Techshakti:
Enabling Digital Business Ecosystems
for Women Entrepreneurs

Jagriti Enterprise Centre

Background.

Techshakti, initiated under the Women Centre of Excellence (CoE) at Jagriti, aims to bridge the gender and digital divide by integrating women into digital business ecosystems. It empowers women entrepreneurs in semi-rural and rural areas to become confident users, owners, and operators of digital tools. To address these gaps, the program focused on several digital connectivity levers, including accessibility, digital literacy, relevance, safety and security, norms, and the active role of women in the digital and data-driven economy.

The data from the baseline study further validates the need for more tailored digital literacy programs for entrepreneurs: 52% of mobilized participants were not using any digital tools in their existing enterprises, while 38% used the internet primarily for communication, 34% for entertainment, and only 26% for upskilling. 74.4% of women are willing to learn but lack access to reliable digital education resources.

Approach.

Techshakti project used a multi-pronged approach to foster digital integration. To mobilise participants for the program, awareness and outreach efforts were conducted among women in rural and semi-urban areas of district Deoria, Kushinagar & Gorakhpur (eastern Uttar Pradesh) about the importance of digital tools, how it can be used in their daily lives as well as in businesses. Participants were mobilised through trusted local organisations. The training program focused on Tools such as WhatsApp Business, inventory management systems, and online payment platforms, enabling market connections and providing practical, context-relevant digital applications. Hands-on training and mentoring were provided by four expert trainers and two field associates.

Peer learning sessions and community engagement drives were conducted to build trust and reduce dropout rates. The program reached over 7,000 women in the mobilization phase through offline and online channels to identify participants interested in learning digital tools and exploring business opportunities. This underscore the importance of outreach efforts. Through these efforts:

1500 women
were trained in basic digital literacy skills to foster basic capacity building.

600 women
entrepreneurs received training on digital tools that can be integrated into their traditional business.

60 women
entrepreneurs received tailored incubation support to adopt distinct business models.

13 relevant
business models were identified after research and introduced to participants.

Business Models.

The selection of business models needs to align with women's socio-economic and geographic profiles. An Inside-Out/Outside-In approach balances internal insights with external opportunities, Business models were profiled and selected based on market potential, low-investment, availability of partners, and technical ease. To match entrepreneurs with the right-fit business models, participants were categorized as Digital Explorers (new to tools), Enthusiasts (comfortable with basics), and Leaders (advanced users), with models mapped to these personas.

Three categories of business models have been identified for the program—Sales Force, Device Ownership and Service, and Digital Infrastructure and these models are at different stages of implementation:

1 Sales Force models earn commission through delivering services, such as product surveys, data annotation, financial services, travel franchises, and rental healthcare.

2 Device Ownership and Service models generate revenue by providing local services with personally owned devices (e.g., AR/VR headsets, photography, graphic design, and digital content creation).

3 Digital Infrastructure models focus on renting out digital infrastructure such as gaming zones, digital libraries, soil-testing centers, and CSC/CSP setups.

Entrepreneur Profiles.

Age
Adoption of digital business models is highest among women aged 18–37, showing an inverse relationship with age.

Household Income
Women with monthly incomes above ₹20,000 are more likely to adopt high-investment business models.

Education
92% of entrepreneurs with education above Class 12 successfully adopted digital tools, indicating the importance of formal education

Digital Readiness
70% reported owning smartphones with access to reliable internet, however access is largely shared within the household

Trust
Women rely on organizational credibility and perform due diligence before participating.

Anjali Nishad | CSP Operator

Anjali, from Sukrauli in Kushinagar, runs a Customer Service Point (CSP) to provide banking services for PNB Bank. After clearing the pre-screening session, she cleared the IBFB exam with a 70% score—an important step before receiving her CSP allotment. With guidance from the program team, she completed all the required documentation and submitted it to the bank. In a span of two months, she recorded sales of INR 60 lakhs, translating in a commission of INR 30,000.

Mamta Kushwaha | Entrepreneur | VR Ka Jadoo

Mamta runs a souvenir shop that sells products from women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and other regional crafts with support from the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). By ordering stock digitally through WhatsApp, she saves considerable time and effort. Advertising on Facebook and WhatsApp has reportedly boosted her income by 30-40%. To build strong customer relationships, she distributes shop cards and encourages referrals. As a Virtual Reality (VR) pre-incubatee, she is developing temple tours to give tourists a virtual glimpse of India. Having completed her training, she plans to launch the pilot in the first week of April.

Puranradha Tripathi | Entrepreneur | Rachna

Puranradha founded Design Fusion in Gorakhpur, and leads a team of four first-generation entrepreneurs. The team began their journey a few months ago, learning basic designing sessions before progressing to programs that cover fundamental business development and graphic content training.

The business currently serves nine clients, generating approximately ₹18,000 per month through services such as social media management and creative design for businesses.

Key Enablers for
Engagement and Uptake.

Community-Led Models

Mobilizing through known entities reduced hesitation among participants. Peer-driven mentorship and community leaders can serve as trust-builders, increasing the adoption rate. 70% of women reported benefitting from support from community leaders, which is essential for mobilization.

> For example, women in the "Drone Didi" program collaborate by sharing the batteries for their drone operations, helping each other overcome challenges. This shared approach is efficient and also fosters a sense of community, as they support each other.

Localized, Hands-On Training and Leveraging Role Models

Context-specific learning materials in local languages provide practical demonstrations of tools for higher retention and application and showcase success stories featuring women leaders (e.g., "Drone Didi") inspire participants to adopt digital solutions.

Family support matters

Programs that involve family members can increase acceptance and participation. This is critical for building trust and informing decision-making (96.2% of women depend on family support). Regular follow-ups ensure continuity in learning and minimise dropouts.

> For instance, Durgawati's son manages daily operations of their Gaming Zone business, such as managing the gaming systems and helping customers, while she focuses on other business management roles. Such collaborative efforts between the women and their family members make the running of business operations smooth.

Key Recommendations.

1 **Develop Accessible Learning Platforms:** Create targeted platforms and programs to address the lack of awareness about digital businesses and provide reliable sources of learning.

2 **Leverage Trusted Networks:** Build partnerships with community organizations and local influencers to enhance outreach and ensure continued engagement with women entrepreneurs.

3 **Identifying Scalable Digital Business Models**
- Provide low-risk capital (including stipends through Entrepreneur-in-Residence programs) and access to institutional funds (CLFs, local banks) for immediate financial stability
- Build a support consortium of financial, technical, and operational partners.
- Combine hands-on guidance (exposure visits, mentorship) with targeted digital upskilling and training to match each business model's requirements; engage family and community for sustained trust and participation; and promote success stories to inspire broader adoption and growth.

4 **Sustained Family and Community Engagement:** Promote the active involvement of family members and community stakeholders to ensure long-term adoption and success of women-led digital businesses.