Micromovements of Change

Safe Mobility

India’s age-old patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes often restrict the mobility of women, affecting their access to choices and more importantly, their pathway to economic empowerment. Young girls who do not have access to transport end up dropping out of schools¹, thus reducing their chance to avail basic needs as well as mainstream economic opportunities. They often are left dependent on their male counterparts, widening the gender gap and keeping women disempowered.

- Through deep listening with the community, we realised that the answer to this challenge lies with women themselves. A pathway was created for women to be at the forefront of mobility challenges through the **women-led e-rickshaw** model which provides:
  - Safe commuting services to community members including girls and women
  - Support women to enhance livelihoods through e-rickshaw and ancillary enterprises
  - Inspire women to move towards non-traditional enterprises and contribute strongly towards economic, social and environmental impact in their community.

Impact and Potential

A network of women-led e-rickshaw in the streets of Bundelkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh has become the wind beneath the wings of young women and girls. What started as a journey of 12 pioneering women enabling other women whose lives are confined around the walls of their homes, has resulted in:

- A movement that has created access to **safe transport for lakhs of women**.
- Reduction of drop-out rate of girl students by 15-20%.
- Women-led e-rickshaws today account for 4% of all e-rickshaws in Mirzapur and Niwadi districts.
- Providing essential services like door-to-door delivery of essential items, and emergency transportation facilities to community members especially during the nationwide lockdown. As a result, more than **40,000 women were able to access healthcare facilities** in Mirzapur.
- Women e-rickshaw entrepreneurs become **influencers** in their communities by inspiring their peers to pursue entrepreneurship and mainstreaming it in rural geographies.

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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¹ Factors leading to school dropouts in India: An analysis of National Family Health Survey-3 data.
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It was in 2017 that the first winds of change were propelled through Pragya Devi’s e-rickshaw travelling down the bylanes of Mirzapur. Pragya, 34, is the first women e-rickshaw entrepreneur in the district where the idea of women behind the wheels was not only distant but unimaginable. Not only did her micromovement of courage remain the mainstay for women’s safe mobility, Pragya also inspired younger women to step up from their circumstances and be in the driver’s seat of their life.

Saida Begum, 22, is a domestic violence survivor who decided to redirect her own path after seeing Pragya driving proudly. Today, she is not only the breadwinner of her family but also provides for her husband’s medical treatment and child’s education. Saida is the youngest e-rickshaw entrepreneur in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh and proudly leads the movement for safe mobility in her community.

Driving to a brighter future...

Sangita, 29, is a young woman full of aspirations. While previously employed as a carpet weaver, she would notice Saida riding her e-rickshaw out and about in town on her way home. Sangita harboured aspirations to ride an e-rickshaw of her own. Being specially-abled, she feared that it would become a setback to her dreams. The W4P team introduced her to Chhangur, 29, an e-rickshaw refurbisher and manufacturer.

Having lost his job during Covid-19, Chhangur understood Sangita’s desire to become an entrepreneur. He customised an e-rickshaw for her and stirred the wind for her wings to take flight. Using his experience as a painter and welder, Chhangur salvages e-rickshaws into usable vehicles. In one year, his enterprise has created 6 jobs and enabled 22 other e-rickshaw entrepreneurs to access quality e-rickshaws. Chhangur has proved to be a ray of hope for many more aspiring women who cannot afford brand-new e-rickshaws. One such woman is Seema Devi, who wanted more than the conventional life.

Making entrepreneurship accessible

Seema Devi, 32, was a home-based tailor who had the desire to choose a pathway beyond tailoring. With two of her children growing up and setting foot into early education, she knew she had to anchor the financial responsibility of their expenses along with her husband, who is a daily wage labourer. Being fond of riding a scooty, it took Seema only 2 days to learn to drive an e-rickshaw from Pragya Devi, the pioneer of the women-led e-rickshaw movement. If you ever find the fortune of being in Mirzapur, you may be lucky to spot Seema and Pragya catching up for tea after a long day of work!

“I am very happy earning my own income.
Riding an e-rickshaw has made me independent and be able to provide not only for my two children, but also my own needs.”

- Saida Begum, an empowered e-rickshaw entrepreneur in Eastern Uttar Pradesh

Scan this QR code to watch an e-rickshaw entrepreneur story come alive.

The network of women-led e-rickshaw is leading the pathway for other women by breaking down gender stereotypes in the community and enabling micromovements of change towards safe mobility. The potential remains huge, as Safe Mobility is a catalyst in empowering many young women to access entrepreneurship opportunities.

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

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