

# Case Study



## Women ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI) in India



### Introduction

Women Entrepreneurship development process in India is increasingly being recognized as a key factor for women's economic empowerment and sustainable development since women entrepreneurs create new employment avenues for women. Government of India formulated various policies and introduced special schemes to bring women out for entrepreneurial activities.

The entrepreneurship development programs for women are reflected in Government of India's Industrial Policy of 1991. The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) adopted a strategy of Women's Component Plan, under which not less than 30 per cent of funds/ benefits were earmarked for women related sectors. Government of India has adopted the cluster approach as a key strategy for enhancing the productivity and competitiveness as well as capacity building of small women enterprises including small scale industries and small-scale service in the country. The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector has emerged as a highly vibrant and dynamic sector of the Indian economy over the last five decades in cooperation with the concerned ministries and departments, state governments and other stakeholders. For example, Andhra Pradesh MSME Policy 2015-2020 stated that of the land reserved for MSME industries in its plots/industrial estates, Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation<sup>1</sup> (APIIC) shall allocate 10per cent of number of plots to Women Entrepreneurs. On the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2018, the Ministry of MSME launched the portal for women entrepreneurs of India ([www.udiyamsakhi.org](http://www.udiyamsakhi.org)). The portal is a network for nurturing entrepreneurship to empower women and make them self-reliant and self-sufficient.

Government of India announced "Start-up India" initiative and Stand-up scheme in 2016. This initiative aims at fostering entrepreneurship and promoting innovation for the growth of Start-ups. The Stand-Up India scheme ensures that women entrepreneurs have a fair chance of setting up their own businesses. The scheme facilitates loans approximately from US\$14,260 to US\$1,42,857 for women. The Act further reiterates that each of the 1.25 lakh bank branches which fund entrepreneurs should fund at least one woman entrepreneur.

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<sup>1</sup> Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC), an undertaking of Govt of Andhra Pradesh, is a premier organization in the state, vested with the objective of providing Industrial infrastructure through development of Industrial Parks and Special Economic Zones.

In the area of women's entrepreneurship, although government policies and promotion strategies have been giving new opportunities to women, few have come forward. According to Sixth Economic Census<sup>2</sup> released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, women constitute around 14 per cent of the total entrepreneurship (i.e. 8.05 million out of the total 58.5 million entrepreneurs).

Social norms, absence of entrepreneurial aptitude, lack of infrastructure, lack of skills to capture market and diversification of business activities, denial of credit by bankers, lack of knowledge on available women entrepreneurial initiatives by the Government and middlemen who take the major share of profit are some of the challenges faced by women who run businesses in India.

Government has introduced several key initiatives to address these challenges and to promote women entrepreneurship in the country. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)<sup>3</sup> has launched a flagship scheme called Pradhan Mantri Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan (PM-YUVA) on 9 November 2016 to impart entrepreneurship education and training to over one million students throughout the country of which 30 per cent would be women. Further under the PMEGP<sup>4</sup> scheme, women entrepreneurs are provided with 25 per cent and 35 per cent subsidies for the project set up in urban and rural areas respectively.<sup>5</sup> NITI Aayog<sup>6</sup> has set up Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) in 2018. It works in collaboration with public and private sector organizations to list women focused entrepreneurship development schemes and programmes on a single platform to derive benefits from existing initiatives in the entrepreneurial space.<sup>7</sup> The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises of Government of India has opened women's cell to aid women entrepreneurs. Special schemes like Rural Women Technology Park were started to promote entrepreneurship among rural women.

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise development organizations, State Small Industries Development Corporations, Nationalized banks and NGOs have been organising various Entrepreneurship Development Programmes to help women without formal educational qualifications and skills for entrepreneurial ventures. Small Industries Development bank of India (SIDBI) has also been implementing special schemes for women entrepreneurs. Social media offers women entrepreneur's new business market options and assist in creativity, innovative ideas, open communication, sharing of knowledge, etc.

## **Public and private sector initiatives for women entrepreneurship**

In the present scenario of economic liberalization and globalisation, women entrepreneurship is evidently becoming important in India. Both Public and Private sectors are playing a proactive role in encouraging Women Entrepreneurship. Few public and private schemes are narrated in brief.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mospi.gov.in/all-india-report-sixth-economic-census>

<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), the Ministry is responsible for co-ordination of all skill development efforts across the country, removal of disconnect between demand and supply of skilled manpower, building the vocational and technical training framework, skill up-gradation, building of new skills, and innovative thinking.

<sup>4</sup> PMEGP Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is a credit linked subsidy programme administered by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Government of India. Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC), is the nodal agency at national level for implementation of the scheme.

<sup>5</sup> <http://pib.nic.in/>

<sup>6</sup> NITI Aayog, a policy of the [Government of India](#), established with the aim to achieve [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and to enhance [cooperative federalism](#) by fostering the involvement of [State Governments of India](#) in the economic policy-making process using a [bottom-up approach](#).

<sup>7</sup> <https://dipp.gov.in>

### Public sector initiatives:

**Department of Science and Technology**, Government of India launched a special program to create an ecosystem for incubation, acceleration support, and international exposure. The program focusses on identifying women entrepreneurs and providing knowledge, developing skills, mentoring and helping develop professional networks. These programs are implemented in collaboration with not-for profit incubators like Technology Business Incubation Centres.

**Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** developed Pradhan Mantri Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan (PM-YUVA) scheme to provide entrepreneurship education on various components for more than one million students throughout the nation.

**Department of Biotechnology** is supporting women under Biotechnology Based Programme for Societal Development with an objective to endorse the utilisation of biotechnological principles and prototypes for benefit of the women population. The programme aspires to create a platform for self-employment and livelihood generation among the target populations by dissemination of proven and field-tested technologies through display, training and extension activities.

**Biotechnology Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)** is also facilitating women empowerment and entrepreneurship through various activities.

**Start-up India online hub** launched by Government of India aims to build knowledge and improve visibility of the existing initiatives and to leverage existing schemes aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs to address information exchange and access to knowledge. The platform provides summary of information about existing government schemes in the relevant industry along with incentives, eligibility criteria and application processes.

**Universities and institutions:** Universities and institutions are taking lead by launching several initiatives like Technology Based Incubation, Rural Women Technology Park and Entrepreneurship Development Cell to encourage collaboration between women entrepreneurs and students while developing their skill sets through training sessions. **Technology Business incubator (TBI)** provides infrastructure support, technology/prototype development support, research assistance, funding, consulting assistance, marketing assistance for promising entrepreneurs to successfully launch their businesses.

**Rural Women Technology Park (RWTP)**<sup>8</sup> aims to create awareness among rural women and provide training in proven technology to maximise profits from their existing businesses. Entrepreneurship Development Cell on campus was launched to encourage students and extend training in among female students.

### Private sector initiatives:

- a. **Self Help Group – Bank Linkage Programme** was developed by ICICI Bank to provide unsecured loans to women-led groups particularly underprivileged women in rural India to start or expand their businesses.
- b. **Mana deshi foundation** popularly called women’s bank grants finance to women entrepreneurs by promoting digital banking and services including insurance schemes and doorstep banking services. It represents rural women’s concerns at the national and international level for Banking and Financial Inclusion.
- c. **Udyogini** facilitates financial relationships between entrepreneurs and social investors. Also, it provides micro-insurance and subsidies for critical inputs available from government schemes and other programs.

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<sup>8</sup> Rural Women Technology Park (RWTP): Rural Women Technology Park is a technology modulation and a training center to show case livelihood technologies for rural women. Technology is transferred to the rural women for their food security and livelihood generation.

## **Contribution of NGOs**

The non-**government** agencies are experimenting with many programs to promote women entrepreneurship. Various NGOs are working on inculcating the spirit of enterprise and self-reliance, nurturing a sense of self-esteem in people, organizing training programmes and helping to market their products especially among women.

## **Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam and Women ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI)**

Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam (SPMVV) is a State-funded Women's University, established in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh with a vision to empower women to become the leaders of tomorrow. The three core components of university are teaching, research and community engagement. As a trend setter in the area of Women's higher education in India, the university is committed to promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, which is reflected in its initiatives like establishment of Rural Women Technology Park (RWTP), Technology Business Incubation Centre (TBI)<sup>9</sup> and an on-campus Entrepreneurship Cell<sup>10</sup>. These initiatives provide opportunity and support for and encourage students and women from rural backgrounds to theorise, test and successfully implement ways of creating better livelihood for themselves and women in their community.

Women-run enterprises are steadily growing all over the world, contributing to household incomes and growth of national economies. ICTs are providing women entrepreneurs with unique opportunities to generate income and empower themselves to overcome isolation and facilitate gender equity.

In this context, WIFI of Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam posits itself as a catalyst for promotion of women entrepreneurship by providing knowledge and use of ICT tools where even women with a low level of literacy can still effectively incorporate ICTs in their daily lives. Alongside, WIFI, SPMVV strongly contends that ICT needs to be popularized within existing cultural and social structures to scale up women entrepreneurship activities.

## **Participation in WIFI consultative meeting: Incheon, Republic of Korea**

Prof V. Durga Bhavani (Vice-Chancellor, SPMVV(2015-18)) and Prof P. Vijaya Lakshmi (Registrar, SPMVV (2014-2016)) at the consultative meeting in Incheon, South Korea and launch of WIFI in Korea have been inspired to implement WIFI in India to expand the reach and impact of entrepreneurship initiatives. Promotional activities under the umbrella of APCICT help to gain a unique recognition and credibility among stakeholders. The practical experience of Women entrepreneurs and policymakers during WIFI launch in the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka helped to understand challenges, bottlenecks and different approaches at ground level. APCICT offered flexibility to customize the content into the regional language to reciprocate well with the local context and requirements. Women-owned businesses tend to be informal, home-based and concentrated in the areas of small-scale entrepreneurship and traditional sectors. It was strongly opined that WIFI was designed to help task teams identify and address issues that limited women's entrepreneurship opportunities and the efforts women made to expand their business through ICT. Rural Women Technology Park on campus has proved to be an advantage to implement WIFI with available resources.

## **Preparation for WIFI launch**

Prof Usha Rani Vyausulu Reddy, APCICT Resource Person, Prof V. Durga Bhavani and Prof P. Vijaya Lakshmi from department of Communication and Journalism, initiated WIFI launch in India based on a matrix prepared by APCICT.

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<sup>9</sup> Technology Business Incubation Centre: TBI provides a vibrant ecosystem and caters to the demands of start-ups. TBI offers budding entrepreneurs much needed infrastructure support and critical mentoring to turn their dream into concrete reality. TBI supports innovations, development of technology and prototype/product development.

<sup>10</sup> An on-campus Entrepreneurship Cell: E-Cell imparts technical and entrepreneurial skills to students on campus.

The mission of WIFI India was presented to the Chief Minister<sup>11</sup> of Andhra Pradesh, along with the relevant members of the cabinet. It was envisaged that APCICT WIFI-Saviskara, TOT Centre along with Technology Business Incubator” (TBI) and Rural Women Technology Park (RWTP) would work together to emerge as a Women entrepreneurship hub contributing to the Andhra Pradesh State Government’s Innovation and Start-up Policy of creating an ecosystem that would produce an entrepreneur in every family.

### Constitution of working teams, resourcing and preparation for WIFI launch

Two teams of an on-campus faculty were assigned the task to customize WIFI modules and WIFI launch. The first team consisted of members from the department of Telugu Studies, Management and Communication and Journalism along with an experienced translator to translate content from English into regional language, Telugu. The second team coordinated with the policy makers, government officers, field level officials, NGOs, Vice chancellors of various universities and women entrepreneurs to advocate the cause of WIFI.

The content was customized to complement the local requirements for its appropriateness and ease in language (i.e. simplicity, understanding and suitability to address the needs of participants). The university has allocated US\$10,000 for printing of modules and launch of WIFI in India.

### Getting started: WIFI inaugural launch

The WIFI in India is named as “APCICT - WIFI Saviskara- Transcending Talent”. The inaugural launch of WIFI in India took place on 19th February 2018 at the SPMMV Auditorium on campus, attended by around 2,000 people including representatives from APCICT, ESCAP, UNDP, Andhra Pradesh State Legislative Assembly, government training institutes, and funding institutions like NABARD, Vice Chancellors of Universities, NGOs, media and other stakeholders related to women entrepreneurship and development activities. The media was engaged to provide extensive coverage and promote WIFI objectives and the importance of sustainable development of Women through entrepreneurship and ICT.

	<p><b>HIGHLIGHTS</b></p> <p>The country’s first ever Women ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI) programme and Training of Trainers (TOT) centre were launched at Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (SPMVV) in Tirupati on Monday in cooperation with the United Nations Asian and Pacific Training Centre for ICT for Development (APCICT).</p>
<p><b>Tirupati:</b> The country’s first ever Women ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI) programme and Training of Trainers (TOT) centre were launched at Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (SPMVV) in Tirupati on Monday in cooperation with the United Nations Asian and Pacific Training Centre for ICT for Development (APCICT).</p> <p>The WIFI in India was named as WIFI Saviskara–Transcending of Talent. Speaking on the occasion, the acting Head of Office, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), Sub Regional Officer for South and South West Asia, New Delhi Michael Williamson said, “WIFI was linked to the economic participation and entrepreneurship was vital means of achieving the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and this agenda promises to leave nobody behind”.</p>	

<sup>11</sup> **Chief minister** is the head of government of each of twenty-nine states and two union territories (Delhi and Puducherry). According to the Constitution of India, at the state-level, by de facto executive authority rests with the chief minister.



WiFi Saviskara; Inaugural Launch

### WiFi Training of Trainers workshops

Following the WiFi launch, parallel sessions of Training of Trainers' were conducted for three days for policymakers and women entrepreneurs attended by 40 and 60 women respectively. The composition of entrepreneurs was diverse comprising of women representing small to large scale social enterprises including the trades of brick making, paper making, jute products, textile, cosmetics, dairy products, herbal products, etc. Feedback was collected from both policymakers and entrepreneurs on completion of the training.



WiFi Saviskara Workso

The "District Industries" who continuously conducts programmes for women entrepreneurship has made special effort in identifying women from different backgrounds. Faculties from different disciplines have enrolled both for policymakers' and women entrepreneurs' track who have later involved in several training programmes.



WiFi: TOT workshops

## Engagement of Policymakers

Around 40 government officials and policymakers from different departments have received training during the launch of WIFI. The Chittoor District collector, who is the administrative head of the district in the State government, was brought on board, who showed support by engaging the Joint Collector as the key person to identify policymakers.



**Mr. M. Prashanth Babu, AGM,  
NABARD, Chittoor**

As part of advocacy strategy, the WIFI implementation team contacted General Managers/ Deputy Managers of District Industries<sup>12</sup>, Horticulture, SETVIN<sup>13</sup>, MEPMA<sup>14</sup>, APSSDL<sup>15</sup> and officials of funding agencies like NABARD<sup>16</sup>, LEAD Bank<sup>17</sup> and other local banks, NGOs, etc, who have been involved with promotion of women entrepreneurship programmes. Area Coordinators of CDPO<sup>18</sup>, ATMA<sup>19</sup>, MAO<sup>20</sup> and MSME<sup>21</sup> responsible for implementation of government initiatives were contacted in an attempt to increase the reach of the WIFI initiative.

To effectively run the initiative, two or three policymakers were involved in each training programme to extend guidance and support.



**Ms. M Geeta Sree, General  
Manager, Capacity Building &  
Campus Interface, AP Innovation**

“Sri Padmavathi Women’s University programme on Women ITC Frontier Innovative (WIFI) is in tune with the economic liberalization and globalization agenda. The programme encapsulates in bridging the gap between men and women entrepreneurs in India. The programme would be a paradigm shift in the outlook of women entrepreneurs challenging new frontiers. The Women’s University having embarked on the rigorous stretch of developing women entrepreneurs have definitely captured the imagination of budding entrepreneurs in Chittoor district. These programmes will make a mark provided unhindered support from the financial sector (read banks). At times gumption will be the seed capital of these entrepreneurs” said M. Prashanth Babu.

<sup>12</sup> District Industries Centres (DIC) are responsible for promoting enterprises, particularly the medium, small and micro, at the district level and render all possible help and guidance in establishing the units.

<sup>13</sup> SETWIN: Society for Employment Promotion and Training in Twin Cities is an organization owned by Government of Telangana to create employment and self-employment opportunities to unemployed persons of twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad by providing training in various courses at nominal fees.

<sup>14</sup> MEPMA: The Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA) is a Government of AP Society forming part of Department of Municipal Administration and Urban Development, which is a platform of Urban (Women) Self Help Groups (SHGs) for Empowerment.

<sup>15</sup> APSSDL: Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) is a not-for-profit organization formed as a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) corporation to promote Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

<sup>16</sup> NABARD: National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) is set up as an apex Development Bank by the Government of India with a mandate for facilitating a credit flow for promotion and development of agriculture, cottage and village industries.

<sup>17</sup> LEAD Bank: Under the lead bank scheme administered by RBI since 1969, a bank (can be private or public) leads the consortium of all banks in the area. The role of lead bank is to coordinate the efforts of all banks in the area for credit expansion to sectors which are important to economy.

<sup>18</sup> CDPO: The child Development Project Officer - Supervise and guide the work of the entire project team, including supervisors and anganwadi workers. To provide nursery care for children in a safe, comfortable and stimulating environment

<sup>19</sup> ATMA: Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) established in each pilot district for integrating research and extension activities and for decentralizing day-to-day management of the public agricultural technology system

<sup>20</sup> MAO: An accounting officer has in-depth knowledge of the financial weaknesses and strengths of a business

<sup>21</sup> MSME: The Micro Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are defined in India under the MSMED Act 2006 on the basis of capital investment made in plant and machinery, excluding investments in land and building.

Attending the WIFI program Policy Makers Track and capacity building workshop provided M Geeta Sree to increase her organisation’s reach and help women understand the need to collaborate for better results. “The workshop successfully engaged the policy makers to work towards capacity building of the women entrepreneurs. Encouraging the integrated and collaborative approach to solve the problems while creating awareness among the women to utilize technology and innovation as a tool to grow in business.” stated M Geeta Sree. She organized several workshops to women entrepreneurs to utilize ICT tools through AP Innovation Society.



**Ms. S. Lakshmi, CEO, SETVIN & District Sports Authority, Chittoor**

Ms. S. Lakshmi, Chief Executive officer, SETVEN and District Sports Authority, has participated in the policymakers track during the inaugural workshop. SETVEN, Department of Youth Services provides vocational training and upskilling to youth making them more employable in the various industries and giving them access to entrepreneurship programmes in collaboration with universities and NGOs. These sessions include training in business administration, finance, production, marketing, enterprise management, banking and bookkeeping. “Rural Indian women have always been successful in the Indian context and must be encouraged to participate effectively in the current times of technology. Smt Yasmin, trained in Sewing and fashion designing has expanded her business to providing uniforms to public schools, Smt Sulochana, a Curtain maker is running a business engaging other women in wood carving, idol making, Kalamkari crafts. The stories of these women are inspiring and provide zeal for others to start something fresh with small investments. WIFI Saviskara provides an opportunity for Graduation holders to start up with new own business in association with institutions” said M. Lakshmi.

### **WIFI implementation framework**

The TOT centre has made several efforts for the past 18 months to conduct follow up activities of WIFI. Some of the strategies adopted for rolling out WIFI –Saviskara are:

- a. Developing a committed and trained human resources at WIFI- TOT Center
- b. Networking with Incubation Centres / Technology Parks
- c. Connecting WIFI TOT trainers with national funding institutions for funding to leverage WIFI activities
- d. Signing MOUs with NGOs/ Finance agencies  
Paying visits to other Centres /Parks

### **Human resources at WIFI – TOT Center**

The proposed strategy requires full-time staff with appropriate expertise to organise training programmes including technical support, ICT skills, supply of training material, hospitality, etc, Accordingly, Prof P.Uma Maheswari, Prof R Usha and Dr Sujatha from the faculty of SPMVV, who received training during WIFI launch, were involved, along with the lead members of champion WIFI initiatives. Members of TOT centre and faculty on campus were encouraged to submit proposals for funding that promoted ICT enabled entrepreneurship.

Considering the contributions of Dr. Sujatha towards RWTP and TBI, US Department of State Bureau of Education and Cultural affairs selected her for International Visitors Leadership programme (IVLP) during 2018. The three weeks of IVLP programme in USA gave her an opportunity to understand diverse strategies employed on US campuses to promote innovation and incubation of ideas amongst the students and the community. Dr. Sujatha has taken an active role in the initiative to impart her knowledge during the training sessions.



### Collaboration of WIFI- Saviskara and Rural Women Technology Park (RWTP)

Rural Women Technology Park (RWTP) was established as a social enterprise with an aim to introduce the entrepreneurship ecosystem to rural women by providing infrastructure, machinery, training and mentoring. The Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, sanctioned a grant of US\$ 1,16,455 to “Rural Women Technology Park” for transfer of science and technology to promote women entrepreneurship in Chittoor District, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India. The centre extends training and technical support to improve processing of food products and to develop marketing skills that will enable women in rural and peri (semi) -urban areas to improve their capabilities to take on multidimensional challenges by training them to be self-reliant.

## Rural Women Technology Park built at Yerpedu becomes functional



**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Tirupati**

**RURAL** Women Technology Park, constructed by Sri Padma-vathi Mahila University at Venkatagiri Road in Yerpedu, a mandal head quarters, on a sprawling a 10-acre site allotted by the State

government, has started production. On Saturday, for the first time, 42 women members of Rural Women Technology park, who were trained by the staff of Mahila University were examined by the in-charge Vice-Chancellor Uma and other related faculty

and technology park members in an exclusive programme.

The Department of Science & Technology has allotted the project and the faculty of Home Science led by Prof A Jyothi trained 42 women from villages surrounding Yerpedu. Over 19 different Varieties of Herbal Products (food products, cosmetics, home fragrances) using tulasi and tender mango leaves are developed.

The project aims to find a long-term solution to solve lifestyle-related disorders like diabetes and hypertension with the natural remedies, the Vice-Chancellor said. They also have plans for developing eco-friendly products and packaging techniques to establish the business and project facilitates free training and assistance to women for the preparation and marketing of herbal products, she added.

RWTP becomes functional. RWTP stalls open on 17 November 2018

The focus of RWTP is the sectors of Herbal technology, dehydrated foods and value-added foods. RWTP engages competent women entrepreneurs who have the potential to contribute to the expansion of micro enterprises and help local economy in Chittoor district. The machinery purchased under RWTP for preparation of herbal products is free-for-all women entrepreneurs who received training at the centre. The advisory members of DST, Government of India, who visited RWTP centre, appreciated the idea of WIFI- TOT center supporting RWTP activities adding the much-needed ICT component to the processes. Prof. V. Durga Bhavani and Prof. P. Vijaya Lakshmi, who are also members of RWTP and the project leads of the WIFI TOT project, included ICT component in all training programmes of RWTP. The customized WIFI modules were further edited and used in the training programmes from time to time based on the literary and knowledge levels of the participants. The TOT centre will aim to expand the activities beyond the state of Andhra Pradesh in the next few years. The TOT team with the support of RWTP members has

conducted consecutive workshops. There is ample evidence about the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as mobile phones, computers and the internet to support the marketing activities of herbal products.

## RWTP creates women entrepreneurs

- DST funded park being run by SPMVV at Chintalapalem village near Yerpedu
- 40 rural women are trained in making various products with herbs like tender mango leaves and Tulasi
- A workshop began to enlighten them on various loan facilities to start their own units

### OUR BUREAU

**Tirupati:** In pursuance of its activities of nurturing rural women with technology intervention thereby making them successful entrepreneurs, the

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SPMVV in-charge V-C Prof V Uma with officials of DST and faculty members of RWTP on the occasion of the workshop in Tirupati on Tuesday

Rural Women Technology Park (RWTP) of Sri Padmavathi Mahila Viswavidyalayam (SPMVV) has begun a two-day workshop in Tirupati on Tuesday. They have opened the workshop for interested women to join and interact with the other women already trained at the Park with product preparation and marketing.

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) had sanctioned the Rs 89 lakh RWTP to the SPMVV. The objective was to empower and provide rural women a platform to become dynamic entrepreneurs. For this park, the AP government has given site at Chintalapalem village near Yerpedu where they have the incubation centre for providing technology-based training to rural women. A multi-disciplinary team

of faculty was appointed to take the initiative forward with Prof A Jyothi of Department of Home Science as Principal Investigator. They have completed various experiments at laboratory successfully and went to field in search of interested women to become entrepreneurs. At the laboratory, the team made several products like nutraceuticals, herbal drugs, cosmetics among others with extracts of tender mango and Tulasi leaves. After this, they carried out a survey at rural areas to find out interested women in starting enterprises. Initially, they identified 40 women from the areas surrounding Chintalapalem village and are being trained in various aspects of making products by using tender mango leaves and Tulasi leaves for the last

few months. Training on income generation methods through microenterprises, better labelling and packing methods and marketing aspects was also being provided.

Speaking to *The Hans India* on this occasion, Prof Jyothi has said that, as representatives of DST have come from New Delhi to interact with the women under training, the trainees have been brought to University campus from the village for the two-day interactive workshop. This will enlighten them on various options of getting loans to start their own units with the support from banks, District Industries Centre, SETVEN, NABARD etc.. The herbs-tender mango and Tulasi leaves will have several antioxidants and work as antibiotics and having several health benefits. They help in increasing the immunity to people with diabetes and hypertension and the villagers were trained in making 25 different products using these herbs. With the financial assistance provided by DST, they have purchased required equipment to carry out advanced experiments in the field.

Using the machinery, the trainees have produced various powders and held an exhibition also earlier this month at the campus and could be able to sell them and this workshop will make them to explore the possibilities of getting loans through which they can start own enterprises and become entrepreneurs.

DST-SEED onsite visit and workshop on herbal technologies in empowering rural women, 27-28 Nov 2018

Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology KIIT<sup>22</sup> in the Southern State of Orissa, India received financial support from American Consulate and conducted a training programme for 60 students on women entrepreneurship in collaboration with WIFI-Saviskara. In another workshop, 70 students were trained on business models.

<sup>22</sup> Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT): KIIT Deemed to be a university is unique in integration professional education with social concern.

# Workshops for women to promote entrepreneurship

- ▶ Women should emerge as employment generators: Prof P Vijayalakshmi
- ▶ 2-day workshop begins on 'social entrepreneurship'

## OUR BUREAU

**Tirupati:** Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (SPMVV) will organise a series of workshops at different places in Andhra Pradesh to promote entrepreneurship among women, said its Vice-Chancellor Prof V Durga Bhavani. Speaking at the inaugural function of two-day workshop on 'social entrepreneurship' organised by Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in collaboration with UN-APCICT-WIFI-TOT centre in SPMVV to promote women entrepreneurship, she called upon the students to make use of the opportunities provided on campus to develop as entre-



SPMVV-Vice-Chancellor Prof V Durga Bhavani speaking at the workshop in Tirupati on Wednesday. Prof P Vijayalakshmi and Srujana Foundation CEO AK Rao also seen

preneurs with commitment. The workshop has been funded by American Consulate. CEO of Srujana Foundation, Hyderabad AK Rao, who participated in the event opined that the desire to create self-employment opportunities among youth has been increasing.

The foundation will support students to write business proposals if they present a good idea and connect them to fund-

ing agencies besides extending help to commercialise that idea.

Coordinator of the workshop Prof P Vijayalakshmi said that women in great number should emerge as employment generators rather than job seekers there by contributing to knowledge economy.

Aditya from (KIIT), Prof S Jyothi, R Usha and Bhimalingeswar from SPMVV-TBI have participated.



Inauguration of two-day workshop on 'Social Entrepreneurship' organised by KIIT in collaboration with APCICT - WIFI -TOT Center in SPMVV

## Women entrepreneurship projects by WIFI- TOT trainers

WIFI TOT centre encouraged several faculty members who were involved in WIFI launch to raise funds to carry Women Entrepreneurship programmes from national and international funding agencies. Two faculty members, Dr. Shobha Rani from Department of Communication and Journalism and Dr Ch. Chandi Kumari and her team, Dr. V.Bindu and Dr. Malleswaramma, received funding to conduct livelihood promotion for women leading to start-ups.

## Collaborations with NGOs / Funding agencies

WIFI-TOT centre is engaged with NGOs to establish networks to tackle the challenges faced by entrepreneurs relating to collaborations within the industry and the market. It has been agreed that the networking with NGOs would help mobilize and motivate women to face challenges and take next steps in scaling up their business models. For example, APMAS<sup>23</sup> is one of the largest NGOs conducting training programmes on "Business Plans" for small scale women entrepreneurs. APMAS has shown a keen interest in connecting women entrepreneurs with marketing firms.

## Visits to Centers and Parks

The TOT Center organised visits for aspiring women entrepreneurs at MS Swaminathan Golden Jubilee Biotech Park for Women located in the State of Tamil Nadu and National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD)<sup>24</sup> located in the State of Telangana. NIRD has expressed their willingness and support in conducting capacity building workshops on product packaging which has been identified as an important marketing skill to compete with International brands.

<sup>23</sup> APMAS: Mahila Abhivruddhi Society, Andhra Pradesh (APMAS) is a NGO working for the advancement of people's institutions such as women's self-help groups (SHGs), SHG federations, farmer producer organizations (FPOs), and other community based organizations (CBOs) who believe in and respect the spirit of self-help and keep it as a guiding principle. It takes a number of entrepreneurial activities.

<sup>24</sup> National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD): an autonomous organisation under the Union Ministry of Rural Development, is a premier national center of excellence in rural development and Panchayati Raj.

The TOT center received overwhelming response on the benefits especially for the women from the surrounding locations enabled by the visits and networking.

The products designed and made by women entrepreneurs were displayed at the sales exhibitions organized by State Government of Andhra Pradesh. These events have helped women gain confidence and establish connections with government officials who implement entrepreneurship programmes and funding schemes.

### **Addressing challenges to scale WIFI – TOT Programmes**

TOT Centre experienced several challenges in organizing training programmes including transportation, diversified backgrounds of women entrepreneurs, resistance to ICT adoption, lack of motivation, etc and Centre made several efforts to address them which were discussed below.

#### **Variation in skill requirements**

The WIFI training programmes have hosted entrepreneurs from diverse socio-economic backgrounds including first generation business owners coming from long-standing family owned businesses who have not adopted ICT either for administration purpose or marketing. On the other hand, TOT Centre worked with rural women with unique traditional skill sets that could create lucrative income opportunities for their households. While almost all attendees required marketing and ICT skills to widen the market for their products, the small businesses and rural women entrepreneurs needed technical support in product development, packaging, and ICT tools.

In order to meet the needs of the participating groups, TOT Center customised the WIFI modules based on the requirement. The RWTP and TOT Center are now working on the curriculum to impart theoretical knowledge, technical and ICT skills, taking WIFI modules as basis to get the approval from National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)<sup>25</sup>. The approval from NSQF will facilitate women entrepreneurs to acquire loans from finance agencies that will understand the competency and skill acquired in WIFI training programmes.

#### **Lack of skills to work in teams**

The TOT Center worked with groups of women from varied backgrounds, many of whom were novice of the concept of ICT. Building trust, maintaining focus and working out the team dynamics have been top priorities of our mentors. Groups needed to be taught interpersonal relationships and to maintain constant communication with each other to work for varied demands in business.

#### **Sustenance of motivation**

Despite prompt service and timely delivery, women entrepreneurs who have participated in the programmes lack motivation which affects their market opportunities. The lack of confidence and perception of a person's own capabilities are more complex to address. They require mentorship and check-ins from the centres to expand their market through ICT. Members of RTWP research team have periodically visited the villages to ensure work in progress. Mentoring at WIFI TOT reflected positive results.

#### **Lack of infrastructure and mobility constraints**

Currently, RWTP is providing machinery and lab equipment free of cost to rural women for production of herbal products but the objective is to make women entrepreneurs self-reliant and sustainable. Travel/mobility was cited

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<sup>25</sup> **NSQF:** The National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) is a competency-based framework that organizes all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has introduced this initiative.

as the most challenging factor. Women entrepreneurs especially from rural areas found it taxing to commute long distances and depend on public transport. This restricts their movement when interaction is required with stakeholders. Majority of these women preferred to sell their products at home or stores in the locality restricting their market base. The university has provided transport facility for participating in training programmes and sales exhibitions.

### **Educational and social barriers**

Lack of education, restricted access to credit, limited/no support from family and pressure of childcare responsibilities are some of the deterrents for women to successfully run businesses. Training sessions focussed on encouraging women by outlining the positive results of being economically independent and helping them understand personal growth and that taking risks and learning from failures help taking the business forward. Arranging visits to other centres and participation in sales exhibitions facilitated interaction with successful women entrepreneurs helped to raise the morale and motivation of the groups attending the WIFI programmes.

### **Lack of marketing skills**

Due to various constraints, most women do not look beyond the physical boundaries of their community. Women need intense training in online marketing skills. A simple way of using Whatsapp group was demonstrated to share business information and improve communication between women in different places to manage their product sales. TOT Centre is planning to conduct more workshops on e-business platforms for greater market integration.

### **Current status and summary of results**

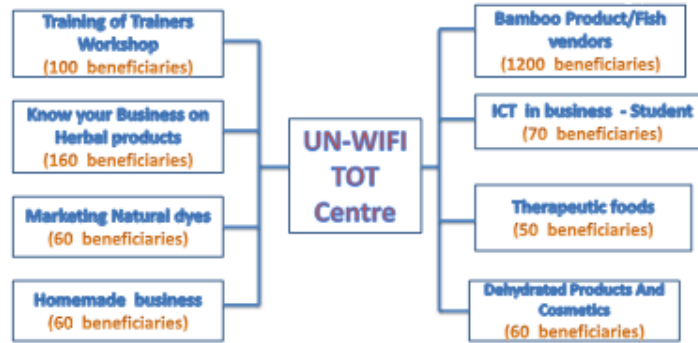
APCICT WIFI – TOT Saviskara in India has established connections with incubation centres, government organizations, universities, and NGOs to collaborate and organize training programmes to promote women entrepreneurship. TOT Center has extended training to over 1,760 women on technical issues, marketing and ICT skills. Workshops and learning and development sessions were organized to facilitate interaction between aspiring entrepreneurs with leading women from multidisciplinary backgrounds to share their success stories. Through WIFI – TOT Saviskara, women entrepreneurs were encouraged to participate in state level conventions and exhibitions to display and sell their products. Initiatives undertaken to encourage promotion activities on special occasions like Women’s Day, “World Health Day”, and “World Food Day” have proved that they do not only economically benefit the businesses but help educate and empower the community around them.

WIFI-TOT Saviskara has a dedicated team to deliver training programmes to strengthen the capacity of women entrepreneurs. A data base of the participants has been developed to monitor the development and extend support if needed. TOT Centre is currently limited to training programs to women in entrepreneurship but aims to develop training programs to policy makers in other parts of Andhra Pradesh.

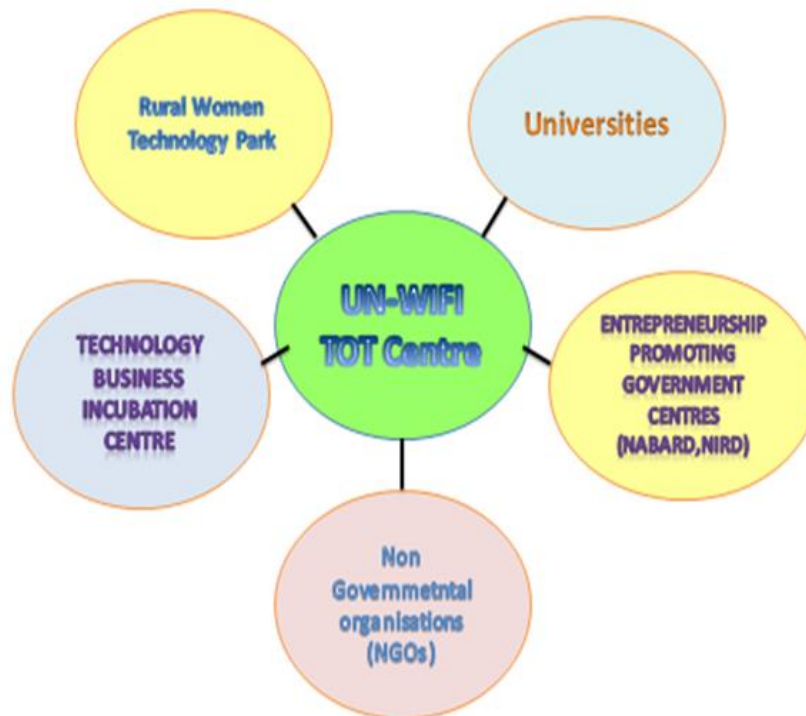
Infrastructure and affordable workspaces equipped with creative requirements of start-ups are essential in building a healthy ecosystem. RWTP offers free workshop spaces and machinery for preparation of herbal products. WIFI TOT and RWTP also provide mentorship, training, legal and regulatory support and services. WIFI-TOT is currently utilizing the infrastructure developed by RWTP to conduct training programs.

The Technology Centres offer NSQF approved certificate, diploma, advanced diploma courses which are well recognized and accepted by the industries in India. The WIFI-TOT Saviskara along with RWTP is designing training modules to acquire the certification of competency from NSQF. This would also enable women to seek employment if they wish as an alternative for business.

The members of WIFI-TOT Saviskara has further taken up projects funded by Central Government agencies to carry training programmes for providing assistance in ICT training and income generation initiatives for the needy women entrepreneurs and the results are discussed below. Another TOT trained faculty member Prof. A Jyothi, along with Prof Mamata from the university, received funding from Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology to empower women through “IOT –Seritech capacity building training programmes and sustainable Resource Centre” in April, 2019 and will organize activities for the next three years.



Activities of UN-WIFI Centre & Its Beneficiaries



WIFI TOT Centre collaborations

## Leveraging WIFI activities through Rural Women Technology Park (RWTP)

Rural Women Technology Park” (RWTP) as a social enterprise aims at creating awareness among rural women and give trainings of proven technology to reap maximum benefits from their existing resources. The Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, has sanctioned a grant of US\$116,455/ to develop prototypes and facilitate innovations leading to start-ups exclusively for rural women in the duration of three years, 2017–2020. It also facilitates rural women in providing backward as well as forward linkages that ensure the marketability of their produces.

The RWTP labs are equipped with necessary machinery to train rural women on dehydrated foods, natural dyes, herbal based products, etc. The training sessions are planned for a group of 40 rural women for each session to extend hands-on training for product development, marketing skills and ICT use. The training helps women to understand the whole process from procuring raw material, product development, marketing strategies, monitoring of the process, and ICT applications. The rural women can make use of machinery and space for free of cost for product development. Mentoring is extended by both WIFI-TOT Saviskara and RWTP members. WIFI-TOT team in collaboration with RWTP has organized 7 training programmes to 380 women on technical aspects and ICT use.



Making of herbal based products: technical training at RWTP labs

### Details of training programmes organized

No	Training Programmes	Dates	No. of Women Beneficiaries	Learning Outcome
1	National Launch of WIFI-Training to Women Entrepreneurs	19-24 February 2018	60	Used computers for accounting purposes
2	National Launch of WIFI – Training to Policymakers	19-24 February 2018	40	Women empowerment and networking opportunity
3	Technical Training and hands on training Programme on Tulasi and tender Mango leaf for Women Entrepreneurs and Online business	23-25 March 2018	40	Use of Social Networking platform for efficient communication (e.g., Created a social networking group to facilitate information about stock availability and used it as a medium to promote their business)
4	Empowerment of Women in Herbal Technology	29-31 October 2018	40	Preparation of herbal face pack powder as a home-based business model. WhatsApp group was created
5	DST-SEED Onsite Visit cum Two - Day workshop on Herbal Technologies in Empowering Rural Women	27-28 November 2018	40	Networking among women and between interested women and district industries center. They are getting information about different training programmes and support in the form of mobile messages
6	Know your Business	19 March 2019	40	The women were trained on different business models
7	Three Day Hands on Training Programme on Dehydrated Foods and Natural Dyes	24-26 June 2019	60	Started home-based business of dehydrated products

8	Three Day Hands on Training on Dehydrated Products And Cosmetics From Natural Sources	5-7 August 2019	60	Developed packaging labels and advertisement models to promote online business of dehydrated products and cosmetics
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WIFI –TOT and RWTP are in the process of registering women entrepreneurs as Farm Produce Organization under business act for larger market integration.

### ICT training to women entrepreneurs to promote bamboo products

One of the WIFI – TOT members received financial assistance of US\$7143, the project of which was “Empowering Tribal Women Entrepreneurs through ICT in Marketing their Products and Services in Andhra Pradesh”. The Project Director, Dr Shobha Rani, has further simplified the WIFI modules and prepared handouts to train women entrepreneurs. She has chosen “Yanadi tribe”, which is a prominent tribe in Nellore District, in the State of Andhra Pradesh. The Entrepreneurs Data of 3500 was collected From ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency), Government of Andhra Pradesh of which 1520 were women entrepreneurs. 1200 members were selected from three Revenue Divisions (i.e. Nellore, Gudur and Kavali) for training on ICT use. Women are involved in home based enterprises like Basket Making / Bamboo Product Marketing, Sheep Unit, Buffaloes, Breeding cows, Fish net and fish vending point, Milk Business, ram lamb Unit, Fruits and vegetable vending place.

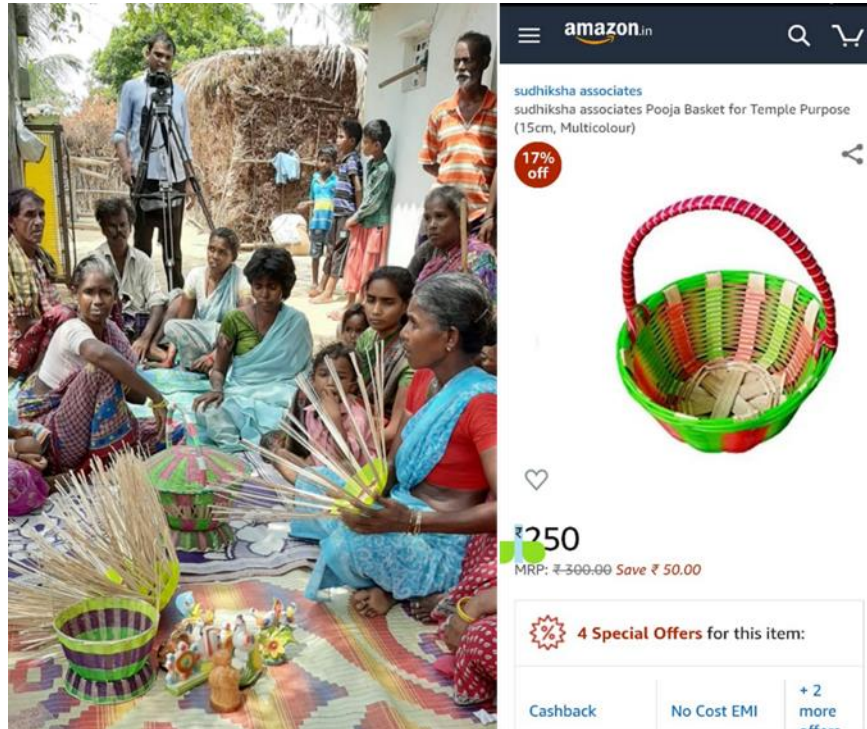
### Women entrepreneurs and businesses

Type of business	Numbers of women entrepreneurs	Percentage
Basket Making	280	23.3
Bamboo Product Marketing	130	10.8
Sheep Unit	90	7.5
Buffaloes	120	10
Cross Breed Cows	120	10
Fish Net & Fish Vending Point	80	6.7
Milk Business	200	16.7
Lamb Unit	120	10
Fruits and Vegetable Vending Point	60	5
Total	1,200	100

The Project Director has conducted preliminary study to understand the level of their knowledge in marketing concepts and accordingly prepared training module. The topics included in the training modules are use of mobile, use of smart phones, and different e-commerce website applications like amazon, Big basket\*, Tribal India\*, etc to promote their products in national and global market. The topics like social barriers, and Private and Public-Sector Schemes related to marketing are also included. The tribal women entrepreneurs are grouped as 20 and received



extended training for a duration of 90 days to enhance the marketability of their handicraft products through use and application of smart phone.



Bamboo Baskets and Marketing on Amazon.In

The ICT training sessions have enabled the women to sell finished products to the customers using the online-shopping platforms like Snap deal and Amazon. Before the training sessions, women involved in the business of basket making and bamboo products used to set up on-street pop-up shops. With the help of training provided in the workshops, Women entrepreneurs have adapted to market their products online and engage women with IT and communication skills to coordinate between themselves to sell their products on Amazon. The change has resulted in the increase of profits. Women who were selling their Pooja bamboo baskets at Rs 50-100 early and now sell at Rs250 /- on Amazon. Broom sticks through snap deal sell at Rs.150 each which was Rs. 30- 60 each earlier. This also provides opportunity for increased quality time spent on other activities within the family.

The major challenge is to create trust in the program amongst the community. Also, amongst the women in target groups, issues like access to smart phones, language barriers are proving to be deterring factors to the process of adopting new technologies and processes. For the perishable products like milk, meat and fish, the project team is negotiating with an e-commerce site “fresh to home” which is currently operating only in cities for the purchase of products in bulk quantities.



Ms. Penchalamma from Vallipuram

The Women Entrepreneurs are now named as “Vartika” meaning “Lamp”. For the last 20 years, Penchalamma, a tribal woman residing in Vallipuram of Chittamuru Mandal has been selling baskets made of palm and bamboo. She had run the family business by procuring raw materials locally and cost-free and selling the finished products at temples in the cities of Warangal or Hyderabad. Due to draught and the expansion of village, production cost increased as she had to have raw materials transported from different regions. Unreliable demand and bargaining prices determined her profit or loss. Ms. Penchalamma is amongst 1200 tribal women who received WIFI training under ICSSR project at Nellore district in 2018 on marketing concepts, mobile applications and online marketing platforms. She has since tripled her income by marketing via e-commerce sites and has also helped sell finished products of other women in her locality. The income level of all 1200 families is increased. These women are using their earnings to take care of health and other family needs. The team is planning to create new products with palm and bamboo and customize their products to create a brand with support of WIFI team.

### Promotion of Therapeutic Start-ups among tribal women

Dr. Chandi Kumari from Department of Microbiology, Dr. Bindu from Department of Home Science and Dr. Malleswaramma from Department of Social Work have received funding of US\$ 21,429 to enhance the potential of tribal women by skill-based training and marketing of value-added health foods / therapeutic foods to increase their family income. In the first phase, a training programme was organized to help 50 tribal women in processing of value addition of millets, green leafy vegetable-based products (moringa leaves, curry leaves, coriander, flaxseed leaves, gogu leaves, etc.), spice mix powders and multigrain products. Among them, 25 members have started their own pop-up shops to sell valued added food products, such as millet-based breakfast foods, millet-based snacks, spice mixes, multigrain flour, etc. Some of the trained beneficiaries have experienced problems like poor family support and late payment by clients. The project team is planning to arrange an outlet in SPMVV campus by the entrepreneurs on a weekly basis and will expand the number of outlets based on the demand for the benefit of tribal women. Besides business training programmes, the team is also taking initiatives to raise awareness of healthy lifestyle by modifying food choices.

### పోషక విలువలతో కూడిన ఆహారం తీసుకోవాలి



#### మహిళలకు శిక్షణ ఇస్తున్న డాక్టర్ చందీకుమారి

రామచంద్రాపురం: పోషక విలువలతో కూడిన ఆహారం తీసుకోవాలని శ్రీ వద్యావతి మహిళా యూనివర్సిటీ అసోసియేట్ ప్రొఫెసర్ డాక్టర్ చందీకుమారి సూచించారు. సోమవారం మండలంలోని కమ్మపల్లి సిద్దేశ్వర్ ఎస్టీ కాలనీలో నేషనల్ ఆకాడమీ ఆఫ్ సైన్సెస్ ఇండియా ప్రొజెక్ట్లో భాగంగా మహిళలకు చిరుదాన్యాలతో విలువ ఆధారిత ఉత్పత్తుల తయారీపై శిక్షణ, అవగాహన

కార్యక్రమం నిర్వహించారు. ఆమె మాట్లాడుతూ జొన్నలు, సజ్జలు, కొర్రలు, రాగులతో వివిధ రకాల పోషక పదార్థాల తయారీ విధానాన్ని వివరించారు. కార్యక్రమంలో కమ్మపల్లి పీహెచ్సీ చైర్మన్ చినబాబు, అధ్యాపకులు డాక్టర్ బిందు, డాక్టర్ మల్లేశ్వరమ్మ, అంగన్వాడీ కార్యకర్త భారతి, ఆరోగ్య కార్యకర్త సునీత, మహిళలు పాల్గొన్నారు.

Local Newspaper article featuring Prof. Chandi Kumari during workshop on Therapeutic Starts ups among tribal women



C. Komala, SGK Rubber & Package Solutions, Chittoor Andhra Pradesh

**చౌకధరలతోనే సమతుల్య ఆహారం**

కమ్మపల్లి (రామచంద్రాపురం), న్యూనీటడే: చౌకధరలతోనే సమతుల్య ఆహారం అభివృద్ధి చేయడానికి ప్రాజెక్టు సాజన్యంతో చిరుధాన్యాలతో విలువ ఆదారిత ఉత్పత్తుల తయారీపై అవగాహన, శిక్షణ కార్యక్రమంలో భాగంగా మంగళవారం జొన్నలు, మినుముల పిండితో వంటకాలపై అవగాహన కల్పించారు.

**వంటకాలపై అవగాహన కల్పిస్తున్న ప్రాఫెసర్ జ్యోతి**



**చిరుధాన్యాలతోనే ఆరోగ్యం**

కమ్మపల్లి (రామచంద్రాపురం), న్యూనీటడే: చిరుధాన్యాలలోనే అధిక పోషకాలు అభ్యుపయోగించి శ్రీపద్మావతి మహిళా విశ్వవిద్యాలయ అధ్యాపకురాలు చండీకుమారి అన్నారు. బుధవారం స్థానిక కమ్మపల్లి సిద్ధేశ్వర యానాదికాలనీలో నేషనల్ అకాడమీ ఆఫ్ సైన్సెస్ ఇండియా ప్రాజెక్టు సాజన్యంతో చిరుధాన్యాలతో విలువ ఆదారిత ఉత్పత్తుల తయారీపై అవగాహన, శిక్షణ కార్యక్రమాన్ని నిర్వహించారు. ఇందులో భాగంగానే జొన్నలతో రొట్టెలు, రాగి పిండితో లడ్డుల తయారీ, అమ్మకాలపై ఆమెతోపాటు కళాశాల పరిశోధకులు డాక్టర్ మీదు, డాక్టర్ మల్లేశ్వరమ్మ అవగాహన కల్పించారు. కార్యక్రమంలో కమ్మపల్లి వీహెచ్ఎస్ అభివృద్ధి కమిటీ చైర్మన్ చినబాబు, అంగన్వాడీ, ఆరోగ్య కార్యకర్తలు, గ్రామ స్థులు తదితరులు పాల్గొన్నారు.



Regional press coverage on Workshops

**Beyond social barriers: SGK rubber and package solutions**

Ms. C. Komala from Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, who comes from a rural agricultural background, has taken up job after completing her intermediate due to family economic and social constraints.

After working in the private sector for 10 years with little growth in the profession, she has decided to set up an independent start-up focussing on mobilising women labour for the construction sector. Keeping in view of her financial position, she entered into service sector (i.e. providing contract labour to the civil construction). After receiving ICT training during WIFI, C. Komala stated that the initiative further strengthened her reform to continue and scale up her business. With the support of the family, she has moved from service sector to running an independent business by the name of SGK Rubber & Package Solutions based on supplying construction material like marbles, granite, tiles, and rubber module components to local businesses and contractors. She aims to move

forward in the male dominated civil construction industry and continue to expand. She has digitalised her business transactions and marketed the products on Indiamart which is an online platform. She also states that often women lack family support and experience gender discrimination, and believes that ICT skills leverage the women entrepreneurs' opportunities. C. Komala extends mentorship to the women in her locality and has encouraged aspiring women entrepreneurs to connect with WIFI team.

### **Collaborations with public and private partners**

Nearly 95 per cent of entrepreneurship in India is concentrated in the informal sector, with millions of female entrepreneurs actively functioning in this sector<sup>26</sup>. In an effort to ensure parity and prosperity for women entrepreneurs, the public and private sectors must work together to address challenges of women entering into business sector.

WIFI-TOT Saviskara has made efforts to collaborate with non-governmental organizations which have played a major role in sustainable development and women empowerment. Government institutions like universities, NABARD, NIRD, and SETVIN AP Innovation Society<sup>27</sup> which can extend business support services. WIFI-TOT Saviskara has planned ICT training sessions for 75 women entrepreneurs before March 2020.

### **Insights and lesson learnt**

The majority of participating women entrepreneurs represent primary industry sector such as food processing, textiles, agriculture, beauty care, and handicrafts. Most of the women from rural areas belong to lower socio-economic background with low literacy levels. The reluctance of women to move/travel, and lack of access to computers and internet is limiting the reach of women entrepreneurship programmes. Though women entrepreneurs understand the business potential of the use of internet and social media, they are not confident about their ability to use such tools for their businesses. Women are experiencing language barriers as ICT marketing tools are in English. Different business models should be adopted to keep women entrepreneurs intact.

An entrepreneur should develop qualities such as high motivation for achievement of the objectives, persistent passion, risk management ability to face challenges, technical expertise, hard-work, and self-confidence to be successful. Specific strategies need to be developed to focus on areas of improvement depending on the individual or the group undergoing training.

### **Framework for sustainability of WIFI**

- WIFI-TOT – Saviskara proposes to strengthen existing tie-ups and develop new networks with various public and private institutions like universities, NGOs, and government agencies for promoting women entrepreneurship through ICT.
- It is observed for the past 18 months that ICT training programmes help to build confidence and empower women but they still need constant motivation. Mentoring System with experts will be established to extend support to needy women entrepreneurs.
- Advisory committee with policymakers and successful women entrepreneurs will be established, which can be a good source of information from time to time.
- Network of WIFI women entrepreneurs is planned to share experience and technical expertise for further diversification of business activities.

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<sup>26</sup> Daynard, Arnaud. "Determinants of Female Entrepreneurship in India." OECD Economic Department Working Papers, no. 1191 (2015): 0\_1–38. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5js4rfh5gtbq-en>.

<sup>27</sup> Andhra Pradesh innovation society provides the state of art facilities to incubate start-ups.

- Since greater importance is given either to rural women entrepreneurs or educated women in general, WIFI-TOT – Saviskara would cater to the needs of urban middle-class women.
- Opportunity for students in Computer Science, Engineering and Management disciplines should be given to train women entrepreneurs in customized ICT activities and business models for marketing on national and international online business platforms.
- Exploration for funding for training programmes is needed.

### **Proposed activities**

- Based on experience and education levels, tailored training programmes in marketing and ICT skills are being planned to accommodate the needs of women entrepreneurs.
- Approvals of training modules from NSQF is necessary.
- A series of workshops are planned in next six months.
- To extend the reach, national level training programme involving representatives from universities, industry, NGOs and policymakers with the support of APCICT is currently being considered.

### **Disclaimers:**

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