

# SUCCESS STORIES FROM DIGITAL SARTHAK



**Digital Sarthak is a national digital entrepreneurship and empowerment programme of Digital Empowerment Foundation supported by USAID and DAI.**

For this programme, 100 Digital Sarthaks from marginalised and economically weaker sections of the society have been identified from 10 districts across seven states who have set up Digital Resource Centres in their community.

Digital Sarthaks are running a sustainable enterprise by providing digital and entitlement services as well as giving digital upskilling training to 10,000 women entrepreneurs and 500 Community Development Organisations. This has been possible because each Digital Sarthak received a smartphone, multi-function printer and hand-holding support for running the centre.

This case study talks about five Digital Sarthaks' success stories. It emphasises the role the programme has played in providing livelihood opportunities to Digital Sarthaks as well as how they are serving the community by bridging the digital divide.

## DIGITAL SARTHAKS WORKING WITH DIGNITY AND PRIDE



Alpna lives in a family of six people including herself. She had a tough life full of challenges till now. Her most daunting challenge is that she had been diagnosed with polio since childhood which led to her facing a lot of problems.

For her education as well, since her village didn't have any college, she had to travel to Biaoara town which is 100 kms away to continue her studies after the 12th. Her family supported her and helped her overcome this challenge. Another subsequent challenge she faced was that she couldn't find work. Since she had now completed college, the next step was to get a job and support her family but this came with problems of its own.

Digital Sarthak Programme has played a crucial role in her life. Using the printer and mobile, I am able to provide services to the people which also helps in covering my monthly costs. For example, she is connected to the Digital Sarthak programme. There are many women entrepreneurs who are unaware of the use of digital technology and its advantages. Alpna said, "Through this Digital Sarthak programme, I am able to provide digital skilling to 100 women entrepreneurs in my community and teach them about various things like uses of a smartphone, PhonePay, Google Pay mobile wallets, social media and others which is creating more awareness among the women as well as access to information."

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“Even though differently-abled, now I don't feel like I am a burden to my family,” she added.

Alpna believes that there are many women in her village who have some skills and talent and always live by the limited boundary of their life. She wants to activate the inner potential of these women entrepreneurs by providing them training on digital technology which is very useful in today's time.

Through this Digital Sarthak Centre; Alpna provides services such as photocopies, printouts, online

information regarding government to her community. And also, she is conducting training for 100 women entrepreneurs from in and around the village and educating them about the online medium, smartphone skills useful for earning money, and various applications which will help them run their business and such others. This programme has added a new chapter to her life that will assist her a lot despite her disability. She is very thankful for this opportunity and is making the best out of it.



# ACTIVATING THE AGENCY AMONG YOUNG WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



**REKHA KUMARI,  
RAMGARH DISTRICT, JHARKHAND**

Rekha Kumari belongs to poor family background and her entire family is fully dependent on cultivation and farming. She has two small kids including a father-in-law and mother-in-law in her house. Her husband works as a farmer during the rainy season and rest of the months he works as migrant labour. Prior to joining the Digital Sarthak programme, she used to spend most of her time looking after her house and children and used to feel annoyed with herself as she wasn't able to be productive and earn some time on her own. The income of her husband was minimal and uncertain due to which there was financial stress in her home. Before joining this program, she

underwent digital literacy training programmes being run by DEF in another district. This helped in improving her knowledge of digital skills and be ready to take up any opportunity that comes up in the near future. Nearly after three months of digital training, she was selected as a Digital Sarthak and received one smartphone and a printer to run her own centre. Through this project, she got a responsibility to digitally train one hundred women entrepreneurs from her region and for this work, she will get a satisfactory stipend of Rs 28,000 at the completion of the entire training schedule. The Digital Sarthak program happens to prove as a very significant

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step in her life. She got the opportunity to establish a digital centre in her locality; secondly, she got the opportunity to learn various functionalities and uses of a smartphone, thirdly she received the necessary support from the programme to establish her new centre, fourthly she will get a good amount for training and digital services being provided and lastly she will be able to create her own contact with the community people while training in the outfield, which will also help in creating outreach for her centre.

Above all, she was previously unemployed and she got a job and responsibility to deal with and more importantly, she will have a source of livelihood which will provide her assistance to uplift her living standard. People of her locality have

great advantages of using the digital services and government benefit schemes facilities through her centre. Previously she didn't know to operate a smartphone and also not aware of digital services procedures, but after receiving the training, now she is capable to run her own centre successfully without any help. Previously her family members were facing hardships due to low income but after connecting with the Digital Sarthak programme, she also started contributing to the income of the household. Thereby reducing the financial constraint to some extent. Also, Rekha was an introvert person with limited interaction with people. But since she started giving training, the entire village recognises her. Now, people look at her with respect and has helped to develop her agency in the house as well as in the community.



# DIGITAL SARTHAK OFFERING A LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITY



Mamtavati is a household woman who lives in a family of 4. The family includes her mother-in-law, husband, and a 4-year-old son. As Mamtavati is a part of a Self-help group and has good relation among the women in the community, she was selected for the role of Digital Sarthak.

Mamtavati and her family are very happy after receiving the assets given under the programme and she is also able to earn for herself and her family by providing training and services to the community.

She is not the one to give up easily and always shows the zeal to keep looking for newer methods to find different sources of livelihood by constantly staying in touch with the women she's associated with.

The association of Mamtavati with the Digital Sarthak programme has greatly benefited her in becoming financially stronger and more self-reliant than before. She has set up a centre at her home itself using the smartphone and printer provided under this programme. People come to her centre for digital services such as photocopies and printouts which helps her to earn on daily basis and along with that, she is also able to earn by providing trainings to women entrepreneurs.

This program has greatly helped her and has also awarded her with the nickname of Digital Didi (Digital Sister) in her own and nearby villages. She conducts training with the women entrepreneurs on how to operate

# DIGITAL SARTHAK PROVIDING AN EQUITABLE ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY



Ushma Devi belongs to poor family background and her entire family was dependent on her husband's income, who works in a brick kiln. She has two daughters including an old Father-in-law and mother-in-law in her house.

Both of her daughters studying in a nearby government school. Her husband works in brick-kiln only in the summer and winter season and during the rainy season, he remains jobless. And in that period family members face a tough time for their survival.

The income of her husband was not sufficient for entire family members and they were facing hardships in their life due to scarcity of money. Before joining the programme she had undergone a digital literacy

programme which equipped her to become a Digital Sarthak when the opportunity arrived. In this project, she received a smartphone and a printer to provide training as well services to the community. Through this project, she is training 100 women entrepreneurs on digital literacy which will also provide her with a credible stipend for her work. The programme has helped her in contributing to the household livelihood as well as improved her understanding of digital literacy. Reaching out to the women and travelling across the villages has boosted her agency and she is now a confident woman in the community. Previously she had a limited understanding of smartphones but the

digital devices and smartphones for enhancing their business. This information is targeted to be useful to them in whatever way possible and is kept to the point so that its application can start assisting them immediately. Money earned through this

programme has helped Mamtavati in running her household smoothly and becoming financially independent. She is happy with all the support received and wishes to reach out to many women like her who have limited opportunities and help them in the best way possible.



after receiving the training by DEF master trainers, she has learnt a lot and is capable enough to provide training to women entrepreneurs. Also, earlier, she had limited public

contacts and nearby households knew about her. But after she is appointed a Digital Sarthak entire, she is a well-known person in the community.



# NIBHA TRAINING THE WOMEN WITH A PURPOSE OF BETTERING THEIR LIVES



*Nibha Kumari (l) giving training on digital and financial literacy*

Nibha Kumari is from West Champaran. She lives in a family of 5 in a very cheerful and wholesome environment. Her family constitutes of her parents, a younger brother and an older sister. Their family income lies below the BPL (Below Poverty Line). Her father works as a farmer and her mother is a housewife who looks after the family and household chores. Her younger brother is undergoing his education for BA and her elder sister Goldy, has completed her education and is in search of a job to support her family.

Nibha has had a daunting life and has faced all the challenges straight up. She has always wanted to make her parents proud and believes in standing out from the crowd in order

to make something worthwhile of your life. She is very hardworking and like to work for the cause without being greedy for results as her belief is that results will automatically find you if you work hard enough.

Digital Sarthak has proved to be a great boon in her life as it has helped her to learn so much and make a name for herself amongst the women of her village. She encourages all these women to become self-dependent and learn about the digital tools so that they can contribute towards making their lives easier and better. Also, she can help these women run small businesses if not already, in the online medium to increase their sales and get a better outreach.

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The program has been of a great deal of help to her as she had been planning on buying a smartphone for herself but was waiting till she got employed. DEF helped her out here and got her started with her own work. Through the Digital Sarthak's experience, she also got a job in Bihar Women Police Battalion.

As of now, Nibha Kumari has started working in her latest job at the Battalion after she trained nearly 100 women of her village and passed on her wisdom to them which helped her

to get where she is. She has left her previous responsibilities in the capable hands of her elder sister Goldy.

She has noticed changes around her such as the girls are now becoming more independent and ambitious with what they can do with their lives since they finally have the resources and guidance. She is extremely thankful to the Digital Sarthak programme as this opportunity has greatly helped her out in elevating her cause and stand on her own feet and has also done the same for many other women as well.

