

From big screen to smallholders: Prajakta Koli joins Heifer International to champion women farmers

The Time100 creator, Bollywood actor, author and advocate joins Heifer International's campaign to celebrate the UN's International Year of the Woman Farmer

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Bollywood actor, creator, best-selling author and activist Prajakta Koli has joined forces with global nonprofit Heifer International to help elevate the voices of women farmers during the UN's International Year of the Woman Farmer.

As the ambassador for Heifer's "[She Has A Story to Tell, Are You Listening?](#)"

campaign, Prajakta will lend her support to help spotlight the experiences, resilience and stories of women farmers across Asia.

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Prajakta Koli

In many developing countries around the world, women produce up to [80 per cent](#) of food, yet they face persistent barriers to markets, finance, training and resources, and are often excluded from decision-making processes. If women had the same access to resources, farm yields could increase to feed an additional [100 to 150 million people](#).

“What resonated most with me about Heifer's She Has a Story to Tell campaign is that it is not about speaking for

women farmers but about creating space for their voices to be heard,” said Prajakta. She added:



Prajakta Koli also visited Nepal as part of Heifer's documentary series in partnership with CNN-News18 entitled "Day in the Life of a Woman Farmer". (Credit: Heifer International)

“Today, much of our food reaches us neatly packaged and processed, making it easy to overlook the people and effort behind it. By putting a face and a story to the journey of our food, we can reconnect with those who grow it and develop a deeper appreciation for its true value.”

Prajakta, 32, who was born in Mumbai, India, is also UN Development Programme (UNDP) India's first Youth Climate Champion and sits on the advisory group for the Gates Foundation's Goalkeepers, championing gender equality and climate action through pop culture and storytelling. She has a following of more than 8.5 million on her Instagram account @mostlysane and over 7.25 million subscribers on her YouTube channel @mostlysane.



Evidence suggests if women had the same access to resources, farm yields could increase to feed an additional 100 to 150 million people. (Credit: Heifer International)

“Women farmers are the backbone of our food systems, yet their stories are too often unheard,” said Neena Joshi, Senior Vice President for Asia Programs, Heifer International. “We are proud to welcome Prajakta Koli as our campaign ambassador, helping more people understand the everyday realities, challenges and contributions of women farmers across Asia, and recognize the role of the women who feed millions, care for the Earth, and contribute to national economies.”

Heifer International launched its global campaign in March with a virtual event featuring women farmers from Kenya and Ecuador to coincide with International Women’s Day, followed by a regional launch in Asia that saw women farmers from Nepal and Cambodia share their stories and an Earth Day event featuring women farmers from Africa.

The farmers called for the meaningful inclusion of women in policy and investment decisions that shape rural economies by governments, funders, and NGOs. They emphasized that women farmers are already leading enterprises, producer associations and financial cooperatives, and that sustained investment in their leadership is essential to building resilient food systems.

As part of its campaign, Heifer has also produced a documentary series in partnership with CNN-News18 entitled “Day in the Life of a Woman Farmer,” which includes episodes from Nepal, India and Cambodia. The first episode from Nepal, which features Prajakta, will be released on July 6.

As of 2024, two thirds of the participants in Heifer projects were women. In Rwanda, women-led

livestock initiatives have doubled milk production while more than 5,500 women in Bangladesh have benefitted from training in climate-smart agriculture. Meanwhile, women involved in an egg cooperative in Mexico increased their household income contribution by an average of 12 per cent and achieved 100 percent participation in financial decision-making on their farms.

Heifer International has worked in India since 1955 and supports women farmers through the formation and training of self-help groups and cooperatives. For example, 30,000 smallholder women goat farmers are involved in the Odisha Sustainable Livelihood Development Project, which supports farmers to work collectively in self-help groups or other farmer-owned agribusinesses. The initiative provides technical and business support to improve farmers' access to markets, credit, and specialized agriculture services to expand their enterprises and increase profits.

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