

"A man is
great by
deeds, not by
birth"
-Chanakya

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**From 'Livelihood to Leverage':
Scaling Rural Women's Enterprises for Climate Adaptation**

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From 'Livelihood to Leverage': Scaling Rural Women's Enterprises for Climate Adaptation

Abstract

Focus Area: Traditionally, women's economic activities in rural areas have been perceived mainly as livelihood strategies—small-scale, subsistence-oriented endeavors designed to guarantee household survival and income stability. However, as women's enterprises grow—through collective organization, improved market access, and stronger institutional linkages—they begin to generate wider effects such as influencing local value chains, mobilizing financial and social resources, and strengthening community-level climate resilience. **Aim and Methodology:** This paper uses the lens of scaling to unravel the growth of women's entrepreneurial ventures in rural contexts facing climatic disruptions. The concept of scaling is examined using a qualitative, conceptually oriented methodology to explore the structural, experiential, and contextual meaning of change. The methodology combines a focused literature review of 'women entrepreneurship' and 'sustainable livelihood scaling' with interpretive analysis.

Findings: We find that scaling of rural women's enterprise, within development and climate adaptation contexts, is a multidimensional process in which these enterprises evolve beyond survival to begin to 'leverage' themselves as agents of local economic development. The transition from livelihood to leverage reflects a process in which women's adaptive enterprises move from coping mechanisms to initiatives that enhance their bargaining power and influence local economic opportunities and institutional arrangements.

Contribution: The research provides a critical empirical and conceptual site for situating and understanding scaling in women's entrepreneurship. It emphasizes in-depth, inductive, and contextual insights to explore "how" women can strengthen agency in choices through resource mobilization, social relationships, temporal changes, and access to markets and institutions. Hence, the study offers new perspectives on the scaling of women's enterprises in situations affected by social inequality and environmental challenges.



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