

The Digital Literacy Way to Empowerment



Kali Prasad Samantaraya, a tribal youth from Odisha, has seen his life change for the better and he is now enabling the same for many, many others.

Kali Prasad Samantaraya is a tribal youth from Manikpur village of Banpur block in Khorda district, Odisha. He found himself in an odd situation when he returned to his village after completing his graduation in 2005. In a village that reeled under abject poverty, he belonged to the relatively affluent, landowning *mukhiya* family. The village

had no jobs for a person like him. Nor could he work on his family land, as it is considered unthinkable for a landowner to be working in his own fields. "Getting an education felt like a mistake!" he remembers.

Case Study Intel® Easy Steps

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Kali Prasad Samantaraya

Kali Prasad was staring at a bleak future doing nothing, sitting at home. Time passed, life became static, and he was demotivated. However, things took a turn for the better in 2010. His zeal to learn took him to eKutir, a social enterprise that works for rural empowerment. He was fascinated by the work being done by eKutir to help farmers. So he started working at eKutir to enable development of agriculture in his village. Seeing the positive impact on farmers, Kali Prasad was so energised that he signed up for an executive MBA program.

In early 2011, he was at eKutir's Bhubaneswar office. In a conversation with the Managing Director of eKutir, he mentioned the digital literacy needs of rural communities. Before he knew it, things were arranged for him to learn computer basics in an eKutir office near his village. Little did he know that this would start a chain of events that would transform his life beyond his own imagination!

Kali Prasad went on to attend a two-day Intel® Easy Steps training program in New Delhi. "The program was conducted very well, and was very easy to understand. It changed everything for me. The trainers of Intel Easy Steps motivated me, a village guy who was not doing anything," he says. "Today, I help other people become digitally literate in my area!"

He is now designated as Program Head, Odisha, Intel-eKutir Digital Literacy Program. He encourages farmers and their families to become digitally literate. He demonstrates how computers can be useful to them. For instance, using information on fertiliser management and seed selection; and using market pricing information while trading for their produce. This is a significant improvement from the old days, when the farmers were ignorant of the existing market prices, and would earn less than what they potentially could.

And it's not just farming where this digital literacy program has made an impact. Kali Prasad helps villagers use the tool for their other needs as well. They learn about how to get their land records, get births and deaths registered, make payments, as well as purchase commodities that are not easily available in the nearby areas.

Digital literacy is thus opening up avenues for the people touched by Intel Easy Steps in Odisha. Kali Prasad has already spread the program's reach to four districts of Odisha. He often has to travel over 100 kilometres a day. He doesn't mind it a bit. "If required, I will travel all across Odisha so more people can be helped through Intel Easy Steps," he states.

Intel® Easy Steps is a basic technology literacy education program meant for adult learners with little or no experience with computers. Participants of the program are enabled to use computer in ways that are relevant to their daily lives.

eKutir is a social enterprise dedicated to improving livelihoods for farmers and rural communities, developing Last Mile Social Entrepreneurs through a comprehensive WEALTH Management plan.