

# Driving the change in her community - Resilient Chanda Shukla



**“The fear of waves, does not help cross the waters”- Chanda Shukla**

If one listens to the challenges in Chanda Shukla’s life, it may appear that she lives a life full of gloom and misery, but that is not Chanda from Mirzapur. She is a fighter who has won over her difficult circumstances and is a proud e-rickshaw driver in her community. She lives a life of dignity and supports her family as well as her children’s education single-handedly.

Today, she is determined to save up enough to buy another e-rickshaw which she plans to rent to have side-income and her dream is to buy a four-wheeler to upgrade her standard of living.

However, such was not the case a few months ago. Her husband is a drug-addict, he has never been able to support the family properly, and her sole support- her brothers were unfortunately murdered. The complexity of problems devastated her but she had no other choice but to survive for her children. Today she drives school children and daily passengers to their respective destinations and she’s an inspiration to many women in her community.

Chanda was supported under the Work4Progress(W4P) Programme, a joint initiative of Development Alternatives and la Caixa Foundation. Work 4 Progress aims to promote innovative solutions for employment among vulnerable women and young. The program wants to move beyond traditional linear approaches limited to isolated projects into Open Innovation Platforms for the creation of employment by means of collaborative partnerships between local civil society organisations, private sector, administration, universities and NGOs.

She received training regarding the W4P programme and learnt to drive e-rickshaw as part of the programme. She took a loan with the help of her husband and started her journey to become an independent woman. She spends most of her time driving her prized possession, the e-rickshaw and she is determined to improve her financial situation for the better future of her children.

The story of Chanda Shukla, a thirty-three-year-old woman from Mirzapur, is a remarkable example of how determination and hard work can help overcome difficult situations in life. Chanda’s

husband suffered from drug addiction, and she lacked support from her family. To help her through this tumultuous time, her brothers took the responsibility of putting food on the table for her family. However, tragedy struck when both her brothers were murdered, devastating Chanda and leaving her to fend for herself.

Faced with an adverse situation, Chanda was inspired by Pragya Devi, the first woman e-Rickshaw entrepreneur, supported under the Work4Progress Programme, a joint initiative of Development Alternatives and la Caixa Foundation. The program focuses on creating dignified and meaningful livelihood opportunities for marginalised women and youth in rural India through enterprise development.

Having been made aware of the programme and seeking help to support her family, Chanda visited workers from the project who formally introduced her to the e-rickshaw programme. With the help of her husband, Chanda took a loan to buy an e-rickshaw and was trained to drive it. Overcoming the initial challenges, Chanda excelled at her work and started earning a decent income by providing pick-up and drop services to passengers and students.

Chanda Shukla's dedication to her work is reflected in the fact that she spends most of her time driving the e-Rickshaw. She has also managed to save money for her children's education and manages her time to train other women on e-Rickshaw maintenance and road safety. In the future, she plans to buy another e-Rickshaw to expand her enterprise.

Despite her success, Chanda Shukla is aware of the challenges ahead and is working hard to overcome them. She aspires to clear her debts and buy a four-wheeler in the future to increase her source of income. Chanda has become an inspiration for other women in her community.