



Voluntary Assessment of Digital Sakhi Project - Maharashtra

Assessment Partner: NuSocia





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1.

PROJECT BACKGROUND













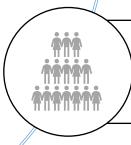
Digital Sakhi Project : A Glimpse



To identify and **develop a cadre of 100 rural women as 'Digital Sakhis',** building and strengthening their capacities to impart digital financial literacy training to rural communities in Maharashtra.



To identify and provide training and handholding support to 1,000 existing rural women micro-entrepreneurs, enabling them to expand and strengthen their existing micro-businesses.



To create awareness in the rural ecosystem about digital financial literacy by conducting community mass awareness sessions on enabling digital payments, reaching out to one lakh rural population in Maharashtra.



Implementing partner- Action for Agricultural Renewal in Maharashtra (AFARM)



100 Digital Sakhis (Trained on Digital Financial Literacy, Leadership and Technology)



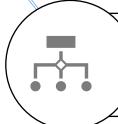
1,000 Women
Entrepreneurs
(upskilling on goat rearing, poultry, dairy, tailoring and enterprise development)



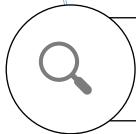
1,00,000 community members in 30 villages of Pune, Osmanabad and Solapur in Maharashtra (awareness on digital financial literacy)



Voluntary Assessment of Digital Sakhi Project



Understand project objectives, stakeholders and methodology



Assess direct and indirect changes in the target group, LTFS recall and overall impact of project against its outcomes



Provide recommendations for improvement and sustainability of the project











2.

METHODOLOGY













Study Design

Key Assessment Questions

- Testing the overall theory of change.
- Has the project contributed to the well-being of DS and WE?
- To what extent can they be considered 'empowered' over the course of DS project implementation?
- What are the circumstances that make Digital Financial Services(DFS) more conducive to communities?
- Have these impacts been lasting & sustainable?
- How is sustainability of DFS being defined?
- Do the benefits of DS to its beneficiaries outweigh the cost of the project?
- Did DS provide a cost-effective approach for impacting the Women entrepreneur, communities and DS?

Schedules of enquiry

• Listing of inherent assumptions.

- Knowledge about government schemes.
- Support received for DFS usage and isolating DS inputs among these supports.
- Awareness about DS project and personnel.
- Overall feedback and suggestions.
- Detailed ABC based budget analysis of the project and per-unit cost analysis.
- Benchmarking it with publicly available data.
- Mapping the intervention against the longevity of the impact for amortization of the cost.

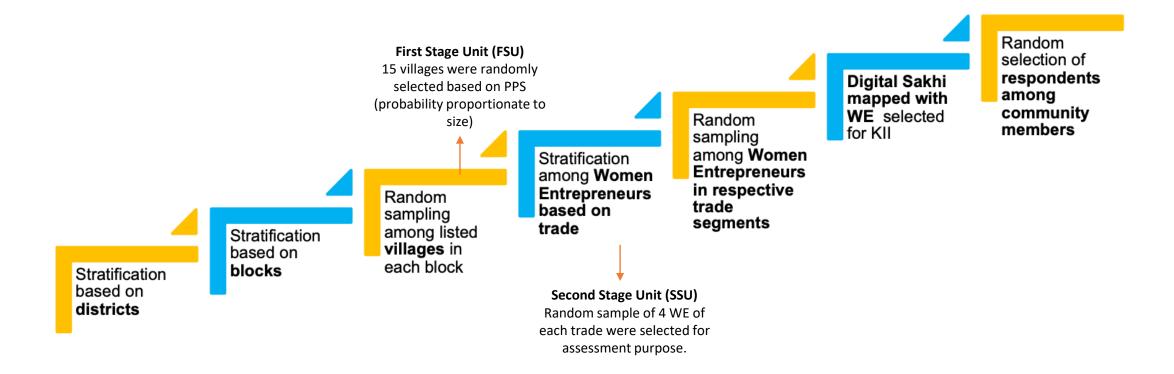
Study Tools

- Visioning Sessions with DS, WE and AFARM team.
- Microenterprise assessment of WE.
- Mini FGDs / KIIs at family meetings with WE and DS.
- Documenting DFS ecosystem of 15 villages.
- Community usage of Digital Financial Services.
- Prompted brand recall surveys.
- RCEEIS Framework





Sample Design: Digital Sakhi and Women Entrepreneurs



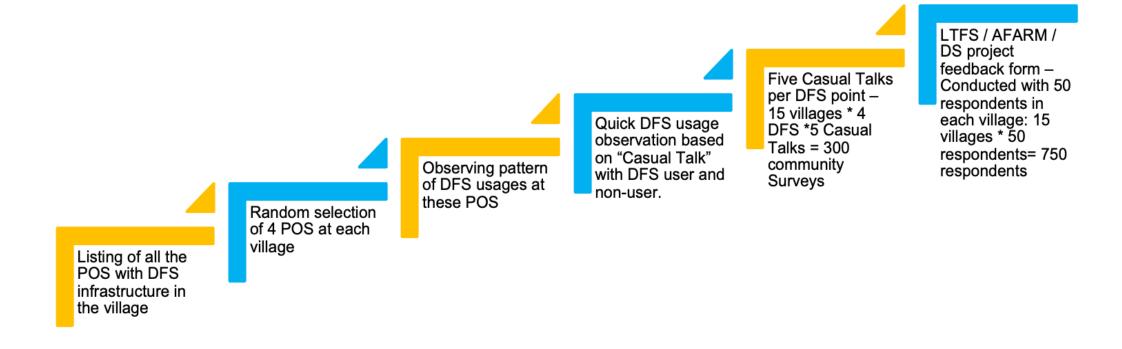
(15 villages*4 trades category*4 respondents = 240 Women Entrepreneurs

+ 40 Digital Sakhis' Interview)





Sample Design: Community Survey



Community Survey 1 (About DFS) – **460 respondents(Shopkeepers)**, Community Survey 2 (About DS Project) – **1,104 respondents (community members)**





Work Phases (Sep 2021 – Jan 2022)

 Initiated desk research and simultaneously deployed a team for site

visit for rapid

assessment.

 Incorporated desk research and site visit learnings to prepare an inception report for the study.

- Researchers deployed in Osmanabad, Solapur and Pune Districts.
- Each district had one team leader along with two researchers. All the three district team leaders reported to Project Leader.
- Field research completion with adherence to the NuSocia Research Protocol as well as COVID safety protocol.

- Data Cleaning and Documentation.
- Data Analysis & best practice documentation.
- Presentation of preliminary findings to LTFS team and incorporate the LTFS team's inputs.

 Final Report submission incorporating feedbacks and suggestions from LTFS team.

Analysis & Insights

4th Dec to 10th Jan

10th Jan to 20th Jan

29th Sept to 11th Oct

Research Design

Primary Research

15th Nov to 3rd Dec

Context Setting

In depth meeting

with LTFS and

Implementation

understand the

and AFARM.

project.

partner AFARM to

NuSocia shared the

required document

checklist with LTFS

Report Production



3.

FINDINGS





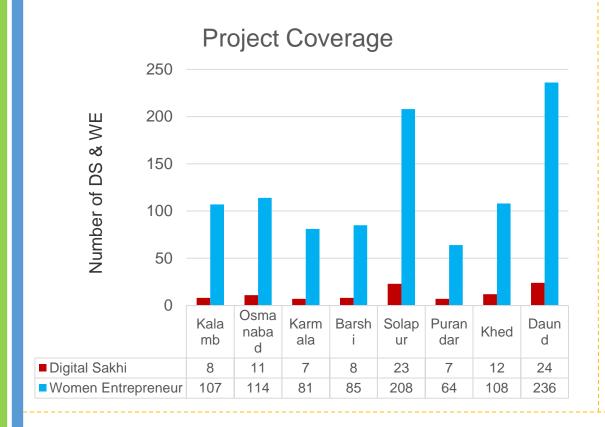


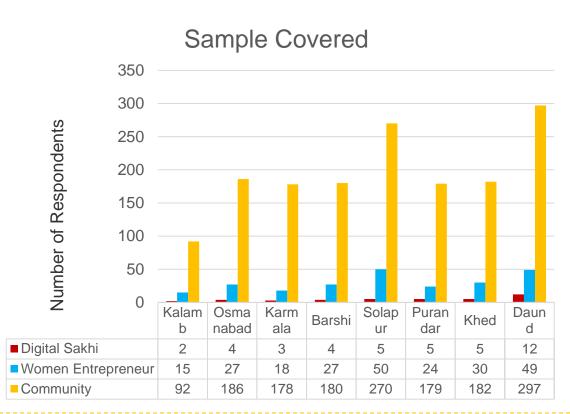






Coverage and Distribution





For the assessment, Total 8 clusters of Pune, Solapur, and Osmanabad districts in Maharashtra were taken. **40%** of Digital Sakhi and **24%** of Women Entrepreneurs under the program were covered during assessment



3.1

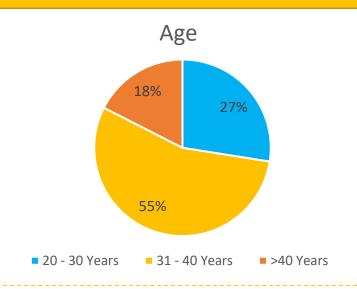
FINDINGS - Digital Sakhi

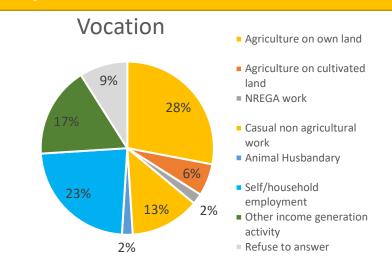
AGENCY. ADOPTION. ADVOCACY

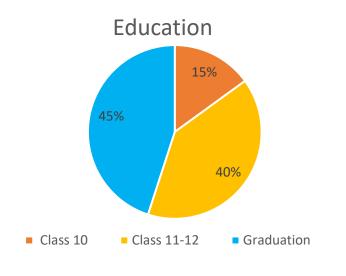


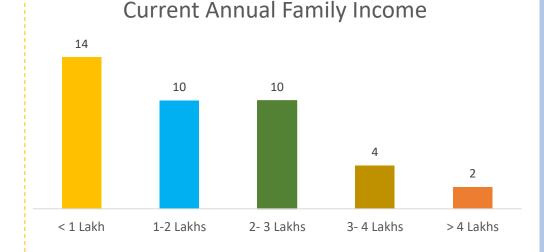


Digital Sakhi: Demographic Overview









The persona of a Digital Sakhi:

- Average Age is 39 years
- Has a minimum education level of Class 10.
- Has a family income of <3 Lakhs.
- Also practices agriculture on own land or has household employment.
- Learnt about the project from community volunteers or SHGs group.
- Joined the project to involve with the community or due to the interest in teaching/training



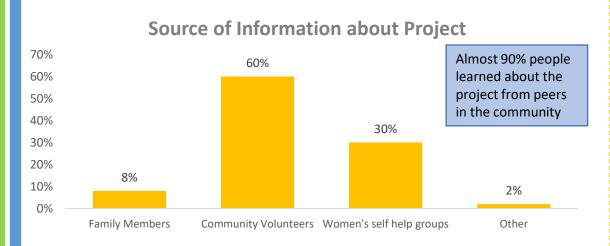


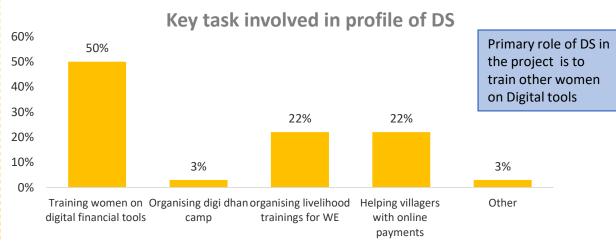
Digital Sakhi: Overall Success Parameters

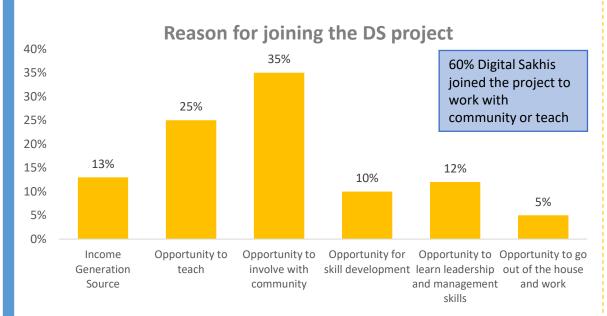
	Baseline*	Assessment
Adoption of digital payment modes	24%	100%
Knowledge of Govt schemes	NA	99%
Knowledge for using internet, computer	NA	100%
Contribution to family income	27%	95%
Participation in financial decision making	39%	87% (37% (Self)+50% (with Family))
Sustainability of the livelihood	NA	96 % working (50% run Digital Seva Kendras)
Her continued engagement with BFSI segment	NA	62%

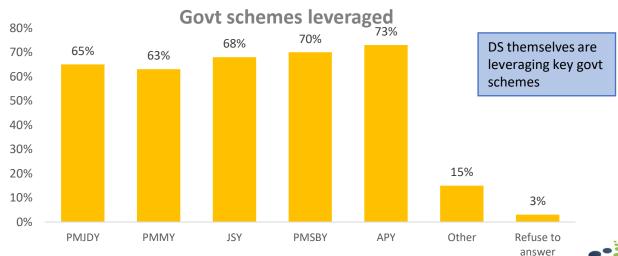


Digital Sakhi: Findings



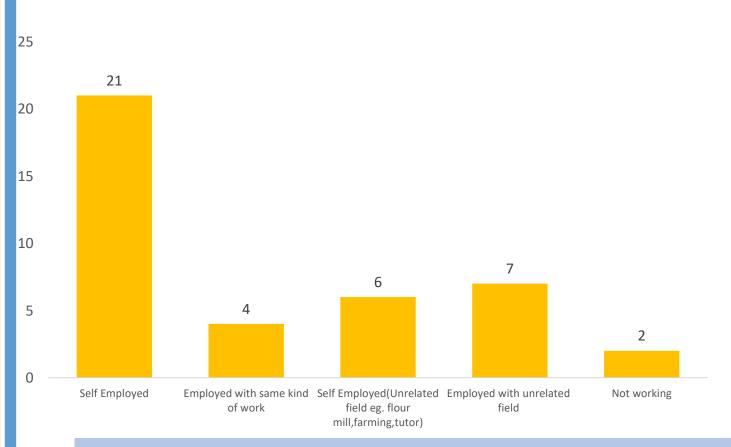








Digital Sakhi : Findings



Category	Occupation	No of Sakhis
Self Employed	Digital Seva Kendra	14
	Tailoring	5
	Beauty Parlor	2
Employed with same kind of work	Working with other organization on women empowerment project	3
	Working as a DS in Phase II	1
Self	Farming	3
Employment(U nrelated Work)	Flour Mill	2
	Tutor	1
Employed with unrelated work	Work in private company/ MIDC	4
	Asha worker/community volunteer/ Grampanchayat Clerk	2

Most Digital Sakhi are self-employed and the majority of them are running Digital Seva Kendras. Also providing access to the WE training sessions helped Digital Sakhis to found income generation opportunities in the locality. Two Digital Sakhis aren't working right now due to additional family responsibilities.



Digital Sakhi : Findings

- As a result of this project, DS have started taking more interest in family finances.
- The project helped DS to open their bank accounts, and those who have smartphones have started using digital modes for payment for payments such as phone recharge, electricity bills and household purchases.
- DS have become habitual about saving and keeping it with formal financial institutions like banks
- More DS preferred SHG loans over MFIs because of adjustable deadlines, low interest and less pressure.
- SOFTER GAINS in their own words
 - "This project gave us the courage and that confidence that we can do anything if we decide something to do."
 - "Our family members respect us, they consider our opinion and decision now. This is the biggest change we have observed."
 - "This project has enabled us to become **financially independent**. It gave us the confidence to manage our expenses without taking the help of family members. This is the best thing about the project."
 - "We came to know the importance of education after the training therefore now whatever it takes but I will pay attention to my child's education and wherever he wants to learn and whatever cost it takes I will take **responsibility** for that"

DS Pooja Halande said(Patas, Daund, Pune),

"I want to grow my Digital Seva Kendra because now there is a very limited number of space. That's why I will grow it on a larger scale and serve the villagers. Also, I am going to contest the gram panchayat election. It doesn't matter whether I win or lose but I want to contest at least once. I have many dreams that I want to fulfill. This confidence comes within me due to Digital Sakhi project."

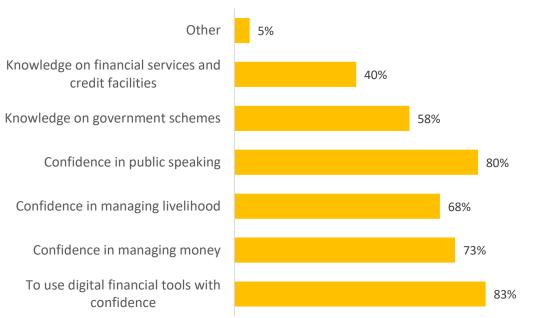




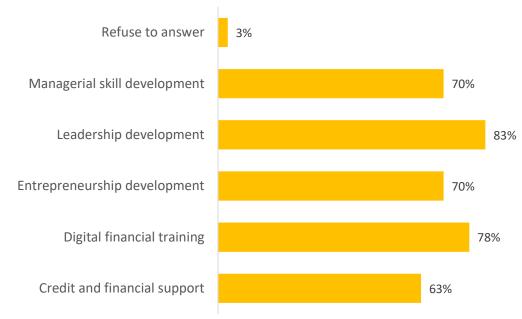


Impact on Digital Sakhi





Support from DS project



About the Digital Sakhi Project

- **60-80% Digital Sakhi** acknowledge that the project helped them with skills in leadership, management, entrepreneurship, digital finance and for getting financial support.
- Word of mouth is the main source through which DS heard about LTFS and AFARM. This included friends, family or women's groups.
- More than 75% are availing benefits from various government schemes such as PMJDY, PMMY, JSY, PMSBY and APY
- Uses Digital financial tools due to convenience and uses it for various types of bill payments





Challenges faced by Digital Sakhi

- 1. Space constraints, to conduct the trainings.
- 2. Time constraints, while managing their own work and family as well as to get trainees to come together at common time.
- 3. Beneficiaries not having smart phone and internet, hence unable to practice.
- 4. Beneficiaries not comfortable in using smart phone. It's a new gadget for them.
- 5. Trainees facing family interference. Women are frequently pulled into family responsibilities or family members stop them from joining the training.
- 6. Beneficiary not interested to continue, due to various personal reasons.
- 7. Beneficiary attrition in between the training.









Story of Change - 1: Digital Sakhi

Shivanjali Hole, Daund (First from right)

- B.Com (Graduate)
- Joined the DS project to create her own identity.
- She was inspired by the trainer's quote, "If you want to change the villagers, then first start from you. You should change yourself; then only you can change your family, and then only you can bring that change in villagers."
- Challenges: She didn't have the vehicle to travel in the village, yet by walking, she covered all the households.
- Success: After the project conclusion, she got a job in an HR consultancy at Kurkumbh MIDC. Currently, she works there part-time because of household responsibility. She believes that the project experience provided her with exposure and improved her confidence significantly.



"I am really grateful to this project because if I didn't receive computer courses MSCIT training then I wouldn't have got the job. Also my communication skills had improved and I cracked the interview procedure."





Story of Change 2 : Digital Sakhi

Pallavi Vadane, Solapur

- Graduate, housewife before joining Digital Sakhi project.
- She joined the project to undertake income generation activity.
- She worked as a Digital Sakhi for three years and opened Digital Seva Kendra. She got confidence from the MSCIT course that she can run a computer comfortably.
- **Success:** She helps villagers to fill out different government forms and also gives an update to villagers about new government schemes. She earns nearly 12,000 per month.

"While working as a Digital Sakhi, I became an expert about form verification of government schemes so I decided that opening Digital Seva Kendra is the best option for me."





3.2

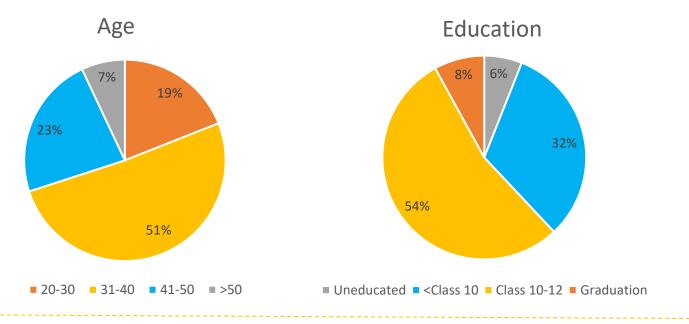
FINDINGS - Women Entrepreneur

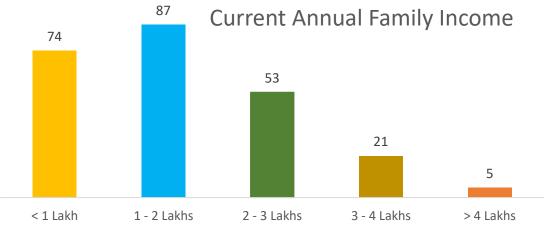
KNOWLEDGE . AGENCY . ADOPTION . ADVOCACY





Women Entrepreneur: Demographic Overview





- An average Women
 Entrepreneur is 31-40 years old, educated at least up to Class 10. 38% have not completed school
- Most of them have a family income of up to Rs. 2 lakhs. Mostly has a nuclear family (67% cases) with 2 or more children.
- 80% of women entrepreneurs have family responsibilities too, with 70% having 2 or more children going to school.
- 67% of women entrepreneurs have five or fewer members in the family and therefore less support at home.

(n=240)



Women Entrepreneur: Overall Success Parameters

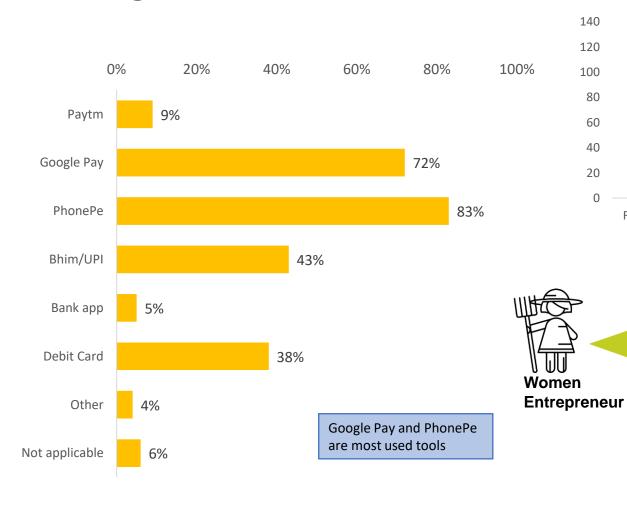
	Baseline*	Assessment
Adoption of digital payment modes	11%	92%
Impact on overall business (trade volume, profitability etc.)	NA	97%
Contribution to household income	NA	99%
Participation in financial decision making	32%	75% (35% (Self), 40% (With family))
Able access of formal financial services	10%	100%



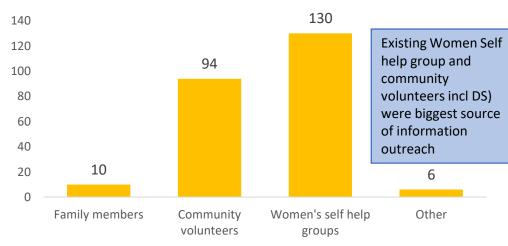


Women Entrepreneur: Survey Findings

Digital financial tools used



Source of Information about the project



WE (Tailoring) from Pimpalwadi, Karmala, Solapur:

"Livelihood opportunities are very less in Pimpalwadi. Men either migrate to nearby areas or daily travel to nearby areas for livelihood. But women in the village have to stay at home due to all their responsibilities. This project gave us an opportunity to earn while doing our business by sitting at home. That is the best thing for women in Pimpalwadi."



Micro-Enterprise Assessment

- Tailoring and Dairy are the trade of choice for women microentrepreneurs.
- Tailoring and Goatery are trades that need low investment
- **Though Poultry** has the highest margin few are preferring it, due to space constraints, seasonal diseases etc.
- Over 97% WEs say that their trade volume has increased post support from the DS project. 86% say that the increase has been more than 50%. More than 80% also say that they are now able to command a higher price for their services.
- Over 96% WEs say that the training provided under the DS project has helped them improve knowledge and skills
- Preferred mode of saving 30% Bank account and 30% in SHGs.





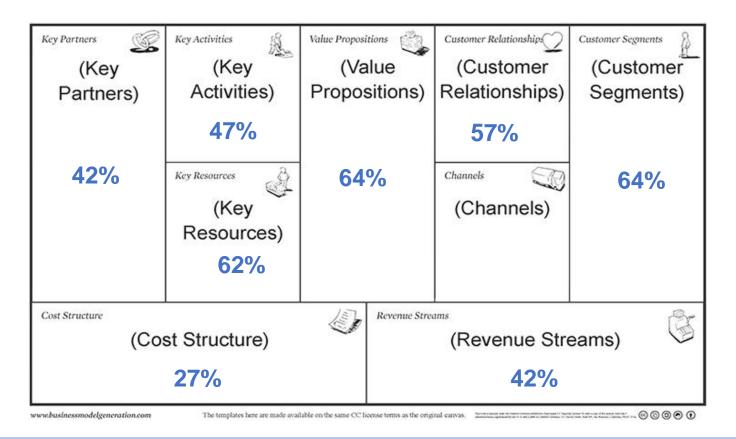


Income and Expense in Trades (Rs. '000)





Micro-Enterprise Assessment : Key Impact Areas

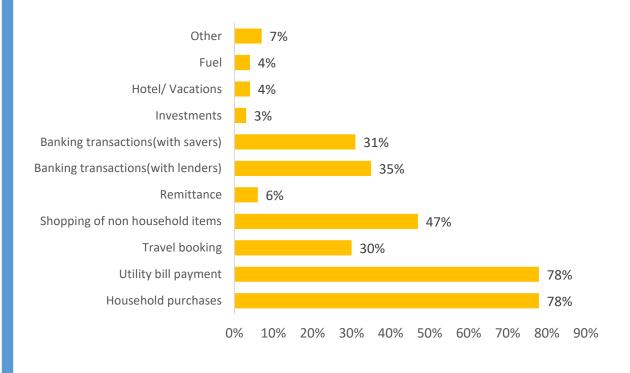


WEs were able to clearly articulate the value propositions of their business and identify different customer segments and improve customer relationships with the inputs received from the training in the project.



Project impact on women entrepreneurs

Purpose of Digital Financial Services



Support received from the DS project





Story of Change 1: Women Micro-Entrepreneur

Archana Divekar (Patas, Daund Block, Pune)

- Archana left her education after 12th and married. Her mother in law used to do goat rearing at a very small level. She only had two goats before joining the training.
- After joining the project, she started looking at goat rearing as a serious profession. Whatever she learnt, she started implementing it in her goat rearing. She also learnt about the digital mode, that's why she got to learn about smartphones and internet usage.



• Moment of Change: She set up a deal with Betel goat provider in Punjab digitally. Initially, the family members were against her because the deal was nearly 80,000 rupees. She convinced them and paid half the amount online in advance, and half paid later when she got the handover. In fact, her family wanted to invest money to expand their house, but she insisted on investing that amount in building shelter for her goats and buying new goats. Now there are a total of 28 goats, and she also started a poultry farm with 40 hens. She earns almost 2 lakh per year.



Story of Change 2: Women Micro-Entrepreneur

Suvarna Gadade (Gopalwadi, Daund, Pune)

- Suvarna was doing tailoring business already before joining the project and used to earn 4,000 rupees.
- In 2017, she joined Digital Sakhi Suman Javak as an entrepreneur to learn new things about tailoring from a business perspective.



• **Moment of Change:** Training was eye-opening for her, and she learned about how to get more customers. Today, she earns nearly 20,000 per month. She bought another electric tailoring machine from her earnings and now also provides employment to one woman in the village. perspective.



3.3

FINDINGS - Community

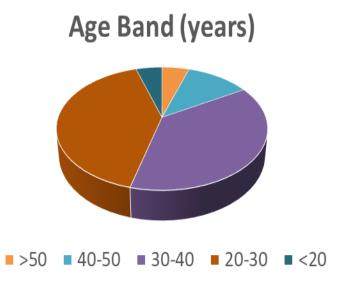




Community Demographics

High Penetration Society

- 99.8% have bank accounts
- 99% have mobile phones (90%+ have smartphones)
- 98% have used some form of digital payment
- 93% say that their family use digital mode for financial transactions
- 94% had used digital payment facility from own computer / mobile
- 93% of male are aware of digital financial tools compared to 88% females
- 85% male and 92% females attribute LTFS/AFARM /project for their digital tool learning
- Smartphone share: 95% in Pune, 90% in Osmanabad, 85% in Solapur







Community Success Indicators

	Baseline*	Assessment
Impact on the adoption of digital payment modes	27%	98%
Brand awareness of the LTFS services - Prompted recall (Casual surveys)	NA	87%



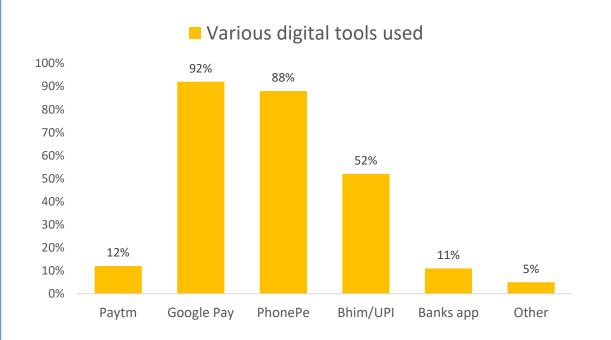
Current Financial Ecosystem of Villages under study

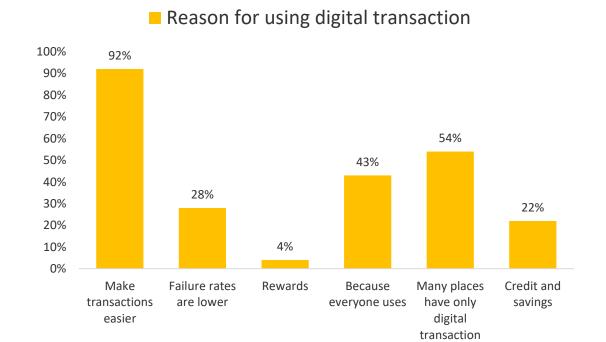


Parameter	Pune	Solapur	Osmanabad, Beed
# of Blocks	4	3	2
# of Villages studied	9	7	4
# of Households	11,450 (avg. 1,400/V)	8,488 (avg. 1,200/V)	5,700 (avg 1,400 / V)
# of SHGs	400	368	91
Banking correspondents	45	30	20
Distance from Bank	200-400m except 1 village	NA, 6 banks in the geo	NA, 4 banks in the geo
Mobile Connectivity	Jio, Idea, Vodafone, Airtel, BSNL (min. 2 options per village)	Jio, Idea, Vodafone, least 1 option in eac	•



Community Digital Financial Usage



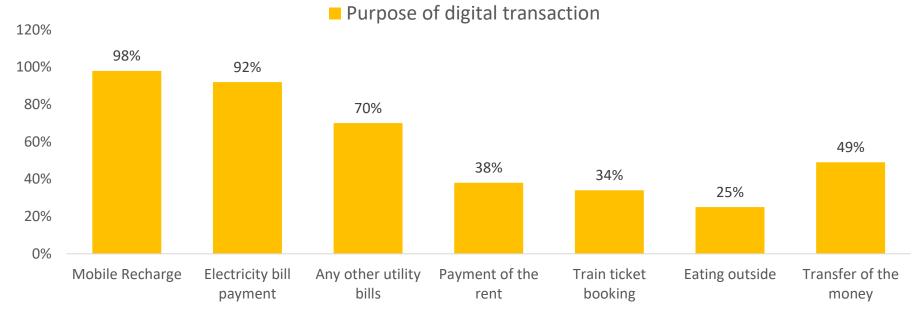


- Only 7% people are unaware of any digital financial services.
- Amongst those who are aware (93%), only 1% never used digital financial services.
- Amongst those who use it, 82% use it regularly, which indicates that if the awareness can be built usage of DFS remains strong validating the basic assumption of the project.





Community Digital Financial Usage





	Pune	Osmanabad	Solapur
Smartphone Share	95%	90%	85%
Awareness of Digital Financial Tools	92%	99%	87%
Convenience as top reason of using DFS	58%	26%	32%
Google Pay, Phonepay, UPI usage	88%	77%	79%





Community Feedback on Digital Sakhi Project

Sarpanch (Morgaon, Purandar, Pune)

: "Our village is very popular in the Pune region due to Ashtavinayak Moreshwar. But from last year our village got a different identity 'A digital village' due to this project. People in the nearby villages come here to demand that they also want such a project"



Woman from Alni, Osmanabad - "I have had a smartphone for the last four to five years. But I didn't know how to use that. I used to do calls only. My daughter used to handle all other applications. But DS started visiting us and then they taught me how to use google pay. Although I am a housewife and don't earn, from the lockdown my husband sends me money on my account and I use this application to pay at shop to avoid physical direct or indirect contact."

Shopkeeper from Mardi, Solapur "

Digital sakhi helped me to get QR code for my shop to do Digital mode of payment. That was really helpful for me during the pandemic." Farmer from Bembli, Osmanabad: "We don't know much about the Digital Sakhi project. They never visited or talked with us. They might have spoken to my wife because they visit only the women of the village."

High Brand Recall: 88% respondents had a brand recall about DS project (Used LTFS, L&T, AFARM, Digital Sakhi)during the conversation. This was 85% among men and 93% among women.



4.

ANALYSIS













ICEBERG Model Analysis

Model	Digital Sakhi	Women Entrepreneur	Community
Events What is Happening?	 Increased Agency Leveraging learning i Informed decision management 	n public and private life aking	 Increased penetration of digital payments High prompted recall for LTFS / DS
Patterns Of Behavior	 DS continues out of obligation to staying engaged and contribute to the household 	 Ripple effect across unrelated sphere of life and also viewing their enterprise as business 	 Community learning from each other
Structure How are the parts related? What influences trends?	 DS is engaged on a salary basis, in the project. Work is deemed high commensurate to salary levels 	 Need handholding: Aggregation, community enterprises, platform Market vs business development 	 Push based DS intervention with community (kiosk, HH visit, Digi Dhan mela etc. are working
Mental models Values, Beliefs	 Monetary incentives helps stickiness due to financial independence. But in the long term, need more non-monetary incentives(recognition, growth opportunity etc.) 	 At present WE experience structural limits on growth potential of business Looking for risk-sharing partner to scale business; advisory has its limits 	 DFS Adoption is an unconscious choice Fear of 'unknown' can be overcome by enabling 'push' and 'convenience'



Analysis: RCEEIS Framework

Parameter	Analysis
Relevance	 The project responded to the felt needs of rural women. The project was relevant as before the intervention, most women in the village were engaged only in household work and farming and didn't involve in the financial management of household; many of them didn't have bank accounts; micro entrepreneurs didn't take their work as a business and didn't knew the concept of income and expenditure. Launched as a Women centric initiative, the project aimed to address the above situation - Gender exclusivity helped gain higher acceptance Custom designed project for rural women and their needs Empowerment is an adaptive and emergent phenomenon inherent in the process of this project, and therefore well realized However, project duration is inadequate for a behaviour change project at the community level
Coherence	 The project is coherent with national policies and direction however opportunity exist to build local level linkages Implementation timelines co-existed with macro-economic changes like demonetization and national-level initiatives like 'Jan Dhan Yojana' and direct benefit schemes No active partnerships with any other community initiatives of similar agenda. Absence of active engagement with Gram Panchayat led to resistance at some locations that Digital Sakhi had to face



Analysis: RCEEIS Framework

Parameter	Analysis
Effectiveness	 The project trained women(DS) on technology and DFS and enabled them to exhibit leadership This project helped in reducing the digital learning gap and provided a head start for Digital Sakhi to build a career. Women entrepreneurs got an opportunity to broaden their horizons to build livelihood to financially help their families. MS CIT Computer training for DS, helped her gain confidence Created an identity for DS with use of uniform and a kit There is verifiable evidence of a considerable increase in the agency and bound freedom for Digital Sakhi and Women Entrepreneurs. Project learnings need to be documented for future learning There were drop outs of WE due to inability to balance enterprise with household work
Efficiency	 Investment on DS enables a multiplier effect in society Digital Sakhi is a community member herself → improved operational efficiency Investment model on one DS individual is serving as a good ROI model – she becoming independent, training WEs and also helping digital financial inclusion at the community level It's a push-based project. Push strategies generally increase the cost of the project Lot of activity including MIS reporting lies with Digital Sakhi - Complicated formats and lengthy surveys takes away her bandwidth from core work Women in the community didn't have access to smartphones for a large part of the project until the requirement was enabled by COVID-19



Analysis: RCEEIS Framework

Parameter	Analysis
Impact	 The project improved the agency for rural women Significant improvement on project output parameters (adoption of digital financial services), however singular attribution to project is uncertain due to macroeconomic changes happening in parallel like demonetization, push to digital payment economy etc. With data usage, 'digital learning' for women is adding newer dimensions creating ripple effect
Sustainability	 Any change at behavioral level takes a long time to come in, and also sustain for a longer period. Digital Seva Kendra being run by digital Sakhi becomes a focal point for people to use DFS as well as for Digital Sakhi to earn additional income. Market linkage is not part of the project. There is localized competition within trades that emerged which was not favourable Financial remuneration for DS wasn't attractive as compared to the span of work Not enough evidence of 'demand'. It is running as a push-based project



5.

RECOMMENDATION













Recommendations

A. PROJECT DESIGN

- Strengthen intervention activities that promote 'behavior change'.
- Use adult learning principles more while conducting training with the community.
- Review & strengthen the mechanism for collecting & incorporating periodic feedback.
- 4. Strengthen the current modules on digital security and safety.

B. IMPLEMENTATION

- 1. More focus on synchronizing activities at ground level will help enhance effectiveness.
- In order to enhance community usage of DFS, strengthen the cycle of (a) Demonstration (b) Nudge (c) Habit formation and (d) Celebrating success

C. SUSTAINABILITY

- Provide support on market development for women entrepreneurs, wherever needed.
- 2. Institutionalize communities of practice at the village level.
- 3. Provide options such as an emergency loan for WE.
- 4. Other development initiatives in the geography can be leveraged better e.g. Panchayat initiatives, Other company CSR work.

An initiative can control at best two out of three outcome – cost, speed and quality. Digital Sakhi currently aims to attain all the three outcomes equally. It is suggested to define only two out of three intended outcome and let observation of third outcome help decide on destination of Digital Sakhi project.





Thank You.

IT'S ABOUT INCLUSION.

YOU CAN'T BE INCLUDED UNLESS YOU'RE PRESENT AND YOU CAN'T BE PRESENT UNLESS YOU'RE ABLE TO GET THERE.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS.



	Abbreviation
AFARM	Action for Agricultural Renewal in Maharashtra
APY	Atal Pension Yojana
BFSI	Banking, financial services and insurance
DFS	Digital Financial Services
DS	Digital Sakhi
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
JSY	Janani Suraksha Yojana
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MFI	Microfinance Institutions
NA	Not Available
PMJDY	Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana
PMMY	Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana
PMSBY	Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Beema Yojana
POS	Point of Sale
SHG	Self Help Group
WE	Woman Entrepreneur