

February-November, 2019

Digital Literacy Bihar Phase-3

Digital Empowerment Foundation



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

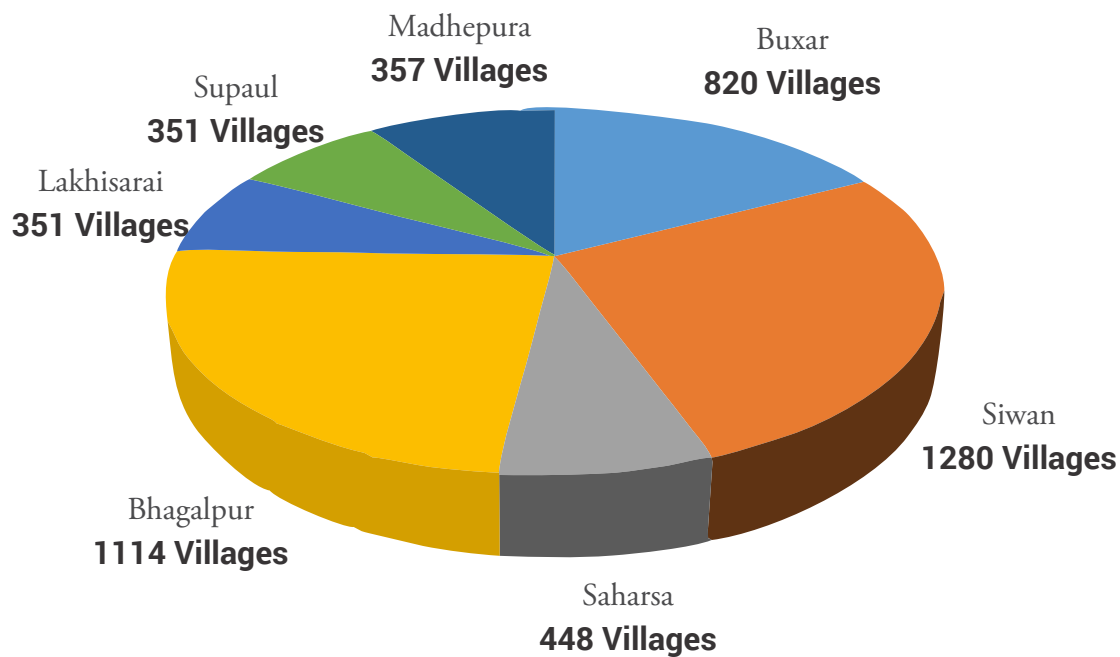
ICTs have accelerated economic growth and propelled a wave of engagements that have touched human lives; changing the way communities interact, increasing opportunities for livelihood and crossing the barriers of inequitable growth. ICTs have also taken up such pre-eminence in our everyday lives, that we now have access to a bank of knowledge and 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 from rural India. 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 (DEF) as an implementation partner to reach out to women living in rural parts of Bihar in an effort to train them in digital literacy and further digitally empower more than eight lakh women and girls.

The project was implemented in seven districts of Bihar and a total of 1,200 women leaders were given training to spearhead the digital revolution 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: In the third phase we covered 4,721 villages in 72 blocks across seven district of Bihar.

State	Districts	Blocks	Villages	Total Saathis
Bihar	Buxar	10	820	214
Bihar	Siwan	19	1280	320
Bihar	Supaul	7	351	88
Bihar	Bhagalpur	10	1114	286
Bihar	Lakhisarai	5	351	90
Bihar	Madhepura	9	357	90
Bihar	Saharsa	10	448	112
Total		72	4721	1200

District wise village coverage



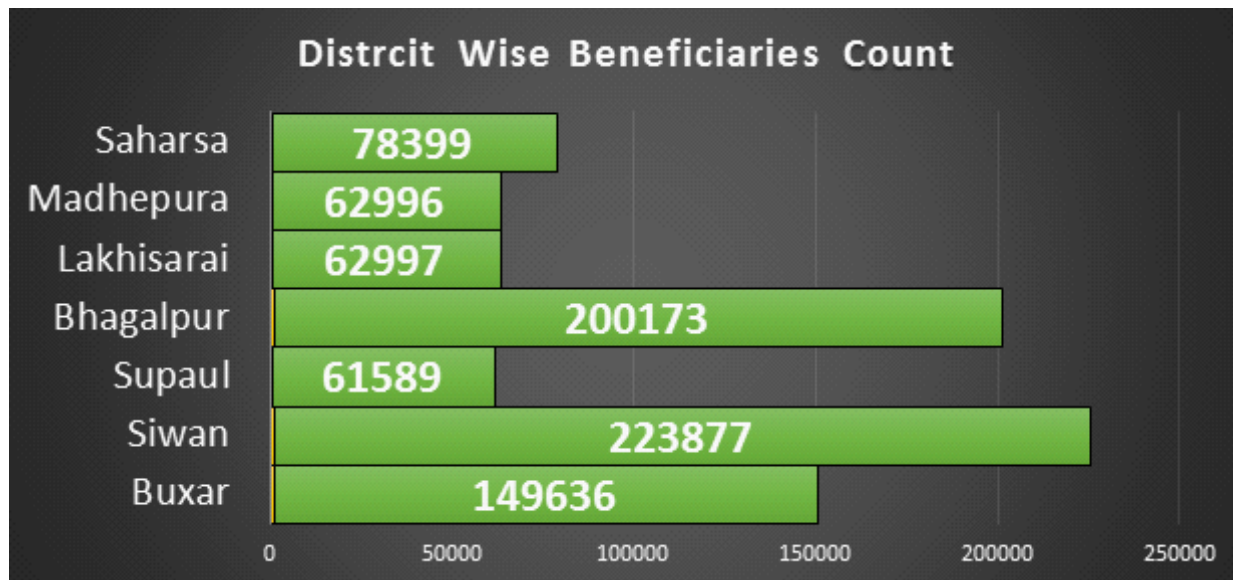
Project Overview:

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, digital literacy, and digital financial literacy. The project was rolled out in Bihar to cover eight lakh rural women and girls between February to November in 2019. A cadre of 1,200 Internet Saathis trained a cumulative of 8,39,881 beneficiaries under this project. 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 two smart phones each, targeted 3-4 villages. They travelled for six months from door-to-door 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.



Outcomes:


The main 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 total 8,39,881 beneficiaries of the backward communities of rural areas.



Activities and Implementation process: The following are the activities and process that had been done during the implementation of the project.

- District and Village mapping
- Village network identification
- Identification and selection of District and Block Coordinator
- Organised day long orientation session for Implementation Team (State, District and Block Coordinator)
- Selection of interested and potential Internet Saathi (Female) as per village mapping
- Conducted two-day training/workshop for selected Internet Saathis
- Launch of digital literacy program/ activity in the village by trained Internet Saathis
- Bi-Monthly Meeting conducted with Internet Saathis by District and Block Coordinator at block level
- Meeting conducted with Implementation Team

Key Highlights of the Programme:

- ➡ Though the primary focus of the project was to impart digital literacy to women and girls (ages 14 and above) of the backward communities of rural areas.
 - ➡ 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 was a success in empowering women from marginalised and low-economic and social backgrounds, in areas with low access of digital tools and its awareness.
 - ➡ Education was not a barrier for this project. It managed to benefit more persons who were illiterates than those who had a little or higher education. The Internet Saathi project was based on hands-on training under which reading ability was minimised for operating a device. To use the internet, voice commands were prioritised for search over a phone or tablet. However, illiterate beneficiaries took more time to learn to operate a mobile phone or tablet as compared to literate beneficiaries. Yet their operational performances were at par as per information from Internet Saathis or trainers.
 - ➡ Basic mobile literacy was the first step towards Digital Education. It included the use of offline applications and maneuvering through the basic function of smart phone.
 - ➡ Internet literacy was one of the key focus areas of the trainings, given its value in accessing and sharing information. It is also one of the main media 'techniques' 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 on the phone.
 - ➡ In today's time, digital literacy is incomplete without digital financial literacy. Therefore, keeping up with the time and its 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.
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Challenges

The Internet Saathi project was a great opportunity for DEF to interact with thousands of rural women and introduce them to technology on the road towards its mission of providing digital access, connectivity and digital literacy to the marginalised sections of the society. This project also gave DEF a platform to experiment with new ideas and tackle several challenges that came its way.

The challenges were diverse and ranged from technical issues, social issues, cultural issues till geographical barriers. Some of the key challenges from the project were:

- Frequent technical defects in the devices provided to the Saathis, especially battery backup of smartphones
- Tedious procedures and delays in the servicing of the devices
- Poor network connectivity in certain tribal belts
- Frequent technical glitches affected the monitoring mechanism
- Long distances between villages with poor road transportation and connectivity led to delay in on-field problem resolution
- Illiteracy and lack of awareness among the communities created suspicion about the intention of the Internet Saathis and the program
- Caste politics often led to demotivation and jealousy among local women and the Internet Saathis
- Saathi Honorarium were very less because the Saathis' travel cost and target was high
- Model Code of conduct, put in place for the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections also affected the program at local and district level administration



Impact Story



Jyoti spreading her wings of knowledge

I am Jyoti from Umedpur village in district Buxar. Initially when I joined the Internet Saathi programme I used to be really nervous, especially while talking to new people. I used to think how will I explain them? Will I be able to do this work well or not? But as the training progressed, I overcame my fear and was even able to help other rural women from surrounding villages, especially in the age group of 40-60 years. I was able to teach them how to operate a smartphone, internet and how it can assist them in their daily life. This helped the women in their sewing and embroidery work as well to search for new designs. Now I teach in a private school near my village and earn a decent income, something which would have been hard to believe till a few years back.

Rukmani's effort in making Internet a 'Saathi' for women

Recalling her experience as an Internet Saathi, Rukmani Gurjar shares, "When I started working with these women, I encountered a sense of motivation in them. Young girls would dream of a world with opportunities through the internet and illiterate women wanted to become self-reliant. They all told me to teach them everything I knew."

Soon Rukmani was assigned three other villages along with her own, which led to her facing problems in transportation. She recalls how the initial days of her visits weren't easy. The women were hesitant to interact with a stranger about a topic they had no knowledge of. However, with continuous rapport building she was able to gauge the attention of the women. Rukmani came up with new ways to teach them on how to operate a smart phone, helping them to identify features and functions using colors and symbols.



Testimonials

ग्राम कचहरी एराजी बलहाँ

द्रोपती देवी
"सर्वपंच"

प्रखण्ड भगवानपुर हाट,
जिला-सिवाण (बिहार)

निवास:-
ग्राम-पेंस, बारकलेन
प्रखण्ड-पेंस-भगवानपुर हाट
जिला-सिवाण (बिहार)
पिन कोड-841224

चक्रक: 0, क-8। दिनांक: 12-11-2019

प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि निशा कुमारी
पिता- श्री लालचन्द्र-चौधरी ग्राम-कचहरी
भट्टनपुर पो- लोकारामपुर थाना- भगवानपुर हाट
अंचल- भगवानपुर हाट, जिला- सिवाण की फिहरी
है। ये अभिलेख 2019 से डी-ए-ए विभाग में
इसने साक्षी के पद पर- बार गौरी- कचहरी
कामीमईनपुर, मोरु- मंत्री सुदमा, मंत्री ब्रिज
में कार्यरत करती है। इनका आईडी नं.- 1005
सुदमा आईडी- डी-ए-ए-30805 है इसने साक्षी
के पद पर साक्षी महिलाओं को शोकेल-गुलाम रस
इसने के बारे में शिक्षा देने के काम में कार्यरत है।

द्रोपती देवी
पिन कोड-841224
दिनांक: 12-11-2019

बिहार पंचायती राज

अनुज कुमार गौड़
मुखिया
ग्राम पंचायत-गंगोली
प्रखण्ड-सिवाण
जिला-बक्सर (बिहार)

चक्रक: 1150/2019 दिनांक: 12/11/2019

सेवा में
श्रीमान डी-ए-ए पदाधिकारी महोदय (बिहार)
विषय- इंटरनेट साक्षी में काम करने हेतु स्थापन।
महोदय,
उपरोक्त विषयक करना है कि जगदाकुणी
(Jagda Kuni), UBER ID - DEF8H31160,
साक्षी ID - 874, ग्राम पंचायत- गंगोली, प्रखण्ड-
सिवाण, जिला- बक्सर, बिहार के निवासी हैं।
इन्होंने अप्रैल 2019 से लगातार काम कर रही हैं।
ये चार जंगो- गंगोली, प्रतापपुर, सिरखिरी,
विठु सिरखिरी, जो गंगोली पंचायत अंतर्गत है, में
इंटरनेट साक्षी के रूप में महिलाओं के स्थाप
मोबाइल-चलाने का प्रशिक्षण दे रही हैं।

अनुज कुमार गौड़
मुखिया
ग्राम पंचायत-गंगोली
प्रखण्ड-सिवाण (बिहार)

सुजाता देवी
सर्वपंच
ग्राम पंचायत-सिवाण
प्रखण्ड-रामगढ़ चौक, जिला-लखीसराय

चक्रक: 279 दिनांक: 11-10-2019

सेवा में
श्रीमान डी-ए-ए पदाधिकारी महोदय (बिहार)
विषय- सर्वपंच ग्राम पंचायत (बिहार)
महोदय,
सर्वपंच विवेकानंद है कि निशा कुमारी सुदमा आईडी
डी-ए-ए 30805 पंचायत समिति ग्राम-पेंस-भगवानपुर हाट-
रामगढ़ चौक, जिला-लखीसराय की रहनेवाली हैं। मैं 25 मार्च 2019
से इंटरनेट साक्षी में काम करती हूँ इसने सुदमा-बार गौरी- कचहरी
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सुजाता देवी
पिन कोड-841224
दिनांक: 11-10-2019

ग्राम पंचायत बेलखोरिया

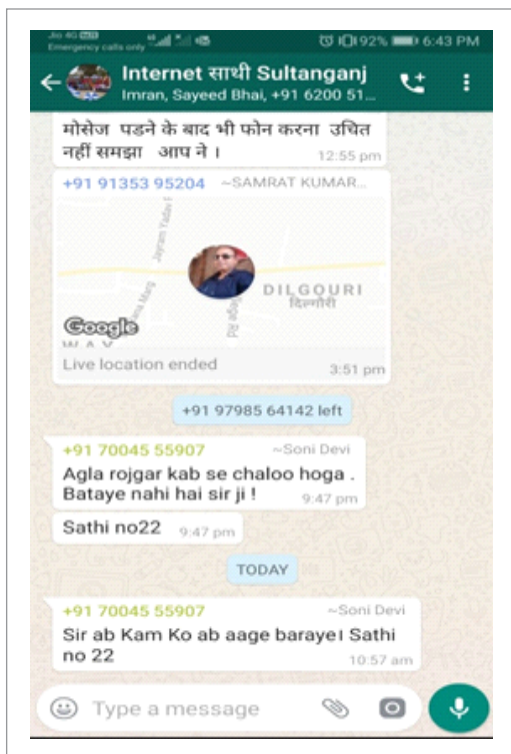
श्रीपति सतीता देवी
मुखिया
ग्राम पंचायत-बेलखोरिया
प्रखण्ड-बेलखोरिया, जिला-बक्सर
पिन कोड-841224

चक्रक: 89/ दिनांक: 12/10/2019

सेवा में
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विषय- सर्वपंच ग्राम पंचायत (बिहार)
महोदय,
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श्रीपति सतीता देवी
मुखिया
ग्राम पंचायत-बेलखोरिया
प्रखण्ड-बेलखोरिया, जिला-बक्सर
पिन कोड-841224

Online Mentoring and Monitoring Mechanisms



Community Mobilisation



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 eight lakh beneficiaries to include men, women and girls to become 'Digitally Internet, Basic Mobile literate and financially aware'. The community trainings of the eight lakh people in Bihar through digitally empowered rural women was one of the greatest achievements of the project as it exposed the 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 4,721 village and depth by creating women digital leaders to drive and lead the rural digital revolution.