

DRAPING DREAMS, DESIGNING FUTURE

With a borrowed sewing machine, a few orders from friends, and the right skills from MGMP, Swati Gopi built more than a business. She built a future.

Through MGMP, Samhita-CGF aims to close the rural opportunity gap for women by delivering high-impact programs in digital literacy, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship. Designed in collaboration with local partners, these initiatives support women to grow local enterprises and become agents of change in their villages.

Swati Gopi's story from Telangana is a powerful example — a journey from home-based tailoring to becoming a trusted entrepreneur and community voice.



As we walked down the quiet bylanes of Pothalamadugu village, the lazy afternoon silence was broken by the soft giggles of women some distance away. Drawn by the hushed excitement in their voices, we reached the compound of a small but neat house that had a welcome board above one door: Lucky Ladies Corner.

Inside the doorway, a couple of young girls were trying on new dresses while the slim, beautiful and immaculately dressed young lady shop owner was busy showing another customer a set of dress designs on her smartphone. Greeting us with a warm, welcoming smile, she requested us to give her two minutes in Telegu.

That was not our first meeting with Swati Gopi, a tailor, designer and mother of two school-going children. We first met Swati when she enrolled in our Entrepreneurship Development session under the Mera Gaon Mera Pride (MGMP) program.

Swati was already a skilled seamstress before marriage, often stitching saree blouses. When she considered working at the local tailor's shop to contribute to the household income, her husband Gopi was supportive but concerned about who would look after their two young children. After several long conversations, Gopi surprised her with a second-hand sewing machine, purchased through a small loan from a relative. His suggestion: set up a tailoring shop at home. ***"I was excited,"*** Swati recalls. ***"It felt like a dream. But I was also scared that borrowing from family meant pressure. What if we couldn't repay it?"***

Swati started Lucky Ladies Corner from a room in her home back in 2022 — long before she'd even heard of the MGMP program. At the time, it was more an act of survival than ambition. After years of stretching a single income and shelving her children's small wishes, she felt a deep urge to contribute. ***"I couldn't even afford to buy clothes to stitch a dress for my daughter, Lucky,"*** she says. ***"That's when I knew I had to do something."***

Still, she named her shop after her daughter and started with what little she had — digging into her rice canister for savings to buy thread and tools. Her first few orders came from friends, and soon, from women turned away by the busier tailoring shop across the street. But business was tough. The local competition had years of trust and visibility, and Swati struggled to keep up.



That's when she was introduced to the Mera Gaon Mera Pride program and joined the Entrepreneurship Development session run by Samhita-CGF. ***"I didn't know what to expect,"*** she says, ***"but I knew I needed help."***

The Marketing module turned out to be a gamechanger. Though shy at first, Swati was quick to apply what she learned. Using a hand-me-down smartphone, she created a WhatsApp group to share photos of her work and even began uploading new designs to her status daily. As her confidence grew, so did her digital instincts. She started browsing for trending patterns, added customers to her lists, and began offering designs her competitors didn't. Her rates were slightly lower too — a strategic move she picked up during class. ***"Even if I lose ₹1 today,"*** she says with a smile, ***"I'll make ₹2 tomorrow."***

Swati's stitching business found its ground. With more orders came more ambition. She realised she could do more than blouses — salwar sets, lehengas, school uniforms. ***"I wanted to be the shop women came to not just for tailoring, but for ideas."***

That's when the Financial Literacy sessions came in. The classes covered everything from saving strategies to government schemes and institutional credit. She and Gopi were still paying off the old family loan, and the idea of borrowing from a bank made them anxious. But with help from MGMP volunteers, she applied for and received a ₹2,00,000 loan. ***"It felt like a big step,"*** she says. ***"But now I know how it works — the EMIs, the paperwork, everything."***

She used the money to repay the earlier loan, buy another machine, stock materials, and begin designing full outfits. Her shop got busier. Her confidence steadier.

What makes Lucky Ladies Corner special, however, is what it's grown into. The shop has grown into something bigger. It's a place where women feel welcome and conversations flow freely. Women from across the village (and even the neighbouring one too) now drop by to browse fabrics, ask for styling tips, or just talk.

Inspired by the Menstrual Health and Hygiene session under the MGMP program, Swati set up a sanitary pad vending kiosk in her shop. The kiosk not only created a safe space for health conversations among women in her village but also added to her monthly earnings.



Today, Swati earns close to ₹4,500 a month and is helping repay the household EMI. ***"We still have dreams for our kids — better schools, better futures,"*** she says. ***"But I can finally say I'm doing my part."***

And Lucky? ***"She gets a new dress whenever she wants now,"*** Swati grins. ***"She's been lucky for us in more ways than one."***