

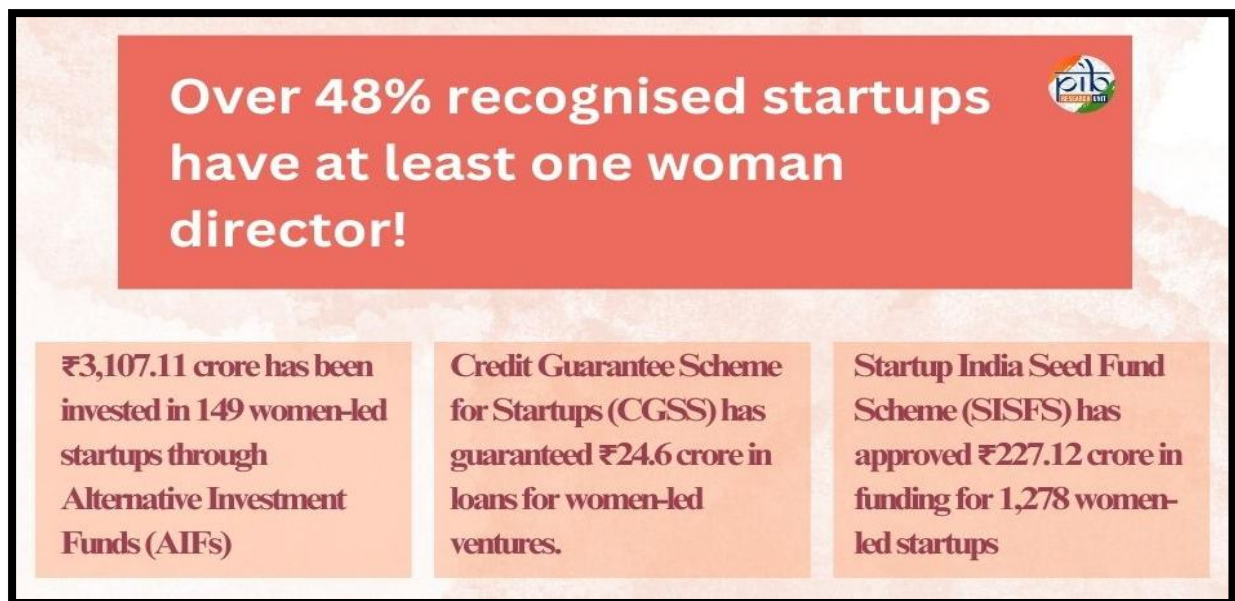


## India's Women Entrepreneurs

### Pioneers of Inclusive Development and Equal Growth

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Women entrepreneurs are emerging as radiant beacons of innovation and resilience, transforming industries and breaking barriers with their visionary leadership. Their ventures are not just businesses; they are **powerful narratives of determination, creativity, and empowerment, inspiring countless others to dream big.**



With a vision to promote the sustainable development of women entrepreneurs for balanced growth in the country, Startup India is committed towards strengthening women entrepreneurship in India through initiatives, schemes, creation of enabling networks and communities and activating partnerships among diverse stakeholders in the startup ecosystem. Since its launch in **2016**, the Startup India Initiative, driven by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), has been a game-changer for fostering entrepreneurship in India.

As of October 31, 2024, a total number of **73,151 startups with at least one-woman director** have been recognized under the Startup India Initiative. This represents nearly half of the **1,52,139** startups

supported by the government, showcasing the crucial role women play in driving innovation and economic growth.

### Financial Support and Inclusion <sup>1</sup>

The government has implemented several flagship schemes to promote women-led startups like:

1. **Amount of Investments by selected AIFs: ₹3,107.11 crore** has been invested in **149 women-led startups** through Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)
2. **Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS):** Since its inception in April 2021, this scheme has approved **₹227.12 crore** in funding for **1,278 women-led startups**.
3. **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS):** Operational since April 2023, CGSS has guaranteed **₹24.6 crore** in loans for women-led ventures.

### Capacity Building and Awareness

The Government of India has implemented comprehensive measures to empower women entrepreneurs and strengthen the ecosystem for women-led startups. Here are the key steps:

#### 1. Dedicated Financial Support

- **10% Allocation for Women-Led Startups:** Reserved under the **Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)**, managed by SIDBI.

#### 2. Higher Management Fee for Women-Led AIFs:

Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) led by women are eligible to be considered for a higher level of management fee (0.1% p.a.).

#### 3. Capacity Building Programs

- **Women Capacity Development Program (WING):** WING workshops create a conducive environment to share best practices and experiences in overcoming challenges and to gain insights learned from the business models adopted in the Indian context.
- **Virtual Incubation for Women Entrepreneurs:** In collaboration with Zone Startups, this initiative provides pro-bono acceleration support to tech startups.

#### 4. Awareness and Accessibility

- **Startup India Hub:** A dedicated webpage on the Startup India portal shares central and state policy measures for women entrepreneurs.
  - **SuperStree Podcast:** A series highlighting innovations by women entrepreneurs to inspire and strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
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- **State Workshops for Women:** Focused on government schemes, mock pitching, and finance-related training.

## 5. Recognition and Visibility

- **National Startup Awards:** NSA recognizes and promotes startups across 20 sectors and special categories. All four editions of the NSA (2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023) have featured a special category and award for women-led startups.
- **President's Interaction with Women Entrepreneurs:** A platform to honour and promote women's role in driving innovation and job creation.

## 6. Regional Empowerment

- **ASCEND Workshops:** Targeting entrepreneurs from the North-East, with a special focus on women-led ventures.
- **State-Level Startup Rankings:** Encourages states to adopt policies and incentives that prioritize women-led startups.

These initiatives collectively aim to enhance financial inclusion, mentorship, and market opportunities for women, fostering a supportive ecosystem that enables them to thrive and inspire future generations.

## Inspiring Future Generations

With continued government support and societal encouragement, women-led startups are poised to redefine India's entrepreneurial landscape, contributing to sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The following success stories are powerful examples of the unlimited potential women can unleash when given the right opportunities and support:

### **Niharika Bhargava**

**CEO & Co-Founder, The Little Farm Co**

**Location: Gurgaon, Haryana**

Niharika established **The Little Farm Co** to revive India's rich condiment heritage by offering preservative-free, homestyle products. Collaborating with over **100 farmer networks**, primarily from tribal villages in Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand, she ensures that **70% of the workforce includes women**. Her initiative not only provides employment but also celebrates India's culinary traditions.

**Dr. Shalima Ahamed****CEO, Cocoroots Organic Private Limited****Location: Kozhikode, Kerala**

Dr. Shalima, after gaining vast corporate and academic experience, founded **Cocoroots** to address hair health issues using organic solutions. Her products, made from sustainable materials like neem wood combs, reflect a commitment to eco-friendly innovation. Shalima's journey is a testament to blending personal passion with global sustainability goals.

**Radhika Lakhotia****Founder, Spentigo Sustainability Solutions Private Limited****Location: Kolkata, West Bengal**

Radhika is revolutionizing the food industry with "**Fit Flour**," created by upcycling spent grains from breweries. Her venture tackles malnutrition, food waste, and affordability while empowering rural women. Supported by IIM Bangalore and endorsed by top industry players, her initiative merges sustainability with impactful nutrition solutions.

The success stories of trailblazers like Niharika Bhargava, Dr. Shalima Ahamed, and Radhika Lakhotia highlight the profound impact of women in driving innovation, sustainability, and empowerment. As women continue to break barriers and redefine norms, they are not just contributing to India's economic growth but also paving the way for a brighter, more equitable future.

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