

Building an Ethical, Inclusive, and Community-Centered Approach to Accessible Digital Health through Al

Harnessing Technologies in an Age of AI to Build a Healthier World

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Prioritising Underserved Communities in the Digital Health Landscape

- Global disparities in Al and digital technology continue to exclude marginalized communities, exacerbating the digital health gap, especially in Global South
- Examine case studies and initiatives that address Al accessibility, fairness, and representation in the last mile.
- Collaboration between experts and communities to create just, ethical and equitable Al systems tailored to address the needs of hyperlocal settings.
- Navigating the Al landscape within the context of an existing and continuously widening digital divide.

DEF has been asking these critical questions to ensure that technology serves the needs of the most vulnerable in society:

- How can Al be developed and used to benefit marginalized communities while avoiding exploitation and harm?
- How can Al systems be designed to be inclusive and address the needs of rural and underserved communities in India?
- What safeguards can be put in place to prevent the displacement or exploitation of frontline workers, especially in low-wage, gig, or platform economies?



HOW CAN WE DEVELOP AI-DRIVEN DIGITAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS THAT ARE COMMUNITY-INFORMED, BRIDGE THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE, AND PRIORITIZE ACCESSIBILITY, FAIRNESS, AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING?





India's Digital Landscape:

- Over 650 million smartphone users
- 950 million internet subscribers
- A global leader in the digital econo

The Reality of Disconnection:

- Despite progress, large sections of the population remain unconnected, deepening the social divide.
- Rural India: Only 24% have internet access.
- Urban India: 66% have internet access (NSSO, 2024).

Growing Disparity:

- The gap between rural and urban access is widening.
- Oxfam's Inequality Report 2022 highlights:
 31% of rural households have internet access, compared to 67% in urban areas

© Challenges in Al Accessibility:

- Limited digital literacy and infrastructure in rural areas.
- Underrepresentation of marginalized communities in Al datasets.
- Algorithmic biases reinforcing social inequalities.



KEY QUESTION: HOW CAN WE BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND ENSURE THAT AI BENEFITS ALL OF INDIA, REGARDLESS OF GEOGRAPHY OR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS?



The Indian Context - Rural Al Divide

Barriers to Al Adoption in Rural India:

- 65% of India's population lacks meaningful engagement with Al and digital tools.
- Algorithmic decisions in welfare schemes exclude marginalized groups (e.g., Aadhaar-related denials).
- Limited Al literacy among community stakeholders (Panchayat leaders, SHGs, youth, etc.).

Al for All Literacy Program - A Case Study

- Initiative: Al literacy & mobilization across 14 states.
- Participants: Panchayat leaders, ASHA workers, students, SHGs, and youth.
- Key Learnings:
 - 72% of participants had no prior understanding of Al.
 - Increased awareness of Al's impact on governance, misinformation, and rights.
- Measure of Impact: Strengthening local decision-makers' capacity to participate as key stakeholders and engage with Al policies



HOW CAN WE SCALE AI LITERACY INITIATIVES LIKE THE *AI FOR ALL LITERACY PROGRAM 2023* TO ENSURE GREATER COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND BRIDGE THE RURAL AI DIVIDE?





DEF's Just AI - Data & Algorithms for Communities

Our Mission: Bridging the gap between Al and social justice through literacy, advocacy, and innovation.

Approach: Community-driven digital literacy, participatory research, and citizencentric Al frameworks.

Focus Areas:

- Al literacy & capacity building
- Grassroots research on Al access
 & biases
- Fact-checking & misinformation combat
- Ethical Al solutions recognition
- Al governance & policy advocacy

ONGOING EFFORTS

Algorithmic Chronicles: Documenting Al injustices across languages.

SheCatalyst Program: Training women-led CIRCs as rural fact-checkers.

Just Al Awards 2025: Recognizing ethical Al innovations for social good.

Al Governance Anthology: Exploring Al's implications on policy, society, and inclusion.

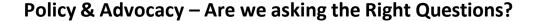
Framework for Community-Informed Responsible AI: A governance & accessibility model.











- What are the gaps in data representation, algorithmic fairness, and transparency?
- How can governments, academia, and communities co-design Al governance frameworks?
- How do we scale localized AI solutions for underserved communities?
- What mechanisms ensure AI accountability & human rights safeguards?
- How can AI be leveraged to create a citizencentric digital model that prioritizes
- inclusion, social justice, and human dignity?

ONWARDS TO 7TH DIGITAL
CITIZEN SUMMIT 2025 – WE, THE
PEOPLE OF INDIA

Key Focus Areas:

Data, Power & Justice – Examine how data governance, AI, and surveillance impact democracy, rights, and marginalized communities.

Digital & Social Justice – Address algorithmic bias, digital exclusion, and policy gaps to ensure ethical and inclusive AI.

Data & AI Literacy – Empower citizens with knowledge on data privacy, AI ethics, and community-driven digital governance.

Data Sovereignty & Rights – Advocate for policies that protect digital autonomy and prevent Al-driven discrimination.

Multi-stakeholder Collaboration – Engage policymakers, technologists, and civil society to co-create ethical Al solutions.

Reimagining Digital Economies – Explore community-driven data economies, platform cooperatives, and decentralized AI models.

AI & Digital Health Access – Harness AI to improve equitable healthcare access, ensuring inclusivity, affordability, and ethical safeguards.









Thank You!

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