

ENTERPRISE CASCADE OF DIGITAL FOR DIGNITY FOR WOMEN IN PURVANCHAL:

Digital Literacy, Digital infusion into existing women's enterprises and Digital-led enterprise models.



The Women's Center of Excellence (W-COE), Jagriti Enterprise Center in Purvanchal (JECP) is implementing a project under its focus of Digital for Dignity. In assessing the progress so far under the project in the three districts of Kushinagar, Deoria and Gorakhpur, a framework developed by Impacttree.ai was applied that reveals the self and the contextual for the entrepreneur (mostly working in the informal sector and largely home-based) in her aspiration for enterprise. We present here an interesting contrast in the three districts and the overall picture of digital uptake

among women in Purvanchal for use in small enterprises.

Three aspects encompass the framework. First, the entrepreneur's Drivers that comprise internal aspirations, desires, and beliefs that set her on her path. Second, the entrepreneur's more direct Influencers that amplify her inner drive and help her advancement. Drivers and Influencers operate in a dialectic for building the entrepreneur's shakti for enterprise. Last, the entrepreneur's Enablers that comprise her ecosystem that supports the combined impact



of Drivers and Influencers for greater stability in her trajectory.

Using this framework, we analyse the participating women's responses and actions towards Digital for Dignity initiatives.

Drivers



The interesting baseline in all three districts was that there was overall high digital penetration in 70% of the participating women so the Driver of the aspiration to learn and desire to grow was already present. In Kushinagar, this Driver meant that digital skills were in demand in the district and women desired to learn more about how to apply what they already knew to enterprise as well as learn new tools. Women in Deoria were already running small enterprises so here their driver was to understand the digital tools to market, expand their existing enterprises or pivot into new avenues.

They quickly learnt ways to build a network and assess customer preferences through whatsapp. One entrepreneur added VR technology and social media management as a consulting service to her IT training enterprise. Gorakhpur is in contrast to both Kushinagar and Deoria. Here, women are in wage employment and their drive to learn digital tools is to start small enterprises for supplementary income.

Influencers

One key Influencer is online digital courses that allows for prior learning coming into the project. In Deoria and Gorakhpur women's prior learning was good. In Deoria, the prior learning has pushed their aspiration for using familiar tools for enterprise (rather than for entertainment) and learn new enterprise-relevant tools.

In Gorakhpur they already knew social media management and transcription so they are open to digital-led enterprise models that can use such tools.

A strong Influencer in all three districts is Jagriti's training. In Kushinagar, women's knowledge and use of new apps learnt in the training, fueled their desire and confidence to invest in upgrading their mobile phones that could handle these tools for enterprise. They began enterprises like school uniforms stitching using business finance and social media marketing tools. The impact of their progress on other non participating women who emerged from their homes for digital training and enterprise start up was a big Influencer for their confidence to go forward. Social transformation

possibilities through interactions between aspiring women and women with less exposure is an Influencer for all women.

In Deoria, the infusion of digital into women's existing enterprises is seeing success and, hence, is a big influencer for a desire to scale. Other women are coming to them for advice to set up or expand their business which is a confidence booster.

Understanding the importance of keeping herself and her family safe while using the digital medium is influencing the entrepreneur to add these tools to her digital repertoire for enterprise expansion.

In Gorakhpur, the main influencer was the existence of recognized women entrepreneurs like Hiral who runs a cloud kitchen and was a finalist on Master Chef India. She is known as Chef Hiral! Another is a food vlogger. Women entrepreneurs at this level own high-end smartphones for their enterprises and this in turn encouraged the women in this project to explore digital-led enterprise models for self-employment.



Chef hiral the finalist from masterchef India

Enablers

The common Enabler in all three districts is family support. Male support for women's enterprise aspirations while keeping their safety and family integrity centrestage is an important enabler in Kushinagar. In a "Purushpradhan" cultural milieu, men offered to undertake front-facing roles in the enterprises so women can be safe (physically and digitally), focus on enterprise operations on site while undertaking care work in the household. In Deoria, since they are already involved in enterprises, women and family members decide how digital enterprises will be managed with their current affordability of 1 GB data per day (with hotspot support from neighbors when required) and what roles adult family members will play in the enterprise. Family support in Gorakhpur is higher than in the other two districts due to the longer exposure of families to digital and social media and, hence, has become less restrictive for women over time.

The JECP providing the entrepreneurship "mahol" and incubation facilities is an Enabler for enterprise start-ups and grown-ups. The Center works directly in all three districts. In Deoria, the large incubation center with expansive grounds covering 6 acres, the team and "mahol" of JECP itself, has attracted many visitors, entrepreneurs, youth with skills and has taken aspiration for enterprise to an economically and socially significant high. In Gorakhpur, Jagriti's office functions like a hub for women to learn, test and grow. Jagriti's team mentors and supports women to offer a viable enterprise-driven service with digital tools relevant for supplementary employment.

In Kushinagar and Deoria, Jagriti has benefited from the prior and ongoing investment by government in infrastructure. In Kushinagar, the social infrastructure by NRLM of SHGs and their credit and lending activities was used by Jagriti to push the digital perspective and enterprise activities with SHGs. The physical infrastructure and road connectivity improving over the last 5-6 years leading to economic expansion of Deoria district is a significant Enabler for inspiration and growing aspirations of women entrepreneurs.