



Second Chance Education (SCE) Signature Features in India

Second
Chance



The approach of UN Women’s Second Chance Education programme recognizes that, for women who are marginalized by crisis, poverty or harmful social norms, transformational change requires more than the offer of training or education alone. SCE’s target women have been held back by gender-based barriers and discriminatory practices all their lives without necessarily being aware of it. SCE therefore provides access to practical support and life skills training that enable women to participate fully in whichever learning pathway they choose. Similarly, it recognizes the importance of social learning and personalized support throughout the SCE journey. This scaffolded approach has led to high retention and low dropout rates and is represented by SCE’s six signature features.

The SCE signature features are outlined below:

SCE Signature Features





Photo: UN Women India

ABOUT SCE IN INDIA

In India, UN Women's Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning Programme (SCE) enables women to re-enter formal education, access vocational training, learn entrepreneurial skills, and connect with employment and business opportunities. In the period from 2018 - 2024, the programme has impacted more than 40,000 women across four states in India, offering them education, training and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Photo: UN Women India



The SCE programme in India is funded by the BHP Foundation, and implemented by Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) as the lead partner along with other implementing partners, consortium and state government partners, such as the Department for Skill Development, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Maharashtra, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and the Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA).



National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)



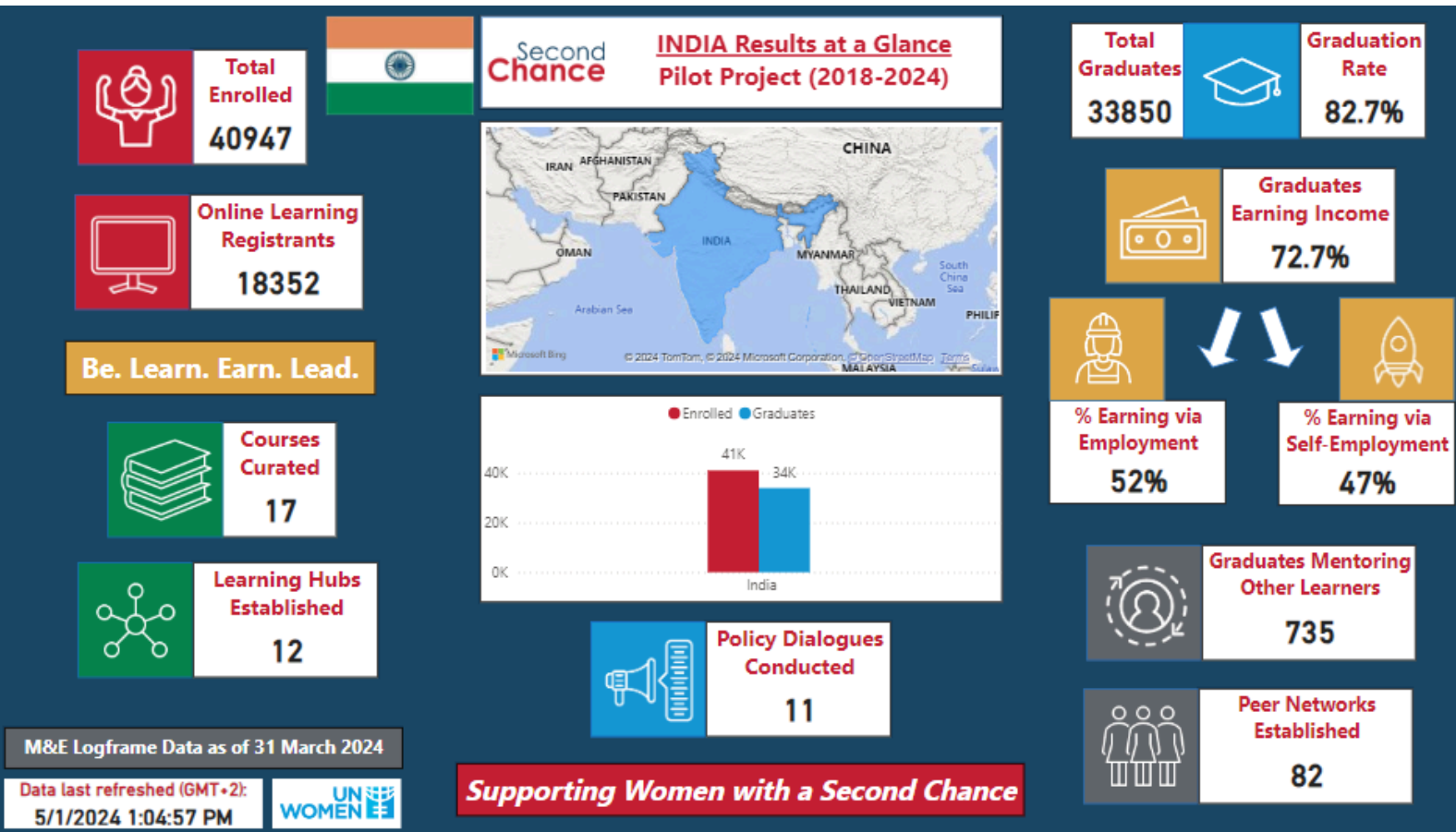
Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA)



Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) and nine other implementing partner.



SCE INDIA RESULTS AT-A-GLANCE



SUPPORT TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED BARRIERS



Support is provided to remove the constraints to women's participation in SCE. It may include access to care services to alleviate their care responsibilities such as child, disability and elder care, safe and affordable transport to the hubs, and engaging with men in families and communities to build their support. It can also include referrals to complementary social services to access professional support for gender-based violence, housing, personal finances, health or other issues.

In India, the programme facilitates women's return to formal education by connecting them with community educators near their homes and providing safe, women-friendly spaces. A network of 54 community educators spans the 12 programme districts, while 12 Women Empowerment Hubs (WEH), one in each district, offer environments conducive to learning vocational skills and launching small business ventures.

Since its inception, the WEHs have played a pivotal role in engaging women on a daily basis across all programme sectors. They host various activities such as training sessions, capacity-building initiatives, and counselling services, as well as events marking significant occasions like Independence Day, Republic Day, and International Women's Day.

Furthermore, numerous online training sessions and webinars have been conducted at the hubs. Registrations for online education classes, pre-departure training in skills and employment, and entrepreneurship development sessions have been arranged. These initiatives have generated momentum at the grassroots level, offering women a conducive space for mutual learning within the WEH framework.

Photo: UN Women India /Mirah Zamin



Setting up information technology (IT) and tailoring labs in the hubs

In SCE India, sewing machine and information technology (IT) labs were established in eight WEHs. These labs were instituted with the primary objective of bolstering women's participation in the hubs to acquire essential skills and knowledge. The overarching aim is to transition the hubs towards self-sustainability by levying a nominal registration fee on girls and women enrolling in the training. This fee is intended to cover a portion of administrative expenses and trainer costs.

Several women have secured direct employment in the garment manufacturing sector, leveraging the stitching training and experience gained through these labs, and are performing their roles proficiently.

These labs were established to facilitate interested candidates in pursuing digital literacy courses, which in turn enhance their employability skills. They are situated in Kishanganj (Bihar), Rayagada (Odisha), Nandurbar (Maharashtra), and Baran (Rajasthan), where there was a demonstrated potential and interest among candidates to enhance their knowledge through the hub.

GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE LIFE SKILLS



Training and support in this area enable women to develop self-confidence, a sense of agency, and aspirations aligned with their interests, skills and circumstances. It is centred on an awareness of participants' strengths and the potential of all individuals, and the part that gendered roles, stereotypes and discriminatory norms play in everyone's lives. Gender-transformative life skills are context-specific and attempt to address intersecting inequalities. This training may provide the opportunity for participants to revisit, adapt or change established attitudes, behaviours and practices at individual, household and community level, often resulting in participants assuming new roles and responsibilities which may differ from socially expected gender roles. It is an essential foundation for subsequent training and for ensuring sustainable change to women's lives and community resilience.

The Second Chance Education programme trained over 40,000 women in technical and employability skills, with over 12,000 women finding jobs in states like Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan, and in diverse sectors such as aviation, hospitality, automobiles, electronics, health care and textiles.

The programme works with 67 skill training institutions connected with various government assistance programmes. Government-run vocational training programmes and schemes are available, some of which are also directly linked to employment and are available at the District and Block levels, making it easier for women to access them from the villages. The SCE programme in India has established connections with these schemes and enrolled women in the training programmes, which are government-certified.

All women and girls undergo compulsory gender sensitization training. As of February 2024, 40,664 participants have completed this training.



Photo: UN Women India



Photo: UN Women India

ONE SCE LEARNING PATHWAY



Women participate in one of three learning pathways: entrepreneurship/self-employment, employment/vocational training or return to formal education. Each pathway is a progression of courses based on a globally standardized curriculum with locally relevant content tailored to participants in language, imagery and type of media. Industry and government connections are provided to link participants to education, jobs or business development opportunities during and after training.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP



SCE in India has supported over **11,000 women** in the development and expansion of farm and off-farm enterprises, including in green banana fibre and solar drying technology in the states of Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan.

SCE is working with women farmers to increase their household income by teaching them new and sustainable techniques to improve their crop yield. As of February 2024, more than 8,282 women have learned about using quality seeds, pest management and organic farming techniques. The programme has also linked women who complete their vocational training to jobs and financial support to start small businesses.

RETURN TO FORMAL EDUCATION



Recognizing the relevance of formal education for women's economic opportunities, SCE in Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan has created pathways for thousands of women from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes who dropped out of formal education, largely due to gender barriers, to support them in fulfilling their educational aspirations for a better life. During 2019-2023, out of 4,741 women who enrolled in the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), 3,081 (77%) completed secondary education from NIOS at their first attempt. UN Women provided academic support to these women and improved their access to higher education and better livelihood opportunities.



The model of SCE with farm-based entrepreneurs

SCE has recognized the crucial role of women in the farm sector, particularly in rural areas, where they are often engaged in agricultural activities but lack decision-making power and control over income. To address this disparity, a programme promoting women as 'farmers' (Mahila-kisan) has been developed, piloted, and scaled up. This initiative focuses on empowering women by enabling them to take control of productive assets, technical knowledge, and income generated from farming activities.

Key strategies employed in promoting women as farmers under SCE include:

1. Gender perspective building: Raising awareness about patriarchal norms and their impact on women's participation in farming within their communities.
2. Capacity building: Providing women with the knowledge and skills necessary for cultivating commercially viable crops.
3. Market exposure: Exposing women to market opportunities and linkages to enhance their understanding of potential economic avenues.
4. Leveraging social mobilization platforms: Utilizing existing women's collectives such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for joint input procurement and output marketing, facilitating collective action.
5. Designing service delivery mechanisms: Establishing women empowerment hubs equipped with staff and resources to provide necessary support and information.

These efforts are led by women's collectives, such as women's federations, which identify women based on their age, needs, and aspirations, and provide specific strategies tailored to each category of women. The consortium partners, including PRADAN, Manjari Foundation, and PRAN, have extensive experience in working with women in the farm sector and have formal arrangements with the government to scale up such programs.

Additionally, besides direct farm production, there are opportunities for entrepreneurial ventures around 'missing rural livelihood services' in low-income regions. Examples include animal healthcare services, crop nursery and seedling production, and input supply and marketing support services, which have the potential for self-employment, particularly for women.

Under SCE, SHGs play a critical role, either with direct membership or through family connections. SHG federations facilitate mobilization, engagement with government programmes, and collective action against social norms detrimental to women's rights. Seventy per cent of programme beneficiaries are direct SHG members across all three verticals of the programme.

Working during the COVID-19 crisis

In rural India, where the health infrastructure is weak, female health workers were at the frontline of the COVID-19 response. The programme trained and certified **10,000** nurses and nurse assistants across 20 states to provide frontline health services safely during the pandemic. Through local partners, the programme delivered **4,800** medical kits for COVID-19 patients, 840 oximeters, and personal protection equipment for local health workers when the crisis peaked with the second wave of infections.

Photo: UN Women India



ADVOCAY AND POLICY WORK



SCE draws on its experience on the ground to advocate for removal of the structural constraints to women's participation in education, training and the workforce. SCE advocates for reforms of laws, policies and financial frameworks and the introduction of government programming to enhance women's economic participation.

In India, SCE works with national and state agencies to influence their policies and increase the reach and impact of their programming for supporting women and girls' opportunities to learn and earn.

Photo: UN Women India

Shaping policies to educate and empower women and girls in India

- In **July 2020**, based on SCE's recommendations, the Rajasthan State Women's Policy waived school fees for women and girls returning to formal education.
- In **September 2022**, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) launched the Inclusive Education policy which was developed in collaboration with UN Women and aimed at reducing the current gender gap in enrolment at NIOS. NIOS has enrolled 4.3 million learners over the last five years and UN Women's input will have extensive reach.
- Through SCE support, NIOS revised its **Gender Policy** and launched it in **November 2023**. UN Women is supporting the gender action plan implementation in NIOS.
- SCE worked with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to build the capacity of vocational trainers across the country to integrate gender sensitivity at each stage of training. The aim was to create an ecosystem that enables more women to participate in vocational training and improve women's participation in the labour force. Gender-responsive training sessions were carried out for **4,500** 'master' trainers who deliver vocational training across the country.
- Until **December 31, 2023**, SCE had a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA) under which it provided technical support on gender to the World Skill Center.
- SCE has an MoU with the Skill Development, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Department (SDEEID), Government of Maharashtra, wherein UN Women supported the department in setting up a women's entrepreneurship cell to promote women's entrepreneurship.

E-LEARNING



E-learning is offered in some form to all participants, whether SCE is delivered through physical hubs or entirely online. E-learning allows flexibility in the delivery of learning with in-person, online, and hybrid approaches used according to circumstances, making it easier for women to participate.

In India, during COVID-19 and until December 2021, women were attending classes in hybrid mode. The popular platform for information dissemination with maximum acceptability among women is WhatsApp and most of the programme communication in digital mode is done through this.

Photo: UN Women India









Photo: UN Women India

PERSONALIZED SUPPORT



Personalized support underpins women's participation throughout their SCE journey. It includes social and instructional support and can be provided through a range of approaches including mentoring, tutoring, peer networks and advisors.

The SCE programme offers personalized support to women through peer networks and mentors. There are **75 peer networks and 654 mentors**. Participants are offered mentorship by SCE graduates who are trained as mentors. These mentors support women by interacting with their families, guiding them to the right training courses, and supporting those who make the journey across states for employment. Where required, a new employee in a job across State lines is accompanied by a mentor who helps guide her in the journey and settle in the new place of work.

-  www.twitter.com/SCEprogram
-  www.facebook.com/SCEprogram
-  www.linkedin.com/SCEprogram
-  www.instagram.com/SCEprogram

Suhela Khan
Country Programme manager
Second Chance Education Programme
UN Women India Country Office
Email address: suhela.khan@unwomen.org
<https://www.mylearningpathway.org>

Srimati Pingua (40), a native of Dhenkanal in Odisha and an Anganwadi worker rejoined formal education in 2019 through UN Women’s Second Chance Education (SCE) Programme, along with her daughter. She says, “I want to do everything in the best of my capacity to bridge the gap between girls and education in my village. I am extremely thankful to the Second Chance Education Programme for giving me an opportunity and want everyone else to have it too.”



Photo: UN Women/Prashanth Vishwanathan

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stand behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinate and promote the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



UN House, 55, Joseph Stein
Lane, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi,
Delhi 110003

Website: UN Women India
www.facebook.com/unwomenindia
www.twitter.com/@unwomenindia
www.instagram.com/unwomenindia
www.youtube.com/unwomen
www.flickr.com/unwomen