daughters had taken shelter at her father’s house. Like Sasmita, the process also did not count women like Ulli Gouda (40), a never married woman, who lived in the cowshed of her brother’s house. It was then confirmed through a thorough analysis that the process of enumeration of the landless did not count the “single women” who were widowed, divorced, separated women and did not live independently, but lived with parents, in-laws or extended family for social security and economic benefits. Because the program counted the “heads” of households as eligible to get fresh land from the government under Odisha Government Land Settlement (OGLS) Act, or it regularized land in favor of head of the landless family that squatted on government land under prescribed guidelines of Odisha Prevention of Land Encroachment (OPLE) Act.

It was further identified that the single women were grossly excluded by the government land programs mainly due to three reasons – a) absence of provision or mandate or institutional mechanism to include them; b) absence of data and an enumeration design to count them; c) limited capacity of the revenue officials to facilitate the process of land titling – which needed to be addressed with utmost priority.

With an objective of addressing the issue, the idea of designing a pilot model emerged and Landesa advocated with the district administration of Ganjam, a southern district in Odisha, for setting up of an exclusive cell at one *tehsil* office (Sub-district level land administration office) to pilot the model in addressing the land rights issues of the single women. The proactive Collector and District Magistrate (District Chief Administrator) of the Ganjam district agreed to this idea of piloting. Landesa designed the model and a cell called “Women Land Right Facilitation Centre” was established at the Khallikote *tehsil* of the district by the District Administration with technical support from Landesa. The pilot aimed at identifying the poor “single women” in the rural areas and facilitating their land rights.

Landesa used a cadre of local youth sourced from the community and trained them as the Community Resource Persons (CRPs) to identify the landless in the rural areas. These CRPs were further trained to

⁷ Landesa’s ‘Theory of Change’ identifies gaps and challenges in existing laws, policies and implementation through field study and research that leads to design and development of pro-poor land tenure reforms, advocacy for policy reforms and providing technical support to governments and development agencies for pilot implementation, share reform practices and impacts for advocating replication and global change.

use an exclusive set of questionnaire to identify the single women who lived with their parents, in-laws or extended family. A comprehensive data base of all single women in the 161 villages was generated and submitted at the *tehsil* office for further scrutiny to check their eligibility for granting them land titles as per the state's provisions. The Revenue Inspectors (RIs) verified the data of single women through detail field verification and finally prepared the list of eligible 3537 women for receiving land titles. On the other hand, since the women were to be allotted with new lands, land parcels in the vicinity of their presently residing village were identified. In due course of time, case records were prepared and the district administration allotted land titles in the names of first batch of 289 single women.

The model was subsequently scaled to all the *tehsils* of the district with a mandate of establishing cells called the "Women Support Center" (WSC) in each of the *tehsil* offices of the district to identify the single women in rural areas and facilitate their land and social security entitlements.

In the district-wide program, Landesa proposed to institutionalize the identification mechanism and explored the possibility of using government resources to reach out to the "invisible" single women in the villages. The Collector and District Magistrate agreed to issue an official instruction to use the services of *Anganwadi* workers (mother and child health and nutrition workers) of the Women and Child Development (WCD) Department as the CRPs to conduct a door-to-door survey to spot the single women. The logic behind using the services of the *Anganwadi* workers was threefold – i) to rope in the village level government staffs that were women; ii) they operated at the ground level; and iii) they had close access to the rural women community.

Landesa developed Training of Trainers (ToT) for the Sector Supervisors of the WCD department who usually supervise the *Anganwadi* workers. They were first trained on the household survey methodology at the *tehsil* level with support from the Block Development Officer, the Child Development Project Officer of WCD department and the *Tehsildars* (the Sub-district Revenue Officer). The sector Supervisors, in turn, trained the *Anganwadi* workers on how to conduct the door-to-door survey and identify the single women particularly the widowed, divorced, separated, never married women and the ones with physical disability.

The *Anganwadi* workers carried out the door-to-door survey in their catchment areas to collect the data of single women. The survey revealed that the number of such "uncounted" single women was pretty high,

constituting about 12%⁸ of the total rural women population in the district. These women previously remained “invisible” to the policy and planners, hence, were deprived of their legitimate rights and entitlements to land.

3.2 From Pilot to Scaling

The pilot implementation of WSC program model in Ganjam district helped the District Administration to reach out to the unreached single women and look at their issues and problems from a closer proximity. The database of the single women helped segregating them as per their needs. The capacity of the government officials were built on implementing the program model and facilitating the cases of single women for their land and social security entitlements as per their eligibility.

In a span of two years from the pilot intervention, Landesa partnered with the district administrations to expand the WSC program model to three more districts – Mayurbhanj, Koraput and Kalahandi – of the state. Subsequently, in the phase II, the model has been further scaled to another three districts – Gajapati, Dhenkanal and Sambalpur – of the state in 2016-17.

To strengthen the implementation of the model, Landesa has provided guidance and information on internationally accepted practices and contributed to the improvement and development of the state’s policy. As an outcome, the state passed the Policy for Girls and Women (2014) which outlines to prioritize benefits to all vulnerable single women under housing and land ownership programs through appropriate definitions and allotting 4 cents of homestead land in rural areas to women belonging to low income group and not possessing any house/ flat or homestead land and who are either (i) widowed, unmarried, divorced or separated from husband by a decree or order of a Court or under any custom or usage having the force of law, having attained 45 years of age or more; or (ii) women with more than 40 percent disability, who have attained 30 years of age or more.

Landesa has helped in enhancing the transparency and improving the functioning of the governance systems with a robust Management Information System (MIS). Besides it has strengthened the capacities and operations of implementing agencies and the local governments through training and orientation programs on securing land tenure rights of single women.

Presently, with Landesa’s technical support and partnership, 88 WSCs are operating from sub-district level land administration offices from seven districts of the state (Table 1: District-wise data of WSCs).

⁸ As per the field data in Ganjam district as collected by the *Anganwadi* workers

Table 1 Women Support Centers in Seven Districts

Sl. No	District	WSCs at Tehsils
1.	Mayurbhanj	26
2.	Koraput	24
3.	Kalahandi	13
4.	Ganjam	11
5.	Gajapati	7
6.	Dhenkanal	8
7.	Sambalpur	9
Total		88

Source: Author's own analysis of field data

3.3 The Key Features of the Model

The model has been well accepted by the District Administrations as a responsible governance model to address the land rights issues of single women because of its key features. We take a closer look into the details of these key features and the implementation of this exclusively designed model to secure the land rights of single women in Ganjam, Mayurbhanj, Koraput and Kalahandi districts of Odisha.

3.3.1 Creation of Responsible Institutional Space

The Women Support Centers (WSCs) have been designed by Landesa to operate within the existing infrastructure and institutional framework of the state's land administration at the *tehsil* level without any additional resources. They rely on the crucial role of the Collector and District Magistrate (The Chief Administrative Officer) of the district who creates mandate for single women's land rights and establishment of exclusive cells, the WSCs, to identify and facilitate the same. By issuing an administrative order, the Collector commissions the process and paves way for its implementation through interdepartmental convergence of the Revenue Department (The department responsible for land revenue collection and administration) and the Women and Child Development Department (WCD).

The WSC is a pioneering step towards breaking the gender stereotypes in land administration. By creating an exclusive cell and appointing a "woman official" of the rank of Revenue Inspector or Assistant Revenue Inspector as the Nodal Officer to lead functioning of the cell, and emphasizing on the need to address the land rights issues of single women with priority, WSC exemplifies an effort towards gender equitability in land governance. It creates an institutional space to identify the women's land right issues and facilitate them through different processes to help the women get their rights.

With the administrative order, the *Anganwadi* workers from the village level WCD centers are tasked to conduct door-to-door survey to identify the single women who had been left out in the general process of enumeration of the landless and collect their data. The Nodal Officer at the WSCs then ensure that the claims of all identified women for land are duly filed, that their cases are prioritized for in-field-verification by field-level revenue (land) officials, that suitable homestead land is identified near the village, and finally that *pattas* (land titles) to small plots of land measuring 4 to 10 cents are issued in their names.

The WSC also creates an effective window for addressing the inheritance rights of single women. It is first of its kind institutional mechanism to take up the issues around inheritance rights of widowed, separated women and the rights of unmarried daughters in their family land. WSC segregates the cases of women who are to get their share of family land through the processes of mutation and partition as per the laws. It re-emphasizes the role and responsibility of *tehsil* office for instituting to disbursing such cases.

3.3.2 Establishing Enumeration Design

One of the major reasons of single women's exclusion from government's land programs has been the lack of data about these women. As the standard enumeration design used by government to count probable beneficiaries of land programs does not enlist the single women, the District Administrations are unable to know how many of such women are there and what challenges these women face, particularly when their husband or father dies or disappears. While the government has policies and programs to support such women with land and social security benefits, a major challenge has been "absence of data" about them. These women, mostly for social security and economic benefits, live with family members or relatives and are absorbed by the larger household without any independent identity. In extremely unfavorable situations and adverse economic conditions, like Padma of Talanaranga village under Semiliguda *tehsil of Koraput district*, such women sometimes live with their children in outhouses or cowsheds in extreme insecurity. Often, the people on whom these women depend on for shelter ill treat them, exploit them and compel them to compromise their dignity. As Gangi of Bangiriposi village in Mayurbhanj district, there are some widowed women, who are abused by own brother-in-law within the family. Therefore, as the District Collector of Mayurbhanj emphasizes, "What women do need is to be counted and to have programs responsive to their existence and their needs" (Patil, 2016).

An important step in serving the "invisible" single women is identifying them and making them "visible" to the government programs. So, WSC established an enumeration design that essentially focused on counting the single women for their inclusion in government's land allocation program. During the

implementation of the scale-up, a refined enumeration design has been introduced by incorporating the learning from the pilot. The form has additional space to collect the women's landholding data and details of the land where they presently reside – who owns the land; relationship of the landowner with the women; family land details, for example, whether the woman's father, deceased husband or father-in-law own any land which is particularly important for identifying the cases of women eligible to get their share from family land and property through mutation and partition processes. Besides, keeping in view the state's emphasis on Aadhaar Card⁹ as a Unique Identification (UID), the enumeration format also captures the women's UID number so that it becomes easier in identifying the women while delivering various services to her and facilitating her entitlements.

The data collection methodology adopted in the pilot was replicated in the scale-up districts - Landesa has developed a training of trainers (ToT) for the Sector Supervisors of WCD department and oriented them on the data collection methodology to be adopted by the *Anganwadi* workers. The Sector Supervisors in turn trained the *Anganwadi* workers who collect the primary data through a door-to-door survey of all single women in the villages.

In the four districts, the WSCs have enumerated 195, 861 “single women” who are the women without any support — the widowed, abandoned, divorced, 30 plus never married women, women with physical disability, and women whose husband is unable to earn due to disability or chronic fatal disease.

Anganwadi workers of the Women and Child Development (WCD) department collected data of single women through an exhaustive a door-to-door survey in 7591 villages in the four districts - Ganjam (1186 villages), Mayurbhanj (3102 villages), Koraput (1818 villages), and Kalahandi (1485 villages).

3.3.2.1 Database of Single Women Created

The district-wise database of the single women has been created. The database helps in quantifying the issues and problems of women related to their land rights. It helps in segregating the data to help the government facilitate different types of land entitlements such as the cases landless and homestead-less. It

⁹ The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is a statutory authority established under the provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 (“Aadhaar Act 2016”) on 12 July 2016 by the Government of India, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). UIDAI was created with the objective to issue Unique Identification numbers (UID), named as "Aadhaar", to all residents of India that is (a) robust enough to eliminate duplicate and fake identities, and (b) can be verified and authenticated in an easy, cost-effective way. Under the Aadhaar Act 2016, UIDAI is responsible for Aadhaar enrolment and authentication, including operation and management of all stages of Aadhaar life cycle, developing the policy, procedure and system for issuing Aadhaar numbers to individuals and perform authentication and also required to ensure the security of identity information and authentication records of individuals.

also helps in knowing the cases of inheritance of land which could be solved through partition (as per 19-1 (C) of OLRA) and the cases of women seeking land titles in their names by record correction following the mutation process if the land titles are in the name of deceased husband, father or father-in-law.

The database also helps generating the list of women who need to be linked with various social security and livelihood promotion schemes and programs. The WSC shares the list with the Block Office for processing the cases to get benefits as per their eligibility.

However, the data base is yet to be linked to the e-governance system of the state which would have multiple benefits – i) would enable updating data in real time (now data is updated on weekly basis); ii) seamless coordination and convergence in terms of service delivery by multiple departments to benefit the single women; minimize errors; iii) progress tracking by top bureaucracy at the state level. Since the program is yet to be owned by the government as a state program, such integration with the state's e-governance is not possible.

3.3.2.2 Invisible Single Women Made “Visible”

The single women, who had previously remained invisible to the government programs, have been made visible. An analysis of the data collected in the four districts depicts that the majority of single women constitutes of widowed women (72%); second highest number in the group is that of the women who never married and aged above 30 years with 11% (it is as high as 18% in the Mayurbhanj district); 6% are separated women without having decree from the court and just 3% women have been legally divorced; 4% is of the destitute who are the most vulnerable without any support and sleep in cowsheds or *Anganwadi* centers; and about 1% found with physical disability.

A profile of single women comprising of six categories of such women, along with their percentage share, has been illustrated through Table 2 and the Fig 1Pie charts below.

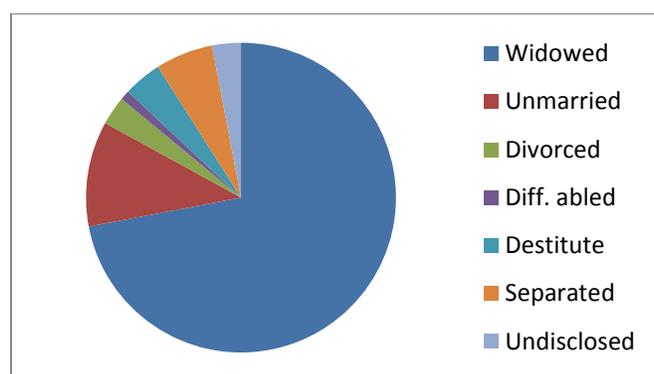
The data further reveals that on an average 25.8 single women were identified in each of the villages who were not reached by government through general enumeration method used to enumerate the landless. If the single women are considered as exclusive household units for the purpose of including them in the state's land program, it is 11.6 % of total households (16, 76, 120) who remained invisible to policies and programs earlier. So, such a substantial number belonging to the most vulnerable demography had previously remained unreached by the government programs.

Table 2: Category-wise Distribution of Single Women

Category of Single Women	Percent
Widowed	72
Unmarried	11
Divorced	3
Diff. abled	1
Destitute	4
Separated	6
Undisclosed	3

Source: Author's own analysis of field data

Fig 1: Category-wise Distribution of Single Women



Source: Author's own analysis of field data

3.3 Management Information System (MIS)

In the pilot stage, the data used to be managed by single units of computer at *tehsil* level. In the scale-up, it became a challenge to manage huge data of single women for creating comprehensive database of each district by collating the data from different the *tehsils* (where the data entry is done). To counter this challenge, a web-enabled Management Information System (MIS) has been developed by Landesa that helps simultaneous data entry from multiple source points (the *tehsils*), automatic collating of data at the master sheet and generating separate inventories of the women for processing service delivery of land and social security entitlements from the *tehsil* and block office respectively.

The MIS also helps the District Administrations in tracking and monitoring the progress of the program. Unique Access Codes (UAC) have been issued to the government officers such as the Tehsildars, the Block Development Officers, the Sub-Collectors and the Collector and District magistrates. Using such

UID, they can view the Dashboard which has specific indicators that provide updates about each milestone – the enumeration, the field verification and the issue of land titles; alert them about process delay, if any, and help in addressing the issues. The data is updated on weekly basis to help monitoring of the program. Government officers can also generate report by using the UID. The MIS minimizes the gap in information sharing and expedites crucial decisions making.

Out of the identified women (195, 350), so far, the field level revenue officials have completed the field verification of 101,735 women and out of them, 29,503 (29%) women have been found eligible for land titles under different categories. The data further reveals that about 35 % of the women verified through due diligence have been found eligible to get fresh land under OGLS. 2% of women are landless and squatting on government land whose cases are being processed for issue of land title in their name through regularization of occupancy under OPLE.

A vast majority of women have been found to get their share of land through inheritance. Among them, while 33% have been found to have notional share in their family land which could be addressed through the “partition” process, 27% of women are eligible to get land title through “mutation” of their land share, the government land record needs to be corrected and land titles to be issued in their names.

Out of the eligible list of women, 24 % (6991) have received land titles (called *patta*) so far. Among the women *patta* beneficiaries, 85% have been allocated with fresh land through OGLS, 4% have received land titles through regularization of occupancy over government land under OPLE, 9% women have received land titles through mutation process. Just 88 numbers of women have received land title to their share through partition process. Table 3 shows the numbers of women received land titles and Table 4 depicts the different processes through which land titles have been issued to the women.

Table 3 District-wise number of single women (six categories) received lands title

District	Widowed	Separated	Divorcee	Destitute	Unmarried	Disable	Total
Mayurbhanj	3459	114		316	540	12	4441
Koraput	410			76	138	5	629
Kalahandi	522		10	81	56	21	690
Ganjam	974	50	16	115	76		1231
Total	5365	164	26	588	810	38	6991

Source: Author’s own analysis of field data

Table 4 Land titles issued through different processes

Process	Land titles issued	%
Allocation (OGLS)	5957	85
Regularisation (OPLE)	292	4
Mutation	617	9
Partition	88	
FRA	37	
Total	6991	

Source: Author's own analysis of field data

About 91% (178489) of the identified women have been recommended for processing of social security entitlements as per the government's paraphernalia. These entitlements include housing, water and sanitation, livelihood promotion programs, food security and family benefit schemes and programs.

3.4 Building Capacity of Government Officials

A major hindrance in securing the land rights of single women has been common practice of "gender discrimination" and lack of sensitivity of government officials about the issues around women's land rights. Deep-seated patriarchy and customary practices are often reflected in the Revenue Officials' attitude, behaviour and practice while dealing with land matters. Besides, lack of clarity on the recent amendments in the laws and ignorance about state's priorities to include women in land programs adversely affect the service delivery by such officials. Therefore, the WSC program design consciously integrates training and orientations for the Revenue officials in multiple layers on the following -1) Importance of land rights for women, especially for the single women, keeping in view the gender equity and equality aspects; 2) Functioning of WSC with clarity on each of the official's role and responsibility to facilitate the process; 3) Clarity on recent amendments of laws and the policy directives for women empowerment by securing their land rights; 4) Training of Trainers (ToT) on how to enumerate single women and include in the government land programs; 5) Two-layered training on computerized data management using MIS; 6) Orientation on field verification to field level revenue officials keeping in view the objectives of WSCs to address land entitlements of single women; 7) Orientation to revenue officials on how to institute and dispose cases of inheritance rights of the identified single women, particularly through mutation and partition.

Separate training modules have been developed by Landesa to train and orient different stakeholders such as the Revenue Inspectors, the Nodal Officers of WSCs, the Sector Supervisors of WCD Department and

the Social Extension Officers of the Block Development Office. The stakeholders are oriented and imparted with multi-layered trainings to help them understand the objective and functioning of WSCs, and capacitate them with the required knowledge and guidelines deliver effectively to identify and facilitate the single women for their land entitlements. (Table 5 shows number of government officials oriented and trained in the process in four districts).

Table 5 Number of Government Officials Trained through WSCs

District	Revenue and Block official	ICDS Officials (ToT)	Anganwadi Workers	Total
Ganjam	102	76	846	1024
Kalahandi	114	85	1487	1686
Koraput	216	91	1495	1802
Mayurbhanj	216	146	3751	4113
Total	658	398	7579	8635

Source: Author's own analysis of field data

4. Challenges in Implementing the Model

The qualitative information collected through personal interviews with revenue officials, local self-government functionaries, *Anganwadi* workers and the men and women in the villages help us summarize here the challenges in implementing the model –

Absence of state's mandatory guidelines

The scaling of the WSC so far has been through district-to-district advocacy by Landesa and getting the individual buy-in of the Collector and District Magistrates. There are challenges in implementing the model due to: a) absence of state's mandatory guidelines for securing land rights of women in congruence with HSAA and lack of special drive for securing the land rights of single women which leaves the programs implementation at the sole discretion of the Collectors; b) district chiefs have diverse style of administration and perception about women's land rights, and they often suggest to have district specific operational guidelines (non-uniform *modus operandi*); c) change in leadership at districts due to relocation reverses the program back to square-one; d) it slows down the scaling as individual buy-in is time consuming and it limits scope of expanding the program across all the districts at one go.

Establishing Eligibility Still a Challenge

As per revenue laws, the landless can be provided with a homestead or farm land or both. There is a challenge in establishing the single women as “landless” because there is a common perception among revenue officials that these women have some notional share of land either from their parent’s side or from their in-laws side (if married) if they have some land. The revenue officials are often confused while cross checking their family landholding and they reject the claims of these single women for allocation of government land on the pretext that they might inherit land from their in-laws or parents. However, it is “double – jeopardy” for the single woman – on one hand, inheriting her family land is almost impossible due to deep seated patriarchy, she fails to benefit from the government land to landless program, on the other.

Definition of Family

Another major gap is in the definition of “family.” As per the Article 37 of the OLRA - a family includes an individual and his/her spouse and their children, whether major or minor. Later the law was amended to include married daughters, whereas a childless widow is not considered to be a member of her deceased husband’s family (Orissa Land Reforms Manual, 1997: A67-A69). Similarly, the Land Ceiling Act (1974) defines the family as a unit comprising of husband, wife and up to three minor children. While the married sons are considered as separate family units, the widowed, separated, divorced women if they do not live separately are not counted as separate family units. Also, mother is not a member of the son’s family. This is double jeopardy for the widowed women as they are deprived from asserting their exclusive land rights due to patriarchal society in one hand; they are not even counted as independent units and are left out while the state enumerates the landless.

Challenges in Settling Women’s Inheritance Rights to Land

More than 80% of the population in India is Hindu and as per the Hindu Succession Act 1956 (amended in 2005), women are entitled to receive a share of land from their paternal or in-law's families. The state law too provides for “partition” of land and property under section 19(1) c of OLRA (as discussed earlier). However, negotiating such rights in the overtly patriarchal set up becomes extremely difficult because single women generally tend to internalize the imposed social restrictions on them and mostly depend on their brothers for economic and social support. Social stigma and seclusion practices compel them to forfeit their legitimate rights in favor of their brothers. Therefore, it becomes a bigger challenge for the government to single handedly institute and dispose the cases of partition and mutation case by case where the situations are very contextual and cannot be generalized. Here, the government officials have to carry out the administrative procedure and at the same time, they have to play a vital role of

counsellor. Many government officials do not willingly take up this responsibility of counselling because: a) that does not come under their primary job deliverables; b) they themselves still lack clarity and gender sensitivity as changing behavior and practice is a slow process; and c) absence of mandatory guidelines from government to carry out counselling and *suo motu* mutation and partition of property within stipulated time of death of husband or father. Besides, due to lack of land legal literacy in rural areas, neither the single women nor their family member know the importance of “name in the land document” called “*patta*” and benefits of land ownership by women.

Therefore, partition of land under the provisions of section 19 (1) c has shown limited results in case of single women even though the state has prioritized it through official orders and circulars to the districts and district administrations have initiated the processes. Both the administrative and quasi-judicial processes have not been amended to protect the women’s land rights despite the historic enactment of HSAA 2005.

It has also been observed that while some parents are lenient towards giving land to their daughters, the resistance is mostly from the brothers against their sisters inheriting parental land as the brothers apprehend their share might reduce.

Similarly, the mutation process being both lengthy and cost-intensive, it discourages single women who are both ignorant and lack access to revenue administration of the state due social restrictions on their mobility. The standard process mutation involves the following: 1) the registration of transfer deeds of any property is intimated by the sub-registrar of land to the concerned tehsildar in a prescribed format (on Form No.3); 2) the tehsildar uses this information to effect the mutation in the ROR; 3) before making any change in the ROR, the Tehsildar calls for objections to the transaction within a stipulated period; 4) any objections to the transaction are dealt with by the tehsil court, however the matter may be referred to the next higher court of the Sub-Collector or above; 5) once the mutation is allowed, the Tehsildar issues a notification to update the RORs of the land transferor(s) and the transferee(s); 6) after mutation and correction of RORs, a 45-day appeal period is allowed for challenging the mutation (This is particularly relevant in the case of siblings with potential claims on a parcel of land, one of whom may challenge the transaction); 7) finally, certified copies reflecting the latest status of land ownership are issued to both the transferer and transferee, the copy of the original record maintained at the Tehsil office is up-dated, and necessary corrections are made in the village map to reflect the most recent plot boundaries. Therefore, if there are no objections at any stage, the process of acquiring a land title (*patta*) after the mutation requires

a minimum of three months' time. The data reveals that just 9% of the women have got land titles through mutation process (Table 4 in page 20).

Besides, even when the women receive land in inheritance, it is invariably much less than an equal share (88 cases of partition settled in the Mayurbhanj district demonstrate this). On the other hand, widowed women are more likely to get their land as compared to daughters. There seems to be a larger level of social acceptance for a widow has stronger rights to claim and get her late husband's share of land. This has mixed scope – more of such cases can be prioritized, at the same time more complex cases to be settled.

Availability of Leasable Land for Cluster Allocation

For allocating land to single women in cluster, availability of leasable land in the vicinity of the present location of the single women is a challenge. Though some land might appear habitable and leasable, the government records show different information about the classification of land like they are not leasable because they fall into certain “objectionable” classifications of land.

For example in the Kalahandi district in Th. Rampur tehsil, out of total land area of 3840.62 acres, a meagre 14.82% land is leasable and 85.18% land is objectionable. Likewise, in the Lanjigarh tehsil of the same district, out of total land area of 6465.98 acres, only 8.63% land is leasable and 91.87 % land is objectionable (source: state government land records).

Size of Plot

While the *Vasundhara* guidelines, homestead land up to 10 cents can be allotted to eligible homestead-less, the State Policy for Girls and Women 2014 mentions about 4 cents of land to be allocated to vulnerable single women. However, the revenue inspectors use discretions to allocate less than 4 cents as they have a perception that it is imperative to keep some land parcels otherwise there may be no land parcel left for allocating to the landless or homestead-less in future. Smaller size of plot leaves very little space for growing kitchen garden or livestock rearing and therefore limits scope of implementing livelihood schemes and programs.

Procedural Delay

Though the centers operate as special cells, it is operationalized within the existing institutional structure of land administration and it functions as per the statutory rules and regulations. Despite due priority is assigned to the cases of single women for processing and settling their land entitlements, the due

diligence and lengthy procedure often delays the process, particularly the process of approving land's classification change in case of fresh land allocation; instituting and settling cases of partition and mutation.

Inactive District Legal Services Authority

While the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) has the mandate to provide legal assistance to the poor, their mandate does not prioritize the land right issues (inheritance) of the poor women, particularly the single women. The DLSA staff expressed the need for land legal literacy of women so as to generate widespread awareness about their land rights.

Relocation Challenges

While efforts are on for providing land parcels to single women who are eligible for government land allocation to them, it is more challenging for the single women to relocate to the new land unless: 1) land parcels are allocated to a group of single women in a cluster; 2) basic amenities like housing, drinking water and sanitation are provided

Lack of Inter-Departmental Convergence

Land right is not effective in empowering women to escape poverty if land is not accessible, not used productively. Women in rural areas lack of awareness about how access input and supports to optimize use of land.

While land rights matters are dealt by the Revenue Department and land titles are issued to the eligible single women by through the Tehsil office of this department, it is almost impossible for the poor single women to start using that land without support of housing grant and sanitation facilities through schemes and programs from the Block Development Office under Prime Minister's Awas Yojna (National Rural Housing Scheme), Biju Pucca Ghar Yojna (State Rural Housing Scheme) and Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS). Similarly, the land development and other benefits is covered under MGNREGS¹⁰ scheme; the starter kits for kitchen garden is provided through National Horticulture Mission from the Horticulture Department; and goats, chicks, ducks are provided through various livelihood promotion programs; and vaccination is taken care of by the Veterinary Department. So, lack of inter-departmental

¹⁰ Under the scheme there are provisions of irrigation facility, horticulture plantation and land development facilities to land owned by households belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes or below poverty line families or to beneficiaries of land reforms or to the beneficiaries under the PMAY of the Government of India or that of the small farmers or marginal farmers as defined in the Agriculture Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008.

convergence adversely affects the service delivery of such schemes and programs, and limits scope of accessing benefits and opportunities by the single women to improve their lives.

5. Scaling of the Model

As discussed earlier, the scaling so far has been through Landesa's district-to-district advocacy and getting individual buy-in of the District Chief administrators. The model is yet to reach to all the 30 districts of the state. Landesa is advocating with the state's apex bureaucracy for a comprehensive land program for women linking it to the broader goal of "women empowerment for inclusive growth and shared prosperity" with a focus on the land rights of single women as a "first step" in attaining it. Based on the current statistics, such a scaling could help the state reaching out to an estimated two million single women who have remained invisible to the policies and hence, as yet, are "unreached" in terms of both state's land and welfare programs. Lack of awareness about their own rights and knowledge about the state's provision and succession rights, the single women are at huge disadvantage in terms getting their share of land.

Landesa has realized through its research and situation analysis that the issues around land rights of single women are more or less similar in India's eastern state of Bihar and northern state of Uttar Pradesh. With Landesa's technical support, these two states too have started piloting the WSC program model of Odisha in select districts with requisite modifications to suit their states' contexts.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

With the experience of WSC functioning in the districts, it has been realized that the finer gaps in the state policy and legal provisions need focused attention. Besides, the state need to come up with a holistic approach towards addressing the land rights of women with special emphasis on the rights of single women who are without marital support. The state needs to devise mandatory guidelines to for implementing a state-wide comprehensive program for empowering women with land rights by expanding the scope of WSC to address women's inheritance rights.

It is recommended that –

- 1) The state should establish Women Support Centers at each of the 314 sub-districts of Odisha under the comprehensive umbrella of "women empowerment" to prioritize the cases of land rights and livelihood of women with focused intervention for securing the land rights of single women through a three-pronged strategy: a) enumerate them as landless, independent of the households they depend on, and include them in state's land to landless program to allocate up to 10 cents of homestead land and up to one standard acre of agricultural land; b) institute and settle

the cases of inheritance rights through the process of mutation and partition with revised guidelines; c) help single women benefit from various government welfare and livelihood programs by institutional convergence of schemes and programs; d) embed land legal literacy program with the programs of strengthening self-help groups.

- 2) The state government should institute a thorough review of the administrative and quasi-judiciary processes of mutation and partition on the principles of providing equal treatment to women as per the legal provisions under HSA 2005. The revision should prescribe clear mandatory guidelines on the processes and procedures.
- 3) The staff and officials responsible for instituting and settling the cases of mutation, updating land records, partition processes, should undergo primary trainings and refreshment trainings on the procedures advised as per new guidelines with clarity and motive to protect and ensure women's land rights with special emphasis on the vulnerable category of "single women."
- 4) The state should come up with training modules (ToT) for Land Legal Literacy training which will be imparted to self-help group leaders who in turn will train the rural women in two phases. These Land Legal Literacy Programs need to be embedded in the SHG training and capacity building programs under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), Targeted Rural Initiative for Poverty Termination and Infrastructure (TRIPTI)¹¹, Watershed Mission, SHG empowerment programs of Women and Child Development Department and Panchayati Raj Department.
- 5) The state should issue mandatory guidelines to District Legal Services Authority for providing assistance to poor single women for their inheritance rights with a priority. The staff of DLSA should be oriented on the new guidelines.
- 6) The state should issue guidelines to the District Rural Development Agencies for covering the single women landowners under various rural development schemes as per its "Women's Wing" that focuses on integrating all poverty alleviation programs and schemes to benefit women.
- 7) While stressing on women's inclusion, policy directives should remove cap of 45 years as such cap would lead to mass exclusion as about half of the single women are within the age group of 45 years.
- 8) The state has to revise the definition of family in the OLRA (Article 37) to recognize single women such as widowed, divorced, separated, unmarried women above 30 years, and women with physical disability as exclusive units to be considered for land allocation and regularization in their favor.

¹¹ Targeted Rural Initiative for Poverty Termination and Infrastructure (TRIPTI), a state-run World Bank assisted project under Odisha Livelihood Mission (a part of NRLM initiative) of the Panchayati Raj Department of government of Odisha aims at enhancing the socio-economic status of the poor, especially women and disadvantaged groups.

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List of Tables

Table 1 Women Support Centers in Five Districts (Page -14)

Table 2 Category-wise Distribution of Single Women (Page – 18)

Table 3 District-wise number of single women (six categories) received lands title (Page- 19)

Table 4 Land titles issued through different processes (Page - 20)

Table 5 Number of Government Officials Trained through WSCs (Page -21)

List of Figures

Fig 1: Category-wise Distribution of Single Women (Page - 18)