

Enhancing women’s access to technology: Smart Snehidi Project, Tamil Nadu

Working with an established NGO to expand women’s smartphone access Launched in 2017, the Smart Snehidi programme seeks to improve access to smartphones among low and middle income female micro-entrepreneurs. The programme is led by Vodafone and the non-profit organization Hand in Hand (HiH). HiH assists women to build microenterprises, access finance through self-help groups (SHGs), and to learn digital skills. As a partner in Smart Snehidi, HiH facilitates microfinance loans for smartphone purchase among members of its SHGs and trains women to use these devices in their businesses. Vodafone works with HiH to ease financial barriers through attractive talk time and data plans. As of April 2017, the programme has enabled 2,000 women to acquire smartphones in three districts across Tamil Nadu, India, with an ambition of enrolling 50,000 women across 19 districts of Tamil Nadu within the next three years. “Hand in Hand is a trusted bank (organization) so we bought a phone from them. I am happy when they give it for monthly installments. We ourselves [the SHG] decided to take a loan for 10 monthly installments.... Now we are paying it.” – Smart Snehidi customer.