Digital literacy –
(good & emerging) practices
from India

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HELPAGE INDIA – FOCUSED ON MAINSTREAMING ELDER CAUSE IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

**Mission:** To work for the cause and care of **disadvantaged older persons** and to improve their quality of life

**Vision:** HelpAge envisions a society where elderly have the **right to an active, healthy and dignified life**

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**FOUR MISSIONS (THEMATIC FOCUS)**

**HEALTHCARE**
- Primary Healthcare | Mobile Health Units | Telehealth
- Vision Restoration – Cataract & Refraction
- Mental Health & Well-being
- Palliative Care

**AGECARE**
- Elder Helplines
- Homes & care centres
- Geriatric caregiving capacity
- Physiotherapy/ functional mobility/ Assistive Aids

**LIVELIHOODS & EMERGENCIES**
- Livelihoods/ Elder Self Help Groups
- Disaster Relief

**ADVOCACY & CAPACITY BUILDING**
- Policy advocacy – pension, food, health
- Digital Literacy & Safety
- Intergenerational bonding (school/colleges based)
- Age friendly environment/ cities

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**NATIONAL PRESENCE**

- Reach 2 million directly
- Working with partners, senior citizen associations, rural self-help groups institutions
- System change and advocacy
- UN Population Award Laureate (Institutional) 2020

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HelpAge India | Fighting isolation, poverty, neglect
ELDERS AND THEIR LIVED CONTEXT

- Large and growing elder population in India – 140mn to 300m by 2050 (~10% to 20% of pop.)

- Changing lived context with access and isolation challenges: Nuclear families in India (~50%); Living single/ with spouse (20%); Rural (70%), functional mobility challenge (40%)

- Even as a large disadvantaged segment struggles with health and income security, longevity and improving healthspan means a growing segment of elders are living longer; aspire to participate and contribute

EMERGING DIGITAL DIVIDE – Key barriers

- **ACCESS** to devices and internet (data)
- **ABILITY** – the knowledge and skills
- **CONFIDENCE** to navigate
- **LEARNING** options & space

HUGE OPPORTUNITY FOR MAKING A CHANGE

Digital literacy intervention for elders can address the digital divide and help them join the mainstream, open a new world and enable them to lead a happy and fulfilling life

RAPIDLY EVOLVING DIGITAL WORLD

- The new Digital World has radically changed the way we live, connect, access information and services. Post covid, rapidly acceleration & adoption - % of digital financial transactions; % of tele-health consultations; % of government schemes e-entitled

- Cybersecurity threat for elders is a very high risk (fraud, cyberstalking)
Elders & Family: Digital Connections

Reasons for not using digital devices

- Children don’t have time: 60%
- Don’t want to be dependent on anyone: 10.3%
- Grandchildren don’t have time: 9.6%
- Children lose patience while teaching: 9.4%
- No other person to learn from: 7.1%

Source: Need Assessment Survey by HelpAge India, 2020 – Dipstick Survey
(Sample: 1580 Seniors | 8 States | Sec B&C)

Who taught seniors use of digital devices

- Self-taught: 46.9%
- Son: 25%
- Daughter: 18%
- Grandchild: 7.4%
- Daughter-in-law: 3.4%
- Son-in-law: 6%

Learning preferences

- Net Banking: 94.8%
- Booking cabs: 93.1%
- To pay utility bills: 88%
Access to Devices

**URBAN ELDERLY SAMPLE**
- 59% urban elders did not have access to a digital device
- Older women considerably behind (66% without devices)

**RURAL ELDERLY SAMPLE**
- Based on field data and small sample survey done recently, findings indicate that ~15% have smartphones (and 15% have key-pad phones)
- Almost 85% elders in rural areas without smartphone devices  
  *(with implication on how we think about their digital literacy & connect, given rural divide context)*
- However, 75% of caregivers (household members) have smartphone with internet access

Source: Ageing in India: Exploring Preparedness & Response to Care Challenges – A HelpAge India Report (June, 2024)
Use of Digital Services - Urban

- Only 20% reported using digital services comfortably/confidently | 15% in women elders
- 8% reported experienced online fraud

Elderly use of Digital Services

- Entertainment and Social Media: 33.6%
- Information Search: 17.4%
- Internet banking and Digital Payment Apps: 12.6%
- Paying Utility Bills, Booking Tickets: 11.6%
- Using Health Apps: 7.8%

Most using for entertainment and social media. And mostly as consumers; some becoming creators.

Limited use of more advanced benefits (with higher complexity) - ability & confidence barriers

Support needed by elderly while using digital services

- All: 18.6% Very Comfortable, 34.7% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 46.7% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services
- Male: 21.5% Very Comfortable, 39.0% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 39.5% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services
- Female: 15.8% Very Comfortable, 30.4% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 53.8% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services
- 60-69 years: 19.5% Very Comfortable, 36.7% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 43.8% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services
- 70-79 years: 17.5% Very Comfortable, 30.9% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 51.6% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services
- 80+ years: 14.5% Very Comfortable, 30.7% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 54.8% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services
- Tier I Cities: 16.3% Very Comfortable, 39.6% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 44.2% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services
- Tier II Cities: 20.9% Very Comfortable, 29.9% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 49.2% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services
- SEC B: 19.4% Very Comfortable, 37.2% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 43.4% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services
- SEC C: 17.5% Very Comfortable, 31.2% Can use services, but needs help sometimes, 51.3% Does not use or is not comfortable at all and needs constant support using Digital Services

Source: Ageing in India: Exploring Preparedness & Response to Care Challenges – A HelpAge India Report (2024)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model/Approach</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td><strong>1. Digital Training Workshops with Senior Citizen Associations (SCAs) in Urban Areas</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Launched in 2016&lt;br&gt; - In-person workshop&lt;br&gt; - Specially designed curriculum/module&lt;br&gt; - 3500 Workshops conducted</td>
<td>70,000+ elders</td>
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<td><strong>2. Digital Safety Program with SCAs (Google funded)</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Responding to rising cybersecurity risk&lt;br&gt; - Launched in 2022&lt;br&gt; - Workshop mode&lt;br&gt; - Special curriculum&lt;br&gt; - 1430 workshops across 16 states of India; 1100 SCAs, 46,000 elders</td>
<td>Target to reach 70,000 elders&lt;br&gt; + Intergenerational/volunteers involved (2 at each session)&lt;br&gt; + Pre &amp; Post survey&lt;br&gt; + Animated curriculum&lt;br&gt; + Reduced isolation</td>
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<td><strong>3. Digital Literacy with Schools (Pilot Program)</strong>&lt;br&gt; - Launched in 2023 on Grandparents day&lt;br&gt; - Connecting schools and SCAs&lt;br&gt; - Modified curriculum (basic)&lt;br&gt; - 14 schools so far; 20 Sessions; 500 students&lt;br&gt; - On the back of our countrywide schools program (SAVE i.e. Students Action for Valuing Elderly)&lt;br&gt; + Intergenerational bonding – students as young champions&lt;br&gt; + Sensitisation on elder issues&lt;br&gt; + Includes dance &amp; fun sessions&lt;br&gt; + Sensitisation on elder issues</td>
<td>5000+ elders with certificate – basic literacy program – enabled for access</td>
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<td><strong>4. Digital Literacy in Rural Areas (with Digital Centres/Agency)</strong>&lt;br&gt; - With Elder Self-Help Groups (ESHGs) – enabling connection to government systems is primary objective&lt;br&gt; - Partnership with the e-governance centre (govt outreach centres/digital centres)&lt;br&gt; - Follows basic digital literacy curriculum of government</td>
<td>5000+ elders reached and scaling-up</td>
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Digital Literacy Curriculum Index

- How to use your Smart Phone (Android)
  - Switching Phone On & Off
  - Saving Contacts
  - How to make a Call
- How to Message (SMS)
- How to Clean Phone Storage
- How to use Phone Camera
- How to create an Email Id
- How to compose an Email
- How to use Google Search
- How to use Google Maps
- How to use Google Play Store to Download Apps
- How to use WhatsApp
- How to pay Utility Bills Online
- How to do online payments via Net banking
- How to book Uber/Ola
- Safety Basics for Online Transactions
- Using Social Media - Facebook, YouTube

Special Digital Safety Booklet & Curriculum Deck

Project Curriculum Available Online

1. Creating a Strong Password - https://youtu.be/2LPXNU86UTo
4. Protecting your Device - https://youtu.be/y1DMuakD01q
5. Spotting an Online Scam - https://youtu.be/d7FrFp85b3s

Protecting Against Harmful Online Content

- Pre-test: 35.1%
- Post-test: 86.5%

Confidence in Taking Action Against Online Fraud

- Pre-test: 32.2%
- Post-test: 88.2%

Based on preliminary analysis of pre & post feedback forms – Digital Safety training program – 1000 respondents
DIGITAL LITERACY RELATED DEVELOPMENTS/ PRACTICES IN INDIA

Cybersecurity or cybercrime branch of police beginning to take up programs focused on senior citizens (recognizing seniors getting affected)

Technology companies such as Microsoft, under Corporate Social Responsibility, have a focus on digital literacy (particularly women). E.g. Microsoft’s Women In Digital Business initiative in India for aspiring women entrepreneurs

Existing rural networks (of women self help groups, microfinance based) who have been running digital financial trainings, have begun to add digital literacy more broadly into their training

New Age-tech organisations are building online community of seniors (e.g. GetSetUp, ) and offering various training and development modules – and using latest conversational and interactive tools

Few (emerging) paid training programs for seniors by private training or education organizations: 4-8 weeks certificate course (responding to growing demand)

OPPORTUNITY TO PARTNER WITH OTHER NETWORKS (PRIVATE SECTOR/SOCIAL/ POLICE/ CO-OPERATIVES) TO EXTEND TRAINING TO SENIORS GROUP
**LEARNINGS AND WAY FORWARD**

**NEED FOR RESPONDING WITH URGENCY & AT SCALE**

**FROM RUNNING OF THE PROGRAM SO FAR**

- **Different approaches for different segments** – urban, rural, others; *older women participation to be encouraged more* – special focus program

- **In-person format works best/ is preferred** (also with benefit of intergenerational, reducing isolation)...*but limits rapid scale up...possibly hybrid*

- **Recognize learning pedagogy for elders would be different** (custom design, multiple revision cycle)

- **Vision of not just literacy, but digital capability** – for fully utilizing its benefits and joining mainstream

**FOR SCALING UP**

- **Fight against ‘ageism’ contributing to digital exclusion** – prevails in government (policies), family (thinking)

- **Family is closest with biggest potential** – intergenerational knowledge transfer (young and seniors)

- **Community integrated design & involve multi-stakeholders** - leverage senior/older persons associations/rural Self Help Groups/ networks

- **Advocacy at policy level for government action** – change age limits in schemes, special programs– inter ministerial involvement (social welfare, education, skills, others)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXDHHrmzd7A

Workshop at Senior Citizen Association/OPA

Google (corporate) supported

Rural elders at e-gov centres

Peer to Peer learning

Youth/ volunteer involvement

Engaging school students