



Munni Devi's Story: From Under the Veil to Behind the Wheel

Munni Devi, a resident of Bathua village, Mirzapur, is a lady with immense strength, one who fought the shackles of patriarchy and poverty for her family, especially her specially-abled daughter and is now a successful e-rickshaw entrepreneur.

Munni Devi's life was limited to the four walls of her house, keeping her face under the veil of her saree, being dependent, never working outside the house, and living in a joint household of nine people with her husband being the sole earner driving an e-rickshaw. Her daughter is a 12-year-old suffering the aftermath of paralysis, even after getting treatment worth lacs, and has one side of her body left paralysed for life.



Amidst the financial crunch, Munni thought of starting her own business but did not have the source or the means to do so. She saw and met Aarya Didi (an e-rickshaw entrepreneur), and they discussed the Safe Mobility project, a project supported under the Work4Progress, a joint initiative of Development Alternatives, the Caixa Foundation, and Fundación ISS that focuses on creating dignified and meaningful livelihood opportunities for marginalised women and youth in rural India through enterprise development.

Deriving inspiration from Aarya and the project, Munni Devi decided she wanted to become an e-rickshaw entrepreneur, but on the condition that the organisation would help her get the e-rickshaw. Post her training, Munni Devi now drives independently, earning Rs 500–700/day with daily rides and close to Rs 8,000 from a linkage with a popular nursing center, picking up and dropping off girls, as well as having another linkage with a pharmacy within the local market to carry out their operations once a week. They are currently making Rs 16,000 a month in comparison to Rs 4,600 a month, which was their family income. She has even been able to enroll her children in a private school.

She says, "I had never gone out of my house, keeping my face covered with a sari, totally dependent on others for any work; now, with an e-rickshaw, I have gone out to government offices and got my daughter's specially-abled card all on my own, for which I have been requesting others for a long time.

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