



Re-wiring India's Digitalising Economy for Women's Rights and Well-being: An Action-oriented Knowledge Intervention

Project overview

Overview

An action-oriented knowledge intervention led by IT for Change, with support from the European Commission and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

Project period: 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2025

Primary cohort:

The teams and beneficiaries of 3 social enterprises LabourNet, Vrutti and SEWA
42 members of national and global policy communities who are part of the project's research fellowships

Nearly 200+ stakeholders – senior and early career researchers, practitioners, public interest technologists, government representatives, cooperatives and social enterprises – who were part of project events and dialogues in India and international spaces

Secondary cohort:

1380 women informal workers associated with LabourNet, 4973 (1244 – Kanakpura, 3329 – Pudukkottai) women farmers associated with Vrutti and 400 (Kheda and Tapi) women farmers associated with SEWA.

Theory of Change

Context and Problem Statement

- India's rapid digital transformation is reshaping traditional sectors (agriculture, garments, informal services).
- Women workers are largely excluded due to:
 - Limited digital access.
 - Lack of gender-sensitive digital and labor policies.
 - Insufficient institutional and infrastructural support.
- Social Enterprises (SEs) in India support large numbers of women workers but lack sector-specific insights on automation, algorithmic management, digital supply chain dynamics, etcetera

Theory of Change

Core Premise

- Empowering SEs with actionable knowledge about the digital economy will:
 - Enhance women's participation and leadership.
 - Strengthen the ability of CSOs and SEs to build inclusive, rights-based digital futures.
 - Contribute directly to achieving SDG Targets such as 4.5 (education), 5.5 (gender equality in leadership), and 8.5 (decent work for all).

Project Impact and Outcomes

Impact: To empower women workers to secure their rights in the digital economy in India

Outcomes:

Oc1: Enhanced practices of social enterprises (SEs) to support women workers in the digital economy

Oc2: Enhanced advocacy effectiveness of national stakeholders (leaders of SEs, CSOs, young leaders, and scholars) in the development of gender perspectives in global and national policies, processes, and strategies related to digital economy.

Project Strategies for Outcome 1

Oc1: Enhanced practices of social enterprises (SEs) to support women workers in the digital economy

Strategies for Oc 1

Longitudinal action research for the development of gender-responsive, enterprise-level apps – of three social enterprises

- LabourNet – app for beauty workers in urban informal services
- Vrutti – farm enterprise management system for a women's FPO
- SEWA – enterprise platform for a women farmers' agricultural cooperative

Documentation of insights in the form of a) a digital capabilities map for each social enterprise, and b) Strategy blueprints distilling principles of gender-responsive platform/app design for on-demand labour and farmers.

Project Strategies for Outcome 2

Outcome 2: Enhanced advocacy effectiveness of national stakeholders (leaders of SEs, CSOs, young leaders, and scholars) in the development of gender perspectives in global and national policies, processes, and strategies related to digital economy

- Building a national policy community on gender and the digital economy through National Gender Fellowships (2 rounds of 10 fellowships each) and 3 national policy dialogues with government and other stakeholders
- Forging a trilateral India-EU-Asia Africa policy community on gender and the digital economy through 2 international multistakeholder dialogues and International Think Pieces (2 rounds of 6 fellowships each)
- Centering feminist digital justice in global policy processes and fora including UN processes, OECD, and national policy spaces like NITI Aayog, Ministry of Agriculture's Agristack framework, and state government of Kerala

Key achievements

- Piloted, tested, and refined platform enterprise solutions with LabourNet, SEWA Cooperative Federation and Vrutti, and institutionalised gender-responsive design perspectives
- Successfully built a vibrant national and international discourse on gender justice in the digital economy. Engaged with over 200+ stakeholders from the technological community, social enterprise sector, cooperative federations, national and state government officials, international scholars of repute, early career scholar-practitioners from India and the world, and members of the global platform cooperative movement through 3 national dialogues and 2 international conferences