



The Power to Empower

EMPOWERING INDIA'S WOMEN

A Strategic Analysis of Ministry
of Skill Development &
Entrepreneurship
Initiatives (2015-2025)





EMPOWERING INDIA'S WOMEN

A Strategic Analysis of Ministry of
Skill Development & Entrepreneurship
Initiatives (2015-2025)

Copyright & Disclaimer

© FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), 2026. All rights reserved.

This publication is intended for knowledge-sharing and informational purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the content, FICCI FLO makes no representations or warranties regarding its completeness or reliability.

The views and analyses presented are based on research undertaken by contributors under the guidance of FICCI FLO and do not constitute professional, legal, or policy advice. References to government policies and institutions are for analytical purposes only and do not imply any formal endorsement or affiliation.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed without prior permission from FICCI FLO.

FOREWORD

It gives me immense pride to present this focused white paper on the initiatives of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, aligned with India's national vision of women-led development. As India advances towards becoming a more inclusive and future-ready economy, empowering women through skills and entrepreneurship remains a critical pillar of this transformation.

Flagship initiatives such as the Skill India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) have significantly strengthened the skilling ecosystem by enhancing employability, promoting vocational training, and enabling entrepreneurship at the grassroots level. Supported by institutions such as the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and an extensive network of Sector Skill Councils, these efforts have created structured pathways for women to access industry-relevant skills and livelihood opportunities.

This white paper builds on these efforts through focused analysis and actionable collaboration pathways. Developed by a cohort of young researchers and interns at FICCI FLO, it examines the implementation landscape of these schemes and identifies opportunities where FLO can partner with the Ministry, NSDC, and Sector Skill Councils to enhance last-mile delivery, strengthen industry linkages, and promote market-oriented, future-ready skills for women across diverse geographies.

For over four decades, FICCI FLO has been committed to



advancing women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship, capacity building, and leadership development. With its strong national footprint and diverse membership base, FLO is uniquely positioned to act as a bridge between policy frameworks and grassroots impact, enabling scalable and sustainable models of skilling and enterprise creation.

This initiative also reflects our commitment to fostering research-led engagement and nurturing young talent. The work has been carried out within a structured institutional framework, guided by Rashmi Sarita - Executive Director, ensuring both analytical rigor and contemporary relevance.

We believe this paper will serve as a catalyst for deeper collaboration between FICCI FLO and the Ministry, contributing to expanding women's access to skills, strengthening entrepreneurship ecosystems, and unlocking their full economic potential. As India moves towards the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, such partnerships will be instrumental in ensuring that women are not only participants but leaders in the nation's growth story.

Poonam Sharma

National President FICCI FLO

2025-26

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	8
Introduction	9
MSDE Initiatives (2015–2025)	16
Institutional Framework & Partnerships	24
Data, Analysis & Impact	28
Opportunities for Women Empowerment	35
FICCI FLO Collaboration Areas	37
Conclusion	43
References	44
About FICCI FLO	50

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)'s initiatives over the past decade (2015–2025), specifically examining their alignment with and contribution to women's economic empowerment (WEE) and women-led development (WLD) in India.

The study highlights MSDE's significant efforts in skill development and entrepreneurship through flagship schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), and strategic collaborations with private-sector entities. While these initiatives have made strides in increasing women's participation in skill training, the analysis identifies persistent challenges, including deep-rooted gender biases, limitations in outreach, socio-economic constraints, and data gaps in outcome measurement.

Crucially, this report identifies substantial opportunities for FICCI FLO to forge impactful collaborations with MSDE. By leveraging its nationwide network, expertise in women-led development, and established initiatives, FICCI FLO can play a pivotal role in enhancing the reach and inclusivity of existing schemes, fostering women-led entrepreneurship, strengthening data-driven policy, and building strategic partnerships.

Proposed areas of collaboration include targeted grassroots mobilization, gender-sensitive program design, digital literacy initiatives, scaling entrepreneurship support, facilitating financial linkages, promoting women-led brands, and advocating for robust gender-disaggregated data frameworks. Such synergistic efforts are essential to accelerating India's progress towards a truly inclusive, women-led economic growth trajectory.

I. INTRODUCTION:

CONTEXTUALIZING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

A. THE IMPERATIVE OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE) AND WOMEN-LED (WLD) DEVELOPMENT (WLD)

Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) refers to women's ability to access, control, and benefit from economic resources and opportunities, including jobs, income, assets, and markets. Complementing this, Women-Led Development (WLD) signifies a paradigm where women are not merely passive beneficiaries but active agents, innovators, and leaders in driving socio-economic progress within their communities and the nation. This dual focus is paramount for India's holistic advancement.

The significance of WEE for national growth extends far beyond a matter of social justice; it is a fundamental driver for overall national economic prosperity and poverty reduction. Research consistently indicates that the inclusion of skilled women in the workforce directly translates to higher productivity and enhanced economic output for the nation.¹

Furthermore, the foundational premise for a country's overall social and economic development rests on ensuring equal rights and participation for both men and women across all spheres of life.² The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), for instance, explicitly aims to ensure that India's vast demographic dividend is fully realized, a goal intrinsically linked to the economic inclusion of its female population.³

The consistent emphasis on WEE across various policy statements and research documents suggests a profound recognition that women's economic participation is not just a social equity concern but a critical, often underutilized, catalyst for national economic growth and poverty reduction.

This perspective implies that strategic investments in WEE yield significant returns that extend beyond individual beneficiaries, contributing substantially to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and overall societal well-being. India possesses a vast young population, which represents a tremendous potential economic boon. However, if a substantial portion of this demographic, particularly women, remains under-skilled or faces systemic barriers to economic participation, this potential demographic dividend could transform into a demographic burden, negatively impacting national productivity and social stability.

Therefore, gender-inclusive skill development is not merely an equitable approach but a pragmatic necessity to truly harness this demographic advantage. This understanding underscores why schemes like PMKVY, while broad in their scope, inherently contribute to this national objective by including women and must be critically assessed for their effectiveness in this regard.

India has demonstrated a stated commitment to gender inclusion within its economic policy framework. This commitment is evidenced by various government policies and initiatives designed to integrate women into the mainstream economy. This foundational understanding sets the stage for a detailed analysis of how the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship's programs align with and contribute to this broader national agenda for women's empowerment.

B. FICCI FLO'S VISION

FICCI FLO, the women's wing of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), operates with a clear and ambitious mission: "To become the dominant voice for the women of India in the society".⁴ Its overarching vision is "To be the thought leader for women of India, their voice for policy change and a guardian of their interests".⁴

To achieve this, FLO's core objective is to "economically empower women by providing them with the necessary resources, opportunities, and support to thrive."⁴ This objective is systematically pursued through four strategic pillars:

- **Engage:**

This pillar focuses on building meaningful connections and fostering collaborations. Initiatives include the FLO Communities, which connects women entrepreneurs and professionals for collaboration, and the Membership Drive and Engagement, aimed at strengthening the FLO community through events and networking. FLO also actively forms strategic alliances through Partnerships, Collaborations, and Associations, and facilitates international trade opportunities for women entrepreneurs via Trade Delegations.⁴

- **Educate:**

This pillar emphasizes empowering women through knowledge, skills, and mentorship. Key initiatives include the FLO Financial Literacy Initiative, which educates women on financial planning and wealth management, and the FLO Digital Skilling Initiative, designed to equip women with essential digital skills to bridge the digital divide. Furthermore, FLO provides legal awareness and support through its Legal & Advocacy initiatives and engages policymakers to influence women-centric policies via its Policy Initiative.⁴

- **Elevate:**

This pillar is dedicated to helping women rise in leadership, business, and entrepreneurship. Programs under this pillar include FLO Women Corporate Directors, aimed at increasing women's representation

in corporate leadership. The FLO Startup Cell supports women-led startups with mentorship and access to funding, while the FLO MSME Assist Cell provides guidance and resources for women-led Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to scale their businesses.

- **Empower:**

This pillar focuses on providing the necessary tools, opportunities, and direct support for women to thrive. Initiatives include FLO Handloom, Textile & Handicrafts, which supports women artisans and promotes traditional crafts, and FLO Rural Livelihood and Rural Enterprises, designed to enable rural women to establish sustainable livelihoods. FLO also champions sustainable practices and fosters inclusive growth at various levels through its Sustainability and Inclusivity Across All Initiatives.⁴

FICCI FLO operates with its headquarters in New Delhi and maintains a robust nationwide network of 21 chapters across India, collectively representing over 14,000 women entrepreneurs, professionals, and corporate executives.⁵

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

This section underscores how FLO's strategic objectives inherently align with national priorities for WEE and WLD, laying the groundwork for identifying concrete areas of synergy with MSDE.

Recent initiatives, such as FLO Santé, a platform specifically for women-led brands, and WeFLO.in, an all-women job portal, underscore its commitment to practical support.⁶

Moreover, FLO has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) to collaborate on advocacy, awareness, outreach, mobilization, and capacity-building efforts for women micro and small enterprises (MSEs), Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), Startups, and Cooperatives, facilitating direct market access for them.⁸

FLO's initiatives demonstrate that it is not merely an advocacy group but an organization with significant operational capacity and a proven track record in program implementation. This positions FLO as a highly valuable and practical partner for MSDE, capable of co-delivering on ground-level objectives. The problem statement specifically requests "areas of synergy" and "targeted proposals for impactful collaboration."

The documented scale of operational initiatives and multi-sectoral collaborations demonstrates a functional framework for program implementation. This means that collaboration with MSDE can extend beyond policy recommendations to joint program design and execution, leveraging FLO's grassroots network and specialized expertise in areas like market linkages and entrepreneurship support, thereby directly addressing implementation gaps in government schemes.

Furthermore, FLO's global network⁵ suggests a strong ground presence, which is crucial given the identified challenges of limited awareness, outreach, and access to training for women, particularly those in rural or marginalized communities. This extensive network can act as a critical bridge between government schemes and the intended beneficiaries.

Government schemes, despite their broad reach, often face challenges in effective last-mile delivery and awareness, especially in

diverse and remote geographies. Women, due to various socio-cultural and economic factors such as mobility restrictions and household responsibilities, are often harder to reach.

FLO's established and localized network can directly facilitate mobilization, awareness campaigns, and even localized training or support, thereby directly addressing a known barrier to women's participation and ensuring greater inclusivity and effectiveness of MSDE's initiatives.

C. REPORT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This report focuses on analysing the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) over the past decade, specifically from 2015 to 2025. The analysis employs a structured approach to assess the impact and opportunities for advancing women's economic empowerment and women-led development through MSDE's programs. This involves:

- **Data Points:**

Extracting and presenting relevant quantitative and qualitative information from the provided research documents.

- **Analytical Framework:**

Developing a structured approach to evaluate the effectiveness of MSDE's schemes, incorporating a gender lens to identify both successes and areas for improvement in promoting WEE and WLD.

- **Targeted Proposals:**

Formulating actionable recommendations for FICCI FLO's strategic collaboration with MSDE, aimed at maximizing the impact of skill development and entrepreneurship initiatives for women.

II. MINISTRY OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP (MSDE):

A DECADE OF INITIATIVES (2015–2025)

A. EVOLUTION OF THE SKILL INDIA MISSION

The Skill India Mission (SIM) serves as the overarching framework guiding the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship's operations. Its primary aim is to equip the youth of India & women with industry-relevant skills, preparing them to be future-ready for a dynamic job market.¹¹

The cornerstone of this mission is the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), launched on July 15, 2015. As MSDE's flagship outcome-based skill training scheme, PMKVY's objective is to encourage and promote skill development nationwide. It achieves this by providing free, short-duration skill training, facilitating upskilling and re-skilling through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and incentivizing skill certification with monetary rewards.³

Nearly 50% of trainees under schemes like PMKVY are women. The scheme has evolved through several phases:

- **PMKVY 1.0 (Pilot Phase 2015–16):**

During its initial phase, the program successfully trained 19.85 lakh candidates.³

- **PMKVY 2.0:**

This phase saw a significant expansion, with 1.10 Crore candidates trained or oriented.³

- **PMKVY 3.0 (2020–21):**

Under this iteration, 7.37 lakh candidates received training. This included 1.20 lakh candidates trained under the Customized Crash Course Programme for COVID Warriors (CCCP-CW) to mitigate the

pandemic's impact, and 1.8 lakh under the Skill Hub Initiative (SHI), which aimed to integrate vocational education with general education as envisioned by the National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP 2020).³ A crucial aspect of PMKVY 3.0 was its Special Projects component, which allowed for targeted training interventions for marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women.¹⁴

- **PMKVY 4.0 (since 2022–23):**

The current phase of PMKVY places a strong emphasis on quality, industry relevance, and flexibility, with On-Job-Training (OJT) now embedded within the Short-Term Training (STT) component.¹⁵ Looking to the future, PMKVY 4.0 has introduced job roles in cutting-edge sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, Electric Vehicle technology, Robotics, 5G, and Data Analytics, aiming to enhance employability in these future-ready domains.¹⁵ Notably, PMKVY 4.0 has shifted its focus from direct placement tracking to empowering candidates to pursue varied career paths, providing orientation support for diverse employment opportunities.¹⁶ As of June 30, 2025, a total of 56,69,369 candidates have been trained in the 2025–26 financial year under PMKVY.³

PMKVY's impact has been cross-sectoral, with candidates trained in diverse fields such as manufacturing, construction, healthcare, IT, electronics, and retail.³ The scheme also strategically supports other flagship government initiatives, including PM Surya Ghar, Vibrant Villages Programme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Jal Jeevan Mission, and Green Hydrogen Mission, by embedding skill development components within these broader programs for wider impact.³

The evolution of PMKVY, particularly the shift in PMKVY 4.0 away from direct placement tracking, indicates a recognition of the limitations inherent in simple placement metrics. This adjustment suggests that initial placement rates may not have met expectations, or that the scheme is moving towards a broader definition of "empowerment" that encompasses self-employment and diverse career paths, which are inherently more challenging to track. This change in focus, however, creates a significant data gap when attempting to assess tangible economic outcomes, particularly for women, making it more difficult to directly map initiatives to economic empowerment and India's development. PMKVY 4.0's introduction of job roles in Artificial Intelligence, Electric Vehicle technology, Robotics, 5G, and Data Analytics represents a highly commendable and forward-looking strategic step

This aims to align skill development with the demands of the rapidly evolving digital and green economies, ensuring India's workforce remains competitive. However, this progressive move, without parallel foundational interventions, carries the risk of exacerbating the existing digital gender gap if women, especially from rural areas, lack basic digital access or literacy to even begin these advanced courses.

The future of work is undeniably digital and AI-driven. By proactively introducing cutting-edge courses, MSDE is attempting to future-proof India's workforce. However, the existing significant digital gender gap, particularly in rural India, means that a large segment of the female population might be excluded from these opportunities from the outset. Simply offering these courses is insufficient; there is a clear need for targeted interventions to ensure women, especially from rural areas, can access and benefit from these advanced skill sets by addressing foundational barriers such as digital literacy and access to devices.

B. CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SCHEMES

Beyond PMKVY, MSDE implements several other critical schemes that contribute significantly to skill development and entrepreneurship across the country.

- **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)**

The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) scheme is designed to impart vocational skills through a non-formal approach, primarily targeting non-literates, neo-literates, and school dropouts (up to the 12th standard) aged 15–45. A key focus of JSS is on empowering women, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and minorities residing in rural and low-income urban areas.³ The scheme was transferred to MSDE in July 2018, consolidating skill development efforts under one ministry.¹⁹

JSS stands out as a unique scheme with a remarkable impact on women's empowerment, as women constitute more than 80% of its beneficiaries.¹¹ From FY 2018–19 to FY 2023–24, over 26 lakh individuals have been trained under JSS, with an annual coverage of approximately 5 lakh beneficiaries.³ JSSs operate through registered societies (NGOs) that receive 100% government grants, enabling them to reach "unreached areas" directly at the doorstep of beneficiaries with minimal infrastructure.¹⁸ Currently, 289 functional JSSs are spread across 26 states and 7 Union Territories.¹⁸

The program offers tailored vocational training courses, encompassing over 60 job roles, designed to meet local demand and expertise, thereby enhancing both employability and entrepreneurship.¹⁸ Examples of trades include tailoring, handicrafts, computer education, and beautician courses.²⁰ A crucial component of the JSS scheme is the "Livelihood Cell" established at each JSS. These cells play a vital role in linking trained beneficiaries, especially women, with employment opportunities, promoting their integration into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Joint Liability Groups, fostering entrepreneurship and livelihood development, and assisting in securing financial assistance or loans from banks.¹⁸

The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) scheme emerges as MSDE's most demonstrably successful initiative in terms of direct women's participation and its potential for women-led development at the grassroots

level. Its non-formal, doorstep training approach directly addresses many practical barriers faced by rural and marginalized women, such as prior education levels, mobility constraints, and time availability.

The explicit objective to “increase household income by promoting self/wage employment”¹⁸ and the establishment of “Livelihood Cells” to connect women to SHGs and financial assistance¹⁸ signify a comprehensive approach that extends beyond mere skill acquisition to actual income generation and entrepreneurship. While PMKVY is a broad national scheme, JSS is explicitly and overwhelmingly women-centric. Its operational model, which is NGO-led and provides doorstep delivery, directly circumvents common barriers for women in accessing formal training.

The “livelihood cell” is a crucial mechanism that translates training into tangible economic outcomes, directly aligning with FLO’s mandate. This makes JSS a prime candidate for deeper collaboration and scaling, potentially serving as a blueprint for other WLD initiatives.

• **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)**

The National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) was launched in 2016 with the objective of incentivizing employers to create new employment opportunities through apprenticeship programs.²³ Women’s participation in apprenticeships has seen a significant improvement, particularly with the introduction of trades in the services sector (Optional Trade). This has led to an increase in the percentage of women apprentices from 22.79% in 2024-25 to 25.80% in 2025-26.¹¹

The observed increase in women’s participation in NAPS, directly linked to the introduction of service sector trades, highlights the critical importance of tailoring skill development and apprenticeship programs to sectors where women are more likely to participate, find opportunities, and feel comfortable. This indicates a responsive policy adjustment aimed at enhancing gender inclusion, moving beyond traditionally male-dominated industrial trades.

This is a clear cause-and-effect relationship: if certain sectors, like services, attract more women, then actively expanding apprenticeship opportunities in those sectors is a direct and effective way to boost women’s overall participation in formal employment pathways. This also implicitly suggests that traditional, male-dominated trades might still present significant socio-cultural and practical barriers for

might still present significant socio-cultural and practical barriers for women, such as gender stereotypes, lack of role models, and work-place culture⁹, requiring different, perhaps more intensive, strategies for gender mainstreaming.

- **Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) & Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)**

The Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS), introduced by the Government of India in 1950, aims to ensure a steady flow of skilled workers for the domestic industry and to reduce unemployment among educated youth through systematic training.¹³ This scheme is implemented through an extensive network of 15,042 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and 33 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) across the country.²⁵

A significant provision to encourage women's participation includes the existence of 19 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) and over 300 ITIs exclusively for women.¹¹ Furthermore, the Government of India has approved a 30% reservation of seats for women candidates in all ITIs (both Government and Private).¹¹

The National Skill Training Institutes for Women (NSTIWs) specifically aim to equip women with the highest standards of vocational skills and entrepreneurship, fostering financial independence, recognition, and a dignified life in society.¹³ These institutes offer a range of courses in trades such as Computer Operator and Programming Assistant, Dress Making, Architectural Draughtsman, and Cosmetology.²⁵ Additionally, institutions like JSS Polytechnic for Women in Mysuru offer specialized trades including Electronics & Communication, Electronic Instrumentation and Control Engineering, and Commercial Practice.²⁷

OTHER RELEVANT SCHEMES AND INITIATIVES

MSDE also leverages and collaborates with other schemes and initiatives to further its objectives:

- **PM Vishwakarma Yojana:**

This scheme is identified as contributing to skill development³ and is utilized by the NAVYA initiative for vocational training.²⁸

- **SANKALP (Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion):**

This scheme prioritizes marginalized social groups, including women.

Under SANKALP 1, 13,861 women were trained; under SANKALP 2, 18,270 women; and under SANKALP 3, 2,970 women were trained during the Financial Years 2022–25.²⁹

- **Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana (RUVV):**

Launched as a pilot project in February 2024 for PM SVANidhi beneficiaries, with the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) as an implementing agency. This project provided entrepreneurship training to 1,744 beneficiaries across 10 cities, with more than 40% participation from women.²⁹

- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY–NULM):**

A flagship poverty alleviation program implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, DAY–NULM aims to reduce poverty by enabling poor households to access gainful self–employment and skilled wage employment opportunities.²³ Notably, Self Help Groups (SHGs) under DAY–NULM are formed exclusively by women. In Madhya Pradesh, this initiative has resulted in 47,013 skilled candidates placed, 3,94,592 SHG members formed, 17,174 beneficiaries assisted for setting up individual or group micro–enterprises, and 1,35,039 SHG women members receiving loans under the Bank linkage Programme. Similar positive figures are reported for Maharashtra.²⁹

- **PM ‘YUVA’ Yojana & National Entrepreneurship Awards (NEA):**

These are listed among MSDE’s broader entrepreneurship schemes.³⁰

- **National Career Service (NCS) Project:**

This serves as a one–stop solution for career–related services, including job listings from private and government sectors, information on job fairs, job search and matching, and career counseling.²³

- **Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY) & Atmanir-bhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY):**

These schemes incentivize employers for the creation of new employment opportunities.²³

- **PM-SVANidhi Scheme:**

This scheme provides collateral-free working capital loans to street vendors in urban areas, helping them resume businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.²³

The explicit inclusion of schemes like PM 'YUVA' Yojana, RUVF, and the significant role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) under DAY-NULM indicates a strong and growing government focus on fostering entrepreneurship, particularly for women. The high participation of women in SHGs, which are exclusively women-formed, and their access to micro-enterprise support and loans demonstrate a proven model for women's self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship.

For many women, especially in rural areas, self-employment and micro-enterprises offer more accessible and flexible paths to economic empowerment compared to formal wage employment, given mobility constraints, family responsibilities, and prevailing social norms. The success metrics from DAY-NULM, including SHG formation, micro-enterprise assistance, and loan disbursements, highlight a successful model. This presents a significant opportunity for organizations like FICCI FLO, with its existing Startup Cell and MSME Assist Cell, to provide crucial mentorship, market linkages, and financial guidance to scale these grassroots entrepreneurial efforts, transforming benefi-

C. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND PARTNERSHIPS

MSDE's comprehensive approach to skill development and entrepreneurship is underpinned by a robust institutional framework and a strong emphasis on partnerships.

A. Core Institutions

The Ministry operates through several key autonomous organizations:

- **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC):**

This unique Public-Private Partnership (PPP) company is central to India's skill landscape. Its primary objectives include creating high-quality vocational training institutions, providing funding through grants and equity, and enabling the creation and robustness of support systems necessary for skill development.³⁰ The Government holds a 49% equity stake in NSDC.¹⁵

- **National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) & Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE):**

These are premier autonomous organizations under MSDE, actively engaged in research, training, and consultancy for entrepreneurship development across the country.³⁰

- **Directorate General of Training (DGT):**

DGT is responsible for implementing long-term training schemes, most notably the Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS), and managing the extensive network of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).³⁰

B. Digital Transformation and Monitoring

A significant advancement in MSDE's operational efficiency and transparency is the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH). This digital platform facilitates the tracking of training programs, ensures Aadhaar-based validation for authenticity, and links payments directly to performance, thereby enhancing overall transparency and monitoring capabilities.³ SIDH also provides accessible dashboards for monitoring PMKVY 4.0 and earlier PMKVY phases.³²

C. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and International Collaborations

MSDE actively engages with private players and international institutions, including through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, for various skill development programs.¹² This approach aims to leverage diverse expertise and resources for broader impact.

Key collaborations include:

- **MSDE-Microsoft Collaboration (“AI Careers for Women”):**

This pioneering initiative is specifically designed to empower women in higher education institutions to pursue careers in Artificial Intelligence (AI).¹² Microsoft provides a comprehensive 240-hour training curriculum aligned with National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) standards.

This training is delivered through a hub-and-spoke model, with 30 Centre of Excellence (CoE) Hubs and 150 spoke educational institutions established in Tier-II and Tier-III towns across six states.³⁵ The program offers AI certifications, internships, apprenticeships, career guidance and aims to cultivate rural AI innovation talent.³⁵

- **MSDE-IBM Collaboration:**

Multiple Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed to provide curated courses aimed at equipping youth with future-ready skills, including AI, cybersecurity, and blockchain, leveraging the IBM SkillsBuild platform. These collaborations target various educational levels, including school education, higher education, and vocational skills.³⁶

- **MSDE-HCLTech and NASSCOM (Skill Up) Collaboration (“Skilling for AI Readiness - SOAR”):**

MSDE has partnered with Microsoft, HCLTech, and NASSCOM for the implementation of this program.¹² HCLTech also has a broader strategic partnership with Pearson to accelerate skills development in an AI-driven world.³⁸ Furthermore, HCLFoundation, HCLTech’s CSR arm, has established skill development centers in partnership with the National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI), focusing on empowering artisans, women, and youth.⁴⁰ HCLTech and NSDC have also joined forces to revolutionize digital learning and bridge the skills gap, in-

including through digital assessments and online reskilling/upskilling courses.⁴¹

- **International MoUs:**

The Government of India has signed MoUs or Memoranda of Cooperation (MoCs) in skill development and vocational education and training with twelve countries, aiming to align domestic skilling efforts with global requirements.¹²

- **Flexi MoU Scheme and Dual System of Training (DST):**

Implemented by DGT, these schemes aim to provide Industrial Training Institute (ITI) students with practical training in an industrial environment, bridging the gap between academic learning and industry demands.¹²

- **Indian Institute of Skills (IIS):**

Established under a Public–Private Partnership (PPP) model, the IIS in Ahmedabad and Mumbai focuses on training an industry-ready workforce for Industry 4.0.¹²

The extensive and multi-faceted collaborations with global tech giants like Microsoft, IBM, and HCLTech, specifically for AI, cybersecurity, and other future-ready skills, signify a strong strategic pivot by MSDE. This approach aims to align its skilling ecosystem with the demands of the rapidly evolving digital economy and Industry 4.0. This is a crucial move to ensure the Indian workforce remains competitive globally.

The reliance on the Public–Private Partnership (PPP) model, exemplified by NSDC and numerous collaborations with private entities, is a strategic choice for scaling skill development and ensuring industry relevance. While this model introduces private sector expertise, resources, and potentially better placement opportunities, it also necessitates robust oversight to ensure gender mainstreaming.

The extent to which these PPPs explicitly address gender-specific barriers or track gender-disaggregated outcomes for women's economic empowerment requires closer examination. If gender-specific targets, inclusive training methodologies, and outcome tracking are not explicitly embedded within these partnerships, there is a risk that

existing gender biases in the labor market could be perpetuated or even exacerbated.

The implementation of the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) for digital monitoring, Aadhaar-based validation, and real-time dashboards signifies a positive move towards more transparent and outcome-driven governance in skill development. This infrastructure has the potential to provide granular data on participation and, if designed appropriately, on outcomes.

While SIDH exists and promotes transparency, the challenge lies in ensuring that the data collected is sufficiently disaggregated by gender and captures meaningful WEE/WLD outcomes, moving beyond just “trained” or “oriented” numbers, especially given the PMKVY 4.0 shift away from direct placement tracking. Without robust, outcome-oriented gender data, it becomes challenging to truly assess the effectiveness of programs and make informed policy adjustments for women’s empowerment.

III. MAPPING MSDE INITIATIVES TO **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT:**

DATA, ANALYSIS, AND IMPACT

A. DIRECT WOMEN-CENTRIC PROGRAMS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

MSDE has launched several initiatives with a direct focus on empowering women, alongside mainstreaming gender considerations within its broader schemes.

1. Swavalambini Women Entrepreneurship Programme

The Swavalambini Women Entrepreneurship Programme, launched in February 2025, represents a significant step towards women-led economic empowerment. This initiative is a collaborative effort between MSDE and NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform.¹¹

Its core objective is to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset among female students and equip young women with the necessary skills to transform their ideas into sustainable businesses. The program offers comprehensive, multi-stage training, spanning from initial awareness to full enterprise creation. It builds capacity through structured programs such as the Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP), Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP), and Faculty Development Programme (FDP).

Additionally, it provides crucial support through mentorship, market linkages, legal assistance, and access to seed funding.³¹ The pilot phase of the Swavalambini program has been implemented across six Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) and Universities in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana, targeting 1,200 female students. Initial results indicate that 996 out of 1,200 students have been trained under the EAP. The EDP, which focuses on intensive training in business setup, finance, compliance, and networking, has trained 139 out of a target of 600 students.

Furthermore, 43 out of 75 faculty members have been trained under the FDP, enabling them to mentor aspiring women entrepreneurs on campus. The EDP is followed by 21 weeks of mentorship and hand-

holding by industry leaders and successful women entrepreneurs. NITI Aayog actively supports the initiative by organizing capacity-building workshops, offering expert mentoring, facilitating seed funding opportunities, and recognizing outstanding performers through its “Award to Reward (ATR)” initiative.³¹

Based on the pilot’s success, MSDE is considering expanding the program nationwide, with a long-term vision to help women evolve as job creators rather than merely job seekers.³¹ This program’s significance lies in its targeted, multi-faceted approach to women-led development, addressing not just skill gaps but also the critical ecosystem elements required for successful entrepreneurship.

2. NAVYA – Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational Training for Young Adolescent Girls

NAVYA is a joint pilot initiative launched by MSDE in convergence with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD).¹¹ Its primary goal is to provide vocational training to adolescent girls aged 16–18 years, who have a minimum qualification of Class 10, with a particular emphasis on non-traditional and emerging job roles.²⁸ The program aims to build confidence, economic independence, and an entrepreneurial spirit among young girls, especially in Aspirational and tribal districts.²⁸

Girls identified by MoWCD receive short-term skill development courses under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), with the potential to establish their own small businesses.²⁸ In its pilot phase, NAVYA is being rolled out across 27 Northeastern and Aspirational districts in 19 states. Participating districts have designated training centers offering job-role-specific vocational courses tailored to the needs of adolescent girls, including graphic design, telecom and financial services, smartphone and drone assembly, solar PV and CCTV installation, and hand embroidery.²⁸

The training leverages existing resources from flagship MSDE schemes like PMKVY and PM Vishwakarma Yojana.²⁸ This initiative is particularly impactful due to its focus on breaking traditional gender roles and fostering self-reliance by equipping young women with skills for emerging, high-growth sectors.

3. Gender Mainstreaming in Flagship Schemes

Beyond dedicated programs, MSDE has integrated specific provisions for women across its broader flagship schemes:

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):**

Special provisions are made to cover expenditure on conveyance, boarding, and lodging for women, along with enhanced post-placement support. PMKVY 4.0 specifically prioritizes projects that emphasize women as primary beneficiaries. Training programs in sectors like Electronics, Retail, Healthcare, Beauty & Wellness, Handicrafts, and Apparel are structured to attract higher participation from women. Skill Hubs and Special Projects actively encourage women's enrollment, and projects are designed to align with local skill demands, creating opportunities for rural women.¹¹

- **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS):**

This scheme demonstrates significant gender inclusivity, with over 80% of its beneficiaries being women.¹¹ Its community-connect approach and the presence of a "Livelihood Cell" at each JSS are instrumental in linking trained women with employment opportunities, Self Help Groups, and financial assistance.¹⁸

- **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS):**

Women's participation in NAPS has seen an increase from 22.79% in 2024-25 to 25.80% in 2025-26, primarily attributed to the introduction of trades in the services sector.¹¹

- **Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) & Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs):**

To promote women's participation, there are 19 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) and over 300 ITIs exclusively for women. Furthermore, a 30% reservation of seats for women candidates has been approved in all ITIs (Government and Private).¹¹

- **SANKALP:**

This scheme has shown significant outreach to women, with 13,861 women trained under SANKALP 1, 18,270 under SANKALP 2, and 2,970 under SANKALP 3 during FY 2022-25.²⁹

- **Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana (RUVV):**

This pilot project for PM SVANidhi beneficiaries reported over 40% participation from women.²⁹

- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY–NULM):**

This program, though under the Ministry of Rural Development, significantly contributes to women’s economic empowerment through Self Help Groups (SHGs), which are exclusively formed by women. It has facilitated the placement of skilled candidates, the formation of SHG members, assistance for micro–enterprises, and the disbursement of loans to women members.²⁹

- **“AI Careers for Women” (MSDE–Microsoft):**

This initiative is a direct collaboration aimed at empowering women in higher education to pursue careers in Artificial Intelligence.¹²

These provisions reflect a strategic intent to enhance women’s participation and ensure they benefit from skill development initiatives. The emphasis on sectors traditionally attractive to women, coupled with financial and logistical support and dedicated institutions, collectively aims for systemic change by making skill development more accessible and relevant for women across diverse backgrounds.

B. CHALLENGES AND GAPS IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MSDE INITIATIVES

Despite the concerted efforts and dedicated programs by MSDE, several persistent challenges and gaps hinder the full realization of women's economic empowerment through skill development initiatives.

- **Systemic Barriers and Gender Bias**

Deep-rooted **gender stereotypes and biases** significantly influence career choices and opportunities for women. Women are often encouraged towards traditionally "feminine" sectors like healthcare or fashion, while technical and higher-paying fields such as engineering, IT, and finance remain largely male-dominated.⁹ This bias can lead to discrimination, lack of respect, and exclusion from opportunities in the workplace.²⁴

Furthermore, there is an underrepresentation of women in senior positions within the vocational education and training (TVET) sector itself.⁴³ Even after completing skill training, women frequently encounter workplace discrimination and a lack of clear career progression paths. The absence of adequate mentorship and networking opportunities further limits their professional growth, making it challenging for them to establish themselves in male-dominated industries.⁹

These biases create a self-reinforcing cycle of limited opportunities, where societal expectations and discrimination restrict women's entry into and advancement within skilled trades and higher-paying sectors.

- **Access and Outreach Limitations**

Many skill development initiatives fail to effectively reach women, particularly those in rural or marginalized communities.⁹ Due to prevailing cultural norms and societal expectations, women may not be adequately aware of the training opportunities available to them. Additionally, many programs do not sufficiently consider women's unique challenges, such as mobility restrictions and extensive household responsibilities.⁹ Practical barriers include long distances to training institutions and a lack of safe and accessible boarding or sanitary facilities.¹⁰

While online learning has expanded access, women still face significant barriers in the digital space, including limited access to technology, internet connectivity, or a safe space to study. The absence of flexible learning options that accommodate caregiving responsibilities further complicates their participation in online courses.⁹ The critical role of last-mile connectivity and culturally sensitive outreach cannot be overstated; without addressing these, even well-intentioned programs struggle to reach their intended female beneficiaries.

- **Socio-Economic Constraints**

Financial barriers pose a significant obstacle for women, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The cost of training programs, even when subsidized, along with hidden costs such as transportation, learning materials, and childcare, can prevent women from participating.⁹ Women disproportionately bear the dual responsibility of managing a home and family alongside their professional aspirations, making it difficult to effectively manage enterprises due to time constraints and overburdened personal obligations.¹⁰

A pervasive lack of confidence, stemming from differential socialization and societal norms, coupled with limited decision-making power within households, hinders rural women from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.¹⁰ High rates of illiteracy among rural women further compound these challenges, limiting their ability to research, gain necessary training, or manage basic accounting for businesses.¹⁰ These socio-economic constraints disproportionately affect women, limiting their ability to access, complete, and effectively leverage skill development opportunities for economic advancement.

- **Data and Evaluation Gaps**

A significant challenge lies in the data and evaluation frameworks. The shift in PMKVY 4.0 away from direct placement tracking, while aiming to empower candidates for varied career paths, creates a gap in assessing tangible employment outcomes.¹⁶ Some reports also lack specific details on the exact skill training programs offered by Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) for women, or comprehensive success stories.¹¹

Furthermore, there is an absence of comprehensive gender-disaggregated reports across all schemes, particularly concerning long-term

employment, income generation, and entrepreneurial success.³² The need for robust outcome metrics that go beyond mere training numbers to capture actual economic empowerment, such as increased income or business sustainability, remains critical.¹ These data gaps significantly hinder effective policy formulation, impact assessment, and the ability to make informed adjustments to programs to better serve women.

- **Policy Implementation Deficiencies**

Despite the existence of policies on women's empowerment at national, state, and local levels across various sectors, significant gaps persist between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level.¹ Challenges include insufficient funding to execute enough programs, particularly in rural areas.⁴⁴ The multiplicity of schemes is often not adequately streamlined, and there is a lack of networking among agencies, leading to beneficiaries not being aware of the best options for their needs.⁴⁴

Uncooperative attitudes from implementing authorities, political interference in project allocation, and a paucity of professional and highly skilled staff further impede effective program delivery.⁴⁴ These issues highlight the critical importance of robust implementation frameworks, transparent governance, and accountability mechanisms to translate policy intent into tangible outcomes for women.

C. OVERALL IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Despite the challenges, MSDE's initiatives have made notable contributions to women's economic empowerment and have opened up significant opportunities for future progress.

Positive Contributions

The various skill development programs have demonstrably led to increased female labor force participation, particularly in non-traditional sectors, by equipping women with specialized skills.¹ This has resulted in enhanced financial independence for women, as those who acquire skill training are more likely to achieve compatible pay levels, leading to greater economic autonomy.¹

Financially empowered women also contribute more extensively to household decisions, including those related to education, health-care, and savings, signifying improved decision-making power within their households.¹ In several instances, training provided through schemes like PMKVY has helped women develop skills in areas such as tailoring and handicrafts, leading to the establishment of local enterprises that contribute directly to economic development in their communities.⁴⁶

The long-term vision of programs like Swavalambini is to help women evolve as job creators, not merely job seekers, thereby contributing significantly to India's startup and innovation ecosystem.³¹ Furthermore, schemes like Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) under PMKVY formally recognize the skills of informal workers, boosting their employability without requiring lengthy formal training.³

Emerging Opportunities

The rapid growth in the digital economy and the emergence of AI-driven sectors present significant new opportunities for women's economic empowerment.¹⁵ MSDE's proactive introduction of job roles in Artificial Intelligence, Electric Vehicle technology, Robotics, 5G, and Data Analytics under PMKVY 4.0 is a strategic move to prepare the workforce for these future-ready sectors.¹⁵ Leveraging the proven model of women's participation in Self Help Groups (SHGs) under schemes like DAY-NULM offers a robust pathway for scaling wom-

There is also considerable potential for mainstreaming vocational education with general education, as envisaged under the National Education Policy 2020, which can create more flexible and accessible learning pathways for women.³ Furthermore, aligning skill development with other major national initiatives such as PM Surya Ghar, Vibrant Villages Programme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Jal Jeevan Mission can embed skill development into broader development agendas, amplifying its impact for women.³

Bridging the Gap: The Role of Strategic Collaboration

The problem statement for this analysis explicitly highlights a “lack of consolidated research that directly maps these initiatives to tangible opportunities for advancing women’s economic empowerment, or women-led development.”

This underscores the critical need for structured analysis and targeted interventions. FICCI FLO, with its nationwide network, established initiatives, and proven expertise in women-led development, is uniquely positioned to bridge existing gaps and amplify the impact of MSDE’s efforts. By fostering synergistic collaborations, FICCI FLO can help translate policy intent into measurable outcomes, ensuring that women are not just beneficiaries but active drivers of India’s economic growth story.

IV. FICCI FLO PROPOSED AREAS FOR IMPACTFUL COLLABORATION WITH MSDE

FICCI FLO, with its extensive nationwide network and deep understanding of women's entrepreneurial and professional needs, is uniquely positioned to collaborate with the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) to significantly advance women's economic empowerment and women-led development. The following proposals outline strategic areas for impactful synergy.

A. ENHANCING REACH AND INCLUSIVITY OF EXISTING SCHEMES

To maximize the impact of MSDE's initiatives, collaboration should focus on overcoming barriers to access and ensuring that programs are truly inclusive.

- **Targeted Outreach and Mobilization**

FICCI FLO can leverage its robust nationwide network, comprising a headquarters in New Delhi and 21 chapters across India, representing over 14,000 women entrepreneurs, professionals, and corporate executives.⁵ This extensive ground presence can be instrumental in grassroots mobilization, particularly in rural and low-income urban areas, for schemes such as Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and the NAVYA initiative.

Joint awareness campaigns, utilizing FLO's strong community-connect and communication channels, can significantly improve the visibility and uptake of these programs among target female beneficiaries.⁴ This direct engagement can address the identified challenge of limited awareness and outreach, especially for women in marginalized communities.

- **Gender-Sensitive Program Design and Delivery**

Collaboration is essential in developing and implementing gender-sensitive curricula across MSDE's core schemes. This includes tailoring PMKVY 4.0, National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), and Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) programs, particularly

for emerging sectors like Artificial Intelligence, Electric Vehicles, and Robotics.¹⁵ Such efforts should advocate for flexible training models that accommodate women's dual responsibilities, alongside provisions for childcare support and safe transportation options, which are critical barriers for many women.⁹

Furthermore, promoting and training more female trainers and role models within Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and National Skill Training Institutes for Women (NSTIWs) can create a more welcoming and encouraging learning environment, addressing the current underrepresentation of women in such roles.⁹

- **Strengthening Digital Literacy and Access**

Given the significant digital gender gap, especially in rural India, a joint effort to implement FLO's Digital Skilling Initiative⁴ is crucial as a foundational prerequisite for women to access advanced technology skills.⁴⁵ This collaboration can focus on providing basic digital literacy training, access to digital devices, and reliable internet connectivity. Advocating for subsidized internet access and digital devices for women trainees can directly address financial barriers and improve their ability to participate in and benefit from digitally-enabled skill development programs.

B. FOSTERING WOMEN-LED ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

To move beyond wage employment and empower women as job creators, focused efforts on entrepreneurship are vital.

• Scaling Up Entrepreneurship Training and Support

FICCI FLO can collaborate with MSDE's National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) and Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) to expand the successful Swavalambini program nationwide.³¹ This can be achieved by leveraging FLO's existing Startup Cell and MSME Assist Cell⁴ to provide comprehensive mentorship, facilitate market linkages, and ensure access to seed funding for women entrepreneurs emerging from these programs.³¹

Furthermore, integrating FLO's expertise in business exchange and trade delegations⁴ with MSDE's entrepreneurship schemes like PM 'YUVA' Yojana and Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana (RUVVP) can provide crucial exposure and growth opportunities.

• Strengthening Linkages with Financial Schemes

A key area of collaboration involves facilitating greater and easier access for women trained under MSDE schemes to various government financial support programs, including PM Mudra Yojana, PM Vishwakarma, and Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM).¹⁷ By leveraging the JSS Livelihood Cells¹⁸ and FLO's Financial Literacy Initiative⁴, a concerted effort can be made to enhance financial acumen among women, improve their creditworthiness, and streamline their access to necessary loans and financial assistance.

• Promoting Women-Led Brands and Market Access

FICCI FLO's initiatives like FLO marketplace, created by chapters as a platform specifically for women-led brands⁶, and its collaboration with Government e-Marketplace (GeM)⁸ can be strategically utilized to provide direct market access for products and services created by women-led enterprises emerging from MSDE's skill development programs. This collaboration can also extend to promoting local women artisans and weavers by integrating them into "One-District,

One-Product” (ODOP) initiatives, thereby reinforcing “Vocal for Local” and “Make in India” campaigns.³

C. ENHANCING DATA-DRIVEN POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Effective policy formulation and impact assessment necessitate robust data collection and evaluation mechanisms.

- **Developing Robust Gender-Disaggregated Data Frameworks**

FICCI FLO can collaborate with MSDE to refine the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) ³ to capture more granular, outcome-oriented, and gender-disaggregated data. This should include metrics beyond mere training completion, such as self-employment rates, average income generation, and business sustainability for women beneficiaries. Joint impact assessments and case studies can be conducted to document success stories and identify specific areas for improvement, providing valuable evidence for policy adjustments.² This addresses the current data and evaluation gaps, enabling a clearer understanding of the tangible impact on women's economic empowerment.

- **Policy Advocacy for Gender Mainstreaming**

Leveraging FLO's Policy Initiatives ⁴, the organization can advocate for stronger gender budgeting and comprehensive gender mainstreaming within all MSDE schemes and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs).⁴⁹ This involves ensuring that explicit targets and accountability mechanisms for Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) outcomes are integrated into program design and implementation. Collaborative research and whitepapers can be developed to highlight best practices and propose evidence-based policy recommendations for women's skill development and entrepreneurship, influencing future policy directions.

D. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Building on existing frameworks, strategic partnerships can amplify the reach and quality of women-centric skill development.

- **Leveraging PPPs for Women's Empowerment**

FICCI FLO can collaborate with MSDE and its private sector partners, such as Microsoft, IBM, and HCLTech ¹², to ensure that initiatives like "AI Careers for Women" are scaled effectively and specifically target women from diverse backgrounds, including those in Tier-II and Tier-III towns and rural areas. This collaboration should advocate for the inclusion of explicit gender inclusion clauses in all future Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), ensuring that gender equality is a core objective, not merely an afterthought.

- **Capacity Building for Women in Leadership**

Utilizing FLO's Women Corporate Directors initiative ⁴, mentorship and leadership training can be provided to women emerging from MSDE's entrepreneurship programs. This aims to prepare them for larger roles in business and industry, fostering a pipeline of women leaders. Jointly developing programs to train female faculty and mentors within Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) and Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), as demonstrated by the Faculty Development Programme (FDP) under Swavalambini ³¹, can create a sustainable ecosystem of support and guidance for aspiring women entrepreneurs and skilled professionals.

V. CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship has demonstrated a clear commitment to skill development and entrepreneurship over the past decade, with significant efforts directed towards integrating women into the national workforce. Flagship schemes like PMKVY, the grassroots reach of JSS, and strategic collaborations with technology giants underscore a forward-looking approach to national development.

However, the path to comprehensive women's economic empowerment remains challenging, marked by persistent gender biases, limitations in outreach, socio-economic constraints, and critical data gaps in outcome measurement. FICCI FLO, with its robust nationwide network, multi-faceted initiatives spanning engagement, education, elevation, and empowerment, and a proven track record in women-led development, stands as an ideal strategic partner for MSDE.

By synergizing efforts, FLO can play a transformative role in enhancing the inclusivity and effectiveness of government schemes at the last mile. This collaboration can amplify the impact of skill development by facilitating targeted outreach, promoting gender-sensitive program design, strengthening digital literacy, and providing crucial support for women-led entrepreneurship from ideation to market access. Furthermore, joint efforts in developing robust gender-disaggregated data frameworks and advocating for stronger policy accountability will ensure that interventions are evidence-based and yield tangible economic outcomes for women.

The shared vision of a skilled, entrepreneurial, and women-led India can be realized more effectively through such impactful collaborations. By working together, MSDE and FICCI FLO can not only empower millions of women to achieve economic independence but also unlock India's full demographic dividend, driving sustainable and inclusive national growth.

WORKS CITED

1. Effect of Skill Development on Women Empowerment for Economic Development in India, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.eeet.org.uk/index.php/journal/article/download/2701/2429/2997>
2. Socio-Economic Barriers against Women Equal Right in the Society (a Case of Bangladesh), accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=86289>
3. 10 years of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana – PIB, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NotelId=154880&ModuleId=3>
4. Our Initiatives – Ficci Flo, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://ficciflo.org/our-initiatives/>
5. Ficci Flo, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://ficciflo.org/>
6. FICCI FLO Bengaluru Launches FLO Santé – A Game-Changing Platform for Women-Led Brands – The Hans India, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.thehansindia.com/business/ficci-flo-bengaluru-launches-flo-sant-a-game-changing-platform-for-women-led-brands-988448>
7. News – Ficci Flo, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://ficciflo.org/news/>
8. INDIA NON JUDICIAL “”; – GeM, accessed on August 12, 2025, https://assets-bg.gem.gov.in/resources/upload/shared_doc/mou-2-1_1742903279.pdf
9. Breaking Barriers: How Gender-Inclusive Policies Can Transform Skill Development Programs, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.impriindia.com/insights/gender-inclusive-skill-development/>

10. Obstacles and ways to facilitate skill development among rural women – ResearchGate, accessed on August 12, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326650022_Obstacles_and_ways_to_facilitate_skill_development_among_rural_women
11. Improved Access to Education and Training to Empower Women – PIB, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2146569>
12. Public Private Partnerships for Skill Development in Rural Areas – PIB, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2155057>
13. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) – National Portal of India, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.india.gov.in/pradhan-mantri-kaushal-vikas-yojana-pmkvy>
14. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana – Special Projects – myScheme, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.myscheme.gov.in/schemes/pmkvy-sp>
15. Beneficiaries under NSDC and PMKVY Schemes – PIB, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2146563>
16. GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO – 1149 ANSWERED ON, accessed on August 12, 2025, https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/184/AU1149_NIJ7YI.pdf?source=pqals
17. Around 43% of youth skilled under government scheme placed – The Times of India, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/less-than-15-of-youth-skilled-under-government-scheme-placed/article-show/123104237.cms>

18. Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) | Ministry of Skill Development and ..., accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://www.msde.gov.in/offerings/schemes-and-services/details/jan-shikshan-sansthan-jss-cjM4ATMtQWa>
19. About Us – Jan Shikshan Sansthan, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://jsscuttack.com/about-us.php>
20. jan shikshan sansthan (jss) – Mission Foundation Movement, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://www.mfm.org.in/page/jan-shikshan-sansthan-jss>
21. GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 275 ANSWERED ON 26/03/20, accessed on August 12, 2025,
https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/267/AS275_KFXIUh.pdf?source=pqars
22. JOURNEY OF SUCCESS, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<http://sikhyaosikhya.com/Journey%20of%20Success.pdf>
23. Employment Generation Schemes/ Programmes of Government of India | Directorate General of Employment (DGE) | GoI, accessed on August 12, 2025,
https://dge.gov.in/dge/schemes_programmes
24. Navigating the Path: Common Challenges Women Face in Skilled Trades, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://westvirginiawomenwork.org/navigating-the-path-common-challenges-women-face-in-skilled-trades/>
25. Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) – National Skill Training Institute(W), accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://nstiwmumbai.dgt.gov.in/cts>
26. Information on Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) – National Portal of India, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://www.india.gov.in/information-craftsmen-training-scheme-cts>

27. WELCOME TO JSS POLYTECHNIC FOR WOMEN | jsspwmys.org, accessed on August 12, 2025, <http://jsspwmys.org/>
28. Government Launches 'NAVYA' – A New Skilling Initiative for Adolescent Girls Under Viksit Bharat@2047 – PIB, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2139341>
29. GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 929 ANSWERED ON 10/02/2 – Digital Sansad, accessed on August 12, 2025, https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/184/AU929_wOrnon.pdf?source=pqals
30. Ministry Of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://cleartax.in/s/ministry-skill-development-entrepreneurship>
31. MSDE Launches Swavalambini Women Entrepreneurship ..., accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://impressivetimes.com/latest/swavalambini-women-entrepreneurship-programme-msde-niti-aayog/>
32. Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) – Upskilling, reskilling, career growth ..., accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.skillindiadigital.gov.in/pmkvy-dashboard>
33. www.pib.gov.in, accessed on August 12, 2025, [https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2123510#:~:text=The%20Ministry%20of%20Skill%20Development,in%20Artificial%20Intelligence%20\(AI\).](https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2123510#:~:text=The%20Ministry%20of%20Skill%20Development,in%20Artificial%20Intelligence%20(AI).)
34. www.pib.gov.in, accessed on August 12, 2025, [https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2155057#:~:text=\(ii\)%20MSDE%20and%20Microsoft%20Global,in%20Artificial%20Intelligence%20\(AI\).](https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2155057#:~:text=(ii)%20MSDE%20and%20Microsoft%20Global,in%20Artificial%20Intelligence%20(AI).)

35. MSDE and Microsoft launch 'AI Careers for Women' initiative with Centers of Excellence in 6 Indian States – Business Standard, accessed on August 12, 2025,
https://www.business-standard.com/content/press-releases-ani/msde-and-microsoft-launch-ai-careers-for-women-initiative-with-centers-of-excellence-in-6-indian-states-125042500530_1.html
36. Govt, IBM Partner To Empower Youth With Future-Ready Skills – Franchise India, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://www.franchiseindia.com/insights/en/article/govt-ibm-partner-to-empower-youth-with-future-ready-skills.55152>
37. Governor Newsom partners with world's leading tech companies to prepare Californians for AI future, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/08/07/governor-newsom-partners-with-worlds-leading-tech-companies-to-prepare-californians-for-ai-future/>
38. HCLTech and Pearson Partner to Accelerate Skills Development, Advance Careers and Bridge the Global Skills Gap in the AI Era, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://www.hcltech.com/press-releases/hcltech-and-pearson-partner-accelerate-skills-development-advance-careers-and-bridge>
39. HCLTech and Pearson Partner to Accelerate Skills Development, Advance Careers and Bridge the Global Skills Gap in the AI Era | Nasdaq, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://www.nasdaq.com/press-release/hcltech-and-pearson-partner-accelerate-skills-development-advance-careers-and-bridge>
40. HCLFoundation, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://www.hclfoundation.org/>
41. Transforming Digital Learning: HCLTech & NSDC Partnership, accessed on August 12, 2025,
<https://www.hcltech.com/trends-and-insights/transforming-digital-learning-hcltech-and-nsdcs-strategic-partnership>

42. NAVYA Initiative – CrackitToday Affairs, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://crackittoday.com/current-affairs/navya-initiative/>
43. Assessment of gender equality and social inclusion gaps in the skills and TVET sector of Bangladesh – International Labour Organization, accessed on August 12, 2025, https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/ILO_GESI_Report_040725_Draft_Final.pdf
44. (PDF) Women Empowerment through Skill Development Programmes – ResearchGate, accessed on August 12, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389700742_Women_Empowerment_through_Skill_Development_Programmes
45. Digital Technology as an Instrument to Bridge the Gender Gaps in Access to Labour Markets pdf (2.2 MB), accessed on August 12, 2025, https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-02/undp-icrier_policy_brief_31.pdf
46. Effectiveness of Skill Development Programs for Women Entrepreneurs – Research Archive of Rising Scholars, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://research-archive.org/index.php/rars/preprint/download/1889/2676/2341>
47. Empowering Women Through Skill Development: PMKVY's Impact in Shillong, Meghalaya, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://abp.championsofchange.gov.in/content/10515empowering-women-through-skill-development-pmkvys-impact-in-shillong-meghalaya/>
48. Annual Reports – JASS – Just Associates, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://justassociates.org/who-we-are/annual-reports/>
49. भारत – Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, accessed on August 12, 2025, <https://www.msde.gov.in/static/uploads/2024/02/18-19AR.pdf>

ABOUT FICCI LADIES ORGANISATION

THE PATH FORWARD FOR A NEW ERA OF PARTNERSHIP

Established in 1983 by a pioneering group of visionary women, FICCI Ladies Organisation (FICCI FLO) has emerged as one of India's most influential platforms for the advancement and empowerment of women. With its headquarters in New Delhi and a widespread network of 20 chapters and over 14,000 members across India, FLO has been the torchbearer for women-led development for more than four decades.

What began as a small collective of driven women professionals and entrepreneurs has evolved into a powerful nationwide movement that brings together women from diverse regions, industries, and walks of life. Through mentorship, leadership, advocacy, capacity-building, and grassroots impact, FLO enables women to rise as agents of change, both in their personal and professional lives.

For the year 2025 -26, FLO has unveiled a comprehensive, forward-looking roadmap aligned with national priorities and global best practices. Around 17 key initiatives reflect FLO's holistic and inclusive approach, focusing on sustainability, digital skilling, entrepreneurship, policy influence, and social impact.

Aligned with India's Vision: Viksit Bharat @2047

As India strides toward becoming a developed nation by 2047, FICCI FLO proudly aligns its mission with the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji—placing women-led development at the heart of the nation-building process.

Through every initiative, FLO reaffirms its unwavering commitment to empower women not just as participants—but as leaders, innovators, and change-makers. Together, we are not just empowering women—we are transforming India.

NOTES



A series of horizontal lines for writing notes, consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed midline for each row.

NOTES



A series of horizontal lines for writing notes, consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed midline for each row.

NOTES



A series of horizontal lines for writing notes, consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed midline for each row.



The Power to Empower

www.ficciflo.com

