



Campaigning for Inclusion of women in the digital spaces

Empowerment through Annihilating Digital Divide, Development Alternatives aims to empower 800 women between the age group of 25-45 in the rural areas of Lalitpur District in Uttar Pradesh. The project intends to break the social and cultural perceptions attached to women's rightful access to technology especially smart devices as mobile phones.

Contrary to the assumption that women might not be comfortable in acknowledging the project goals, we found out that women were very welcome to the idea of learning how to operate a smart phone. During our baseline survey, women were eager to know the expanse of work that can be done using the mobile phone. While men were reportedly hesitant of women having a phone but they were acceptable to the idea that woman joins digital literacy classes. However, they were still reluctant seeing the woman using mobile phones and 'distraction' from household chores. This attitude became the basis of our campaigning, where we are challenging larger oppressive notions.

In the first stage of this program, our primary focus is on creating an eco-system to ensure that women get access to technology. By reaching out to the community members, decision makers, religious leaders and other important stakeholders, awareness on digital gender divide is being created. Our main aim is to enable the transformation of opinion and cultural perceptions surrounding use of mobile phones by rural women. DA launched a campaign called 'Faide ki Ghanti'. The whole campaign has been designed targeting the force field i.e., men and women. The campaign elements include the broadcast of Radio Jingle, Street Plays, and interpersonal communication (IPC) activities with men and women, audio-video advocating the use of smart phone by women and games geared to unveil different uses of smart phone.

Community has been perceptive of the campaign activities. Women specifically want to know as how a smart device can be used to create a livelihood opportunity. Men folk have been observed to be restricted, as they already have they established ways of functioning and switching to digital seems a task. We've also noticed that men are equally unaware of the benefits of technology. Smartphone has become a tool to connect virtually, however scope of things that can be done through smart devices is limited. There is a strong need for exposure to such avenues for a long period of time to expect any change in outlook.

Until now we have reached out to 12,000 community members including men, women, youth and opinion holders. Once we are done with campaigning, we will advance forward to provide digital literacy to women who show interest generated after the exposure to messages from the campaign.