

# Soochnapreneur' wins World Bank Group and CES's Global Tech Challenge Solutions for Women 2020

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## **'Soochnapreneur' wins World Bank Group and CES's Global Tech Challenge Solutions for Women 2020**

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The World Bank Group and CES announced the winners of the Global Tech Challenge: Solutions for Women, launched at CES 2020. In the list of winners is the 'Soochnapreneur' (Information Entrepreneur) model from India, solution driven by the New Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF). The other two winners of the Global Tech Challenge are Bridge for Billions and MicroMentor.

Digital Empowerment Foundation and IIHMR University, Jaipur joined hands together to address India's Rural Digital Gender divide in the Global Tech Challenge 2020. Winning this challenge is a testimony to joint efforts and recognition of the initiatives that have helped improve diversity and promote women empowerment. Both DEF and IIHMR University Jaipur is committed to take this knowledge and digital partnership forward to address wider digital gaps in India and beyond.

Congratulating the DEF-IIHMRU Joint team, Dr. P.R. Sodani, President, IIHMR University, Jaipur, said "DEF is committed to work towards addressing social and economic challenges through social and digital innovations and solutions involving critical stakeholders including women and address gender digital divide and other access related gaps. IIHMR University is proud to join hands together with them and work on the domain of social and development focused innovations." He added that in future both the organizations will work together on creating and disseminating knowledge about meaningful innovations for social development.

“ From increasing access to connectivity and information for women in rural areas to mentoring isolated female entrepreneurs, the winners of this challenge are tackling the digital gender divide on multiple fronts. The World Bank Group is pleased to work with the selected innovators so that women and girls worldwide can fully embrace the opportunities offered by digital transformation,” said Boutheina Guermazi, the World Bank’s Director of Digital Development during the announcement.

The Soochnapreneur solution is recognized for its digital based rural / community entrepreneurship drive that connects India’s rural citizens to information, rights, government entitlements and other necessary digital services. Since its creation, it has trained 25,000 rural women to further empower more than 5 million rural women in India.

“We are strongly committed to the idea that connecting women to communication and information technologies will end up benefiting the development of society at large. Therefore, the prospect of scaling our innovation and reaching more is thrilling for all of us working on the Soochnapreneur program and we look forward to engaging with World Bank Group teams to create a greater impact,” said Osama Manzar, founder of the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), in his reaction to the announcement.

The winning solutions are recognized for their innovative efforts in addressing the widening digital divide and internet access gaps for women and generating opportunities for them created by digital technologies, particularly during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when connectivity is the key. The 2020 winning solutions above, were evaluated by a panel of leading experts from Microsoft 4Afrika Initiatives, GSMA, SoftBank, the International Telecommunication Union, IBM and The Female Quotient and three winners were selected from over 1000+ applications received from around the globe. We are thrilled to receive this recognition and we believe that our success story can be scaled-up and replicated in all parts of the world, said Dr. Sheenu Jain, Associate Professor & Chair Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship, IIMMR University and team member, DEF-IIMMRU Joint team.

“It’s a wonderful news! It is not just winning but also an opportunity to share our social innovation with the global community. We are excited with the thought of joining hands with other like-minded innovators to scale-up our solution for the larger impact.” We are glad that we are getting recognition for our scalable, innovative technological solution to empower women. We are excited to receive mentorship from world bank leaders and more thrilled to contribute towards the greater good. We feel #SheIsConnected- #WeAreConnected said Dr. Shiv Tripathi, Professor & Dean Training, IIMMR University, Jaipur and member of DEF-IIMMRU Joint team.

The Global Tech Challenge has been launched by the World Bank Group, one of the largest sources of funding and knowledge for developing countries, and partnered with CES—the world’s most influential technology event—to bridge the digital gender divide. This is supported by the World Bank’s Digital Development Practice, whose mission is to achieve connectivity for all, the challenge rewards scalable and innovative technological solutions that seek to increase digital access, skills and opportunities for women. Through the Tech Challenge every year, the World Bank Group and CES seeks to reward scalable, innovative technological solutions that seek to empower women in four areas of Platforms, Digital Skills, Online Content and Enhancing Digital Access.

The ‘Soochnapreneur’ initiative was institutionalized by Digital Empowerment Foundation in 2016 with the initial grant support of the Qualcomm under its ‘Wireless Reach’ program. Since then the solution traversing diverse scope, challenges and opportunities have been able to reach out to underserved areas and communities with access to information, public entitlements and digital resources through community led ‘Soochnapreneurs’ IIMR University, Jaipur, is a leading Post-graduate, Education and Research University while DEF is a pan India ICT for development agency that works towards digital innovations and solutions to address critical development needs in India.