

NITI Aayog hosts National Seminar on “Global Aspirations, Local Foundations: Scaling Women-Led Startups from Rural India”

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NITI Aayog’s Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Division organized a National Seminar on “*Global Aspirations, Local Foundations: Scaling Women-Led Startups from Rural India*” on 24th September 2025 in NITI Aayog, New Delhi. The seminar was led by Shri Rajeev Singh Thakur, Adviser, NITI Aayog (Additional Secretary, Govt. of India). The discussions were further enriched by Shri T.K. Anil Kumar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, Shri Surender Mehra, Adviser (RD&PR), NITI Aayog, Ms. Mercy Epao, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, and Shri Sanjiv Singh, Joint Secretary, DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, who collectively emphasized strategies to scale women-led startups from rural India to global markets.

The event also brought together the key executives from the ground, State level officials from different departments, CEOs of State Rural Livelihood Mission, representatives from international organisations alongside policymakers, industry leaders, and changemakers, fostering dialogue on scaling women-led rural startups.

The experts emphasized the need to create end-to-end support systems and strengthen block-level setups, while promoting female labour force participation and enhancing the quality of work and enterprise readiness. They highlighted the importance of improving access to gender-responsive financing and leveraging digital platforms, including the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) and e-commerce, to ensure consistent and sustainable market linkages.

The seminar also underscored the role of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in expanding export potential, ensuring compliance, and enhancing visibility and logistics for rural women-led enterprises. A key takeaway was the need for stronger convergence between Ministries, State Governments, and related agencies to provide coordinated support for women entrepreneurs. States shared innovative initiatives and best practices, demonstrating scalable models for empowering rural women entrepreneurs.

The deliberations reaffirmed that placing women at the forefront of rural entrepreneurship and enabling their enterprises to scale from grassroots visibility to global markets is not only an economic priority but also a social imperative for India’s inclusive development journey.

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