Micromovements of Change

Brave Spaces

Women and young girls from rural India are unable to take control of their lives, access resources, and take part in opportunities that they dream of. Their innate strengths and abilities remain hidden, feeling invisible and undervalued by a complex, unequal social and economic system. Deep-rooted socio-cultural and traditional perspectives of the community have built fear, and doubt in their own abilities, inhibiting young girls and women from unleashing their true potential. We realised that there is a need for a new empowerment story for women, where they are creators and narrators of the story itself. Together with the community, ‘Brave Spaces’ was co-created where women can discover their voice and discuss ways to exercise their agency. Objectives of these spaces are to:

- **Build solidarity to overcome socio-cultural barriers** by voicing aspirations, realising innate strength, and forging common narratives for empowerment
- **Co-create new models for inclusive growth** with stakeholders for accessing resources and opportunities
- **Galvanise a cadre of women change makers and influencers** by connecting with peers and stakeholders, thereby, mainstreaming women-led models for socio-economic growth

Impact and Potential

The first brave space was conceptualised to enable women to unlearn layers of social conditioning and embrace their hidden aspirations, the ability of brave space to enable women channelise one’s talent:

- Entrepreneurial energies of 5000+ young girls and women were unleashed through 7 physical Brave Spaces in 3 districts of Jhansi, Niwari, and Mirzapur.
- Led 300+ women to move beyond collectives and walk into non-traditional economic activities.
- The ability of Brave Space to customise according to the users’ needs led to unlocking its physical aspect where women and young girls were introduced to new-age enterprise choices such as udayME Kiosk, e-rickshaw, Optical lens manufacturing, and gig enterprises.

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**Co-working (brave) spaces for young women**

Spaces where women build solidarity to overcome socio-economic barriers by voicing aspirations and forging common narratives of empowerment

- **Only 20.3% of women participate in the Indian labour force**
  - Only 20% of enterprises in rural India are women-owned

- **49.9% of women-led enterprises are set up out of necessity rather than aspirations**

- **90% of India's women are working in the unorganised sector, with low-paying subsistence activities**

**About the Work4Progress Programme**

In the last 5 years, 12 systemic prototypes have been designed as part of the Work4Progress programme, which are influencing the local entrepreneurial ecosystem and bringing systemic shifts in the communities. These systemic prototypes have been co-designed with communities by stirring innovations, breaking silos, and forging connections with stakeholders.

**Join the Movements of Change**

- **Join us as a partner** in our mission to accelerate entrepreneurship-led job creation under the Work4Progress programme
- Contribute in replication of inclusive approaches by **adoption the prototypes** developed under the programme to enable shifts in many local entrepreneurial ecosystems
- **Join our social investing** platform Rang De to enable access to affordable credit for millions of aspiring entrepreneurs

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[www.jobswemake.org](http://www.jobswemake.org)

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1. 2019, MOSPI report  
2. Times of India – IMF, ILO, WIEGO, WRI
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Forging aspirations to empowerment...

Pragya Devi, 34, had previously expressed in our interactions of her desire and curiosity about bikes, which led her to learn to ride one as well. Through her endeavour, she prompted us to think of the idea of setting up women-led rickshaw services for the safe mobility of women. Since 2017, Pragya’s e-rickshaw “ToTo”, darts across Mirzapur, where she is revered as the lady who dons a motorcycle jacket while cascading around the area on her e-rickshaw. She has trained over ten women in her village, many of whom ride their own e-rickshaws now! Even during the pandemic, she was entrusted with mobilising essential services and workers and has become a trailblazer in her community. Pragya is a pioneer in redefining safe mobility and building pathways for women. She inspires women to dream a little bit differently!

...Enabling many more voices to come forward...

As Pragya reassesses mobility for others, Ravi Sen, 36, a saree Retail entrepreneur, is setting an example of the utilisation of mobility for market expansion. She rides her scooty in the alleys of Punawali ka village in Jhansi, selling a wide range of bright, embellished sarees for her dedicated customers. Ravi has gathered admiration for herself by merging a balance of respect for her culture while also fulfilling her entrepreneurial aspiration. One would never see Ravi without her “pallu” even as she rides her scooty. Ravi’s eyes glow with joy while sharing how she helped her husband set up his own business. Ravi has instituted a culture of entrepreneurship amongst her community through a micromovement of innovation. She has subtly fought an unseen battle in a male-dominated society and led the way for fellow women to build their market!

Pioneering a better tomorrow...

While Pragya and Ravi are taking the mobility industry by storm in their respective villages, young Shreya, 23, is ignited with the aspiration to bring accessibility of better healthcare in her community as a nursing student. However, societal responsibility pushed her away from taking a step further. Brave space introduced her to gig opportunities concept and market assessment. During Covid-19, she encouraged fellow girls to manufacture and sell masks. Carrying forward her skill, she also sells her manufactured goods through multiple social media platforms. Shreya has transformed into a confident woman, and today she is enabling last-mile accessibility of better healthcare through tele-medication and teleconsultation services.

“It is so encouraging to see women in my village come out of their shells and talk about economic opportunities.
Women do not usually discuss business or even aspirations.
Only when given an opportunity do they realise that even they have entrepreneurial aspirations”
- Devi Mishra, Nursery entrepreneur

Brave Space is an enabler for aspirations to be voiced and channelled to create an inclusive culture of entrepreneurship among women in rural communities. Technology-driven Brave Spaces has opened a window for women to a world beyond their village and is providing them access to new-age economic opportunities. These stories of empowerment do not end with one woman but continue to pass on to many more in solidarity.

Scan this QR code to watch a Brave Spaces entrepreneur story come live.

Learn more about the #JobsWeMake movement on www.jobswemake.org
Contact us at work4progress@devalt.org

This prototype has been co-created under the Work4Progress initiative led by Development Alternatives with its partners, with support from “la Caixa” Foundation.
More Information about Development Alternatives’ work can be found here.