

# The Her&Now Approach to Women Entrepreneurship Promotion

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## A Project Guide



Implemented by

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

**HER** empowering  
women  
entrepreneurs  
**&NOW**

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# Women Entrepreneurship in India - Context

At a time when India is trying to realise its stated ambition of being a \$5 trillion dollar economy, it has much work to do in terms of bridging the gender gap in economic spheres. A 2021 report by the World Economic Forum states that the gender gap in the Indian labour market is 72%. Battling a lack of critical support and social norms, women face an uphill climb to be seen as serious economic actors.

Only 20% of all enterprises in India are run by women, as per a 2019 report by Google-Bain. This disparity was further pronounced by the pandemic which affected women disproportionately. 90% of female entrepreneurs reported a significant loss in revenue, post the lockdown. A World Bank study shows that female employment in India dropped from 26% to 19% in 2022.

However, integrating women into the workforce and entrepreneurship is the opportunity that could help India unlock its \$5 trillion dollar aspirations. For example, just bridging the financial gap for women entrepreneurship could add an estimated \$770 billion to the Indian GDP by 2025, as per estimates from McKinsey.

This requires structured interventions to plug critical gaps, such as business competencies, digital skills, access to finance and markets, and networking.

# Project Overview



On behalf of German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

In partnership with Indian Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



**08/2018 – 01/2023**



**€ 5.9 Mio.**



**Outcome:**

The framework conditions for women-led enterprises in India are improved

**Competencies and  
Mentoring**



**Networking and  
Peer Support**



**Need-based  
Support**



**Enabling  
Ecosystem**



**Positive Mindset  
Change**



**Access to  
Finance**



# Competencies and Mentoring

Along with five local implementation partners, Project Her&Now ran an entrepreneurship support programme for women from 12 Indian states. These include Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Telangana.

The programme had two components, i.e. incubation and acceleration. Incubation focused on idea-stage entrepreneurs, helping them convert their ideas into registered enterprises. Acceleration focused on growth-stage entrepreneurs with existing businesses, who were looking to scale their operations and revenue. The programme was sector-agnostic and focused on traditional enterprises from the tier 2 and 3 cities of India, as opposed to innovation-driven startups.

The project used a mix of mainstream media, on-ground outreach and activation, and ecosystem networks, to scout for eligible entrepreneurs. This was achieved through partnerships with local governments, incubators, academic institutes, and entrepreneurship support organisations (ESO).

Selected participants benefited from classroom sessions and 1:1 mentoring by industry experts, acquiring critical business skills, customized business advice, access to market opportunities, and linkages to financial institutions. Additionally, they were supported to improve their self-image and self-confidence as entrepreneurs.

**More than 900 women entrepreneurs received incubation and acceleration support.**



# Resources



## PROJECT IMPACT REPORT

for the first cohort of women entrepreneurs

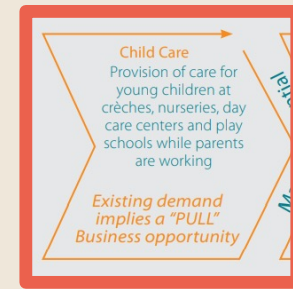


## PROJECT IMPACT REPORT

for the second cohort of women entrepreneurs

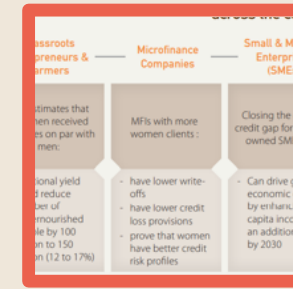


# Preparatory Studies and Reports



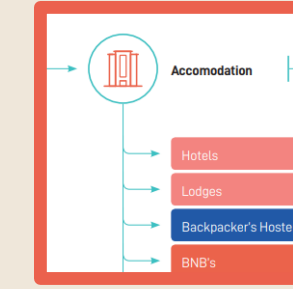
## REPORT

on the childcare ecosystem in India and how it affects participation of women in the workforce



## BUSINESS CASE

for gender-lens investing in India



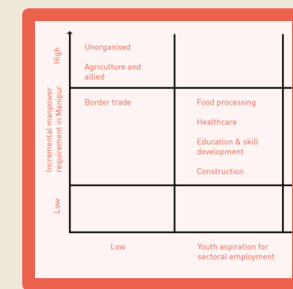
## ANALYSIS

of key value chains that lend themselves to women-led micro-entrepreneurship.



## ANALYSIS

of the women entrepreneurship ecosystem in India



## ANALYSIS

of the women entrepreneurship ecosystem in the North Eastern state of Manipur





# Entrepreneurship Support in Numbers

**3770**

applications were received for the support programmes

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The youngest participant was aged

**18**

and the oldest was aged

**66**

**986**

applicants were selected

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The programme drew participation from

**12**

Indian states

**908**

participants successfully completed the programme

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**721**

participants completed the incubation programme

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**187**

participants completed the acceleration programme

**75%**

of the workforce employed by the participants were women

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**>48,130**

livelihoods were impacted by the support programmes



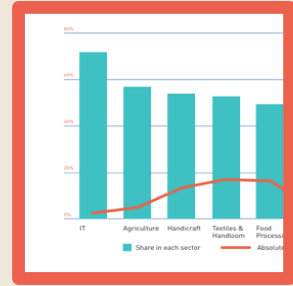
# Need-based Support

For participants of the Her&Now support programme, the project also extended need-based support, going beyond the structured boundaries of incubation and acceleration. These value-added interventions were conceptualized as a response to

- a. An existing gap that needed urgent attention and had the potential to elevate the performance of participating entrepreneurs
- b. An opportunity that could be capitalized on, thereby significantly impacting the businesses of high-potential participants
- c. An unforeseen event or crisis that required fresh thinking that was originally not in-scope.



# Resources



## WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' RESILIENCE

in Times of Covid-19, a report that details out how WEs responded to the pandemic



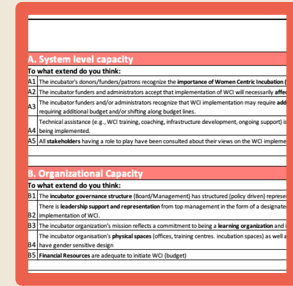
# Enabling Ecosystem and Policy

While a significant amount of work that Project Her&Now undertook involved working with women entrepreneurs, the project tackled the gaps in the ecosystem, especially in the smaller cities, which impede the growth of women-led businesses. Some of the key questions addressed through the ecosystem enablement and policy development initiatives were

- a. How do we help our implementation partners build robust foundations to continue their work in women entrepreneurship support?
- b. How do we share our learnings with other entrepreneurship support organisations and incubators to help them design more effective programmes?
- c. How do we create a better sensitised mentor pool to support WEs?
- d. How do we contribute towards improving the policy landscape for women entrepreneurship in the country?



# Resources



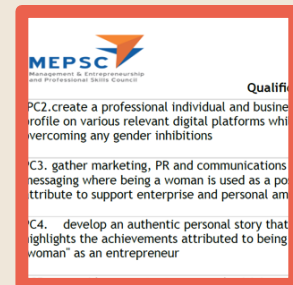
## WINCUBATE

a training module to help incubators and ESOs design more effective women entrepreneurship programmes



## POLICY BRIEF

to unlock the potential of women entrepreneurship in Nagaland



## QUALIFICATION PACK

on gender-sensitive entrepreneurship developed for the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) – Informal enterprises



## POLICY BRIEF

with recommendations to improve the WE ecosystem in the state of Delhi



# Ecosystem Enablement in Numbers

**30**

incubators underwent the Wincubate foundational training that helps organisations design better women entrepreneurship support programmes

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A qualification standard for entrepreneurship training including electives on women entrepreneurship was passed by the National Council for Vocational Education and Training

**2**

incubators underwent the Wincubate advanced training

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The Government of Nagaland was supported to identify policy-level changes to promote women entrepreneurship in the State through research culminating in a policy brief, followed by support to implement select policy recommendations

**3**

recommendations on gender-sensitive development of government support programmes were implemented on a pilot basis

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**>12,600**

stakeholders participated in capacity building and outreach events conducted by the project and its implementing partners

**12**

capacity-building interventions were conducted for central and state government partners

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# Networking and Peer Support

While implementing the entrepreneur support programme, a recurrent observation pertained to the power of community. Participants of Project Her&Now often reported improved self-confidence and a feeling of solidarity from their fellow entrepreneurs. One important aspect supporting this sense of community came from an identifiable and relatable brand name 'Her&Now'. To build on this and to ensure continued impact post the completion of the project, four WE networks were set up across India. Initially funded by the project but managed autonomously

by volunteer entrepreneurs, these networks built local peer-support communities. Currently, they organize expert sessions, networking meets, and advocate for a better entrepreneurship ecosystem for women in their respective states by engaging with the local governments. Project Her&Now supported the networks with organizational development and registration of their networks, as well as institutionalizing connections with local ecosystem stakeholders, particularly government.



# Networking and Peer Support in Numbers

**4**

women entrepreneurship networks were formally established by the participants of Project Her&Now support programmes

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**417**

women entrepreneurs are part of these 4 networks

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# Access to Finance

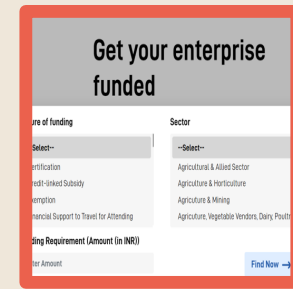
The support programmes emphasised on getting participating women entrepreneurs ready for investment, in a variety of ways. Classroom sessions focused on equipping them with knowledge around relevant themes, including but not restricted to –

- Types of funding instruments, mechanisms, and products
- Compliance requirements to access various forms of funding
- Pitching skills to improve chances of being funded
- Credit score to improve credit-worthiness

The project also facilitated access to finance through targeted interventions, and invested in creation of a tool that will improve awareness around financial schemes launched by the government.



# Resources



## PORTAL

developed to help women entrepreneurs discover relevant government schemes for financial assistance and offered under the MeraBizNet platform.



# Positive Mindset Change

Many of the existing biases and hurdles that keep women from starting and running successful businesses can be traced back to discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes. Therefore, any women entrepreneurship promotion efforts also need to include additional activities at a societal level to positively transform such underlying norms of unequal economic participation.

Our dedicated film and media campaign encouraged a public debate about the great potential of women's economic participation with the goal of changing mindsets around women entrepreneurship in India. Using a great variety of communications products and channels, stories of successful women entrepreneurs were shared with a wide audience to promote relatable role models for women. The intention was to inspire more women to take up entrepreneurship as a viable career option and convince their families, community and the society more generally to support their ambitions.

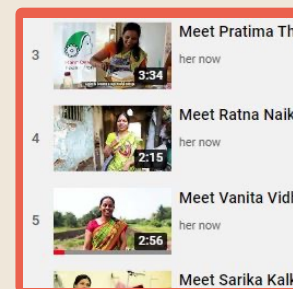


# Resources



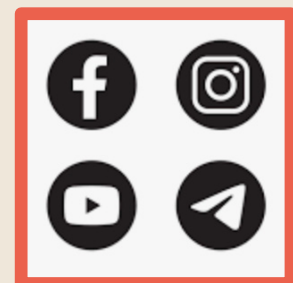
## MEDIA PACK

includes all products of the campaign as well as a practical guideline on their gender-transformative application.



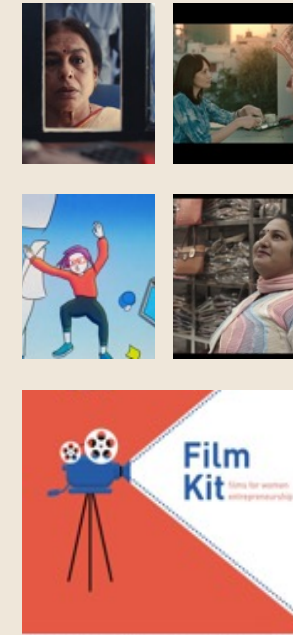
## ROLE MODEL VIDEOS

women entrepreneurs talk about their business challenges, successes and aspirations.



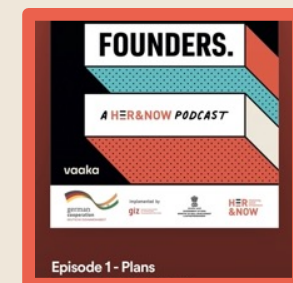
## SOCIAL MEDIA

targeted communication across various social media channels was used to inform and inspire as well as creating a supportive online community.



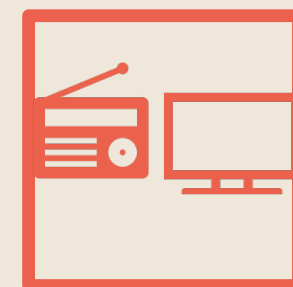
## FOUR AWARD-WINNING SHORT FILMS

that were screening across small Indian cities in combination with moderated discussions on gender norms and entrepreneurship based on the auxiliary Film Kit.



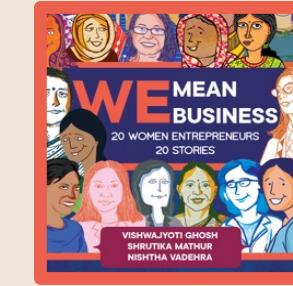
## PODCAST

in three episodes, in which subject matter experts discuss the socio-economic landscape of women entrepreneurship in India, exemplified with the accounts by women entrepreneurs.



## RADIO AND TV

the projects' messages and initiatives were disseminated through the mass media radio and TV.



## GRAPHIC NOVEL

"WE Mean Business – 20 Women Entrepreneurs, 20 Stories", available in bookstores across India, compiles illustrated real-life stories of Indian women from diverse regions, business sectors and backgrounds.



## NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PRESS COVERAGE

showcased diverse stories of women entrepreneurs ensuring their representation among a wide readership and in vernacular languages.



# Positive Mindset Change in Numbers

Over

**1,130,000**

people reached

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**66,000+**

views of role model videos

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**790+**

articles published in regional and national media

**77**

film screenings with

**8,700+**

participants

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**515**

radio- and TV spots aired

**900,000+**

views of the short films on YouTube

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**900+**

podcast plays

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**4,500**

books disseminated

**12,500+**

followers on social media with

**70,000+**

engagements

# Key Lessons Learnt

## IMPLEMENTATION

### The right partner selection is crucial

- Do they have a focus on gender outside of this project?
- Do they have a strong regional footprint?
- What are their partnerships like?
- Does the commitment to gender reflect in their organisational structure?

### Build for when the project will end

- Tools, assets, that will outlive the project
- Capacities that will leave partners stronger than you found them

- Strong peer support networks for women entrepreneurs

### Have an implementation framework that is adaptable

- Cultural context in implementation regions
- Gender analysis of the implementation regions
- Ecosystem readiness

### Market access extends beyond legal and compliance aspects

- Product development and design is a key aspect

# Key Lessons Learnt

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Local government buy-in early in the project

- Engage central government for overarching impact and scale, while engaging with smaller, local government bodies for speed of execution. Local government bodies tend to be nimbler, which helped the project move from idea to implementation faster.

### Hands-on approach to cover for blind spots within the monitoring systems

- Co-create and participate actively in implementation sessions so there is enough confidence among beneficiaries to highlight gaps and areas for improvement
- Commission a third-party evaluation agency that can operate outside of the internal monitoring

framework to gauge real impact of the project effectively

**Create a mandatory anti-harassment framework at the level of implementing partners, which includes mentors and service providers that work with the women entrepreneurs as part of the programmes**

**Co-create and standardize the curriculum of the women entrepreneurship support programmes to ensure quality across implementing partners and to make sure that important standards of women centricity are fulfilled**

**Adopt a very hands-on approach with and detailed monitoring of implementing partners**

# Key Lessons Learnt

## MEDIA CAMPAIGN

- Meaningful representation and validation through **relatable role models**
- Much needed **safe spaces** for self-expression and open discussion on gender norms
- Creating of a common movement beyond technical support through **strong branding**
- Campaign **before/in parallel** with other project activities to amplify them
- **Online - offline mix** of products and activities to reach target group effectively
- Balancing **in-depth engagement vs. maximum reach**
- Balancing **creativity vs. control of content**
- Monitoring **gender-transformative messaging** throughout (needs **capacity-building** of partners/contractors)
- Ensuring **sustainability** of resources and efforts with local partners
- Uncertain **impact measurement** beyond mere reach of campaign



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