



# INTERNET SAATHI

## Performance Report 2018



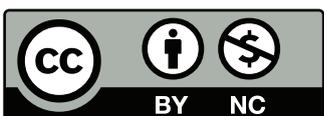
TATA TRUSTS





## Internet Saathi: Performance Report

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# INTERNET SAATHI

## Performance Report 2017

Internet Saathi is an initiative to introduce women to digital tools and the content, information and opportunities the Internet holds. Under this project, women volunteers (or Internet Saathis) have been trained in and equipped with ICT tools and knowledge to connect remote communities to the mainstream world, thus bringing them out of information darkness.



**OSAMA MANZAR**

Founder-Director  
Digital Empowerment Foundation

“Women are the lifeline of a household and a community. Empowering them makes an impact on the entire community and village, including their families and households. Internet Saathi, a focused programme aimed at empowering women through internet, is making a critical difference among the people at the village level.”



**RAHUL SINGH**

District Magistrate  
Gopalganj, Bihar

“Internet Saathi is doing an excellent job in rural areas. It is adding hands and wings to the dreams of new India, especially women, and ensuring that a better part of the population doesn't lag behind in this digital age.”



**DR. SHAHID SIDDIQUI**

Project Head, Internet Saathi  
Digital Empowerment Foundation

“There is much at stake, with much to lose if women are left behind. Internet Saathi has come as a boon for those left behind. These Internet Saathis have not only enhanced women's economic empowerment through access, but also their social and political participation at village level.”



**RAMAN KALYANAKRISHNAN**

Head, Digital Intervention  
Tata Trusts

“DEF's consistent efforts to forge partnerships with local authorities has been pivotal in achieving significant outreach in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. They have created a strong cadre of women leaders in difficult parts of the country.”



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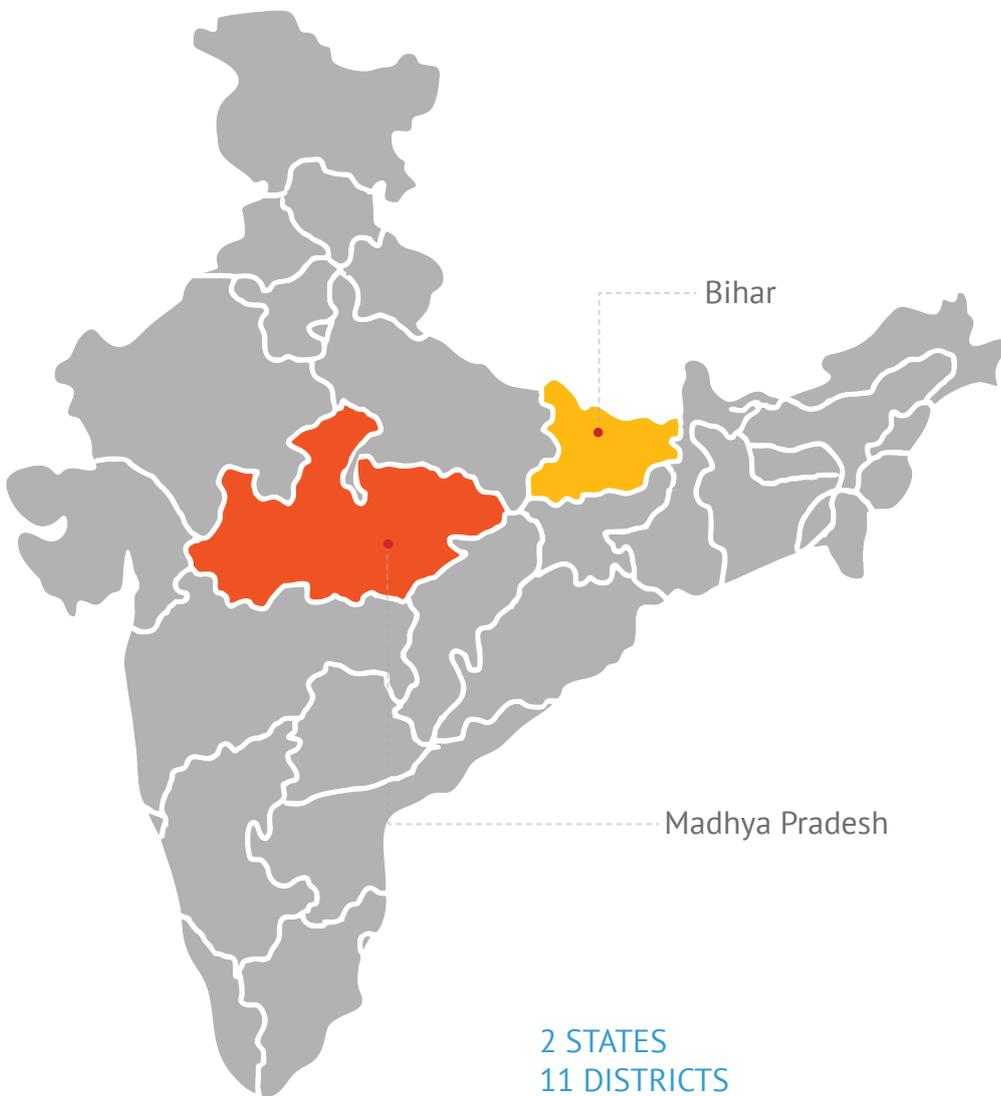
# INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have accelerated economic growth and propelled a wave of engagements that have touched human lives; changing the way communities interact, increasing opportunities for livelihood and crossing the barriers of inequitable growth. ICTs have taken up such pre-eminence in our everyday lives, that we now have access to a bank of knowledge & services at our fingertips. As a result, people in tune with ICTs are no longer isolated and are part of the fast changing global platform. However, there are still millions who are yet to gain access to ICT platforms to access knowledge and opportunities, especially women. In India, only 29% women are Internet users, while 43% of Indian men own a cell-phone; women lag behind with only 28% mobile ownership. The gender gap in mobile ownership, estimated at about 114 million reinforces the fact of unequal access. Recognising this gap, Google and Tata Trust's joint initiative 'Internet Saathi' has empowered thousands of rural women across the country to access digital tools and connect with the online world. As part of this initiative, Google and Tata Trust teamed up with Digital Empowerment Foundation as an implementation partner to reach out to women living in rural parts of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar in an effort to train them in digital literacy and further digitally empower more than 20,00,000 women and girls.

The project was implemented in six districts of Bihar and five districts of Madhya Pradesh, training a total of 2,937 women leaders to spearhead the digital revolution with a cascading effect in rural India. This report outlines the outcome and challenges of the project, and highlights the success stories of the Internet Saathis, their experiences and learning from the project.



# OUTREACH



Bihar

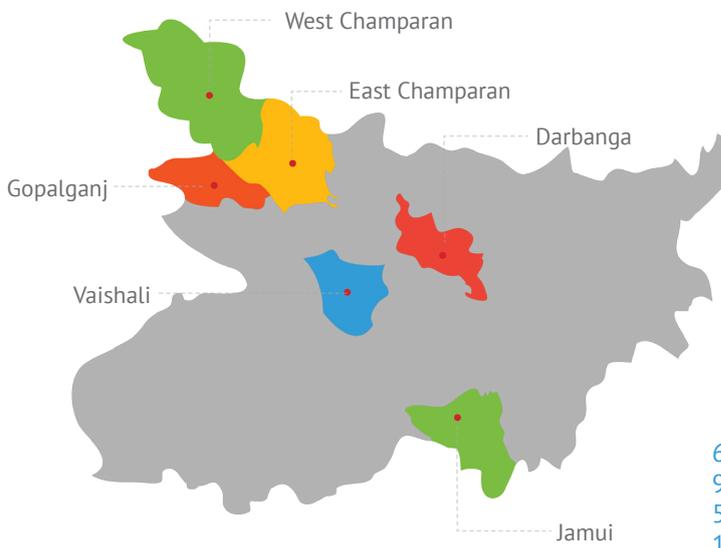
Madhya Pradesh

2 STATES  
 11 DISTRICTS  
 124 BLOCKS  
 10,662 VILLAGES  
 2,937 INTERNET SAATHIS



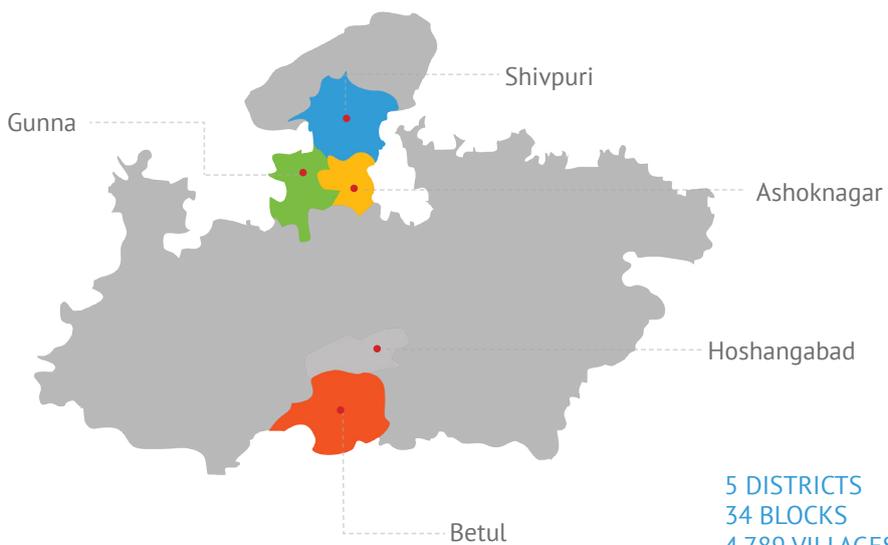


# BIHAR



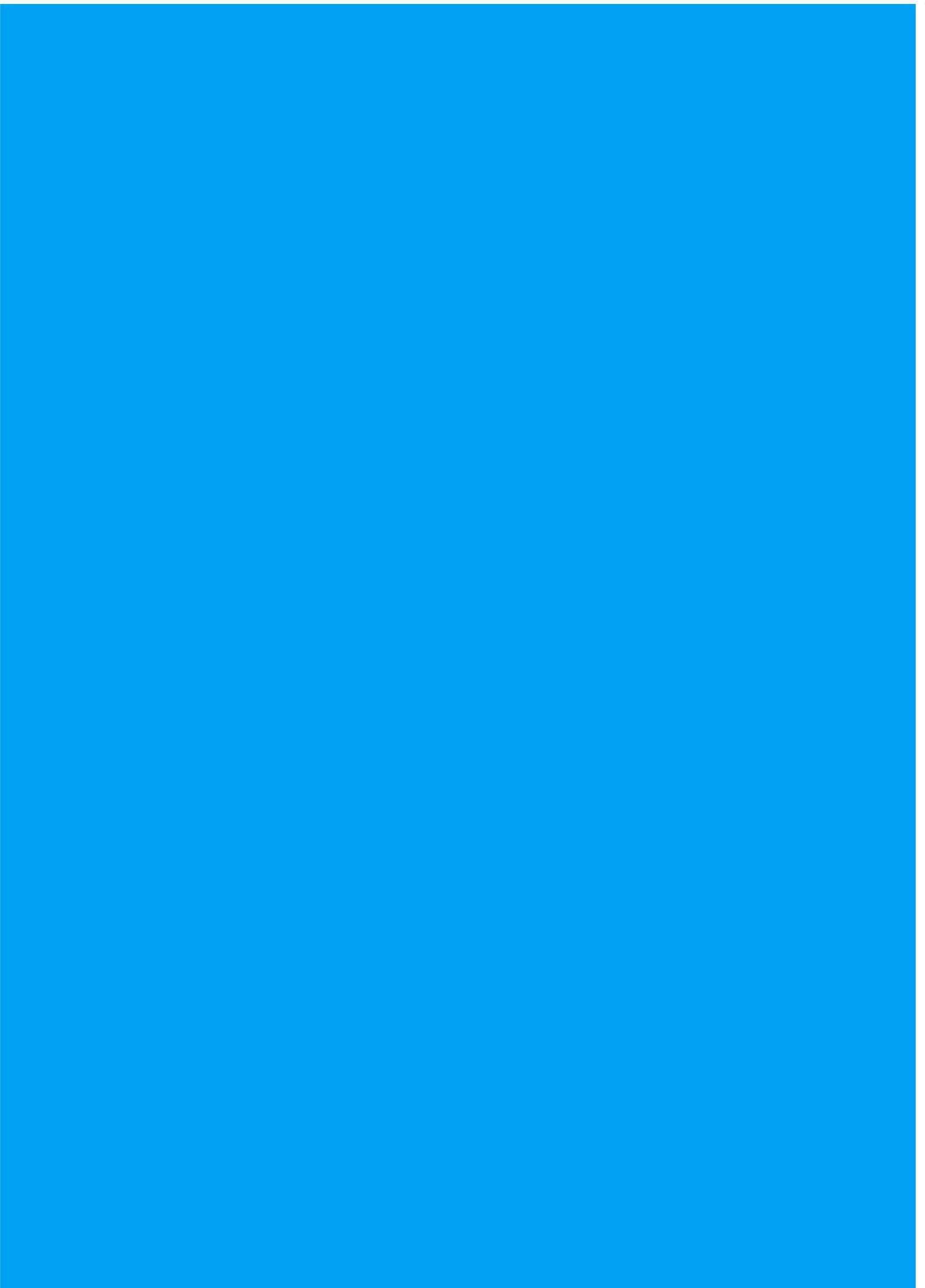
6 DISTRICTS  
90 BLOCKS  
5,873 VILLAGES  
1,606 INTERNET SAATHIS

# MADHYA PRADESH



5 DISTRICTS  
34 BLOCKS  
4,789 VILLAGES  
1,331 INTERNET SAATHIS







# PROJECT OVERVIEW

The mission of Internet Saathi was to train rural women (Internet Saathis) to provide digital and Internet literacy to lakhs of rural women. These trained Internet Saathis were enabled to train women in functional mobile usage and spread awareness about digital and financial literacy to enhance their ICT skills and expose others like them to digital tools and the Internet. The training modules included basic operating functions of mobile phone/tablet, digital literacy, and digital financial literacy. The project was rolled out in two states – Bihar and Madhya Pradesh – to cover 20 lakh rural women and girls between January and July in Bihar and from March to August in Madhya Pradesh in 2017. A cadre of 2,937 Internet Saathis trained a cumulative of 20,51,456 beneficiaries under this project; 19,41,312 of them were females. The beneficiaries ranged from varying backgrounds of caste, economic status, educational qualifications and occupations but most of them were first-time digital users. Every Internet Saathi equipped with a phone and tablet targeted three villages, and travelled for six months from house-to-house to train and impart literacy. The project successfully completed its target and established a strong foundation of women leaders driven to change and contribute to the society.

# 3

## IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The Internet Saathi project was executed with rigorous planning and tight timelines. The project involved active engagement and monitoring of approximately 3,000 human resources at various levels. The entire process involved several Orientation Programmes for supervisors, 101 physical training sessions for the Internet Saathis, and a continuous mentoring mechanism through WhatsApp application, calls, mails and regular field visits. The criteria for the selection of the Saathis required the individual to be at least a Class X passout with basic functional mobile literacy. However, after a baseline across the potential areas of implementation, 90% of the Saathis selected had completed their higher secondary, a few were graduates and postgraduates, and the rest had only been to primary school. Though a considerable number of the Saathi households owned a mobile phone, most women did not have access to the same. By the end, a total of 2,937 Saathis were selected to cover 10,662 villages across the two states.

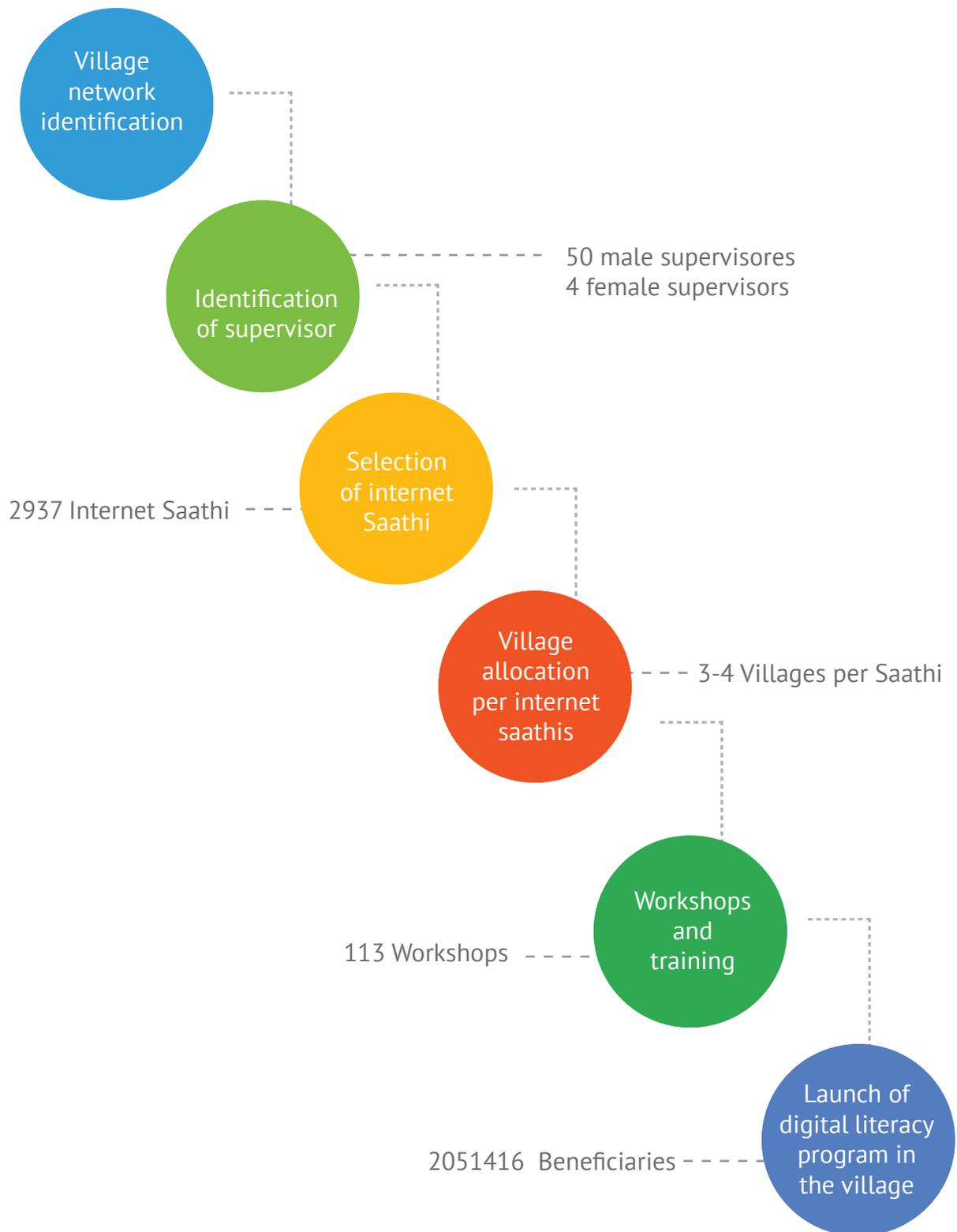


**A group of Saathis hold their newly acquired smartphones up high ahead of a training session.**

## Number of Internet Saathis and villages covered in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh

State	District	Number of Villages Covered	Number of Internet Saathis
Bihar	West Champaran	1071	297
	East Champaran	1113	310
	Gopalganj	1139	287
	Jumui	1007	272
	Darbangha	622	173
	Vaishali	921	267
Madhya Pradesh	Guna	973	270
	Ashok Nagar	778	215
	Hoshangabad	854	237
	Betul	1118	312
	Shivpuri	1066	297
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10662</b>	<b>2937</b>

Every Saathi received a tablet and a smartphone, and was allotted three to four villages with a target to cover 200 community members per month. The Saathis carried the digital equipment and travelled to individuals households, organised meetings for group sessions and engaged women in public spaces to conduct the digital literacy trainings. A supervisor looked after every 50 Internet Saathis and was responsible for their initial selection, mobilisation during trainings, monitoring of their daily activities and troubleshooting problems related to devices and project-related activities. An Android-based application, CollectApp, was also used to keep a track of their daily activities. The application recorded data related to basic understanding of mobile phone/tablet operations, ability to use the Internet on the given devices and digital financial literacy apart from general information of beneficiaries. The entire implementation process was highly dependent on human resources with an effective use of technology for its smooth functioning.





# 4

## OUTCOMES

The larger aim of the project was to create a large scale impact in the area of women empowerment through access and awareness of digital tools and connectivity among the female population in the targeted areas. The outcome, both quantitative and qualitative, can be witnessed among various stakeholders of the project. The project achieved a target of training 20,51,456 beneficiaries of which 95% were female while 6,637 and 1,03,507 were male beneficiaries from Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, respectively.

Number of Beneficiaries in selected districts of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh

State	District	Male	Female	Total
Bihar	Vaishali	263	121993	122256
	West Champaran	2411	298406	300817
	Darbhangha	178	106747	106925
	East Champaran	708	214037	214745
	Gopalganj	1110	225255	226365
	Jumui	1967	158300	160267
Madhya Pradesh	Ashoknagar	31286	108192	139478
	Betul	28499	156217	184716
	Guna	17581	177393	194974
	Hoshangabad	20451	125867	146318
	Shivpuri	5690	248905	254595
	<b>Total</b>		<b>110144</b>	<b>1941312</b>



Though the primary focus of the project was to impart digital literacy to women and girls of the backward communities, more than one lakh men demanded digital literacy trainings. Majority of these beneficiaries were from Shivpuri district in Madhya Pradesh, with a count of 2.5 lakh community members followed by Gopalganj in Bihar with 2.2 lakh trainees.

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**Beneficiaries with their Digital Literacy certificates after they completed a six-hour digital literacy course under the Internet Saathi project in Madhya Pradesh**



**Internet Saathis watch children's videos on YouTube at a Mobile Distribution and Training session.**



# 5

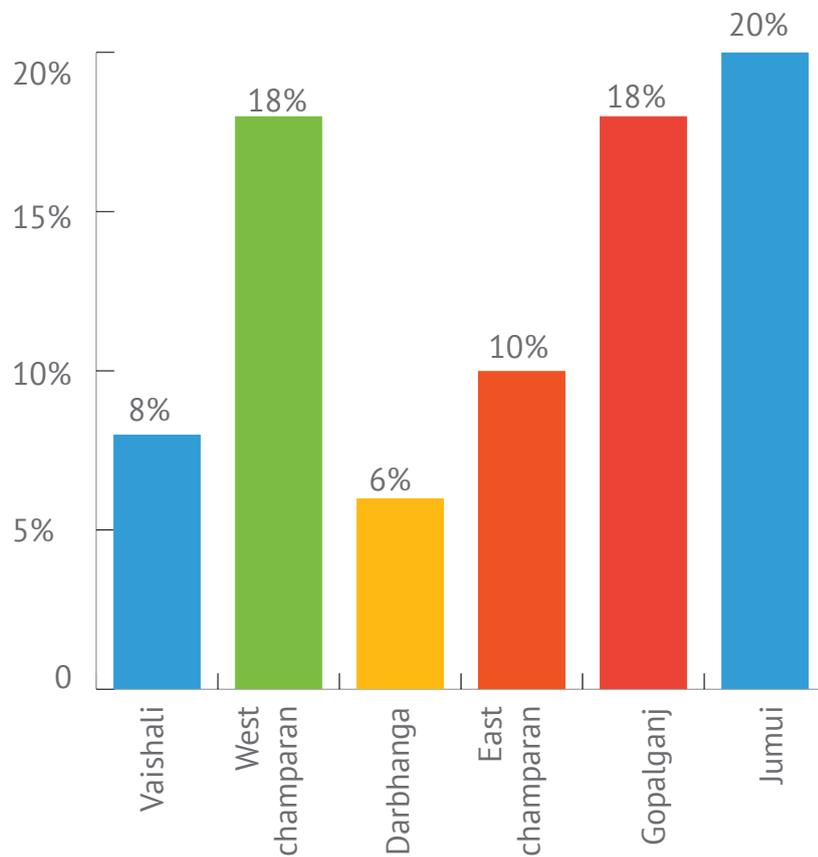
## WOMEN OUTREACH

One of the key achievements of the project has been the extensive outreach across the villages to mobilise women and young girls to participate in the rural digital revolution. The project has succeeded in empowering women from marginalised, low-economic and social backgrounds in areas with low access of digital tools and its awareness.



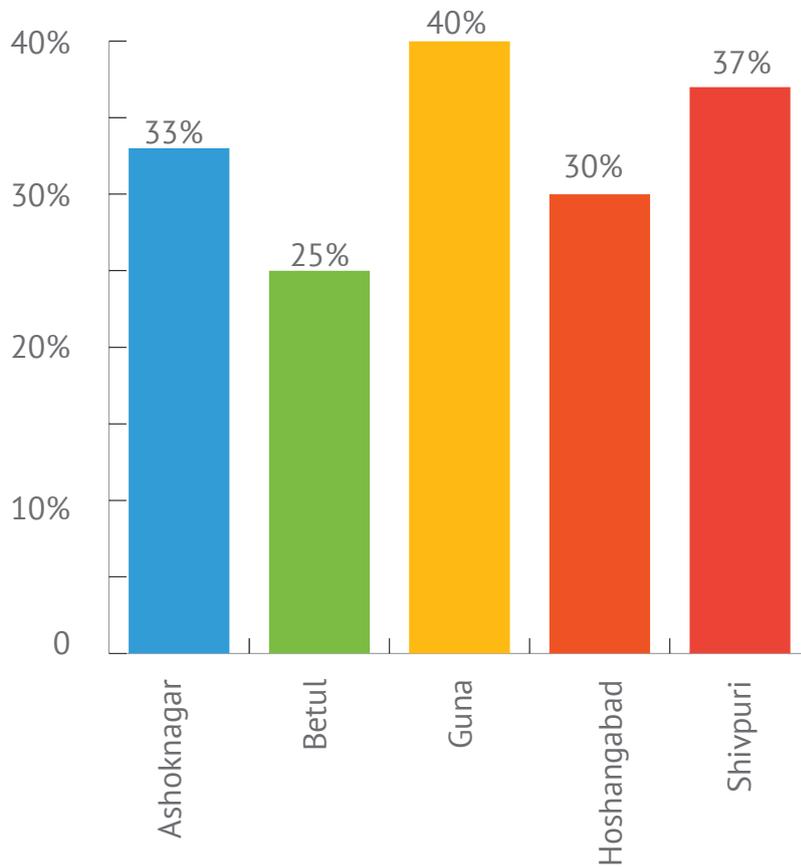
**An Internet Saathi in Madhya Pradesh teaches a physically handicapped person to operate a tablet and access the Internet to look up relevant information.**

### Percentage of female beneficiaries covered in the selected districts (Bihar)



According to Census of India (2011), the districts of Vaishali, West Champaran, East Champaran, Gopalganj, Darbhanga and Jumui in Bihar have more than 91,00,000 female residents collectively. As shown the above figure shows the percentage of females covered – out of the total female population – in the each of the districts. More than 20% of the female population from Jumui district, 18% from Gopalganj and West Champaran both were trained under this project. Vaishali and Darbhanga districts had a relatively lower penetration with approximately 8% and 6% of the female population trained during the course of the project, respectively.

Percentage of female Beneficiaries covered in the selected districts (MP)



In Madhya Pradesh, according to the Census of India 2011, Ashoknagar, Betul, Guna, Hoshangabad and Shivpuri districts in Madhya Pradesh have a collective population of around 25,00,000 women. As shown the above figure indicates the state-wise reach of the project among women. The following figure shows that 40% of the female population from Guna district was provided training, followed by Shivpuri and Ashoknagar with 37% and 33%, respectively.



# DIGITAL LITERACY

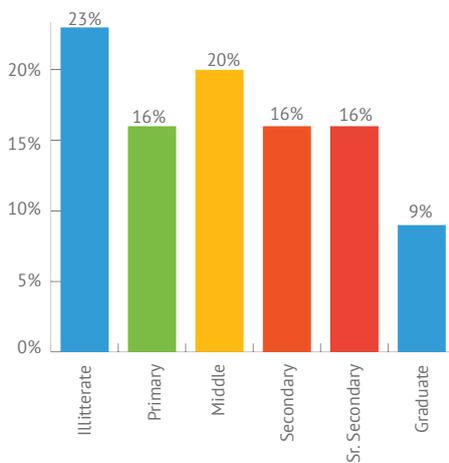
Internet Saathi, as a project, not only created a cadre of digitally literate Internet Saathis but also worked with the illiterate masses to impart a certain level of digital literacy. Training and conducting workshops within a community with low levels of literacy was a challenge, with literacy rates in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh at 63.82% and 70%, respectively. However, that did not deter the Saathis from training lakhs of women. Under this project, more than 20 lakh rural women were benefited in six districts of Bihar and five districts of Madhya Pradesh. These beneficiaries were trained in digital literacy and basic operation of mobile phone and tablets. The targeted audience primarily consisted of females through 6,637 and 1,03,507 male beneficiaries were recorded in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, respectively.

Internet Saathi: Number of Beneficiaries in selected districts of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh

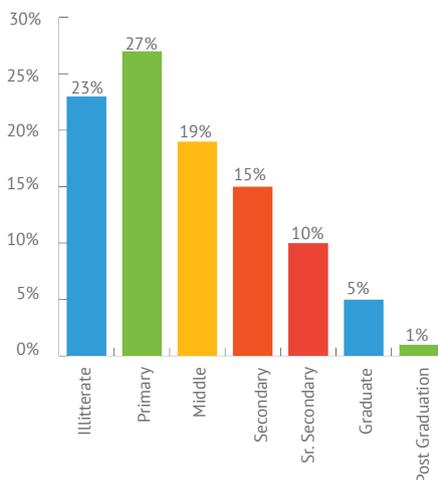
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	<b>Total</b>	<b>110144</b>	<b>1941312</b>	<b>2051456</b>

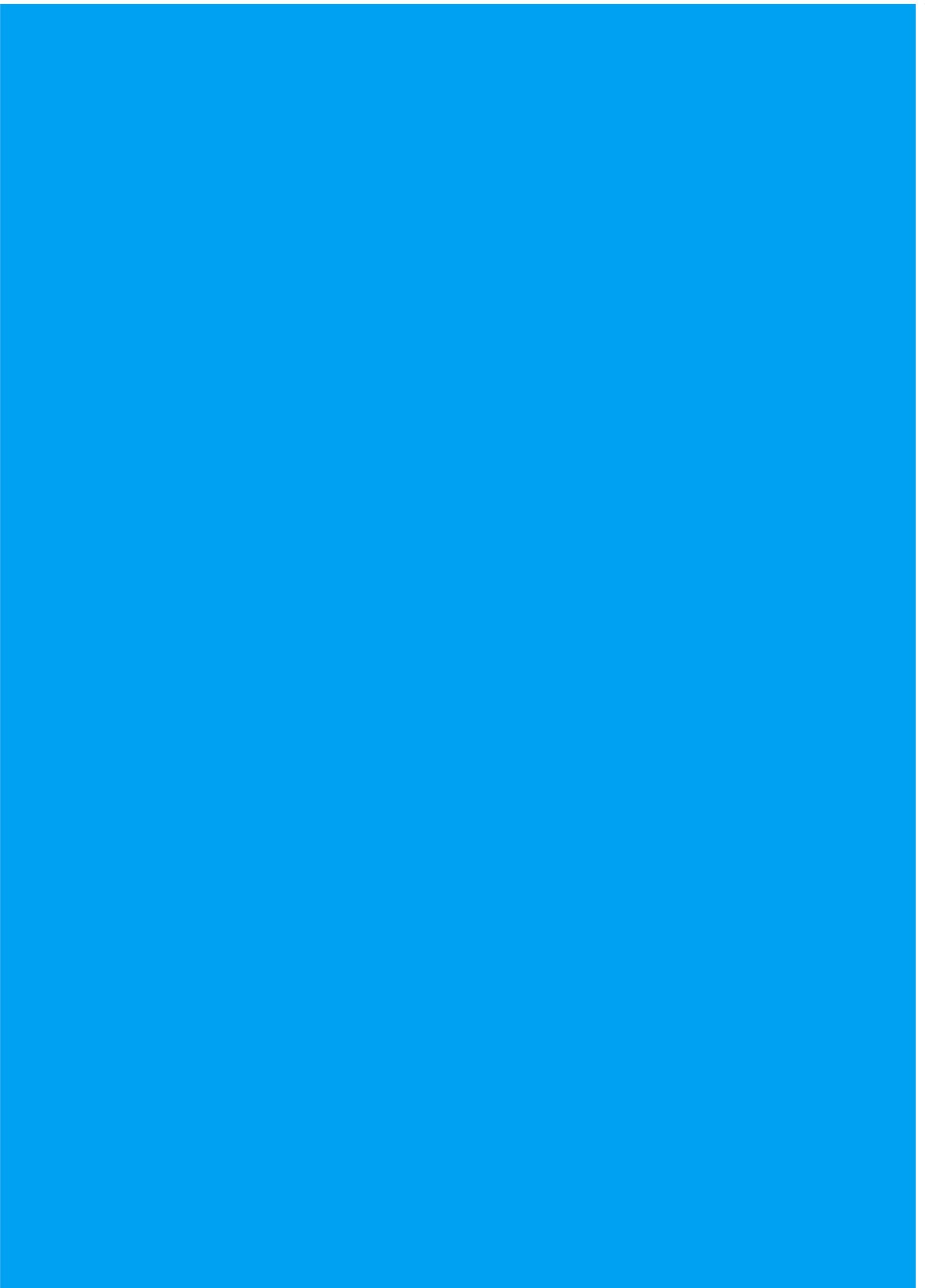
Education was not a barrier for this project, which managed to benefit more persons who were illiterates than those who had a little or higher education levels. The Internet Saathi project was based on hands-on training in which reading ability was minimised to operating a device. To use the Internet, voice commands were prioritised for search over a phone or a tablet. However, illiterate beneficiaries took more time to learn to operate a mobile phone/tablet as compared to literate beneficiaries yet their operational performances was at par, according to Internet Saathis/trainers. In Bihar, more than 16% beneficiaries had completed primary level education while 20% had studied up to middle school. As much as 16% of the beneficiary had studied till secondary or senior secondary level while 9% of the beneficiaries were graduates. Meanwhile, illiterates who showed interest in learning to use the Internet on their mobile phones or tablets accounted for 23 per cent of the beneficiary population.

Educational Level of beneficiaries (Bihar)



Educational Level beneficiaries (M.P)







# BASIC MOBILE LITERACY

Basic mobile literacy, was the first step of digital Education. It included the use of offline applications and maneuvering through the basic function of smart phone. In Bihar, 97% of the beneficiaries learnt to switch on and switch off a mobile phone/tablet for the first time while 95% learnt to lock and unlock a mobile phone/tablet for the first time. Similarly in Madhya Pradesh, 97% of the beneficiaries learnt to switch on and switch off a mobile phone/tablet for the first time while 95% learnt to lock and unlock a mobile phone/tablet for the first time. As per data and feedback received, respondents found changing the operating language of a mobile phone/tablet more difficult than learning to lock and unlock a device. However, 90% of the beneficiaries in Bihar learnt to change the mobile language to a vernacular language of their choice during the course of this training. However, 10% of the beneficiaries faced difficulties in trying to do the same. In Madhya Pradesh, 88% of the community members were able to successfully change the language of the mobile phone. As aimed, once the beneficiaries had learnt to change the operating language of the device to a language of their choice, as many as 90% of them – in both the states – found it easier to navigate between the home screen and the main menu. The mobile camera was ranked fourth in the list of popularly used mobile phone applications. In Bihar, 90% of the beneficiaries successfully learnt to use the mobile phone camera and demonstrated its use to the trainer. As many as 92% of the beneficiaries were even able to locate their clicked photos in the mobile phone gallery. In Madhya Pradesh, 93% of the beneficiaries successfully learnt to use the mobile phone camera and locate the clicked photos in the phone gallery. Another popular feature of the mobile phone was found to be the calculator. Women found it extremely helpful to carry out simple calculations with the help of the in-built application. As per project data, 88% of the beneficiaries, in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, learnt to use the mobile phone calculator.



# INTERNET LITERACY

Internet literacy was one of the key focus areas of the trainings, given its key value in accessing and sharing information. It is also one of the media to access various citizen-centric government applications that provide easy access to government schemes and entitlements to citizens. Since most of the beneficiaries belonged to poor rural areas with limited connectivity, a high number of project beneficiaries were first-time Internet users. Starting this training from the scratch, beneficiaries were first trained to switch on and switch off mobile data over a phone. In Bihar, 88% of the beneficiaries successfully learned to switch on and switch off mobile data and Wi-Fi. Only 12 per cent of the beneficiaries were unable to understand this feature during the training. Data from Madhya Pradesh shows that 86 per cent of the respondents learnt to switch on and switch off Internet on their phones. To assist beneficiaries in accessing information through a search engine without the lack of ability to write being a barrier, they were taught to type keywords or enter voice commands. Data from Bihar shows that 85% of the beneficiaries were able to type or enter voice commands into search engines while 87% of the beneficiaries learnt to open websites of their choice to seek information. Data from Madhya Pradesh shows that 84% of the beneficiaries were able to type or enter voice commands into search engines while 85% of the beneficiaries could open websites of their choice to seek information. Beneficiaries were also trained to understand the purpose of different domain names – such as .gov, .in or .com. This helped 79% of the beneficiaries in Bihar and 75% of the beneficiaries in Bihar to distinguish a government website from other websites, and understand the kind of information either would serve. PlayStore is an important feature of an Android smartphone, and 84% of the beneficiaries in Bihar and 80% in Madhya Pradesh learnt to use the PlayStore to download various applications over the Internet on their devices.

# 9

## FINANCIAL LITERACY

In today's time, digital literacy is incomplete without digital financial literacy. Therefore, keeping up with times and needs, trainings of beneficiaries focused on providing awareness about digital financial tools and accessing banking services through a mobile device. The Saathis were made to watch a video film on online banking and financial literacy for this purpose, besides including them in discussions about the same. The video covered topics like USSD, UPI, mobile wallets and debit/credit cards, among others. While 69% of the respondents in Bihar understood the content of the video, 78% of the respondents in Madhya Pradesh understood the content of the video. These beneficiaries showed much enthusiasm in enquiring about the use of digital financial tools to avail banking facilities.



**A bunch of old women hold a smartphone for the first time to take a selfi together after the Internet Saathi of Bihar taught them the basic functions of a smartphone.**

# KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The trainings were provided to rural women in six districts of Bihar and five districts of Madhya Pradesh where the Internet Saathi module include basic operating functions of a mobile phone/tablet, digital literacy and digital financial literacy.
- A total of 20,51,000 people were benefited under this project; 19,41,312 of them were females – which is more than the total population of the state of Nagaland (Census, 2011).
- Around 17 per cent of female population of the two states were covered during the course of this project.
- Around 33% of female population of the five districts of Madhya Pradesh was covered during the course of this project.
- Around 12% of female population of the six districts of Bihar was covered during the course of this project.
- Out of the total beneficiaries, 23% were illiterate and 7% were graduates.
- As much as 74% of the beneficiaries (15,14,046) were below the age of 35 years while 2% of the beneficiaries (36,566) were over the age of 60.
- During the trainings, 97% of the beneficiaries learnt to switch on and switch off a mobile phone/tablet.
- During the trainings, 89% of the beneficiaries learnt to change the operating language of the mobile phone in both the states.
- During the trainings, 92% of the beneficiaries learnt to click photos from their phone and 93% were able to locate the clicked photos in their gallery.
- During the trainings, 87% of the beneficiaries learnt to turn on or turn off mobile data and Wi-Fi on their phones.
- More than 17 lakh beneficiaries learnt to use a popular search engine and open websites based on search results on mobile phones.
- As many as 77% of the beneficiaries are able to identify government websites after the Internet Saathi trainings.



# CHALLENGES

The Internet Saathi project was a great opportunity for Digital Empowerment Foundation to interact with thousands of women and introduce them to technology in the road towards its mission of providing digital access, connectivity and digital literacy to the marginalised sections of the society. This project also gave the organisation a platform to experiment with new ideas and tackle several challenges that came our way. The challenges were diverse and ranged from technical issues, social issues, cultural issues and geographical barriers. Some of the key challenges from the project were:

- Frequent technical defects in the devices provided to the Saathis, especially low battery back up of tablets
- Tedious procedures and lengthy delays in the servicing of the devices
- Poor network connectivity in certain districts
- Frequent technical glitches in CollectApp affected the monitoring mechanism
- Long distances between villages, with poor road transportation and connectivity, led to delays in on-field problem resolution
- Illiteracy and lack of awareness among the communities created suspicion about the intention of the Internet Saathis
- Caste politics often led to demotivation and jealousy among local women and the Internet Saathis
- Mismatch in available physical data of the villages and actual situation on the ground led to misallocation of villages among the Saathis



# 11

# CONCLUSION

The Internet Saathi project was a major success in terms of its scale and innovation in design. The project successfully achieved a target of over 20 lakh beneficiaries to include men, women and girls to become digitally literate and financially aware. As much as 23% of the targeted population was illiterate while the rest had completed either primary or secondary school education. All of the surveyed beneficiaries were above age of 14, and 74% of the total beneficiaries were below 35 years of age. The survey result shows that more than 90% of beneficiaries learnt to switch on and switch off a mobile phone/tablet and change the operating language of the device. The data also reveals that more than 92% of the beneficiaries have learnt to take a photo with a mobile camera and locate it in the picture gallery. Basic Internet literacy was an integral part of the training programme, and the collected data shows that more than 87% of the beneficiaries have learnt to switch on and switch off mobile data and Wi-Fi. Further, 85% of the beneficiaries learnt to use search engines and open different websites based on the search results. The result also demonstrates that more than 75% of the respondents were able to identify government websites from other websites. The community trainings of 20 lakh people in two states through digitally empowered rural women was one of the greatest achievements of the project as it exposed information-dark communities to the power of technology and the Internet. At the same time, qualitatively, the project created self-confidence and an entrepreneurial attitude among the Internet Saathis to use technology as a means to enhance their livelihood opportunities while serving the needs of their community members. The project, thus, achieved scale by reaching out to communities of more than 10,000 village and depth by creating women digital leaders to drive and lead the rural digital revolution.

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

जयपुर  
 शासक मंत्रालय  
 समाज कल्याण विभाग

श्रीमती सुमन-वसुदेव शर्मा  
 जयपुर  
 ज. सं. नं. ११११, जिला शिवपुरी (म.प्र.)  
 पिन- २२११११

दिनांक ३१/०६/२०१७

प्रमाणिकरण

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 श्रीमती सुमन शर्मा, जयपुर, पंचायत राज, जयपुर, जिला शिवपुरी (म.प्र.)  
 पिन- २२११११

जयपुर  
 जयपुर जिला  
 जयपुर जिला प्रशासन

शिवबालक प्रसाद  
 उप मुखिया  
 ग्राम पंचायत राज- पिपरा

-निवास:-  
 ग्राम- पिपरा, पो- अहावर पिपरा,  
 थाना- सिवलिवा प्रखण्ड- बटौली,  
 जिला- गोपालगंज पिन- 841405  
 मो- 9199459892

दिनांक 29/07/2017

प्रमाणिकरण

प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि शिवबालक प्रसाद का निवास निम्नलिखित है-  
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उप मुखिया  
 ग्राम १० पो- पिपरा  
 १०- अहावर (गोपालगंज)  
 शिवबालक प्रसाद  
 29/7/2017

पंचायती राज (प्र) अमर खेड़ा  
 कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत ..... कटौली  
 जिला शिवपुरी (म.प्र.)

दिनांक  
 प्रमाणिकरण

प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि कु. लक्ष्मी कु. ग्राम कटौली की निवासी हैं और ज. सं. नं. ११११, जिला शिवपुरी (म.प्र.) इन्होंने ग्राम पंचायत की कटौली की महिलाओं को घर-घर जाकर इन्टरनेट सिखाया और पंचायत में पंचायत भवन पर प्रशिक्षण भी कराया और शासन की अन्य योजनाओं की जानकारी भी दी और इन्होंने बहुत अच्छा कार्य किया जिससे सभी लोग मनुष्यता पा सके हैं।

जयपुर  
 जयपुर जिला  
 जयपुर जिला प्रशासन

ग्राम पंचायत राज जमुआ  
 प्रखण्ड-डाका, जिला-पूर्वी चम्पारण (बिहार) 845418

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 ग्राम-पो-जमुआ,  
 थाना-डाका, पो-चौ  
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दिनांक- 30-07-2017

प्रमाणिकरण

प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि कलावती कुमारी पिता लाल दास ग्राम गड़दिया पो- सिवलिवा, थाना-डाका, जिला-पूर्वी चम्पारण बिहार के स्थायी निवासी हैं। इनके द्वारा ग्राम पंचायत राज जमुआ में महिलाओं को लक्ष्मी कु. मोबाइल इंटरनेट का कार्य के बारे में जानकारी दिया जा रहा है। इस कार्य में साहसिक हैं। महिला एवं लड़कियों में जागरूकता प्रदान कर रहे हैं। इनके उच्चतम भविष्य की कामना करती हूँ।

जमुआ  
 जमुआ जिला  
 जमुआ जिला प्रशासन

# 12

# MEDIA COVERAGE







# SUCCESS STORIES

## BREAKING CULTURAL BARRIERS



Gauri Kumari  
Jamui, Bihar

Gauri Kumari is one of the most talkative, excited and enterprising women among the Internet Saathis of Jamui, Bihar. In just six months, she had completed Internet trainings of more than 1,800 women and girls across four villages. When Gauri is out in the villages, exposing women and girls to basic functions of a smartphone and the hidden wonders of the Internet, she often has to leave her kids under the supervision of her neighbours. She finds it difficult to look after her children and meet the deliverables of Internet Saathi. “The allocated villages are far away from home, and sometimes I have to use Google Maps to search for them,” she says. However, she feels that her travels around the villages and interactions with different people have made her life more fruitful and exciting than it was before. Recollecting a time when she visited a Muslim locality and homes of lower caste families, Gauri says, “If I wasn’t a Saathi, I would have never visited their homes and never known about their lifestyles, food habits and cultural practices.” Before joining the Internet Saathi project, Gauri took tuitions for young school kids. Her love for teaching and eagerness to learn new technology drove her to become an Internet Saathi. The first time she visits a home, she says, she is greeted with curiosity. The second time she visits the same home, she is surrounded by happy faces and cheers from young girls that give her satisfaction and motivation to keep moving forward. Whether it be teaching daily wage labourers to use the calculator to calculate their monthly wages or looking up saree-blouse designs on the Internet and watching food recipes with middle-aged women, every day is a new experience for Gauri. At the end of a tiring day, when she returns home, her children pounce on her and take away her phone to play games, watch cartoon and videos. Sometimes, they even ask her and her husband to watch films with them, “Accha Lagta hai, saath mein baithkar dekhna (It feels good to sit together as a family and watch movies).”

## BUILDING CONFIDENCE



Priyanka Sarvaiya  
Ashoknagar, Madhya  
Pradesh



After her schooling, Priyanka Sarvaiya went on to pursue a degree in BA and then in PGDCA. Her rural background and economic backwardness often posed many challenges in her life but her enthusiasm to learn kept her going and one day she started a coaching centre in the village to provide her family with financial support. It was not only a means of earning a livelihood but also the passion to teach people. While pursuing PGDCA, Priyanka had learnt the basics of computers but still knew very little about a smartphone. Priyanka has always been well aware of the fact that people in villages are largely unconnected with the outside world. This has always bothered her. However, when she heard about the Internet Saathi project, she was excited to join and offer her community members an opportunity to see the world through the eyes of the Internet. A little excited about the empowering chance and a little nervous about her lack of proficiency in using a smartphone and accessing the Internet, Priyanka began to receive her training under the Internet Saathi project. Soon, she was a confident woman, eager to train other women like her. “It feels good when I see rural women using a mobile phone and accessing the Internet. It gives me satisfaction,” she says. At her coaching centre too, Priyanka uses the tablet to practice Hindi, English and mathematics with her students. “Earlier, I used to face problems while teaching since books don’t always offer enough/variety explanations but now the Internet has solved this issue,” says Priyanka, who has even taught some adults to use net banking and mobile banking services on their phones.



## FIGHTING RESISTANCE



Nidhi Kumari,  
East Champaran, Bihar

Nidhi, who holds a master's degree, was no stranger to the world of the Internet. As a student, she would often look up information on the Internet using her smartphone while pursuing her degree. When her brother introduced her to Internet Saathi, she joined the programme almost immediately, sure that she would be learning something new. At the training, Nidhi learnt the technical skills fast. Through discussions, they also discussed the possible challenges that the women would encounter. Excited about what she had learnt, she went back home and shared her knowledge with her family members. Her mother, who was the only one in her house who did not use a smartphone, also started using one when Nidhi taught her to use it. Once in the field, Nidhi would convince the women in her village to access the Internet by showing its use in everyday life. She would tell women how they could send text messages on WhatsApp rather than post letters. She would tell them about the various embroidery patterns and recipes they can look up on the Internet rather than stick to their age old favourites. Soon enough, women – who were earlier hesitant to learn a smartphone given their lack of knowledge and ability to use one – were now quite eager to be trained by Nidhi. However, things weren't always easy. Nidhi would often have to talk to the men in the house first to seek their permission, on behalf of the women in the house, to learn to operate a smartphone. Given the patriarchal structure of our society, especially in rural India, Nidhi understood that it was imperative to equip women with digital skills otherwise they would remain dependant on others their entire life. Nidhi visits her assigned villages regularly and has become popular among the villagers. Women now come to her for a variety of things – stitching techniques, livelihood opportunities, information about the process of getting an Aadhaar and more. Nidhi feels that there is an increased sense of awareness about Internet and its utility, and more and more women in the villages are now demanding mobile phone ownership.

## INFORMATION AGENT



Janki  
Guna, Madhya Pradesh.



Prior to being an Internet Saathi, Janki was working with Digital Empowerment Foundation at its CIRC in Haripur, Guna, where she taught community members to use computers and access information online. Janki is well known in her village, and is popularly called the 'Kisan Didi' because she provides farmers with information on agricultural practices. However, the road to familiarity with the community wasn't as easy when she had to visit new villages as part of the Internet Saathi project. The determination, motivation and passion, coupled with persistence, though eventually made her a friendly face wherever she went. Janki tells everyone that one does not need to visit the city anymore, since all information is available at the touch of a screen via the Internet. This has also, dramatically, brought down the cost involved in travelling and accessing a piece of information. Women in the villages she has served now come to her for exam results or job opportunities for their children, making financial transactions and personal advices. In fact, a lot of households visit her house instead of travelling to the nearest city when they are in search of information. Janki shares a warm relationship with other Saathis in the region. They meet often to discuss and seek counsel whenever they face challenges. She feels it is important to help each other and learn from each other. Janki feels that the Internet Saathi project is great medium through which she can continue to earn a livelihood in the future.





## VILLAGE PHOTOGRAPHER



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Rekha  
Khaira, Bihar





Rekha in her mid-forties had always been associated with the issues of women. She was the block coordinator of the Mahila Samakhya Society in Bihar where she worked on issues like girl child education, maternal health and women's livelihoods. Unlike most women in her village, she had a supportive family that encouraged her to work even after her marriage. Curious to explore the idea of women empowerment and mobile phones, she decided to join the Internet Saathi project. Rekha was not a very well-known face in the village but when she became one of the only woman to own a smartphone and a tablet, the word spread like wild fire. Several women would come to her and praise her for teaching young girls and women to use the Internet but they rarely signed up to be trained. Rekha, however, didn't stop. She was persistent in her efforts and went from village to village, locality to locality, motivating women to learn to look up information on Google Search, click photographs and watch relevant videos on YouTube. One day, after a long night of a wedding celebration, Rekha was woken up by five women, relentlessly knocking at her door. There was a rush in their voices. When Rekha opened the door, she was informed that the cameraman had left after the wedding and there was no one to photograph the 'vidaai' ceremony at dawn. The village women had come to the door as she was the only person with a camera phone in the village. Happy to help, Rekha immediately picked up her phone and rushed to the wedding house just in time to click the bride, the groom and their families. Later, she got them printed and gave it to the families. "Us din mujhe laga ki main bhagwan hu (I felt like a saviour that day)," she says, feeling grateful for the opportunities and new relationships she has come across through the Internet Saathi project. Rekha is now popularly known as the Mobile Didi of the village.



## A LEAP INTO eEDUCATION



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Manisha Kumari  
Jamui, Bihar

Manisha is one of the youngest Saathis and holds a undergraduate degree in mathematics. After completing college, she started taking mathematics coaching lessons at her home for young boys and girls in her village. It was this interest in teaching that led her to join the Internet Saathi project. Manisha had heard of the Internet before but had never owned a phone or a computer to actually explore it. “Kabhi zaroorat hi nahi padi (I never felt a need to own a phone),” she says. But now that she has learnt to use a smartphone, she was also exposed to a range of applications and utilities. She says she was initially shocked to see how almost every piece of information could be derived from Google without even stepping out of the bedroom. “College jane ki zaroorat hi nahi, ghar mein baith ke hi seekh sakti thi main tab kuch! (There was no need for me to go to college; I could have learnt everything at home!),” she says. In a span of five months, Manisha has taught 807 women and girls, besides a bunch of school boys, to use a smartphone to access the Internet. Manisha has several education apps downloaded on her device that helps her practice mathematics and teach her students better. She even visits nearby government schools to train children in using mobile applications to improve their mathematics, English and even Bollywood dance moves. She remembers the time when she had to struggle to solve difficult math problems and sometimes had even failed to explain it to her students. With YouTube now just a tap away, “All I need to do is enter the problem and within a minute I can find the solution. This has made my life so much easier”. Manisha’s house is no longer just a mathematics tuition centre, but has become a place where young boys and girls come to learn various subjects through video-based online tutorials.

# COMMUNITY MOBILISATIONS



GUNA, MADHYA PRADESH



JAMUI, BIHAR



DARBHANGA, BIHAR

# INTERNET SAATHI IN ACTION



SAATHIS ORGANISE A FLOOD RELIEF CAMP

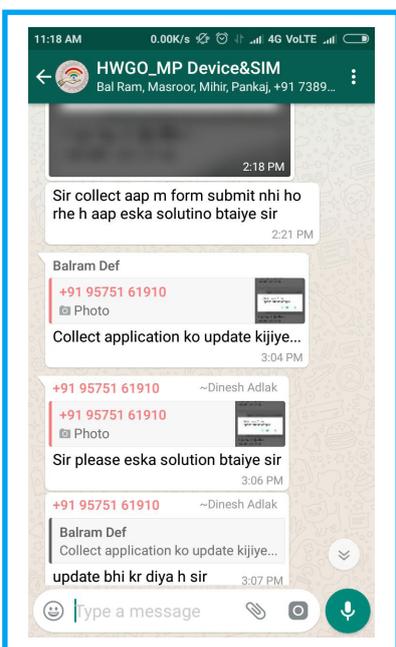


SAATHIS PARTICIPATE IN  
A DIGITAL INDIA EVENT

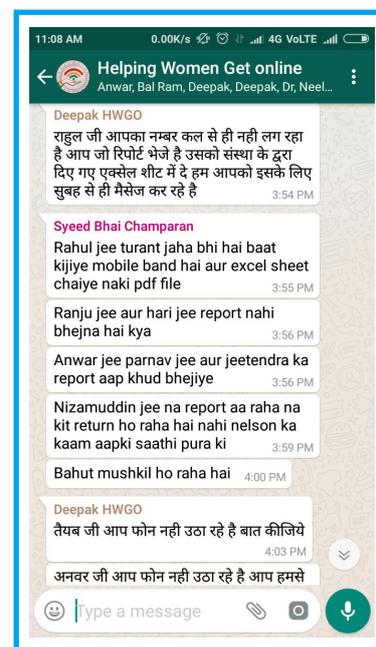


SAATHIS INTERACT WITH  
UNION MINISTER RAVI SHANKER PRASAD

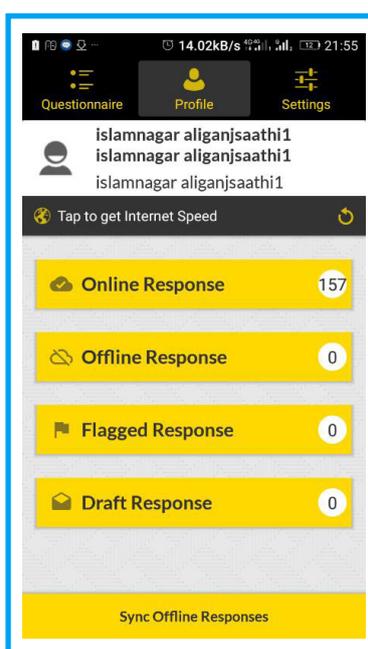
# ONLINE MENTORING AND MONITORING MECHANISMS



**A DEDICATED CHAT GROUP FOR DIGITAL DEVICES-RELATED TROUBLESHOOT**



**A MENTORING AND MONITORING GROUP FOR IMPLEMENTATION TEAM**



**A DEDICATED MIS APP FOR SAATHI'S MONITORING**

# WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS



VAISHALI, BIHAR



ASHOK NAGAR, MADHYA PRADESH



HOSHANGABAD, MADHYA PRADESH







Internet Saathi is an initiative to introduce women to digital tools and the content, information and opportunities the Internet holds. Under this project, women volunteers (or Internet Saathis) have been trained in and equipped with ICT tools and knowledge to connect remote communities to the mainstream world, thus bringing them out of information darkness.



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