



DA Changemaker Program 2021: Padhegi woh toh Badhenge Hum

Development Alternatives has designed a recurring fellowship called the Changemaker Program 2021, where the volunteers not only become a voice in their community and raise funds, but also develop their leadership and fundraising skills.

Crowdfunding is a way to raise money from many people. It provides extensive mediums to attain potential opportunities for crowdfunding to support and fund projects in the developing economies. It has been an immensely effective medium for raising funds for emergency and disaster relief in developing countries.

According to the Journal of Innovation Economics & Management, Crowdfunding has also played an important role in promoting the growth of renewable energy, agriculture and services sectors in developing nations. Though it has been around for a while, it became increasingly popular during the pandemic in India. This is because it comes with advantages such as wider reach, opportunity to validate and refine the opportunity provided and creating a support community. Crowdfunding is a relatively newer concept in India. Through crowdfunding, the cause can gain more attention, hence making it a valuable marketing tool.

The first cohort of DA Changemaker Program 2021 was initiated in the month of August 2021, with an aim to work with passionate and proactive individuals who would raise funds for DA's Flagship programme – TARA Akshar+ and become a voice of change in their circles. The program was divided into two phases, in the first phase the Changemakers underwent a 4-day training program from 16 August 2021 – 20 August 2021, where they received insightful mentorship from the sectoral experts such as **Dr Ashok Khosla**, Chairperson, Development Alternatives Group; **Prof. Anita Rampal**, Ex-Dean, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi; **Mr Shrashtant Patara**, CEO, Development Alternatives; **Mannat Anand**, Director - Fundraising, Make a Difference (MAD) and **Dr Alka Srivastava**, Consultant, Development Alternatives.

The second phase of the program was designed to ensure that the Changemakers put the skills gained to test through Crowdfunding. Therefore, Development Alternatives in collaboration with Fueladream, a crowdfunding platform, designed and developed individual Campaign pages for all the Changemakers. These pages enabled them to raise funds for the cause of literacy over a period of 4 weeks. Literacy, the ability to read and write, can be a powerful tool for adult women in rural and peri-urban areas, who are unable to receive the mediums to learn or earn' often live a fatalistic life. As victims of the situation, their families are unable to come out from the vicious cycle of poverty. Through Literacy and empowerment, individuals are able to comprehend their social, political and cultural environment and respond to it appropriately.

To empower the women, the collective goal of all the Changemakers was fixed at 10 lakhs, ensuring that the lives of at least 100 rural women are reached. The Changemakers have together surpassed that goal by 14%, thereby, changing the lives of close to 120 women. This was possible because we were able to tap into the collective efforts of a large pool of individuals-primarily online via social media and crowdfunding platforms-and leverages their networks for greater reach and exposure. The amounts raised will be utilised to impart literacy to 100 women in the remote areas of Lalitpur district, Jakhaura Block, Uttar Pradesh.