

# GIZ GENDER AWARD APPLICATION 2022

## About Her&Now

The project ‘Economic Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs and Startups by Women’ (Project [Her&Now](#)) has been implemented in India since 2018. The goal of the project is to improve the framework conditions for women entrepreneurs in India. Up to date, the project through its local partners has supported more than 700 women entrepreneurs from small cities and towns across 12 states of India to turn their idea into a business (incubation programme) and to grow their existing enterprises (acceleration programme). Her&Now and its partners support micro women-led enterprises which have the potential to grow and provide further employment. Her&Now also showcases these entrepreneurs as [role models](#) through social media, [online](#) and print magazines and newspapers, by running radio ads and through specially produced podcasts. Four short films on women entrepreneurship have been produced with support from the project, which are screened virtually and offline across India to stimulate mindset change and create positive attitudes on women entrepreneurship.



[Trailer 1](#), [Trailer 2](#), [Trailer 3](#), [Trailer 4](#)



## 1. Promoting gender equality in the ecosystem through WINcubate

Having successfully piloted a specially designed gender-sensitive entrepreneurship support curriculum in the incubation and acceleration programmes for women entrepreneurs, Her&Now is now sharing these best practices with the entire Indian entrepreneurship ecosystem through the [WINcubate Training Programme](#).

The WINcubate Training equips incubators and accelerators with the knowledge and skills to adopt a women-centric approach in their incubation and acceleration programmes for startups. It offers incubators the space and platform to prompt new thinking about the design and implementation of their startup support programmes from a gender perspective. WINcubate is structured into a two-day Foundation Training and a 70+ hour Advanced Training. Adapted versions of the WINcubate training are offered for mentors and service providers working with women entrepreneurs.

To date, 22 incubators have been trained through the Foundational

Training and 4 incubators are currently undergoing the Advanced Training. The intent is to train as many incubators, mentors and service providers as possible until the end of the project in January 2023 in order to mainstream women-centric incubation and acceleration as widely as possible across India. To this end, Her&Now has entered into partnership with the Atal Innovation Mission, India’s flagship incubation scheme provided by the Government of India which has empanelled more than 65 prime incubators across India which will undergo the WINcubate training in 2022.

Her&Now is also working with State Governments in several states of North Eastern region in India to support gender-sensitisation of the nascent local entrepreneurship ecosystems. Incubators empanelled under State Startup Policies will be supported to develop women-centric approaches through WINcubate and individualised follow-on support measures.

## 2. Gender as a quality feature of Her&Now

Her&Now's incubation and acceleration programmes have yielded [impressive results](#): on average, 28% of women have been able to turn their idea into a registered business with a 12-month business plan in place at the end of the incubation programmes (target: 10%) and 91% of entrepreneurs were able to scale their businesses at the end of the acceleration programmes (target: 60%). This is despite the COVID-19 pandemic severely affecting micro, small and medium enterprises in India since March 2020. Around 90% of entrepreneurs participating in the Her&Now programmes report that they were able to strengthen their self-confidence as entrepreneurs.

The efforts have been recognised by clients, partners, GIZ and the commissioning party alike: an overwhelming majority (90%) of the Her&Now women entrepreneurs report that the programme helped them advance as entrepreneurs. [June Rose Vaiphei](#), founder of Soothe Handmade which offers handmade soaps and candles, [appreciates that](#) "The Her&Now Programme has helped me in many ways: It connected me with other women entrepreneurs who are going through the same struggles in the

market and home front. It built my self-confidence. It has given me the courage to think big, to dream big." This shows the aspiration of Her&Now: to raise the self-confidence and ambition of potential and existing women entrepreneurs who grow up and operate in an environment which discourages women from thinking big.

Her&Now implementing partners such as the implementing partner for Rajasthan have particularly appreciated that "The whole strategy of the programme, the way it is designed and executed, is very different. Women entrepreneurs are introduced to a community of women with similar experiences." The programme manager for this implementing partner further shared that the programme had also transformed her own thinking and "made her a feminist".

Her&Now was fortunate enough to receive the first prize in the GG2 category of the GIZ Gender Award 2020 and has also been asked by BMZ as its commissioning party to present its approaches and results, for example in a Brown Bag Lunch organised for the entire BMZ staff in November 2021.



### 3. Capturing Her&Now results and impact on gender

Her&Now has developed a full-fledged results-based monitoring system capturing gender-specific data on 75+ data points in all project components. The business progress of the more than 700 women entrepreneurs supported through the incubation and acceleration programmes is monitored in-depth through quantitative indicators, including on soft aspects like self-image as entrepreneur and self-confidence. Entrepreneurs are tracked every three months during the support programmes and results are used to discuss ways to adapt or add onto the support programmes with the implementing partners. Follow-up surveys to track business performance are conducted six months after the end of the support programmes. Progress monitoring and evaluation also includes the project's film and media campaign to track how the project succeeds in reaching audiences and changing

their attitudes on women entrepreneurship. Updates from the results-based monitoring system are shared with the project team every three months to review and adjust project strategy.

In addition, an external impact evaluation of the incubation and acceleration programmes has been commissioned and results are evaluated after each round of the programmes. This impact evaluation by an external evaluation firm includes a qualitative assessment of gender-specific experiences and biases, such as attitude of family members, workload in the household, mobility, self-confidence and challenges encountered in the business environment. Findings from the external impact evaluation are used to adapt the programme design for the next round of the incubation and acceleration programmes but also the design of the WINcubate training.



## 4. How Her&Now cooperates with partners

Her&Now's focus since the start of the project, but increasingly since 2021, has been to promote and stimulate cooperation with and among local partners in each of the twelve states of implementation in an attempt to build sustainable support structures for women entrepreneurs after the project ends. Two exciting initiatives stand out which are a result of this investment: in two states, namely Manipur and Rajasthan, former Her&Now participants along with other women entrepreneurs have formed their own network to support women entrepreneurs in their states. The project will support these two nascent networks to formalise and develop an organisational setup and vision going forward.

Her&Now has also entered into formal partnerships with government institutions and banks in North Eastern Region which will be crucial to influence policies and mobilise finance for women entrepreneurs.

Internally, Her&Now launched a 'Gender Breakfast' Initiative for GIZ India staff and has held 5 gender breakfasts to date, during which gender aspects in various thematic areas of interest to GIZ India's projects are discussed, in an attempt to contribute to gender sensitisation in our own projects and organisation. In this regard, Her&Now has also organised a screening of the short films for GIZ India colleagues. Collaborations with specific

programmes are sought to mainstream gender and women entrepreneurship, for example events for women entrepreneurs on gender & corruption (together with the Alliance for Integrity) and a hackathon for women-led enterprises who are building solutions that promote gender equality – from inclusive products and services for women and girls to solutions that focus on workplace diversity and gender (together with Programme for Migration and Development).

A challenge in seeking collaborations with organisations in the Indian ecosystem has been to create the common understanding with partners that promoting women entrepreneurship is not a charity, but a business case. This is important because unless women entrepreneurship is understood to have a significant positive impact on economic growth and employment, it will not receive the necessary push and effort from government and the ecosystem which is needed to create a level playing field for women entrepreneurs.

Success factors for establishing effective collaboration include sharing a strong commitment for women entrepreneurship as a business case and an openness to question one's own organisational or operational approaches when it comes to promoting women entrepreneurship and gender equality.