



Safeguarding Rural India Through Critical Digital Literacy



Project Report

*From:
Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)
New Delhi, India*



Safeguarding Rural India Through Critical Digital Literacy



Project Report

*From:
Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)
New Delhi, India*

Published in 2024 by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)

© Digital Empowerment Foundation 2024

This publication is available under the **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License** (CC-BY 4.0). By using the content of this publication, users agree to be bound by the terms of the Creative Commons License. No part of this publication may be reprinted, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the publishers' prior permission in written form.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of DEF concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city, or area or of its authorities or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Suggested citation: *Safeguarding Rural India Through Critical Digital Literacy*. Digital Empowerment Foundation. New Delhi, 2024.

Prepared & compiled by:

Shruti Narula & Ashraf Jawaid

Proof Read by:

Akanksha Ahluwalia

Design & Layout:

Satish Kumar

For permission requests, write to the publisher at the address below:

info@defindia.

Table of Contents

1. Background	7
2. Project Need	9
3. About the project	11
4. Programme Geographic	13
5. Project Objectives and expected Social Impact	15
6. Programme design/methodology	17
7. Program Implementation	21
i. Identification of Infopreneurs	21
ii. Eligibility Criteria for Finalising InfoPreneurs	21
iii. Onboarding process of Infopreneurs	22
iv. Setting up of Centres	23
v. Centre Inauguration	24
vi. Centre Activities	26
vii. Identification of Learners	26
viii. Baseline assessment of learners	28
ix. Training Methodology on Modules	29
x. Pre and Post assessment of learners	31
xi. Yojana Camps	32
xii. Residential Workshops	33
xiii. Endline Assessment of learners	37
8. Project Outcomes	41
9. Monitoring	43
10. Impact Numbers	45
11. Experiential Learning	47
12. Learning Insights & Additional Outcomes	49
13. Conclusion	51
14. Way Forward	53
Annexure-1 Case Stories	55



नागरिक सेवाओं की जानकारी
एवं पहुँच

 defindia.org



1. Background

Digital Empowerment Foundation, established in 2002, with the aim of addressing information poverty in rural India. As an organisation, we have worked on equipping rural communities with access to digital tools, digital development, digital rights, infrastructure and entrepreneurial avenues. As such, our initial work was with the unconnected and under-connected. Currently, we have expanded our work to include problems arising from connectivity such as misinformation as pioneers in India's digital literacy development narrative. DEF has a wide reach among rural populations in India with a cadre of over 2000 information entrepreneurs whom we have equipped with devices, connectivity, and skills. The grassroots information entrepreneurs have a good rapport and standing with communities due to providing facilitating access to much-required digital services and government entitlements and schemes. The earnings from these also make the information entrepreneurs self-sustainable. This

project is based on our 20+ years of experience and built around our existing model.

When the program was designed, the two major pillars were digital financial literacy and critical literacy. While the program implementation was taking place, we felt there was a need to make the program more effective by shifting to a more activity-based curriculum that makes people aware of their biases and engages in pre-bunking strategies. We chose to work with women because our on-ground experience has shown that they tend to be more accountable and responsible, and they also make empathetic teachers. We are also pioneers in Digital Literacy Training and have been part of conceptualizing the central government program– National Digital Literacy Mission. We have also been providing digital services to rural, remote and tribal areas and have contributed to conceptualization of the central government program– Common Services Centre.

समीक्षात्मक डिजिटल साक्षरता द्वारा ग्रामीण महिलाओं का सशक्तिकरण

कार्यात्मक डिजिटल साक्षरता

डिजिटल वित्तीय साक्षरता

समीक्षात्मक डिजिटल साक्षरता

नागरिक सेवाओं की जानकारी एवं पहुँच



delindia.org



2. Project Need

According to a study by Oxford University Press, 54% of Indians rely on social media for information. 87% of those who share content are confident of the truthfulness indicating a pressing need for critical digital literacy. As per a [report in the Reuter](#), “India’s poultry industry has lost 13 billion rupees (\$182 million) in three weeks after speculation on social media that chickens are a cause of the spread of coronavirus”. The rural population is also more susceptible to scam messages and cyber fraud especially using fake Unified Payment Systems (UPI) screenshot. Thus, there is a need to invest in digital financial literacy as well.

Our other focus area is reducing the gender digital divide. According to a study by Observer Research Foundation, Indian women are 15% less likely to own mobile phones compared to men and 33%

less likely to use internet services. Women in rural India are worse off due to the urban-rural digital divide as well. As such, this project equips rural women with skills and devices.

The third focus area is citizen services. India is in a transition phase with the central government pushing for rapid digitalization across various sectors. However, in rural India where the majority of India’s poor reside, still lags urban areas in access to digital infrastructure including connectivity and digital skills leading to a skewed distribution of costs and benefits of digital transformation. As per the census of 2011, 72.2 percent of the population of India lives in rural areas. However, rural broadband penetration is only 29% against a national average of 51%. Similarly, the urban tele density was 141.62% at the end of July-21 whereas the rural tele density was only 60.33% during the same period.



3. About The Project

Project Brief

Keeping the context in mind, this project was conceptualized to build the capacities of individuals and communities in rural India to critically engage with digital content and platforms. DEF has a presence in 250 districts in India with a cadre of more than 2000 InfoPreneurs (grassroots information entrepreneurs who provide digital services to local communities). We selected 30 infopreneurs from four Indian states and trained them using a contextualized curriculum. We also provided laptops and printers to these women to ensure that they could expand their mobile/tablet-based services. The program also aimed to ensure that these 30 InfoPreneurs would train 15 women from their communities and that the program would be able to establish a cadre of 450 women fact-checkers. The activity-based curriculum used for training will have components of functional digital literacy, digital financial literacy, critical digital literacy (cyber laws, privacy, and consent, ways to identify fake

news, identifying biases and how to counter them, tactics of mis/dis information such as emotional language, financial incentives and influence operations) and facilitating access to citizen services. We will be beginning with functional digital literacy and digital financial literacy to interest participants and also because cyber fraud is a serious concern in rural India.

Thus, we aim to create a cadre of rural women equipped with critical digital literacy who can form a rural fact-checking ecosystem. 90 promising candidates from these 450 will be given digital devices to start their own centres (this would also act as an incentive). We also intend to finetune our existing curriculum on misinformation – both content and delivery wise through this project. And there are indirect beneficiaries to digital literacy training through influence spheres. Local community members also benefit from digital services made possible through the devices. Project funds will be spent on curriculum development, capacity building and monitoring and evaluation.

जागरूकता और योजना शिविर

(नागरिक अधिकार एवं सरकारी योजनाएं)

समय सुबह 10 बजे से शाम 4 बजे तक

सभी व्यक्ति आवेदन कर सकते हैं

सामाजिक सुरक्षा पेंशन किसान सम्मान निधि अटल पेंशन

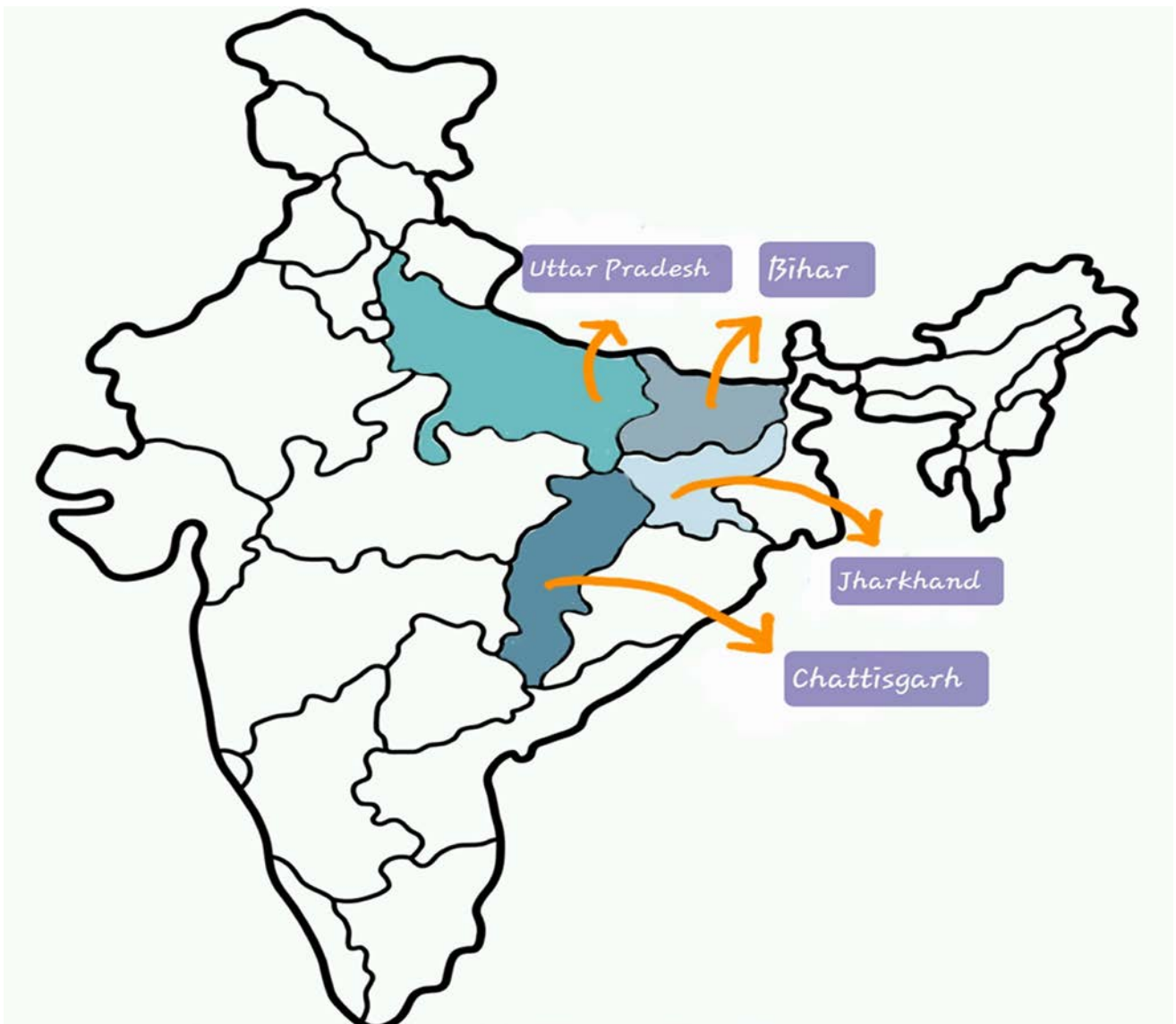
सभी लोग जानकारी प्राप्त कर सकते हैं और आवेदन कर सकते हैं

 <p>समाजिक सुरक्षा पेंशन</p>	 <p>किसान सम्मान निधि</p>	 <p>अटल पेंशन</p>	 <p>समाजिक सुरक्षा पेंशन</p>
---	--	--	---



4. Programme Geographic

S. NO	State	Districts	No. of Centres
1	Bihar	West Champaran	24
2	Chhattisgarh	Durg & Raipur	40
3	Jharkhand	Ramgarh, Khunti & Bokaro	28
4	Uttar Pradesh	Bhadohi, Jaunpur, Prayagraj, Chandauli, Varanasi	28
Total			120





5. Project Objective(s) and Expected Social Impact

1. The project successfully created a cadre of 480 rural women spread across northern Indian states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, who build the capacities of local communities to produce, disseminate and consume digital content critically.

2. Facilitated affordable access to digital services and citizen services in the remote districts of Northern India.

3. Nurturing a cadre of 120 grassroots rural women entrepreneurs who can generate income by providing digital services and facilitating access to citizen services to the local communities. They will be charging a nominal fee for providing these services. These 120 women will also form

part of the 480-women cadre trained in critical digital literacy.

Envisaged social impact:

- Creation of women led local ecosystems nurturing critical digital literacy
- Rural centers facilitate access to connectivity and devices.
- Income generation for participants by facilitating digital services
- Increased community access to digital services and govt entitlements





6. Programme Design & Methodology

Main activity	Sub activities
Team Induction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completion of hiring/ identifying District Coordinator 2. Identification & Finalization of 30 infopreneurs by DCs 3. Identification & Finalization of 450 Learners by DCs & Infopreneurs. 4. Organizational induction and orientation to project goals, outcomes and process
Centre Set Up	<p>Centre Set up 30 Selected Women Infopreneurs.</p> <p>Distribution of Devices (Laptops & Printers)</p> <p>Orientation of Devices.</p> <p>Branding of Centres.</p> <p>Mobilization about Centres</p>
Baseline Assessments, Endline Assessments & FGDs conducted	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baseline Orientation to the infopreneurs 2. Baseline survey (20% - 90 participants) 3. Endline Orientation to the Infopreneurs. 4. Endline Survey Conducted (20% - 90 participants) 5. Focus group discussions conducted regarding Misinformation, Disinformation, Fake News, Cyber Frauds. 6. Analysis of the responses.
Curriculum Development & Refining	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum Development & Refining <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Functional Digital Literacy, b) Digital Financial Literacy, c) Facilitating access to citizen Services, d) Critical Digital Literacy. <p>Developed critical digital literacy module so that it addresses tactics behind misinformation and disinformation such as emotional language, financial incentives, influential operations.</p> 2. Prepared Handouts, other interactive materials etc, to be used during Sessions. <p>Prepared</p> <p>Activity Kit Development - Developed Safeguarding Rural India through Critical Digital Literacy kit. The Kit includes Modules, Media & Information Literacy (MIL) Activities. Through various activities and case studies, we will learn practical ways to fact-check information and identify misinformation/disinformation and biased opinions that are presented online as factual information. We will also explore how to navigate the complex world of social media and avoid falling prey to clickbait headlines and sensationalized content.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Translation of Material in Hindi 2. Designing & Copy editing of Content

Main activity	Sub activities
Training of the district coordinators by the main trainer cum content developer team	Modules covered: Functional Digital literacy, Digital Financial Literacy, Facilitating access to citizen Services & Critical Digital Literacy.
Training of the 30 infopreneurs by district coordinators	Modules covered: Functional Digital literacy, Digital Financial Literacy, Facilitating access to citizen Services & Critical Digital Literacy.
Training of the 450 Learners by their respective Infopreneurs	Modules covered: Functional Digital literacy, Digital Financial Literacy, facilitating access to citizen Services & Critical Digital Literacy Also, The Kit Training in their community Activity Based activities in their Local Dialect.
Community outreach by infopreneurs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitating access to digital services (education, healthcare, career related) 2. Facilitating access to government schemes and citizen services 3. Outreach to nearby higher secondary schools and public institutions for digital literacy training (these will be an ongoing activity that will continue even after the project duration as this is how infopreneurs will earn income)
Conducting Yojana Camps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yojana Camps were conducted
Selection of 2nd batch of infopreneurs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selection of 90 Infopreneurs out of 450 on basis (Attended Training Regularly, Active Participation, Demonstrated Tech, Entrepreneurial & Leadership Attitude. 2. Distribution of 90 laptops and 90 printers





Introduction to
Cyber Crime Safety

RETI
M
Introduction
Definition
Aims/Purpose
Installation
Steps of P...
Termination
Conclusion

7. Program Implementation

i. Identification of InfoPreneurs

The selection process for the InfoPreneurs involved a comprehensive evaluation of the potential candidates' communication skills, rapport formation, leadership, training and interpersonal skills, as well as their willingness to work for their communities. The InfoPreneurs were also chosen based on the availability of digitally equipped centres/CIRCs/CSC centres in their locality, to ensure that services are provided where they are most needed. The InfoPreneurs are also expected to have strong leadership skills and the ability to work effectively with beneficiaries from diverse backgrounds and to know that these potential master trainers are getting interviewed by our DCs and Delhi team coordinator. The Delhi program team also gave priority to local stakeholders, such as community leaders and SHG members, to ensure that the program is embedded in the community and have a sustainable impact for a long term.

ii. Eligibility Criteria for Finalising InfoPreneurs

We have established a comprehensive set of eligibility criteria for the final selection of InfoPreneurs participants. These criteria have been meticulously designed to ensure that the individuals chosen are equipped with the right skills, mindset, and determination to excel within this program. The outlined eligibility requirements are as follows:

- The potential candidates must be aged between 18 to 35 years.
- The potential candidates should possess at least a matriculate or eighth-grade education.
- They must be able to read a fundamental skill that all Infopreneurs should have. This will enable them to access information, learn new concepts, and navigate various resources effectively.
- They should be able to apply simple mathematical operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. This skill set will enable them to engage with financial aspects and basic quantitative tasks.
- Effective communication is crucial for leadership. They must be adept at both verbal and written communication, which will facilitate their engagement with peers, mentors, and the broader community.
- She should be open to stepping beyond the confines of their homes and embracing new experiences through travel. This quality reflects a willingness to learn and adapt to different environments.
- She should have a soft-spoken demeanor, combined with a social and people-friendly attitude, which will foster a positive and collaborative atmosphere within the Infopreneurs community.
- Basic familiarity with digital devices and their usage is essential. While in-depth technical knowledge is not mandatory, a foundational understanding will empower participants to engage with digital tools effectively.
- She must be selected from an area where Common Service Centre (CSC) facilities are unavailable. This ensures that those with

limited access to existing resources can provide these services to their respective communities.

- An Infopreneur should be enthusiastic about establishing and successfully running their own small digital business centers. This requirement aligns with the program's focus on empowerment and entrepreneurship.
- While not mandatory, a basic grasp of digital operations is desirable. This knowledge will enhance Infopreneurs' ability to leverage digital platforms and tools effectively.

iii. Onboarding Process of Infopreneurs

The selection and interview process for potential Infopreneurs is a crucial step in ensuring that we bring on board individuals who embody the spirit and values of our program. For that, from Each district 25 women were interviewed This process involves several key stages, to identify those who have the potential to make a meaningful impact as Infopreneurs within their communities, below is an overview of how the process went:

- Identification of Potential Candidates

The first step involved identifying potential candidates who were likely to succeed as Infopreneurs. This process relied on partnerships with local organizations, community outreach, and the use of social networks to spread the word about the opportunity. Community leaders were often involved to help identify individuals who were already active in local initiatives, had entrepreneurial potential, and had demonstrated leadership skills. Emphasis was placed on ensuring diversity, targeting women from various socio-economic backgrounds.

- Designing Interview Format

To assess candidates effectively, a comprehensive interview format was developed. The interview questions were designed to evaluate both the hard skills and soft skills of the candidates. Some key areas of focus included:

- Communication Skills: Could they articulate their ideas clearly?
- Community Engagement: Did they have experience working within their community?
- Entrepreneurial Spirit: Could they think innovatively and take initiative?
- Problem-solving Ability: How did they approach challenges?
- Digital Literacy: Did they possess or show potential to learn digital skills, a crucial aspect of being an Infopreneur?

- Scheduling District-wise calendars for conducting the interviews

- Once the interview format was finalized, district-wise calendars were set up to conduct the interviews. This stage involved coordinating with district representatives to ensure that interviews were scheduled in a way that was convenient for the candidates. Each district's interview calendar was created with attention to logistics, ensuring interviewers and candidates had enough time to participate without overlapping other commitments.

- Proper Internet Connection.

- Coordinators from different State.

- Scheduling Online Interviews

Given the geographical spread and the need for an efficient interviewing process, many of the interviews were conducted online.

Virtual platforms were used to connect interviewers with candidates from different districts. This also allowed for consistency in evaluation and ensured that candidates who may have been in remote locations could still participate. Technical support was provided to ensure that the digital interview process ran smoothly, and potential candidates were guided on how to use the platforms if needed.



- Selection decision

After the interviews were conducted, the selection process involved a thorough review of each candidate’s performance during the interview. The selection committee, comprising district leaders and representatives of the Different State District Coordinators, Program manager, assessed candidates on several key metrics:

- Alignment with Program Values: How well did the candidates reflect the mission and values of the Infopreneur program?
- Impact Potential: Was the candidate likely to create a significant impact in their community?
- Learning Agility: Did the candidate demonstrate a willingness to learn and adapt, particularly in acquiring digital skills?

- Community Reach: How connected was the candidate to their community, and how easily could they mobilize others?

The selection process was inclusive and transparent, ensuring fairness in decision-making. Candidates Selected as InfoPreneur with a focus on diversity and impact potential. This structured process ensured that the selected Infopreneurs were well-equipped to contribute effectively to the program, driving digital equity and community empowerment.

iv. Setting up of Centres

Setting up of Infopreneur Centers

The process of setting up Infopreneur Centers involves a well-organized approach that ensures the centers are equipped to serve their purpose effectively. This includes the distribution of assets, branding of the center, and the orientation of assets to ensure proper usage. Below is a detailed explanation of each aspect:

1. Distribution of Assets

Setting up an Infopreneur Center requires the distribution of essential assets that enable the smooth functioning of the center. These assets typically include:

- Digital Equipment: Computer and Printer
- Educational Materials: Training manuals, posters, and other digital literacy resources to support awareness and learning.

The distribution process ensures that every center has the necessary tools to deliver digital services to the local community effectively.

2. Branding of the Centre

Branding is a critical element to ensure visibility and trust within the community.

- **Banners & Posters:** Installing Flex boards and banners that clearly display the name of the center, the Infopreneur program, and partner logos. Posters related to Digital Literacy, Entitlement Services.
- **Promotion within the Community:** Using community gatherings to inform people about the center and the services it offers. Word-of-mouth is also a key tool in rural areas.

This branding builds credibility and encourages community members to trust and engage with the center, knowing it is part of a larger, reputable initiative.

3. Orientation of Assets

After distributing the necessary equipment and branding the center, it is crucial to orient the Infopreneurs, on how to use the assets effectively.

- **Training on Equipment Usage:** InfoPreneurs are trained on how to use digital devices like Laptops and printers. This includes understanding basic troubleshooting methods to handle technical issues that may arise.
- **Digital Tools Orientation:** Infopreneurs were introduced to the Banking Correspondence IDs, CSC IDs, State IDs & other Government Portal through which one can apply Entitlement Services and provide benefits to the community members.
- **Security Protocols:** Emphasizing the importance of cybersecurity and data protection, Infopreneurs are trained on how

to securely manage personal information of the community members.

- **Operational Guidelines:** A detailed orientation on the day-to-day operations of the center, such as maintaining records through MeraApp Tool, providing digital services, and assisting community members with accessing various schemes and services.



This orientation ensures that the Infopreneur Centers operate smoothly and can deliver effective and secure services to their communities. By setting up these centers with the right assets, branding, and orientation, the program establishes a strong foundation for digital empowerment and capacity-building in rural areas.

v. Centre inauguration

The inauguration of the center is a significant milestone of the program, occurring in the fourth month of its implementation. This initiative is designed to empower rural women, transforming them into “InfoPreneurs” who play a crucial role in leveraging digital tools for the benefit of their respective communities. The overarching goal of the program is to equip these Infopreneurs with the skills and knowledge needed to use digital means effectively. Their primary focus is on facilitating access to information regarding government schemes and services for the local community members. In doing so, they charge a small fee to sustain themselves, creating a sustainable model that fosters self-reliance

among the Infopreneurs. The role of Infopreneurs extends beyond mere information dissemination; they act as bridges, addressing the information gap between the government and citizens. Operating locally, they specifically target underprivileged communities, providing a vital link to connect people in remote areas with essential services such as welfare schemes, digital services, and financial services—all facilitated through digital means. The center inauguration is not just about establishing physical spaces; it signifies the creation of digital infrastructure, a foundational component of the program. These centres become hubs for delivering services digitally, ensuring that information and resources are accessible to those who need them the most. Digital literacy is a key aspect, with the Infopreneurs facilitating the learning process, empowering individuals to navigate the digital landscape confidently. Importantly, the program aligns with broader objectives related to employment and entrepreneurship. The focus on digital skill training for women not only enhances their employability but also nurtures an entrepreneurial spirit. By empowering women with digital skills, the program contributes to breaking barriers, fostering economic independence, and creating a ripple effect of positive change within communities. In essence, the centre inauguration symbolizes the realization of the program's core components—digital infrastructure, service delivery, and digital literacy—all seamlessly integrated to address the needs of underprivileged communities.

vi. Centre Activities:

- **Community Profiling:** Using MeraApp, Infopreneurs engaged in continuous community profiling, gathered detailed demographic data to better understand the needs and dynamics of the communities they serve. Through using MeraApp, Infopreneurs and their learners have engaged in continuous data collection to deepen our understanding of the communities served by our program. This data-driven approach enables personalized support and strengthens community connections, ensuring the services offered meet the specific requirements of each community segment. This involved gathering demographic information such as the demographic makeup including the number of women, men, and children, as well as insights into their occupations. By delving into these details, we gained valuable insights into their digital needs, enabling our Infopreneurs to offer more personalized support, enhance their understanding of community dynamics, and foster stronger connections within the community fabric.
- **Daily Services delivery:** The Infopreneurs demonstrated continuous commitment



in maintaining seamless daily operations across all centres, ensuring digital services delivery consistently to their communities as needed by them. These digitally equipped centres have become pivotal local access points, bridging the digital divide by offering a range of essential services for the communities. From photocopying and printing to online bookings, assistance with government forms, and access to online resources, these services are crucial for enhancing digital literacy and equalizing technological access within communities. Fostering economic growth and enhancing overall quality of life.

- **Schemes and services delivery through centres:** Our lead Infopreneurs, operating from community information resource centres, have actively facilitated the delivery of various schemes and entitlements to eligible individuals. Their dedicated efforts ensured the efficient distribution of benefits and programs to entitled members of the community, going as far as conducting door-to-door visits when necessary. These centres served as accessible hubs for digital service delivery, effectively bridging the gap between citizens and the schemes they were entitled to benefit from.



Revenue Generation: During the program period, in all 30 centres, all Infopreneurs have been

continuing to deliver digital services through their centres. A few Infopreneurs have also added other sets the digital tools in their centres (Like lamination machine, colour printers etc), which allows them to offer extra services and make money. In some centres, Infopreneurs have expanded their inventory. This was prompted by the training session held at the end of the program, where they were trained on which services that could be offered through the centre without requiring a CSC ID or state ID. This newfound knowledge has led to an increase in revenue, as Infopreneurs are now actively providing these services. This active approach of using digital tools to offer services that make money has not only helped our centres to last longer but has also helped the communities we serve to become more financially secure.

vii. Identification of Learners

As the first set of InfoPreneurs have been identified they are entrusted with the task of identifying the next cohort of learners. With their insights and experience gained from the program orientation, these Infopreneurs are ready to recognize women who share the same passion for learning, growth, community empowerment, and digital social entrepreneurship. By extending their knowledge and influence to identify 15 enthusiastic learners, we aim to create a ripple effect of positive change, fostering a dynamic and collaborative environment within our program.

Selection Process of Learners: The selection process for learners in the program is a critical step to ensure that individuals who can benefit the most from digital literacy and empowerment are reached.

1. Identification of Learners by Infopreneurs

Infopreneurs, being deeply embedded in their communities, play a vital role in identifying

potential learners. Being part of SHGs Groups, Community Groups etc.

- **Community Engagement:** Infopreneurs actively engage with the local community, including marginalized groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, and the elderly, to identify individuals who lack digital literacy or need upskilling.
- **Learners Selection from Different Villages:** To ensure that knowledge impart can widely spread also, as they became a Potential SochnaPreneur.
- **Assessment of Needs:** Infopreneurs assess the needs of the community members by understanding their current digital skill levels and the barriers they face in accessing technology. They focus on identifying learners who have limited access to digital tools but can benefit significantly from the program.
- **Targeted Outreach:** Through local community events, word-of-mouth, and collaboration with local leaders, panchayat members. Infopreneurs spread awareness about the program and encourage participation from interested individuals.
- **Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups:** Special attention is given to ensuring the inclusion of disadvantaged groups like women from rural areas, socially and economically marginalized communities, and those who have been affected by misinformation or cyber-related issues.

2. Orientation of Learners by DCs & Infopreneurs

Once the learners were identified, they undergo

an orientation process conducted by the District Coordinators (DCs) and Infopreneurs to ensure they are ready for the program. This involves:

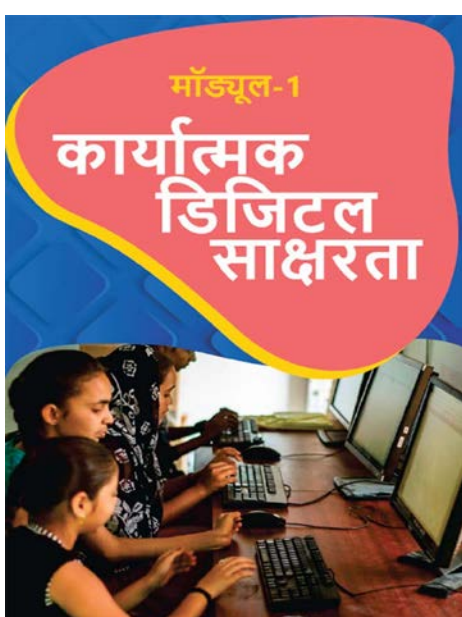
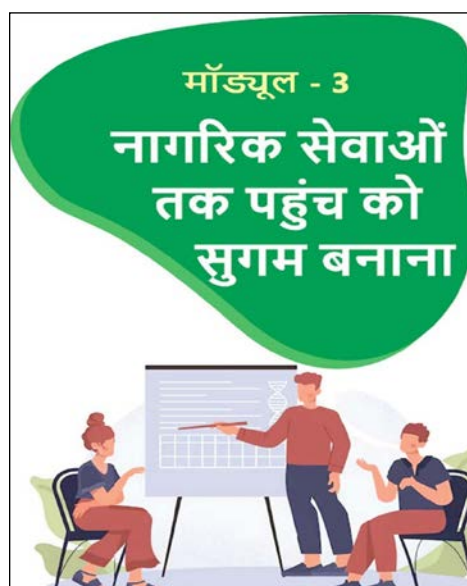
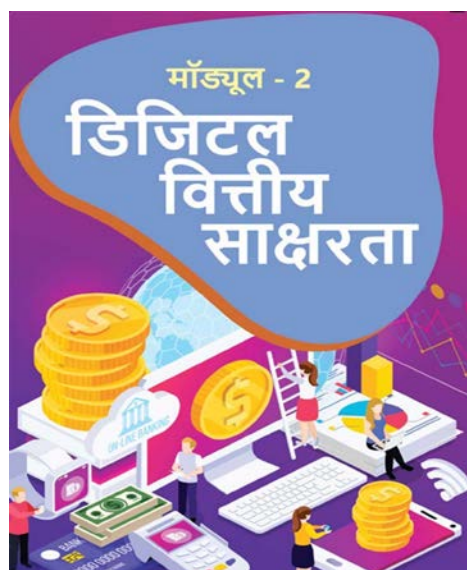
- **Program Introduction:** The orientation begins with an introduction to the overall objectives of the program, explaining how digital literacy can empower learners in their daily lives and improve access to essential services such as education and government schemes.
- **Overview of Digital Tools:** Learners were introduced to the basic digital tools they will be using, such as smartphones, computers, and tablets. This includes familiarizing them with online platforms, applications, and services they will access throughout the program.
- **Expectations and Outcomes:** Learners were briefed on what to expect from the training sessions, including the duration of the program, the type of content they will learn (e.g., internet safety, social media literacy, digital payments), and the skills they will acquire by the end of the training.
- **Building Confidence:** The orientation also focuses on motivating learners and addressing any apprehensions they may have about using technology. DCs and Infopreneurs emphasize the importance of digital skills in today's world and how it can help them overcome challenges like misinformation and cyber fraud.
- **Interactive Sessions:** To make the orientation engaging, interactive sessions are held where learners can ask questions, share their concerns, and express their learning goals. This helps to tailor the upcoming training to the specific needs of the learners.



viii. Baseline Assessment of Learners

Baseline survey was conducted for the project, Digital Literacy & Women Fake news Fighters across select districts in the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh by Digital Empowerment Foundation. The survey was conducted with a sample size of 91 respondents. The survey was conducted to assess the level of digital literacy and adoption along the following four sub-themes:

- Functional Digital Literacy
- Digital Financial Literacy
- Critical Digital Literacy
- Access to Citizen Services & Entitlements



The purpose of the baseline was to arrive at modes of potential intervention towards improving access and meaningful usage. Guided by this goal some key objectives of this baseline survey were to quantify existing access to ICT devices and internet, degree of digital skills and knowledge, current internet usage patterns, indicators revealing level of awareness of cyber safety, awareness and use of online fact checking, and other digital needs and aspirations among the sample respondents across different age groups, occupation, and educational qualification. The survey revealed that the overall level of digital as well as information literacy is low and there is much scope for improving access.

ix. Training Methodology on Modules

The central team first provided the training on the functional digital literacy module to all district coordinators. This initial training focused on providing a comprehensive understanding of the content and methodologies associated with Training Modules.

- **Initial Central Team Training:** Central team provided comprehensive training on the Training module to all district coordinators.
- **Focus of Training:** This training focused on understanding the content and methodologies related to the training modules.
- **District Coordinator Role:** Trained district coordinators then became responsible for training the 30 InfoPreneurs in their respective districts.
- **Delivery Method:** District coordinators conducted inperson trainings for InfoPreneurs and provided refresher trainings.

- **InfoPreneurs as Trainers:** Trained InfoPreneurs, equipped with knowledge, became trainers for their learners.
- **Learner Training Sessions:** InfoPreneurs conducted physical training sessions for a total of 450 learners, sharing insights from the modules.
- **Personalized Learning Experience:** Hands on training provided a personalized learning experience, with InfoPreneurs having a better understanding of local context and learner needs.
- **Cascading Impact:** The cascading training approach ensured effective content delivery and empowered InfoPreneurs and learners.
- **Sustaining Impact:** This process helped InfoPreneurs and learners practice digital literacy skills, fostering a locally driven, sustainable impact in digital literacy.



Module 1 Functional Digital Literacy

The Functional Digital Literacy module is designed to support women in various parts of India to learn the skills that will enable them to use digital technologies, including mobile phones, social media and internet.

The purpose of this module is to provide individuals with the foundational digital skills

required to navigate the digital world effectively. It focuses on practical tasks such as using web browsers, emails, and managing common digital applications. These skills are increasingly necessary for everyday activities, from accessing information to communicating online, and this module aims to make technology more accessible to all learners

The benefits of completing this module include increased confidence in using digital tools, improved communication through email, and enhanced ability to manage day-to-day tasks digitally. Learners will be able to better engage with the digital landscape, which in turn can open up new opportunities for personal and professional growth.



Module 2 Digital Financial Literacy

Digital Financial Literacy module is designed to equip individuals with the skills needed to access and use digital financial services securely. As digital financial transactions become more prevalent, it is crucial that individuals understand how to navigate tools like internet banking, mobile payments, and online financial platforms. The aim is to empower learners with knowledge that will help them manage their finances digitally and confidently.

The benefits of mastering digital financial literacy include the ability to perform safe online banking, use digital wallets, and understand the mechanisms of digital financial platforms. This not only promotes financial independence but also helps learners protect themselves from fraud while navigating digital services.



Module 3 Facilitating Access to Citizen Services & Entitlements

In today's digital age, it is essential to ensure that citizens have easy and convenient access to government services. Facilitating access to citizen services not only improves the overall efficiency of government processes but also enhances citizen satisfaction.

This module provides an overview of various digital solutions that can be used to facilitate access to citizen services. The module covers topics such as online portals, mobile applications, digital identity authentication, and e-payment systems, among others.

The module also highlights the importance of user-centric design in ensuring that digital solutions are accessible and easy to use for all citizens, including those with disabilities.

By the end of this module, learners will have a solid understanding of the key concepts and technologies involved in facilitating access to citizen services, and how they can be applied to improve government service delivery.



Module 4 Critical Digital Literacy

In Module 4, structured trainings were conducted by 30 Lead Infopreneurs to educate and empower a cohort of 450 learners in critical digital literacy. These trainings were designed to equip learners with essential skills necessary to navigate and thrive in today's digital environment.



Critical Digital Literacy module covered a range of content:

- Identifying Fake News:** Learners were taught methods to discern between credible and misleading information circulating online. This included understanding the sources and understanding around misinformation, dis-information, fake news, fact-checking techniques, and recognizing common tactics used to disseminate fake news.
- Understanding Logical Fallacies:** The training focused on educating learners about logical fallacies—common errors in reasoning that can undermine the validity of arguments. By learning to identify these fallacies, learners were better prepared to critically assess the arguments and claims they encounter in digital content.
- Recognizing Cognitive Biases:** Another important aspect of the training was addressing cognitive biases—systematic patterns of deviation from rationality in judgment. Learners learned how biases can influence decision-making and perception of

information, thereby improving their ability to approach digital content with a more critical mindset.

- Evaluating Digital Content:** The training emphasized techniques for evaluating the credibility and reliability of digital content across various platforms. This included understanding the importance of verifying sources, cross-referencing information, and considering the context in which information is presented.

The training aimed to develop critical digital literacy among the learners and prepare them to become master trainers for their community's women. Additionally, the training sought to create a community of informed and critical thinkers who can confidently navigate the complexities of today's digital world.

x. Pre and Post assessment of learners

Pre & Post Assessments were conducted to measure the knowledge and skills Learners possess before and after participating in digital literacy training programs.

Module - Financial Digital Literacy

Row Labels	Average of Digital Financial Literacy Pre-Assessment (30 Marks)	Average of Digital Financial Literacy Post Assessment (30 Marks)
Bihar	12	25
Chhattisgarh	14	24
Jharkhand	14	23
Uttar Pradesh	17	24
Grand Total	14	24

Module - Facilitating access to citizen Services

Row Labels	Average of Facilitating access to citizen Services Pre Assessment(30 Marks)	Average of Facilitating access to citizen Services Post Assessment (30 Marks)
Bihar	13	23
Chhattisgarh	13	20
Jharkhand	13	20
Uttar Pradesh	11	20
Grand Total	12	21

Module Critical Digital Literacy

Row Labels	Average of Critical digital Literacy Pre Assessment (40 Marks)	Average of Critical Digital Literacy Post Assessment (40 Marks)
Bihar	9	24
Chhattisgarh	12	26
Jharkhand	13	24
Uttar Pradesh	9	28
Grand Total	11	26

These statistics indicate that Women Learners across all regions showed significant improvement. Learners have gained a better understanding of digital financial services, Learners also have gained some familiarity with accessing citizen services digitally, but there's room for further improvement, especially in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

The significant improvement in post-assessment scores across all regions indicates that participants have developed critical thinking skills related to digital content evaluation, improved their

awareness of digital security issues, and gained a deeper understanding of the broader societal implications of digital technologies.

xi. Yojana Camps

During the program period, InfoPreneurs with the help of their District Coordinators (DCs) took proactive steps to organize yojana camps across all Infopreneurs centres. Through the camps, the Infopreneurs were focused on assisting community members in accessing various government services and schemes that they are entitled to. Yojana Camps included informative sessions where Infopreneurs and DCs explained the details of different government schemes, eligibility criteria, and the benefits associated with them. District Coordinators provided support and practical guidance on the application procedures for these welfare schemes during the camps to Infopreneurs. DCs actively assisted Infopreneurs in filling out applications correctly. By bridging the gap between entitlements and awareness, Infopreneurs and DCs played a pivotal role in helping people access the schemes and services.

During yojana camps, community members who were entitled to avail E-Shram card were helped by Infopreneurs to apply for the scheme, E-Shram card scheme aims to cover seventeen useful schemes, started from birth of the child and covering other schemes during their lifetime. It contains insurance policy, each type of pension facilities, accidental claim facilities, marriage-related schemes, birth-related schemes etc.



Many people applied for the Ayushman Bharat Yojana scheme to get benefit of their health care system for all family members. Under this scheme, financially poor families get free treatment up to Rs-5 lakhs for the whole family; this card is also available to BPL card holders, through this card they can treat up to Rs- 5 lakhs in any hospital. In this scheme 27 different types of treatment are covered by this plan. Ayushman Bharat Yojana launched by the central government; we can get our treatment in emergencies through this plan. This scheme is specially designated to provide the best health facilities to vulnerable people, besides that we can get many more benefits from treatment.

During Yojana camps, many community members have also applied for the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, which aims to support those who depend on cultivation and farming. The scheme provides financial assistance of Rs 6000 per year to beneficiaries. It is specifically designed to help poor families who own up to two hectares of land for cultivation. The assistance is directly transferred to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries in three equal instalments of Rs 2000 each.



Villagers during yojana camp taking information through infopreneur and departmental dignitaries in Khunti district



xii. Residential Workshops

Comprehensive Report on the Two-Day Residential Workshop for Infopreneurs, SPs & Learners, Jharkhand

Workshop Overview

The two-day residential workshop aimed to provide a comprehensive training program for InfoPreneurs and Learners, focusing on critical thinking, Media Information Literacy (MIL), and digital literacy. The agenda included a mix of presentations, group discussions, success story sharing, and hands-on activities, ensuring an engaging and informative experience for all participants. The workshop successfully achieved its objectives, equipping participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate and contribute to the digital landscape effectively.



Chaupal Baithak Sessions

The Chaupal Baithak sessions aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of various aspects of fake news and equip participants with the knowledge and skills to recognize, fact-check,

and combat misinformation. By exploring these topics in detail, participants were better prepared to navigate the digital landscape and contribute to a more informed and discerning society.

Topics Covered under Chaupal Baithak

1. The Influence of Fake News on Society

Fake news can have significant and far-reaching impacts on society. This topic explored how false information spreads rapidly through social media and other online platforms, leading to misinformation and confusion among the public. The discussion covered real-life examples of fake news incidents, their social consequences such as public panic, mistrust in media, and polarization of communities. Participants discussed the mechanisms by which fake news influences public opinion and behaviors, and considered the societal implications of widespread misinformation.

2. The Psychology Behind Fake News

Understanding the psychology behind why people create and believe fake news is crucial. This topic delved into cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, that make individuals more susceptible to false information. The discussion also explored the role of emotions, such as fear and anger, in spreading fake news and how echo chambers and filter bubbles reinforce these beliefs. Participants examined the psychological tactics used by fake news creators to manipulate audiences.

3. Recognizing and Fact-Checking Fake News

This topic aimed to equip participants with the skills to identify and fact-check fake news. The session covered various tools and techniques for verifying the authenticity of information, such as checking sources, reverse image searches, and cross-referencing with reputable news outlets. Participants engaged in hands-on activities to practice these skills and learned about resources available for fact-checking.

4. Social Media's Role in Spreading Fake News

Social media platforms (Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook etc) play a significant role in the proliferation of fake news. This topic examined how algorithms prioritize sensational content, the role of social media influencers in spreading misinformation, and the impact of viral content. Participants discussed the responsibilities of social media companies in mitigating the spread of fake news and explored measures that can be implemented to promote accurate information.

5. Combating Fake News through Media Literacy Education

Education is a powerful tool in combating fake news. This topic focused on the importance of media literacy education in helping individuals critically evaluate information and become more discerning consumers of news. The discussion covered effective educational strategies, curricula, and programs that have been successful in promoting media literacy. Participants shared ideas and best practices for incorporating media literacy into various educational settings.

6. Ethical Considerations in Dealing with Fake News

Addressing fake news involves navigating various ethical dilemmas. This topic explored the balance between censorship and freedom of speech, the ethics of fact-checking and reporting, and the responsibilities of individuals and institutions in combating misinformation. Participants discussed real-world scenarios and considered the ethical implications of different approaches to managing fake news.

7. Technology Solutions to Counter Fake News

Technology offers innovative solutions to detect and counter fake news. This topic examined the role of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other technologies in identifying and mitigating the spread of misinformation. Participants explored current and emerging technological tools, their effectiveness, and potential limitations.

8. Promoting Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is essential for discerning truth in an age of misinformation. This topic emphasized the importance of fostering critical thinking skills to analyze information critically and make informed decisions. The discussion included practical strategies for developing these skills, such as questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and recognizing logical fallacies. Participants engaged in exercises to enhance their critical thinking abilities.

Media Information Literacy Workshops

Workshops on media information literacy (MIL) at the grassroots level in India are essential due to the profound impact online threats have on these communities. As more individuals gain digital access, they become susceptible to online dangers that can result in physical, mental, and tangible effects, deterring them from becoming informed digital citizens.

The 'Humaara MIL Toolkit for the Multiverse of Digital Fallacies' addresses these challenges through targeted workshops. These sessions educate participants on critical topics such as misinformation, cybercrime, fake news, online harassment, and cyberbullying. By equipping participants with knowledge and practical skills, the initiative empowers community members to recognize and respond to digital threats, fostering a safer online environment.

A training session targeted infopreneurs, learners aiming to enhance their digital literacy. Participants received essential resources, including guidance on using the cybercrime portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) and the helpline number. Practical exercises familiarized them with navigating the portal and filing complaints, ensuring they could apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

Key subjects covered included identifying credible sources to combat misinformation and fake news, protecting personal information against cybercrimes like phishing and identity theft, and strategies for dealing with online harassment and cyberbullying.



By the end of the session, participants left with enhanced digital literacy and practical tools to protect themselves and their communities online. The 'Humaara MIL Toolkit for the Multiverse of Digital Fallacies' ensures grassroots communities are aware of digital threats and equipped to mitigate these risks effectively, promoting a safer and more inclusive digital environment.

Workshop and Training – We the People

A comprehensive workshop and training session was conducted by the We the People Team. This session focused on the preamble and critical digital literacy, providing participants with essential skills and knowledge to navigate the digital landscape effectively.

Constitution for Citizen Action or Samvidhan Se Samadhan

We, The People Abhiyan's Constitution for Citizen Action (CCA) training aims to empower citizens with the knowledge, skills, perspective, and tools necessary to become active and engaged within their communities. It is an in-person training program enabling participants to establish the connection between constitutional values and

social and governance issues. The program's design is based on experiential and interactive methodologies such as group work, reflection, games, and written exercises using AVs, handouts, and supportive material. The participants are provided tools to transfer their learning, spread awareness, and build capacity with community members.

Conclusion

The two-day workshop successfully provided a comprehensive training program for Infopreneurs and SPs, focusing on critical thinking, media information literacy, and digital literacy. Through presentations, group discussions, success story sharing, and hands-on activities, participants were equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate and contribute to the digital landscape effectively.

Tackling Misinformation & Online Threats

A workshop on "Tackling Misinformation & Online Threats" was conducted at the #REDEF2024.

The workshop aims to help Women Infopreneurs gain a better understanding of misinformation, online trolling, stereotypes, prejudices & other online threats.

The workshop was a valuable opportunity for our women Infopreneurs to address the pressing issue of the growing threat of disinformation.

During the workshop our Expert Mr Mansoor Ahmed (Founder Director Cyber Crime Control Foundation & Studies) spoke about ways of building their resilience towards disinformation also effective and scalable practices, current trends in disinformation and their impact in communities, the support community member needs in facing this challenge.

Disinformation is one of the biggest emerging risks for 2024 and the misuse of artificial intelligence

(AI) is a contributing factor. Especially Young people spend increasingly more time online and are much more likely to reach out to their social media feeds when looking for news. Yet, many of them still lack the skills and competences to safely navigate online and critically assess the information they encounter.

"Manipulated and falsified information is now the most severe short-term risk the world faces, according to the Global Risks Report 2024. The risk presented by misinformation and disinformation is magnified by the widespread adoption of generative AI to produce what is known as "synthetic content". This ranges from deepfake videos, voice cloning and the production of counterfeit websites. Regulators are acting to create new laws to control the misuse of AI but the speed the technology is advancing is likely to outpace the regulatory process." Mr Mansoor Ahmed.



In conclusion it was discussed that women infoPreneurs play a vital role in their communities as influencers, providing crucial support and guidance to those around them. They serve as pillars of information, ensuring that their communities stay informed with timely and relevant updates. These women are trusted figures within their societies, shouldering significant responsibility in delivering accurate information and debunking misinformation. As key players in their communities, women infopreneurs hold the power to shape opinions and foster informed

decision-making. They dedicate themselves to fact-checking information, guiding their society towards discerning truth from falsehood. By upholding integrity and reliability, they cultivate a culture of trust and accountability within their communities. As every participant to be a good influencer for their networks: the best countermeasure to disinformation is the truth—as long as it comes out “fast, fair



xiii. Endline Assessment of Learners

This endline assessment study attempts to show the changes that have taken place in rural settings, where women have been ensured access to mobile phones. They were trained with digital literacy modules, including– functional digital literacy, digital financial literacy, citizens’ access to entitlements and critical digital literacy models. The end-line assessment results are based on a survey of 90 rural women who received digital literacy training from DEF. The end-line assessment presents the changes in

their knowledge of digital literacy. Ultimately, this study also highlights the challenges faced during program implementation and the barriers to providing access to digital literacy training to rural women in the states where this study was conducted. Recognising these challenges would also guide the organisation’s further project designs and interventions towards empowering the rural community.

The study surveyed 90 women learners across four states: Uttar Pradesh (21), Chhattisgarh (30), Jharkhand (21), and Bihar (18). The findings from the Endline Assessment Study are as follows:

- **Education Status of the Learners:** In Uttar Pradesh, most learners have educational qualifications below class 10. In Chhattisgarh, 41% completed education up to class 12, while 31% of learners in Jharkhand and 29% in Bihar hold undergraduate qualifications.
- **Occupation Status of the Learners:** Most learners are homemakers. Their proportion in the endline study increased to 57% from 46%, which was reported during the baseline study. 80% of learners do not earn, with 20% reported to be earning members. Among earners, 39% have an annual income of 10k-50k, and 61% earn less than 10k annually. This is a significant increase in low-income earners from 8% in the baseline survey.

Additionally, Jharkhand has a higher proportion of earning learners than other states.

- **Access to Digital Devices and Functional Digital Literacy:** Access to digital devices among learners has increased, with 92% of learners reporting device access and 75% owning their devices. Smartphone usage has also improved, with 97.59% having access and 83.13% being proficient in its operation. Post-training, it has been noted that 73% of learners use digital devices for financial services, 16% use them for social media apps, and 11% use digital devices for gaming.

- **Digital Financial Literacy:** There has been a positive increase in digital financial literacy among learners since the training of the financial literacy module. Digital payment usage increased from 53% in the baseline to 91% in the end-line survey. For digital transactions, UPI transactions are the most common, with 74 learners using digital payments for money transfers. The most frequently cited reason for not using digital payments is a lack of funds, as reported by 37 learners in the end-line survey. This is a slight decrease from 40 learners in the baseline survey.
- **Access to Citizen Services:** Awareness of government entitlements rose to 89% from 69%

in the baseline survey. Additionally, the presence of Sochnapreneur centres near learners' homes also increased from 24% to 47%. Learners use Sochnapreneur centres to access benefits such as loans, insurance, ration, and health benefits.

- **Critical Digital Literacy:** Awareness of fact-checking increased from 59 learners in the baseline to 82 in the end-line survey. While 34 learners used discrepancy checks, compared to 54 relying on Google searches at baseline, social media platforms like WhatsApp became the primary news source for 69 learners, up from 40 in the baseline. This reflects the urgent and continuous need for critical digital literacy.





8. Project Outcomes

Creation of 120 rural women-led rural cohorts that work towards building and strengthening digital literacy of the local communities.

Self-reported Increase in the income levels of the cohort leaders compared to the baseline.

Increased usage of digital financial services such as UPI and online banking among participants

Self-reported increase in confidence about identifying fake news, cyber fraud, disinformation tactics such as emotional language, influence operation, and awareness about cognitive biases and financial incentives behind misinformation and responding to them among the participants

Increased ease of access to digital services and citizen services in the project areas.





9. Monitoring

Weekly Follow-up meetings with the District Coordinators – Every week, HO team conducts meeting with District Coordinators. These meetings are held where DCs are to share updates and exchange region-wise challenges. These meetings helped keep everyone informed about

the progress of the program in different areas, making sure that challenges and opportunities were addressed effectively. The Head Office team worked closely with District Coordinators to solve problems and improve the program, including meeting with Infopreneurs.



Meetings with lead Infopreneurs: District Coordinators regularly conducted training sessions with the lead Infopreneurs to strengthen their capabilities in key areas. These sessions focused on building proficiency in handling assets effectively, acquiring knowledge and practicing the implemented modules, and mastering the use of digital tools. The goal was to ensure that Infopreneurs were well-equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively carry out their roles. This training served as a mechanism for continuous improvement and skill development among the lead Infopreneurs, fostering a more empowered and knowledgeable team.





धीर की जय ॥

विशेष सन् - 1974

सूचना प्रेक्षा

सूचना प्रेक्षा

10. Impact Numbers

No. of Activities	Impact Numbers
No of States covered	4
No of districts covered	10
No of panchayat covered	120
No of villages covered	360
No of infopreneurs identified and trained	120
No. of Learners Identified & Trained	360
Community Members Outreach (till 31st March 2024)	131440
Revenue generated through digital Services, Digital Literacy & Entitlements	1478665
Average Revenue generated by each Infopreneur (till 31st March-2024)	49288

सरकारी
अफसरी
से सजक काल
एक अफसर

दु-चालीन संयोजन
यहां प्राप्त करें



सूचना प्रेन्योर



सूचना प्रेन्योर

airtel Payments Bank



11. Experiential Learning

S. No	Challenges	Alternative/Solutions
1	Getting 15 women together for training at same time was difficult because of their home priorities, such as looking after children and managing household chores.	We formed smaller groups as per women's availability and make the training possible
2	Susceptibility to misinformation & Cyber frauds especially the Rural Population.	Implementing Comprehensive Critical Digital Literacy Modules.
3	Lack of Fact Checking Resources	Creating a Cadre of 480 Women Learners as a Local Fact checker for their community & providing relevant resources to them.



12. Learning Insights & additional Outcomes

- Incorporating all modules into the self-learning chatbot and enabling content learning as per beneficiaries' regional language helps them with continued learning even after the program's duration. Not only the Indirect beneficiaries but their family members can also learn from the same content with their own learning pace.
- Adding one more module related to the entrepreneurship model and how to take their businesses online can help them grow their business faster and create more opportunities for them.

Additional organisational outcomes from the program

- Curating a proposal that incorporates the learning insights from the Safeguarding Rural India through Critical Digital Literacy project and mobilise funds to open new InfoPreneur centers.
- To open 25 New Centres under this program with the similar program model for efficiency and sustainability
- Incorporating a Chatbot tool of all 4 modules so that learners have access to the content 24*7
- Critical Digital Literacy Module to be delivered through DEF's Women InfoPreneurs 480 (Incorporating with Media & Information Literacy (MIL) Content).
- Presenting the learnings of this project in various conferences such as the roundtable conference jointly organized by Point of View, Software Law Centre and Association for Progressive Communications on gendered disinformation.



13. Conclusion

The project has created a cadre of 480 trusted information source which will be available accessible to the local community to fight against misinformation and significant impact in digital literacy, critical thinking, and access to essential services among rural communities in the program locations. By providing women infopreneurs with digital skills and resources, the initiative has promoted economic growth, improved digital literacy, and strengthened resilience against misinformation and Fake news. The project

has empowered women to become community leaders, thereby reducing the gender digital divide and fostering sustainable development in rural areas.

The critical digital literacy curriculum developed through this programme will be used across all the DEF centres. Thus, bringing a needed critical impetus to fight the infodemic problem at country level.





14. Way Forward

To sustain and expand our impact, DEF plans to establish more centers in backward districts like Barabanki, Lohardaga, Dausa and Jalore and integrate self-learning chatbot with multi-lingual content to ensure continuous learning among the beneficiaries. Adding entrepreneur-

ial training will further empower participants to scale their businesses and drive local economic growth. Additionally, DEF will share insights and best practices from this project in various forums to inspire similar initiatives globally.



गणकता आर योजना शिविर

(नागरिक अधिकार एवं सरकारी योजनाएं)

समय सुबह 10 बजे से शाम 4 बजे तक

सभी व्यक्ति आवेदन कर सकते हैं

आमाजिक सुरक्षा पेंशन

किमान सम्मान निधि

अटल पेंशन योजना

लोग जानकारी प्राप्त कर सकते हैं और आवेदन कर सकते हैं



प्रधानमंत्री जीवन ज्योति योजना, आयुष्मान् भारत योजना, प्रधानमंत्री सुरक्षा योजना



विश्वविद्यालय प्रस्ताव एवं विकल्प छात्रों के लिए, आरक्षण योजना, विश्वविद्यालय पेंशन योजना



सकल विधवा वरिष्ठ प्रवासी जूरी विभागात्मक, शिविर योजना, पेंशन योजना - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5



डिजिटल सेवाएं

पेंशन कार्ड, सहायता, आरक्षण

कृपया: उपस्थित रहें



Annexure 1: Case Studies

Women Infopreneurs took the Critical Digital Literacy training, helped us understand essential themes unique to the experiences of women in rural regions with misinformation, disinformation and cyber frauds. We identified three key areas. Firstly, the narratives from DEF SoochnaPreneurs focused on the gendered nature of misinformation in rural India. These include incidents of misinformation and cyber frauds specifically targeted at women. We also learned how social taboos form the top layer of misinformation in rural India, with women having to spend a considerable amount of energy and resources fighting these beliefs in their families and communities. Secondly, we learned about the gendered consumption of misinformation in rural India. Specifically, it deals with how women consume and spread misinformation and, in their ways, how they do it differently compared to rural men. Thirdly, the FGDs brought about narratives that focus on the implementation of learning from the critical digital literacy module. It includes stories of DEF SoochnaPreneurs fighting misinformation and disinformation in their communities.



Case Story 1 -Kashish Srivastava, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh Empowering Rural India: Transforming Lives Through Knowledge and Digital Literacy

Kashish Srivastava, residing in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, was initially proficient in using a smartphone but lacked confidence in utilizing it effectively. This scenario was common among many rural individuals who possessed digital devices but lacked the skills to leverage them fully.

The lack of digital literacy posed a significant obstacle to the empowerment and development of rural communities. Without adequate knowledge and skills, individuals were unable to access essential services and were vulnerable to misinformation. Kashish became involved in the Safeguarding Rural India through Critical Digital Literacy Project, initiated by DEF. Through this project, Kashish received comprehensive training, enhancing her digital skills and knowledge. Empowered by her newfound expertise, Kashish took the initiative to train 15 women from her community, enabling them to unlock the potential of Functional Digital Literacy, Entitlement Services, Financial Services and make them aware about Critical Thinking.



Establishing a center within her community, Kashish provided access to essential services such as Aadhar cards, PAN cards, photocopies, pension assistance, and income certificates. This initiative not only uplifted the community but also empowered individuals to engage more actively in various administrative processes. Recognizing the importance of combating misinformation, Kashish and her community members acknowledged the need for critical digital literacy. They understood that with knowledge comes the power to discern truth from falsehood. This realization fuelled their commitment to spreading awareness and digital literacy throughout rural India. Kashish's journey exemplifies the transformative impact of digital literacy initiatives in rural India. Through her efforts, she not only enhanced her own skills but also empowered her community members to navigate the digital landscape confidently. The establishment of the centre provided essential services locally, reducing the barriers to access faced by rural residents. Moreover, the collective commitment to critical digital literacy promises to safeguard communities against the dangers of misinformation, fostering a more informed and empowered society.

Total Revenue she earned till March 2024 – Rs. 58435/- by Providing Digital Services, Entitlements & Digital Literacy.

Case Story 2: Rameshwari Verma's Encounter with Online Fraud, Durg District Chhattisgarh

“My name is Rameshwari Verma, and I live in Pandar village, in the Patan block of Durg district. I work as a Bank Sakhi, helping people in my village with basic banking transactions. I often use apps like PhonePe, Google Pay, and WhatsApp to make my work easier and to help others with online payments.*

One day, I got a phone call from a man who said he was my senior. He told me, ‘I’ve deposited ₹25,000 into your account.’ Right after the call, I received a message on my phone saying that ₹25,000 had been credited to my account. But when I checked my balance, there was no money in my account. I felt confused, so I asked the caller why I couldn’t see the money. He told me, ‘There must be a temporary issue with your phone. Don’t worry; the money is there.’ Then, he asked how much money I currently had in my account. I told him that my balance was ₹7,000. He quickly said, ‘Alright, I’m giving you a number; please transfer that ₹7,000 to it, and your balance will be updated soon.’

Since he sounded so confident, I trusted him and



transferred the money. But later, I found out that I had been scammed. I spoke about what happened to Anju Sen, an infopreneur from our community who has helped many of us understand cyber safety. Anju explained to me that this was a common trick that scammers use and advised me to be careful with calls from unknown numbers in the future. Together, we also reported the incident on the cybercrime portal.

What I Learned:

1. Verify Messages and Calls: Now I know that I should check directly with the bank if I receive unexpected messages or calls about money transfers.
2. Be Careful with Unknown Numbers: I won't trust unknown callers claiming to be bank officials or senior staff without verifying.
3. Report Suspicious Activity: Reporting this incident helped me feel more secure, and I hope it can prevent others from being tricked.

This experience taught me an important lesson. Thanks to Anju's guidance, I now feel better prepared to spot fraud and help others in my village avoid these traps.

Case Story 3: Gutjora Village's, Journey Towards Digital Literacy and Protection from Misinformation and Fraud

Background:

Gutjora village, located in the Khunti district of Jharkhand, is a rural community with around 4,000 residents, primarily from the Teli, Munda, Koiry, and Mahto communities. Most villagers rely on agriculture, cattle farming, and other labor-intensive work for their livelihoods. The community's traditions, combined with limited digital literacy, make them particularly vulnerable to misinformation, superstitions, and fraud. This case highlights the transformative impact of critical digital literacy training, brought to Gutjora through the "Safeguarding Rural India through Critical Digital Literacy" project and the work of a local infopreneur.

Challenges Faced by the Community:

1. Vulnerability to Misinformation: Many residents, especially women, trusted advice given by local priests, palmists, or other influential village figures without questioning its validity. For example, one



woman with three daughters was advised by a traditional healer to follow an expensive herbal treatment, costing ₹10,000, with the promise that she would conceive a male child. Fortunately, a local infopreneur intervened and explained that the claim was unfounded, sparing her both the expense and the emotional strain of false hope.

2. **Exploitation of Young Girls:** Gutjora's young girls were at risk from traffickers who falsely promised respectable jobs with high salaries. Some girls had been lured out of the village, only to face exploitation. The infopreneur, working with local authorities, helped save two young girls from such a fate by raising awareness about the dangers of these fraudulent job offers.
3. **Belief in Witchcraft:** The traditional belief in witchcraft practices, such as sacrificing animals to cure diseases, had also persisted. Many villagers performed expensive and ineffective rituals, resulting in significant financial losses. The infopreneur worked to educate residents about the science behind diseases and the importance of proper medical treatment.
4. **Online Fraud and Financial Loss:** With limited digital literacy, many villagers became victims of cyber fraud, especially when applying for loans to fund agricultural purchases like seeds, fertilizers, or tractors. Fraudsters often collected detailed information about these loan applications and tricked villagers into transferring money. Scams were also common during elections, when candidates exploited villagers' trust for votes without delivering on promises. The community suffered financial losses and damaged trust due to these recurring incidents.



Training Sessions and Innovative Solutions:

Under the project, the infopreneur (Anokha Devi) initiated digital literacy training sessions tailored to the needs of Gutjora's women and other vulnerable groups. The sessions included:

Drama and Storytelling: Recognizing the community's inclination towards traditional forms of communication, the infopreneur used local plays and dramatizations to address topics like misinformation, online fraud, and critical thinking.

Practical Activities with Symbol Recognition: Many villagers were unfamiliar with smartphones and digital symbols. The infopreneur introduced games using cards and symbols, helping participants recognize app logos, understand key digital security practices, and feel more comfortable with technology.

Flexible Group Training: To accommodate women's daily schedules and limited access to smartphones, the infopreneur organized group sessions and used a shared laptop. By forming smaller, time-based groups, women could attend sessions when it was convenient for them, ensuring more consistent participation.

Impact of Digital Literacy Training:

1. **Increased Awareness and Caution:** After the training, residents learned to critically examine the information they received. Women became more vigilant, learning to question claims made by unknown callers, avoid sharing personal information, and safeguard their digital identities by never sharing OTPs or clicking suspicious links.
2. **Reduced Incidence of Fraud and Exploitation:** Following training, cases of online fraud, cyberbullying, and digital harassment decreased. For instance, women who previously believed misleading messages about miracle cures or magic were now more skeptical. The community also saw a decline in domestic violence, as women became more aware of their rights and reported incidents of abuse to authorities.
3. **Empowerment and Advocacy:** The infopreneur inspired other community members to advocate for change. Over 15 women became peer mentors, educating others on cyber safety, misinformation, and reporting processes. As a result, the community collectively strengthened its resilience against digital threats.
4. **Celebrating Success and Recognition:** On Women's Day, March 8, 2024, the District Council honored the infopreneur for her remarkable work, alongside recognition from local leaders. The training sessions not only

boosted digital awareness but also fostered a sense of community pride and confidence in tackling misinformation, cyber threats, and social challenges.

Reflections and Lessons Learned:

This initiative taught that effective education for digital safety in rural communities requires a blend of practical tools and culturally relevant teaching methods. The use of drama and storytelling made complex topics accessible, allowing participants to connect with the content emotionally and intellectually.

Today, Gutjora village is better equipped to handle digital challenges, thanks to the Anokha Devi's efforts and the ongoing support of community leaders. The project's impact has made villagers more self-reliant and less vulnerable to cyber fraud, superstitions, and exploitation. As the community continues to grow in digital confidence, they also stand as an inspiring example for other rural areas to follow.



समीक्षात्मक डिजिटल
महिलाओं का

सूचना प्रेन्योर

सूचना प्रेन्योर

सूचना

करना



समीक्षात्मक डिजिटल साक्षरता



Safeguarding Rural India Through Critical Digital Literacy

Rural India faces a growing vulnerability to misinformation and disinformation campaigns, as many lack the digital skills necessary for accurate fact-checking. While India has seen the rise of fact-checking initiatives, these efforts mainly reach educated urban audiences, leaving rural communities underserved. Additionally, the available tools for digital verification are often mismatched with rural realities, creating a gap in accessibility and effectiveness. Recognizing this need, the Digital Empowerment Foundation launched an innovative critical digital literacy program aimed at empowering rural India to tackle misinformation and disinformation. This initiative

not only equipped participants with digital literacy skills but also enhanced their understanding of digital financial literacy and entitlement services, enabling them to securely access government schemes and financial resources online. Through focused group discussions, storytelling, and hands-on activities, the program helped participants build critical thinking skills and confidence in navigating the digital landscape safely. These learnings underscore the transformative impact of tailored digital education in strengthening rural resilience against online threats, bridging the digital divide, and fostering more informed, self-reliant communities across India.



Digital Empowerment Foundation

 www.defindia.org  info@defindia.org