



Enduring Value



FICSI

Food Industry Capacity and Skill Initiative

IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

JANUARY 2025

PROJECT



Prepared by

SGS

www.sgs.com

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ABBREVIATIONS

FICSI - Food Industry Capacity and Skills Initiative

FoSTaC - Food Safety Training and Certification

FSSAI - Food Safety and Standards Authority of India

GMP - Good Management Practices

GHP - Good Hygiene Practices

SIP - Skill India Portal

ToT - Training of Trainers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We, SGS, would like to express our gratitude to FICSI for entrusting us with this impact assessment assignment. We are extremely thankful for their assistance during the course of the study.

We thank everyone who participated in the study and contributed to gathering insights.

We truly appreciate all the intellectual guidance from the FICSI's team throughout the study. Last but not least, we want to express our gratitude to everyone who spent the time answering the extensive survey.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Informed consent:

The interviews were done after receiving respondents' consent. Even after the interviews were completed, their permission was sought to proceed with their responses.

Confidentiality:

The information provided by participants has been kept private. At no point were their data or identities disclosed. The research findings have been quoted in a way that does not expose the respondents' identities.

Comfort:

The interviews were performed following the respondents' preferences. In addition, the interview time was chosen in consultation with them. At each level, respondents' convenience and comfort were considered.

Right to reject or withdraw:

Respondents were guaranteed safety and allowed to refuse to answer questions or withdraw during the study.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Women play a crucial role in India's food processing industry, which is one of the largest employment-generating sectors in the country. Estimates suggest that over 25% of the workforce in the food processing sector comprises women, with many involved in small-scale enterprises, home-based food businesses, and informal food handling roles. However, these women face significant barriers in obtaining the necessary certifications and training required to comply with food safety regulations and industry standards.

Despite their crucial contributions, women in the food processing sector often lack access to formal training and certification programs, limiting their ability to scale their businesses or secure better employment opportunities. Key challenges include:

Lack of Awareness & Accessibility to Certification: Many women food handlers, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, are unaware of mandatory certifications such as FSSAI's Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC), which is essential for operating in regulated food businesses. Additionally, the process of obtaining certification is often complex and inaccessible for small-scale food handlers.

Gaps in Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) Compliance:

Women-led food businesses and informal food processing units struggle to meet industry standards due to limited exposure to best practices in food handling, packaging, and quality control. This restricts their ability to enter mainstream supply chains.

Hygiene and Safety Issues: A significant number of women food handlers lack training in hygiene and sanitation, which is critical for ensuring food safety. Factors such as limited access to clean processing environments, improper waste disposal, and inadequate personal hygiene practices can lead to foodborne illnesses and quality concerns.

Financial and Structural Barriers:

Many women engaged in food processing operate in unorganized and informal settings, with little or no access to credit, modern equipment, or market linkages. The absence of structured training programs further prevents them from integrating into the formal economy.

ABOUT FICSI

The Food Industry Capacity & Skill Initiative (FICSI), also recognized as the Food Processing Sector Skill Council, is a nonprofit organization registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. This initiative has garnered support from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in collaboration with the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI). The organization's headquarters is situated at the third floor of the Shriram Bhartiya Kala Kendra Building, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi 110001.

FICSI operates as an autonomous entity within the industry, with the primary objective of cultivating a skilled workforce tailored for the Food Processing Industries. Its role extends to fostering a culture of food-related knowledge and enhancing the skills of individuals engaged in the food processing sector. Notably, FICSI is registered under the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) as an Awarding Body.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women play a vital role in India's food processing industry, yet they face significant challenges in obtaining the necessary skills, certifications, and hygiene training required to compete in the formal market. Limited awareness of food safety regulations, inadequate access to structured training, and financial constraints often prevent women food handlers from adhering to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and securing better economic opportunities.

The "Aashirvaad – Raho Chaar Kadam Aage" initiative, implemented by FICSI is designed to address these gaps by providing skill development, awareness, and certification to 30,000+ women food handlers across Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. By equipping them with industry-relevant knowledge and formal recognition, this initiative aims to enhance their employability, improve food safety standards, and empower them towards sustainable livelihoods in the food processing sector.

SGS was assigned the task of conducting an impact assessment for the project. To complete this evaluation, 402 women beneficiaries were surveyed across five districts—Darbhanga and Supaul in Bihar, and Balrampur, Gonda, and Hardoi in Uttar Pradesh. The team engaged with these beneficiaries through in-person interactions. A mixed-method approach was used for the study, ensuring a statistically validated sample size. The key findings from the assessment are outlined below.

The "Aashirvaad – Raho Chaar Kadam Aage" initiative has helped women food handlers gain confidence in their skills and business potential. Many now feel more comfortable starting or expanding their own food businesses, with a better understanding of food safety and hygiene practices. The program has also introduced them to digital transactions, making it easier for them to manage payments and access banking services. Additionally, women have learned about government schemes that can support their work, and many are now more confident in applying for these opportunities. Around 65% of participants are now agreed that they understand the FSSAI regulations and they are well aware about it. Through this initiative, women are feeling more independent and prepared to take the next steps in their food processing journey.

The key findings are structured in alignment with the OECD-DAC evaluation framework, covering Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact.

Relevance – Addressing the Needs of Women Food Handlers

Many participants (66%) had no prior exposure to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which is essential for food businesses to maintain high safety standards. By introducing FSSAI guidelines and compliance requirements, the program filled a critical gap in regulatory awareness.

Effectiveness – Building Skills and Confidence

- 60% of women reported increased confidence in starting their own business, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in fostering entrepreneurship.
- 88% of participants became comfortable with digital transactions, which is a critical skill for managing payments and accessing financial services in an increasingly cashless economy.
- 98% of women noted a significant improvement in their knowledge of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP), ensuring higher food safety and quality standards in their businesses.

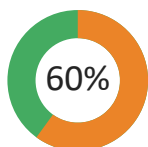
Efficiency – Exposure to Regulatory Frameworks

- 99% of participants found the training content and materials relevant and useful to their work and future aspirations.
- 92% reported that the language used in the training was simple and easy to understand, making the program accessible to women from diverse educational backgrounds.

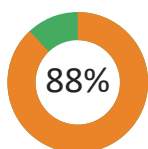
Impact – Empowering Women Beyond Training

- 96% of women reported increased confidence in understanding and applying for government schemes, potentially enabling them to access financial assistance, subsidies, and support services.
- This enhanced awareness empowers women to expand their businesses, improve food safety practices, and strengthen their economic resilience.

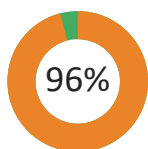
KEY FINDINGS



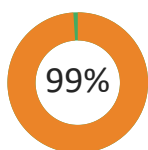
Feel confident in opening their own business



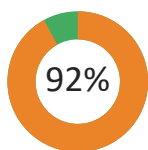
Are comfortable with digital transactions



Are confident in understanding and applying for government schemes



Feel training content and material relevant and useful



Feel that the language used was easy to understand

66%

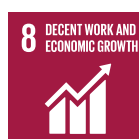
Were exposed to FSSAI through training program

98%

Knowledge on Good Manufacturing and Good Hygiene Practices improved



SDG Alignment



ABOUT THE INTERVENTION

The "Aashirvaad – Raho Char Kadam Aage" initiative is a skill training and certification program designed exclusively for women engaged in the food processing industry. The intervention aims to equip 30,000+ women food handlers across Uttar Pradesh and Bihar with essential skills in food safety, hygiene practices, and business development. By addressing key challenges such as lack of awareness, limited access to certification, and gaps in hygiene and safety standards, the program empowers women to enhance their employability, start or grow their businesses, and improve food safety compliance.

Through FICSI's network of affiliated Training Providers, certified trainers from FSSAI and FICSI conducted training sessions for both the FoSTaC (Food Safety Training and Certification) Basic Course and the Food Product Handler courses. Beneficiaries underwent a structured assessment process and were awarded dual certifications for both FoSTaC and Skill India, ensuring their registration in both the FoSTaC and Skill India Portals. This dual certification equips participants with comprehensive knowledge of food safety measures, including proper food handling, storage, hygiene, regulatory compliance, and entrepreneurship skills. Participants took part in a one-day, 8-hour training session that included both the FoSTaC and Skill India modules. The training covered the following modules:

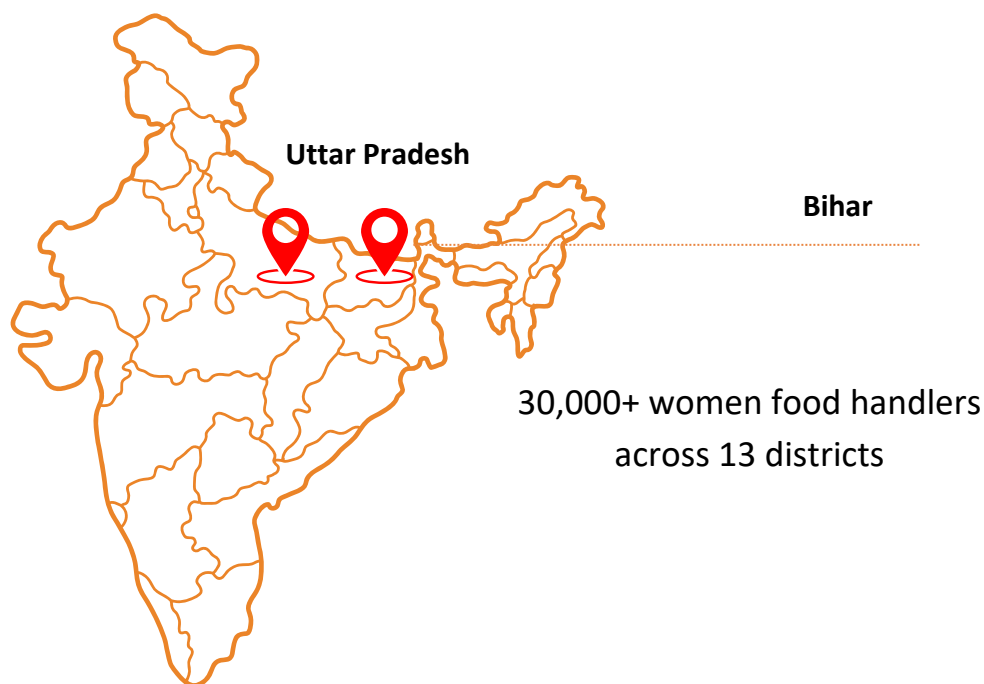
Module 1: Overview of Food Handler Job Role

Module 2: FoSTaC Module of FSSAI

Module 3: Soft Skills and Entrepreneurship

Along with enhancing their expertise in their respective fields, the program also offers guidance on entrepreneurial skills, equipping participants with the necessary tools to start their own food businesses. The soft skills and entrepreneurship module is designed to raise awareness among beneficiaries about the key aspects of entrepreneurship, including legal, marketing, and financial considerations. The trainers who conducted these sessions were selected from a pool of professionals holding dual certification for both the FoSTaC and Skill India programs. The training was delivered in Hindi, the local language across the selected states. After the training, each participant received a participant handbook for the FoSTaC course in Hindi.

GEOGRAPHICAL OUTREACH



KEY OBJECTIVES



To **upskill women**
engaged in Food
Processing Sector



To confer **Dual
Certifications i.e FoSTaC
and Skill India** among
women food handlers



To **disseminate knowledge**
about **Good
Manufacturing Practices
and Good Hygiene
Practices**



To **promote
entrepreneurship,
local employment
and better income** to
curb migration

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the objectives of the impact assessment study, detailing the methodology, tools, sampling approach, and data analysis techniques used.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating participatory assessment tools to gather comprehensive data for an in-depth analysis. SGS aimed to provide insights that would enable FICSI to evaluate the intervention's overall impact, understand stakeholder perspectives, and devise strategies for future implementation. The study involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

The impact assessment was conducted using the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) framework to ensure a structured and robust evaluation.



Fig 1: OECD framework deployed for the study

Phase I: Planning

The SGS team collaborated with the FICSI team to gain a comprehensive understanding of the project and its objectives. Based on these discussions, qualitative and quantitative tools were designed for data collection. Field enumerators received training and orientation from the SGS team, and a detailed field plan was developed and finalized in coordination with the FICSI and downstream implementation partners in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Phase II: Implementation

Customized qualitative and quantitative tools were developed for various stakeholder groups. A pilot test was conducted prior to data collection to ensure the tools' effectiveness. After the pilot, the data collection process was initiated. A total of 402 samples were collected from 5 districts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Phase III: Assessment and Dissemination

Once data collection was completed, the data was cleaned, coded, and analyzed. A comprehensive report was then prepared based on the findings.

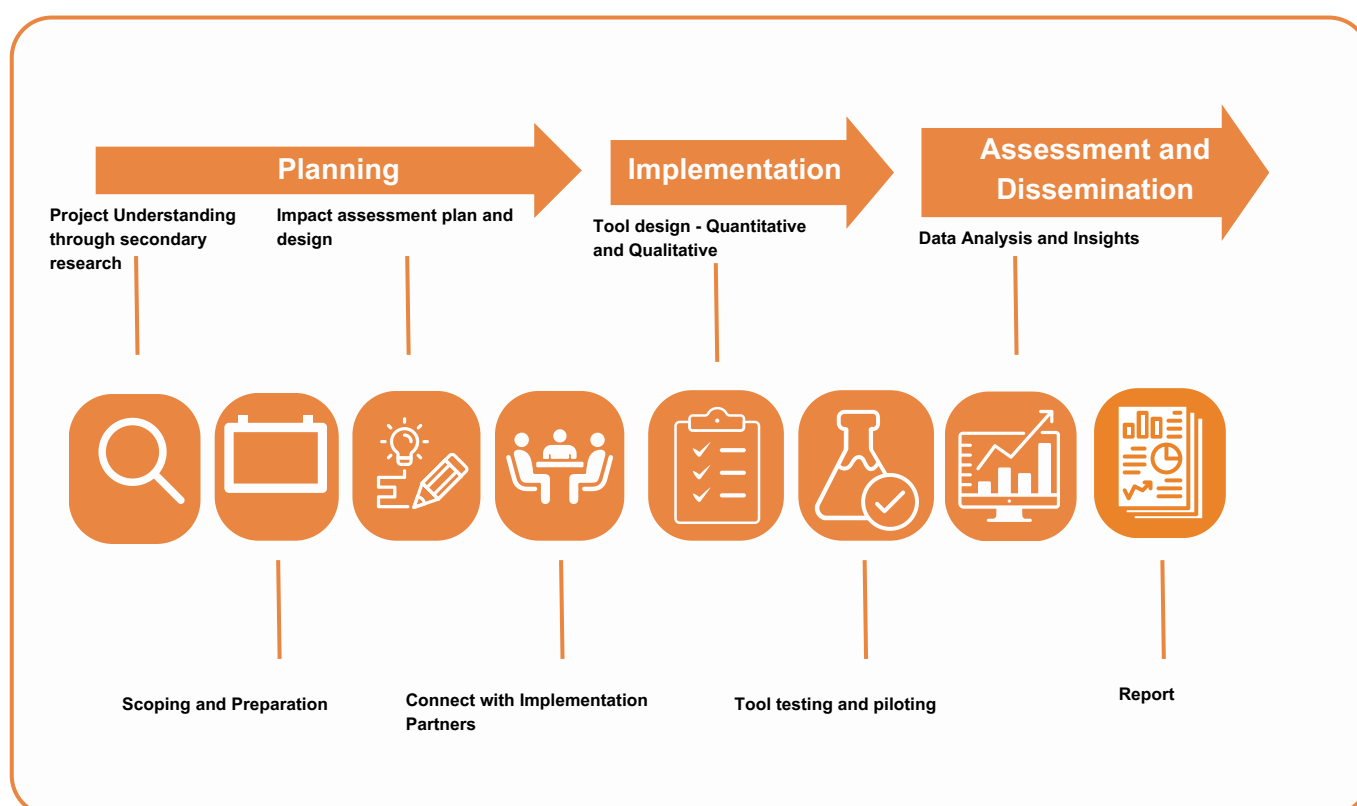


Fig 2: Technical Approach for the Impact Assessment Study



FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter provides an overview of the demographic profile and key findings from the impact assessment study, which involved consultations with 402 beneficiaries. As the project targets women exclusively, all respondents were women.

Demographic Profile

The distribution of beneficiaries across the selected regions is as follows: 23% of the participants are from Balrampur, 5% are from Darbhanga, 31% are from Gonda, 10% are from Hardoi, and 31% are from Supaul.

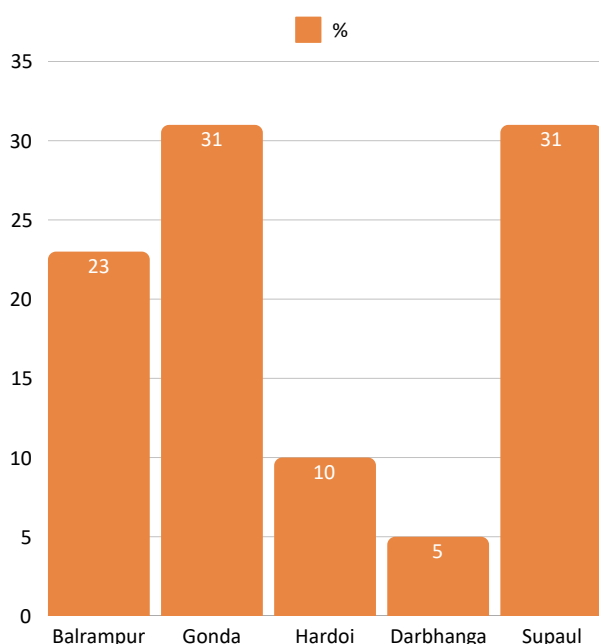


Fig 3: Location wise representation

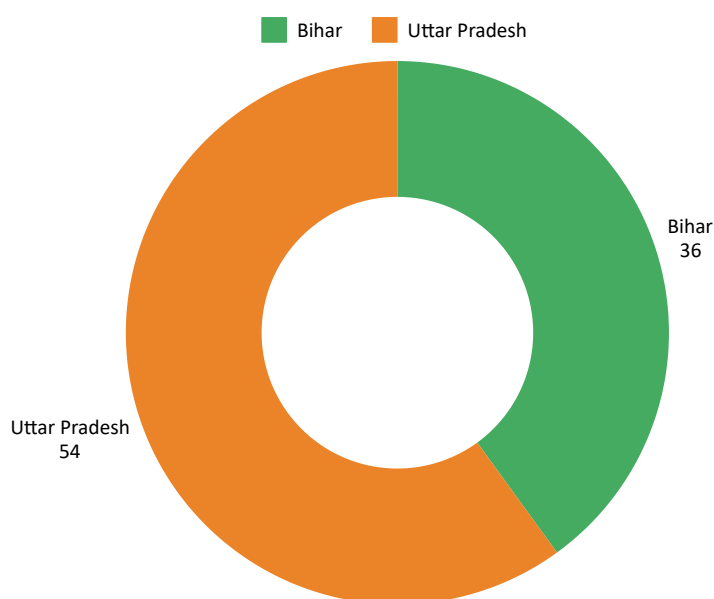


Fig 4: State wise representation

The impact assessment was carried out in three districts of Uttar Pradesh—Balrampur, Gonda, and Hardoi—and two districts of Bihar—Darbhanga and Supaul. District wise respondent's representation in the study is illustrated in fig.3. Thirty-six percent of the respondents were from Bihar, while fifty-four percent were from Uttar Pradesh.

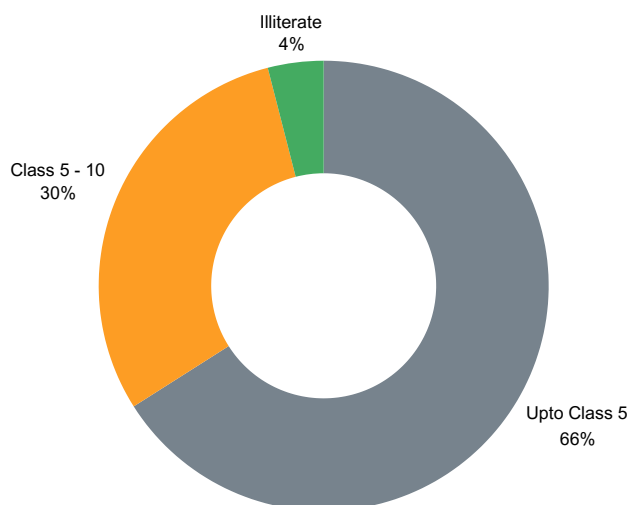


Fig 5: Education Profile

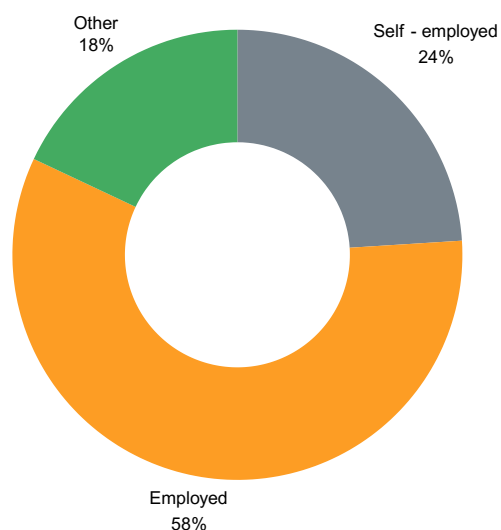


Fig 6: Occupation Profile

The education levels of the beneficiaries involved in the project show that a majority, 66%, have completed up to Class 5, while 30% have education between Class 5 and 10. A smaller proportion, 4%, are illiterate. 24% of the interviewed women are self-employed, while a significant 58% of respondents are employed in highly informal segment.

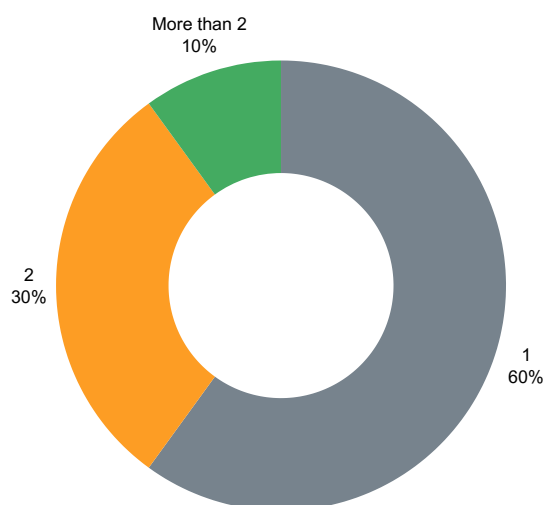


Fig 7: Number of earning members in the family

The Findings and Analysis section further has been divided according to the criteria outlined in the OECD framework.

RELEVANCE

In India, a significant number of women are engaged in informal food handling occupations, often operating within the unorganized sector. According to recent statistics, approximately 68% of women involved in food processing and handling work in the informal sector, where they face numerous challenges such as limited access to formal training, certifications, and skill development opportunities. These women are often left without the recognition or qualifications that would enable them to advance in their careers or establish formal businesses.

Given that 66% of the women in the project have only attained education up to Class 5, their exposure to training and skill development opportunities is limited. This lack of higher education and exposure further emphasizes the relevance of the "Aashirvaad – Raho Chaar Kadam Aage" project.

EFFECTIVENESS

The "Aashirvaad – Raho Chaar Kadam Aage" project has shown promising results in empowering women, particularly in terms of confidence, entrepreneurship, and economic independence. Notably, 65% of the women reported feeling confident in their ability to open their own business, indicating that the training and skill development provided through the project have successfully instilled a sense of entrepreneurial capability. Furthermore, 95% of the women expressed confidence in their ability to earn and grow as women, highlighting the project's positive impact on instilling a sense of self-reliance and economic empowerment.

In terms of future aspirations, 56% of the women expressed a desire to start their own business within the next six months, demonstrating a strong intention to apply the skills gained through the project. These results reflect the effectiveness of the initiative in equipping women with the knowledge and skills required not only to enhance their current livelihood but also to take proactive steps toward creating their own enterprises.

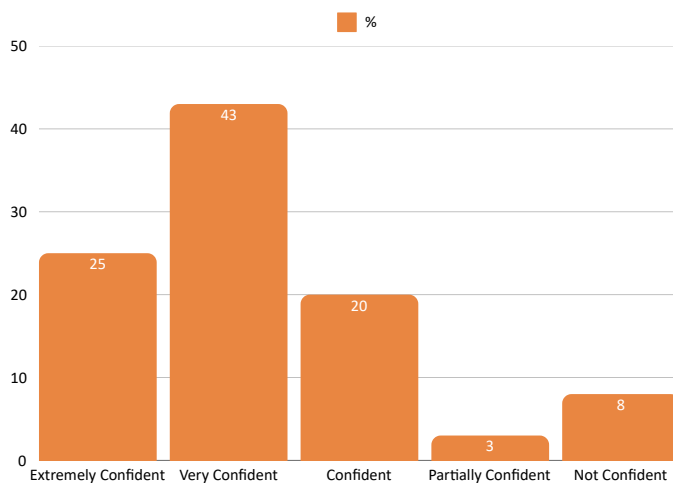


Fig 8: Feel confident with respect to digital transactions

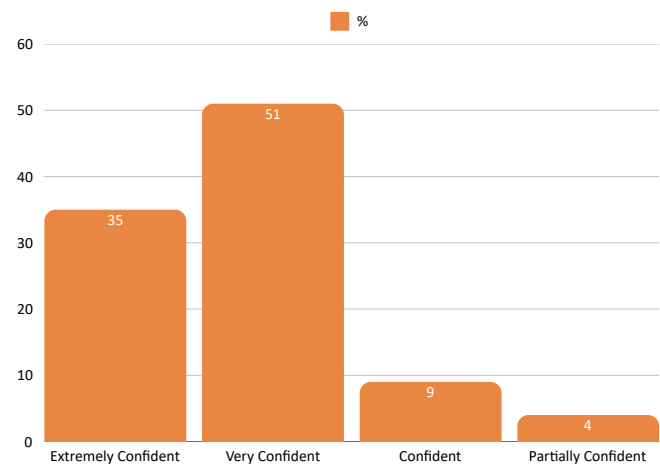


Fig 9: Feel confident in understanding and applying for government schemes

The graph highlights the confidence levels of women in performing digital transactions, such as through Google Pay or other UPI payment systems. A significant 25% of the women feel extremely confident, while 43% feel very confident in handling digital payments. Additionally, 20% report being confident, indicating a strong overall sense of comfort with digital transactions among the majority of participants. However, 3% are partially confident and 8% are not confident at all, suggesting that a small portion of women still faces challenges in adopting digital payment systems.



Women undergoing training

EFFICIENCY

The figure below highlights the participants' ratings of the curriculum, with 28% rating it as Excellent, 62% as Very Good, and 10% as Good. Notably, there were no ratings of Moderate or Poor, indicating that the curriculum was well-received by the majority of participants. This suggests that the project's training material and delivery methods were effective in meeting the needs of the women, providing them with relevant and useful skills. The high percentage of positive feedback (90%) underscores the efficiency of the project, which likely contributed to the overall confidence of the participants.

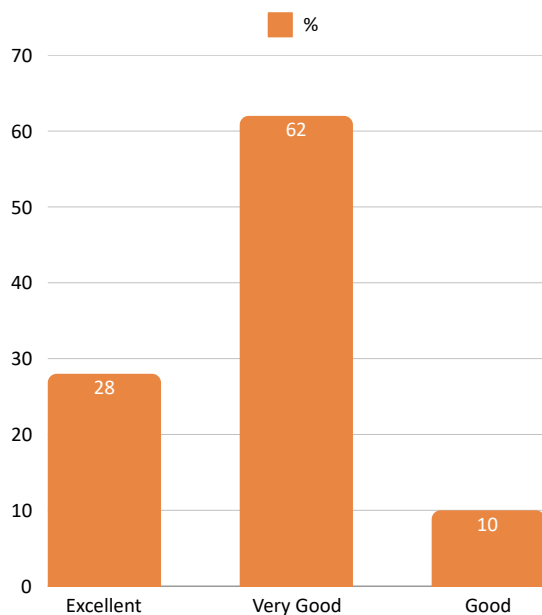


Fig 10: Rating - Curriculum

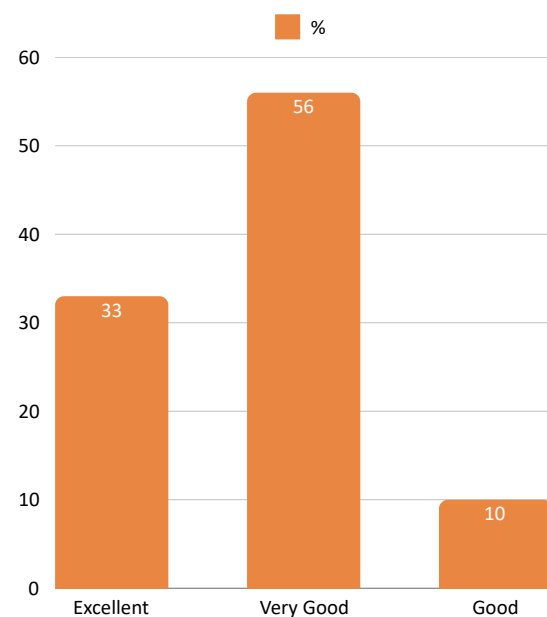
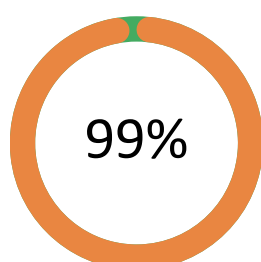
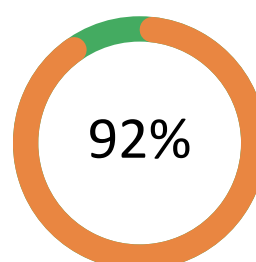


Fig 11: Rating - Trainer

The table shows the ratings for the trainers, with 33% of participants rating them as Excellent, 56% as Very Good, and 10% as Good. These results suggest that most participants were satisfied with the trainers and their teaching methods, with a large majority finding them to be efficient.



Rated training content relevant and Useful



Feel that the language used was easy to understand.

IMPACT

The "Aashirvaad – Raho Chaar Kadam Aage" project has had a noticeable impact on the women beneficiaries, particularly in terms of their understanding of food safety and good manufacturing practices. According to the feedback, 98% of the respondents mentioned that their knowledge of food safety including Good Hygiene Practices and Good Manufacturing Practices had improved after the training.

After the training, participants shared that they would make an effort to follow these practices:

- Washing food, hands, and cleaning utensils properly.
- Wearing caps, trimming hair, and maintaining clean nails for hygiene.
- Cleaning kitchen utensils and equipment regularly.
- Using quality raw materials in food preparation.

These findings suggest that the training has helped increase awareness and encouraged participants to adopt better food handling practices, which can lead to safer food preparation and healthier outcomes in the long run.

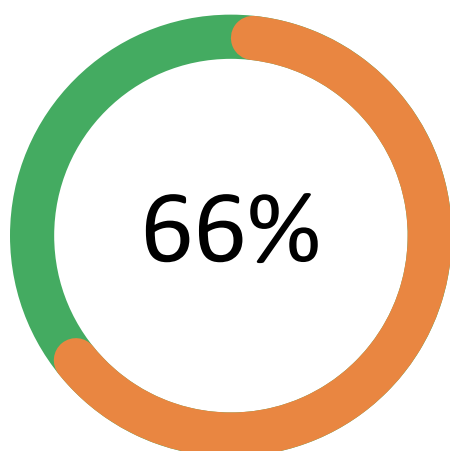


Fig 12: Came to know about FSSAI Registration post training

Prior to the training, 66% of the women had no exposure to FSSAI registration, a crucial step in ensuring compliance with food safety standards. Through the training, they were made aware of the importance of food safety regulations and how to align their practices with industry standards.



22-Aug-2024 1:3

Lucknow
Uttar Pradesh



22-Aug-2024 12:5

Lucknow
Uttar Pradesh

COHERENCE

The initiative contributes to the Government of India's goals outlined in the Skill India Mission and Atmanirbhar Bharat, which aim to enhance the skills of workers, particularly women, and promote self-reliance. By offering training and certification through platforms like FoSTaC and Skill India, the project aligns with the country's objectives to build a skilled workforce, improve food safety standards, and encourage women's economic empowerment. In this way, the project supports the national priorities of improving food safety, regulatory compliance, and empowering women to be active contributors to India's economy.

महिलाओं को आत्मनिर्भर बनाने के लिए निशुल्क खाद्य सुरक्षा ट्रेनिंग संपन्न

न्यू गुरुकुल एजुकेशन सोसाइटी ने दिया 1000 महिलाओं को खाद्य सुरक्षा का प्रशिक्षण



बलरामपुर। सामाजिक संस्था न्यू गुरुकुल एजुकेशन सोसाइटी के तत्वाधान में खाद्य सुरक्षा संबंधी महिलाओं को निशुल्क ट्रेनिंग दी गई है। इस प्रशिक्षण में करीब 1000 महिलाओं को विकासखंड तुलसीपुर एवं मैसडी में प्रशिक्षित किया गया है। प्रशिक्षण के बाद संस्था डायरेक्टर दिनेश खटाना ने प्रमाण पत्र दिया जाएगा। संस्था डायरेक्टर ने खाद्य सुरक्षा प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम को

संबोधित करते हुए कहा कि फूड इंडस्ट्री कैपेसिटी एंड स्किल डेवेलप के तहत महिलाओं को सेफ्टी सफाई के साथ काम करने की जानकारी दी गई है उन्होंने बताया कि प्रशिक्षण के बाद महिला अभ्यर्थियों को प्रमाण पत्र दिया जाएगा प्रमाण पत्र देने का मुख्य उद्देश्य महिलाओं को आत्मनिर्भर बनाना है एवं उन्हें खाद्य सुरक्षा के क्षेत्र में फायदा करना है। प्रशिक्षण के बाद महिलाओं को निशुल्क किताबें

दी गई जिसमें प्रशिक्षण के संबंध में सारी जानकारी निहित है महिलाओं को ट्रेनिंग देने में मैनेजर संजय कुमार को ऑर्डिनेटर सुष्मा गुप्ता अनु यादव का विशेष योगदान रहा है संस्था सदस्य जिया तनवीर निखिल गुप्ता मोहित विश्वकर्मा राजीव रंजन एवं अंकित कुमार ने मिलकर करीब 1000 महिलाओं को निशुल्क खाद्य सुरक्षा की ट्रेनिंग दी है ट्रेनिंग के बाद सभी को सर्टिफिकेट दिया जाएगा।

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The "Aashirvaad – Raho Chaar Kadam Aage" project has proven to be a valuable initiative, making a significant impact on women engaged in the food handling sector. By offering training and certification in food safety and good manufacturing practices, the project has greatly enhanced the beneficiaries' understanding of crucial food safety measures, with 99% of respondents reporting improved knowledge. Additionally, the project has successfully increased awareness among participants about essential regulatory requirements, such as FSSAI registration, which 66% of the women had no prior exposure to.

The training also encouraged women to adopt key practices like maintaining hygiene, ensuring the cleanliness of utensils and equipment, and using quality raw materials—important steps that align with industry standards. Furthermore, the project has fostered a sense of confidence and empowerment, with many participants expressing a desire to start their own businesses in the near future.

Aligned with national priorities like Skill India and Atmanirbhar Bharat, the project not only supports women's empowerment but also contributes to strengthening India's food safety standards and fostering a skilled workforce. In conclusion, the project has effectively addressed key challenges faced by women in the informal food handling sector and has equipped them with the skills and knowledge necessary for personal and professional growth, ensuring they are better prepared to contribute to the economy and meet regulatory standards.

The project contributes to **SDG 5: Gender Equality**, by empowering women in the food handling sector through skill development, certification, and increased economic opportunities. The project also supports SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, by enhancing women's employability and promoting self-reliance in the food processing industry. Through training in food safety and hygiene, the initiative contributes to **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being**, by improving food quality and safety standards, ensuring better health outcomes for both producers and consumers. Additionally, by increasing awareness of regulatory requirements such as FSSAI registration, the project helps ensure compliance with food safety regulations, aligning with **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Follow-up Support and Mentorship: While the training provided valuable knowledge and skills, offering continuous follow-up support or mentorship could ensure that the women are able to implement the learned practices successfully. This could include periodic check-ins or mentorship from industry experts to guide them as they start or grow their businesses.

Broader Outreach for FSSAI Registration Awareness: While the project successfully introduced FSSAI registration to the participants, conducting workshops or awareness campaigns for the broader community of women in food handling, particularly in rural or underserved areas, would help increase understanding and registration across a wider demographic.

Strengthening Community Networks: Establishing networks among women participants could promote peer learning and collaboration. A platform for sharing resources, tips, and best practices would help foster a community of empowered women supporting each other's growth.

Enhanced Digital Literacy Training: Given that some women still face challenges with digital transactions, incorporating additional digital literacy training on using online payment platforms and tools would help build their confidence and facilitate smoother business transactions in today's digital economy.

TESTIMONIALS

"The training has really opened my eyes to how important food safety and hygiene are for both my business and my customers. I've learned about all the steps I need to take, from washing my hands before handling food to making sure my kitchen and equipment are spotless. It's these little things that make a big difference in food safety. Now, I feel equipped to manage food safely and keep my business running smoothly. I'm more confident in my work and proud to offer food that is both safe and high-quality."

Champa Devi, Supaul

"Before the training, I never paid much attention to the quality of raw materials or the cleanliness of my kitchen. But after the program, I now know that using good quality ingredients and maintaining cleanliness is the key to making safe, delicious food. I always make sure to wash my hands properly, clean my utensils thoroughly, and maintain hygiene at all times."

Anjali, Padrona, Balrampur (UP)

"Before this training, I had no idea about FSSAI registration or how it could help my business. I always thought it was something that only big businesses had to worry about. But through this program, I learned that FSSAI registration is not only important for legal compliance but also ensures that my food products meet the highest safety standards."

Rinku, Nardahiya, Darbhanga (Bihar)

MEDIA GALLERY



Certification Distribution Ceremony



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