

Harvesting with wings

Women's Empowerment via Namu Drone Didi Yojana

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In the past few years, drones have emerged as a disruptive advancement in agriculture technology, making precision farming an accessible reality. Fitted with advanced spraying

systems, these drones have revolutionized the application of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides more efficiently.

1. About the Scheme

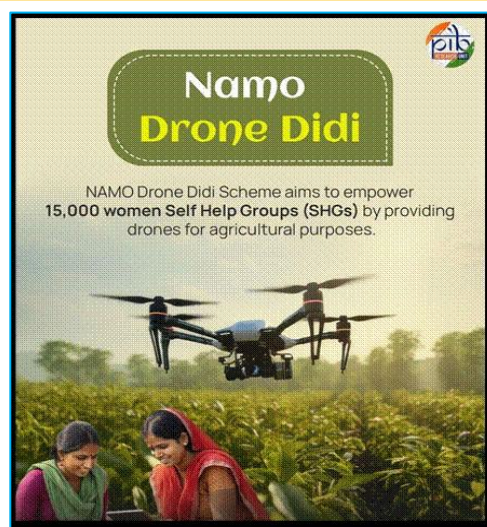
On 15th August, 2023, the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced the launch of the "Namu Drone Didi" Yojana, which aimed to empower women by handholding them

into a sustainable business model where they can increase their income by more than Rs 1 Lakh, and transforming the modern farming ecosystem with drone technology.

2. Key Highlights of the Scheme

2.1 Objective:

- To promote advance technology in agriculture for improved efficiency, enhanced crop yield and reduced cost of operation.
- To empower Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) promoted under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) as drone service providers.
- To provide business opportunities to Women SHGs and their CLFs promoted under DAY - NRLM to increase their income.
- To increase the opportunities for rural employment and financial inclusion.
- To encourage use of Nano-fertilizers and to optimize the use of pesticides and fertilizers.



(Image Source: <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NoteId=153383&ModuleId=3>)

2.2 Funding & Allocation:

Under the Drone Didi initiative, a total allocation of ₹1261 crore has been sanctioned as part of a Central Sector Scheme. This substantial financial commitment underscores the government's intent to promote women-led technological empowerment and sustainable agricultural practices. A key target of this funding is the provision of 15,000 drones to various Women

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across the country. By channeling these resources directly through women's collectives, the scheme aims to enhance women's participation in modern agri-technological domains, generate rural employment, and strengthen the economic base of SHGs.

2.3 Financial Assistance:

To ensure affordability and accessibility, the scheme provides significant financial support to the participating SHGs. Each SHG is entitled to receive an 80% subsidy on the drone package, with a ceiling of ₹8.0 lakh per SHG. This means that the SHGs are only required to contribute the remaining 20% of the cost, thereby making high-cost drone technology financially viable for rural women. Additionally, if the SHGs choose to finance the remaining amount through credit,

2.4 Training:

A major focus of the Drone Didi scheme is skill development and capacity building among women in rural areas. As part of the drone supply package, a 15-day comprehensive training program is provided to the SHG members free of cost. This includes five days of drone pilot training where participants learn about flight control, maintenance, and basic operational protocols, followed by ten days of hands-on training on nutrient and pesticide application

2.5 Implementation:

The operational execution of the Drone Didi initiative is coordinated through a well-structured multi-level framework. Seven Lead Fertilizer Companies (LFCs) have been designated as State-Level Coordinators to oversee the implementation and ensure smooth execution across different regions. These companies are responsible for facilitating drone supply, organizing training programs, and providing

2.6 Economic Impact:

The Drone Didi Yojana is expected to bring a transformative change in the rural economy, particularly by empowering women through technology and entrepreneurship. By engaging SHGs in drone-based agricultural services, the scheme opens up new avenues for sustainable income generation and livelihood diversification. The use of drones enhances farm efficiency, enables precision spraying of fertilizers and pesticides, and reduces input costs for farmers while improving crop health and yield. Over time, this is projected to create a ripple effect in the rural economy fostering innovation, improving productivity, and promoting women-led micro-enterprises in the agri-tech sector.

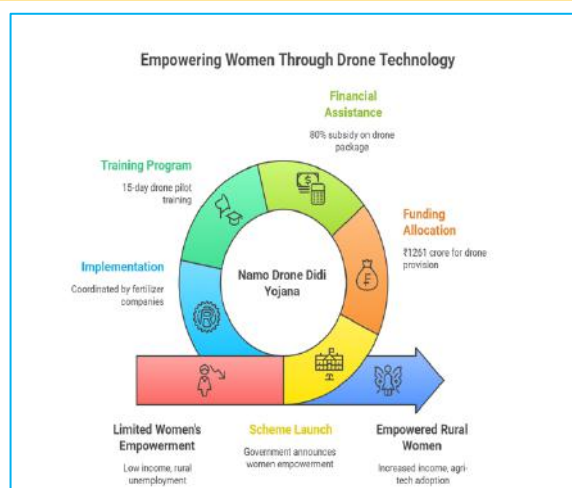
3 Drone Procurement Process for Drone Didi

The procurement process under the Drone Didi scheme has been designed to be inclusive, transparent, and easily accessible to women in rural areas. The qualification criteria stipulate that applicants must be female members above 18 years of age and should have completed at least a

10th-grade education. This ensures a basic level of literacy and comprehension necessary for technical training and operational responsibilities. To participate, an interested woman must enroll in a Self-Help Group (SHG) that is registered

using drones. This ensures that participants not only become licensed drone operators but also proficient in the agricultural applications of drone technology. Additionally, a separate five-day training course is offered for Drone Assistants, focusing on maintenance, data handling, and field support. Importantly, SHGs are not required to pay any training fee, as all associated costs are included within the overall implementation package.

technical guidance to SHGs. The State Governments, in turn, play a pivotal role in monitoring, evaluation, and handholding support, ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous assistance to the women beneficiaries. This collaborative approach between central agencies, state authorities, and private partners ensures that the scheme remains both effective and sustainable.



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To participate, an interested woman must enroll in a Self-Help Group (SHG) that is registered

under the DAY-NRLM (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission). Once registered, the SHG can apply for drone procurement under the scheme. The financial structure allows the SHG to receive 80% of the total cost (up to ₹8 lakh) as a subsidy from the government. The remaining 20% can be financed through a loan under the AIF scheme, benefitting from a 3% interest subvention.

After financial approval, the SHG members are required to undergo mandatory training at the

2.7 Qualification

To become a beneficiary under the Drone Didi Yojana (Nari Drone Didi Yojana – NDDY), the applicant must be a female aged 18 years or above. This age requirement ensures that participants are legally eligible to undergo training and handle financial responsibilities associated with the scheme. Additionally, the applicant should have completed at least 10th

2.8 Enrolment

After meeting the eligibility criteria, the interested woman must enroll in a Self-Help Group (SHG) operating within her area. The SHG must be officially registered under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM). Registration under DAY-NRLM ensures transparency, accountability, and linkage to government-supported livelihood and credit mechanisms.

2.9 Loan Application

Once enrolled in a registered SHG, the next step involves applying for financial assistance to procure the drone. Under the Nari Drone Didi Yojana, the government provides an 80% subsidy on the total cost of the drone package, up to a maximum of ₹8 lakh per SHG. This substantial subsidy significantly reduces the financial burden on women beneficiaries. The remaining 20% of

2.10 Training

After the completion of the enrolment and loan application process, the selected Self-Help Group (SHG) members are required to undergo specialized training to ensure safe and effective drone operation. The training is conducted at the nearest Remote Pilot Training Organization (RPTO), recognized by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Each designated Drone Didi must complete a 15-day comprehensive pilot training program, which covers theoretical as well as practical aspects of drone handling. The training includes modules on drone components, flight simulation, safety protocols, field calibration, and maintenance

nearest Remote Pilot Training Organization (RPTO). The drone pilot training spans 15 days, covering operational and agricultural aspects, while a 5-day assistant training program is also available for those assisting in drone operations. The comprehensive design of the procurement process ensures that the women not only own but also operate and maintain the drones effectively, thereby enhancing self-reliance and local entrepreneurship.

standard education, ensuring a minimum level of literacy and comprehension necessary for understanding technical training, drone operation, safety procedures, and record maintenance. These basic qualification criteria are designed to ensure that women participants are adequately prepared to engage with and benefit from drone-based agricultural technology.

Through SHG enrolment, women can collectively apply for the scheme, share responsibilities, and access institutional support such as training, financing, and operational guidance. This group-based model not only enhances coordination and efficiency but also empowers women collectively, fostering leadership and community-based entrepreneurship.

the cost can be financed through a loan under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), which carries a 3% interest subvention, making repayment more affordable. This blend of subsidy and concessional credit ensures that even small or financially limited SHGs can acquire and operate drones without facing prohibitive financial constraints.

procedures. Additionally, participants are given hands-on experience in using drones for agricultural purposes such as spraying fertilizers, pesticides, and nutrients. For those designated as Drone Assistants, a shorter 5-day training course is conducted at the same RPTO. This program focuses on supporting activities such as field preparation, equipment setup, data collection, and post-operation maintenance. Both training programs are designed to build technical proficiency and confidence among women operators, ensuring they can independently manage drone operations and provide efficient agri-services in their respective communities.

3. Drone Didi Selection Process

The selection process for Drone Didi is systematic and merit-based, focusing on inclusivity and local representation. Eligible women who meet the educational and age criteria and are part of registered SHGs can express their interest through local Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) or Block Mission Management Units (BMMUs) under DAY-NRLM. Applications are screened based on parameters such as willingness to undergo training, group performance, and the SHG's financial credibility. Priority is often given to SHGs demonstrating active participation in livelihood initiatives or those located in regions with significant agricultural potential.

Once shortlisted, candidates are guided through orientation sessions explaining drone usage, business models, and operational procedures. Upon successful completion of the mandatory training and certification, the selected women are formally recognized as Drone Didis. They then receive drones under the approved financial structure, with continuous technical support, maintenance assistance, and monitoring from implementing agencies. This systematic selection ensures that the scheme benefits deserving women while promoting technological adoption and entrepreneurship in rural India.