


## Strengthening Digital Information Ecosystem

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**Samarth SoochnaPreneur:  
Inspirational Stories  
of Empowerment**

# Introduction

Samarth SochnaPreneur (SSP) is an initiative of the EquallyAble Foundation and the Digital Empowerment Foundation. The aim of the program is to digitally empower persons with disabilities to become social entrepreneurs and further empower their communities by providing them with digital access to governance, education and finance.

Each PwD is provided with digital training and digital tools such as tablets, laptops and printers and in turn (s)he uses the digital tools to provide digital services such as access to government schemes and services, Aadhar corrections, photocopies, online bookings, education, finance, health, livelihood, and several entitlements.

SSP allows the PwD to not only become independent and earn enough money to support their family but it also allows them to serve communities at large. One tablet, one printer and one laptop has the power to not only transform the life of a PwD but also of an entire community that has been in information darkness due to lack of access to digital tools.

# Providing Access

Mala Khatun belongs to the district of Murshidabad, West Bengal. She belongs to a financially backward family and she has had low vision since her birth. Life for her has always come with obstacles attached to her disability. However, her undying spirit to overcome all her difficulties has made her a strong individual. She always wanted to financially support her family but was not aware of the ways from where she could support them. To her luck, she was introduced to the power of digital literacy and the benefits through a campaign organized by the Digital Empowerment Foundation. Therefore, she enrolled herself in the digital literacy course offered by Digital Empowerment Foundation, where she learned about digital literacy. Currently, she is a Samarth Sochnapreneur who supports her community by rendering help in online banking, booking online railway and flight tickets, government entitlements etc. By doing so, she is not only earning a living for her family but also supporting her community.

**Mala Khatun**  
Samarth SochnaPreneur





# Achieving Financial Freedom

Marijina Khatun hails from a small village in Murshidabad district, West Bengal. Even though she has always wanted to support her husband who is a daily wage worker, she could not find anything suitable due to her disability. During one of the program interventions by the Digital Empowerment Foundation in her community, she came into contact with one of the DEF coordinators, where she shared how her family is struggling to make ends meet.

The coordinator then enrolled her in DEF's digital literacy program, where she learned about various digital tools. After successful training, she became a Samarth Sochnapreneur and now runs her own digital centre in her locality. Through her centre, she provides services like Internet banking, E-governance related services, printing and training on digital literacy to her community. Through her dedication and hard work, she is not only financially supporting her family but also developing her confidence to run a business on her own.



**Marijina Khatun**  
Samarth Sochnapreneur

# Digital Mentorship Creates a Digital Entrepreneur

Jyotsna Khatun is a 35-year-old Samarth Soochnapreneur from Murshidabad district, West Bengal. She has a locomotor disability that restricts her movement. However, her family always supported her goal to be self-reliant, unlike her peers and community members who always demotivated her. Jyotsna is one of the GOAL mentees from the GOAL (Going Online As Leaders) Samarth program, an initiative of EquallyAble and Digital Empowerment Foundation. Through the program, she enrolled herself in the digital literacy program where she was trained to use digital tools and the internet to access information. Soon after that, she started her own digital centre with DEF's support, where she provides digital literacy to the community and also caters to their digital service needs like photocopy, enrollment in government schemes, etc. The centre has helped her in earning a steady income to support her family financially and at the same time it has also helped her in serving the community.



**Jyostana Khatun**  
Samarth SoochnaPreneur

# Age is Just a Number

Nurul Haque is 57 years old and currently living in cachar district, Assam. Since childhood, he has had a locomotor disability because of which he was not treated with dignity respected in his community. Even after multiple attempts, he was unable to support himself financially. However, one day his neighbour informed him about the digital center run by Digital Empowerment Foundation, where he enrolled himself as a student in the digital literacy classes. Nurul excelled in the classes, and became digitally literate and was able to further support himself. Later, he was given an opportunity to become a Samarth Soochnapreneur that helped him earn his livelihood by providing digital services to his community, such as online bill payments facilitation, providing printing services, printouts, introducing government schemes, etc. Now, Nurul is imparting digital literacy classes to the children of his community.



**Nurul Haque**  
Samarth SoochnaPreneur



# Digital Tools Lead to Financial Freedom

Emajuddin Sheikh is a resident of Khargram, Murshidabad. He is suffering from Polio because of which many people in his community discriminate against him. However, rather than giving up, he decided to focus on his career, as he understood that his monthly salary will help him support his family. After struggling to find a job, he came to know about Digital Empowerment Foundation through his friend, so he joined the Samarth SochnaPreneur program. He was given digital equipments like a mobile phone, a desktop, a printer and a tablet and he is now using the equipment to serve others as well as earn an income for himself.

Emajuddin is now successfully operating the digital centre and training people on digital literacy, as well as providing various digital services to his community. He is delighted to become a part of such an initiative and is earning enough to provide for his family.

A photograph of Emajuddin Sheikh, a man with a mustache wearing a blue and white striped shirt, sitting at a desk in his digital center. He is looking towards the camera. On the desk, there is a laptop, a printer, and various papers and cables. The background is a dark blue wall with a pattern of small white dots.

**Emajuddin Sheikh**  
Samarth SochnaPreneur

## Leading by Example

"There are things I can do and things I can't do," says Zakira Khatun, a Samarth Soochnapreneur with Locomotor disability from West Bengal's Murshidabad district. Zakira has faced several obstacles, yet she has never given up on her goal of being self-sufficient. She has faced many hurdles and she says more than anything else it is the way people treat her that irks her the most. But she's also seen many beneficial developments in getting other persons with disabilities more physically engaged and independent through sustainable livelihood options.

She also assists the community at her centre which has been set up with the help of Digital Empowerment Foundation; by educating them on digital literacy, banking, insurance, and ticket booking. It not only assists her in becoming financially independent, but she also ensures that she looks out for other people who are differently-abled.

**Zakira Khatun**  
Samarth SoochnaPreneur





# Hope Spreads Happiness

Zahidul Hasan had several hurdles throughout his life after being diagnosed with Locomotor disability at a young age. He struggled to be accepted in a culture where being disabled is still considered a stigma. However, Zahidul never gave up on his dream of being independent.

With the support of the Digital Empowerment Foundation, Zahidul became a Samarth Sochnapreneur and established a centre that provides assistance with digital literacy, banking, insurance, and ticket booking. He also tutors school children and educates them on the need of digital literacy. He believes that 'Hope 1000 Project' has assisted him in developing a platform from which he can make a difference in the lives of other disabled people by giving them opportunities to lead a sustainable way of life.

The community leaders have also praised all of his efforts and hard work. They feel Zahidul has not only worked hard to become self-sufficient, but has also paved the way for many more persons with disabilities by setting an example. Instead of focusing on his limitations as a consequence of his disability, Zahidul focused on what he could accomplish and continues to make a difference in the lives of others.

**Zahidul Hasan**  
Samarth SochnaPreneur



## Delivering Happiness with Pride

Abdul Ahad Laskar, currently residing in Cachar (Udharbond) Assam, has faced many difficulties because of his Locomotor disability, which he has had from childhood. He frequently recalls being mocked and discriminated against as a child. He did, however, come to recognize his own potential over time. He has now established his own business with the support of the Digital Empowerment Foundation, where he educates the youth on digital and financial literacy and makes them aware of its value in their daily lives. He is also ensuring that he can assist other individuals with disabilities by providing a platform for them to acquire new skills and become self-sufficient.



**Abdul Ahad Laskar**  
Samarth SochnaPreneur

# Never Lose Hope

"Fortune favours the brave", and so is the story of Oliulla Barbhuiya living in Cachar district, Assam. He is suffering from locomotor disability since his childhood because of which he was not respected in his community. There were many instances where he was bullied by his peers and humiliated as well. However, this did not destroy his motivation to live a respectful life. One day he met one of the district coordinators of Digital Empowerment Foundation near his location, where he was oriented about the power of digital literacy.

Right after the camp, he enrolled himself in the digital literacy training offered by Digital Empowerment Foundation where he actively participated in all the classes and learned about all the digital tools. Currently, he is a Samarth Soochnapreneur with Digital Empowerment Foundation and has opened his own center where he is providing services like filling various online government forms and providing digital literacy to his village youth.



**Oliulla Barbhuiya**  
Samarth SoochnaPreneur



## From Getting no Access to Becoming an Access Provider

Fokrul Islam Laskar from the district of Hailakandi, Assam is suffering from locomotor disability. He was facing many difficulties due to financial constraints and lack of employment opportunities in his region for the differently-abled population. However, he persistently looked for livelihood opportunities and one day his desire to live a respectful life happened to visit landed him at one of the Digital Empowerment Foundation centers located in his area.

This was surely was a life changing opportunity for him because he learned about digital literacy and the internet. After completion of the course, he became a Samarth SoochnaPreneur with Digital Empowerment Foundation and opened a centre to help his community connect to the digital world. Currently, Fokrul is providing services such as printing, scanning, enrolling people in providing government schemes, etc. through his centre. In the future he wants to introduce a digital literacy course for the children in his community.



**Fokrul Islam Laskar**  
Samarth SoochnaPreneur

## Conclusion

The case stories are testimony to the success of the Samarth SochnaPreneur program. These 500 SSPs have taken the responsibility of turning themselves into community leaders who are transforming their communities and villages by bringing them out of information darkness and providing them access to the world of digital. Whether it's education, governance, health or finance, these 500 PwDs are ensuring that the daily lives of all the people in their respective villages are made easier, they are made aware of their rights and entitlements and they don't have to travel to far-off places to gain access to basic digital services. On an average each Samarth SochnaPreneur provides 1,000 services every month so effectively these 500 SSPs are providing 500,000 services every month. Empowering these 500 SSPs has provided digital access to 500 villages.