

Opinion: Entrepreneurship skilling can attract more women if offered in a qualification framework

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By Neharika Vohra, Neelanjana Gupta & Preethi Rao

Women's participation in labor markets is an important means to their economic empowerment. It also, in turn, fuels improvement in socio-economic conditions of households and helps build diverse and inclusive societies. Skilling and entrepreneurship development are two very important channels to promote greater labor force participation. Government schemes such as the National Policy for Skill Development, launched by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2015, the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) and the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) have specific provisions such as flexible training schedules and targeted employment opportunities post training, particularly for women. Such policies and schemes have also promoted entrepreneurship among women, which is considered an important source of livelihood given their specific needs such as flexible work timings and lack of mobility.

Building on its agenda to socio-economically empower women, the Government of NCT of Delhi announced the "Saheli Samanvay Kendra Scheme" as part of its 2021-22 budget. The scheme intends to set up easily accessible local incubation centers to support women-led start-ups. The Saheli Samanvay Kendras (SSKs) are set up at Anganwadi Hubs (AWHs) and serve as convergence-cum-facilitation centers that provide a vibrant space for women and children to engage in dialogue, receive services and information, and get sensitized on various social issues.

In 2021-22, IWWAGE, an initiative of LEAD at Krea University and the Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University (DSEU), Government of NCT of Delhi, partnered to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that focused on gathering ground-level data and information on women living around AWHs and Anganwadi centers (AWCs) to support the design of the Samridhi component of the program which focuses on mobilizing and strengthening women's collectives by nurturing entrepreneurship and generating sustainable livelihood opportunities.

An 'Enterprise Readiness Survey' was conducted in November 2021 across 5 AWHs in Delhi covering 522 women to assess their enterprise readiness while also gauging their appetite for uptake of skill training programs. The results of the survey have been published recently in a report by IWWAGE titled 'Barriers and opportunities for aspirational women entrepreneurs'. About 80% of the respondents in the sample set were housewives, unemployed, students or retired or pensioners. Of the remaining respondents, half were self-employed (54 women), while the other half reported having salaried jobs.

More than 70 percent of the women who are not entrepreneurs (housewives, students and unemployed and retired individuals) reported that they would be interested in starting a business. Most of the women are inspired to set up an enterprise to supplement their family income (77%); some also desired to gain economic independence (11%) or pursue personal interest or a pass-time activity. However, a large number (64%) of women feel that childcare and domestic responsibilities would restrict them from doing so. They are also not confident that they have financial knowledge required to run a business. These women also lack the financial support to establish an enterprise; 16% of the respondents said that their families would not be supportive and would restrict them from engaging in any such activities.

In terms of the content and structure of skill training courses, the survey revealed that stitching and sewing, pickle and papad-making, and embroidery are popular entrepreneurial and livelihood skill training programs, while business management and planning, communication, and use of mobile phones are soft skills in high demand. To increase take up of training programs that increase the employability of women, it would help if the training imparted is integrated within the National Skills Qualifications Framework and is accredited by a credible body.

A concerted effort to harmonize the ongoing training interventions and skilling programs run by NGOs in this space, and to validate the outcomes and link to income generating activities would also ensure that efforts are not duplicated and existing systems are leveraged. Innovative models of training delivery, through fellowship programs targeted towards empowering young fellows to develop and impart such training programs, can also be considered.

The IWWAGE study provides empirical support for the WomenWorks program of DSEU which aims to encourage and support women entrepreneurs by identifying and addressing skills gaps. The Delhi Government, through the Department of Women and Child Development has recently signed an MoU with DSEU to support setting up of 500 women-led enterprises, especially from low-income settlements in the state. Other states in India have also launched similar skilling programs – such as the Tejaswini Yojana in Jharkhand and Sudakshya Yojana in Odisha – which promote livelihoods, business and technical training to increase economic opportunities for women. Through such concerted efforts state governments can bring about a multiplicative effect on the uptake of entrepreneurship among women and ultimately impact their socio-economic stature in the society.

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By Rahul Gupta

renewable energy.

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India is aiming to achieve the 500 GW target by 2030, in its continued efforts toward a cleaner and sustainable environment. However, many say it's a big goal post placed too far. no one knows whether we will hit the target or not. In this line, at least there is a big motivation and clarity that huge investments are needed in the industry and the installation pace has to be increased. Given, globally India is emerging as a superpower, the reliance on the indigenous source of power needs to be assured. Added to it the global pressure of meeting carbon emission commitments, achievement of the 500 GW target needs to be ensured.

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Major challenges in the sector