

# Chapter 15

## Strengthening Rural Women's Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development: The Impact of Digital Tools, Government Policies, and NGO Support

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study explores the role of rural women entrepreneurship in sustainable development. Traditionally seen working for others, rural women are now becoming influential entrepreneurs. By reviewing 40 research publications from 2016–2024, this study highlights key findings and gaps, offering insights for policymakers and researchers. Rural women entrepreneurs face significant barriers. Digital tools enhance operations, but access is limited. Government policies are supportive but vary in effectiveness. Successful interventions include development programs and partnerships. NGOs provide crucial training, resources, and advocacy. The study suggests enhancing digital access, tailoring policies, strengthening NGO-government collaboration, continuous monitoring, and promoting best practices to support rural women entrepreneurs, fostering sustainable development and gender equality.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Rural women have traditionally been integral to the economic and social fabric of their communities, often working tirelessly in various setups but rarely recognized as entrepreneurs. Their roles have typically been classified under labour rather than entrepreneurship, despite their vast skills and potential. This underutilization of talent represents a significant missed opportunity for economic growth and social development (Gautam, R. K., & Mishra, K., 2016). As the world increasingly focuses on sustainable development, the role of rural women entrepreneurship is gaining recognition as a critical driver of change (Agarwal, 2020).

Women entrepreneurship in rural areas stands as a powerful catalyst for economic development and social transformation. But their limited access to resources and lack of knowledge about technology and government policies is the major snag ceasing them from progressing. Empowering these women can unlock substantial economic and social benefits, directly contributing to sustainable development goals.

This chapter examines the transformative potential of integrating digital tools, government policies, and NGO support to strengthen rural women entrepreneurship, emphasizing sustainable development. Digital technologies empower rural women to overcome geographic and social barriers, cultivating their business operations and market reach (Chatterjee, S., Dutta Gupta, S., & Upadhyay, P. 2020). Government policies deliver essential resources and frameworks to fuel digital entrepreneurship, while NGOs play a grave role in bridging the gap between policy initiatives and on-the-ground implementation by offering training, resources, and advocacy.

The chapter instigates with an overview of the present landscape of rural women entrepreneurship, highlighting both prospects and challenges. It then discusses the benefits of digitalization, viewing how digital tools can augment efficiency, innovation, and sustainability in rural businesses. The role of government policies in creating a supportive environment for digital entrepreneurship is also talked about, with examples of successful policy interventions. Additionally, the chapter underscores the importance of NGOs in facilitating the effective implementation of these policies, ensuring that rural women entrepreneurs receive the support they need. This research aims to explore how rural women entrepreneurs are navigating the business environment and how these different elements contribute to their success and sustainability.

**Gap Analysis:** From the literature available we can access that urban women entrepreneurs often receive significant support and resources; their rural counterparts are frequently overlooked and face substantial challenges. Rural women struggle with limited access to financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and fewer educational opportunities, which impedes their ability to start and grow businesses. To address this disparity, targeted solutions are needed.

The paper titled “Strengthening Rural Women Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development: The Impact of Digital Tools, Government Policies, and NGO Support” addresses the critical gaps faced by rural women entrepreneurs. By examining the role of digital tools, it highlights how technology can bridge the divide by providing access to markets, resources, and training that were previously out of reach. The paper also accentuates the importance of supportive government policies that can create an enabling environment for rural women, such as targeted financial incentives and infrastructure development. Additionally, it explores how NGO support can offer vital resources and mentorship to help rural women overcome barriers and scale their businesses. Through a comprehensive approach that integrates these elements, the paper provides a roadmap for reducing the disparity between urban and

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