



There is no end to learning – From housewife to an entrepreneur

Profile of Bank Sakhi

Name of Bank Sakhi	Nidhi Kumari
SHG Name	Mausam
Village	Baheri Purvi
Block	Baheri
District	Darbhanga
Bank Sakhi joining date	Jun-17
Individual Saving Bank account opened	1947
Total Transaction (Till June 19)	31,64,83,282
Total earning (Till June 19)	3,83,501
Average Monthly earning	15,979
Monthly earning June 2019	10,872.49





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Nidhi Kumari, aged 25, started working as a



Bank Sakhi for IDFC Bank since July 2017. Today Nidhi is recognized in the village due to her hard work and initiative of becoming an entrepreneur. Nidhi has established her Customer Service Point (CSP) outlet in Baheri village of Darbhanga district with an intention to bring banking services closer to the community especially for women members who were not comfortable to deal in a branch or had to wait in long queues at the ATM. She has also upgraded her CSP counter to provide additional services including ticket booking, print outs and filling out online examination forms. Today, her work brings considerable ease for the community, complements her family's income, and has created her identity in the society.

Background

Nidhi was just 17 years old when she was married, right after her 10th board exam. At that time, she was in Delhi with her family who had migrated there from Bihar. Though, she was the youngest in her family her mother who was not keeping very well, insisted that she gets married and settle down. After marriage Nidhi moved from Delhi to Darbhanga in Bihar.

"Jindagi badlne ki liye padhai hi sab kuchh hota hain. Aur ye baat maine bahut pehle samajh li thi Delhi mein jab rehti thi"

(In order to change one's life, education is the most critical thing. This I understood quite early in my life when I was staying in Delhi)

Nidhi was ambitious and did not want to discontinue her education post marriage. Her in-laws though reluctant in the beginning agreed to support, sensing her determination. Her consistent good academic performance ensured that she never loses family support. After completing graduation with a distinction, she decided to enroll for the DCA course to enhance her knowledge of computers. She never faced any trouble in learning computer as she was good in English. Later, she also completed an advanced computer course under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). She was able to strike a positive balance between her education and household responsibilities.

"Pati se jyada padh likh ke kya karogi"

(What you will do by studying more than your husband)- Initial reaction of in-laws

Her relationship with JEEViKA began just after her marriage. She came to know about JEEViKA from her mother-in-law who was also a Community Mobiliser. Soon after joining a SHG, she was appointed as a Treasurer for her group. As a treasurer, she dealt with the banks regularly and became familiar with the processes. It also made her confident in transacting with banks independently.



“Jab main treasurer bani aur bank officials’ ke saath kaam kiya tab mujhe laga ki main aur bhi bahut kuch kar sakti hun”

When I started working as a treasurer, I realized that I am capable of doing much more.

Nidhi's Bank Sakhi Journey

JEEViKA rolled out *Bank Sakhi* project with an aim to provide better financial services to community members within the village itself. The project also aimed at providing a sustainable livelihood opportunity to its members. The *BC Sakhis* were chosen amongst the community members who would then work as business correspondent agents for various banks.

“Jis din se Bank Sakhi ka kaam mila hai, mein ghar se nikal ke dukaan pe baithi hoon”.

(Since the day I got Bank Sakhi work, I could come out from house and sit in the shop)

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) of JEEViKA have to suggest names of SHG members who can be potential candidates for *Bank Sakhi* work in their areas. The role has a pre-requisite of basic English and ability to learn to operate computer. Block office shortlisted Nidhi for *Bank Sakhi* for Baheri village as she was the most suitable women candidate amongst all the community members. Nidhi was excited after hearing about the opportunity and agreed to apply for the position of *BC Sakhi*. Her family members also encouraged her to apply for the same as they considered banking work as a respectable one. She soon heard from the block office that she has been selected. Nobody in the community was surprised at her selection as she was a graduate with distinction, knew operating computers, able to read and write English and cleared selection JEEViKA's exam for book-keeper.

It was in April 2017, when she got her orientation and induction training as *Bank Sakhi* and her CSP outlet was rolled out in July 2017. She was amongst the first 17 BC Sakhis appointed for IDFCF Bank. Apart from training, JEEViKA also supported her by providing capital to buy microATM and furniture for the shop. JEEViKA provided capital in form of soft loan, grant and first six months' advance honorarium so that BC Sakhis are not burdened with cash requirement typically required to establish Customer Service Point.

Like any entrepreneur, she also faced a lot of issues in the beginning but handled them with grit. IDFCF Bank was not recognized in her village since the bank does not have any branches in her district. Fearing fraud, customers did not open bank accounts and transacted at her CSP outlet. To gain trust and confidence of people, she initially focused on the key challenge faced by the customers-withdrawal of money while customers waited in long queues. She promoted her outlet as a one stop for withdrawal from any bank account. This helped her to get customers from the bank branches closer to her outlet, who used to get tired standing in long queues or struggled to use ATM. Slowly and steadily, customers started pouring in her outlet. Sensing the opportunity, she got big posters stating “**24*7 withdrawal**” from any bank account at no cost, posted at her outlet. Especially women in the community found it comfortable to transact through her outlet since they can just use Aadhaar instead of filling transaction forms at the branches. She promptly supported them at the time of emergency and facilitating transactions at odd hours.



In the initial period, she struggled to convince people to open bank accounts. To increase confidence, she visited SHGs and VO meetings to spread awareness. She carried her microATM in these meetings to demonstrate the ease of transactions with use of only Aadhaar. She demonstrated withdrawal from their bank accounts to get their confidence. Slowly, there has been some increase in trust levels amongst the people and she has managed to open 1947 bank accounts till date. She had a positive growth in the value of financial transactions over a period of last 24 months, however, more than 90% of the transactions are cash withdrawals. The volume of deposits and third-party deposits such as remittances are increasing at a slow pace due to low visibility of IDFCFF brand in Bihar. **“Jab tak bank branches nahi khulenge, log bank account nahi kholenge na paise daalenge”** (Unless IDFCFF starts its bank branches in district, people will neither open bank account nor deposit their money)

After the initial struggles, she is now one of the top performing *BC Sakhis*. From her initial commission of just Rs. 1,751 in July 2017 she has started earning more than Rs. 20, 000 per month. To increase her income further, she invested in a laptop and printer to provide other non-financial services such as ticket booking, photocopy etc. which adds another Rs.2, 000-2,500 per month. After meeting operational expenses, her profit now ranges between Rs. 18,000 to 20,000. She is confident that her transactions would increase further if CBOs financial transactions are routed through her. But all SHG members are not willing to bear the cost of fund transfers.



Nidhi – handholding other *BC Sakhis*

Apart from running her CSP outlet, Nidhi is also active in supporting new *Bank Sakhi* recruits especially in activating and training them to operate microATM. Initially, when Nidhi was handed over the microATM when she joined in July, she explored all the menu options, filled mock bank account opening forms and transaction forms to gain speed. In case, she faced any issue, she took support from IDFCF and microATM technicians in Mumbai to rectify the



Nidhi activating microATM for another *BC Sakhi*

error. Now, that she understands the microATM so well, IDFCF and JEEViKA team rely on her to provide hand holding support to new batch of *BC Sakhis* on operating micro-ATMS.



Today, Nidhi operates her CSP counter and handles daily transactions worth Rs. 1.5-1.7 million per month. Her journey as a Bank Sakhi has provided immense opportunity of self-learning and she is thankful to JEEViKA and IDFCFF to give her this opportunity. She aspires to increase her daily transactions to above Rs. 0.75 million per day and to achieve this she is approaching various institutions such as toll operators, schools etc. from where she can get cash to resolve liquidity challenges. It's still a complicated battle to win, but Nidhi is confident that she can now do anything. Nidhi believes that her future is bright, and she can do a lot to better serve the community.