

## AIR Spotlight - Women Transforming India

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in the [IAS exam](#) preparation. This article features an interview with Ms. Anna Roy of the NITI Aayog on the role of women transforming India.

### Participants:

- Anna Roy, Senior Advisor at NITI Aayog
- Suparna Saikia, AIR Correspondent

### Context:

Many initiatives for women entrepreneurs have been taken by the [NITI Aayog](#). The article will discuss the initiatives and role of women in transforming India.

### Women Entrepreneurship Platform:

#### Background:

- The idea of setting up a Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) to promote and support established as well as aspiring women entrepreneurs in India took seed at the 8th Annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) 2017 held in Hyderabad, jointly by NITI Aayog in partnership with the Government of the United States of America.
- There is a lot of information asymmetry in India hence, the CEO of NITI Aayog Mr. Amitabh Kant realized that if necessary information about various initiatives is provided to the women then, it would really help the women to become successful entrepreneurs.
- Keeping this idea in mind, the setting up of a Women Entrepreneurship Cell was announced, and later on, this cell was converted into a Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) and it was launched on 8th March 2018.
  - 8th March is Women's Day – read more about this in [‘This Day in History’ dated March 8](#).

#### Introduction:

- The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a first-of-its-kind, unified access portal that brings together women from different parts of India to build a nurturing ecosystem that enables them to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations.
- WEP achieves this by facilitating relevant information and services through key partnerships.
- As of now, there are more than 35,000 women who are registered on this platform.

#### Challenges:

There were certain challenges faced by the think tank related to the establishment of WEP. They are as follows:

- **Funding:**
  - Funding from the government comes when the scheme is fully approved by the government.

- As this scheme was not an approved scheme, it faced the issue of funding.
- **Involvement of the private sector:**
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  - NITI Aayog wanted it to be an initiative of public-private partnership and not a scheme of the government.
  - Hence, getting private sector involvement was also one of the major challenges faced by NITI Aayog.
- **Structure and content:**
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  - Both the entrepreneurs and partner agencies were looking for clear features and content regarding the platform.
  - Hence, the NITI Aayog took the initiative of first building the structure and content of the platform so that more and more entrepreneurs can register themselves.
- **Reaching rural and semi-urban areas:**
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  - Reaching rural and semi-urban areas is difficult in terms of online mode. Initially, the initiative was offline but in the post-covid period, it became a challenge to reach out to rural and semi-urban areas.
  - Another challenge was in terms of language.
  - Facing all these challenges, NITI Aayog is trying not to leave any beneficiary and is taking the assistance of agencies who have the ground presence across all the segments who are not familiar or comfortable with the online mode.

#### **Services provided by the WEP:**

Services of WEP are provided in 6 focus areas:

- Community and Networking
- Funding and Financial Assistance
- Incubation and Acceleration
- Compliance and Tax Assistance
- Entrepreneur Skilling and Mentorship
- Marketing Assistance

#### **Women Transforming India (WTI) Awards 2021:**

- Various initiatives have been launched for women entrepreneurs such as [Startup India](#), and schemes related to finances, etc.
- To celebrate the 75th year of independence, the NITI Aayog's flagship initiative, Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) decided to felicitate 75 woman achievers as part of the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations.

- The WTI Awards is NITI Aayog's endeavor to recognize and celebrate stories of exceptional women change-makers from across India.
- Since 2018, the WTI Awards have been hosted under the aegis of the Women Entrepreneurship Platform with a focus on 'Women and Entrepreneurship'.
- The awards continue to bring to the fore inspiring female role models charting impact across the country. The previous editions have shed a much-needed spotlight on the stellar work of women-led businesses, both in commercial and social sectors.

#### **Selection Process:**

- Women entrepreneurs can self-nominate or can be nominated by others as well.
- Nomination can be done under one or more than one of the seven categories – Public and Community Service, Manufacturing Sector, Non-manufacturing Sector, Financial Products enabling Economic Growth, Climate Action, Promote Art, Culture and Handicrafts and Digital Innovation.
- The selection process involves an application round, from where shortlisted applicants will undergo several rounds of screening by esteemed panels before the winners are announced.

#### **Evaluation Process:**

- There are two metrics: Social Entrepreneurship and Commercial Entrepreneurship and there are a number of variables on the basis of which evaluation is done. The variables include:
  - The scale of the business
  - Impact of the business
  - Local employment generation
  - Challenges faced
- On the basis of the above-mentioned variables, the evaluation of the selected awardees is done.

#### **Way Forward:**

- Women have faced a lot of challenges in terms of the behavioral mindset that 'they cannot do anything' and even now they face certain issues such as whether they would be able to continue their businesses after marriage and children or not.
- But, women are coming out as strong leaders after overcoming all the challenges.
- WEP is a platform where women can grow and WEP is continuously working towards the development of women entrepreneurs such as providing collateral-free loans, 'Masking with Us' scheme, providing accurate mentorship to the women entrepreneurs for addressing their various issues, etc.

**Read more Gist of AIR Spotlight [here](#).**