



11 Years of Digital India: eSaras Online Market & Melas Strengthening Rural Livelihoods through Digital Commerce

Over 8.99 crore SHG members Sell 1,400+ Products likes Chips, Papad, Honey, Handicrafts etc on eSaras Portal

Women Entrepreneurs and Agri Produce Collecting & Marketing FPOs Empower Themselves, Creating New Income Opportunities

With Vision of 6 crore Lakhpati Didis by 2029, eSaras initiative of Digital India enabling Women & Rural Entrepreneurs to Sell Products Nationwide

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As the **Digital India** programme completes eleven years, India continues to leverage Digital Public Infrastructure to create inclusive opportunities for citizens across sectors. A significant example of this transformation is **eSaras**, a government-backed digital commerce platform that is connecting rural producers with customers across the country. Developed by the **Digital India Corporation (DIC)** under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), eSaras is implemented under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**. The platform enables Self-Help Groups (SHGs), women entrepreneurs, producer collectives and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) to market their products through a trusted digital marketplace, creating sustainable livelihood opportunities while advancing the vision of inclusive digital growth.

eSaras is the official e-commerce platform of the Ministry of Rural Development under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

It connects rural women-led Self-Help Group (SHG) enterprises with customers across India, offering authentic... pic.twitter.com/k9NpCxTVGZ

— Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India (@MoRD_GoI) July 6, 202

Measurable Impact at the Grassroots

eSaras has emerged as an important digital commerce platform supporting rural entrepreneurship under DAY-NRLM. The programme today covers **over 8.99 crore registered SHG members**, creating one of the world's largest women-led livelihood ecosystems. The platform features **more than 1,400 products**, while **800+ buyers** access SHG products through ONDC-enabled buyer applications. More than **50 SARAS Melas** are organised annually to promote rural enterprises, and SHG products are available through **11+ buyer applications** integrated with ONDC, significantly expanding market visibility and sales opportunities. By combining digital technology with livelihood promotion, eSaras is helping rural women entrepreneurs strengthen household incomes, preserve traditional skills and contribute to the vision of an inclusive and self-reliant India.

Digital Commerce for Rural Women

Women-led Self-Help Groups have emerged as a key pillar of rural economic development under DAY-NRLM. eSaras strengthens this ecosystem by enabling SHGs to independently showcase and sell their products to customers across India through an end-to-end digital commerce platform. It provides digital onboarding through the trusted LokOS ecosystem, online product catalogues, inventory management, secure digital payments, integrated logistics, order management and multilingual access through BHASHINI. By reducing dependence on intermediaries and enabling direct access to national markets, the platform helps rural women improve incomes, build enterprises and participate more effectively in the digital economy. The platform is also enabling verified rural women entrepreneurs to access national markets, supporting the Government's vision of creating **6 crore Lakhpati Didis by 2029**.

SARAS is a unique initiative by the Ministry of Rural Development to provide a marketing platform for the handcrafted products of the rural women artisans of self-help groups, ensuring a sustainable source of income for them and making them self-reliant.

This encompasses the... pic.twitter.com/DIDuARIm7p

— Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India (@MoRD_GoI) May 31, 20

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Strengthening Rural Livelihoods Beyond Agriculture

For millions of rural households, agriculture remains the primary source of income, but earnings are often seasonal. eSaras helps diversify income by enabling SHGs and rural producer groups to generate revenue throughout the year. The platform promotes a wide range of livelihood activities, including food processing, farm-based enterprises, handicrafts, handloom, honey, dairy products, herbal products, personal care items and home décor. This creates additional and sustainable income opportunities for rural families, particularly during the non-harvesting season, reducing dependence on seasonal agricultural earnings.

Encouraging Value Addition for Better Returns

Beyond providing market access, eSaras encourages rural entrepreneurs to increase the value of their products before bringing them to market. SHGs are supported in processing and packaging agricultural produce into higher-value products such as chips, papad, pickles, jams, squashes, candies, packaged spices, processed pulses and bottled honey. For example, instead of selling raw potatoes or fruits, producer

groups can convert them into packaged food products with improved shelf life and branding. Such value addition enhances product quality, improves marketability and enables rural producers to earn higher returns from the same agricultural output.

Capacity Building for Digital Entrepreneurship

The success of digital commerce depends not only on technology but also on building the capabilities of rural entrepreneurs. Under DAY-NRLM, women associated with SHGs receive training in digital onboarding, product listing, branding, packaging, product photography, digital marketing, inventory management, order processing, customer service, financial literacy and logistics management. These capacity-building initiatives equip rural women with the skills required to independently manage online businesses and compete in wider markets. By combining training with digital infrastructure, eSaras is enabling women entrepreneurs to become active participants in India's expanding digital economy.

Supporting Diverse Rural Products

eSaras showcases products that reflect the diversity of India's rural economy. Popular product categories include pickles, papad, honey, spices, millet-based food products, bamboo and cane crafts, wooden handicrafts, terracotta products, handloom sarees, shawls, cotton garments, home décor items, herbal soaps, essential oils, dairy products, ghee and woollen products. The platform also promotes products linked to animal husbandry and allied livelihood activities undertaken by SHGs, thereby creating market opportunities across multiple sectors of the rural economy.

Technology Driving Inclusive Growth

Built on the principles of Digital Public Infrastructure, eSaras integrates with UMANG, secure digital payment systems, logistics partners and API-based digital verification services. Digital seller verification through LokOS strengthens trust, while multilingual services powered by BHASHINI improve accessibility for users across different regions. The platform also offers accessibility features such as text-to-speech support, adjustable text size and visual accessibility options, making digital commerce more inclusive for persons with disabilities, senior citizens and users with diverse accessibility needs. These technology-driven features ensure a transparent, secure and citizen-friendly digital marketplace connecting rural producers with consumers nationwide.

Beneficiary Story: Falak SHG Taking Khurja Pottery to Customers Across India

The impact of eSaras is reflected in the success of **Falak Self-Help Group (SHG)** from **Khurja, Uttar Pradesh**, which is preserving the traditional **GI-tagged Khurja Pottery** while expanding its market through digital commerce. Earlier, the group's handcrafted pottery was sold mainly in local markets, exhibitions and regional fairs, limiting its market reach.

After joining eSaras, Falak SHG has been successfully selling its handcrafted pottery products to customers across India for the past three and a half years. The platform has enabled the group to expand beyond geographical boundaries, while reliable logistics support has helped ensure the safe delivery of fragile handcrafted products. The initiative has strengthened the group's livelihood opportunities, increased the visibility of Khurja Pottery and demonstrated how digital commerce can empower rural women entrepreneurs while preserving India's traditional crafts.

Expanding Market Access Across India

Since its launch, eSaras has continuously strengthened its digital ecosystem to improve market access for rural producers. The web portal was launched on 28 October 2022, followed by the Android mobile application on 28 June 2023. Subsequent integration with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), logistics partners, secure payment gateways, Power BI-based analytics, digital seller verification

and UMANG has expanded the platform's reach and improved operational efficiency. Women-led SHGs producing handicrafts, textiles, processed foods and other rural products are now able to access customers across India, moving beyond traditional fairs and exhibitions to year-round digital commerce.

For more information, visit <https://www.esaras.in/>

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