

## Aarya, Empowering Women through Mobility

On the occasion of the 76th Independence Day, Development Alternatives launched a campaign, titled 'Aarya', at an event organised in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh. The event was organised with the help of a local implementation partner, Vindhya Sabji Evam Beej Producer Co. Ltd., to celebrate e-rickshaw women entrepreneurs, acknowledge their decision to choose e-rickshaw as a way of livelihood, and provide a safe mobility option to girls and women of the community.

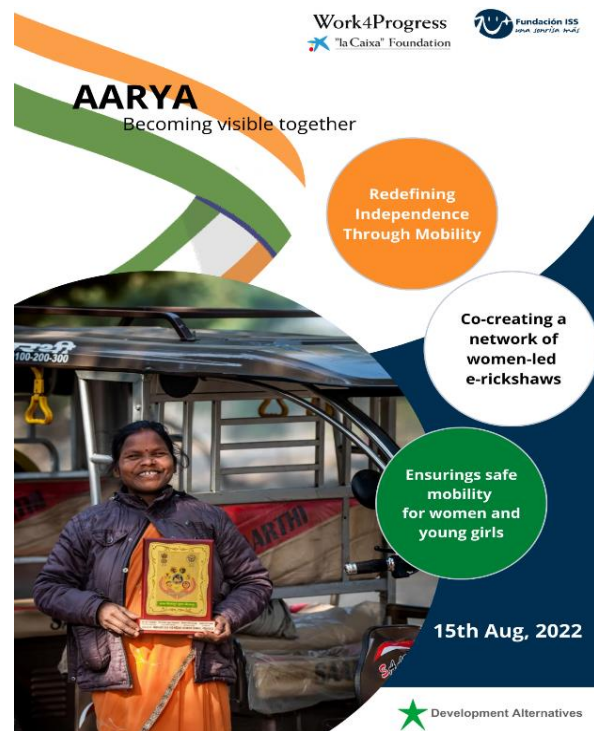
The word 'Aarya' symbolises strength and power and represents our existing and upcoming e-rickshaw women entrepreneurs. During the event, a total of 25 women entrepreneurs including 2 existing e-rickshaw entrepreneurs, 3 new e-rickshaw entrepreneurs, and 20 aspiring women entrepreneurs attended this event. Sangita Devi and Reshma Begum from Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh and Nirmala Devi from Bhadohi, Uttar Pradesh, who is also the first woman e-rickshaw driver of Bhadohi, received e-rickshaws.

At this event, Mr Swaminathan Aiyar and Ms Neeraj Kaushal from Shahnaz Memorial Foundation, Dr Sheela Singh, Director, Gyananda Academy of Higher Education, Mirzapur, Dr Asha Rai, a regional social activist, and Dr Gayatri Gupta, who provides free health and hygiene services to rural women, were the guest speakers.

The first e-rickshaw women entrepreneur of Mirzapur, Pragma Devi, too attended this event. She shared her journey of how through the Work4Progress programme, her aspirations were channelised. She conveyed to the upcoming Aarya(s) that there is no reason to be fearful and that they should believe in themselves.

Mr Aiyar expressed that he is amazed to witness the progression of women's role in mobility. This experience inculcated the thought in him that women who own an e-rickshaw 'become their own boss', and he also envisioned enabling 100 such owners in the community in the coming years.

Ms Kaushal was extremely delighted to witness active participation of the women in the audience and said, "In the next 25 years, this enthusiasm will also be evident in the women labor force participation in eastern Uttar Pradesh as a whole." The panelists motivated women entrepreneurs to take a charge while being in the driver's seat of their own life stories.



Poster of our event 'AARYA'



Sangita receives keys of her e-rickshaw from Chhangur, one of our e-rickshaw manufacturing unit entrepreneur

Development Alternatives has been working towards bringing in a positive change in the lives of women of Mirzapur for the past 5 years through the e-mobility initiative under the Work4Progress programme. This initiative, co-created with the community, is unleashing the entrepreneurial aspirations of women, by enabling them to become Aarya, and focuses on the safe mobility of women. This will then lead to creating a network of Aarya(s) who will ensure the safe mobility of young girls and women in Mirzapur and Bhadohi.