



## Supporting sustainability –Managing rural young women empowerment through digital literacy strategies

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**Abstract:** A gender divide in accessing technology is discernibly growing in India. Comprising nearly 50% of the rural population, women have been sidelined in accessing internet technology benefits. There is an immediate need to design programs towards stimulating rural women to harness technology through digital literacy. A collaborative capacity building programs to support rural women in understanding & identifying the information needs to be evolved. Such initiatives will support rural women towards digital literacy. This paper addresses the need for expanding mechanism towards digital literacy.

**Key words:** Rural women, digital literacy, capacity building programs

**Introduction:** Rural women suffer from a variety of problems. Being a part of the male dominated society, rural women find it very difficult to access to education, health & civic systems. Their illiteracy hampers their access to technological inventions. Use of mobiles, smart phones, computers, internet  
Table 1. Behavioral impact of drugs

connectivity, & such other digital devices is still a distant dream for rural women. Government spends millions of funds towards empowerment of rural women, but women are unaware of the welfare projects as lack knowledge. Table 1 shows the behavioral impact of drugs.

Sl. no.	item	rural	urban
1	Computer knowledge	18%	49.8%
2	Internet connectivity	16%	69.7%
3	Computers	6%	29.2%

**Challenges towards digital literacy:** there are several Challenges towards digital literacy such as

1. Illiteracy
2. Poverty
3. Limited access to technological inventions
4. Limited access to affordability

**Benefits to rural young women;** along with the expansion of globalization there is a great upward improvement towards expanding rural markets. Foreign direct

investment channels are aiming at rural markets. There is an expansion of foreign market penetration into rural areas. This has necessitated the rural population to keep themselves technologically updated. There are several benefits to rural young women through digital literacy such as employability, household support, entrepreneurial skill building. (Rekha Pande - Social Impact Of Globalization Technology Diffusion & Gender Disparity 2013).



1. Acquiring a sustainable living through employability options
2. Avoiding local middle men in farm markets
3. Encouraging children for higher education
4. Facilitating financial transactions related to Eg dairying, packaging . Agro processing , house hold agro crafting ,
5. Learning entrepreneurial skills
6. Managing family income without visiting urban centers
7. Securing easier access to health care systems
8. Securing access to e -banking & m-banking
9. Securing self-reliance via self-motivation
10. Strengthening the empowerment medium

**Considerations:** digital literacy expansion involving rural young women can be a great challenge as digital literacy needs basic literacy infrastructure. There is a need for greater policy intervention in expanding literacy.

**A drive towards stimulating rural women to harness technology** - A special drive towards stimulating rural women to harness technology have to take a shape .This can support rural women in understanding & identifying the information needs. This initiative will support rural women towards digital literacy.

**Capacity building programs** -Capacity building programs to stimulate rural women to access digital tools have to be designed.

**Broadening the technology access** - By broadening the technology access through simpler affordability rural women should be stimulated to use

technology will support rural women towards digital literacy. Expanding access to technology can motivate rural women to use technology for their welfare.

**Equipping school libraries with computers** - Equipping school libraries with computers &access to internet can also have a positive impact on rural women & will support rural women towards digital literacy

**Formal training programs** - Training girls in accessing the internet tools at schools & colleges can help the expansion of technology as well as support rural women towards digital literacy Devising programs to access the technology more effectively rural women

**Providing e- learning** - Providing e-learning & m - learning opportunities , rural women can be helped to access banking health care socio political support will support rural women towards digital literacy. (Rekha Pande - Social Impact Of Globalization Technology Diffusion & Gender Disparity 2013).

**Flexible approach to informal & formal education** - Creating more flexible approach to informal & formal education will support rural women towards digital literacy

**Transforming the delivery & reception of knowledge** -Transforming the delivery & reception of knowledge with more collaborative & interactive learning experience will help rural women towards digital literacy. Online banking , mobile banking, Secure banking, managing family income facilitate financial transactions related to family business encouraging children for higher education health care systems can be easily accessed rural isolationism is modified visit to banks health care



centers can be changed this saves time this saves unnecessary travel to urban centers this saves their precious health rural women ( Rekha Pande - Social Impact Of Globalization Technology Diffusion & Gender Disparity 2013). This provides opportunities rural women to expand training opportunities for health care professionals

**Google India Initiative:** Google India launched a special programme called internet saathi to bring more women online, along with TATA trusts, the objective of the programme is to empower rural women and their communities by enabling them to use internet in their daily lives. The programme aims to provide basic training on the usage of internet and its benefits by use of specially designed internet cycle carts. These cycle carts will visit villages to provide access the aim is to reach out to 4,500 villages and 500,000 women by the end of 2016. ( Rekha Pande - Social Impact Of Globalization Technology Diffusion & Gender Disparity 2013). Information will be provided on farming techniques, payment of school fees, bills, etc will support rural women towards digital literacy . Equality & sustainable human development issues & challenges ( Rekha Pande - Social Impact Of Globalization Technology Diffusion & Gender Disparity 2013).

**TATA internet cart:** The programme seeks to empower women and their communities in rural India by enabling them to use the Internet and benefit from it. The joint initiative is aimed at bridging technology gender divide, which currently puts women in rural India at further risk of getting left behind as the

world around them benefits from the Internet. The initiative will provide basic training on the usage and benefits of the Internet for women through specially-designed Internet bicycle carts. These carts will visit villages to provide easy Internet access to women. They are built on the back of a bicycle, a cart modeled on India's traditional distribution system, which is used to carry everything from ice-cream to industrial supplies. The operator or the 'Internet **Saathi**' trains women in information and communication access.

**Government policies:** Government has formulated several rural development policies which aim at expanding infrastructural bases in rural India.

Integrated rural Development Program - IRDP 1980

Swarna Jayanthi Grameen Swarozgar Yojana 2004

National rural employment guarantee scheme 2005

Ajeevika skills guidelines 2013

These policies are reaching out to expansion of -Capacity building training programs for rural women to acquaint with technology & digital media, Demand driven training programs for rural women as a part of informal education / adult education / basic education . etc, Employment oriented computer skills training programs for rural women through self-help groups / NGOs / Community stake holders etc, Placement driven skill training programs through internet access, Rural women skill training programs in M-banking & internet banking. (Ramkrishna . H .The Emerging Role of NGOs in Rural Development of India).



**Present statistics:** There is a great expansion in M-banking in India

On line shoppers	100 million
Wireless internet users	200 million
Smart phones users	140 million
3g users	85 million

Source: India TV Data .Com 2014

Daily internet users	61%
Accessing internet several times a day	18%
Once a day	10%
All week day users	33%

Source : India TV Data .Com 2014

**Towards a Digital revolution-** In India only 12 % of the rural population uses Internet which as compared to urban India is very less. Of the 350 million, the IAMAI reported that 60 percent accessed the internet through mobile phones. According to the report done in collaboration with KPMG, India is projected to have 236 million mobile internet users by 2016. The number might reach 314 million by 2017. Both rural and urban women represent a very small portion of India's internet users. For example, less than 16 percent of women between the ages of 20-29 use Face book. The numbers are particularly shocking when compared to the 51 percent of men that access the social network.

**Conclusion-** A unique drives towards stimulating rural women to harness technology have to take a shape in rural India with policy formulators streamlining rural women potential. This can support rural women in understanding & identifying the information needs. This initiative will support rural young women towards digital literacy. Transforming the delivery & reception of knowledge with more collaborative & interactive learning experience will help rural women towards digital literacy.

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