



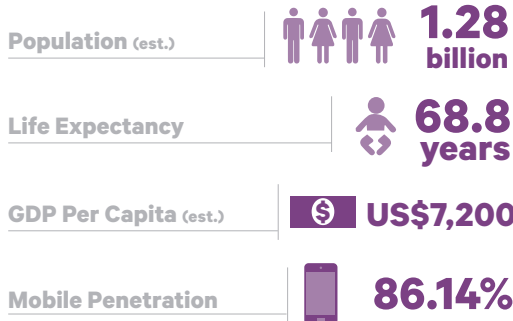
Soochnapreneur

The Soochnapreneur (sooch-nah-pre-neur) program connects rural citizens to information about government entitlements and other digital services while creating technology-based entrepreneurship opportunities for rural youth.

In India, approximately 70% of the nation's 1.3 billion people live in rural areas.¹ Largely due to poverty and illiteracy, many of these citizens may be unaware of government entitlements that exist to help them and may not have access to the Internet that could provide more information about these programs. In collaboration with the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), the Soochnapreneur program equips rural youth with advanced wireless technologies that enable them to become entrepreneurs and deliver much-needed information about entitlements to citizens as a fee-based service. Ultimately, this program aims to demonstrate how advanced wireless technologies can be used for social and economic empowerment, which will help bridge poverty gaps through last-mile information access and delivery of services. Soochnapreneur aligns with the Government of India's Digital India plan, whose goal is to empower citizens through ubiquitous access to the Internet and use of mobile phones and services.

INDIA

2018 Statistics*



Challenge

- Poverty and illiteracy leave many rural citizens unaware of and without access to numerous existing government entitlements for which they are eligible.
- 3G and 4G/LTE-enabled smartphones and tablets, as well as data plans, continue to be unaffordable to a vast majority of rural citizens.
- Rural youth need new entrepreneurial avenues to earn a livelihood, help lift their families out of poverty and enable them to contribute to their communities.

Solution

- MeraApp is a mobile application developed by DEF which contains details about many government schemes and entitlements, thereby providing timely and relevant information to rural citizens about available benefits.
- Rural youth from the West Champaran district of Bihar, Guna in Madhya Pradesh, Alwar and Barmer in Rajasthan, Ranchi in Jharkhand and Bargarh in Odisha have been provided 3G and 4G/LTE-enabled tablets preloaded with the MeraApp. The youth also receive data connectivity, data plans and training enabling them to deliver the information as a fee-based service to rural citizens. These rural youth are called Soochnapreneurs. The name is derived from the words "Soochna" which means 'information' in Hindi and "entrepreneur."
- Soochnapreneurs have been connected to IT and digitally-enabled Community Information Resource Centres (CIRCs) in their block (sub-district) to provide various digital services, including mobile phone talk-time recharges, bus and rail ticket reservations and facilities to photocopy or scan documents, among others.
- These Soochnapreneurs are also enrolling themselves in the Government of India's Common Service Centre Program, which will enable them to deliver a larger number of digital services to rural citizens and improve their incomes.
- The MeraApp is available on the Google Play store.

*Sources: CIA World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>); mobile penetration data provided by Ovum World Cellular Information Service and based on market intelligence.

Impact



7,000 Rural Beneficiaries to Date

So far 100 Soochnapreneurs have assisted about 7,000 rural beneficiaries with applying for benefits, such as those for mothers, for housing, road construction and emergency medical expense coverage.



Application Providing Critical Benefit Details

The MeraApp mobile application provides details of 628 benefits and entitlements provided by the Central Government of India and State Governments of Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan; more continue to be added.



Increased Average Monthly Income

As of June 2017, Soochnapreneurs earned a monthly income of Rs. 1,600 on average through delivery of these services.

Technology

- MeraApp Android mobile application
- 3G and 4G/LTE-enabled tablets
- 3G and 4G/LTE connectivity

Program Stakeholders

The state governments of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha



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wireless reach

¹ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=IN>

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