



**Samarth - GOAL**  
Going Online as Leaders

# Leading the Future Leaders

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In collaboration with



**EquallyAble**



# Leading the Future Leaders

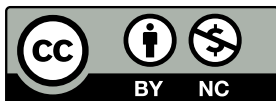
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Mentorship Programme for Aspiring  
Differently Abled Youth

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# Introduction

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According to the International Labour Organization (2011), the differently abled population or “Divyangjan” in India is 70 million. Even though disabled people constitute a significant 5 to 6 % of the population of India, their needs for meaningful employment largely remain unmet and it varies with geographical location (urban or rural), gender, education, and type of disability. According to the 2011 census of India, 68% of India lives in rural areas. Therefore, the number of differently abled people is proportionately higher in rural areas. The numbers constitute majorly of youth aged between 20-29 years eventually resulting in them being disconnected from employment and skills. One in every two differently abled unemployed youth is dependent on their respective families.



# The Initiative

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The project aims to initiate digital literacy and mentorship forum that seeks to identify and mobilize 10 renowned experts (also including experts who are differently abled), known for their leadership skills or roles, to digitally empower and personally mentor 5 differently abled youth—each from rural and tribal communities across India. The 10 leaders, who are experts in their respective domains—from business, education and health to politics, arts and entrepreneurship—will inspire, guide and encourage these youth to become village-level digital young leaders for their communities. The differently abled youth will be trained in functional digital literacy; equipped with basic digital tools; and nurtured to instil life skills, leadership qualities, advocacy skills and an entrepreneurial attitude.

The GOAL (Going Online As Leaders) Samarth mentorship program is an initiative of Digital Empowerment Foundation and EquallyAble Foundation.







# Objectives

- **Leadership** - Help the differently abled mentees become future leaders. Imbibe leadership skills and qualities in them using digital tools.
- **Confidence** - Motivate, inspire and enable the mentees to become confident individuals who live in society without fear of discrimination.
- **Aspiration** - Guide the mentees to aspire for goals and then enable and motivate them to achieve those goals.
- **Entrepreneurship** - Imbibe an entrepreneurial spirit in the mentees so that they become financially independent and stable.







# Nunita

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## *A 24-Year-Old Specially Abled standing on her own feet and conquering the world*

She couldn't walk due to disability, but this didn't stop her from standing against all the odds. Nunita uses her hands to commute. She has completed her graduation in arts with the help of a scholarship.

She went through depression because she thought her disability would never allow her to support her family. She had lost all her confidence and given up hope. During the COVID-19 lockdown, Nunita came to know about Digital Empowerment Foundation and visited the Ramgarh Digital Center in Jharkhand. There she started learning computers and enrolled for the GOAL Samarth program.

Nunita was mentored by Sneha Chandana, founder at Planet Able. Speaking to Sneha gave Nunita more clarity and perception towards life that she never had before. She said that being mentored by Sneha made her see the positive sides of life. Now she is more focused and committed towards achieving

her dreams and goals. She is currently working on improving her vocabulary. She is also acquiring advanced computer skills. She is constantly working on her digital skills with the mobile phone provided by DEF under this GOAL Samarth program.

She is now confident in using various digital platforms like YouTube. She is also learning cooking skills. In her free time, she uses the Internet to look up people who have disabilities and are achieving big things in their lives. It gives her hope and it motivates her.

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*She thought her disability would never allow her to support her family. She had lost all her confidence and given up hope*

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# Irshad

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## *Disabled youth becomes a pillar to his family*

30-year-old Irshad is from the village of Malab in the district of Nuh in Haryana. He has a disability due to polio. Separated from his joint family, Irshad looks after his family on his own.

He completed his basic education and wanted to get a government job so he enrolled for a diploma in education course. Unfortunately, he was unable to get a government job. He then put forward his kind nature and became a social worker. He started supporting villagers in completing their documents required to avail the state and central government welfare schemes and this was his source of income.

He came in contact with DEF's centre coordinator and got to know about the GOAL Samarth mentorship program. He expressed his interest to join the program. He was then mentored by Amex Executive, Ms. Megha Chopra.

During one of the sessions he opened up

and shared about the phase of his life where he felt depressed because he was not good at English, he had failed in his exams and he had to drop out because of financial issues. He had never expressed these things to anyone earlier. He also shared his interest in helping the community. Megha, his mentor guided him to use the Internet and motivated him to not be hesitant about taking opportunities just because he was differently abled.

The sessions also helped Irshad in improving his communication skills. He is now doing an advanced digital literacy course and is aspiring to become a SoochnaPreneur (Information Entrepreneur). He is now planning to work as a digital service provider in his village. He wants to provide government services and entitlements to people who don't have access to it. He plans to use the digital skills he has learnt to empower the community and help them access their rights.



# Ganesh

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*23-year-old differently abled is now saving a minimum of 50,000 rupees per annum*

Ganesh is a 23-year-old from the district of West Champaran in Bihar. Before joining the GOAL Samarth program, he was looking for opportunities to support his family.

DEF's district coordinator Prabhu met Ganesh and enrolled him for the mentorship programme. After several interactions with the mentor Ravi Guria, Ganesh gained some confidence.

Observing his dedication towards the engagement, Prabhu enrolled Ganesh in DEF's programme of Risk communication and community engagement, in which he earned a decent stipend and also spread awareness in his village about Covid-19 and techniques for its prevention. He is now happy to be associated with the programme that has helped him to support his family.

Ganesh also discussed with the mentor about his life, hardships, financial problems he has faced and plans of starting a small venture in his village. In order to get short

term financial help, Ganesh is planning to approach the company where he used to work earlier. He wants to save for his future business plan.

Ganesh followed the advice suggested by his mentor Ravi and approached the previous company. The owner of the company agreed to give him a similar position on which he was working earlier, and according to the plan, Ganesh will now be saving at least 50000 rupees annually. He will then return to his village and take a loan for his business venture

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*he plans of start a small venture in his village.*

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# Sushma Kumari

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## *No Disability can hinder your growth*

Sushma Kumari is a 23-year-old girl from the village of Khoka Beyan in Jharkhand.

She belongs to a financially backward family. Her father works as a daily wage labourer and her mother is a housewife. She has two siblings as well.

Sushma was a studious girl with good grades in school. She had a very hard time convincing her parents to allow her to continue higher education. However, she shared her ordeal with a schoolteacher who helped her in Polytechnic Exam (Electronics and Communications Engineering). She not only passed the exam but also got a scholarship. This helped her to successfully complete her graduation without having to ask her family for money.

After the completion of her diploma, she got a job in a company but due to family disagreement, she had to come back to her

village. However, she didn't give up and tried for competitive exams, unfortunately she could not clear it because of her household responsibilities.

She then came in contact with DEF's centre coordinator and decided to engage with the GOAL Samarth program. During the mentorship sessions with Sneha Chandana, she learned basic life and moral skills. She learned how to be self-reliant, independent and help others too.

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*She had a very hard time convincing her parents to allow her to continue higher education.*

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# Haradhan Manjhi

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## *A 22-year-old with a will to progress*

Haradhan Manjhi belongs to a small village in Jharkhand. Regardless of his inability to pay the fees, his passion for studies did not fade. Through government scholarship, he pursued his education.

With the aim of promoting the Hindi language, he is currently doing Masters in Hindi honours and preparing for government jobs. His family livelihood depends on agricultural work and both his brothers work as daily wage labourers.

Because of his disability, he faced criticisms and difficulties in the community and even amongst his peers. However, rather than giving up, he decided to focus on his studies, as he firmly believes that education is the only weapon capable of changing the society's perspective.

He joined the GOAL Samarth program, where he got a mobile phone. It gave him an opportunity to enhance his digital skills and connect with his mentor, Natasha Bishnoi. As a part of this project, he was actively involved in learning computer skills in DEF's Digital Centre in Gola, Jharkhand.

He shared that these mentorship sessions with Natasha proved to be a blessing for him. He shared how in one such session he learned about

emotions. In another session with a lawyer, he learned about disability rights. He also learned about personality development. These sessions motivated him and made him more confident. In recent discussions with Natasha, he spoke about his education plans and brainstormed ideas in detail about the purpose and direction of his life. He always completes his work on time and has a keen interest in every discussion. He talks to people who are either young or very senior in age, and believes that he tends to learn a lot from them. He is also a strong advocator of educating the youth.

He said that people in rural India were adamant about not educating the youth, but he did not give up and continued to spread awareness about the importance of education. He is an environmentalist too, and wishes to do something for the society and upcoming generation.

The mentorship program has provided him with a platform where he can freely share his thoughts and feelings.

Haradhan Manjhi wanted to become financially independent and with the guidance of his mentor, he has now found a direction and is taking the steps necessary to achieve his goals.



# Radhika

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## *Hardships don't define a person*

Radhika is a 30-year-old mentee from the village of Rampur in the district of West Champaran in Bihar. She completed her graduation in History honours from a government college by availing a scholarship.

During a one-to-one interaction with DEF's centre coordinator, Radhika shared about the time when she went through depression. She felt alienated in school because of her disability and people in her community also discriminated against her. It had reached a stage where she started having suicidal thoughts.

Radhika came in contact with Prabhu, DEF's district coordinator. He enrolled her in the digital literacy program to divert her mind and push her towards doing something productive. Further, after the inception of the GOAL Samarth program, she also became a part of the mentorship program, and was mentored by Mr. Ravi Guria.

Prabhu had a tough time in speaking with Radhika, as she was under confident. Prabhu's seniors and the DEF team in Delhi also prompted her to speak up. After all the efforts the DEF team considered removing her from the program as they got no response from her.

They decided to give it one last try and the mentor and the coordinator were able to get through to her and Radhika gradually started sharing her feelings. She shared her life experiences, and opened up about the phases she has gone through in her life.

Slowly she started bringing up topics that would interest her and from a quiet listener, she became the talkative mentee who would freely express herself and ask questions.

Looking at her transformation, the whole team was impressed and amazed. She is now well versed with computers and she uses her mobile phone to learn new things.





# Akhtar

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*For one who demonstrates perseverance, possibilities open*

Akhtar is a 28-year-old from the village of Sonari in the district of Ramgarh in Jharkhand. He is suffering from locomotor disability due to polio. Akhtar is married and a father of three children.

Akhtar completed his Bachelor's in History and due to prolonged illness and financial instability, he dropped out after that and was unable to continue his education. During a one-to-one interaction with his mentor, Akhtar shared that he was keen to pursue higher education but because of financial problems he was unable to continue. However, a few months back he got to know about the program that DEF was implementing in his village and he immediately approached the digital centre and excitedly enrolled himself in the advance digital literacy course.

Moreover, based on his dedication the centre coordinator enrolled him in the

GOAL Samarth mentorship program. Akhtar said that the GOAL Samarth program has given him hope of reviving his aspiration of learning and growing. Akhtar shared many of his life's experiences with his mentor Natasha and this helped her understand him better. Over the course of several sessions in the span of six months Natasha realised that he had a good voice and he had good negotiation skills and she made him realise the same.

With continuous brainstorming sessions Akhtar decided that he will dedicatedly learn the advance digital skill course and seek the help of the Digital Empowerment Foundation to open his own Community Information Resource Centre in his village to offer digital literacy and citizen services to the villagers which will help him to increase his monthly earnings and at the same time help the villagers.



# Archana Chaurey

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*The limits are what you make them*

Archana Chaurey is an 18-year-old mentee from the village of Parmandal in Madhya Pradesh. She has a locomotor disability that restricts her movement. Archana is in her final year of schooling and wants to pursue her graduation in biology this year.

Her family has been supportive of her dreams and goals, however, her peers in school and the society have not shown the same kind of support. She faces discrimination on a daily basis because of her disability.

She joined the GOAL Samarth mentorship program and received a mobile phone from DEF. She uses it to look up useful information on the Internet and in particular she uses YouTube to watch motivational videos. Archana is being mentored by Shudha Jain, a professional from Fair and Growth company and is mentoring her for the last seven months. Archana said that the

connection she felt with her mentor helped her open up to her in a way that she had been unable to before. She added that the sessions also helped her understand what she wants to do in future. Being a part of the mentoring group has given her new friends and new energy as all the four mentees come from a similar background. They are now friends and share their stories with each other. Being disabled, all of them understand each other's hardships and struggles very well. Archana did a SWOT analysis on the recommendation of Shudha and it helped her realize that she is a good public speaker. Her mentor also made her realize that she needs to have a strong hold over her emotions. Not being able to do so could make her emotions her weakness. Her mentor also guided her to write a journal and she now maintains a daily diary. This helps her reflect on the mentor-mentee sessions and also on her daily life and how it is progressing.





# Aamanat

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## *Stronger, faster & better*

Aamanat is 22-year-old mentee from the village of Malab in the district of Nuh in Haryana. She stays with her parents and two younger siblings. Aamanat lost her right leg three years ago in an accident. She has completed her bachelor's degree in Arts and holds a diploma in JBT (Junior basic training for teaching).

Aamanat's family's income is based on agriculture. She added that they were a big support to her after her accident. She lost hope after the accident and it took a long time for her to gain her confidence. The mentoring sessions played a huge part in her recovery.

Aamanat's mentor Annudita conducts weekly sessions with Aamanat in the group as well as individually to motivate her so that she stays positive. Mentor Annudita shared that the sessions with Aamanat were very

productive because Aamanat was open to the guidance. The SWOT (Strength, weakness, opportunity and threats) analysis was also productive and this helped her understand more about Aamanat and she then planned the sessions accordingly.

Annudita spoke to Aamanat about the qualities that a good teacher should possess and she organized an activity to help Aamanat in practicing patience, a quality that is very important in teaching primary school children. She also conducted sessions and suggested videos which would help Aamanat to adopt creative methods to teach children in a playful way.

The mentoring support helped Aamanat in building her confidence and she said she is now confident to express her feelings to anyone without any hesitation.



# Mohammed Tofiq

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## *Converting learnings to earnings*

Mohammad Tofiq is a 27-year-old differently abled mentee from the district of Nuh in Haryana. He got to know about the program from DEF's district coordinator and during the orientation by the team he expressed his willingness to join the GOAL Samarth program.

He is being mentored by Ms. Megha Chopra. During a one-to-one interaction Tofiq said that the mentoring sessions have helped him to stay motivated, due to some family issues he was asked to leave the house by his parents, he struggled a lot during this phase. Motivational sessions on emotions and leadership and collaboration by Ms. Megha and Mr. Amar, his two mentors gave him strength to overcome the difficult period and thrive.

Tofiq individually interacted with Megha and had some brainstorming sessions that

resulted in something concrete. He has enrolled himself in a professional computer diploma course and has learned a lot about the basics of a computer. He can now confidently use all the Microsoft office applications and is learning photoshop and indesign as well.

Recently he got an opportunity to become a primary school teacher and was offered a monthly salary of 6000 rupees. He shared this achievement with his mentors and got emotional and thanked the team for their continuous support, during one of the difficult phases of his life.

Tofiq is hardworking and dedicated and the DEF team is now planning to give him some digital infrastructure that will enable him to earn a steady income and also provide basic digital services in his village.





Differently Abled Youth

## GOAL-SAMARTH

Digital Mentorship of Differently Abled Youth



**In collaboration with**

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