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Digital Citizenship
Can Smartphones Help the Poorest Escape Extreme Poverty?

We're working with Tata Communications to support a commitment with the Clinton Global Initiative which aims to provide 25,000 women living in extreme poverty with access to mobile technology. While our program has been proven to effectively help women living in extreme poverty build sustainable livelihoods, this project gives us an opportunity to explore ways in which mobile technology can play a role in improving and scaling the delivery of our program to more women in remote areas.

As all of our participants, those who have little experience with smartphones, often not allowed to leave their village, and small but isolated, and where their communities' challenges such as network connectivity and designing optimal content and functionality.

In any given day, Sangita can be found traveling throughout Jharkhand, India, meeting with groups of women from small villages like her own. Jharkhand, like many states in eastern India, has one of the highest concentrations of poverty in the country. More than a third of its 33 million citizens are unable to regularly meet their most basic needs, for food, shelter, healthcare, or education.

Sangita didn’t always enjoy such freedom or feeling of purpose. She lives in Gatuadu, a village in Jharkhand that’s not only small but a location where women—especially those living in extreme poverty—enjoy very little independence. They’re often not allowed to leave their homes for extended periods or even travel long distances. While they work, children, and other family members provide free pre-natal care or even grants to build a modest home, Sangita helps them get it. She also teaches them leadership, how to run their own successful self-help group, how to be more active in household decision-making, and speak out for community improvements like better roads and wells.

Sangita’s story is not uncommon and Sangita was married in her early teens. She moved into her in-laws’ home, where she would be with her husband, and even grants to build a modest home, Sangita helps them get it. She also teaches them leadership, how to run their own successful self-help group, how to be more active in household decision-making, and speak out for community improvements like better roads and wells.

As Sangita says, “A woman can contribute and benefit much more when she joins with other women.”

Learn more at trickleup.org.
Can Smartphones Help the Poorest Escape Extreme Poverty?

Trickle Up's latest pilot project will put smartphones in the hands of women facing the direst conditions of extreme poverty. We’re working with Tata Communications to support a commitment with the Clinton Global Initiative which aims to provide 25,000 women living in extreme poverty with access to mobile technology. While our program has been proven to effectively help women living in extreme poverty build sustainable livelihoods, this project gives us an opportunity to explore ways that technology can play a role in improving and scaling the delivery of our program to more women in remote areas.

Like all of our participants, those in this project will be given seed capital and training, and connect with other women in savings groups where they share advice and access loans. The addition of a smartphone means that women will have instant access to information about weather conditions and market prices, along with training materials and other resources.

How will mobile technology help?

Women have greater access to information & support

Trickle Up coaches provide “just-in-time” training and critical support to women and their families as they begin new activities with which they often have little experience (such as rearing livestock, growing crops for sale at a market, or commercial enterprises). One common reason for failure is that participants don’t follow the training they received and miss key steps required to execute a livelihood activity well. With a smartphone, women have access to details about the market price of the produce, as well as pictures and videos that provide explanations, all tied to automated calendars, checklists, and short videos and voice messages for more complicated procedures. In addition, the phones should help them troubleshoot, from automatically diagnosing common problems to requesting help if a response isn’t known. Even just by having a phone, participants will be able to contact their nearest field agent if individualized support is needed in between scheduled visits.

When women were soon figuring out how to navigate the prototype apps and were brimming with ideas about how they could put the phones to use. One participant asked, “Can we use this to learn English?” Another wanted to know if she could look up recipes to improve the menu at her small shop.

Women become field reporters

Some of our participants are from small but isolated, and where women—especially those living in extreme poverty and access credit and a support system outside the home where they can seek advice and rely on one another. After her initial training, Sangita informed her husband about her work. Although he was initially apprehensive, he ultimately supported her decision.

Today, Sangita works as a Community Resource Person with Trickle Up and Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society, traveling from village to village helping women by organizing self-help groups. She coaches those looking to raise crops or livestock, run a small business, or participate in government programs, and earn a reliable income. She helps them gain access to training and other financial services, too. If they qualify for an existing government service (some provide free pre-natal care or even grants to build a modest home), Sangita helps them get it. She also teaches them leadership, how to run their own successful self-help group, be more active in household decision-making, and speak out for community improvements like better roads and wells.

As Sangita says, “A woman can completely transform her life when she joins with other women.” Learn more at trickleup.org.

ANNUAL REPORT
What Made 2016 a Breakout Year?

Trickle Up worked with 49,933 households in India, Africa, and the Americas — benefiting more than 215,000 people. That’s more than three times the number we reached in 2015. See more results at 2016annualreport.trickleup.org.

AFRICA

383

Butina Ferto, Zambie, Egypt

AMERICAS

2,815

Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Ecuador

INDIA

32,733

Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal

FROM THE FIELD

Breaking the Cycles of Poverty & Silence

Sangita Deni works with women living in extreme poverty and her mission is to help them tackle its many obstacles and build a better future for their families.

On any given day, Sangita can be found traveling throughout Jharkhand, India, meeting with groups of women from small villages like her own. Jharkhand, like many states in eastern India, has one of the highest concentrations of poverty in the country. More than a third of its 33 million citizens are unable to regularly meet their most basic needs for food, shelter, healthcare, or education.

Sangita didn’t always enjoy such freedom or feeling of purpose. She lives in Getulsud, a village in Jharkhand that’s not only small but surrounded by women—especially those living in extreme poverty—enjoy very little independence. They’re often not allowed to leave their homes for extended periods or even travel long distances on their own. Childhood marriage is not uncommon and Sangita was married in her early teens. She moved into her in-laws’ home, where she was expected to do housework. Even within her own home she had little voice or independence. Sangita dreamed of breaking the cycles of extreme poverty and silence she witnessed all around her. She wanted to create a meaningful place for herself in her home and community.

The path wasn’t easy.

When the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society formed “self-help” groups in her village, Sangita started to participate in group activities secretly, without the knowledge of her husband’s family. When women join self-help groups, they gain a safe place to save and access credit and support a

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Breaking the Cycles of Poverty & Silence

Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal
Can Smartphones Help the Poorest Escape Extreme Poverty?

Trickle Up latest pilot project will put smartphones in the hands of tens of thousands of households facing the direst conditions of extreme poverty.

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Like all of our participants, those in this project will be given useful capital and training, and connect with other women in savings groups where they share advice and access loans. The addition of a smartphone means that women will have instant access to information about weather and market prices, along with training materials and other resources.

How will mobile technology help?

* Women have greater access to information & support

Trickle Up coaches provide “just-in-time” training and critical support to women and their households as they begin new livelihood activities with which they often have little experience (such as rearing livestock, growing crops for sale at market, or other commercial enterprises). One common reason for failure is that participants don’t follow the training they received and miss key steps required to execute a livelihood activity well. With a smartphone, women have access to detailed graphics and pictures that provide explanations, all timed to automated calendars, checklists, and short videos, and voice messages for more complicated procedures. In addition, the phones should help them troubleshoot, from automatically diagnosing common problems to requesting help if a response isn’t known.

Even just having a phone, participants will be able to contact their assigned field agent if individualized support is needed in between scheduled visits. We don’t believe the phones are a substitute for hands-on training and coaching. Coaching provides motivation and support beyond simply answering questions, and we believe coaching is key to empowering participants, personally and socially. But we do believe smartphones and mobile technology have the potential to make coaching more efficient, scalable, and sustainable.

* Women become field reporters

The smartphones will feature an easy-to-use platform that doesn’t rely on literacy where participants can enter simple metrics on their progress and access basic analytics. We also aim to increase accountability to participants by providing an anonymous way for them to give feedback about whether they were visited by staff, the quality of those visits, and when they received their seed funding.

Before we began the project, we worried that women wouldn’t be comfortable with the phones. But, despite having had no prior experience with smartphones, women were soon figuring out how to navigate the prototype apps and were brimming with ideas about how they could put the phones to use. One participant asked, “Can we use this to learn English?” Another wanted to know if she could look up recipes to improve the menu at her small shop.

We expect to learn, adapt, and refine this project over the coming months, addressing challenges such as network reliability and designing optimal content and functionality.

To learn more about our projects visit trickleup.org/projects.

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When the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society formed ‘self-help’ groups in her village, Sangita started to participate in group activities secretly, without the knowledge of her husband’s family. When women join self-help groups, they gain a safe place to save and access credit and support a system outside the home where they can seek advice and rely on one another. After her initial training, Sangita informed her husband about her work.

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I continued to build my savings by setting aside money to pay for the future costs of enrolling my twins in school when they get older and the increased cost of sending my eldest to secondary school 7 km away. I am planning on opening a personal bank account at a financial institution in addition to the savings I have in the savings group.

I wanted to be treated with respect like other people in my community and have my point of view heard. I didn’t want to live in extreme poverty anymore. My aim was to succeed in everything I do in order to satisfy my personal goals and needs. I wanted to feed my children with dignity—without having to beg, sleep on an empty stomach, or eat less. I wanted to ensure my children have education and healthcare and to have a decent home for them.

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