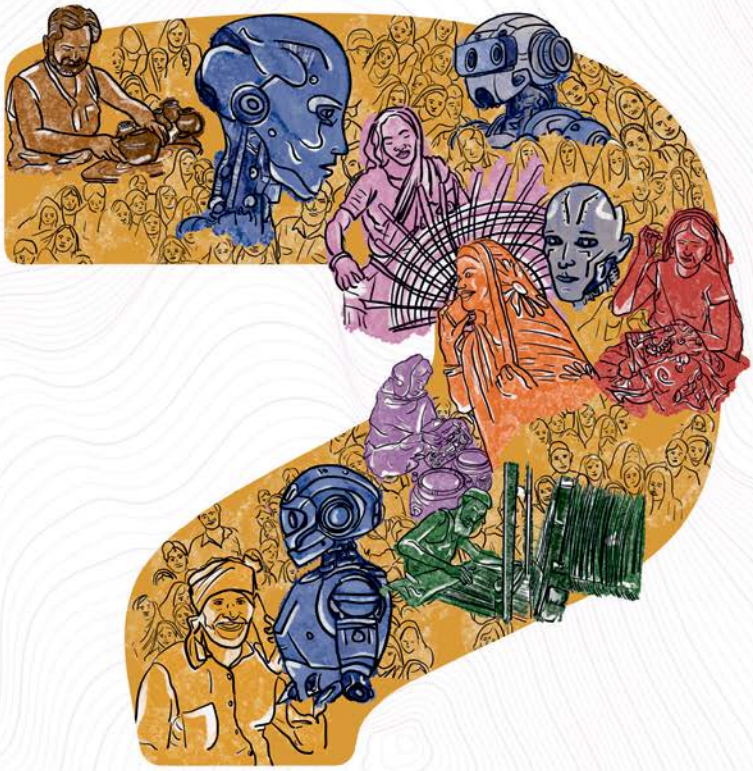
7th DIGITAL CITIZEN SUMMIT 2025

People & Platforms:
Let's Talk Accountability



DCS Report 2025

DIGITAL CITIZEN SUMMIT

COMMUNITY NETWORK XCHANGE

DAOI DIGITAL ARTIZANS OF INDIA

JUST AI

The Muslim Digital Society

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JUST AI

The Museum of Digital Society

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People & Platforms: Let's Talk Accountability

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We especially thank our co-organisers, the Government of Telangana, T-Hub, and the Centre for Development Policy and Practice, for co-hosting the event with us and helping shape a truly collaborative platform. We are deeply grateful to our Principal Partners, APNIC Foundation, Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Internet Society, DIGI, AIACA, Creative Dignity, and DigiKargha, for supporting DCS 2025 with resources and institutional backing that enabled us to convene all five tracks together.

We also warmly acknowledge our Associate Partners, World Summit Awards (WSA), Accountability and Responsibility in South's Ecosystem (ARISE), Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP), Commons Collective (CC), and the Global Digital Empowerment Network (GDEN), for strengthening the summit's outreach and advancing shared commitments to digital inclusion, rights-based governance, and equitable digital futures.

Our sincere thanks to our Inclusion and Equity Partner, Women 4 Ethical AI, for anchoring essential conversations on fairness, representation, and accountability in emerging technologies. We thank our Media Partner, Medianama, for helping share the summit's key ideas and stories with wider audiences. We are grateful to our Knowledge Partners, Internet Society India Hyderabad Chapter, Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Voice of Fashion, Globe Ethics, Software Freedom Law Center (SFLC), AI Safety Connect, and Mahindra University, for contributing expertise and insights that enriched the programme and its outcomes. As DCS 2025 is an officially recognised event, we also thank the India AI Impact Summit for its support and association.

Lastly, we extend heartfelt appreciation to all our session partners, speakers, and moderators who joined the summit and helped make Digital Citizen Summit 2025 a truly multi-stakeholder convening rooted in dialogue, collaboration, and action. We thank the rapporteurs and volunteers for their careful documentation, coordination, and on-ground assistance, the Digital Empowerment Foundation team and our extended colleagues for their dedication and professionalism in organising DCS 2025 and bringing the entire event together with care and attention to detail.

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About Digital Citizen Summit

Digital Citizen Summit is a global multistakeholder platform initiated by Digital Empowerment Foundation to discuss and deliberate on digital rights and citizenship to advocate for accessible, affordable, and meaningful Internet. This annual event, meticulously organised by a synergy of technology and social innovation experts, brings together a diverse and dynamic gathering of scholars, academics, practitioners, civil society organisations, and government representatives who share a profound interest in technology, digital citizenship, and social innovation. Since its inception in 2016, the Digital Citizen Summit (DCS) has been built around the broader discourse of how individual rights are refracted through, inflected and impacted by complex digital ecosystems. Traversing the landscape of social media and internet rights in 2016; access, rights, and privacy in 2017, DCS 2018 explored the key challenges of privacy, surveillance, intimidation, censorship, and misinformation emerging within the online environment, revealing the underside of a hyper-connected world while half the population continues to be lack the basic access to such resources. In 2019, it was decided to restructure the DCS to do a deep-dive on a particular issue to engage subject-matter experts and practitioners across its multiple dimensions in order to develop meaningful stakeholder engagements and leverage and advance the collective work done by different stakeholders in a given area. Accordingly, DCS 2019 explored the intractable online information landscape of misinformation and disinformation and the compounding legal and social challenges it has thrown up in terms of developing a solution for its effective regulation that works within a rights-based framework. Through its past editions, the DCS journey has demonstrated the diversity of issues currently at stake in the space of digital rights and range of stakeholder engagements that would require confronting outstanding challenges. The 5th Digital Summit after the Covid Pandemic was focused on "Commoning the Internet for a Vibrant Democracy" where crucial topics like related to internet governance, human rights, and the future of internet was discussed. Reaching a milestone, the 6th edition of DCS in 2024 was organised in collaboration with the Government of Telangana in Hyderabad and focused to understand the ethics and accountability issues emerging in the use of artificial intelligence in India and South Asia.

About Digital Citizen Summit 2025

People and Platforms: Let's Talk Accountability

As debates around digital governance intensify globally, this summit builds on the urgent need to rethink how platform power is held accountable and how digital infrastructures can be reclaimed as public goods. With the penetration of pervasive digital technologies and expanding platform power, it becomes essential to interrogate the responsibilities of individuals, communities, platforms, and institutions in shaping equitable digital futures. It explores the tensions between agency and accountability, innovation and regulation. It highlights how collective responsibility, rooted in justice, participation, and rights, can help reclaim the internet as a public good.

Building on the foundations of previous editions, "Commoning the Internet for a Vibrant Democracy" (2023) and "AI, Algorithms and Accountability" (2024), the 2025 Summit deepens the conversation by asking: Who bears the burden of shaping digital spaces, and who holds the power to transform them?

This summit's inquiry into digital governance and platform power is also informed by the ongoing work within ARISE (Accountability and Responsibility in South's Ecosystems), a transregional community space advocating for greater platform accountability, ethical governance, and rights-based digital infrastructures. As part of ARISE's membership and secretariat, DEF actively contributes to collective efforts challenging the dominance of global technology actors who routinely evade accountability in Southern contexts.

By drawing from ARISE's commitment to fostering tech accountability, equitable policy frameworks, and enhanced user protections, the 2025 Summit seeks to deepen dialogues on how multi-stakeholder coalitions, citizen alliances, and institutional networks can collaboratively reclaim digital infrastructures as public goods grounded in justice, rights, and participatory governance.

The pre-event at the CDPP office brought together senior policymakers, digital rights advocates, international partners, academics, and grassroots representatives to set the tone for two days of critical conversations on digital governance, platform accountability, AI ethics, inclusion, and community-led tech futures. Senior global experts, including Sonia Jorge (Global Digital Inclusion Partnership), Anriette Esterhuysen (Association for Progressive Communications), Shaik Salauddin (Telangana Gig and Platform Workers' Union), and Gustaff Harriman Iskander (Common Rooms Network Foundation), joined Osama Manzar (Founder and Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation) in outlining the Summit's vision, five thematic

tracks, and its focus on platform governance. CDPP announced a Special Issue of the Journal of Development Policy and Practice on "Technology and Society", while DEF and CDPP teams presented ongoing research on digital inclusion, platformisation, misinformation, and community networks. The day featured an invited talk by Prof. Ran Greenstein on policy and reconciliation in divided societies, followed by a discussion on Dr. Rajiv Kumar's book *Everything All At Once*. The Digital Citizen Summit 2025 convened 100+ speakers, 29 organisations, and 73+ sessions at T-Hub, Hyderabad, featuring plenaries, panels, workshops, unconference forums, exhibitions, and awards across five thematic tracks. The event also featured two key recognitions: the JUST-AI Awards, celebrating ethical and responsible AI innovations, and the DAOI – Digital Artisans of India Awards honouring outstanding artisans, crafts, and digital creative talent. The winners of the Just AI Awards included interventions such as Adalat AI, MAAP, Peta Bencana, NIPUN, Digital Green Trust, and two special mentions: CORD and JyotiAI. DAOI received over 200 nominations, awarding cash prizes of ₹1,00,000, ₹75,000 and ₹50,000 to the top three artisans. The winners were Ashwin Siju (Kutch weaving), Aafiya Khan (silver footwear craft), and Ishver Singh Prajapati (clay and paper pottery). The Inaugural Plenary on "Digital Citizenship & Platform Accountability," chaired by Mr Jayesh Ranjan (IAS, CEO, Industry and Investment Cell; CEO, SPEED; Government of Telangana), brought together Anriette Esterhuysen (APC), Sonia Jorge (GDIP), Rajiv Kumar (Pahle India Foundation and Ex-NITI Aayog Vice Chairman) and Vandana Vasudevan (Author of OTP Please!). The session examined how platform monopolies, data extraction, and opaque algorithms shape citizenship, and called for rights-based, transparent, and people-centred digital ecosystems driven by accountable governance and inclusive innovation.

A 30-minute interactive Townhall with Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Envoy for Digital and Emerging Technologies, directly engaged with young voices from the audience on how community-level digital inclusion initiatives can inform the implementation of Global Digital Compact's goals on universal access and an equitable digital economy. The concluding plenary on Data Governance and Accountability, held on 15th November and chaired by Amir Ullah Khan (Member, Telangana Public Service Commission), reflected on two days of dialogue on rights, equity, and platform governance. The session featured Neeti Biyani (APNIC Foundation), Setu Upadhyay (Internet Society), Rakshita Swamy (Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research), and Indranil Niyogi (Swiss Philanthropy Foundation). Speakers emphasised the importance of citizen-centred data ecosystems, transparent governance frameworks, philanthropy's role in promoting digital rights, and community-rooted accountability models. This year's Summit reaffirmed that digital platforms must evolve in ways that protect agency, reduce exclusion, and prioritise public interest.

Welcome Address

Mr Jayesh Ranjan (IAS), Special Chief Secretary for Special Projects (SPEED) and Investment Cell, Chief Minister's Office, and Special Chief Secretary, Tourism, Culture & Sports, Government of Telangana, Hyderabad

Mr Jayesh Ranjan (IAS) the co-chair of Digital Citizen Summit 2025 opened the summit with a warm welcome to participants and dignitaries from across India and the world. He highlighted the continued collaboration between Government of Telangana and the Digital Empowerment Foundation, noting the Summit's growth in scale, participation, and quality, including the Just AI Awards and Digital Artisans of India Awards. Framing the summit's theme around data and accountability, he underlined growing concerns around data misuse, surveillance, and citizens' limited awareness of how their data is collected and used.

He reflected on Telangana's early leadership in ethical data governance, beginning with the adoption of an Open Data Policy in 2015, making it one of the first Indian States to institutionalise open data. He highlighted how open data has enabled evidence-based solutions in mobility, transport planning, women's safety, agriculture, and public services citing examples where ride-sharing and transport datasets informed traffic management, public transit planning, and targeted interventions by government departments and startups.

Addressing the digital divide, he noted that infrastructure alone does not guarantee meaningful use, drawing on Telangana's early broadband rollout through T-Fiber, which revealed the need for locally relevant digital solutions. This insight shaped the state's focus on agriculture, particularly small and marginal farmers, leading to the creation of the Agriculture Data Exchange (ADeX) and the Agriculture Data Management Framework (ADMF), and later the Telangana Government Data Exchange (TGDEX). Concluding, he emphasised the importance of balancing innovation with citizen trust through strong data governance frameworks, reaffirmed Telangana's commitment to partnerships and learning from grassroots initiatives, and invited participants to use the summit as a platform for collective reflection and collaboration toward an inclusive digital future.

Welcome Address by Mr Jayesh Ranjan (IAS) - https://youtu.be/rW9sB33aFHA?si=M5BwyH0l2-T--S-5

Opening Remarks

Osama Manzar, Founder and Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Osama Manzar, Founder and Director of the Digital Empowerment Foundation, curator and co-chair of Digital Citizen Summit opened this year's summit by framing the gathering as a critical space to question data, accountability, and citizen agency in an increasingly AI-driven world. He cautioned that data collection has become pervasive and largely invisible, embedded in everyday use of apps, devices, Wi-Fi networks, and surveillance systems—often without meaningful consent or awareness. Emphasising that people are increasingly reduced to data points, he warned that such data now fuels AI systems that amplify surveillance, profiling, and decision-making power.

He further highlighted the growing asymmetry between those who generate data and those who control it, particularly affecting rural communities and artisans whose data originates locally but is governed by distant corporate and institutional actors. Calling for accountability to emerge from citizens rather than data collectors alone, he urged participants from government, civil society, academia, and industry to actively engage over the next two days. The summit, he noted, offers a vital opportunity to collectively reflect, question, and shape more ethical, inclusive, and people-centred digital futures.

Welcome Note & Opening Remarks by Osama Manzar - https://youtu.be/aeA3Hnmx-EI?si=a3x1jJFgYsn4ykV0

Session Summaries

Inaugural Plenary: Digital Citizenship and Platform Accountability

Anriette Esterhuysen, Rajiv Kumar, Osama Manzar, Sonia Jorge, Vandana Vasudevan (seated from left to right)

Key Discussion Points

- Data extraction vs. data benefits: Large-scale data collection is justified for public-good solutions (traffic planning, agricultural interventions) but creates risks when commercial uses or opaque sharing replace public interest guardrails.
- Platform concentration of power: Platforms centralize information, decision-

making, and market access; this yields convenience for some but structural dependency and bargaining power imbalances for workers and small sellers.

- Opacity of algorithms and enforcement: Algorithmic rules that control gig work, listing visibility or user-blocking lack transparency and due process for affected workers and sellers.
- Digital inclusion is not only connectivity: Broadband rollouts (e.g., T-Fiber) do not automatically translate into meaningful use; uptake requires relevance, demonstration of value and local problem-solving.
- Local solutions matter: Hyper-local data and community networks (CNX examples) can counterbalance global platform hegemony by producing tangible benefits and building trust.
- Ethical, governed data exchange as a middle path: Telangana's ADEX / TGDEX models illustrate how curated data exchanges with governance rules can enable innovation while attempting to protect contributors.
- Power, privilege, precarity triad in the app economy: Consumers hold privilege, platforms hold informational power, workers/small vendors face precarity — policy must address all three simultaneously.
- Depersonalization and accountability gaps: Platformisation risks severing relational accountability between citizens, service providers and government, weakening democratic responsiveness.

Key Recommendations :

- Adopt transparent data-governance frameworks: Mandate disclosure of data flows, permitted uses, and data-sharing partners; require clear consent and accountability mechanisms for commercial reuse.
- Scale ethical data exchanges with enforceable norms: Promote state or multi-stakeholder data exchanges (ADEX/TGDEX model) with access rules, benefit-sharing clauses and audit trails for commercial usage.
- Regulate algorithmic fairness and due process: Require platforms to publish high-level algorithmic decision criteria, provide appeal mechanisms for worker/seller deplatforming, and mandate impact assessments.
- Design meaningful-connectivity programs: Pair broadband rollout with targeted digital public goods and demonstrations (e.g., agriculture tools, local services) so communities experience immediate benefits.

- Protect gig workers and small sellers: Extend labour protections or social security schemes adapted to platform work; enable collective representation/unions and platform transparency on ratings/penalties.
- Support local & community networks: Fund and integrate CNX-style local practitioners into policy deliberations; prioritize interoperable, open local platforms that preserve agency.
- Promote public awareness and digital literacy: Run targeted campaigns explaining data rights, consent, and platform risks — especially among artisans, rural users and small enterprises.
- Foster public–private–civil society partnerships: Use pilot partnerships to test rights-respecting tech interventions (e.g., open mobility datasets, hackathons that solve local problems) and scale successful models.

Technical Session 1: Building Platforms for Small and Microentrepreneurs (Panel Discussion) by WE Hub

Swetali Mahapatra, Mayur Patnala, Thapasya Vijayaraghavan, Vinutha Naga Rallapalli (seated from left to right)

About the Session:

This session organised by We Hub discussed about the possibilities digital platforms have to support rural entrepreneurs. The session discussed the challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs in setting up their entrepreneurship online in terms of digital illiteracy, lack of trust and others. The panelists through their experiences of organisations like We Hub, SERP, Swasha.org talked about the transformation digital platforms can bring in supporting small and microentrepreneurs.

Key Takeaways:

- Platforms act as equalizers, bridging gaps between entrepreneurs and customers.
- Platform is essentially a bridge or an ecosystem -something that must reduce friction for an entrepreneur.
- For rural entrepreneurs, even starting with something basic is a huge step. Having the right local partners and SHGs who genuinely work for them helps create momentum.
- The idea of Local Production and Global Consumption needs to be adopted by engaging with products which are genuinely needed and then designing products according to specific needs.
- The buying decisions happen only after entrepreneurs engage with customers offline, because trust is built through storytelling and real interactions.
- Government involvement becomes crucial at three levels: trust, legitimacy, and scale. Rural entrepreneurs see government endorsement—whether through district collectors, local officials, or SHG federations—credibility increases instantly.
- Trust happens when people see that the platform is designed for them, not imposed on them.
- Entrepreneurs should feel that the platform is working for them, not benefiting from them.
- Establish rural decentralized production warehouses, led by well- trained women artisans.

From the Speaker's Desk

Digital helps bring the product to market, but offline trust-building is what pushes the venture forward.

Thapasya Vijayaraghavan

A large part of building digital trust involves digital literacy sessions, grievance redressal channels, and transparent data practices.

Mayur Patnala

The biggest shift happens when artisans see their own work valued and circulated digitally. That is when digital becomes empowering.

Swethali Mahapatra

Building platforms for small and micro entrepreneurs requires equal parts technology, trust, and touch.

Vinutha Naga Rallapalli

Technical Session 2: Tracing Platform Power – A Walking Method for Digital Accountability (Workshop) by Arran Ridley

Arran Ridley (on the right)

About the Session

This was an interactive workshop that introduced a "walking method" as a tool for critically analysing the pervasive, yet often invisible, power of digital platforms in our everyday physical environments.

Participants were guided through a series of reflective prompts and activities designed to map their interactions with and dependencies on digital systems.

Key Takeaways:

- Mapping Digital Touchpoints: The facilitator asked participants to identify all points of interaction with "screens, codes, sensors, or terminals" in a given space.

This exercise revealed the sheer density of digital intermediation, from QR code menus to CCTV cameras and access gates, and prompted discussion on who operates these systems and to what end.

- Identifying Dead Zones, Resistance & Refusal: A key theme was looking for spaces or practices where digital systems fail ("dead zones") or are actively resisted. Participants shared examples of seeking non-digital alternatives, highlighting that refusal to engage can be a form of agency and a critique of imposed technological "solutions."
- Analysing Dependencies and Thresholds: The workshop explored moments where individuals have "no choice" but to use a specific digital tool, framing this as a loss of autonomy. The concept of "thresholds" was used to describe borders crossed when convenience becomes compulsory, shaping our vulnerability to platform power.
- Centering Exclusion: A critical part of the discussion focused on who is left behind. Participants were prompted to find a service requiring specific technologies and analyse who might struggle to access it, reinforcing that digital accountability must address equity and inclusion.

Key Takeaways:

- The core objective was to move from abstract criticism of "platform power" to a tangible, grounded understanding of how it manifests in daily life, who it includes and excludes, and where resistance or alternatives exist.
- Through the workshop, it was emphasized that accountability begins with making this power visible and understandable.

> Convenience often masks compulsion. We need to ask when our 'choices' are actually dependencies engineered by platforms
>
> **Arran Ridley**

Key Recommendations:

- Adopt Grounded Research Methods: Civil society organizations, researchers, and policymakers should employ similar participatory, ground-up methods like the "walking method" to understand the real-world impact of digitalization.
- Audit for Exclusion: When designing or regulating digital services, conduct mandatory "exclusion audits" to identify and mitigate barriers for marginalized communities.
- Champion Non-Digital Alternatives: Policy should actively protect and ensure the continued existence of non-digital (offline) access pathways to essential services as a matter of rights and inclusion.

Technical Session 3: Lets Build our Common AI: Public & Just (Panel Discussion) by Commons Collective

Rajasekhar, Gaya Hadiya, Roshna Arafa Ali, Siddhartha Malempatti (seated from left to right)

About the Session

The panel discussion explored how AI infrastructures, labour practices, and governance models affect public life, and how a commons-based AI model could be imagined. Panelists highlighted the environmental, labour, and ethical costs embedded in global AI systems; from rare-earth mining and child labour to energy-intensive data centres. The session emphasized that AI is not autonomous or neutral; it is shaped by corporate ownership of infrastructure, data and labour, making accountability opaque. Participants engaged in a mapping activity to visualise existing power structures in AI (infrastructure, labour, governance, ecology) and then re-imagined them as public, democratic alternatives.

Key Takeaways:

- Data centres relocated from the U.S./Ireland to India due to environmental regulations and rising costs abroad.
- One hyperscale data centre consumes: 1 GW of electricity (more than entire cities like Warangal). 2 crore litres of water per day (~3% of Hyderabad's freshwater usage).
- Land, electricity and water are heavily subsidised by the public, while jobs created are minimal (e.g., a ₹3 billion centre creating only 180 jobs).
- Critical minerals (e.g., cobalt from Congo) involve child labour and hazardous extraction.
- AI is rapidly replacing middle-level jobs (DBAs, IT specialists, content creators, analysts).
- Firms now prefer an hourglass workforce—elite top management + outsourced gig workers, with the middle eliminated.
- New AI-dependent jobs (data labelling, content moderation) are low-paid, outsourced, unregulated.
- Pre-existing exploitative work cultures (overwork, understaffing) allow CEOs to use AI as justification for layoffs.
- AI "therapists" used in workplaces/universities shift responsibility to workers rather than addressing toxicity at its root.

From the Speaker's Desk

Digital helps bring the product to market, but offline trust-building is what pushes the venture forward.

Rajasekhar

A large part of building digital trust involves digital literacy sessions, grievance redressal channels, and transparent data practices.

Siddharth Malempatti

The biggest shift happens when artisans see their own work valued and circulated digitally. That is when digital becomes empowering.

Gaya Hadiya

Building platforms for small and micro entrepreneurs requires equal parts technology, trust, and touch.

Roshna Arafa Ali

Key Recommendations:

- Demand Transparency: By bringing public disclosure of energy, water use, and subsidies for data centres. By building transparent model audits and accountability pathways.
- Regulate AI Labour Impacts: By bringing protections for gig workers and content moderators. By bringing policies ensuring AI does not justify layoffs or worsen precarity.
- Democratise AI Infrastructure: By promoting open, publicly-owned data centres or community models. By limiting monopolistic control by Big Tech.
- Strengthen Ethical Governance: By aligning with emerging global frameworks (e.g., EU AI Act).
- Ensure AI systems used in therapy, education, or HR and undergoes bias, safety, and accountability checks.

Technical Session 4: Disability and the Future of Mobility Platforms (Fishbowl Discussion) by Pacta

Nivedita Krishna , T.V Aishwarya, Kedhar, Prachi Deo, Raghu Dut Degala and Ridha Fathima (seated from left to right)

About the Session:

This session discussed about how the App-based mobility has significantly expanded independence for persons with disabilities, offering door-to-door travel, trackability, safety features, and reduced need for negotiating fares—but public transport gaps and inconsistent accessibility still limit full inclusion.

The session also discussed the major barriers which persist because of driver behaviour, lack of sensitization, and platform design issues: refusal of service, inability to accommodate wheelchairs, inaccessible trunk space, misinformation, cash-only demands, and interfaces that are not screen-reader friendly. Policies exist, but implementation is weak.

Key Takeaways:

- Diversity of Accessibility Needs Participants highlighted those disabilities are varied (visual, mobility, neurodiversity), and mobility barriers differ across these groups. Experiences show that a one-size-fits-all approach to mobility solutions is inadequate.
- The Human Factor in Accessibility: A major challenge is not just technology but the behaviour, assumptions, and preparedness of drivers. Misconceptions—such as disabled riders needing charity, or mobility aids damaging vehicles—shape negative interactions. Many accessibility problems arise from drivers' lack of confidence or knowledge about assisting disabled users.
- Interface and Design Barriers: App interfaces overload users with information, creating challenges for those using screen readers. Key accessibility features (e.g., simplified navigation, clearer auditory cues, disability-identification features) are missing or inconsistently implemented. Participants noted that local and alternative initiatives such as Namma Yatri demonstrate the possibility of community-based, open-protocol systems and driver sensitization.

From the Speaker's Desk:

Need to change the narrative – don't simply say we (the disabled) are an inspiration. Make the technology disability friendly. Some drivers think disabled people need charity.

Raghu Duth Degala

It is a misconception that neurodiverse people cannot move about independently. We know neurodiverse people who use mobility platforms to travel.

Prachi Deo

Key Recommendations :

- Implement mandatory disability-sensitization training for all drivers.
- Add accessibility features in apps—simplified interfaces, screen-reader support, and disability-identification options.
- Restore or introduce dedicated accessible ride categories on platforms.
- Ensure vehicles and drivers can safely accommodate mobility aids.
- Establish a clear, fast grievance redressal channel for accessibility-related issues.

Technical Session 5: Living with the Giants: Rethinking Big Tech from the Global South (Panel Discussion) by Digital Empowerment Foundation and ARISE

Raina Ghosh, Jamila Venturini and Catalina Moreno (from left to right)

About the Session :

The discussion discussed about the sheer scale and influence of major technology companies such as Meta, Google, and Microsoft. Their omnipresence, makes it nearly impossible for individuals, small organizations, or micro-enterprises to engage with them meaningfully or challenge their decisions. This dynamic, she argued, raises fundamental concerns about democratic oversight and the equitable distribution

of power. The speakers emphasized how platform rules — such as banning specific words or restricting certain expressions — can rapidly shape user behaviour. The speed with which users adapt to these imposed changes, demonstrates the extent to which individuals are governed by decisions made unilaterally by technology companies. This dynamic reflects a broader imbalance of power, in which corporations, rather than users or democratic institutions, increasingly shape the boundaries of online discourse.

Key Takeaways:

- Increasing public awareness about the concentration of power in the hands of these tech giants.
- The users have become accustomed to accepting such terms automatically, rarely reading them and often feeling they have no real choice if they wish to remain connected.
- Even those who attempt to read the conditions, frequently encounter language designed to obscure rather than clarify, leaving users confused and disempowered.
- The tech giants invest significant resources into online advertising, only to have their visibility or control undermined by subtle changes in terms and conditions they may not even be aware of.
- These shifts — often introduced without meaningful consultation or transparency — can severely disadvantage smaller organizations and weaken their ability to operate as empowered consumers.

From the Speaker's Desk

The global companies now operate almost as governing entities in themselves, setting rules, norms, and expectations that others must follow.

Catalina Moreno

By manipulating user interfaces and platform functions to suit the preferences of a select few, these companies force the broader public to adapt to changes they did not ask for.

Jamila Venturini

Technical Session 6 : Disrupting Platform Playbook (Panel Discussion and Launch of ARISE Anthology) by Digital Empowerment Foundation and ARISE

Senka Hadzic,Shashank Mohan, Raina Ghosh (from left to right)

About the Session :

This session explored how dominant digital platforms shape power, rights, and representation across the Global South. The discussion centred on the emergence and evolution of the ARISE Network, a coalition amplifying marginalised voices across digital spaces. Speakers examined issues of trust-building, collective action, company accountability, content moderation practices, and the unique internal structures that make ARISE an inclusive movement.

The conversation highlighted the intersections between digital rights, consumer rights, and gig workers' rights, while stressing the need to decentralise power in technology governance. The session concluded with the launch of a book connected to these themes.

Key Takeaways:

- The framing the conversation around the influence of dominant tech platforms and the growing need to integrate digital rights, consumer rights, and gig workers' rights into mainstream policy discourse.
- The ARISE Network was introduced as an emergent coalition that foregrounds marginalised voices in digital governance.
- Trust-building requires addressing power asymmetries that shape digital interactions.
- Many individuals and communities feel isolated when confronting large platforms; networks like ARISE help counter that sense of isolation.
- Trust emerges when groups recognise shared concerns and collectively challenge structures that marginalise.

Key Recommendations :

- Strengthen Collective Advocacy Through Networks
- Support and expand community-led digital rights networks to amplify marginalised voices.
- Build Trust by Addressing Power Imbalances
- Implement participatory governance mechanisms that allow affected users to shape policies and platform responses.
- Ensure Responsible Repurposing of Technology
- Establish clear guidelines for how protective tools may be expanded or repurposed.
- Invest in Grassroots Capacity-Building
- Develop training and awareness programmes across the Global South to expand digital, consumer, and platform literacy.
- Encourage Transparent Internal Governance Structures
- Promote similar transparent, inclusive governance models in other rights-based networks.
- Recognise Marginalised Users as Central Stakeholders
- Embed marginalised communities directly into digital policymaking processes.

Technical Session 7: AI Literacy for All: Building Awareness of Ethics and Inclusive AI (Panel Discussion) by ICT Watch and LocNet

Akhmat Safrudin,Indrianto Banyumurti (from left to right)

About the Session:

The session brought together practitioners from Indonesia and India to examine how AI can be made more ethical, inclusive, and accessible—particularly for women, youth, and marginalized communities. The session highlighted shared challenges between Indonesia and India: linguistic diversity, infrastructural inequalities, and the widening awareness gap in AI use. The contributions underscored that achieving AI

literacy for all requires contextual approaches, ethical grounding, and collaborative action. The session enquired into important questions like – Is AI truly inclusive today? Is AI ethical enough for widespread public deployment? Is AI narrowing or widening the digital divide?

Key Takeaways:

- Digital Access Gaps: Persistent urban–rural divide, limited connectivity, affordability barriers.
- Low Digital Literacy: Absence of a unified national curriculum; fragmented programs by various actors.
- Language Barriers: Existing AI materials are primarily in English or Bahasa, while many rural communities use local languages.
- Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion Gaps: Unequal access to technology and training opportunities.
- Regulatory Ambiguity: Indonesia's AI governance framework is still evolving; only broad ethical guidelines exist.
- Rapid AI Growth: Risk of exclusivity as marginalized communities remain uninformed or disengaged.

From the Speaker's Desk :

AI literacy must be built from the ground up, through local languages, community ownership, and culturally aware approaches.

Indrianto Banyumurti

AI literacy is no longer optional: it is foundational for ensuring equitable access to emerging technologies across Asia.

Akhmat Safrudin

Key Recommendations:

- Promote inclusive AI literacy strategies rooted in local languages, cultural contexts, and community needs.
- Strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration, leveraging government, civil society, academia, and industry expertise to ensure equitable access.
- Develop clear regulatory and ethical frameworks for AI that centre transparency, safety, and accountability.
- Empower marginalized groups, especially women, rural communities, and persons with disabilities, with tailored AI training programs.
- Support community-owned AI initiatives, particularly in climate resilience, rural development, and grassroots innovation.
- Invest in youth-led and peer-learning models, integrating foundational digital skills and responsible AI use into educational systems.

Technical Session 8: Privacy and Platforms: Risk, Regulation, and Public Policy in the Age of AI (Workshop) by Vishnu Pillai

Vishnu Pillai

About the Session:

The workshop on *Privacy and Platforms* explored conceptual, technical, and policy-driven frameworks for governing Artificial Intelligence (AI), with a particular focus on privacy risks, regulation, and societal impact. The session was facilitated by Dr. Vishnu Pillai, who emphasized that AI governance needs to move beyond narrow legal compliance and incorporate engineering-based risk analysis, transparency frameworks, and robust public policy tools.

Key Takeaways:

- The session underscored that AI governance requires systemic risk thinking, not isolated legal compliance.
- AI should be conceptualized as a spectrum, not a fixed category.
- For Privacy Risk Assessment three diagnostic questions related to duration, repurposing and spill over needs to be made.
- AI systems today operate not in a data economy but an inference economy, where sensitive attributes can be inferred without explicit disclosure.
- Over-regulation may stifle innovation, while under-regulation may allow large-scale harms to go unchecked.

From the Speaker's Desk :

> As AI becomes more human-like and accurate, complexity rises and transparency falls—making governance far more challenging.
>
> **Vishnu Pillai**

Key Recommendations :

- Adopt risk-based regulation for AI systems, grounded in complexity and coupling analysis.
- Mandate transparency standards for data inputs, outputs, and inference processes.
- Strengthen protection for bystanders and future generations, especially regarding spillover and inference harms.
- Develop clear retention and repurposing standards, with strict limits on commercial data reuse.
- Enhance government analytical and operational capacity, enabling effective implementation of privacy regulations.
- Promote multi-stakeholder dialogues, including academia, civil society, technologists, and industry.
- Embed privacy-by-design principles into health, education, and public platforms.
- Encourage technology forecasting, ensuring that regulatory frameworks evolve proactively.

Technical Session 9: The People's Blueprint for a Better social media: From the Platform Accountability Lab (Discussion and Dialogue) by Point of View

Vaishali Soni, Kopal Goel (from left to right)

About the Session:

The session started with an interactive session wherein all the speakers and the participants engaged in a fun activity of introducing them and letting people know of the first thing that comes to their minds when they think of "social media". Very interesting words came up from audiences spanning from the widely associated words like brain rot, chit-chat space to ideas as complex as vacuum cleaner, control and product.

This fun activity was followed by another interesting activity where the participants deliberated on four key aspects related to social media. A DIY approach was adopted and participants were made to sit in groups, each group had one theme to ponder on.

Key Takeaways:

- Social media now can be associated with a lot of different aspects. The list of aspects it can be associated with is expanding with time and expanding social media accessibility and reach.
- Given the changes in social media, it needs to be reimagined and regulated afresh.
- Some crucial aspects like transparency, safety, data ownership and justice aspect of social media are still far from how it needs to be to ensure a better social media experience for all- one which is less exploitative!
- How social media platforms take advantage of consumers in a clever way, issues like why the design for switching off privacy needs so many mind-boggling steps and settings directions and not designed as simply as scrolling a reel.

From the Speaker's Desk :

We already know the pros and cons, but let's imagine the possibilities. Let's make social media our space again

Vaishali Soni

We need to think about how social media went from a tool of connection to a breeding ground of negatives.

Kopal Goel

Key Recommendations :

- Stronger regulatory frameworks needed.
- Improved digital literacy and cyber awareness programs needs to be designed.
- Proper moderation systems should be employed to prevent biases and uneven enforcement.
- User-centric design principles needs to be incorporated.
- Social Media needs more efficient regulations that takes better care of aspects like transparency, data ownership, justice, and safety.

Technical Session 10: Safe city's Model for mapping SGBV (Workshop) by Red Dot Foundation

Soumyaa Hariharan, Vaibhavi Rani (from left to right)

About the Session:

This workshop was based on RDF's work in Faridabad focused on understanding the rising patterns of street harassment and online harassment through a participatory and community-driven approach. Sensitive forms of violence such as staring, stalking, cat-calling, touching, groping, and digital harassment were discussed. Because these topics can be triggering, the session began with a content warning and the option for participants to step out or participate anonymously.

Using the Safecity-inspired intersection of data, gender, and community, the session

examined harassment patterns reported between 2021–2024. Participants were divided into four stakeholder groups youth, residents, business owners, women police officers, and local authorities to identify policy gaps, assess data, and propose solutions.

Key Takeaways:

- Shift from Physical to Digital Harassment
- Data showed that while physical harassment staring, stalking, touching remains widespread, online harassment is rapidly increasing. Women reported incidents such as strangers searching their names on LinkedIn, saving photos, sending unwanted messages, and following them on social media. Young women aged 18–25 were the highest reporters due to easier use of digital platforms.
- Harassment as a Gendered Issue
- The data revealed that 99.9% of survivors were women**,** especially college-going girls, working women, and daily commuters. Harassment peaked during afternoon travel hours, exposing gendered vulnerabilities in public spaces.
- Gaps in Existing Policy and Policing
- The All-Women Patrol Initiative (2021–24) improved early reporting but revealed major gaps: patrolling was limited to main markets, leaving narrow lanes unsafe; poorly lit areas remained hotspots; and 95.6% of digital complaints received no follow-up action. Many businesses distanced themselves from the issue despite harassment occurring around commercial areas.
- Normalisation of Everyday Harassment
- Participants emphasized that harassment is rarely a single event. Women face continuous micro-aggressions staring, comments, unwanted proximity which are often dismissed by authorities but take an emotional and psychological toll.

Key Recommendations:

- Improve Reporting and Response
- Ensure mandatory follow-up on digital complaints within 24–48 hours.
- Provide anonymous complaint options.
- Train police in gender-sensitive communication.
  - » Strengthen Urban Safety
- Install better street lighting in dark lanes and near bus stops.

- Expand CCTV coverage in markets and high-risk areas.
- Promote "Safe Business Corridors" through shopkeeper–police cooperation.
  - » Address Online Harassment
- Conduct community workshops on cyber safety and legal rights.
- Collaborate with cybercrime cells to monitor repeat offenders.
- Encourage responsible digital behaviour among youth.
  - » Support Survivors
- Establish a women's help desk with trained counsellors.
- Provide free legal support.
- Create peer-support groups in colleges and workplaces.
  - » Build Community Accountability
- Engage RWAs in identifying unsafe spots.
- Encourage "Safe Shop" commitments.
- Include gender-safety modules in schools and colleges.

Technical Session 11: Whose Citizenship Counts Exclusion of Transgender Persons in India's Digital Policy Landscape (Panel Discussion and Report Launch) by Digital Empowerment Foundation

Arpita Kanjilal, Rachana Mudraboyina, Santosh, Maitri Singh (From left to right)

About the Session:

The session discussed about the understanding of Digital Citizenship and Digital Divide follows a binary distinction of sexes, it does not account to marginalized. There is a pushing need to factor 'lived experiences' of marginalised groups located in intersectionalities of gender spectrum and socio-economic realities. Such a deficiency in thought creates a systemic barrier in digital landscapes which is augmented with the advent of AI and other sophisticated technology.

Then the documentary titled 'Whose Citizenship Counts? Exclusion of Transgender Persons in India's Digital Policy Landscape' was screened. The documentary had multiple speakers from the transgender community and people working in organisations that support the case, putting forth their views and experiences on instances of exclusion in access to state welfare schemes, private sector employment, dignified self-employment opportunities and documentation and legal issues.

Key Takeaways :

- Digital inclusion still leaving out the requirement of personal verification for documentation is a question that transcends the question of gender.
- The idea of citizenship being exclusionary applies with respect to minorities of various kinds and thus is broader concern.
- The need for implementation of horizontal reservation as currently if an individual identifies as non-binary, they lose the benefit of caste-based reservation.

Technical Session 12 : Accountability in the Digital Health Era with Platforms: Policy, Governance, and Transparency (Panel Discussion) by Centre for Development Policy and Practice

Aakanksha Natani, Shweta Mohandas, Chandrashekhar Rentala, Uday Prakash, Avik Sarkar (from left to right)

About the Session:

The session brought together experts from healthcare policy, digital governance, law, and technology to examine the evolving landscape of AI and digital health in India. The discussion centred on the challenges of integrating AI in healthcare, concerns related to data quality and privacy, accountability gaps in existing frameworks, and the opportunities India holds as a global model for scalable digital health solutions. The speakers provided insights into varying aspects: the technical limitations of AI in clinical practice, the legal and policy implications of health data governance,

adoption levels of AI in hospitals, and the future direction India must take to enable responsible innovation. The panel emphasised the need for interoperability across health systems, stronger institutional oversight, and the development of a trusted data-sharing ecosystem.

Key Takeaways :

- AI is a tool, not a replacement for educated radiologists or clinicians.
- Patient dissatisfaction because AI systems cannot recognise nuanced symptoms.
- There is a need of unified national health software ecosystem where systems "talk to each other," emphasising the importance of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission in achieving interoperability.
- The DPDP Act's failure to categorise health data separately, leading to insufficient safeguards.
- Paediatric and geriatric care adoption remains low due to costly instruments and the continued need for human involvement.
- Tech companies often train models on US or foreign datasets, reducing contextual accuracy for Indian patients.
- Accountability must extend beyond bias and include equitable access and quality of care.
- Regulations should require anonymous data sharing for legitimate research, without over-restricting access.

From the Speaker's Desk

Regulate, but don't choke innovation—we can't make data so restricted that it becomes unusable.

Chandrashekhar Rentala

Hospitals use AI, but awareness remains surprisingly low, even among larger institutions.

Avik Sarkar

We talk about AI, but the real question is: are we prepared with the right data?

Shweta Mohandas

You cannot treat health data like music or shopping data.

Aakanksha Natani

Key Recommendations:

- AI should be treated as a support tool, especially in diagnostics and imaging. Maintain mandatory human oversight ("human-in-the-loop") for all AI-generated clinical outputs.
- Speakers repeatedly emphasised that India's health datasets suffer from quality inconsistencies. Poor data quality undermines AI accuracy and shifts the burden back onto medical professionals. Establish national data standards and ensure interoperability across systems through platforms like the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.
- Current legislation may not adequately protect individuals from harm caused by sensitive health data misuse. Consider legislative refinements to recognise health data as a special category requiring enhanced protection and clearer consent architecture.
- There was strong agreement that AI deployment requires structural oversight. Existing mechanisms for auditing health AI systems are insufficient. Introduce mandatory audit frameworks, especially for significant data fiduciaries and organisations deploying AI-based diagnostics.

Technical Session 13: From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Women for Ethical AI (Panel Discussion) by W4EAI-UNESCO

Saloni Chaudhary, Nisha Sethi Girdhar (from left to right) Shreya Krishnan and Aditi Namdeo present virtually

About the Session:

The session "From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Women for Ethical AI" brought together experts from policy, research, industry, and civil society to discuss how women can shape ethical and inclusive AI across South Asia. Speakers emphasized that AI development must be grounded in equity, cultural understanding, and gender-sensitive design, especially in areas like healthcare where digital divides

remain strong. The panel highlighted how women lived experiences, leadership roles, and community-cantered perspectives are essential for addressing gender bias in algorithms, improving representation in AI ecosystems, and ensuring that emerging technologies reflect the socio-cultural realities of the Global South rather than reproducing Western or male- dominated models.

Key Takeaways:

- Low participation of women in AI development contributes to bias in algorithms and products.
  AI must be grounded in equity, empathy, community knowledge, and cultural understanding.
- Women's lived experiences and leadership styles bring essential perspectives to AI design.
- AI in South Asia should reflect local social structures, cultural values, and behavioural contexts rather than reproducing Western or male-centric models.
- Although more women now enter STEM, gaps remain due to: limited access to high-level AI training, gender bias in workplaces, career interruptions due to caregiving responsibilities and fewer pathways to leadership roles.
- The network UNESCO's Women for Ethical AI South Asia Network works through: Research & Innovation, Policy & Advocacy Inclusion & Equity
  promoting responsible AI and enhancing women's visibility and participation in the region.

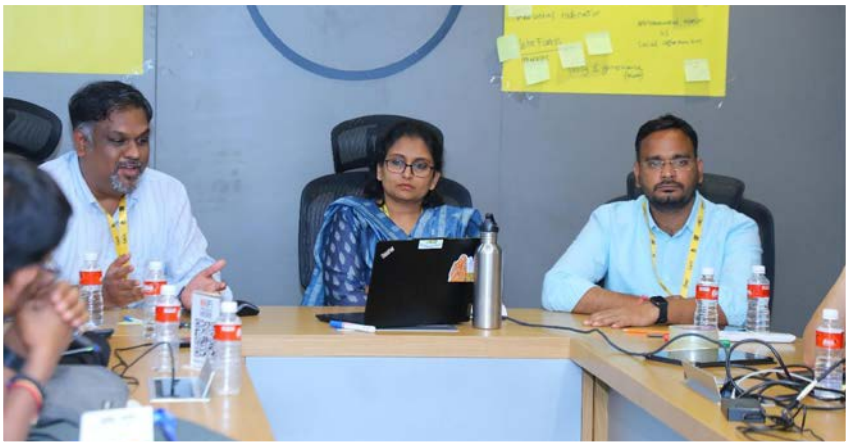
Key Recommendations:

- Build Inclusive AI in Healthcare
  - » Establish AI access centres in underserved regions.
  - » Train frontline women workers in AI-supported screening and tracking.
  - » Use datasets that reflect India's socio-cultural diversity.
  - » Promote telehealth and AI-based diagnostics.
- Increase Women's Participation in AI
  - » Offer targeted scholarships and mentorship.
  - » Integrate gender-sensitive STEM curricula.
  - » Improve hiring, retention, and leadership pathways for women.
- Promote Ethical and Contextual AI Design

- » Involve social scientists and anthropologists in AI development.
- » Incorporate cultural and behavioural context into models.
- » Conduct continuous user-feedback sessions with women and marginalized groups.

- Reduce Algorithmic Bias
  - » Introduce mandatory bias audits.
  - » Strengthen ethical AI standards aligned with global frameworks.
  - » Ensure inclusive user testing during design and deployment.
- Strengthen Regional and Multi-Sector Collaboration
  - » Expand UNESCO's regional network.
  - » Support collaborations among academia, industry, and civil society.
  - » Encourage women-led AI innovations addressing health, education, and social challenges.

Technical Session 14 : From Extractive to Reciprocal: Co-Creating Data with Speakers of Unwritten & Endangered Languages (Workshop) by UnrealTech



Karthik Narayanan, Benu Pareek, Shyam Ratan (from left to right)

About the Session:

This workshop presented a critical framework for shifting the paradigm of AI data collection from a top-down, extractive model to a community-led, reciprocal one, specifically for unwritten and endangered languages. The facilitators introduced and detailed four distinct models of language data governance, ranging from harmful "Corporate Extractivism" to empowering "Community-Empowering Commons."

The session provided practical analytical tools, including the CARE Principles (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics) and the Four R's Framework (Resource, Reflexivities, Recognition, Responsibility), to evaluate and guide ethical data practices.

Key Takeaways :

- The Problem of "Data Colonialism": The much of contemporary AI data collection, especially for low-resource languages, as a form of Extractivism. Language data is treated as a raw material to be mined for proprietary value, often without consent, credit, or benefit to the source communities.
- A Spectrum of Governance Models: A central part of the workshop was the "Data Governance Continuum," which illustrated four models:
- Corporate Extractivism: Characterized by no community benefit, implicit consent, and opaque processes.
- Open-Science/Philanthropic Extractivism: Where transparency replaces co-governance, and communities lose agency after data is collected.
- Shared-Benefit Public Infrastructure: Data managed for public benefit with centralized governance and consultative participation.
- The best model is the Community-Empowering Commons, where communities are in charge of the data and make decisions about it.
- Practical Frameworks for Accountability: The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance and the Four R's Framework were presented as essential tools to operationalize ethics. These frameworks shift the core questions from "What data can we get?" to "Who benefits?" and "Who controls?"
- Project BoLI as a Case Study: The session showcased Project BoLI as a practical application of these principles, focusing on the Indigenous Languages of India. Its initial principles are built around Impact, Response, Recognition, and Responsibility, ensuring the dignity and sovereignty of contributor communities.

Key Recommendations:

- Adopt Ethical Frameworks: Researchers, NGOs, and policymakers working with community data must formally adopt and implement frameworks like CARE and the Four R's.
- Support Community-Led Governance: Investment and policy should actively support the development of "Community-Empowering Commons" models, where data is co-governed and benefits are directly repatriated.
- Conduct "Data Governance Audits": Organizations should use tools like the provided heatmap to audit their own or others' language data practices, publishing the results to foster accountability.
- Promote Projects like BoLI: The ecosystem should recognize and fund more initiatives like Project BoLI that are built on reciprocal principles from the ground up.

Technical Session 15: Whose Bodies, Whose Data? Accountability in the Politics of Gendered and Queer Data (Panel Discussion) by Software Freedom Law Centre

Sharin D'Souza, Prerna, Vaibhavi Rani (seated from left to right)

About the Session:

The session started on the note about how technology reinforces existing inequalities, not only gender-based ones but also caste, religion and other axis. The session discussed about the right to privacy, as expounded in the 2017 K S

Puttaswamy Judgment, and how it is not enough for gender diverse persons and does it cover the (in)visibility problems for queer people. The session critically analysed the judgment's conception of privacy was borne out of heteronormative norms and there needs to be conversation from queer standpoints.

Key Takeaways:

- The importance of privacy for queer people and other sections of society which are discriminated against and the consequences of breaching that privacy being disproportionately harsher for such persons.
- The right of privacy and freedom of speech existing as constitutional rights and forceful outing as a breach of constitutional freedoms and leads to harmful consequences such as physical violence and social ostracization.
- The essential need of self-identification and flexibility in systems so as to keep the privacy of queer persons intact and let people not be excluded.

Key Recommendations:

- That flexibility be built into platforms so queer people can be accommodated.
- That self-identification be the norm to help protect the privacy of people.
- That platforms should be held accountable to what they are doing, such as Meta with their new guidelines on speech, which allows hate speech.
- That government should provide protection to the queer people, if it is requiring disclosure or publication of their identities.

Technical Session 16 : Beyond Takedowns: Building Rights-Respecting Responses to Disinformation in India (Panel Discussion) by Software Freedom Law Centre

Syed Haroon, Vajana C, Aymen Mohammad, Rakesh Dubbudu (from left to right)

About the Session:

This session discussed the problem of fake news in India. The experts agreed that the current method of just removing ("taking down") content from the internet is not working well. It often silences the wrong people and doesn't stop the spread of fake news. They talked about better ways to handle this problem that respect people's right to free speech.

Key Takeaways:

- Takedowns are a problem: By simply removing content is a harsh and unfair tool. The rules for takedowns are not clear.
- There is a need of a fair and independent committee to handle these issues, not the government or social media companies alone.
- People don't trust institutions anymore; people have lost faith in the courts and other bodies that are supposed to be fair. This makes the fake news problem worse.
- The government has the power to remove content, but it often uses this power to silence its critics, not just to stop fake news.
- Social media tools are being misused: The "report" button on platforms is being used by bullies to silence journalists and activists.
- Fake news is a social problem, not just a tech problem. It grows when people lose trust.
- Social media platforms have too much power and often make the situation worse for honest people.
- The COVID-19 period was a clear example of how these systems failed and caused harm to a community.

From the Speaker's Desk

Context is everything." You can't understand a post without knowing the full story.

Aymen Mohammed

Platforms always take down the content of people who need help. The system is biased against the victim.

Vajana C

The solution is not just deleting posts. We need to make the system more transparent and teach people how to spot fake news.

Rakesh Dubbudu

Key Recommendations:

- Government should create a fair and independent committee to oversee content disputes.
- Government should make the rules for takedowns clear and public.
- The Social Media Companies (like Facebook, YouTube) should fix the "report" button so it can't be misused by bullies.
- The Social Media Companies should be clear about why content is removed.
- The public support independent journalists and fact-checkers.
- The public should have the capacity to identify fake news.

Technical Session 17 : A Deep Dive into Model Training (Workshop) by Sara Marcucci, AI+ Planetary Justice Alliance

Sara Maracucci

About the Session:

This workshop delivered a grounded and material understanding of Artificial Intelligence by examining what AI is made of, starting from minerals and extending to energy, labour, and global supply chains. The speaker emphasized that AI is not an abstract or purely digital technology—it is built on extensive extractive processes involving minerals, manufacturing, data, computation, and human labour.

The session introduced concepts of planetary justice, explaining how AI systems operate on a planetary scale and how their benefits and burdens are unevenly distributed. The work of the AI + Planetary Justice Alliance was highlighted as a collective studying the environmental, social, and ethical impacts of AI's supply chain.

Participants were guided through different classifications of AI systems—large-scale vs. small-scale, general-purpose vs. task-specific, and centralized vs. decentralized—showing how these design choices shape environmental costs, governance structures, and resource use.

Key Takeaways :

- AI relies on minerals such as lithium, cobalt, copper, and rare earth elements extracted through environmentally intensive mining.
- These extraction processes create ecological damage and labour exploitation in several parts of the world.
- Planetary views AI as a global socio-technical system that impacts ecosystems, communities, and economies across borders.
- Planetary justice asks who benefits from AI and who bears the burdens—often low-income regions.

From the Speaker's Desk

> To understand AI ethically, we must understand its supply chain, not just its algorithms

Sara Maracucci

Key Recommendations:

- To demand transparency from AI companies regarding resource usage, energy consumption, and labour conditions.
- To implement planetary justice frameworks in AI policy, research, and regulation.
- To develop accountability mechanisms for data procurement, raw material sourcing, and model training practices.
- To support smaller, decentralized, and energy-efficient AI systems where possible.
- To use AI Supply Chain Impact Framework for audits, ethical reviews, and public policy development.

Technical Session 18: OTP Please!: Online Buyers, Sellers, & Gig Workers in South Asia' (Book Discussion)

Osama Manzar, Vandana Vasudevan (seated from left to right)

About the Session :

The session was a book discussion focusing on how app-based platforms and delivery systems are reshaping everyday life across South Asia. The author Vandana Vasudevan shared insights from interviews with workers, customers, and small sellers, highlighting how technology has transformed work patterns, social behaviour, and economic relationships. The discussion emphasised the emotional and social dimensions of platform work, including themes such as pleasure, guilt, gratitude, anxiety, and isolation. The speakers also examined concerns around algorithmic decision-making, dependency on digital platforms, and the growing centralisation of power within large tech companies.

Key Takeaways:

- Platform-based services reshape society, behaviour, and labour across South Asia.
- Real stories of delivery workers, their daily routines, emotional experiences, and shifts during the COVID period.
- Changing customer behaviour — from late-night ordering to the "little treats" culture and a growing reliance on convenience.
- The book's emotional framework: pleasure, guilt, gratitude, freedom, oppression, anxiety, isolation, and courage.
- Algorithms influence visibility for sellers, task allocation for workers, and choices shown to customers.
- The rise of platforms and its role in centralising data, money, and decision-making in a few companies.

From the Speaker's Desk

> A seller may never appear in search results unless they pay to advertise — the algorithm decides who is seen.

Vandana Vasudevan

Key Recommendations:

- The session highlighted the need for greater transparency in how algorithms make decisions about work allocation, seller visibility, and customer recommendations.
- Participants were encouraged to reflect on how their everyday choices on digital platforms shape labour conditions, business sustainability, and local economic ecosystems.
- The discussion emphasised that while platform work provides opportunities, it also brings challenges such as unstable earnings, high pressure, and limited worker control.
- The speakers stressed the importance of questioning and understanding the growing concentration of power within large platform companies and its long-term social impact.

Technical Session 19: Making Digital Welfare Work: Accountability and Transparency in India's e-governance platforms (Panel Discussion) by Digital Empowerment Foundation

Sidharth Santosh, Khaliq Parkar, Rejitha Nair, Suruchi Kumari (seated from left to right)

About the Session:

This session talked about how digitalisation has shifted governance from rights-based, decentralised welfare to centralised, platform-driven systems, reducing transparency, weakening grievance redressal, and often displacing constitutional rationality with technocratic efficiency. Data-driven governance has not eliminated discretion or corruption; instead, it has created opaque digital intermediaries, widened gaps in digital literacy, and reduced people's negotiating power, while parallel governance structures (like RWAs) and informal learning networks emerge. Technology is reshaping state–society relations by centralising authority and limiting participatory pathways, even as scattered innovations—such as social audits and co-produced digital platforms—offer possibilities for accountability, inclusion, and citizen-centric governance.

Key Takeaways :

- Digital IDs like Aadhaar and platformised governance have reframed citizens as consumers, prioritising efficiency and identity management over welfare rights, participation, and accountability.
- Digitalisation has introduced new forms of opacity, where neither citizens nor frontline officials understand why processes fail, and grievance redressal is weakened by centralised, unresponsive systems.
- Data and discretion continue to shape public finance and service delivery, with mismatches between official datasets and field realities, the persistence of informal negotiations, and limited digital literacy within government and communities.
- Technology is reorganising power across levels of the state, centralising control, undermining federal and local autonomy, and challenging possibilities for inclusive governance—while raising questions about how to design citizen-centric platforms, interoperable systems, and scalable participatory mechanisms.

From the Speaker's Desk

In India, the people are transparent to the state, but not the other way round.

Rejitha Nair

Digital platforms are built on the design assumption that there has to be a single source of truth.

Khaliq Parkar

Key Recommendations :

- Rebalance technocratic efficiency with constitutional principles by strengthening participation, decentralisation, and human oversight in digital welfare and governance systems.
- Improve transparency and accountability in digital platforms through clearer grievance-redress mechanisms, public-facing explanations of system failures, and stronger state transparency toward citizens.
- Invest in digital literacy and capacity-building for both citizens and frontline government staff so they can effectively navigate digital platforms and reduce dependence on informal intermediaries.
- Design citizen-centric, interoperable systems and strengthen participatory processes—including social audits and co-produced platforms—to ensure digital governance enhances, rather than diminishes, people's negotiating power.

Technical Session 20 : The Hidden Costs of the AI Infrastructure Boom: Who Really Pays the Price? (Panel Discussion) by Digital Empowerment Foundation

Mili Dangwal, Maitri Singh,Sidharth Malempati, Sara Maracucci (seated from left to right)

About the Session:

The session examined the global and local impacts of AI infrastructure, focusing on the supply chain behind large-scale AI systems. The speakers discussed the environmental, social, and economic consequences of mining, data centres, model

training, and energy/water use. The conversation highlighted the disproportionate burden placed on communities, especially in India, due to land use, electricity consumption, and water stress. The panel explored questions of accountability, transparency, governance, and the need for community-centred approaches to AI development.

Key Takeaways:

- There exists AI supply chain, from mining minerals to manufacturing chips, building data centres, and training large models and how each stage affects communities and ecosystems.
- The heavy environmental footprint of AI infrastructure, including extreme electricity use, water consumption, and pollution linked to mining and chemical refinement.
- The data centres in India strain local resources through land acquisition, subsidised electricity, and high water-demand, while offering limited local employment.
- There is invisible and poorly paid labour involved in data annotation, content moderation, and model training.
- There is a lack of transparency and accountability from corporations, and the need for community awareness, stronger policy oversight, and exploration of decentralised AI alternatives.

From the Speaker's Desk

We need mandatory transparency. These companies must tell us how much of our resources they are taking.

Sara Maracucci

One data centre can consume as much electricity as an entire town.

Siddharth Malempati

Key Recommendations :

- The speakers emphasised that companies operating data centres and AI infrastructure must be required to disclose accurate data on energy use, water consumption, and environmental impact.
- The session underscored the need for community awareness and participation so that local populations can make informed decisions and recognise long-term consequences.
- It was recommended that policymakers reassess subsidies, land allocation practices, and electricity pricing to prevent disproportionate burdens on citizens.
- The discussion highlighted the importance of exploring decentralised or smaller-scale AI models that reduce dependency on massive centralised data centres.

Technical Session 21: What happens to Our Electronics? E-waste, the Environment and the Global Value Chain (Panel Discussion) by Digital Empowerment Foundation

Aakansha Jain,Ashutosh Mohanty,Alfiya Azeem Khan (seated from left to right)

About the Session:

The session highlighted the crucial role of India's informal sectors in supporting the circular economy. They also pointed out that the absence of formal structures and proper training has exposed workers in these sectors to significant health risks like reproductive issues. A documentary on the e-waste hub of Seelampur, Delhi was released, showcasing deep insights into informal recycling processes. Speakers highlighted the critical role of informal workers in India's circular economy and the health hazards resulting from lack of training, unsafe recycling.

Key Takeaways:

- A significant portion of e-waste from developed countries is dumped in developing nations, worsening environmental and health challenges.
- Government efforts to integrate informal recyclers remain insufficient. Formal recognition of their contribution is necessary to prevent waste from ending up in landfills.
- Companies must take responsibility for end-of-life management of electronics instead of diverting waste to landfills.
- India currently has 178 registered e-waste recyclers, but coverage and implementation remain limited.
- The informal e-waste sector plays a central role in recycling yet remains undervalued an unsupported.
- Lack of training and unsafe processing create severe health hazards for workers, especially in unregulated markets.
- Urgent need for policy reforms to formally integrate informal workers and improve waste segregation mechanisms.
- Companies and cities must assume responsibility for systematic e-waste collection, recycling, and refurbishment.

From the Speaker's Desk

Without proper segregation and formal mechanisms, waste becomes a reproductive and environmental hazard.

Ashutosh Mohanty

The market in Seelampur existed long before the circular economy became a concept.

Aakansha Jain

Key Recommendations:

- To develop stronger mechanisms to formally integrate informal e-waste workers into regulated systems.
- To expand awareness and training on safe recycling methods and health protections.
- To encourage companies to adopt Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in a meaningful way.
- To improve local government participation in e-waste management and establish city-level recycling ecosystems.

Technical Session 22: Building dream machines: How can we build accessible technologies together? (Workshop) by Design Beku

Padmini Ray Murray

About the Session:

The discussion on disability began with an activity encouraging participants to imagine themselves as creators of future technology. They were asked to think in three dimensions—see, hold, and feel—to visualise advanced tools or devices that could meaningfully support persons with disabilities. The main idea was to inspire innovation by imagining future gadgets that enhance accessibility, independence,

and inclusion. This exercise aimed to shift perspectives from disability as a limitation to technology as an enabler.

Key Discussion Points :

- Technology as enabler
- Future assistive devices
- Technology and inclusivity

Key Recommendations

- Connection to another session a participant developed an app to help blind people to walk without a stick and to guide him.
- Interface and the hardware and technology (software) required to build a gadget.

Technical Session 23: Platform work, Rising heat and Urban Futures (Workshop) by Janpahal

Anusha Bhat, Nitesh Das (from left to right)

About the Session:

The workshop examined how rising heat exacerbates existing precarity in platform-based gig work. The speakers highlighted gaps in policy, governance, worker protections, and urban infrastructure. Discussions centred on how algorithms, platform incentives, and city planning collectively shape the day-to-day vulnerabilities of gig workers.

Key Takeaways:

- The workshop framed gig work through three lenses: city governance, platform operations, and state responsibilities—highlighting how reforms in all three are essential.

- Gig workers are classified as *independent contractors*, not employees, limiting access to protections, social security, and bargaining power.
- Attendees discussed algorithmic systems, emphasising the need for transparency and fairness.
- Unrealistic delivery timelines were identified as a major source of pressure, worsening physical risks during extreme heat.
- Lack of resting spaces, cooling rooms, or shade points in cities forces workers to remain on the road without breaks.
- Participants noted the absence of unionism and collective bargaining among platform workers.
- The speakers discussed the recent Zomato earnings report claiming ₹25,000 monthly income, and highlighted widespread worker pushback demanding regular employment and stable wages instead.
- Incentive structures were criticised—targets are tied to previous delivery performance, pushing workers to drive faster, compromising road safety.
- Attendees highlighted the burden of synthetic uniforms, which trap heat and make working conditions even harsher.
- Platforms remain customer-centric rather than worker-centric, shaping policies that prioritise delivery speed over worker wellbeing.
- Workers often lack medical allowances, health insurance, or social protection, despite being exposed to occupational hazards.
- The notion that "10-minute deliveries are feasible because warehouses exist every 5 km" was debated; the speakers stressed that in practice, this operational logic is flawed and adds extreme pressure on workers.

Key Recommendations:

- Establish regulatory guidelines for platform working conditions, including maximum working hours and mandatory heat-safety measures.
- Cities and platforms should create resting shelters or cooling-off zones accessible to delivery and ride-hailing workers.
- Platforms must revise algorithmic and incentive structures that encourage unsafe driving and penalise slower deliveries during extreme weather.
- Ensure access to health insurance, medical support, and social security benefits for gig workers.

Technical Session 24: Policy Pathways for Trusted and Responsible AI through Data Governance (Panel Discussion) by Broadband India Forum

Sonia Jorge, Prabhakar Rao,shubhika Saluja (seated from left to right)

About the Session:

The session explored how India and other countries can shape trusted and responsible AI frameworks through effective data governance. Speakers discussed the importance of partnerships, India's leadership potential, cultural and linguistic inclusion, fairness, feminist principles, user feedback, and the gaps between idealised AI principles and real-world implementation. The conversation revolved around the central question posed by the moderator: Can India shape a global framework for responsible AI?

Overall, the panel emphasised that responsible AI must be contextualised, culturally grounded, linguistically inclusive, and guided by strong governance structures.

Key Takeaways:

- India's diversity, digital ecosystem, and partnerships makes it a potential leader in shaping global norms for responsible AI.
- Digital cultures in India influence how technologies are used and understood.
- Responsible AI requires aligning digital society and culture.
- There is a need for inclusive data practices and fairness grounded in feminist principles.
- Language is the foundation of data; linguistic exclusion leads to biased AI.
- The Industry increasingly needs to demonstrate fairness in AI systems.
- AI governance must balance public interest with market incentives.
- Policies should focus on relevance, sustainability, and cultural integration of technology.
- Compute power is not the main concern; context and governance matter more.

From the Speaker's Desk

Technology becomes relevant only when it becomes part of our culture.

Dr. Usha Raman

Data is language, and without linguistic diversity, AI cannot be inclusive.

Dr. Prabhakar Rao

Key Recommendations:

- Adopt culturally and contextually grounded AI models rather than one-size-fits-all approaches.
- Strengthen linguistic diversity in datasets to ensure inclusiveness and reduce socio-cultural bias.
- Develop risk-specific governance models instead of broad, generalised policy frameworks.
- Establish structured channels for user feedback to continuously improve AI systems and policies.

Technical Session 25: Domain Name System (DNS) Abuse for Dummies (Workshop) by Dot Asia

Edmong Chung,Jennifer Chung, Socheta Sokachan, Barkha Manral (on the screen) , Vinayak Bharadwaz (seated on right)

About the Session:

The session introduced to the audience to what is Domain Name mentioning that it is similar to a phonebook. The session discussed that Domain Name System (DNS) Abuse is often very unnoticed and seems trivial.

Key Takeaways:

- The history DNS abuse goes to early 2000s when it was existent but not so widespread.
- The roles played by ICANN, the GNSO Council, contractual parties like registrars and registry operators, and the policy processes that affect DNS-level decisions.
- DNS abuse mitigation is the operational responsibility of registries and registrars.
- DNS abuse happens rarely, but when it does, it has a big effect, so responses must be well-planned and coordinated.

Key Recommendations:

- A call for greater engagement among general audience especially the younger cohort, with initiatives such a NetMission.Asia to educate themselves and others in this regard.

Technical Session 26: Memes, myths, and Misinformation: Reshaping narratives on gender, sexuality and rights in the age Disinformation (Panel Discussion) by YP Foundation

Nidhi Arya, Jesmin Ahmand (from left to right)

About the Session:

The workshop focused on how misinformation and disinformation shape online narratives around gender, sexuality, and rights. Through participatory activities, attendees explored how platforms, algorithms, and personal biases influence what we consume and believe. The session opened with an interactive activity visualising how misinformation spreads quickly within networks.

Key Takeaways:

- Participants were divided into four groups based on social media platforms they use—LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Reels/short-video apps.
- LinkedIn users highlighted professional content, credibility, networking, and how LinkedIn shapes knowledge-building and career aspirations.
- WhatsApp users discussed the platform as a personal, intimate space—book clubs, hobby groups, family chats—where misinformation spreads easily due to trust within closed groups. Also used widely for political campaigning.
- Instagram users noted ease of connection, influence of micro-creators, and rapid consumption of visual content.
- Reels/short-video platforms were recognised as major channels for misinformation because short videos are emotional, fast-moving, and widely shareable.
- When asked how often they post or forward content, many attendees estimated 20–30 times a day, indicating the massive scale of information exchange.
- Misinformation and disinformation are not new phenomena, but the *speed* and *scale* of spread have intensified due to platform design.
- Personal biases strongly influence whether we believe information or not—but narratives are also intentionally constructed to reinforce these biases.
- Discussion highlighted how harmful narratives—e.g., homophobic content—spread via reels and shape social attitudes.

Key Recommendations:

- Increase accessibility and awareness of fact-checking tools for everyday users.
- Encourage digital literacy programmes that address biases and emotional triggers in online content.
- Promote mindful sharing habits across platforms.
- Support community-driven counter-narratives that challenge harmful myths about gender and sexuality.

Technical Session 27: Trust and Safety for Preventing Picture-Perfect Hate in South Asia: Examining Emergent Systemic Voids Through an Algorithmic Audit (Workshop) Dignity in Difference

Himanshu Panday

About the Session:

The session introduced the idea of image generation using AI intuitively. The session discussed as to how with technology, creativity takes shape easily. The workshop focused on the motivational factors behind such efforts through cognitive understanding of human emotions and actions which has an anthropological tone to it. The anthropological insight of human actions has time and again been dominantly motivated by 'fear' and 'harm' rather than vengeance or any alternate emotion.

Key Takeaways:

- The hateful posts on social media, is done using AI-generated images for amplified visibility and engagement.
- These metrics indicate that hateful-posts on twitter receive two-fold increase in views and retweets and threefold increase in comments when compared to posts of similar character without an AI-generated image.
- AI algorithms are inherently biased towards certain socially-pertinent perceptions that seep into the training data fed into it.

Technical Session 28: Digital Public Infrastructure, Welfare Innovation & the Citizen Customer Paradox- Navigating through the Non- Linear & Policy Panopticon Lenses (Panel Discussion)

Sharique Hassan Manazir, Shailendra Bisht, Abdul Shaban, Stephen Anurag(seated from left to right)

About the Session:

The session discussed about digital public infrastructure and the challenge of exclusions based on gender, caste or demographic when talking about digitization of public services. The session discussed about how the government always looks for a citizen centric approach to solve these unlike industries which look for profit maximization.

Key Takeaways:

- The state, which once functioned in a *panopticon*-like manner, has now transformed into a surveillance-oriented one.
- The reliance on technical forms of identification has increased significantly.
- The problem with DPIs is that if they are not structured properly, it could lead to a larger social exclusion.
- Any technology that comes out first goes to the upper class, and later by the time the lower class finally gets them and adapts to them, new tech comes out again putting them behind. This creates another layer of digital inequality.

Technical Session 29: Digital Safety and Security (Capacity Building Workshop) by Software Freedom Law Centre

Syed Mohammad Haroon

About the Session:

The session began with the definition of privacy as that information which an individual would not share unless he trusts the other person and the evolution of Privacy from the landmark judgment of Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017). The session discussed about classified information into public information i.e., which is accessible from public domains, personal information and sensitive personal information like health data, phone number, religion, gender etc. However, a notable feature is that sensitive information varies from person to person and hence the elements under it may not be neatly fitted as sensitive information for another person.

Key Takeaways:

- A notable and important difference was clarified by the speaker with regards to data breach which requires criminal intent and a criminal act whereas data leak is a situation where the user of a digitally stored data does not have adequate protective features preventing its spread.
- Illustrations were introduced using tools such as Have I Been Pawned, ublockorigin,lightbeam, privacy badger which the users shall ordinarily use to prevent unwanted tracking by 3rd party websites and to trace the online activity of the user, giving more power to the user to control who shall legitimately have the right to use the data enforcing a consent based mechanism.
- Growing technology has also resulted in shift in crimes online like data theft and tracking of data and regular cross referencing of the apps which is used by cyber criminals to coerce the users in revealing information and their in-turn results in exploitation of the user's data in areas like the dark web.
- Online Gender Based Violence is another growing concern which involves causing harm or intent to cause harm based on gender. Steps with regards to reporting of such crime has been discussed to make aware of the participants.

Key Recommendations

- Having trustworthy web extensions to prevent is necessary
- Regularly update passwords and email addresses and be mindful of where to share information.
- Being aware of digital personal rights.

Technical Session 30: Sextortion and Digital Accountability — Safeguarding Dignity and Rights (Panel Discussion) by Social Media Matters

Pratistha Arora, Rohini Lakshane, Arnika Singh (seated from left to right)

About the Session:

The session examined sextortion as a complex digital harm, influenced by legal, social, emotional, technological, and economic factors rather than just moral perspectives. They stressed that sextortion is interconnected with other online threats, including image-based abuse, digital exploitation, financial scams, online blackmail, and AI-manipulated content. The session discussed as to how the current

systems are insufficient, with noticeable gaps in reporting, victim protection, legal clarity, mental health support, and timely response mechanisms. The session emphasized the need for technology platform responsibility, stronger regulations, and user safety-by-design features.

Key Takeaways:

- Sextortion is not merely a moral or consent-based issue but intersects with economics, organized cyber-crime networks, and cross-border complexities.
- Survivors face shame, fear, self-blame, and lack of trust, which prevents timely reporting and access to help.
- Current digital platforms lack rapid response, culturally contextual processes, clarity in definitions, and accessible reporting mechanisms.
- A proactive, collaborative ecosystem involving tech companies, safety partners, media, NGOs, educators, and policymakers is needed to build prevention-based systems.
- Image-based abuse is deeply contextual; what is considered intimate in India may be different from global norms, even non-nude photos can be exploited for shame or blackmail.
- The panel clarified that abuse does *not require nudity*, even every day or culturally sensitive images (such as selfies or partially revealing photographs) may be weaponized to shame, threaten, or coerce an individual.
- Digital arrest scams were discussed, where women are coerced to undress on camera under threats of legal action, revealing the severe emotional and financial manipulation involved.
- Speakers pointed out that unemployment stress and online job-scams often act as feeder pipelines into sextortion networks, making economic vulnerability a major factor.

From the Speaker's Desk

We must begin viewing sextortion as an economically organized crime, not just a moral or consent-focused issue.

Rohini Lakshane

Survivors often say: 'I'm sorry, it's my fault.' That shame becomes a weapon used against them, so it is not your fault - shame is the weapon perpetrators rely on.

Arnika Singh

There is no easy, clear, or trusted reporting pathway — people don't know where to go.

Adrija Bose

Key Recommendations

- Recognize and legislate sextortion as an organized digital-economic crime rather than a purely reputational or moral offense.
- Strengthen platform accountability through faster, culturally contextual, and survivor-centric response systems.
- Develop accessible, visible, and simple reporting pathways across all major digital platforms including vernacular support.
- Build preventive digital literacy ecosystems in schools, colleges, parent-communities, and public spaces using realistic vocabulary (e.g., *"sextortion"* instead of generic cautioning).
- Encourage platforms to publish mandatory transparency reports and proactively remove harmful content across all linked platforms.
- Recognize the need for community-owned, open-knowledge digital spaces where safety, resilience, and accountability are built into the design, not added as an afterthought.

Technical Session 31: Digital Divide Among Elderly and Senior Citizens (Lightning Talk) by Mathew Cherian

Mathew Cheiran

About the Session:

This lightning talk by Mathew Cherian highlighted that social connections arex falling in the digital age, where the elderly are not connected in the cyber world and where our living arrangements create barriers to meeting people physically, older people experience loneliness due to the lack of social connection. And as such conditions are different for each elderly person, we need to create conditions to age gracefully in the digital age.

Key Takeaways:

- Digital literacy in aged people is often ignored due to a combination of aged-related challenges, socioeconomic factors, and systemic neglect.
- Teach with empathy, gratitude and patience by improving the gap is essential for their social inclusion, independence and well - being
- Digital literacy example, integrated care in Kerala has significantly improved the digital gap and also the well-being of elder people
- Equity and Inclusion through CHAT GPT – Gratitude, Patience and Time

Technical Session 32: Cyber Attack or Brain Trap? The Hidden Psychology of Online Fraud (Lightning Talk) by Mansoor Ahmad

Mansoor Ahmad

About the Session:

In this lightning talk by Mansoor Ahmad the concept of cybercrime, which is any crime committed on the cyber space was discussed. Cybercrime can be distinguished into two types, first the highly technical, where security breaches and large-scale hacking are involved where they try to earn money from data theft and other such sophisticated methods and the other part is cyber fraud, which

is not technical but based on cyber environment to defraud persons by way of impersonation or otherwise into giving out information leading to financial loss.

Key Takeaways:

- Cyber fraud is designed to look 100% real, the fraudsters are always ahead of the curve and most of the times it doesn't even register that a person has been defrauded. One of the major ways to combat cyber fraud is to accept that cyber space is dangerous only as many believe the danger of the cyber space only when they have been defrauded.
- Many examples were discussed regarding cyber fraud and methods of combating them were also discussed. Along with the consequences of cyber fraud to the victim and how they should be informed of the same.
- The effected of cyber fraud need to be dealt with carefully to not lead to serious consequences.
- One needs to be ever vigilant in the evolving digital landscape and keep up with the fraudsters.

Technical Session 33: Networked Hate at the Margins: Catering to Online & Offline Realities of Victim-Survivors (Panel Discussion) by RATI Foundation and Aawaaz e Niswaan

Faiza Shaikh, Salman Mujawar (from left to right)

About the Session:

In this session, the speakers shared their experiences with their helpline on online safety. Through the interventions and provides helpline for online cases called Meri Trustline, which helps in cases such of online harassment by helping in doing takedowns in cases obscenity being uploaded.

Key Takeaways:

- Networked hate is targeted hate against a person using similar language hashtags and other such similar patterned behaviour in an online space.
- Women and other persons along the social divide are targeted to restrict their freedoms.
- RATI does on ground interventions and provides helpline for online cases called Meri Trustline, which helps in cases such of online harassment by helping in doing takedowns in cases obscenity being uploaded.
- Networked hate as a phenomenon appears across all sorts of social divides, spreading hate on the basis of caste, gender, disability and religion.
- Women and other persons along the social divide are targeted to restrict their freedoms.

Technical Session 34: Gig and Platform Workers Dialogue: Data, Wages and Social Protection (Panel Discussion) by Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union and Digital Empowerment Foudation and ARISE

Arpita Kanjilal, S.Q Masood,Shaik Salauddin,Alivelu (from left to right)

About the Session:

The session focused on understanding the fast-growing gig and platform economy and the challenges faced by workers in this sector. The discussion highlighted how workers engaged with platforms such as cab services, food delivery, home services, and freelancing often work without formal contracts, stable income, or adequate social protection.

Key Takeaways:

- Caste identity continues to shape social interactions in the gig economy.
- Language also plays an important role in the gig economy.
- No state is fully prepared to take responsibility for the welfare of gig and platform workers, even though they form a significant part of the urban economy.
- Telangana has recently become the fifth state after Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar and Jharkhand to introduce a bill in its Cabinet for the welfare of gigs and platform workers.
- The digital devices and applications have become central to work, making digital literacy essential.
- The aggregator companies have grown so large that at times they appear more powerful than the government, yet he emphasizes that workers remain the most important part of this ecosystem because the entire system runs on their labour.
- While digitalization and digital public infrastructure have expanded rapidly, workers simultaneously face discrimination, surveillance, privacy violations and a lack of adequate social security benefits.

Key Recommendations:

- Transparency is essential so that workers should have access to their own data, clear fare calculations, and honest information about deductions.
- "Own data, Own control" must be a central principle for financial justice.

Technical Session 35: Platforms and their Workers: Techno-Legal Solutions to Strengthen Fair Work Outcomes (Panel Discussion) by Pacta

K K Prahalad, Jai Bharathi, Shaik Salauddin (from left to right)

About the Session:

This session provided holistic view on India's booming gig economy, juxtaposing the platforms' public narratives with the harsh realities faced by drivers and delivery workers. During the session, the workers testimonies highlighted a system of profound power imbalance, where algorithmic management leads to a lack of control, stagnant wages despite inflation, and a complete absence of social security

and grievance redressal for workers. The discussion moved beyond identifying problems to exploring techno-legal solutions, analyzing existing legislation, platform-led initiatives, and the critical role of worker collectivization in demanding accountability and fair work conditions.

Key Takeaways:

- The Reality of "Algorithmic Control": Workers are at the mercy of opaque algorithms. Mr Nagesh and Ms Durga testified that while customer complaints lead to immediate blocking, driver grievances are ignored. Ms Durga's story of being rerouted from 4km to 10km for the same fare and then penalised for asking for more money illustrated this powerlessness.
- Stagnant Wages and Rising Costs: Mr Nagesh provided stark data: in 2014, petrol was ₹65/litre and wages were ₹8-9/km. In 2025, petrol is ₹110/litre, but wages are only ₹14-15/km. This effectively represents a significant pay cut; debunking platform claims of high earnings.
- The Crisis of Social Security and Safety: The human cost was emphasised through a harrowing account of a driver assaulted over a ₹200 fare, facing a ₹1.7 lakh hospital bill with no support from the platform. For women like Ms Durga, the lack of basic infrastructure like safe and accessible ladies' washrooms and driver lounges is a major barrier.
- The Power of Collectivisation and Legislative Advocacy: Mr Shaik Salauddin detailed a decade-long struggle that led to gig workers being included in the Code on Social Security 2020. He stressed that this was achieved purely through political pressure and that the current challenge is forcing the implementation of schemes. States like Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Bihar are leading with welfare boards, and Telangana is under pressure to follow.

From the Speaker's Desk

In 2014, petrol was ₹65/litre and the wage was ₹8-9/km. In 2025, petrol is ₹110/litre and the wage is ₹14-15/km. There is no increase in real wages.

Nagesh, Gig worker

When a customer complaints, our device is blocked. When we have a complaint, the customer care call is never resolved.

Durga Maheshwari, Gig worker

Companies claim you can earn ₹25,000-50,000, but the reality is only ₹10,000. This is why less than 1% of drivers are women.

Jai Bharathi, Gig worker

Key Recommendations:

- To Implement and Enforce Existing Laws: Governments must move beyond legislation to the active implementation of the Code on Social Security, including establishing and funding state-level welfare boards for gig workers.
- To mandate Algorithmic Transparency and Fairness: Regulation must require platforms to make their algorithms transparent, explain decisions (like routing and pay), and establish a fair, two-sided grievance redressal mechanism.
- To establish a Minimum Wage Floor: A legally mandated, dynamically calculated minimum wage for gig work is non-negotiable to ensure workers are not pushed into poverty by rising costs and stagnant pay.
- To invest in Public Infrastructure for Workers: Municipal corporations and platforms must jointly invest in creating "driver lounges" with restrooms, parking, and canteens, which are essential for the safety and dignity of workers, especially women.

Technical Session 36: Decentralising Truth: Fighting Misinformation in a Digital World (Panel Discussion) by Digital Empowerment Foundation

Akanksha Ahulwalia, Uma Kalkar, Syed Mohamaad Haroon (from left to right)

About the Session:

The session featured a video lecture from Pankaj Sri founder of Founder of Go News, who provided an in-depth analysis about rising disinformation and misinformation in the growing age of digitalisation and social media. The world is suffering from information crises as the flood of information has resulted in lack of credible information which creates larger socio-economic impact Further the time

spent online now reaches billions of collective hours daily, giving misinformation unprecedented opportunities to spread among large sections of people.

Greater control in terms of market share by prominent companies has resulted in weaker regulations to control the oversizing reach of these companies and their technological dominance with reference to data of the consumers.

There has also been a stark difference between the traditional media which has lost traction whereas social media actors reporting current conflicts like Israel and Gaza has attracted millions of views and created a narrative among the viewers. Similar instances of social media regulations in the neighbouring countries of India have resulted in change of governments due to social media handlers and users.

Finally, on the regulation's aspect present in India, though legislations are framed, they are rendered toothless due to some infirmities preventing proper and effective implementation of the act.

Key Takeaways:

- The escalation of Misinformation in the Digital Age: the explosion of online content, coupled with declining traditional media influence, has created an information crisis and enabled rapid spread of false narratives.
- Regulatory Gaps and Jurisdictional Challenges: Although in India there are laws addressing misinformation, enforcement remains weak due to regulatory infirmities and the foreign jurisdiction of major tech platforms.
- Human Factors: Bias, Low Digital Literacy & Lack of Critical Thinking
- Discussion underscored how unconscious biases, limited digital literacy, and declining critical thinking skills drive public susceptibility to manipulated content online.
- Need for Collaborative and Citizen-Led Approaches
- The session stressed the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration and citizen participation, supported by political will, to counter misinformation effectively.

Key Recommendations :

- The session concluded that misinformation in the digital age is a multi-layered challenge requiring structural, technological, and behavioural solutions. Panellists agreed that enhancing critical digital literacy is central to empowering citizens to identify and resist false narratives.

- Stronger regulatory mechanisms were seen as essential, but panelists stressed that laws must be supported by effective implementation, clear accountability, and political commitment. Given that many digital platforms operate outside India's jurisdiction, coordinated global standards—similar to climate-focused COP frameworks—were recommended to ensure consistency in regulation and enforcement.
- Addressing unconscious bias and generalisation, which fuel misinformation, requires long-term public education and awareness initiatives. Encouraging citizens to question information, seek rationale, and verify sources was highlighted as a critical behavioural outcome.
- Finally, the launch of the *"Critical Digital Literacy in the Age of AI"* module was presented as a significant step in equipping individuals with skills to navigate AI-driven information ecosystems, fostering resilience against misinformation and enabling responsible digital citizenship.

Technical Session 37: Accountability by Design: Shaping Regulations for AI, Platforms and Critical Digital Infrastructure

Bindu Madhavi, Rajesh Vetcha. Shubhomoy Bhattacharjee, Deepak Maheshwari, N. Subramanian (from left to right)

About the Session:

The session was centered on the critical need for accountability frameworks in the development and deployment of AI systems, particularly as they become integral to critical digital infrastructure in India and globally.

The session emphasized that as AI becomes central to critical infrastructure—from power grids to aviation systems—accountability must be embedded from the design

stage itself. The conversation explored regulatory principles, sectoral challenges, and the balance between innovation and safety across multiple domains.

Key Takeaways:

- Energy infrastructure is fundamental to AI deployment, questioning AI's energy costs and subsidy allocation.
- India's India Energy Stack initiative aims to digitize the grid with 15-minute planning intervals and smart grid technologies, though implementation faces capital and capacity constraints.
- Aviation as built on safety, precision, and trust with global regulatory consistency.
- Aviation employs performance-based regulation and Safety Management Systems (SMS) that define desired outcomes rather than prescriptive rules, allowing innovation while maintaining safety.
- In contrast, the power sector's stiff regulatory frameworks resulted in DISCOM failures, rigid rules, and regular bailouts.
- AI accountability must be distributed across developers (design, data quality, bias mitigation), deployers (implementation context, monitoring), users (proper operation, reporting), and regulators (outcome-based standards, multi-stakeholder dialogue).

Key Recommendations:

- Whole-of-Society Approach: Include manufacturers, deployers, users, and non-users in accountability frameworks
- Performance-Based Standards: Define outcomes rather than prescriptive requirements
- Adaptive Mechanisms: Evolve regulations with emerging risks
- Transparency: Prefer open-weighted models for critical applications
- Data Protection: Use PETs for computational security
- Strengthen State Capacity: Expand institutional resources proportionally to mandates
- Promote Voluntary Standards: Encourage NIST/IEEE adoption through collaboration
- Establish Sandboxing: Create controlled experimentation environments
- Data-Driven Policy: Ensure analysis precedes policy announcements
- Develop Indigenous Capabilities: Support Indian AI model development

Technical Session 38: One Dataset: Multiple Realities (Workshop) by Halfcourt Collective

Anisha Pai and Avani Samaga (from Left to Right)

About the Session:

The session "One Dataset: Multiple Realities" workshop demonstrated that data visualization and interpretation need not be confined to objective frameworks. By embracing subjectivity and encouraging creative expression, the session showed how empathetic approaches reveal nuances technical analysis might overlook.

The female tailoring case study generated rich discussions about economic opportunity, cultural influence, skill development, and structural barriers. The

session discussed about modelling an inclusive approach that democratizes access to statistical information and empowers diverse audiences to engage critically and creatively with data.

Key Takeaways

- Human empathy and experience are tools for engaging with data, not detriments
- Subjectivity conveys true values embedded in data
- Viewers naturally synthesize data with personal experience
- Data can be imaginative, expansive, and playful—not static
- View data as dynamic material for creative engagement

Key Recommendations

- Embrace subjectivity—multiple valid realities can coexist from one dataset
- Question every stage—data collection, analysis, and visualization choices
- Tailor visualizations to specific audiences and their contexts
- Use creative and empathetic approaches beyond traditional charts
- Demand contextual information—regional, socioeconomic, policy factors, total numbers
- Value personal experiences as legitimate forms of data engagement
- Position data literacy as creative practice, not just technical skill
- Consider cultural and temporal factors influencing data patterns

Technical Session 39: Does the Digital State Listen ? (Co-Learning Workshop) by Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research

About the Session:

This Co-Learning Workshop *"Does the Digital State Listen?"*, documents the key discussions, reflections, and findings from a workshop organized by the Social Accountability Forum for Action & Research in Adilabad, Telangana. As governance in India rapidly digitizes, millions of citizens continue to face exclusion, technical barriers, opaque procedures, and unresponsive systems. The workshop brought

together diverse participants—citizens, CSOs, activists, researchers, and government officials—to critically examine whether digital governance truly upholds democratic values, especially the constitutional right of citizens to be heard. Through interactive sessions, lived experiences, and case studies, the workshop explored how digital systems can both enable and silence people—and how participatory, transparent, and accountable mechanisms like the Adilabad Prajavani Pilot can help create a digital state that listens.

Does the digital state listen?

In a time when governance is increasingly digitized, people across India face exclusion, technical errors, documentation failures, and opaque systems that affect their daily rights and entitlements.

The workshop brought together citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs), activists, digital governance researchers, and government representatives to reflect on lived experiences and explore solutions rooted in constitutional values.

A People-Centered Constitutional Framework

The discussion grounded itself in the Constitution of India, emphasizing:

Sovereignty lies with the people

The Preamble begins with:

"We, the People of India..."
meaning the State must remain answerable to citizens, not merely automated systems.

The Right to Be Heard

A core democratic value:

Freedom to speak + the Right for it to be heard.

Digital systems must enable, not replace or ignore, human voices.

Understanding Digital Exclusion through Lived Experiences

The workshop began with a reflective exercise:

When did you feel unheard?

Examples included:

- Complaints about waste management being ignored
- College administration dismissing student concerns
- Discrimination in gated communities
- Digital platforms inaccessible to persons with disabilities

These experiences revealed how power hierarchies and automated systems create everyday silencing.

The Digital State vs. Democracy

Digital governance often strengthens the first while weakening the second.

Core concerns:

- Systems prioritize data entry over public hearings
- Algorithms reject applications without human review
- Citizens spend years correcting "technical errors"
- Accountability becomes ambiguous
- Delays deny basic rights

Democracy requires active listening, not passive automation.

The Adilabad Prajavani Pilot: A Case for Participatory Digital Governance

The session introduced a unique initiative:

Decentralised Prajavani (Grievance Redressal Mechanism)

Key Features:

- Registration of grievances through multiple channels
- Acknowledgment and trackability
- Assignment to Grievance Redressal Officer (GRO)
- Mandatory public hearings with citizens, GROs, and presiding officers
- Written Action Taken Reports (ATRs)
- Escalation if timelines are breached

- A public dashboard for transparency
- Integration with Management Information Systems (MIS).

Legal Mandate:

RTI Act Section 4(2) — proactive disclosure of information.
The pilot attempts to operationalize this mandate through:

- Real-time public data
- Clear formats for disclosure
- Departmental timestamps
- Accountability for wrong entries
- Public review of MIS data
- Dialogue between CSOs + Government on APIs for disclosure.

Data from the Pilot (Illustrative)

- Positively Dealt With: 49%
- Wrongly Disposed / Pending: 25%
- Policy Decision Awaited: 25%
- Sent to Next Level: 8%
- Collector Appeal: 11%

These figures highlight both progress and the persistence of systemic silences.

Case Studies: When the Digital State Fails to Listen

Below are the major citizen testimonies integrated from your provided content.

Case 1: C. Venkat Goud — Ration Card Pending for 9 Years

Location: Hyderabad, Telangana
Issue: Ration card cancelled due to owning a yellow-plate taxi
Duration: 9 years pending

Facts:

- Had a valid ration card in undivided AP
- Bought a taxi in 2016 → system flagged him as "ineligible"
- Department admitted mistake but did nothing
- Reapplied in 2025 → again rejected automatically

- No opportunity to be heard
- No accountability assigned

Loss:

- 9 years of food grains
- Exclusion from schemes:
  - » Indiramma Housing
  - » Praja Palana (6 Guarantees)
  - » Multiple BPL-based benefits
- Financial stress and mental hardship

Needed: Proactive Disclosure

- Public list of food security card holders
- Reason for exclusion
- Name/designation of responsible officer
- Appeal mechanisms.

Case 2: Madavi Ganith Kumar — Disabled Pension Pending 6 Years

Location: Adilabad
Type of Issue: Disability pension
Years pending: 6 years

Facts:

- Disability certificate renewed three times
- Pension was approved by Collector in 2019
- Later marked "ineligible" without reason
- Pension ID still exists in the system
- Grievances filed through Prajavani
- Public hearing promised action
- Technical error prevented roll-back
- IT team now follows up

Loss:

- ₹4,000 × 72 months = ₹2,89,152

- Caregiver burden on family
- Denial of welfare access
- Emotional strain

Accountability Demands:

- Pension restoration
- Arrears + compensation
- Fixing systemic errors
- Officer-level responsibility.

Case 3: Kure Ganganna — Land Records Wrongly Digitized for 7 Years

Location: Sangvi (K), Adilabad
Issue: 10 guntas of land missing from Dharani digital records
Duration: 7 years

Facts:

- Purchased land in 2003; valid documents
- Post-2018, land disappeared from digital records
- Land still showing under the seller (deceased)
- Heirs got mutation due to system error
- Legacy correction system missing
- Grievance was initially rejected
- On Collector's appeal, MRO instructed to correct error — action pending

Loss:

- Loss of land use for 7 years
- Loss of welfare schemes
- Loss of potential loans
- Legal expenses
- Psychological distress

Needed: Proactive Disclosure

- Clear reasons for exclusion

- Name of responsible data-entry authority
- Digitization error correction mechanisms.

Case 4: Devarampalli Mallaiah — Rythu Bima Claim Denied for 5 Years

Issue: Farmer insurance claim (Rythu Bima)
Years pending: 5 years

Facts:

- Wife registered under Rythu Bima
- Policy not renewed in the year she died
- Renewed before and after — but missed the crucial year
- Claim rejected, citing "no UC"
- High Court ordered in his favour
- Still no compensation released
- Government fears multiple similar corrections → compensation liability

Proactive Disclosure Needed:

- Published list of all approved/not approved claims
- Reasons for rejection
- Officer responsible
- Compensation timelines

Concluding Plenary : Data Governance and Accountability

Rakshita Swamy, Setu Upadhyay,Amir Ullah Khan, Neeti Biyani,Indranil Niyogi (seated from left to right)

Session Summary :

The concluding panel reflected on the intensity and depth of discussions across the two days of the Digital Citizen Summit, focusing on accountability as the defining challenge of digital citizenship. The session examined how rapid digitisation, platformisation, and data-driven governance have outpaced mechanisms for transparency, redress, and citizen agency. Speakers and audience members collectively questioned who defines accountability, who demands it, and how marginalised communities, often reduced to data points, can reclaim rights, voice, and power within digital systems. The session set the agenda for future action, calling for rights-based governance, bottom-up accountability, community collectivisation, and active citizenship to shape the path ahead.

Key Takeaways:

- Accountability as a rights-based demand, not a charitable offering by systems.
- Digitised governance often lacks feedback loops—where citizens submit data or applications but cannot track decisions, delays, or denials.
- The true accountability begins when communities have the capacity and mechanisms to *seek answers* and challenge systemic bottlenecks.
- Accountability must be clearly qualified—accountable to whom and by whom. The top-down models that treat digital exclusion as "collateral damage" and called for bottom-up accountability, where historically marginalised communities can question design failures, demand compensation for harm, and ensure that systems work for those most excluded, not just the majority.
- The accelerating reality of platformisation, noting that accountability is rarely embedded by design. While some global regulations attempt to rein in platforms, enforcement risks authoritarian misuse.
- The sustained citizen awareness, collective pressure, and balanced regulation are essential to ensuring platforms remain accountable without undermining freedoms.
- The debate by questioning whether people are still citizens or increasingly becoming digital subjects. The terms like "inclusion" and "empowerment" reinforce power imbalances and argued for a shift toward agency, where individuals and communities design their own digital futures.
- There is need for recognising intersectional identities—gender, age, caste, class, and ability—in shaping digital vulnerability.

Key Recommendations

- Define responsibility, transparency, and redress across governments, platforms, and data intermediaries.
- Centre local realities, gender, language, and lived experience in connectivity and platform design.
- Expand digital literacy to include consent, surveillance awareness, and citizen data rights.
- Resource women-led groups, community networks, and civil society as bridges between people and digital systems.
- Mandate explainability, audits, and rights-based safeguards in AI-driven and data-intensive systems.

Townhall with Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill, Under-Secretary-General and Special Envoy for Digital and Emerging Technologies

Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill, Under-Secretary-General and Special Envoy for Digital and Emerging Technologies (joined online)

About the Session:

This town hall provided a critical bridge between the community-focused discussions of the summit and the high-level global governance processes at the United Nations, particularly the implementation of the Global Digital Compact (GDC).

Mr. Gill outlined the UN's three-pillar approach to AI governance:

1) Addressing information asymmetries through an AI Advisory Body.

2) Fostering a global dialogue for inclusive and interoperable AI rules.

3) A major push for global capacity-building, including a proposed $3 billion fund for countries at risk of being left behind.

The interactive Q&A session tackled core summit themes: the role of youth in setting ethical benchmarks, the challenge of "selfishness" in international cooperation, the balance between curbing AI-powered misinformation and protecting free expression, and most importantly, how to "ladder up" community voices to shape global frameworks.

Key Discussion Points :

- The UN's Framework for Inclusive AI Governance: Mr. Gill detailed a structured approach to ensure AI benefits all humanity, moving from high-level principles (GDC) to practical mechanisms like the AI Advisory Body and a global capacity-building fund, emphasizing that "every country, big or small, rich or poor, has a seat at the table."
- Youth as Architects, Not Just Beneficiaries: In response to a question, Mr. Gill asserted that young people are "overturning orthodoxy" and actively writing the tech future. He advocated for grounding the GDC in local contexts where young innovators are most active, allowing them to set high benchmarks for trusted innovation and data rights.
- The Central Challenge: "Selfishness" vs. Solidarity: Mr. Gill identified the biggest hurdle to inclusive governance as a "me-first" approach in international engagement. The solution, he argued, is a "people-centric democratic approach" that uses community voices to dampen this selfishness and promote global cooperation.
- A "Laddered-Up" Implementation for the GDC: Mr. Gill and Mr. Manzar discussed practical strategies to connect global frameworks with on-the-ground realities. This includes working with UN Regional Commissions, Resident Coordinators, city mayors, and directly with community organizations through initiatives like the Open Source Week and the DPI Summit.

"In the name of countering misinformation... we take harsh and excessive measures... They may be driven by good intentions, but they end up having a disproportionate impact on sustainable development and freedom of expression."

Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill on balancing accountability with rights.

Participant Interaction

The session was highly interactive, with three key questions from the audience (and moderators) that shaped the dialogue:

Question 1 (Youth & Ethics): How can youth influence global norms to prioritize community rights over corporate rights and center ethics in the GDC?

Question 2 (Grassroots Inclusion): What are the challenges in bringing grassroots voices to the global table, and what strategies is the UN employing?

Question 3 (Misinformation & Free Speech): How can global governance balance freedom of expression with the need for AI accountability regarding misinformation?

Key Recommendations :

- Operationalize the "Laddering Up" Model: The UN, in partnership with organizations like DEF, should systematize the channeling of community-led innovations and demands into regional and global policy discussions, using the GDC as a living framework.
- Invest Heavily in Multidisciplinary Capacity Building: There is an urgent need to fund and implement the proposed global AI capacity-building fund, focusing on government officials, educators, and citizens, particularly in the Global South.
- Champion Context-Specific, Open-Source Solutions: Support for open-source AI models, digital public infrastructure (DPI), and shareable use cases should be a cornerstone of international digital cooperation to avoid vendor lock-in and promote sovereignty.
- Adopt a Nuanced Approach to Misinformation: Governance must avoid overly broad measures that lead to internet shutdowns or censorship, instead combining platform accountability with robust, bottom-up digital literacy initiatives.

To watch the townhall : Townhall with Amandeep Singh Gill | UN Envoy on Digital & Emerging Technologies | DCS 2025

Rajasthan
Gujrat
Madhya Pradesh
Kashmir
Maharashtra
Delhi
Goa
Tamil Nadu
Telangana
Andhra Pradesh
Uttar Pradesh
Haryana

Bihar
Organised by
Supported by
Knowledge Partner
THE VOICE OF FASHION
Karnataka
2025
DIGITAL ARTISANS OF INDIA
Kala-e-Digital
Mela
A vibrant showcase of 50+ artisans from 15+ states — where India's living traditions, crafts, and culture come alive in the digital era.
Assam
West Bengal
Odisha

Kala-e-Digital Mela

As part of the Digital Citizen Summit, the **'Kala-e-Digital'** mela/exhibition was organized to celebrate and recognize 50+ artisans from 15 states engaged in diverse handmade crafts from across the country. Bringing them together under one roof, the exhibition showcased not only their exquisite creations but also the rich stories behind their crafts, the resilience, heritage, and cultural significance woven into every piece.

From the vibrant weaves of Kutch to the intricate Sozni embroidery of Kashmir, and the elegant Pattamadai pai mats of Tamil Nadu, the exhibition reflected the true diversity of India's artisanal traditions. Artisans who are part of the Digital Artisans of India initiative presented their products firsthand, gaining direct visibility and an opportunity to connect personally with audiences.

'Kala-e-Digital' served as a bridge between tradition and technology, empowering craftsmen and craftswomen by providing them a platform to share their narratives, expand their reach, and celebrate the enduring spirit of handmade artistry in the digital age.

Manjuwara Begum

About the Speakers

Global Digital Inclu
Partnership
Inclusion and Equi
Women
4 Ethical

About the Co-chairs

Osama Manzar

Founder and Director,
Digital Empowerment Foundation,
Curator & Co-chair, Digital Citizen Summit

Osama Manzar works at the intersection of Access to Rights and Rights to Access. A Senior Ashoka Fellow and British Chevening Scholar, he is the founder of the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), established in 2002. Under his leadership, DEF has digitally empowered over 35 million people through a network of 2000+ Communication Information Resource Centres across India. Osama has been a key architect of India's inclusive digital ecosystem, influencing national initiatives such as the Digital Literacy Mission, Common Service Centres, the ban on Free Basics, and the liberalization of ISP licensing through PM-WANI. He has also led pioneering grassroots efforts to counter misinformation, including the creation of a cadre of rural women fact-checkers, frontline digital defenders combating misinformation in underserved communities. At the core of Osama's vision is the SoochnaPreneur model, a community-driven social entrepreneurship model to digital development that empowers local communities, especially women and persons with disabilities, to deliver last-mile access to information and citizen services.

Osama serves on several global boards and advisory bodies, including WiDEF, APC, GNI, and the World Summit Awards. He was profiled by The Hindu as "the man who travelled more than 10,000 villages." A regular columnist for Mint, he has co-authored over 20 publications, including Internet Economy of India and NetChakra.

Jayesh Ranjan

IAS, CEO, Industry and Investment Cell; CEO, SPEED (Smart Proactive Efficient and Effective Delivery), Government of Telangana, Co-chair, Digital Citizen Summit

Jayesh Ranjan, IAS is a 1992-batch officer serving as Special Chief Secretary, Government of Telangana, and CEO, Industry & Investment Cell (CMO) & SPEED. He also holds additional charge of Youth Advancement, Tourism & Culture (YAT&C) and Director, Archaeology. He serves on the boards of RICH, WE Hub, and T-Works, and is an Agenda Contributor to the World Economic Forum. Since 2023, he has co-led the Digital Citizen Summit and has co-curated the Just AI Awards since its launch in 2024.

Townhall

Amandeep Singh Gill

Amandeep Singh Gill is a United Nations Under-Secretary-General and the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology.

Amandeep Singh Gill is a United Nations Under-Secretary-General and the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, heading the UN Office for Digital & Emerging Technologies (ODET). He leads UN digital cooperation, including follow-up to the Global Digital Compact and work on AI governance, and serves on the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Body on AI and Scientific Advisory Board. Earlier, he was India's Ambassador & Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament and chaired the 2017 UN Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems; he also led the Secretariat of the UN High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation and was CEO of I-DAIR in Geneva. He holds a BTech from Panjab University and a PhD from King's College London.

Day 1 Innaugral Plenary

Digital Citizenship and Platform Accountability

Chair

Osama Manzar

Founder and Director,
Digital Empowerment Foundation,
Curator & Co-chair, Digital Citizen Summit

Osama Manzar works at the intersection of Access to Rights and Rights to Access. A Senior Ashoka Fellow and British Chevening Scholar, he is the founder of the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), established in 2002. Under his leadership, DEF has digitally empowered over 35 million people through a network of 2000+ Communication Information Resource Centres across India. Osama has been a key architect of India's inclusive digital ecosystem, influencing national initiatives such as the Digital Literacy Mission, Common Service Centres, the ban on Free Basics, and the liberalization of ISP licensing through PM-WANI. He has also led pioneering grassroots efforts to counter misinformation, including the creation of a cadre of rural women fact-checkers, frontline digital defenders combating misinformation in underserved communities.

Speakers

Dr. Rajiv Kumar

Chairman, Pahlé India Foundation

Dr. Rajiv Kumar is a prominent economist and policy-leader who currently serves as Chairman of the Pahlé India Foundation, a think-tank he founded in 2013. He previously held the position of Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog (2017–2022) with the rank of Cabinet Minister. Dr. Kumar holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Lucknow and a D.Phil. from the University of Oxford.

Vandana Vasudevan

Journalist and Author

Vandana Vasudevan studied in the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and worked in the corporate sector for many years. She shifted career tracks and became a development sector professional, consulting for various national and international organizations after obtaining a PhD in urban development from the University of Grenoble, France.

Sonia Jorge

Founder and Executive Director, Global Digital Inclusion Partnership

Sonia Jorge is the Founder and Executive Director of the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP). Sonia is an experienced leader and international digital policy expert. She had successfully led global coalitions, bringing together the private sector, governments, and civil society actors from across the globe to deliver the policies needed to reduce the cost to connect and make universal meaningful connectivity a reality for everyone in global majority countries. As a policy advisor and gender equality advocate with experience in over 45 countries, she has led numerous digital policy and development projects in several regions and with international organisations, such as the World Bank, UNDP, UN Women, ITU, and for private sector companies and associations.

Anriette Esterhuysen

Senior Advisor on Global and Regional Internet Governance at Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

Anriette Esterhuysen is an internet activist and policy leader, currently Senior Advisor on global and regional internet governance at Association for Progressive Communications (APC). She previously served as APC's Executive Director, where she advanced access, rights, and ICT for development across the Global South. A former Executive Director of SANGONeT, she has been active in digital rights and connectivity initiatives since the 1980s and was inducted into the Internet Hall of Fame in 2013 for her pioneering work connecting civil society in Africa.

Technical Sessions

1. The People's Blueprint for a Better Social Media: From the Platform Accountability Lab by Point of View

Vaishali Soni

Visual Communicator & Illustrator

Vaishali Soni is a visual storyteller working at the intersections of gender, sexuality, and technology. Her practice focuses on using design as a framework for inquiry, learning, and change — across campaigns and creative projects. At Point of View, she works as a Design Specialist and manages the visual universe of the organisation.

Kopal

Comms Strategist & Project Manager

Kopal is a visual storyteller working at the intersections of gender, sexuality, and technology. Based in Delhi, she has spent the past five years building grassroots power and community-led change for campaigns, collectives, and nonprofits. Her work focuses on translating complex, technical issues into stories that mobilise communities and influence decision-makers.

At Point of View, Kopal works as a campaign manager, strategising digital outreach via social media and mobilising global south civil society organisations for a cross-movement campaign for platform accountability.

2. Accountability in the Digital Health Era with Platforms: Policy, Governance and Transparency by Centre for Development Policy and Practice

Chair

Rentala Chandrashekhar

Chairman, Digital for the Digital Future

Rentala Chandrashekharis a highly respected and well-recognised public figure in the IT and Telecom sectors, both in India and internationally. He is currently Chairman of the Centre for The Digital Future and is associated with several organizations in advisory roles and Board positions. As a former Secretary to the Government of India for Telecom, Electronics and IT, and former President, NASSCOM he possesses a unique breadth of expertise and experience, both in the Government and private sector, that covers the entire gamut of the IT and Telecom sectors. He was a member of the country's premier Indian Administrative Service.

Speakers

Shweta Mohandas,

Senior Research Fellow, C-HELP

Shweta Mohandas is a Senior Research Fellow at The Centre for Health Equity Law & Policy (C-HELP), where she focuses on the impact of existing and emerging technologies on health systems, digital rights, access to health services and human rights. Previously, she was a Researcher at the Centre for Internet and Society, conducting research on AI in healthcare, India's digital health policies, and privacy and accessibility of voice interfaces.

Dr. Aakansha Natani

Assistant Professor, International Institute of Information Technology - Hyderabad (IIITH)

Akanksha Natani is working as an Assistant Professor in the Human Sciences Research Centre, IIIT Hyderabad, India. She works broadly on data governance, regulations and data infrastructures in the EU and India. She worked as a DC Pavate Visiting Fellow in the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge, UK in 2023. She was awarded the Jean Monnet Module Grant on 'Digital Democracy and Data Governance in the European Union' by the European Commission in 2024.

Dr. Avik Sarkar

Senior Researcher and Visitng Faculty, Indian School of Business (ISB)

Dr.Avik Sarkar comes with over 20 years of experience across industry, government and academia and is currently associated with the Indian School of Business, working and teaching in Data, Emerging Technology, and Public Policy. At ISB, Dr Sarkar headed the development of the India Data Portal, a one-stop portal for analysing and visualising government data and working on the societal & policy aspects related to emerging technologies like artificial intelligence trustworthiness, ethics, data privacy, e-commerce policy, etc. Dr. Sarkar was the former Head of the Data Analytics Cell and Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India Aayog), premier policy think-tank of the Government of India. At NITI Aayog, Dr. Sarkar helped in developing India's first AI Strategy and roadmap for the use of data, analytics and artificial intelligence for Governance and policymaking across various sectors for India's inclusive growth and led efforts towards setting up the first High-Performance Computing based Data Analytics Lab and Energy Modelling Unit at NITI Aayog.

Dr. Udai Prakash

Director and Chief Joint Replacement Surgery and Sports Injuries Unit at Udai Omni Hospital

Dr. Udai Prakash is the Director and Chief of the Joint Replacement Surgery & Sports Injuries Unit at Udai Omni Hospital, Hyderabad. With over 25 years of exceptional orthopaedic experience, he has earned both national and global recognition. Trained in the UK and Australia, he completed specialist training in trauma and orthopaedics in the UK, followed by fellowships in arthroscopy and revision joint replacement surgery in Australia. He also served as a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon and Honorary Professor at the University Hospitals of Coventry & Warwickshire before returning to India to develop Udai Omni Hospital into a center of excellence. His expertise encompasses joint replacement and sports injury care, including primary and complex revision surgeries,Oxford partial knee replacements (he's the highest user in South India and introduced it to Hyderabad in 2013), arthroscopic ACL and PCL reconstructions, cartilage/meniscal repair, and management of periprosthetic joint infections and fractures. Recently, Dr. Prakash has integrated robotics for precision joint replacement. An avid academician, researcher, and active speaker, he has authored several peer-reviewed papers.

3. Whose Bodies, Whose Data? Accontability in the Politics of Gendered and Queer Data by Software Freedom Law Centre

Moderator

Angela Thomas

Volunteer Legal Counsel at Software Freedom Legal Counsel

Angela Thomas is a Volunteer Legal Counsel at SFLC.in, where she leads work on Artificial Intelligence, Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV), and platform governance. She also oversees initiatives on free speech and privacy, focusing on how emerging technologies can be regulated responsibly while safeguarding fundamental freedoms. Previously, she worked as a corporate lawyer. Angela is a graduate of Symbiosis Law School.

Speakers

Prerna

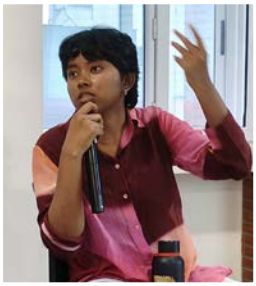
Assistant Professor of Law at NALSAR

Prerna is a non-binary legal academic from Jharkhand and serves as an Assistant Professor of Law at NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. Their doctoral research examines intersections of anti-discrimination law across caste, disability, and trans identity. Drawing on critical legal theory and lived experience, Prerna investigates how law mediates autonomy, freedom, and sexuality, most recently through an empirical study on law students' perspectives. They are committed to inclusive, student-led teaching and to reimagining pedagogy through interdisciplinary, justice-oriented frameworks.

Vaibhavi Rani

Lawyer, Red Dot Foundation

Vaibhavi Rani is a lawyer, and social justice advocate with a focus on criminology of gender-based violence, and data privacy laws. At Red Dot Foundation Global, she leads policy and stakeholder engagement initiatives and is currently working on a research project in Greater Manchester in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Police and Victim Services. She has represented youth voices at global platforms including the United Nations ECOSOC Youth Forum and the UN Habitat Assembly.



Sharin D'Souza

Researcher and Psychologist, iHEAR Sangath

Sharin D'souza is a researcher and psychologist based in New Delhi. As a Research Coordinator at iHEAR Sangath their work explores participatory research on health access with LGBTQIA+ and disability communities in India. They also bring experiences from their work in gender and sexuality education, community mental health and publishing. Sharin's work is driven by a queer-feminist, anti-caste lens that values community, care, and joy alongside analyses of power and systems, accountability and collective action.

4. Building Platforms for Small and Micro-entrepreneurs by WE-Hub

Chair

Sita Pallacholla

CEO, WE Hub

Sita Pallacholla is a founder, technologist, investment specialist, and global advocate for women's empowerment and entrepreneurship. As the CEO of WE Hub – India's first state government-led organisation to support women entrepreneurs, she brings two decades of experience in building entrepreneurial ecosystems, mobilising capital, and driving impact that transcends borders and sectors. Under her leadership, WE Hub has evolved into both a policy think-tank and a robust on-ground implementation engine, transforming the lives of women across all 33 districts of Telangana. Through deep partnerships with government bodies such as SERP and MEPMA, WE Hub's programs are structured to reach 7.5 million Self-Help Group (SHG) women, creating pathways for economic participation, enterprise creation, and financial independence.

Speakers

T. Ravikiran

Commissioner, MeeSeva, Government of Telangana

Dr T. Ravikiran, IFS, currently serves as Commissioner, Electronic Service Delivery (MeeSeva), Government of Telangana. An accomplished officer with deep expertise in governance and technology, he has spearheaded several transformative initiatives, including Project MeeSeva 2.0, which leverages m-Governance, Big Data, and analytics to enhance

citizen-centric service delivery. With a diverse academic background and professional excellence in public service, including roles such as District Forest Officer and Joint CEO (IT) at the Election Commission of India, he brings a strong blend of bureaucratic acumen and innovation-driven leadership. His continued efforts focus on advancing efficiency, transparency, and improved governance outcomes for the citizens of Telangana.

Mayur Patnala

Founder, Nirmaan

Mr Mayur Patnala is the Founder and Global CEO of Nirmaan Organisation, a leading non-profit driving social impact across education, employment, and sustainable development. Founded in 2005 while at BITS Pilani, Nirmaan has grown into a nationwide movement impacting over 5 million lives across India & beyond. A social innovator and IVLP alumnus, Mayur continues to inspire changemaking through collaborations with corporates, governments, and global foundations.

Hima Bindu Nalluri

Founder & CEO Easylife Mobility Innovations Pvt. Ltd.

Dr Hima Bindu knows what it means to navigate the world differently. As a woman with a disability, everyday spaces often became barriers. But instead of surrendering to these limitations, she chose to transform them. Through WE Hub's WE Engage program, we supported her through market access, visibility and revenue growth to accelerate her innovation through the program, reimagining mobility with empathy at its core. Drawing from her own lived experience, she didn't just build devices—she crafted dignity.

With over 15 distinct wheelchair models, each designed to address real challenges faced by people with disabilities, her work is a quiet revolution in assistive technology. Thousands now move through life with greater ease and confidence—because one woman refused to accept that the world couldn't be more accessible. Dr Hima Bindu reminds us that when design begins with empathy, innovation becomes truly inclusive.

5. AI Literacy for all : Building Awareness of Ethics and Inclusive AI by ICT Watch

Akhmat Safrudin

Regional Capacity Building Coordinator Asia (Local Networks Initiatve)

Akhmat Safrudin is an experienced ICT leader with over 15 years in technology development, software engineering and cloud infrastructure. Currently serving as the Asia regional coordinator for capacity building for the Local Networks initiative, his current focus is on addressing the digital divide by fostering community-centred connectivity initiatives. He has a strong background in open source technology and has led initiatives in software development, the internet of things (IoT) and cybersecurity.

Indriyatno Banyumurti

Executive Director, ICT Watch

Indriyatno Banyumurti is executive director of ICT Watch Indonesia, a civil society organization pioneering the "Internet Sehat" movement since 2002. With extensive experience in public education, policy engagement, and community empowerment, he focuses on promoting safe, responsible, and inclusive use of digital technology across Indonesia. He has been actively involved in developing digital literacy modules, training educators and communities nationwide, and collaborating with government institutions, private sectors, and international organizations to combat misinformation, online harm, and digital inequality.

6. From Barriers to Breakthroughs : Women for Ethical AI by W4EAI-UNESCO

Moderator

Nisha Sethi Girdhar

AI Delivery & Planning Lead, Fidelity International

Nisha plays a leading role in Fidelity International's GenAI journey, with a strong focus on execution, enablement, and ethical adoption. Her work stands out in translating complex AI capabilities into practical, high-impact use cases that deliver real business value.

She drives cross-functional delivery, helps shape Responsible AI practices, and leads efforts to embed governance, compliance, and long-term trust into every solution. She is also a strong advocate for AI adoption across teams - constantly experimenting, enabling, and demystifying tools that help people work smarter and innovate faster.

Nisha is also a member of UNESCO Women for Ethical AI (South Asia chapter), where she contributes to and helps lead the policy and advocacy workstream that steers conversations on ethics and AI governance.

Speakers

Saloni Chaudhary

Research Scholar -AI Governance

Saloni Chaudhary is a seasoned leader in IT Quality, Delivery Excellence, Compliance and AI governance, currently heading AI policy initiatives at a Finland-based multinational. With nearly two decades of experience across IT quality, risk, and GRC, she develops frameworks for responsible AI compliance with EU AI Act, NIST, ISO 42001, and UNESCO-EIA

standards. A research scholar on AI governance in Indian SMEs and a member of "Women for Ethical AI–UNESCO," Saloni advocates for robust, ethical AI policies at global forums and summits.

Shreya Krishnan

Managing Director, AnitaB.org India

Shreya Krishnan is the Managing Director of AnitaB.org India and has nearly 20 years of experience in Marketing, Corporate Communications, and CSR. A changemaker across tech, inclusion, and the arts, she chairs the Policy Advocacy Committee for UNESCO's Women for Ethical AI (South Asia). She has held leadership roles at Aon and First Advantage and founded Onyx Communications. A certified NLP Practitioner and POSH trainer, Shreya co-authored Words Matter, a book on empowering girls through vocabulary.

Aditi Namdeo

Director - Strategic Interventions J-PAL South Asia

Aditi comes with an extensive corporate, public and consulting experience, a decade of which was in strategy and finance consulting in PwC offices across Europe, US, India and Australia. She has anchored and led several business transformation projects in Energy, Manufacturing and Infrastructure vertical. She has been a global trainer for the PwC Academy and has taught in several internal and external consulting courses. In her public experience side, she was heading the PwC Nordic-India Consulting Desk furthering relationship with Indian and Nordic ministries and offices.

7. Beyond Takedowns : Building Rights - Respecting Responses to Disinformation in India by Software Freedom Law Center

Moderator

Syed Mohammad Haroon

Volunteer Legal Counsel, Software Freedom Law Center

Syed Mohammad Haroon is a legal researcher and public interest lawyer working at the intersection of technology, constitutional rights, and public policy. He currently serves as Volunteer Legal Counsel at the Software Freedom Law Center, India (SFLC.in), where he is involved in strategic litigation, legal research, and advocacy on digital rights. His work focuses on issues such as internet shutdowns, online surveillance, platform regulation, data protection, and the rights of vulnerable groups in digital spaces. Mr. Haroon has been actively engaged in regional and global internet governance processes. He has contributed to and supported session proposals at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF), and the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) held in Lusaka, Zambia. Through his work, he collaborates with civil society organizations and policy networks across the Asia-Pacific region to promote rights-respecting digital policy frameworks and safeguard fundamental freedoms online.

Speakers

Aymen Mohammed

Faculty, NALSAR University of Law

Aymen is an academic and practitioner specialising in public law and policy. He started his career in a leading public policy law firm where he advised governments and private sector in various aspects of legislative policy and regulation. He also contributed in authoring

independent whitepapers on important regulatory issues. Aymen has extensive experience in bridging the gap between 'law' and 'lay.' He has contributed in the production of online content on important legal issues. He has also participated in training police officers and co-teaches administrative law to IRS trainees. Aymen presently teaches courses related to administrative law, public policy, federalism and election laws at Nalsar University of Law, Hyderabad.

Rakesh Dubbudu

Founder, Factly Media & Research

Rakesh Dubbudu is the founder of Factly Media & Research, a prominent civic-tech, fact-checking, and public data initiative in India. With a career spanning over two decades, Rakesh has dedicated himself to championing transparency, information access, and combating mis/disinformation through innovative technology solutions. His work lies at the intersection of data/information access, their consumption, and technology, with a specific focus on AI-driven products that address the pressing challenges of the information age. In particular, he has championed the cause of the Right to Information legislation, advocating for improved information access to the public.

C Vanaja

Journalist and Film Maker

C Vanaja is an award-winning journalist, TV presenter and documentary film maker. Her work focuses on issues of development, social concerns and people's movements. She is the first Telugu journalist to get the prestigious Ramnath Goenka award followed by many other awards in both journalism and documentary films. Her films have received many awards and accolades as best documentaries and traveled across the globe by getting nominated in many prestigious film festivals. She is founder and editor of Mahua Media and running a news perspective youtube channel with the same name.

8. Tracing Platform Power – A Walking Method for Digital Accountability

Arran Ridley

Assistant Professor in Marketing and Digital Communications at Monash University

Arran Ridley is an Assistant Professor in Marketing and Digital Communications at Monash University Indonesia, holding a PhD in Media and Communication from the University of Leeds. He is a member of SEADS (Southeast Asia Research Centre for Digital Tech and Society). His research focuses on data visualization, critical data studies, design studies, and digital methods, with over nine years of experience as an interdisciplinary researcher.

9. Safecity's Model for Mapping SGBV by Red Dot Foundation

Soumyaa Hariharan

Product Designer

Soumyaa is a product designer by profession and deeply passionate about gender and development work. She led ground operations for the Faridabad project with Red Dot Foundation, where she worked closely with communities to mobilize people, conduct safety surveys, collect data, and support impactful local interventions and collaborations.

Vaibhavi Rani

Lawyer

Vaibhavi Rani is a lawyer, and social justice advocate with a focus on criminology of gender-based violence, and data privacy laws. At Red Dot Foundation Global, she leads policy and stakeholder engagement initiatives and is currently working on a research project in Greater Manchester in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Police and Victim Services. She has represented youth voices at global platforms including the United Nations ECOSOC Youth Forum and the UN Habitat Assembly.

10. Disrupting Platform Playbook by ARISE

Moderator

Senka Hadzic

Independent Researcher

Dr Senka Hadzic (she/her) is a telecommunications engineer (PhD) and digital development expert with 10+ years of experience advancing inclusive digital infrastructure, connectivity policy, and public interest technology. She is affiliated with leading digital policy think tanks, including Research ICT Africa and FGV Centre for Technology and Society (CTS), and consults with various non-profits, UN agencies, and organisations in the development and humanitarian sectors on digital inclusion and equity. She is also coordinating the Dynamic Coalition on Community Connectivity (DC3) at the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

Speakers

Aditi Aggarwal

Research Development and Grants Specialist, Tattle Civic Technologies

Dr Aditi Aggarwal (they/them) is a Research Development and Grants Specialist at Tattle Civic Technologies, applying feminist and disability justice frameworks towards making online spaces and AI tools safe for users at the margins. They have a PhD in anthropology from the University of Illinois Chicago and a Masters in Development Studies from IIT Madras. Aditi enjoys working in interdisciplinary teams that design systems and processes centering the goal of greater equity and access for as many folks as possible.

Raina Ghosh

Manager and Senior Researcher, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Raina Ghosh (she/they) is a Human Geographer by training, with a doctorate from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. They currently serve as Manager and Senior Researcher at the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), leading research on digital rights, circular economy, platform accountability, and algorithmic governance. Raina also heads the DEF Secretariat for ARISE, a transregional collective of 50+ Global South organisations advocating for platform accountability of major tech companies. Their work encompasses grant and proposal writing, building funding partnerships, qualitative research, policy analysis, and designing M&E frameworks to advance digital access and technology for marginalised communities.

Shashank Mohan

Associate Director, Centre for Communication Governance and Tech Global Institute

Shashank Mohan (he/him) is a tech-policy professional based in New Delhi. His work focuses on questions of accountability and regulatory design. He has written extensively on data privacy, platform accountability, and the geopolitics of tech governance. Over the past couple of years, Shashank has worked on developing and maintaining community relationships in digital rights around the world and he believes that a collective voice is required to effect change. He is currently the Associate Director at the Centre for Communication Governance at National Law University Delhi and a Tech Policy Fellow with the Tech Global Institute. He is a lawyer by profession but considers his work to be inter-disciplinary.

11. What Powers AI : A Deep Dive into Model Training by AI +Planetary Justice Alliance

Sara Marcucci

Researcher and Advocate, AI +Planetary Justice Alliance

Sara Marcucci is a researcher and advocate focused on the planetary justice impacts of the AI industry. She founded and leads the AI + Planetary Justice Alliance, a collective advancing justice-centered approaches to AI across its supply chain, and consults for various public and private organizations. Sara has advised intergovernmental organizations and civil-society initiatives through roles with The GovLab at NYU, the World Bank, The Open Data Institute, and others. She has contributed to hearings and public consultations on AI and planetary justice, and speaks regularly on alternative approaches to technology. She holds an MSc in Data & Society from the London School of Economics.

12. Rerouting Access : Disability and the Future of Mobility Platforms by Pacta and Nayi Disha

Moderator/Co-Moderator

Nivedita Krishna

Founder, Pacta

Nivedita Krishna is the Founder of Pacta, a law and policy organisation working to advance digital accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities. Her work focuses on data governance, access to justice, and inclusive system design through research, policy, and institutional reform.

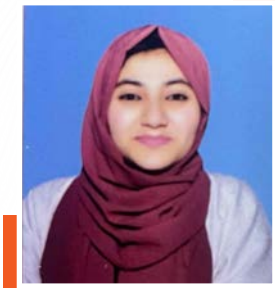
Prachi Deo

Founder, Nayi Disha

Prachi Deo is the heart and driving force behind Nayi Disha, a tech-powered non-profit that provides a life-long support system to parents and families who are the primary caregivers for children with Autism, Down Syndrome and other learning and developmental disabilities.

She founded Nayi Disha in 2015 with the aim of creating a digital knowledge hub, a thriving community and a national helpline that brings together families into an eco-system and make comprehensive and credible information accessible for families. She brings a unique blend of technical expertise and lived experience to create meaningful, accessible solutions for thousands of families across India. With Prachi's leadership, the organisation ensures that no family is ever alone on this journey.

Participants (Persons with Disabilities for the Fishbowl Discussion)



Ridha Fatima

Independent Counsellor

Rida Fathima is a counsellor and passionate candle artisan with a background in psychology. She advocates for inclusion and resilience while supporting families and individuals through her work and creativity.

Kedhar

Independent Artist

Kedhar is a 25-year-old artist whose creative journey blends imagination, detail, and emotion. A graduate in Fine Arts, Kedhar's work spans nature studies, portraits,abstracts, and digital paintings. His artistic voice reflects both sensitivity and precision, capturing the essence of his subjects with depth and clarity.

Kedhar has participated in several national and international art exhibitions, earning appreciation for his expressive and original style. In addition to his independent art practice, he also takes commissioned work and has been paid for his digital and traditional artworks..

Raghu Duth Degala

Founder, The Good Talk Factory

Raghu Duth Degala has built his career across counseling, training, sports psychology, and entrepreneurship. For more than ten years, he trained people in soft skills, employability, and leadership, and also worked as a consultant sports psychologist, helping domestic cricketers build mental toughness. Over time, he moved into work that combines innovation with social impact, focusing on inclusion and accessibility. He started The Good Talk Factory, a platform that encourages meaningful conversations and personal growth, and Kaiteki Innovations, a startup that designs assistive technology and solutions to make everyday spaces easier and more comfortable for persons with disabilities.

T.V. Aishwarya

Co-Founder & CMO of Grailmaker Innovations

T. V Aishwarya is the Co-Founder & CMO of Grailmaker Innovations, an assistive technology startup dedicated to making public spaces accessible for persons with visual impairment and the deaf & hard of hearing. A visually impaired entrepreneur, she is also a 3D tactile artist and filmmaker, creating artworks and films that redefine accessibility and Inclusion.

13. Privacy and Platforms

Vishnu S Pillai

Assistant Professor, Kautilya School of Public Policy (KSPP)

Dr Vishnu S Pillai is an assistant professor at the Kautilya School of Public Policy. Dr. Vishnu completed his PhD in Public Policy from The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong. His research area lies in the intersection of technology and governance, especially in the regulation of AI. His work in this area has been published in the journals Science and Public Policy and the Journal of Asian Public Policy.

14. From Extractive to Reciprocal : Co-Creating Data with Speakers of Unwritten and Endangered Languages by UnReal-TecE

Karthick Narayanan

Director and Co-Founder, Council for Diversity and Innovation and Chief Community and Data Officer

Linguist and digital archivist specialising in sociolinguistics, documentation, and digital humanities. Director and Co-Founder of the Council for Diversity and Innovation and Chief Community and Data Officer at UnReal TecE LLP. Advisor to CIIL and the Government of Tamil Nadu, recipient of the 2024 SPARROW-R Thyagarajan Literary Award, and co-founder of India's first endangered language archive (SiDHELA). His work centres on participatory, ethical archiving and digital justice.

Shyam Ratan

Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer , UnReaL-TecE

Shyam Ratan is the Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer (COO) at UnReaL-TecE LLP. He is also a Research Scholar at the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies, University of Hyderabad, working with Professor Selvaraj Arulmozi. His doctoral research explores disinformation detection on social media, combining computational linguistics and NLP approaches. Beyond his core research, he has a strong interest in field linguistics and under-resourced languages.

Benu Pareek

Co-founder Council for Diversity and Innovation and Cief Knowledge Officer

Benu Pareek is Linguist with interests in education, child language acquisition, psycholinguistics, corpus linguistics, NLP, and morphosyntax. She holds a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University and postdoctoral experience at IIT Delhi. Her research includes nominal morpho-syntactic features in child language and the generation and processing of naturalistic spoken corpora. Her recent work focuses on computational tools for documenting understudied languages and educational applications. She is Co-founder of the Council for Diversity and Innovation, and Chief Knowledge Officer at UnReaL TecE LLP.

15. Let's Build our Common AI by Commons Collective

Siddhartha Malempati

Directing Council-General of the Commons Collective

Siddhartha Malempati is a multifaceted professional with over 18 years of experience spanningcomputer science, patent law, and economics. As the Directing Council-General of the Commons Collective, he leads a global network of activists, researchers, and practitioners working to advance the commons as a foundation for social progress. A serial entrepreneur, Siddhartha co-founded Helico Consulting, Octacomm Technologies, and Radius EduTech, companies pioneering innovations in cloud computing, AI-driven communication, and learning management systems. A recognized free and open-source policy advocate, he has championed digital rights, net neutrality, and community technology initiatives, extending digital education to over 30,000 individuals in rural India.

Rajasekhar P.

Operations, Octacomm

Rajasekhar P. is part of the Commons Collective and has been involved with the Free Software Movement for more than a decade, working on community-led approaches to technology and communication.He currently works with Octacomm in operations, focusing on building resilient and accessible communication systems. With earlier experience as a journalist at The Times of India and Deccan Chronicle, he brings insights from media and public communication into his work on last-mile connectivity and decentralised, offline models for rural communities.

Gaya Hadiya

Researcher,IIT-Dharwad

Gaya Hadiya is a PhD scholar at IIT Dharwad. Her area of research is the metaethicsof AI, with a special focus on moral agency and moral responsibility. Gaya completed her Master's in philosophy from the University of Hyderabad. She wenton to work in several research projects in the areas of epistemology of history and the ethical aspects of self-driving Cars, and has presented papers at national and international conferences.

Roshna Arafa Ali

Digital Journalist

Roshna Arafa Ali is a digital journalist whose work spans human-interest stories,politics, culture, urban spaces, cinema, gender, and digital culture. She holds a Master's degree in Communication from the University of Hyderabad and has worked with leading news organisations, including The Times of India and DeccanChronicle.

16. Digital Safety and Security

Syed Mohammad Haroon

Volunteer Legal Counsel at the Software Freedom Law Center

Syed Mohammad Haroon is a legal researcher and public interest lawyer working at the intersection of technology, constitutional rights, and public policy. He currently serves as Volunteer Legal Counsel at the Software Freedom Law Center, India (SFLC.in), where he is involved in strategic litigation, legal research, and advocacy on digital rights. His work focuses on issues such as internet shutdowns, online surveillance, platform regulation, data protection, and the rights of vulnerable groups in digital spaces. Mr. Haroon has been actively engaged in regional and global internet governance processes. He has contributed to and supported session proposals at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF), and the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) held in Lusaka, Zambia. Through his work, he collaborates with civil society organizations and policy networks across the Asia-Pacific region to promote rights-respecting digital policy frameworks and safeguard fundamental freedoms online.

Vignesh

Technologist at the Software Freedom Law Center

Vignesh is a Technologist at SFLC.in. He has completed his Bachelor's in Engineering (Computer Science). He is a free software and free knowledge enthusiast. He comes with over 8 years of experience working with free software organisations in India including Free Software Movement Karnataka and Free Software Foundation Tamil Nadu. His interests include knowledge freedom, gender rights & social justice.

17. Whose Ciitzenship Counts ? Centering Voices of Transgender Communities in Platform Governance

Moderator

Arpita Kanjilal

Head, Research & Communications, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Arpita heads the Research & Communications Division at the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) where she leads critical work at the intersection of digital rights, equity and inclusive development in India. In addition to her research and programmatic leadership, she spearheads strategic partnerships, working closely with civil society organisations, government bodies, and industry stakeholders to advance collective advocacy efforts. She is a researcher and writer who brings academic depth and grassroots insight to the discourse on technology, justice, social transformation. With a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics, Arpita works at the convergence of language, identity and digital empowerment, advocating for rights-based, people-centric approaches to digital policy and practice. Her leadership at DEF spans a wide range of initiatives from strengthening last-mile connectivity and advocating for online safety and data protection - to examining the environmental impact of digital technologies and exploring economic alternatives for coal-dependent communities. She has anchored the Digital Swaraj Fellowship - shaping experiential learning journeys for youth, and currently leads the Just AI Initiative, which focuses on data and algorithmic accountability grounded in community realities.

Speakers

Rachana Mudraboyina

Telangana Hijra Intersex Transgender Samiti -THITS

Rachana Mudraboyina (She/They) is a Hyderabad-based Transgender rights activist. Rachana was the ex-chair of #SITAL(SaveIndianTransALLINDIALives) project for COVID19 help for transgender persons in India. She is director and on the Board of Human Rights Law Network (HRLN) focused on rights of LGBTQI folks. She is part of Trans INCLO (International Civil Liberties organisations attended three International conventions at Cape Town, South Africa, Buenos Aires, Argentina and Bogota, Columbia. She holds dual master's in commerce and social work. She is engaged with UNAIDS India LGBTQI think tank. She was fellow member of International Visitors Leadership Program of US Embassy from 2016, visited 5 states in US on an exchange program.

Maitri Singh

Researcher, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Maitri Singh is a researcher and communications professional at the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF). With masters in English Literature from Ambedkar University, Delhi, she currently works on digital inclusion, gender, and just transitions. She also leads Digital Just Transition Taskforce at DEF, where she explores the intersections of digital with climate change. Recently, her research centres on understanding the socio-economic impacts of AI data centres in India.

Santosh

Transgender Rights Community Advocate

Santhosh is Dalit Transman, who has fought his way to access and pursue his education and job as a Traffic Assistant. He is a transgender rights community advocate and is studying law.

18. Living with the Giants: Rethinking Big Tech from the Global South

Moderator

Raina Ghosh

Manager and Senior Researcher, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Raina Ghosh (she/they) is a Human Geographer by training, with a doctorate from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. They currently serve as Manager and Senior Researcher at the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), leading research on digital rights, circular economy, platform accountability, and algorithmic governance. Raina also heads the DEF Secretariat for ARISE, a transregional collective of 50+ Global South organisations advocating for platform accountability of major tech companies. Their work encompasses grant and proposal writing, building funding partnerships, qualitative research, policy analysis, and designing M&E frameworks to advance digital access and technology for marginalised communities.

Speakers

Jamila Venturini

Derechos Digitales

Jamila is Co-Executive Director at Derechos Digitales. Activist and researcher with over 15 years of experience in civil society organizations. She is a journalist and holds a Master's degree in Social Sciences with a focus on Education from FLACSO Argentina.

Catalina Moreno

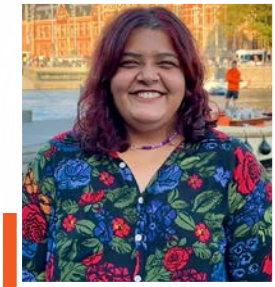
Fundacion Karisma

Catalina Moreno Arocha is co-director of Fundación Karisma. She worked for more than 10 years at the Constitutional Court. She also worked as a lawyer advocating for political and legal change on gender issues as part of a civil society organization and in the public sector.

Day 2 Technical Sessions

Technical Session 1: Decentralising Truth: Fighting Misinformation in a Digital World

Moderator



Akanksha Ahluwalia

Lead, Media & Information Literacy Initiative, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Akanksha Ahluwalia leads the Social Inclusion, Media & Information Literacy (MIL), and communication-driven programmes at the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), India. With a background in English Literature and a focus on gender, misinformation, and new media, she brings a nuanced lens to the evolving challenges of digital communication in underserved regions. Her core work revolves around the design and implementation of strategic communication interventions that not only promote digital literacy but also combat the growing threats of misinformation, disinformation, and algorithmic bias, especially in rural and semi-urban India. Through on-ground training, community media production, and multilingual resource development, she works closely with digital entrepreneurs, teachers, students, and community leaders to strengthen civic participation, promote ethical digital practices, and build resilience against fake news ecosystems. Her efforts focus on localising complex digital concepts into relatable narratives ensuring that awareness around misinformation is not just top-down, but contextual, conversational, and community-led. Akanksha's approach to communication is grounded in both academic inquiry and field-based realities. She is particularly interested in how new media platforms can be harnessed to address structural inequities while remaining mindful of their potential to amplify existing biases and misinformation loops.

Speakers

Syed Mohammad Haroon

Volunteer Legal Counsel, Software Freedom Law Center

Mr. Syed Mohammad Haroon is a legal researcher and public interest lawyer working at the intersection of technology, constitutional rights, and public policy. He currently serves as Volunteer Legal Counsel at the Software Freedom Law Center, India (SFLC.in), where he is involved in strategic litigation, legal research, and advocacy on digital rights. His work focuses on issues such as internet shutdowns, online surveillance, platform regulation, data protection, and the rights of vulnerable groups in digital spaces. Mr. Haroon has been actively engaged in regional and global internet governance processes. He has contributed to and supported session proposals at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF), and the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) held in Lusaka, Zambia. Through his work, he collaborates with civil society organizations and policy networks across the Asia-Pacific region to promote rights-respecting digital policy frameworks and safeguard fundamental freedoms online.

Uma Kalkar

Strategy Lead & Chief of Staff to Nicolas Miailhe, AI Safety Connect

Uma Kalkar is a governance strategist focusing on international AI alignment and diplomacy. As Chief of Staff to Nicolas Miailhe, she supports initiatives to advance AI safety and governance across Asia-Pacific and Western contexts. This includes leading the flagship AI Safety Connect event series, convened during the 2024 Paris AI Action Summit, the 2025 UN General Assembly, and the 2026 India Impact Summit (forthcoming).

Technical Session 2: Accountability by Design: Shaping Regulations for AI, Platforms, and Critical Digital Infrastructure

Chair

Subhomoy Bhattacharjee

Professor of Practice &Director Centre for Regulatory Governance, OP Jindal Global Law School

Subhomoy Bhattacharjee is a prominent Indian journalist and academic who currently serves as Consulting Editor at the financial daily Business Standard. With a background in the Indian Information Service (1991 batch) and editorial roles at leading publications like The Economic Times and Financial Express, he brings deep insight into public-policy, regulatory governance, finance, energy and maritime sectors. Academically, he holds an MA in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics and Shri Ram College of Commerce, and is currently Professor of Practice & Director at the Centre for Regulatory Governance, Jindal Global Law School, Sonipat. He also hosts his fortnightly video series "ON POINT with Subhomoy Bhattacharjee" that dissects economic reform trends.

Speakers

Deepak Maheshwari

Senior Policy Advisor, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)

He is Senior Policy Advisor at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), Advisor at the Indicus Centre for Financial Inclusion (ICFI), and a member of the Public Affairs Advisory Board at Palo Alto Networks. His prior affiliations include CUTS, Centre for the Digital Future, and Public Affairs Forum of India, as well as

ICRIER, where he supported the Department of Telecommunications during India's G20 Presidency. He is a thought leader with a keen interest in exploring the interplay across public policy, technological innovation, and socio-economic development. He has served on government committees on artificial intelligence and accessibility. He has also volunteered as Global Chair of the IEEE Internet Initiative, Secretary of the ISP Association of India, and advisory board member of the IIM Ahmedabad–Idea Telecom Centre of Excellence. Previously, he led public policy efforts at Microsoft, Mastercard, Symantec, and Sify, covering regions including India, South Asia, ASEAN, and China. A graduate in engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, he also holds a law degree.

Bindu Madhavi

Lead, India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA)

Bindu Madhavi is an experienced clean energy and power sector professional with over 14 years of expertise in policy, regulation, and industry engagement. Currently with the India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA), she leads initiatives on energy storage, electric mobility, and advanced cell manufacturing (ACC), driving collaboration between government and industry. As Chair of IESA's Policy Working Group, she guides strategic policy actions and market development e×orts. A mentor with the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNET), she champions gender diversity in energy leadership and has co-authored key publications, including IESA's Energy Storage Vision 2030. Her leadership in policy engagement and advocacy was recognized during India Energy Storage Week 2023, where she was acknowledged among the "Women Leaders Driving the Energy Sector in India."

Rajesh Vetcha

Ex-Head, Hospitality & Airport Land Development, GMR Group

Rajesh Vetcha is currently pursuing PhD, and is Ex-Head, Hospitality & Airport Land Development, GMR Group. He brings 27 years of diverse experience in the Corporate and Infrastructure sectors, Displaying leadership in New Business and Project Development,

Sports, Regulatory Affairs, And Stakeholder Management. He excels in public-private partnerships, navigating complex Collaborations and intricate interactions between government bodies and private businesses. With extensive expertise in the infrastructure field, he made significant contributions to the Banking sector early in his career, influencing transactions totalling close to one thousand Crores. Later in his career, he spearheaded significant infrastructure projects, leading them from Inception to completion, resulting in substantial capital investments and deals valued at 23,000 Crores across twelve impactful ventures., and he is the primary advisor to CDPP Regulation Project.

N. Subramanian

Executive Director, Society for Electronic Transactions and Security

Dr. N. Subramanian is serving as Executive Director, Society for Electronic Transactions and Security (SETS) since December, 2022. Prior to joining SETS he had served at Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune as Head and Senior Director, Corporate R&D. As part Of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) funded initiatives, he has lead various R&D projects in cyber security and established critical infrastructures. Contributing as member of Project Review & Steering Group of MeitY, doctoral committee, hackathon reviews, and mentored start-ups. He contributes to standards formulation activities under BIS and TSDSI and involved in guiding PhD students for research guidance.

Book Discussion: OTP Please! Online Buyers, Sellers and Gig Workers in South Asia

Discussant

Osama Manzar

Founder and Director,
Digital Empowerment Foundation,
Curator & Co-chair, Digital Citizen Summit

Osama Manzar works at the intersection of Access to Rights and Rights to Access. A Senior Ashoka Fellow and British Chevening Scholar, he is the founder of the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), established in 2002. Under his leadership, DEF has digitally empowered over 35 million people through a network of 2000+ Communication Information Resource Centres across India. Osama has been a key architect of India's inclusive digital ecosystem, influencing national initiatives such as the Digital Literacy Mission, Common Service Centres, the ban on Free Basics, and the liberalization of ISP licensing through PM-WANI.

Author

Vandana Vasudevan

Author, Researcher & Journalist

Vandana Vasudevan studied at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and worked in the corporate sector for many years. She shifted career tracks and became a development sector professional, consulting for various national and international organizations after obtaining a PhD in urban development from the University of Grenoble, France.

Technical Session 4: Platform Work, Rising Heat and Urban Futures

Speakers

Anusha Bhat

Researcher, Cividep India

Anusha Bhat is a Bangalore-based researcher with Cividep India, a labour rights organisation. Her work examines the political economy of labour and public health, particularly in urban contexts. She works with gig worker unions to explore the impacts of climate change and extreme heat on platform workers in India. Her writing on labour rights and inequality in neoliberal cities has been published in outlets such as Deccan Herald and Question of Cities. Anusha holds a Master's degree in Development Studies from Azim Premji University.

Nitesh Kumar Das

Policy Advocate, AIWU and GigWA

Nitesh works at the intersection of grassroots organising and policy advocacy to advance the rights of Amazon warehouse workers through the Amazon India Workers Union (AIWU) and platform-based gig workers through the Gig Workers Association (GigWA) in India. He has been closely involved in supporting workers to unionise, demand fair wages, expose exploitative conditions, and access legal entitlements and social protections as part of the broader struggle for decent work. His work spans field-based training, campaign building, and collaborations with international trade unions and allies. He has documented worker testimonies and written reflective pieces on platform work in India. He holds a postgraduate degree in Development from Azim Premji University.

Technical Session 5: Sextortion and Digital Accountability — Safeguarding Dignity and Rights

Moderator

Pratishtha Arora

CEO, Social & Media Matters

Pratishtha Arora is the visionary CEO of Social & Media Matters, with over a decade of pioneering work at the powerful intersection of Gender and Technology. With an academic foundation in Gender Studies, she brings a lens of inclusion and equity to the digital realm, crafting programs, policies, and community frameworks that redefine safety online. Her leadership spans critical missions including child online safety, trust and safety, digital well-being, youth safety, gender, caste, AI, and child protection. From driving transformative interventions to designing curricula and strategies, she has not only shaped impactful initiatives but also provided real-time support to victims of cybercrime. As a passionate trainer and an influential voice in both digital and gender movements, Pratishtha amplifies the Indian context on global platforms while steering national dialogues. Her unwavering mission is to ensure that digital spaces evolve as havens of trust, inclusivity, and protection for all.

Speakers

Arnika Singh

Director, Policy, Programs and Research, Social & Media Matters

Arnika Singh is the Director - Policy, Programs and Research at Social & Media Matters, an organization committed to advancing digital rights, trust and safety, and online safety. With over 14 years of experience at the intersection of digital literacy, technology policy,

and grassroots advocacy, Arnika has worked extensively to bridge the gap between user experiences and tech platform governance. She is also a strong advocate for empowering parents, teachers with digital parenting tools and strategies to foster safer, healthier online experiences for children. She specializes in countering emerging issues such as sextortion, misinformation, and leads initiatives that combine field research, working with survivors, community education, and policy innovation.

Rohini Lakshané

Fellow, Factor Daily

Rohini Lakshané is a technologist, interdisciplinary researcher and Wikimedian. She is a consultant/ adviser with a few different not-for-profit organisations and businesses. She is a Fellow at Factor Daily. An engineer by training, Rohini has worked on several research and advocacy projects at the intersection of technology, policy, and civil liberties. Her body of work encompasses diverse territories such as the application of technology and policy to solve issues of gender inequity and violence; access to knowledge; openness; patent reform; making tech spaces diverse and inclusive; and the cross-hairs of gender, sexuality and the Internet.

She was a Wikimedian-in-Residence (pilot project) in Mumbai (2013), and Chairperson of the Gender gap Special Interest Group, Wikimedia India (2013-14), and served on the Simple Annual Plan Grants advisory committee (2017-2021).

Adrija Bose

Senior Editor, BOOM

Adrija Bose, Senior Editor at BOOM, leads Decode, an investigative vertical on technology, society, and politics. Over the last 14 years, she has reported on digital rights, polarisation, and marginalised communities. Her work has won three UN Laadli Media Awards, the RedInk Award for illegal coal mining expose, and the Polestar Award. She previously worked at News18, HuffPost India, NDTV, and Firstpost.

Technical Session 6: Exercising the Right to be Heard in Digital World

Speakers

Rakshita Swamy

Founder and Director, Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research (SAFAR)

Rakshita Swamy is the Founder and Director of SAFAR. She has worked towards advocating and institutionalizing transparency, accountability and citizen participation in governance, through her collaborations with Central and State Governments and Civil Society Organizations. Her work focuses on conceptualizing, demonstrating and institutionalizing mechanisms that enable disclosure of information, time bound grievance redress and social audits in the delivery of schemes and functioning of public institutions. She worked with the Ministry of Rural Development with a mandate to support State Governments in implementing social audits under the MGNREGA, and drawing institutional synergies on social audit with the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. She is associated with the Right to Information and Right to Work campaigns. She has a Masters in Social Policy and Development from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a Bachelors in Economics from Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi.

Sree Harsha

State Coordinator, Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research (SAFAR)

Sreeharsha coordinates a farmer's helpline called Kisanmitra in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to redress farmer's grievances through legal, administrative and policy advocacy. He works on promoting sustainable agriculture and socio-ecologically just alternatives and advocates for farmers rights in Telugu states. He

is a trained engineer and his previous experience in the IT sector has shaped his interest in FOSS (free and open source software). With the increasing digitisation of agriculture, he wants to facilitate discussions and work with collectives to ensure farmer's interests are centered in the design of new technologies. He also volunteers with Rythu Swarajya Vedika and Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA). He is SAFAR's state coordinator for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Akhil Surya

State Coordinator, Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research (SAFAR)

Akhil Surya is SAFAR's State Coordinator for Telangana. With a Bachelors in arts and law from the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR), Hyderabad, he works with movements, campaigns and collectives, especially by volunteering legal and policy support, to ensure that the constitutional ideals of social, economic, and political justice are meaningfully achieved. With the constantly ongoing corrosion of accountability mechanisms in governance and law, and the increasing institutionalization of the ease of doing business agenda, he strives to work towards the realisation of participatory democracy, labour rights, and social-environmental justice. He volunteers with the National Alliance for People's Movements, the Musi Jan Andolan, and unorganized workers' collectives and unions, especially domestic workers and platform workers.

Technical 7: Making Digital Welfare Work: Accountability & Transparency in India's e-governance Platforms

Moderator

Suruchi Kumari

Senior Researcher & Communication practitioner, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Suruchi Kumari is a Senior Researcher and Communication practitioner at Digital Empowerment Foundation. Previously, she completed her PhD in Geography from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her research areas lie at the intersection of digital rights and citizenship in India, particularly in the context of welfare delivery.

Speakers

Khaliq Parkar

Faculty, Human Sciences Research Centre, International Institute of Information Technology - Hyderabad (IIIT)Hyderabad

Khaliq Parkar is faculty at the Human Sciences Research Centre at IIIT Hyderabad. His doctoral research at the University of Paris City focused on digitalization and data initiatives under the Smart Cities Mission. For this work, he was awarded a fellowship by the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development, and was hosted as a Fellow at the Weizenbaum Institut in Berlin. His current research explores and evaluates policies and practices around digital technology and governance. His work has been published in the Economic & Political Weekly, South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal, and by the Centre for Policy Research, The Indian Express and Scroll. Before joining IIIT, he taught at the Symbiosis University (Pune), NMIMS University and St. Xavier's College (Mumbai).

Dr. Rejitha Nair

Faculty Member, Shiv Nadar School of Law, Chennai

Dr. Rejitha Nair has over a decade of experience working with universities and grassroots organizations. She is currently a faculty member at the Shiv Nadar School of Law, Chennai.

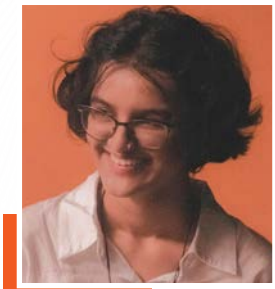
Her research explores the intersection of legal institutions and poverty, with a particular focus on social welfare policies, land rights, and the evolving digital welfare state. She holds a Master's and a Ph.D. from NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, where her doctoral work examined the potential of universal basic income to realize distributive justice within India's constitutional framework.

Sidharth Santhosh

Senior Research Associate and Founding Team member at the Foundation for Responsive Governance (ResGov)

Sidharth Santhosh works at the intersection of research and practice to make public initiatives more effective and citizen-responsive. They study and build capacities on how bureaucrats in India learn and use GovTech, collaborate across departments (convergence), and build citizen–state coalitions. Sidharth is a Senior Research Associate and founding team member at the Foundation for Responsive Governance (ResGov), supporting business development, fundraising, leading research and capacity building interventions. Sidharth also consults with Reap Benefit, strengthening partnerships between civil society and government for citizen-led solutions to climate resilience. Previously, Sidharth has worked at the Centre for Policy Research and IIEP–UNESCO, Paris, among other institutions. They are an alum of Sciences Po, Paris and Christ University, Bangalore.

Speakers



Avani Samaga

Exhibition and Spatial Designer, Halfcourt Collective

Avani Samaga is an exhibition and spatial designer working with speculative futures, centered around dataviz. Avani works with datasets and their representations as a tool to identify fundamental issues and their solutions, and ways in which these representations can change thought processes and create systemic change at a grassroot level.

Anisha Pai

Data Scientist, Halfcourt Collective

Anisha Pai is a Data Scientist working in the international NGO and Non-Profit space. They create qualitative AI tools to tell nuanced and impactful data stories. Primarily, Anisha works to understand what "Good" and "Dignified" jobs mean to workers and how ecosystem partners can bridge the gap to help employers offer those jobs.

Technical Session 9: Policy Pathways for Trusted and Responsible AI through Data Governance

Moderator

Sonia Jorge

Founder and Executive Director of Global Digital Inclusion Partnership

Sonia is the Founder and Executive Director of the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP), and an experienced leader and international digital policy expert. Sonia has successfully led global coalitions bringing together the private sector, governments, and civil society actors from across the globe to deliver the policies needed to reduce the cost to connect and make universal meaningful connectivity a reality for everyone in global majority countries. As a policy advisor and gender equality advocate with experience in over 50 countries, she has led numerous digital policy and development projects in several regions and with international organizations, such as the World Bank, UNDP, UN Women, ITU, and for private sector companies and associations. Sonia was recognized by Apolitical as one of the World's 100 Most Influential People in Digital Government in 2019. She serves or has served as a member and expert in a number of Committees, including CGAP's Data Project, DFID's Digital Access Panel for Africa, the ITU-UN Women EQUALS Partnership, The World Economic Forum's Future of the Internet Initiative, the Broadband Commission Working Group on the Gender Digital Divide, the Advisory Committee on International Communications and Information Policy (ACICIP) Subcommittee of the U.S. State Department on ICT4D, and the EU-AU Digital Economy Task Force. She was an Independent Board Director with KaiOS Technologies. Sonia is an Advisory Board member of UNESCO's Cetic.br Regional Center and a frequent speaker at international, regional and national forums. Sonia was the co-founder and Executive Director of the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) until September 2022. She has a Masters in Public Policy from Tufts University and degrees in Economics and Business Finance from the University of Massachusetts.

Speakers

Dr. Jandhyala Prabhakar Rao

Former Dean, School of Humanities and Director, e-Learning Centre, University of Hyderabad

Formerly Professor of Linguistics in the University of Hyderabad, He was Dean, School of Humanities and Director, e-Learning Centre, University of Hyderabad. He was also Member (India) of the UNESCO-Information for All Programme (IFAP) Bureau (2022-24). He has been nominated as Chair, Working Group on Information for Development, UNESCO-IFAP (2024). His areas of research include linguistics, translation studies, Internationalisation of Higher Education and AI Ethics. His innovative activities and initiatives in the IFAP Priority Areas, such as Multilingualism, Information for Development, Information Ethics, Information Literacy and more., enabled him to build strong national and international networks. As a result, he has established a Consortium on Global AI Ethics for Social Good (GAIE4SG), and initiated the creation of two Consortia on Ethics for Public Policies on Artificial Intelligence for Latin American and the Caribbean (EticALIA). His initiative to establish South and South East Asia AI Research Forum for Holistic Development (S&SEAAIRF4HD) is in the process. These initiatives strengthen IFAP across the globe and support achievement of the SDGs 2030. He is an advocate for building local AI solutions, promoting Digital Well-being, preserving multilingualism using digital technologies in sync with the indigenous people, cultures and knowledge. His familiarity with multi-disciplinary topics and multi-cultural environments is a linked to being a coordinator of several national and international projects. He has presented and published several research papers on these themes and serves as an editorial board member of many Journals and academic committees across the globe. A regular speaker in academic settings, he has also established MoUs with many universities and institutions across the world. In addition to his international and academic work his strong links with private sector means he also has roles as a member of Executive Committees of some of India's premier industrial organisations.

Shatakratu Sahu

Associate Director for Digital Economy and TMT for US India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF)

Shatakratu Sahu is Associate Director for Digital Economy and TMT for US India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) where he focuses on AI and cybersecurity and broader US-India relations. In his previous role for the think tank Carnegie India, his research primarily focused on AI-related issues on regulation, infrastructure, global AI summits, and national strategies of India and the United States. Shatakratu is a qualified lawyer and a graduate of National University of Juridical Sciences (NUJS), Kolkata, India.

Usha Raman

Professor, Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad.

Her academic interests span journalism pedagogy, cultural studies of science, health communication, children's media, feminist media studies, and digital cultures. Before joining the University, she headed the communications department at L V Prasad Eye Institute. In addition to several journal articles and book chapters, she writes regularly for the popular media on issues related to health, gender and education and edits a monthly magazine for school teachers, called Teacher Plus. Usha received her doctorate in mass communication from the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA, in 1996. She has been a visiting fellow at the University of Sydney (Australia), MIT (USA) and University of Bremen (Germany). Most recently, her work has focused on civic engagement and digital social networks, and feminist digital methodologies. She is co-founder of the IDRC funded initiative FemLabCo, which explores the future of women's work.

Professor Usha Raman led the India field work for a multi-country project initiated by the Digital Futures for Children centre at the London School of Economics. Alumni Sumana Kasturi and Chinar Mehta are co-authors of the study, which explored young people's experiences with GenAI, so as to draw insights that can inform technology design and policy interventions for a safer and more sustainable digital future.

Technical Session 10: What Happens to Our Electronics? E-Waste, the Environment, and the Global Value Chain

Moderator

Alfiya Azeem Khan

Researcher, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Alfiya Azeem Khan is a researcher at the Digital Empowerment Foundation. Her earlier work examined e-waste in Seelampur through the lenses of caste, class, and gender. Her work has been published in Himal Southasian, Maktoob and Newsminute.

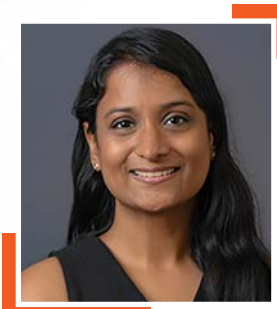
Speakers

Prof. (Dr.) Ashutosh Mohanty

International Development Expert and Professor

Prof. (Dr.) Ashutosh Mohanty, an International Interdisciplinary Development Professional, Practitioner, Researcher, Senior University Professor, Mentor, Team Leader, Consultant, Programme planning & Policy Adviser with 22 years of applied project-based experience in more than 14 countries to ensure Holistic Disaster Risk Management & Governance, Climate Resilience, Sustainable Urban Development and Strategic Resilience of existing and future infrastructure, AI application in Disaster Risk Management, Green and Clean Energy, Integrated Development policy & Planning, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Application. He served mainly Strategic Environmental Risk Management; EIA, Urban & Smart City Development Programme, Climate Resilience focused on Livelihood and Eco System Services in Hindukush Himalayan and Coastal Region. He is serving as Adviser to the World Bank Funded Disaster Risk

Management Project with Maharashtra Government, India. Presently serving as an Adjourn Professor Odisha State Open University, OSOU, Disaster Management Dept. Govt of Odisha) including NIDM nodal officer (IUIN-DRR-NIDM), MHA; He served as Professor and Director, Department of Disaster Management, Climate Change and Sustainable Development at The Faculty of Emerging Technologies, Sri Sri University Cuttack Odisha, Served as Dean-Research and International Affairs, Madhyanchal Professional University, India.



Aakansha Jain

PhD Scholar, School of International Service, American University

Aakansha is PhD candidate at School of International Service, American University, Washington DC. Her research engages with environmental justice and political ecology, critically examining how existing social inequalities across caste, class, and gender shape people's vulnerabilities and responses to environmental degradation. Her broader interests include land rights, informal waste economies, migration, and climate change. She holds a Master's in Development Studies from Ambedkar University Delhi and a Bachelor's in English Literature from the University of Delhi. Aakansha's work foregrounds the everyday politics of environmental struggles and the unequal terms on which communities engage with global ecological and economic transformations.

Technical Session 11: Networked Hate at the Margins: Catering to Online & Offline Realities ofVictim-Survivors

Salman Mujawar

Program Lead, RATI Foundation & Maharashtra Online Safety Network

Salman Mujawar is a psychologist with an MA in Counseling Psychology from Shivaji University, Kolhapur. He brings extensive experience in adolescent and youth counseling, HIV/AIDS counseling, mental health support, and general psychological counseling. With a practical, client-centered approach, he helps individuals navigate life's challenges and improve their overall well-being by providing a safe and non-judgmental space to explore their experiences. Over the past six years, Salman has worked with several prominent organizations, hospitals, and institutions in Kolhapur and Pune. He has served as an adolescent health trainer, mental health trainer, and counselor in nearly 35 schools across both rural and urban areas. He is also the co-founder of We Care Social Foundation, Kolhapur, which focuses on mental health awareness, adolescent well-being, and social development initiatives. At RATI Foundation, Salman began as a counselor with Meri Trustline, providing psychosocial and technical support to victims of online abuse. He now serves as the Program Lead for the Maharashtra Online Safety Network, where he strengthens the capacities of child protection systems, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to safeguard children and adolescents in digital spaces. Passionate about continuous learning, he remains committed to staying updated with best practices in mental health and offering compassionate, evidence-based support to every individual he works with.

Faiza Shaikh

Program Lead, RATI Foundation

Faiza Shaikh completed her management studies from Mumbai University and began her journey with Aawaaz-e-Niswaan as a student. There, she deepened her understanding of social issues, particularly the struggles of women and girls from minority communities. This experience inspired her to become a trainer, educator, and counselor. Currently, Faiza works as the Program Lead, conducting sessions in schools and colleges, teaching women through adult literacy programs, and providing personal and career counseling. She has completed a year-long counseling training with Ummeed, which has enhanced her ability to address the psychological and emotional needs of women and girls. She advocates for mental well-being and creates non-judgmental spaces for all genders, staying closely connected to the community and exploring girls' social media experiences to better understand their challenges. A passionate poetess, Faiza uses her words to amplify women's rights, equality, and empowerment. She has handled numerous cases of violence involving girls and women, provided peer group counseling, and supported adolescents and teenagers with various personal issues. Faiza has been part of the Feminist Leadership Journey, which brought together young grassroots workers from across India to explore diverse regions, experience local cultures, and engage with ongoing movements for the rights of women and disadvantaged groups. Recently, she participated in the Shodhini Convention, aimed at building collective strategies for engaging and empowering marginalized girls across Maharashtra. She has also performed at the Mumbai Literature Festival, showcasing her literary talents while advocating for social change.

Technical Session 12: Platforms and theirWorkers: Techno-Legal Solutions to Strengthen FairWork Outcomes

Moderator

K K Prahalad

Senior Legal and Policy Consultant, Pacta

Prahalad is a Law and Policy Associate at Pacta, where he focuses on technology policy and digital rights, advocating for privacy, equity, and innovation in the evolving digital landscape.

Speakers

Shaik Salauddin

Founder, Telangana Gig and Platform Workers' Union (TGPWU)

Shaik Salauddin is a passionate advocate for platform workers, founding key organizations like the Telangana Four Wheeler Drivers' Association and the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers' Union (TGPWU). As National General Secretary of 'Indian Federation of App- based Transport Workers' (IFAT), he represents over 35,000 members. His work has led to the registration of 40,000 workers and scholarships for 25,000 children. Honoured with the 2023 Shram Shakti Award, Shaik envisions a future where gig workers across India have a powerful, unified voice in shaping policy and social change.

Jai Bharathi

Founder & CEO of MOWO Social Initiatives

Jai Bharathi is a trailblazing social entrepreneur and motorcyclist, empowering women through mobility. As Founder & CEO of MOWO Social Initiatives, she's trained 5,000+ women in two- and three-wheeler driving and established India's first women-exclusive motor training centre. Under her leadership MOWO has also published two impactful research reports: "Beyond Transportation: The Profound Impact of Mobility on Women's Lives" and "Mobility & Well-being: Empowering Women Through Sustainable Mobility Solutions". Jai's work has earned global recognition, including the Grinnell College Social Innovator Prize, and she's now scaling MOWO Fleet for India's sustainable future.

Technical Session 13: Memes, Myths, and Misinfo: Reshaping Narratives on Gender, Sexuality, and Rights in the Age of Disinformation

Speakers

Nidhi Arya (she/her)

Programme lead, Communications & Knowledge Production, The YP Foundation

Nidhi is a young feminist practitioner. She works as a programme lead – Communications & Knowledge Production at The YP Foundation, where she weaves stories of change through strategic communications and youth-led knowledge initiatives. With over seven years of experience in the development sector and five years dedicated to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), she has worked closely with young people and government stakeholders to strengthen policies, build narratives, and promote meaningful youth participation.

Jesmin Ahmed (she/her)

Programme Coordinator, Communications & Knowledge Production, The YP Foundation

Jesmin is a queer visual artist and intersectional feminist advocate with over three years of experience in content creation, digital marketing, UX design, research, and partnership building. With a background in Sociology and Social Anthropology from TISS and Miranda House, she fosters inclusive dialogues across communities. At The YP Foundation, she works as a programme coordinator-Communications & Knowledge Production. Jesmin also channels her creativity through art, cooking, and crafting artisanal candles and jewellery.

Technical Session 14: The Hidden Costs of the AI Infrastructure Boom: Who Really Pays the Price?

Moderator

Mili Dangwal

Senior Officer, Media & Communications, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Mili Dangwal is a Senior Officer at the Digital Empowerment Foundation, where she leads initiatives at the intersection of digital inclusion, gender advocacy, and social impact. Her work involves designing and managing community-driven programs that empower marginalized groups, especially women and artisans, through technology-enabled livelihoods, capacity building, and digital literacy. She is currently contributing to a research study examining the social and environmental implications of emerging AI and data infrastructure in India.

Speakers

Sara Marcucci

Founder, AI + Planetary Justice Alliance

Sara Marcucci is a researcher and advocate focused on the planetary justice impacts of the AI industry. She founded and leads the AI + Planetary Justice Alliance, a collective advancing justice-centered approaches to AI across its supply chain, and consults for various public and private organizations. Sara has advised intergovernmental organizations and civil-society initiatives through roles with The GovLab at NYU, the World Bank, The Open Data Institute, and others. She has contributed to hearings and public consultations on AI and planetary justice, and speaks regularly on alternative approaches to technology. She holds an MSc in Data & Society from the London School of Economics.

Maitri Singh

Researcher, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Maitri Singh is a researcher and communications professional at the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF). With masters in English Literature from Ambedkar University, Delhi, she currently works on digital inclusion, gender, and just transitions. She also leads Digital Just Transition Taskforce at DEF, where she explores the intersections of digital with climate change. Recently, her research centres on understanding the socio-economic impacts of AI data centres in India.

Siddhartha Malempati

Directing Council-General, Commons Collective

Siddhartha Malempati is a multifaceted professional with over 18 years of experience spanning computer science, patent law, and economics. As the Directing Council-General of the Commons Collective, he leads a global network of activists, researchers, and practitioners working to advance the commons as a foundation for social progress. A serial entrepreneur, Siddhartha co-founded Helico Consulting, Octacomm Technologies, and Radius EduTech, companies pioneering innovations in cloud computing, AI-driven communication, and learning management systems. A recognized free and open-source policy advocate, he has championed digital rights, net neutrality, and community technology initiatives, extending digital education to over 30,000 individuals in rural India. Guided by a deep commitment to technological justice and collaborative innovation, Siddhartha's lifelong mission is to harness technology and collective intelligence to build a more equitable and sustainable world.

Technical Session 15: Trust and Safety for Preventing Picture-Perfect Hate in South Asia: Examining Emergent Systemic Voids Through an Algorithmic Audit

Speakers

Himanshu Panday

Co-Founder, Dignity in Difference

Himanshu Panday is a digital anthropologist and co-founder of Dignity in Difference (DiD), a South Asia-based organization focused on preventing online hate speech. His research and practice sit at the intersection of technology, policy, and social justice, with a focus on building safer and inclusive digital spaces in the region. He leads the curation of data and tools for peacebuilding at the organisation. Himanshu has previously worked with global organisations on combining thick and big data to address online gender- based violence and preventing violent extremism in South Asia.

Karen Rebelo

Deputy Editor, BOOM

Karen Rebelo is a journalist reporting on misinformation and disinformation in India. She has been instrumental in setting up one of India's earliest fact-checking newsrooms. In 2018, she led fact-checking workshops for journalists across six Indian cities as part of the Google News Initiative, in which she also helped develop the curriculum. A few of the participants in her workshops have gone on to set up their own fact-checking newsrooms. More recently, she spearheaded efforts channeling experts in academia in India and the United States and start-ups to build a detection ecosystem for deepfake content in the 2024 general election in India. Karen was the first to report about the use of AI-voice clones in the Madhya Pradesh state elections in 2023; how photos of a rape and murder victim in India were edited using AI apps to make reels; and how Meta AI is being weaponised to make harmful anti-Muslim AI images.

Lightning Talk 16 :Digital divide among elderly and senior citizens

Mathew Cherian

Global Ambassador of HelpAge International on Ageing

Mathew Cherian is a civil engineer and alumni of BITS Pilani, and from the first batch of IRMA . He is an author of books and development worker for four decades. He has set up Credibility Alliance and Guidestar India for transparency in the voluntary sector. He also set up Charities Aid Foundation in India and worked with HelpAge india as CEO for 18 years and is now the Global Ambassador for Ageing with HelpAge international. his book on Million Missions outlines the history of the voluntary sector.

His latest book is on " Ageing and Poverty in India . A member of the World Economic forum council on Ageing .Former Chair of VANI and Trustee of HelpAge and presently Global Ambassador of HelpAge International on Ageing.

Lightning Talk 17 : Cyber Attack or Brain Trap ? The Hidden Psychology of Online Fraud

Mansoor Ahmed

Director (Outreach) Cyber Crime Control foundation & Online Education.

As the University Outreach Director for Online Education, he spearhead initiatives to expand access to quality education while advancing research on global cyber frauds and crimes. His work focuses on developing case studies to enhance understanding of cyber threats in business and industrial systems. As a passionate advocate for cyber safety, he speaks globally on awareness to combat cyber threats and fraud, empowering organizations to secure their digital and production environments.

Technical Session 18: Gig and Platform Workers Dialogue: Data, Wages and Social Protection

Moderator

Dr. Arpita Kanjilal

Head, Research & Communications, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Arpita heads the Research & Communications Division at the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) where she leads critical work at the intersection of digital rights, equity and inclusive development in India. In addition to her research and programmatic leadership, she spearheads strategic partnerships, working closely with civil society organisations, government bodies, and industry stakeholders to advance collective advocacy efforts. She is a researcher and writer who brings academic depth and grassroots insight to the discourse on technology, justice, social transformation. With a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics, Arpita works at the convergence of language, identity and digital empowerment, advocating for rights-based, people-centric approaches to digital policy and practice. Her leadership at DEF spans a wide range of initiatives from strengthening last-mile connectivity and advocating for online safety and data protection - to examining the environmental impact of digital technologies and exploring economic alternatives for coal-dependent communities. She has anchored the Digital Swaraj Fellowship - shaping experiential learning journeys for youth, and currently leads the Just AI Initiative, which focuses on data and algorithmic accountability grounded in community realities.

Speakers

S.Q. Masood

Co-founder, ASEEM and The Democracy Dialogue

S.Q. Masood is a social activist based in Hyderabad who has been actively working on various issues for decades, with a focus on the rights of minority communities. He is also engaged in promoting transparency and accountability through advocacy and legal interventions. He is the co-founder of ASEEM and The Democracy Dialogue. Masood has filed several public interest litigations in the Telangana High Court and the Supreme Court of India on issues concerning the rights and entitlements of marginalized communities, including social security, food security, digital exclusion, and surveillance.

Shaik Salauddin

Founder, Telangana Gig and Platform Workers' Union (TGPWU)

Shaik Salauddin is a passionate advocate for platform workers, founding key organizations like the Telangana Four Wheeler Drivers' Association and the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers' Union (TGPWU). As National General Secretary of 'Indian Federation of App- based Transport Workers' (IFAT), he represents over 35,000 members. His work has led to the registration of 40,000 workers and scholarships for 25,000 children. Honoured with the 2023 Shram Shakti Award, Shaik envisions a future where gig workers across India have a powerful, unified voice in shaping policy and social change.

Alivelu, Ride- Hailing Cab Driver

Technical Session 19: Domain Name System (DNS) Abuse for Dummies

Moderator

Vinayak Bharadwaz

NetMission Alumnus and Ambassador

Vinayak Bharadwaz is a youth Internet governance advocate from India, currently serving in the organizing committees of NetMission Academy 2026, Local APIGA India, and Youth IGF India from the past 3 years. A NetMission.Asia Alumnus and recent inSIG 2025 Fellow, he works to advance inclusive dialogue and youth participation in digital governance across the Asia Pacific. With the Internet Society India Mumbai Chapter, he has contributed to regional initiatives promoting accessible Internet ecosystems, including the Internet Governance Praxis Series in Shillong, Meghalaya. Vinayak is also a Internet Society certified Community Centered Connectivity Technician, focusing on grassroots infrastructure connectivity solutions and community-driven innovation in the digital space.

Speakers

Socheata Sokhachan

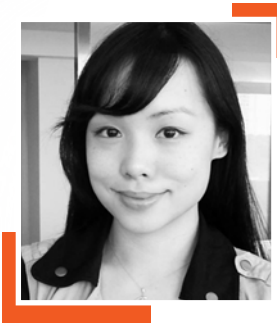
Head, Community Engagement, NetMission.Asia

Socheata Sokhachan is a passionate Internet governance advocate from Cambodia, currently serving as Head of Community Engagement at NetMission. Asia. She first joined as a Student Ambassador in the 2023–2024 cohort and quickly emerged as a leading voice in regional youth engagement. Since then, she has taken on pivotal roles in program development, community-building, and strategic outreach.

At NetMission.Asia, Socheata has led the planning and facilitation of youth-focused

initiatives including the APAC Youth WSIS+20 Series, NetMission@APRALO, and the Asia Pacific Youth IGF 2024 & 2025. As a member of the NetMission Academy Organizing Committee (2024–2025), she plays a key role in shaping participant experience, while also contributing to content strategy through her work with the Digital Content & Research Committee (DCRC).

Beyond NetMission, Socheata's impact spans the broader Internet governance ecosystem. She is a current member of the APrIGF Multistakeholder Steering Group (2025), a youth facilitator for APIGA, and a core organizer of YIGF Cambodia since 2023. She continues to champion youth inclusion, digital equity, and cross-cultural collaboration in both regional and global forums.



Jennifer Chung

Vice President- Policy, DotAsia Organisation

Jennifer Chung is the Vice President, Policy for DotAsia Organisation. She represents Asia Registry at Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and is a Generic Names Supporting Organisation (GNSO) councilor, making policies for generic Top-Level Domains (e.g. .com, .org, .asia etc.). She headed the IANA Stewardship Transition Coordination Group (ICG) Secretariat that oversaw the IANA stewardship transfer from the US government to the global multistakeholder community. Ms. Chung was appointed to the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) (2018–2020), and the 2022 Expert Working Group that developed recommendations on strengthening the IGF. She heads the Internet Governance Forum Support Association (IGFSA) Secretariat which provides support to the IGF and grants seed funding to National, Regional and Youth Initiatives (NRIs). She has taught at the South School on Internet Governance and Asia Pacific School on Internet Governance, and is a current faculty member for the NetMission.asia Academy, and the Asia Pacific Internet Governance Academy (APIGA) since its inception, building up the next-generation leaders. She serves in the Asia Pacific Regional IGF Secretariat and works towards amplifying Asia Pacific contributions on Internet governance. Ms. Chung is on the Information Society Innovation Fund (ISIF.asia) Selection Committee that awards grants for research and technical solutions supporting Internet development in Asia Pacific. Representing DotAsia, she is part of the core Secretariat of the Technical Community Coalition on Multistakeholderism (TCCM), a group of critical Internet infrastructure operators dedicated to strengthening the multistakeholder approach to decisions about the Internet's future and its governance.

Barkha Manral

Founder, India Internet Research Organisation (IIRO)

Barkha Manral is a cyber-tech enthusiast passionate about technology policy and Internet governance, navigating her journey as a dynamic youth change-maker. She began her involvement through Youth IGF India in 2023, where she gained foundational insights into Internet governance. Her journey took shape when she was selected as a Fellow at ICANN 78 in Hamburg, transforming her role from a newcomer to an engaged community member. As an ICANN Fellowship alumna, Barkha continued to broaden her perspective joining the NetMission Academy 2024 cohort, which helped her grow from a learner to a youth leader. Her consistent dedication led her to multiple IG Fellowships, including ICANN 80 in Kigali, ICANN 83 in Prague and APSIG 2024 in Taiwan. Today, Barkha contributes actively within APRALO, APRALO CIP CCG, and the Youth IGF India Organising Committee. She also brought Local APIGA India to her country and served as a mentor for ALAC, chosen by the APRALO Leadership Team for APIGA 2025 in Busan. In addition, she holds a position on the NetMission Advisory Board now. To further empower young learners, she founded the India Internet Research Organisation (IIRO), creating a platform to encourage meaningful youth participation in digital policy and governance.

Edmon Chung

CEO, DotAsia Organisation

Edmon Chung is serving as the CEO for DotAsia Organisation. He also participates extensively in global and regional Internet related groups and contributes his time and expertise to Internet Governance related issues.

Since 2002, Edmon has played a leadership role in the region-wide '.Asia' domain extension initiative. He championed DotAsia Organisation as a not-for-profit organization and its mandate to promote Internet development and adoption in Asia. Since the launch of '.Asi' web presence in 2008, DotAsia has contributed significantly to a variety of community projects in Asia, including for example: Go.Asia, ISIF.Asia, NetMission.Asia, MaD.Asia among others. Edmon is also an inventor of patents underlying technologies for internationalized domain names (IDN) and was involved in making it possible for

the introduction of multilingual domain names and email addresses on the Internet. In 2000, Edmon was selected by Canada's most prestigious and influential news journal, The Globe and Mail, as one of its 'Young Canadian Leaders'. In 2001, he won the 'Most Innovative Award' in the Chinese Canadian Entrepreneurship Award. Between 2006 and 2010, Edmon served as an elected member on the ICANN GNSO Council and after that he served as an elected member on the ICANN At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) from the Asia Pacific Region. Between 2006 and 2011, Edmon also served as an elected member of the Elections Committee of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the Information Technology Subsector. Edmon has a Bachelor of Applied Science and Master of Engineering from the University of Toronto.

Technical Session 20: Building dream machines: How can we build accessible technologies together?

Speakers

Padmini Ray Murray

Founder, Design Beku

A researcher, maker, and founder of Design Beku, Padmini's work aims to reshape how we think about design, technology, and justice. She leads a collective of artists, technologists, and researchers working to build community-led, ethically grounded, and locally rooted digital practices. Through her research and creative interventions, Padmini challenges extractive infrastructures and algorithmic systems to imagine digital spaces that reflect feminist, inclusive, and context-specific values.

Closing Plenary : Data Governance and Accountability

Chair

Amir Ullah Khan

Research Director
Centre for Development Policy and Practice

Amir Ullah Khan is a development economist and a Member of the Telangana Public Service Commission (TPSC). He serves as Research Director at CDPP and is an Adjunct Professor at TISS and Manipal University. He is also a Visiting Professor at ISB, NALSAR, and KSPPH. A former civil servant from the 1993 batch, Amir has worked on research projects for the European Commission, the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER), the Planning Commission, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), and the World Bank. He was also associated with UNDP's Project LARGE on legal reforms, and worked with Encyclopaedia Britannica in the previous century. In this millennium, he has worked with AEquitas Consulting, the India Development Foundation, PHDCCI, Bangalore Management Academy, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Amir is also a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Development Policy and Practice. He holds a degree in Electronics Engineering from Osmania University, a qualification in Rural Management from IRMA, and a PhD from Jamia Millia Islamia.

Speakers

Rakshita Swamy

Founder and Director of Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research (SAFAR)

Rakshita Swamy is the Founder and Director of SAFAR. She has worked towards advocating and institutionalizing transparency, accountability and citizen participation in governance, through her collaborations with Central and State Governments and Civil Society Organizations. Her work focuses on conceptualizing, demonstrating and institutionalizing mechanisms that enable disclosure of information, time bound grievance redress and social audits in the delivery of schemes and functioning of public institutions. She worked with the Ministry of Rural Development with a mandate to support State Governments in implementing social audits under the MGNREGA, and drawing institutional synergies on social audit with the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. She is associated with the Right to Information and Right to Work campaigns. She has a Masters in Social Policy and Development from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a Bachelors in Economics from Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi.

Neeti Biyani

Senior Advisor, Strategy and Development at APNIC Foundation

Neeti Biyani is Senior Advisor, Strategy and Development at APNIC Foundation. She brings extensive regional and global experience spanning intergovernmental and governmental agencies, civil society, and the technology sector. Over the years, Neeti has worked on issues of transparency, governance, social development, and justice, driven by her belief in strategic, evidence-based approaches to create meaningful and sustainable transformation. At the Foundation, she leads strategy, planning, development, and impact initiatives while also coordinating advocacy frameworks focused on digital and internet development. Her work bridges the Foundation's diverse programs, leveraging synergies to strengthen outcomes and advance systemic change.

Setu Bandh Upadhyay

Senior Advisor, Policy & Advocacy, Internet Society

Setu Bandh Upadhyay is Senior Advisor for Policy and Advocacy at the Internet Society, leading global efforts to advance an open, secure, and trustworthy internet. He has previously worked with the Global Network Initiative, Mozilla, Global Voices, and the Alexander von Humboldt Institute, focusing on community and people-oriented tech policy and civil society engagement across the Global Majority. Setu holds a Master's in Public Policy from Central European University and is a trained lawyer in India.

Indranil Niyogi, Consultant

India Program Fund, Swiss Philanthropy Foundation

Indranil Niyogi is a seasoned development professional with over two decades of leadership experience in education, child safeguarding, gender equity, and systems strengthening. He currently manages the India Program at the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation, overseeing multimillion-dollar investments in justice, rights, livelihoods, and climate adaptation. His expertise includes evidence-informed programme design, institutional capacity building, and forging equity-driven partnerships. With experience across diverse contexts-migrant children, indigenous groups, and urban poor-he has led initiatives in foundational and social-emotional learning, child protection, and community empowerment, grounded in the belief that quality education and safe environments are vital for children's well-being and development.

Thank You All !!

Let's strengthen our efforts towards Digital Empowerment together to build equal digital citizenship!

See you all at the next Digital Citizen Summit 2026.

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