

ONE-DAY EVENT FOCUSES ON WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

'Women farmers still struggle for land rights'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: Gauri Chhela, 50, a woman farmer from Shakod village near Bavla, has lived in the shadow of fear for the past five years. A paddy farmer, Gauri started demanding the inclusion of her name in land ownership documents after her husband died.

"My in-laws, especially my brothers-in-law, opposed the idea. But I had two children to look after and without the land, where would they go? Unfortunately, both my sons died and I am now looking after my three grandchildren," says Gauri.

NGOs had to approach the TDO and mamlatdar to get her the land. Due to influence of her in-laws, she couldn't even get the five witnesses needed for the transfer. As a special case, the mamlatdar had to pass an order to consider two witnesses as sufficient.

Chhela was not alone among the 250-odd women farmers who gathered at Gujarat National Law Univer-



250-odd women farmers gathered at GNLU to discuss issues related to agriculture and land ownership in Gujarat

sity (GNLU) on Tuesday to discuss issues related to women farmers and land ownership in Gujarat. The event was hosted by the Gujarat chapter of Working Group for Women and Land Ownership (WGWLO) along with 18 NGOs from various parts of the state.

Shilpa Vasavada, convener of the

working group, said the state has about 43.92 lakh women in agriculture and related sectors.

"While there are no official statistics available, only about 3% women actually get land rights. The majority of women don't know the formal procedure, whereas sometimes even get-

ting recognition as a woman farmer is a tough task," she said.

The scenario is even more grim for women from tribal and forest areas, experts say. Rami Bhabhor, a resident of Bharva village near Dahod, said she grows maize and beans on her plot which is just short of two acres, to raise her two girls. "I lost my husband and the struggle had started to alienate me from the village and family. I was pushed to the wall and decided to fight back. I am worried about preserving the rights of my daughters," she said.

Some issues discussed at the conference included awareness of government schemes, registering on the e-Khedut portal and using innovative methods of farming. The women also decided to ask the government to make laws gender-neutral and to provide incentives to women farmers for equipment and seeds. They pointed out that sometimes, contradictorily, forest conservation rights are given to women living in tribal areas.