

Larsen & Toubro Infotech

Impact Assessment of Digital Sakshar Program

Final Report

14th January 2022



Thinkthrough Consulting

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1. Executive Summary

Background

Larsen & Toubro Infotech (LTI) as part of its CSR initiative provide rural youth with the skills to participate in an increasingly digital world. LTI has invested in making digital literacy available to the underprivileged societies. LTI is working with Pratham Infotech Foundation (PIF) to provide the necessary digital skill to the youths. It is actively working to bridge the digital gap, facilitate the adoption of information technologies in education and equip disadvantaged youth with skills, tools, and capabilities that new global economy needs.

LTI's 'Digital Sakshar' program is aimed to empower the youth of the marginalized communities by imparting digital literacy in computer and IT skills, enhancing their communication and employability skills and helping them to get better employment. When education, training and assistive devices and technologies is made accessible, they are able to access better employment opportunities. This results in improved well-being of their families which has a positive socio-economic impact for the entire community.

Summary of key findings

Relevance

Overall, the assessment found the program to be relevant to the needs of the youth and the market standards. The interactions with the youth and their perspectives on the relevance of the skills taught in the program highlighted that the content is in tandem with the employability skills of present day. All current trainees who were surveyed found the content to be useful for both the digital and the financial literacy programmes. Along with digital and financial literacy, students are taught about the importance of communication at workplace, work ethics and other soft skills which were reported to be useful in securing jobs.

Effectiveness

For both, the employability program that focusses on digital skills as well as the financial literacy program, the team at Pratham ensured that not only the youth but the community was also assured about the importance of the program. Pratham engaged with parent and youth stakeholders through regular community visits. The Pratham team also ensured that these efforts continued alongside the classes/training continued during the pandemic. Almost all respondents reported that they were satisfied with the training guidance received during the course.

A social return on investment study carried out by TTC in the later part of 2021, brought out that for each unit of currency invested by LTI towards Digital Sakshar program, the potential is to generate 14 units worth socio-economic value for stakeholders. Against the overall investment worth INR 38,636,716 for the Digital Sakshar program, the overall present value of outcomes amounts to INR 511,060,762 which represents how the youth beneficiaries were benefited through their monetized value of increase in confidence, increase in employability; the savings for parents derives from the youth beneficiaries, the improvements in the trainers, the satisfaction derived by the LTI employee volunteers; the LTI will be benefiting by an increase in visibility and brand image; and Pratham Infotech benefits by the increase their donors through its improvements in the market reputation. All these aspects have been further validated by the current assessment as well, across past and present batches.

Efficiency

The program adapted seamlessly to the requirements of the pandemic; it was converted to an online mode of teaching and learning that the students found useful. Job fairs and access to interactions with human resource teams of various companies was part of the program which continued online in spite of the challenges posed by the pandemic restrictions. Through these strategies, students were given adequate access to job interviews and placement interviews.

Impact

The program impact was highlighted through positive beneficiary responses about the increase in confidence and increase in employability skills attained through the training. A visible rise in income was also observed for students of both the programs. The details of each parameter are illustrated in the ensuing pages. The overall objective of the program, to ensure employability amongst youth and increase their skills in digital technology appears to have been achieved to a great extent. Interactions with beneficiaries highlighted that they were able to secure better employment after undertaking the course.

Sustainability

The sustainability of the program depends on a strong backward and forward linkage; the program ensures a strong engagement with the community on helping them understand the importance of undertaking this training as well as ensures to a large extent the connect with industry for employment. The training goes beyond digital skills and ensures that trainees understand the importance of soft skills in everyday life especially when securing a job. It imparts in them, the knowledge and skill of interacting with different kinds of people at workplace and teaches workplace ethics and rights.

Recommendations

The Digital Sakshar program has evolved over time and ensured that it adapts to the need of the time **and situation smoothly. It has also ensured that there is continuity in beneficiary's learning and has adapted quickly whilst also achieving its primary objectives of employability and skill enhancement.**

Interactions with program stakeholders have highlighted some aspects that can be strengthened going forward:

- 1 Greater involvement of LTI volunteers through a systematic employee engagement program is needed. This will ensure transfer of knowledge and drive greater effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the program. LTI can explore the development of a dedicated volunteer program in line with key flagship projects being supported by them to make the involvement more structured.
- 2 Post placement feedback from recruiters and relationship building should provide the program useful feedback and guidance on key emerging market trends.
- 3 Strengthened engagement with alumni to trace the long-term impact of the program. The alumni engagement needs to be structured better for greater visibility and impact.
- 4 Concurrent assessments and a centralized system for tracking learning outcomes on a regular basis will provide participants greater engagement. These aspects can be built into the app going forward.

2. Background

2.1 About the Program

The Digital Sakshar initiative was started in February 2016 as a pilot project till March 2016. It finally began as a complete project in 2017 by Larsen & Toubro InfoTech (LTI) with their implementation partner Pratham InfoTech Foundation. The main objective of the program was to equip youth with employability skills and to encourage their participation in the increasingly digital world and to ensure a better standard of living through skill enhancement. Digital Sakshar project focuses on digital literacy and employability improvement for men and women from underprivileged communities in Pune and Mumbai areas

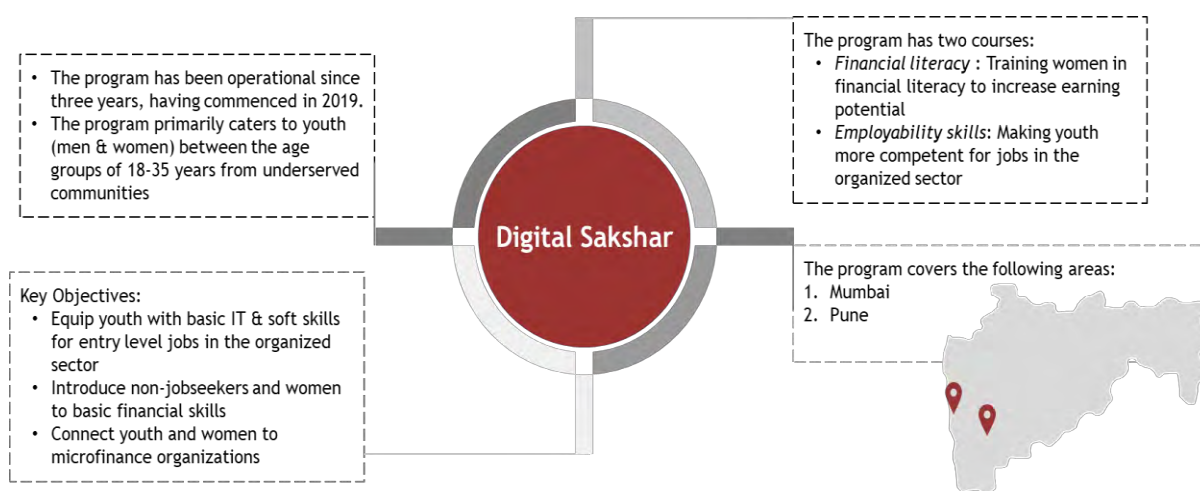


Figure 1 Digital Sakshar Overview

The program was started for underprivileged youth belonging to the age group of 18-35 and was implemented in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane and Pune in Maharashtra state. As a first step, staff and trainers usually reach out to the communities and get youth enrolled in the program using a door to door mobilizing strategy. The program caters to two kinds of population, those who are looking for employment opportunities and those who are not necessarily looking employment but are looking for basic/knowledge and skills regarding finances.

Before the pandemic, the training sessions were conducted in government school premises, after working-hours or in the case of Pune, in community centres. The duration of the course is 60 hours and it is usually held on alternate days in the week. The capacity of one batch is 50 and there are a total of 5 batches of two months each over the course of one year. The first 10 days the course focuses on the building a foundation, while 7 days focus on soft skills and the final 8 days in the course focus on specialisation in employability skills or financial literacy. The second half of the course includes job fests where students get an opportunity to appear for employment interviews. To create a network, Pratham Infotech has created multiple alumni groups using social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Once the training is complete, a joint certificate is issued by LTI and Pratham Infotech to the trainees.

Beneficiary Outreach

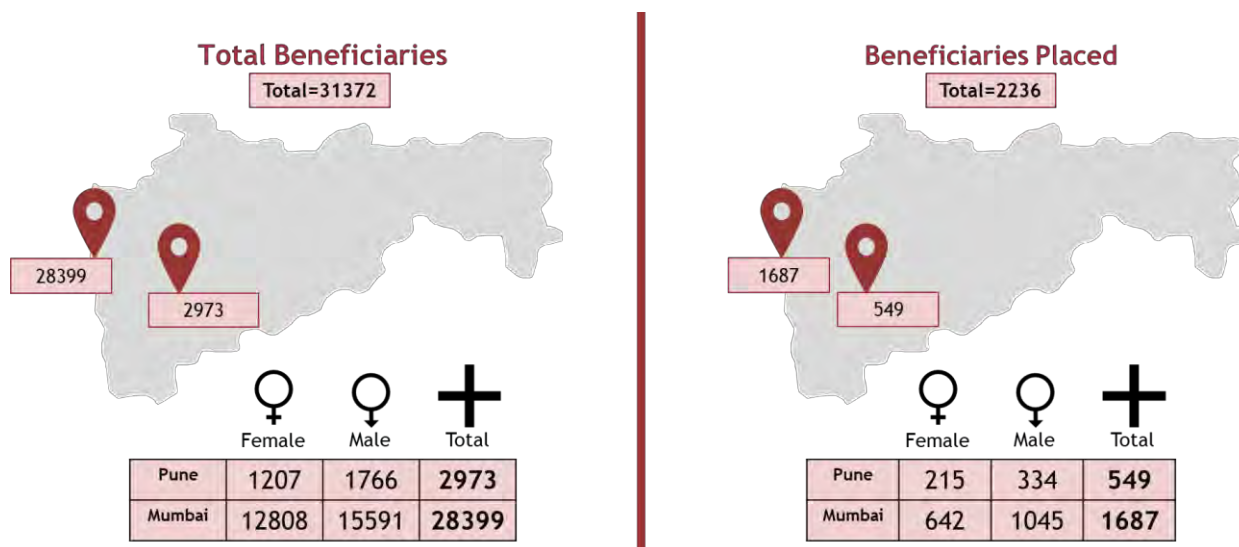


Figure 2 Beneficiary Outreach

Strategies were revised to incorporate the restrictive measures during the pandemic. The program focused on two areas: minimizing the pressure of the pandemic and engaging beneficiaries in learning activities. Revised measures also included moving in-person training sessions to an online portal. Pratham Infotech has tied up with self-help groups to imbibe financial literacy amongst women. The activities in the program are mentioned in a step-by-step flow here:

Implementation Strategy

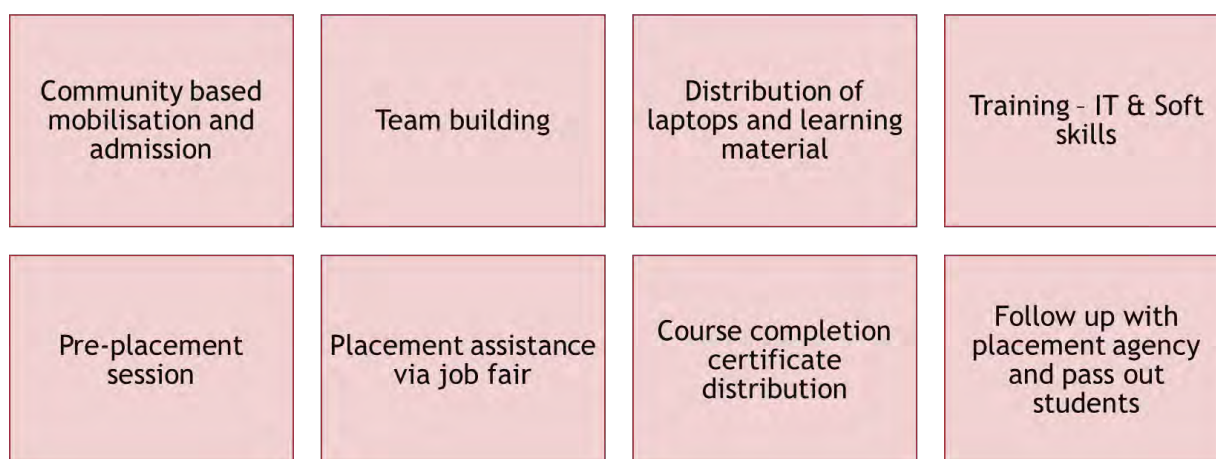


Figure 3 Implementation Strategy

Pratham's implementation strategy developed over the initial years of the program had to adapt itself to the covid pandemic. The program delivery along with mobilisation and connectedness had to be rebuilt in a manner that the trainees felt that there existed a support system. Moreover, covid also disrupted the job market, resulting in greater focus on digital skills, causing Pratham to double down on the digital enablement efforts.

Additionally, Pratham's YouTube channel was updated with latest courses on skills. The monitoring for the program takes place through an online mode along with teachers/trainers sharing screenshots of training sessions with their team leaders. An online portal, *Jankari*, is used to keep a track of program related data and used as an MIS. Pratham Infotech sends a weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly report to LTI.

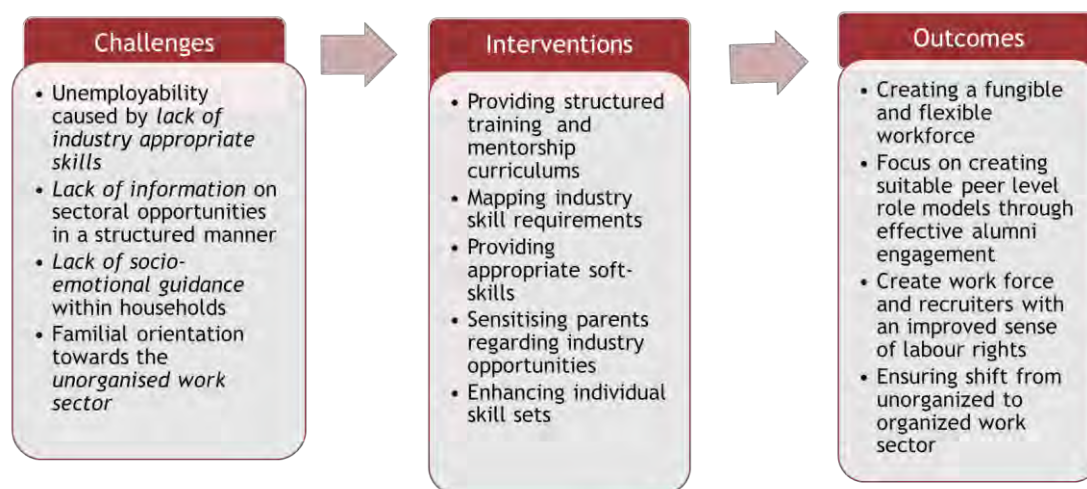


Figure 4 Theory of Change

It will be useful at this stage to reflect on the theory of change for the Digital Sakshar program. The assessment has considered the program evolution and stakeholder engagement modalities to comment on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the program. The Digital Sakshar program focusses on addressing challenges related to employability and digital literacy and employs key strategies to address these challenges as highlighted below.

Digital divide and unemployability - Low exposure to digital literacy and lack of access to digital infrastructure combined with lack of soft-skills result in low employability amongst youth and women. Digital Sakshar ensures that trainees are given appropriate soft skills to appear for interviews and conduct themselves in work-environments, including POSH trainings as a value-addition to their place of work.

Financial literacy - Lack of exposure to financial literacy resulting in inequality in decision making, economic vulnerability and low employability. Digital Sakshar addresses the lacunae faced by women in everyday life in conducting financial transactions and provides a sense of empowerment through the knowledge that is imparted.

Online learning - Digital Sakshar adapted to online modes of training and learning to ensure that classes were continued even during the pandemic period. The course content was reported to be in tandem with the requirements of the time-knowledge and use of digital payments, importance of email, use of search engines and use of digital maps by beneficiaries.

Mentorship- The program understands that most trainees do not have suitable role models from the organised sector who can help them understand the challenges and coping mechanisms needed to survive and thrive in the sector. Through structured mentorship, knowledge building sessions and volunteer connects, the program enables trainees to get a better picture of the job market.

The model identifies the needs of the beneficiaries in select geographies and employs ground staff to engage with the various stakeholders. The program provides trainers who have completed a basic

course in digital technology and who are inclined towards teaching; this aspect is deemed important in forming a rapport with the students. The program emphasises on imparting soft skills to trainees, that is believed to be the lacunae particularly when securing a job. Interactions highlighted that, while students may have the skills to undertake a particular job role, skills like communication, ability to speak in front of interviewers with confidence, interacting with various types of people and the use of different channels of communication are not taught in professional/vocational programs rendering students incapable of employment or often experiencing obstacles in getting promoted.

2.2 Assessment Approach

TTC team adopted a participatory model that suited the needs of the assessment. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative research instruments was deployed to ensure that diverse perspectives are captured, and the program evolution is understood correctly. For the quantitative data, we surveyed students of current as well as previous batches and for the qualitative data we held interactions with trainers, placement coordinators and program staff. We also held focus-group discussions with students to substantiate our insights. This aspect received significant focus as the achievements of developmental programs in general have been impacted by covid induced disruptions. Therefore, any program that has been able to adapt itself and measures taken to ensure **that stakeholder engagement continues deserves to be understood. Additionally given the program's nature, it was important to get a cross section of perspectives from past and present batches, and men and women, over the years to understand the programme's impact.**

Reaching out to the trainees:

The quantitative survey was administered virtually through data base of trainees provided by the implementation partner, Pratham Infotech, over a 2-month period from October to December 2021. A total of 374 trainees across batches were covered as part of the assessment. A database of 1320 was provided for the purpose of the study, which included trainees from batches conducted before COVID, during the 1st wave of COVID, during the 2nd wave of COVID and current batches. To ensure that we reach the optimum number of beneficiaries through calling we called/contacted each phone number 4 times before declaring it to be not-in-use. The survey questionnaire was developed post review of project documents and in consultation with LTI project team. Post a brief pilot to understand questionnaire run time followed by training of enumerators, the survey questionnaire was administered to the trainees.

Qualitative interactions were structured in a manner that both face to face and virtual conversations were carried out, based on availability of the trainees. The TTC team was particular about ensuring that the Pratham infotech team is engaged with across all levels, from the CEO to the field functionaries, so that diverse perspectives, along with both operational and strategic aspects are accounted for. The program evolution, the adaptations made, and efforts made to ensure effectiveness in delivery was therefore focused upon, in line with the assessment framework. A total of 25 qualitative interactions were carried out.

Limitations to the Assessment

Given the nature of the assessment which required respondents to spare a significant amount of their time in a day, the assessment was carried out virtually. Virtual interactions allow respondents the flexibility of being in any geographical place or setting without having to lose working hours. It is important to also consider the *opportunity cost* and constraints faced by beneficiaries when undertaking such an assessment. Many trainees had changed their numbers and tracking these select trainees would have incurred more time, impacting the assessment timelines. Hence, adaptations were made to meet the timelines. Through best efforts the assessment was stopped when we reached 374 trainees.

The assessment team has focused on understanding how the program has continued to add value to the trainees- both past and present in terms of both qualitative aspects as well as quantitative aspects like income enhancement. The assessment does not however get into actual income increase discussions with beneficiaries as that would need to be validated with salary slips. It is the endeavour of the assessment to understand how past and present batches feel about the program. This aspect has been captured location wise as well as gender wise.

3. Evaluation Criteria

TTC undertook a formative evaluation of the Digital Sakshar programmes keeping in mind the **objectives and desired impact of LTI's initiatives. The program has been assessed using the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria (OECD DAC).** The OECD DAC criteria follows six evaluation criteria - relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. This framework is used as a reference globally to evaluate and ascertain the merits of international development projects. For the purpose of the study, we look at 5 out of 6 criteria as follow:

The following figure illustrates some of the key assessment and research areas along with relevant indicators.

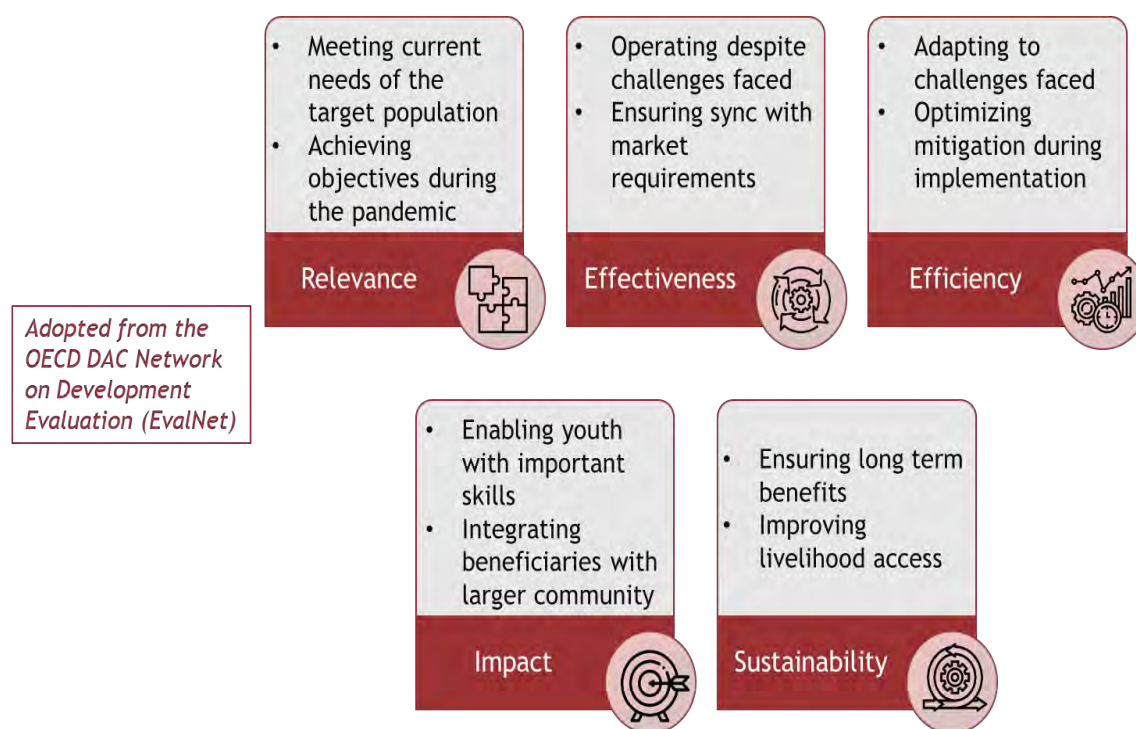


Figure 5 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)Criteria

DAC criteria	Key assessment areas	Indicators
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the program manage to achieve its desired objectives, given the pandemic restrictions? Is it relevant to the current needs of the target population? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with current employment trends Alignment with social conditions and restrictions (COVID-19) Uptake and utilization

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevance and updation of training modules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the program operating in spite of the challenges being faced? Are the classes delivering all that the program aimed for? Are the ones enrolled getting opportunities after joining the course? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved digital literacy Increase in level of confidence. Employability, placement readiness
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The challenges faced during carrying out the program. The steps taken to minimize the effects of the challenges faced during the implementation of the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital accessibility. Reaching out to maximum youth/women from the targeted community. Increase in enrolment. Increase in digital literacy and financial literacy Increase in enrolment percentage
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the program helping the youth? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in confidence level. Increase employability. Increase in digital and financial literacy.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the program help the community gain from it in the longer run? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post placement support Alumni engagement Family support

4. Key Insights

Overall, the program has been found to be working in alignment with the needs and aspirations of the target group. The program has been engaging with both market stakeholders (recruiters) and the community where the trainees come from. The Pratham team usually studies the market trends and evolving industry trends to ensure that the trainees are skilled in line with the market requirements. Interactions with trainees have revealed a high degree of trust **in the program's ability to help them** find better jobs and a general sense of improved confidence in dealing with job market realities.

The program's beneficiary selection has been found to be apt and in line with the program objectives.

The course content has been found to be useful and in sync with market realities. Given that the program has managed to continue its active engagement with trainees despite the pandemic induced disruption, swiftly moved its content delivery online, continue to ensure that job fairs happen, and students continue to find productive placements, indicates the program is being efficiently run.

From an impact perspective, interactions and quantitative surveys across past and current batches **across courses reveal increase in confidence, skill sets and also income. The program's engagement** with stakeholders across the spectrum especially parents has enabled greater participation of women trainees and an increased ability of these women trainees to enter the job market on their terms. There is growing evidence that women are willing to enter trades that defy conventional gender stereotypes. These aspects provide confidence to the program gains being sustained over time.

Detailed Findings in line with OECD DAC Assessment Parameters

4.1 RELEVANCE

Employability

“Indian workers will need to develop seven new digital skills by 2025 to keep up with technology advancements and industry demand”¹. As a result, every industry will seek to upskill and upgrade as well as hire already skilled employees. The latest India Skills Report (ISR) 2021² states that less than 50 per cent of Indian graduates (45%) are employable as they lack the skills that are in demand today.

Digital Finance and Inclusion

While policy initiatives and reforms have helped to increase the use of digital solutions in finance, COVID-19 has sped up the adoption of digital financial solutions cutting across social segments. Digital technology has boosted growth, expanded opportunities, and improved service delivery. However, its use and effect are uneven owing to various socio-cultural factors.

Given this, the relevance of LTI’s program is observed through its focus on the following aspects:

- Addressing increasing reliance on use of digital technology in everyday life and workplace
- Addressing increasing need for financial literacy for everyday transactions
- Addressing lack of employment and employment opportunities amongst youth and women resulting from low exposure to financial and digital literacy

The relevance of the Digital Sakshar Program is highlighted through its focus on ensuring that trainees are equipped with the basic skills of employment and digital literacy. Relevance is also maintained through the adaptive manner in which Digital Sakshar has been conducted during the pandemic. It was able to adapt to the requirements of the COVID-19 restrictions by conducting online training to ensure that classes continued. The shift to digital training mode needs to be reviewed in light of the existing access to digital devices at the level of the trainees. Quantitative interactions with trainees have not revealed any major gaps, which has enabled them to continue engaging and benefiting from the program.

Access to Digital Infrastructure

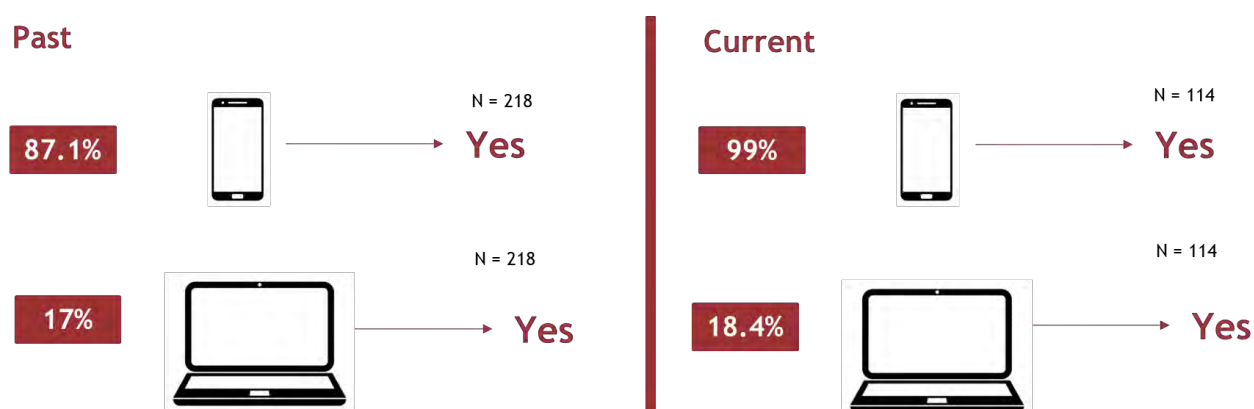


Figure 6 Access to digital infrastructure as reported by trainees undergoing digital literacy

¹ Increasing unemployment and a talent shortage: The Employability Paradox

² <https://indiaeducationforum.org/pdf/ISR-2021.pdf>, India Skills Report (2021)

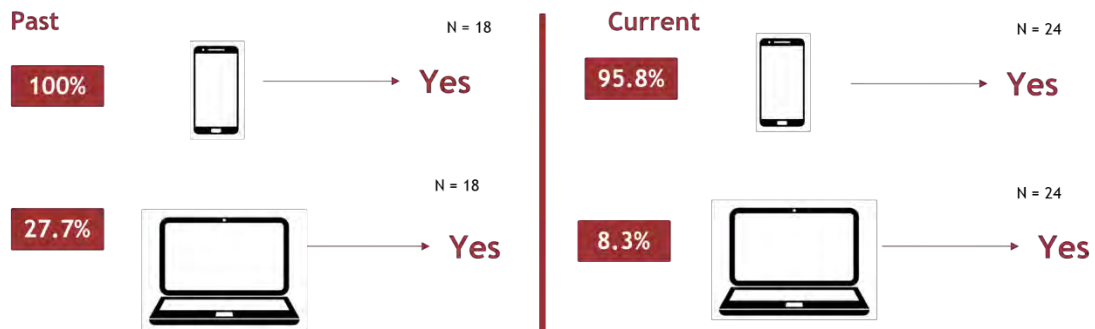


Figure 7 Access to digital infrastructure as reported by trainees undergoing financial literacy

Access to phones does not appear to be an issue amongst current beneficiaries, however, the lack of it was observed amongst some past beneficiaries. LTI and Pratham Infotech ensured that trainees have access to digital infrastructure by providing a laptop to a group of 3-4 students residing in close vicinity. Through this, students were given the opportunity to handle a laptop, which proved to be useful particularly during the pandemic along with promoting hands on learning opportunities. It also gave them confidence of handling a device all by themselves, something which trainees revealed during qualitative interactions mattered a lot to them.

More than 95% of beneficiaries have access to phones, while access to laptops has seen a fall from 27% to 8%. One reason may be the kind of beneficiaries targeted through the programme, wherein most needy or candidates who require the training are included. Though, this has not been verified in the assessment. It was useful for the assessment to understand from the trainees if they found the course content and objectives useful. Focussed discussions with trainees across past and present batches, across genders have revealed that the course content has been found to be useful and skills acquired as a result, relevant (figure 8 and figure 9).

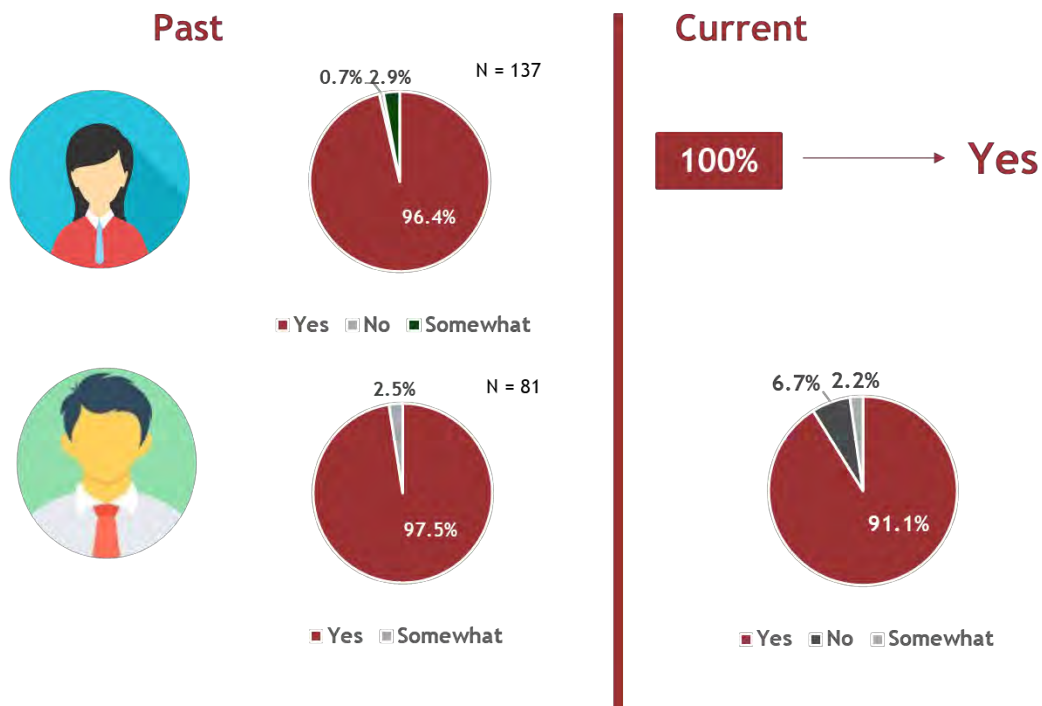


Figure 8 Trainees across batches find digital literacy trainings and skills imparted useful

Trainees as part of the digital literacy effort are taught basic software (Excel, PowerPoint, Word) that are potentially used in the formal workspace. The curriculum is reviewed and updated regularly. Trainers also help students who are interested in learning concepts outside the curriculum. There is a lot of focus on soft skills, handling stress, handling organised sector job scenarios and a general sense of readiness is created among trainees.

Digital literacy is also given importance while teaching financial literacy, given the increase in use of technology in everyday life. Women are introduced to and taught about the importance of using online banking and payment methods. The financial literacy program is designed to empower women in everyday transactions and provide knowledge and exposure to basic financial concepts. Almost all women have reported that they have access to a smartphone, which is adequate for their training. The program design is preparing trainees to drive digital businesses in the near future. The idea being that presently financial literacy enables people to make and receive payments at best, it does not necessarily enable them to access insurance or avail working capital loans for businesses they may be having or may want to run. The fact that the trainee population availing the financial literacy program has access to digital infrastructure and can use it, is a good starting point for further services to be bundled along. The below figure (figure 9) illustrates the perspective of the trainees on the relevance of skills taught pertaining to financial literacy.

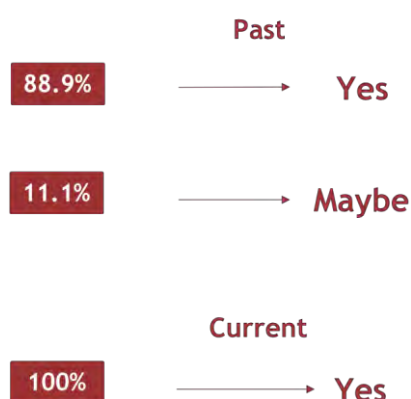


Figure 9 Trainees across batches find financial literacy trainings and skills imparted useful

4.2 EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness needs to be seen from a process perspective especially given the re-alignment that the program had to undergo quickly to ensure that trainees feel supported and at the same time continue to feel that the program remains relevant for them. In this context, it must be noted that quantitative interactions revealed that trainees received strong mentor support and continued to feel that the program was helping them get ready for the market.

For both, the employability program that focusses on digital skills as well as the financial literacy program, the team at Pratham was able to ensure that the community sees merit in the program. This was done through systematic advocacy and mobilisation efforts by a dedicated team for stakeholder engagement. The Pratham team also ensured that these efforts continued alongside the classes/training continued during the pandemic.

Two key strategies that drive effectiveness in the program are:

1. *Continuous access to learning in spite of challenges*

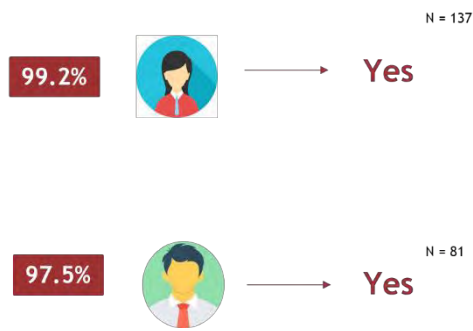


Figure 10 Adequacy of training - Digital Literacy Skills

open to reach out to trainers for any challenges that the trainees would face. Figure 10 illustrates the perspectives of trainees on the adequacy of training for digital literacy skills. Almost all students have reported that the skill training was adequate.

“Whenever I have a doubt, I can call my trainer and ask about how to do something. They are very helpful. I was also taught how to use Zoom meetings through tutorials. We get You Tube links on WhatsApp with detailed instructions.” -Student, Pune

The training or classes were scheduled regularly on Zoom or Google, at different times in the day to ensure that trainees would be able to attend with minimum disruptions to their schedule. One device was physically made available for a group of 3-4 students. In addition to this, regular engagement with parent community allowed for strengthened participation and regular engagement with students ensured effective training.

More than 90 per cent of both past and current beneficiaries for digital literacy and 100 per cent beneficiaries for financial literacy (figure 11) reported that they receive adequate guidance. Communication channels such as WhatsApp and Facebook ensure that trainers can be reached at any time for guidance

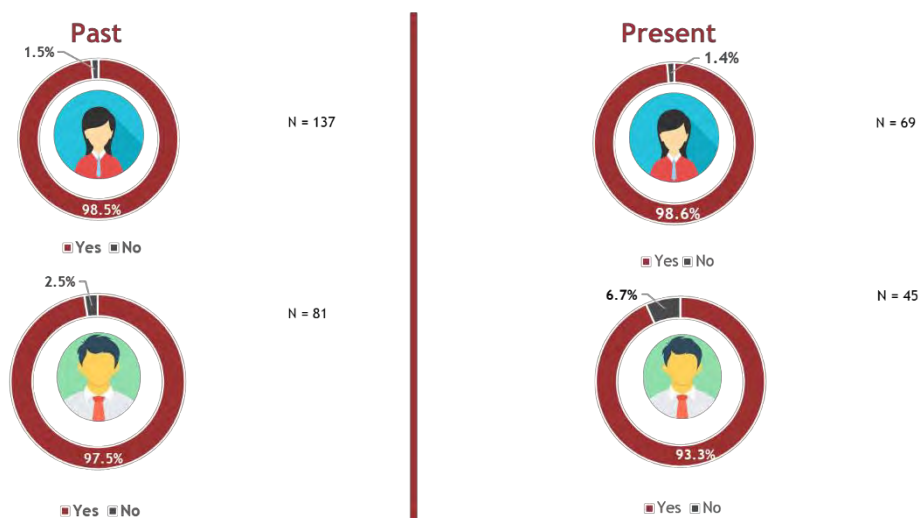


Figure 11 Mentor guidance received by trainees across batches for trainings provided

Offline learning was effectively changed to online learning through quick efforts and flexibility. This required the trainers to utilise new methods of teaching and engaging with students virtually and they adapted rapidly to the change through wide usage of WhatsApp and YouTube tutorials. In many ways, it required an extra effort on the trainer’s part to ensure that their lessons were effective and engaging. In case of the employability skills program, it imparts basic knowledge of digital devices, however, as a result of the pandemic, this gap had to be covered quickly for students to be able to handle digital devices and applications on their own. Channels of communication were kept

1. Rigorous stakeholder engagement

There was persistent engagement with parents and community to help them understand the importance of financial and digital knowledge. Regular visits to the community, engagement on issues of unemployment and ways to increase employability were some of the ways in which the trainers and ground staff ensured that the community sees value in sending their children to undertake the training.

“We go and persist and sit with parents for a long time so that they understand the importance of enrolling their children in this class.” - Trainer, Pune

Although some students knew about the program, there was an initial hesitation in joining because of doubts in its value-addition and contribution to their career. These doubts were addressed through continuous engagement with students as well as ensuring that the training does not incur any cost to them.

“Some parents insist on coming with the girls to see whether the classroom and training are real. They come and fetch the girls at the end of the class, but we ensure that they agree to at least send them.” -Trainer, Pune

The training centres are strategically located to serve areas where a needs assessment has been conducted prior to the establishment. In alignment with the needs of the community, almost all students reported that they have received adequate training which points to the fact that they feel adequately equipped in digital literacy and are employment ready.

In addition to the mentorship and guidance, recruiters are constantly sensitised and familiarised with trainee profiles, expectations, to ensure greater retention potential and better future work environments.

A social return on investment (SROI) exercise conducted by TTC in late 2021, conducted to analyze investments of LTI towards the Digital Sakshar program to improve the lives the youth beneficiaries and women, establishes that LTI has been successful in creating a positive impact on the stakeholders involved in the program. The SROI revealed that for every unit of currency that LTI has invested has the potential to generate 14 units worth of socio-economic value for stakeholders. Throughout the analysis process it has become clearer that Digital Sakshar creates more value than measured in the analysis. Especially the families of the participants experience many positive effects from the program, which are not considered in the analysis. These aspects have been further validated by the **current assessment. These elements have also been found to be crucial in the program’s continued ability to operate and remain useful for the target group during the pandemic period.**

4.3 EFFICIENCY

The program model has proved to be efficient in tackling challenges and adapting to new strategies and methods of implementation. For instance, the program was designed to be implemented at a physical space with the presence of trainers and digital equipment. A part of the program had included job fairs for the trainees to introduce them to companies and apply for placements. Despite the online mode of training, LTI and Pratham were able to conduct regular job fair and ensure access to job interviews in alignment with the expectations of the trainees. The online mode of training required students to download the Digital Sakshar application on their phones so that classes and training would be continued, and they would have access to learning material through the app.

“Whatever challenges I have faced to use the app or otherwise, the trainer is always helpful. The app is also easy to use.” -Student, Pune

Initially, a few teething problems were incurred but those were smoothed out through the continuous engagement with students and various channels of communication. The following figure (12) illustrates the challenges faced by students while using the app.

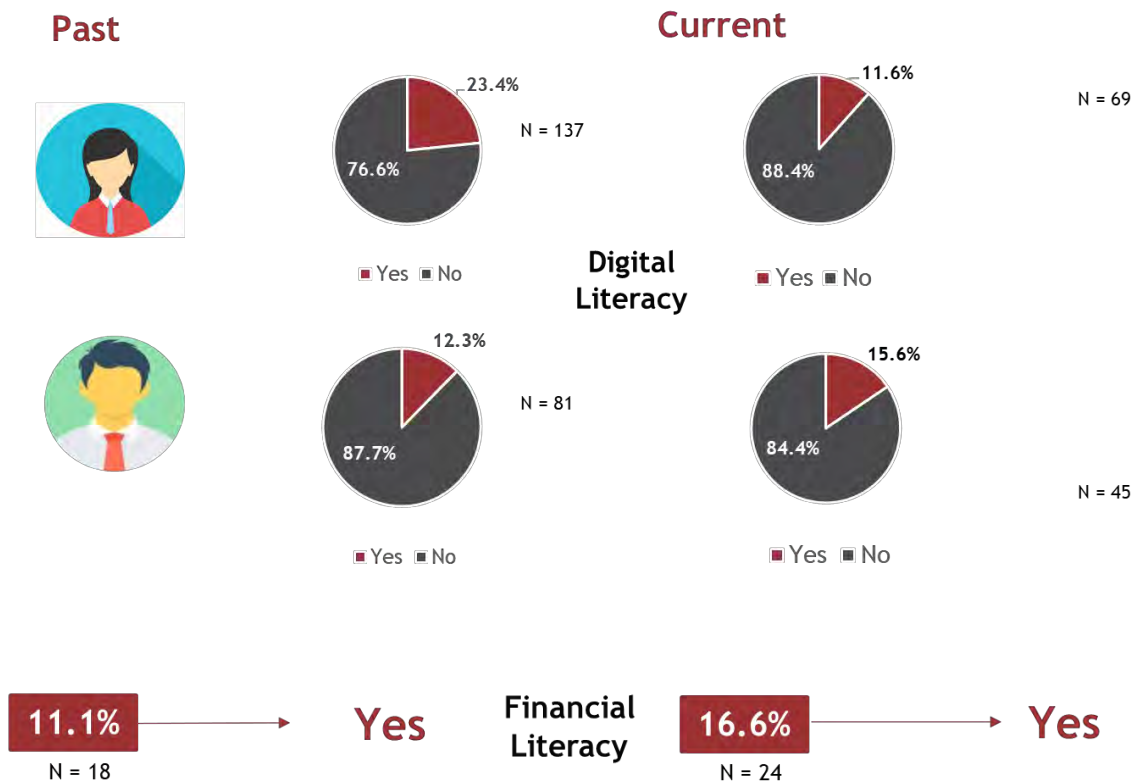


Figure 12 Challenges faced while using the application

The lack of knowledge about usage of mobiles and apps was mitigated to a certain extent through tutorial videos shared through WhatsApp. To ensure that the app is accessible to students who are comfortable in vernacular languages, the app can be used in English, Hindi and Marathi. This allows the information to be more widely used and makes the application and the program more inclusive in nature.

One of the objectives of the program was to ensure that trainees/students have access to the job market through arranging for job fairs and interviews with company HR executives.

“I was able to attend the job fest online. That is where I was selected and now, I am waiting for the confirmation from the company”-Student, Pune

The following figures (13 & 14) show the adequacy of access to job interviews for past and current beneficiaries of the program:

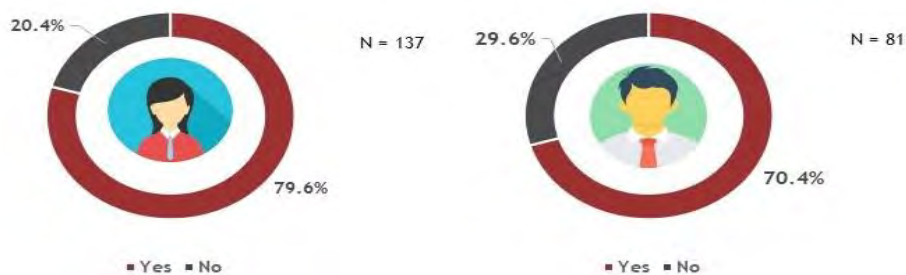


Figure 13 Gender-wise Access to job interviews for past beneficiaries

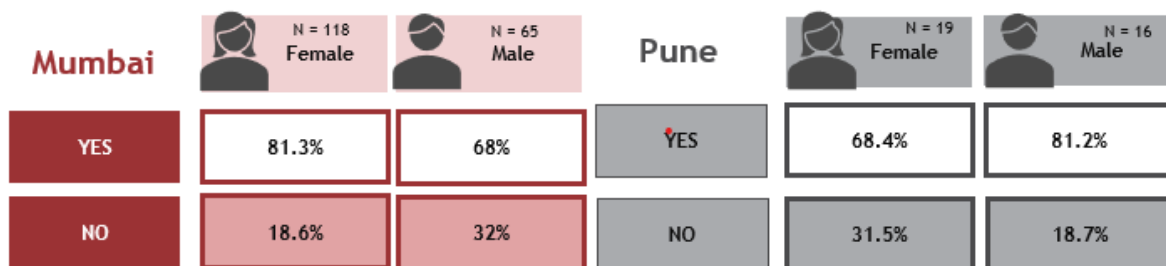


Figure 14 Location-wise access to job interviews for past beneficiaries

Access to job interviews depends on the trainees' willingness to appear for the job fairs and for job interviews. In some cases, it is possible that trainees did not opt to appear for interviews. This is especially true of women where it was found that women join the course to upgrade their skills, but no necessarily secure jobs. This is also observed amongst trainees where they seek to upgrade their skills in order to perform better at their current place of work.

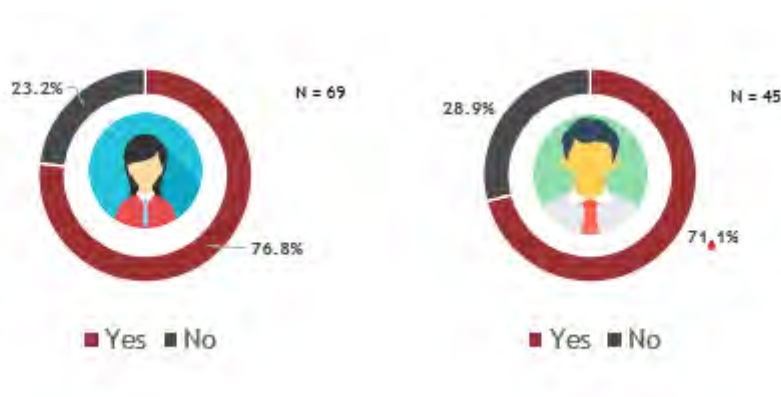


Figure 15 Gender-wise job access to interviews for current beneficiaries

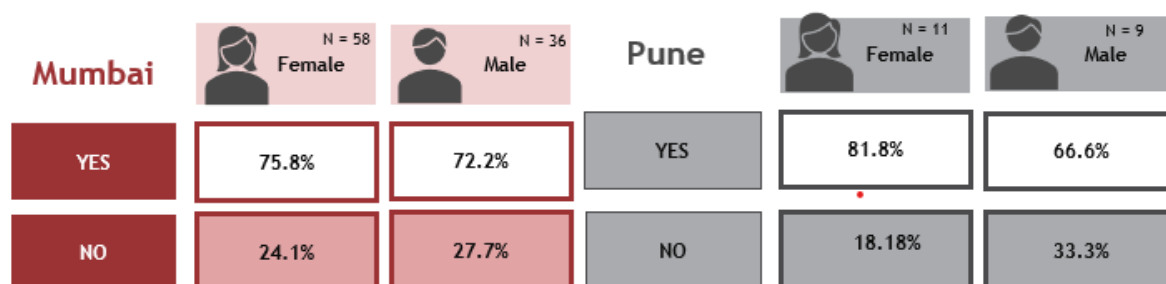


Figure 16 Location-wise access to job interviews for current beneficiaries

4.4 IMPACT

The impact of the program is observed amongst beneficiaries through the increase in confidence of the skills acquired, through the placements or jobs secured and visible increase in income. The program fares well on all three parameters, proving that the overall effect and impact of the program has been a positive one. The program has imbued confidence amongst beneficiaries who underwent financial literacy training as well those who underwent digital literacy training.

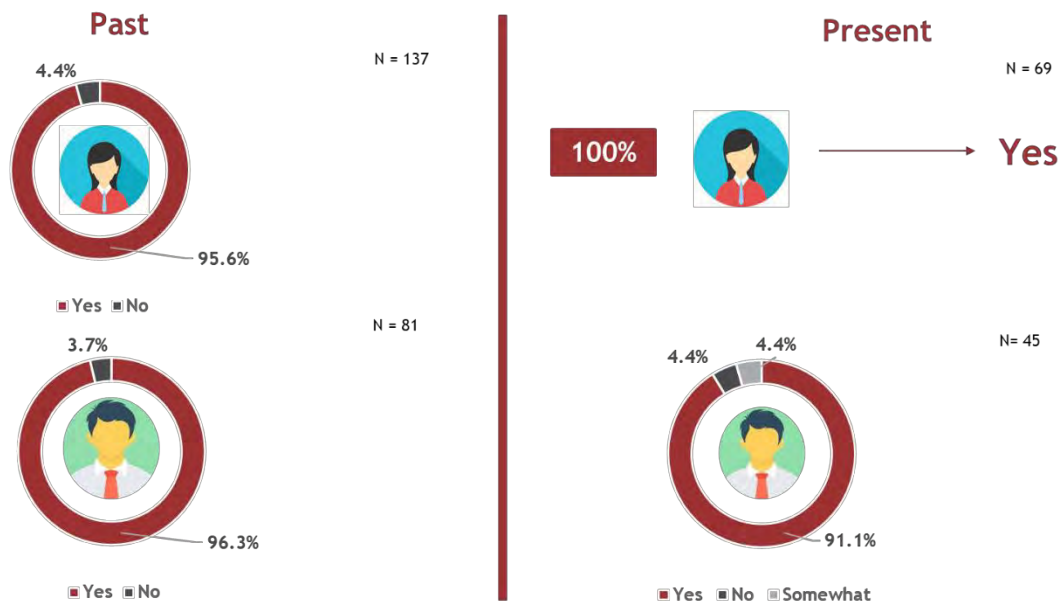


Figure 17 Confidence in skills acquired - Digital Literacy

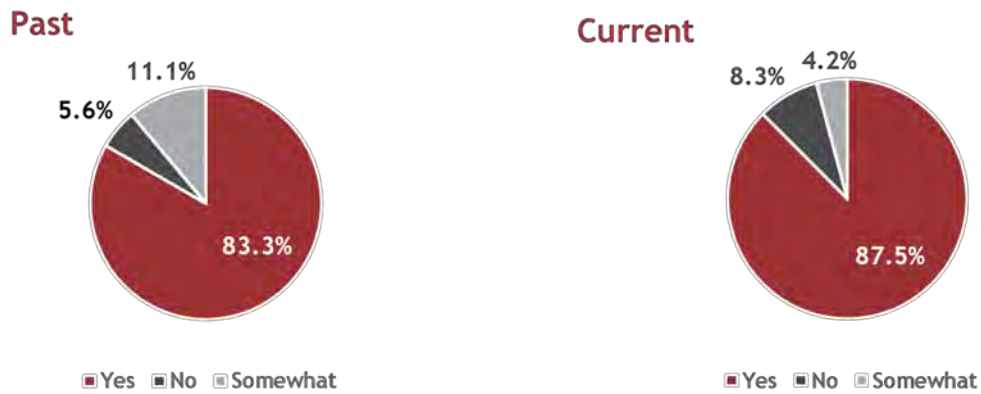


Figure 18 Confidence in skills acquired - Financial Literacy

Figures 17 and 18 show the extent to which students feel confident about the digital and financial literacy skills imparted during training. A high incidence of certainty and confidence in the skills acquired can allow beneficiaries to explore more opportunities other than the placements provided. This will also give them the confidence to upgrade their skills further in the future and rise up in their professions. The confidence and certainty of skills amongst beneficiaries is also a testament to the quality of training and trainers. Through these figures, it can be concluded that Pratham Infotech is employing quality trainers and content to ensure that students are equipped with the right skills and are job ready.

The second parameter to ascertain impact is that the trainees secure a job or placement through the program. The following figures help understand the job placement scenario through the program.

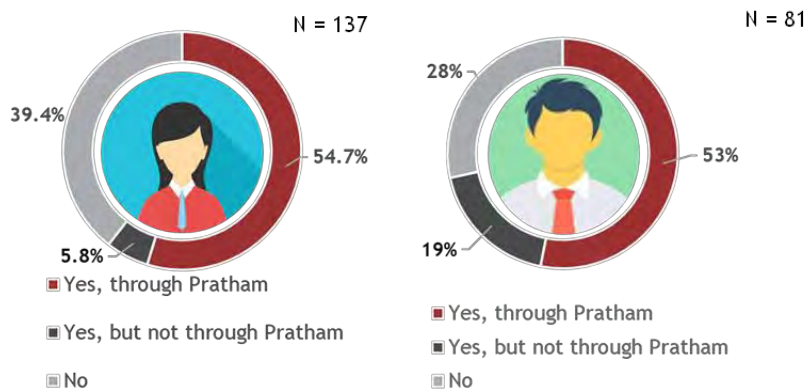


Figure 19 Gender-wise placements

54.7 percent of women and 53 per cent of men reported have reported that they were placed through Pratham Infotech, while 39.4 per cent women and 28 per cent men reported that they were not placed at all. Through the interactions, it was observed that women do not regularly opt for job placements; they join the training classes to upgrade skills but not necessarily to secure a job. Therefore, while they may have the potential to secure a job and are adequately supported by the training and job fairs, the numbers above may not necessarily reflect on the capacity of the program to ensure employment. Placements also depend on the overall requirement in the market and during the last two years, given the effects of COVID 19, market requirements were heavily affected. The program secures employment for more than half of the beneficiary population while some have explored opportunities outside of Pratham placements. This shows that the certificate provided holds credibility.

	Mumbai		Pune	
	Female (N = 118)	Male (N = 65)	Female (N = 19)	Male (N = 16)
No	40.6%	24.6%	31.5%	43.7%
Yes, Not Through Pratham	5.9%	21.5%	5.2%	6.2%
Yes, Through Pratham	53.4%	53.8%	63.1%	50%

Figure 20 Location-wise placements

Lastly, the impact can be observed through the visible rise in income parameters. There is a significant rise in income amongst beneficiaries of both courses. This rise is significant considering the pandemic disruption. We have mapped the income increase, program wise, gender wise and location wise to give as many insights into the income picture as possible.

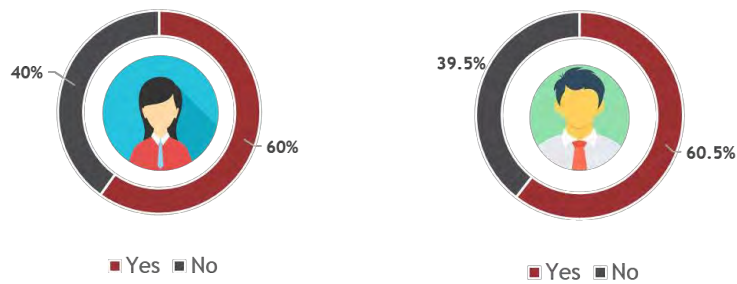


Figure 21 Gender-wise rise in income

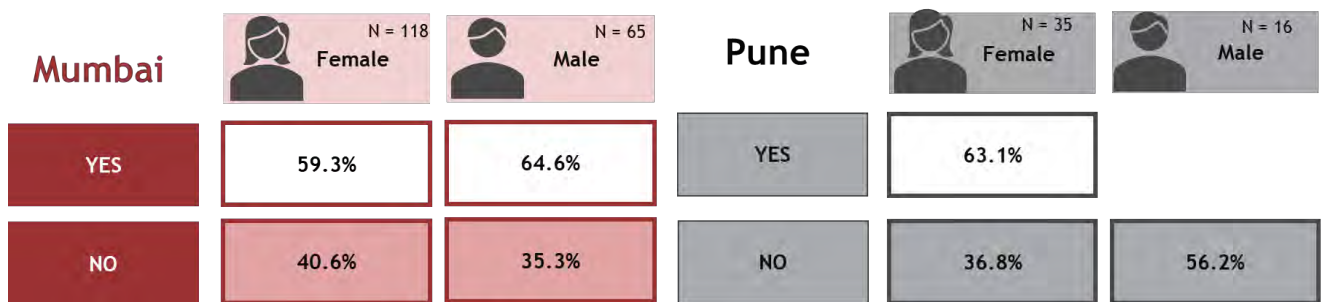


Figure 22 Location-wise rise in income

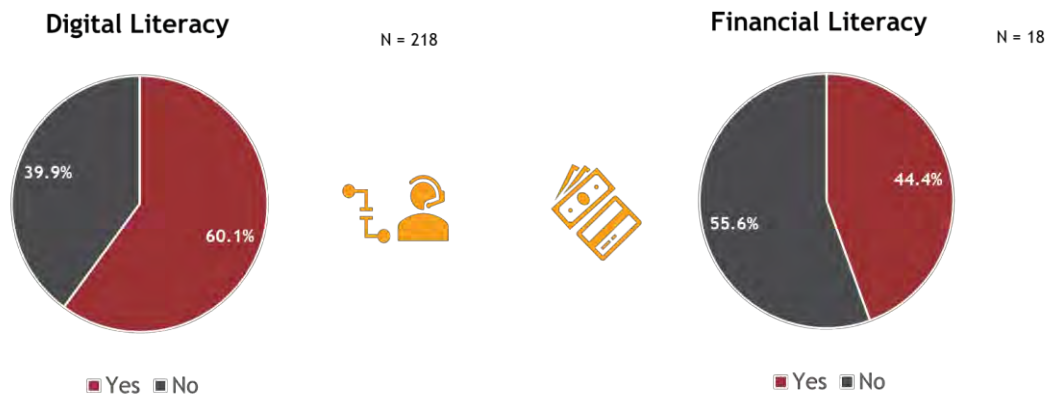


Figure 23 Program-wise rise in income

The increase in income is reported equally amongst men and women. While there are beneficiaries who have reported no increase in income, it is important to understand whether there has been a transformation in the nature of their work - from informal to formal sector. The qualitative interactions suggest that although the nature of work may not have radically changed from contractual to permanent, there is a significant rise in income and upskilling has helped trainees secure jobs in the formal sector.

4.5 SUSTAINABILITY

The gains of the Digital Sakshar program have been found to be sustainable on account of the program design. This is because the program has a backward and forward linkage approach. The program is clear in terms of what it intends to achieve and focusses on facilitation, sensitization and advocacy as major intervention points. The stakeholder engagement happens at the family level, at the trainee level as well as the recruiter level.

Skill building initiatives often derive their sustainability credentials based on how trainee engagements continue post placement, how recruiters view the quality of trainees coming into their fold, the retention or attrition rates and finally how trainees have been equipped to handle themselves in a work environment. In this regard it is important to make a mention of the job awareness module which provides many important skills sets to the trainees. This module which is centrally driven enables trainees to understand aspects of labor rights, an aspect that assumes significance given that for most of them this is first brush with the organized sector.

Additionally, aspects pertaining to prevention of sexual harassment at workplace setting are also covered. These aspects contribute towards building a more equitable and amicable employer-employee equation at a workplace scenario. Pratham as part of the program also focusses on creating greater stickiness at workplaces. The idea is to ensure that trainees find themselves suitably equipped to conduct themselves in a workplace setting. Additionally for trainees it is further important that they spend a decent enough time working before they find their own comfort zone. Pratham as part of the program has facilitated the development of an alumni discussion portal on Facebook through which trainees from past batches interact with their cohort group and enable trainees to switch jobs. For this alumni portal to work better, trainees would need to remain in their jobs for some time before they are able to create an ecosystem for their peer group.

Furthermore, the program design has specific design elements that engage with parents of the trainees, especially those of women trainees, so that the home environment becomes more conducive and accepting of a woman entering the work force. The program team organizes parent sensitization **and outreach efforts to inform parents on the changing job markets and how with a little 'nudge'** their wards could actually earn a decent living standard themselves.

'it is incorrect to assume that women do not want to enter the work force, or they want only back-end jobs. Women want to do all kinds of jobs, but they remain constrained by their immediate families. We are trying to ensure that families play a more supportive role for women to realise their dreams'


-CEO, Pratham Infotech

While the efforts mentioned above refer to the supply side, there are demand side aspects that have been taken into account as well. HR managers who recruit from the trainee pool trained by Pratham, are also made aware of the POSH practices and industry benchmarks from time to time. They are also sensitized to the specific profiles and background of the trainees so that HR managers can understand how best to handle potential employees and manage their expectations. This enables the development of a sensitized and more amicable future workplace scenario.

The program derives its sustainability from these efforts that are part of its core design. The fact that the program places a lot of value in ensuring that future employers and current employees **understand each other's expectations clearly, is expected to contribute to the program's** sustainability effort. The program model has adapted rapidly to the changing requirements of the times and therefore can be readily replicated to another geography or location. Although the current model is implemented in Mumbai and Pune, lack of employability skills is a major lacuna observed

irrespective of geography. Pratham Infotech can continue their process of identifying the most vulnerable areas and establishing a centre close by.


5 Select Case Stories



I took the course because I was badly in need of a job. The pandemic has caused my husband to lose his job and there were many challenges.


I found out about the course through a trainer who stays close to my mother's house. She introduced me to this and encouraged me to enrol for this course. Due to some challenges at home and my pregnancy, I was not working for the last 4 years. Taking this course allowed me to gain confidence in my abilities and taught me new skills that are required for communication at a work place. I currently work in customer service and it is a contractual job. I now receive INR 5000-6000 more than my previous job.

Amrita Padale has left her job 4 years ago due to domestic challenges, and wanted to rejoin the workforce to support her household income. She found out about the course through her trainer who was also her neighbour and was encouraged to enrol. She believes that it has helped her tremendously. Email communication, basic computer knowledge and communication in English were the three important aspects that she feels have contributed to her securing a job and being able to perform well in her current place of employment.




"I came to know about the course through my sister who has also taken the course earlier. It had helped her secure a job. She has heard about the course through someone so it was a word-of-mouth publicity that helped me know about it. I am still studying and because now my studies have moved online, I was also able to take up this course. Although I knew about using a phone and a computer, I learnt some nuances of email communication, use of PowerPoint, digital payments and word. Most importantly, the soft-skills taught in this program are very useful as my job involves client interfacing."

Zainab is still studying, however she was looking for avenues to support her family income. Through her sister who has secured a job through Pratham, Zainab found out about the course and enrolled in it. She did not secure a job through the job fest, but through a recommendation by one of the trainers. She believes that the soft-skills taught to her during the course have been of prime importance and she feels that that enrolling in the course has helped her secure a job that she never thought she could do.



"I came to know about the course through Mr. Tamboli, whom I have worked with earlier. He encouraged me to join the course and told me about the benefits. I feel that it was a great idea to join because earlier, I had no idea about using a mobile phone or the different things that can be done through the phone. I was not able to read or understand English. Now, I can read English and understand the use of different apps such as maps, google pay. My children use mobile phones for their school and sometimes I am able to help them out with their work. If they face challenges in using an app, they come to me and I can solve their problems."

Savita Adhav is a rickshaw driver and joined the course on the recommendation of another student who had taken the course earlier. Although she did not opt for a placement through Pratham's job fest, she believes that taking the course has increased her confidence, now that she is able to understand digital technology better and also make use of it in her daily life.



"I decided to do this course to understand more about digital technology believing that it will help me in my business. I know about the basics of how to use a computer but I do not know about all the new apps that are coming up. I am actually a teacher and through this course, I learnt how to use technology to teach students online. This was especially useful during the pandemic when everything moved to an online platform. Amongst many things, this course also taught me about etiquettes and communication. It taught me how to use email communication and soft-skills that I would not have been able to pick up anywhere else"

Mr Tamboli is a teacher who had to use digital technology while teaching 9th and 10th standard students online. Although he knew the basics of handling a computer, the use of online tools has rapidly accelerated. He believes that by enrolling in this course he was able to catch up to new technology and was able to perform better as a teacher. Not only did the course help him as a teacher, but he was able to make use of technology in his business as well.

6 Way Forward & Recommendations Useful for Program Growth

The Digital Sakshar program has over the years created significant value for the intended stakeholder group. The program design has also evolved from just focusing on employability improvement to digital enablement and financial literacy. The program has thus kept in sync with the evolving needs of the time and the intended target group. Given that the focus of the program is to increase organized sector representation among youth and to ensure they feel capacitated enough to enter the sector, the program has been delivering on this central mandate. Range of qualitative discussions have provided insights on how the program design is geared towards ensuring that trainees have the necessary skill sets and confidence to continue applying for jobs. The fact that the assessment was able to gather perspectives from both present and past trainees and compare their confidence, skill **and willingness to apply, has provided a reasonable reference point to comment on the program's** continued efficacy despite covid induced disruptions.



Figure 24 Recommendations chart

The program's abilities to continue delivering on its mandate will however improve if the following additional areas are weaved into the MEAL systems.

- Strengthened tracking and updation of database

The trainee data base needs to be updated from time to time especially once the trainees have been placed. Presently there is no system of tracking the trainees post placement unless the trainee comes back and reaches out to the Pratham team. There should be an engagement mode by which trainees can share their experiences or concerns. This can act as a support group for trainees who feel overwhelmed or may need any kind of help. Presently this support is available only if the trainees make an explicit effort. This can also in the future help in making the alumni group more vibrant and foster more participation from a more diverse trainee base. Additionally, the training, selection and placement need to be tracked in a systematic manner to ensure comprehensive insights and delve into reasons behind non-placement.

- Concurrent Assessments

Currently, the trainees undergo an assessment at the end of the course which determines their certification. While it is important to conduct an overall assessment, a concurrent assessment system will ensure efficient and effective tracking of the learning outcomes. Trainees are given regular assignments to determine their competency in each topic taught within the course, however this is not recorded formally through a standardized tool. Fellows/trainers maintain records which do not feed into the central MIS (Jankari portal). An assessment tool can be developed for both digital as well as soft skills and student progress trajectory can be recorded in a systematized manner. Given that pandemic led disruptions will continue to push the program to operate in its current mode, it will be useful to embed this assessment feature within the digital Sakshar application itself. It will make the process seamless and provide usable information without delay to the Pratham team.

- Post placement feedback

Post placement feedback from recruiters is presently not taken. This is an area that may need some focus. While Pratham does have a mechanism basis which they assess industry trends, it will be useful if recruiters have a formal platform to provide feedback and this can also be a good platform to source some feedback on specific areas of focus that the program may then focus on. Also, since the program has an explicit design aspect of engaging with recruiters, it will be important to build on this relationship and source feedback that can segue into the training, curriculum and any other related areas.

- Strengthened volunteer engagement

LTI volunteers have a key role to play when it comes to this program, as LTI volunteers can act as role models which most of these trainees lack in their immediate families and peer group network. LTIs volunteering efforts have been sporadic and not very structured. It is important for LTI program team looking into digital Sakshar to identify staffers who can play the role model function, engage with Pratham team on specific aspects the volunteers can cover and make the engagement continued and sustained. While LTI has tried doing this in the past, attrition within LTI has prevented them from having a constant volunteer presence, but this can also be addressed if the volunteers themselves feel closer to the program and feel valued about the role they are playing. Pratham team can in that case continue to remain in touch with the volunteers even if they leave LTI at a later date and build on the relationship.

7. Annexure

7.1 Screenshots of the Digital Sakshar Application illustrating its contents and features

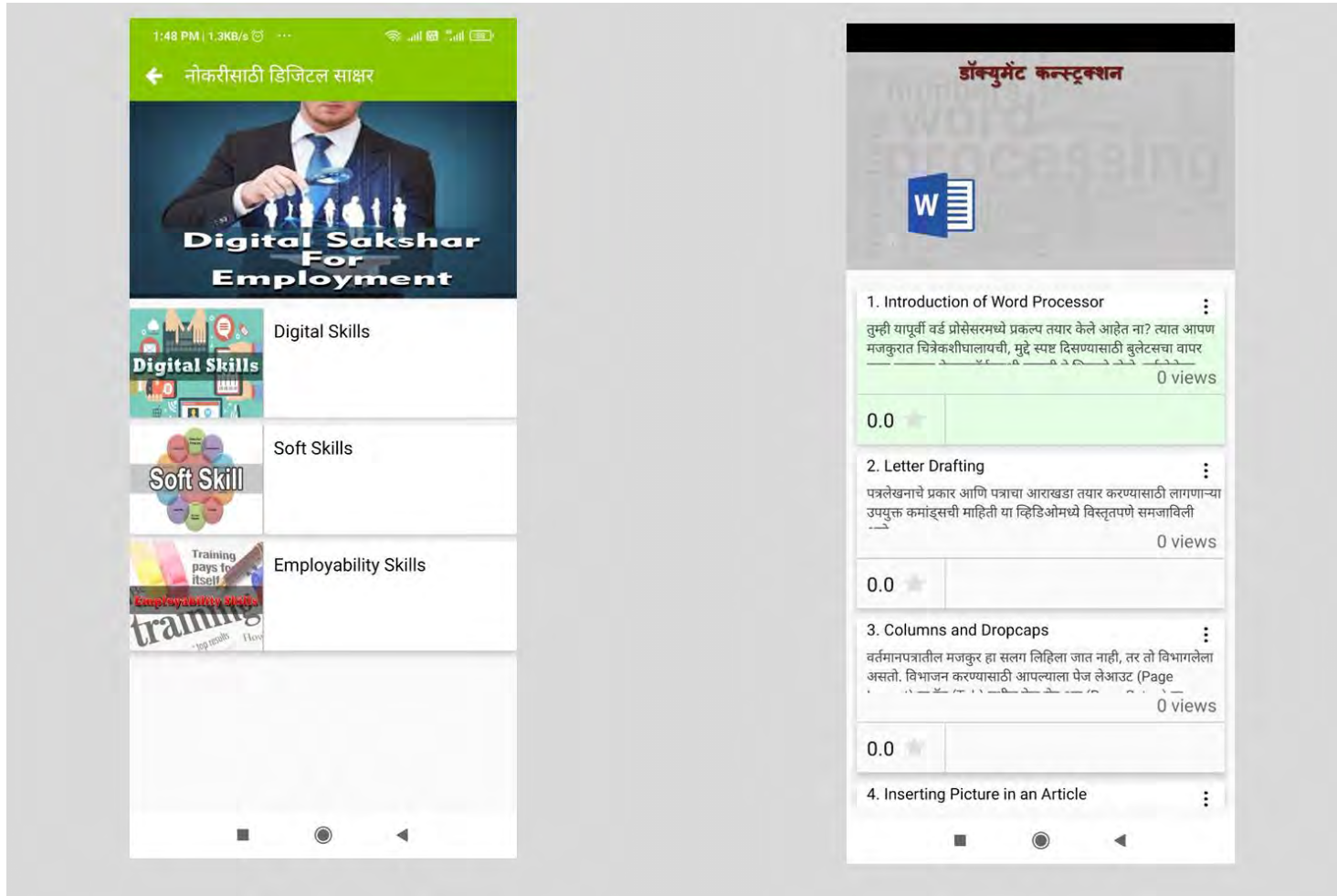


Figure 25 L - Digital Sakshar Programs R - Content of Digital Skills in Marathi

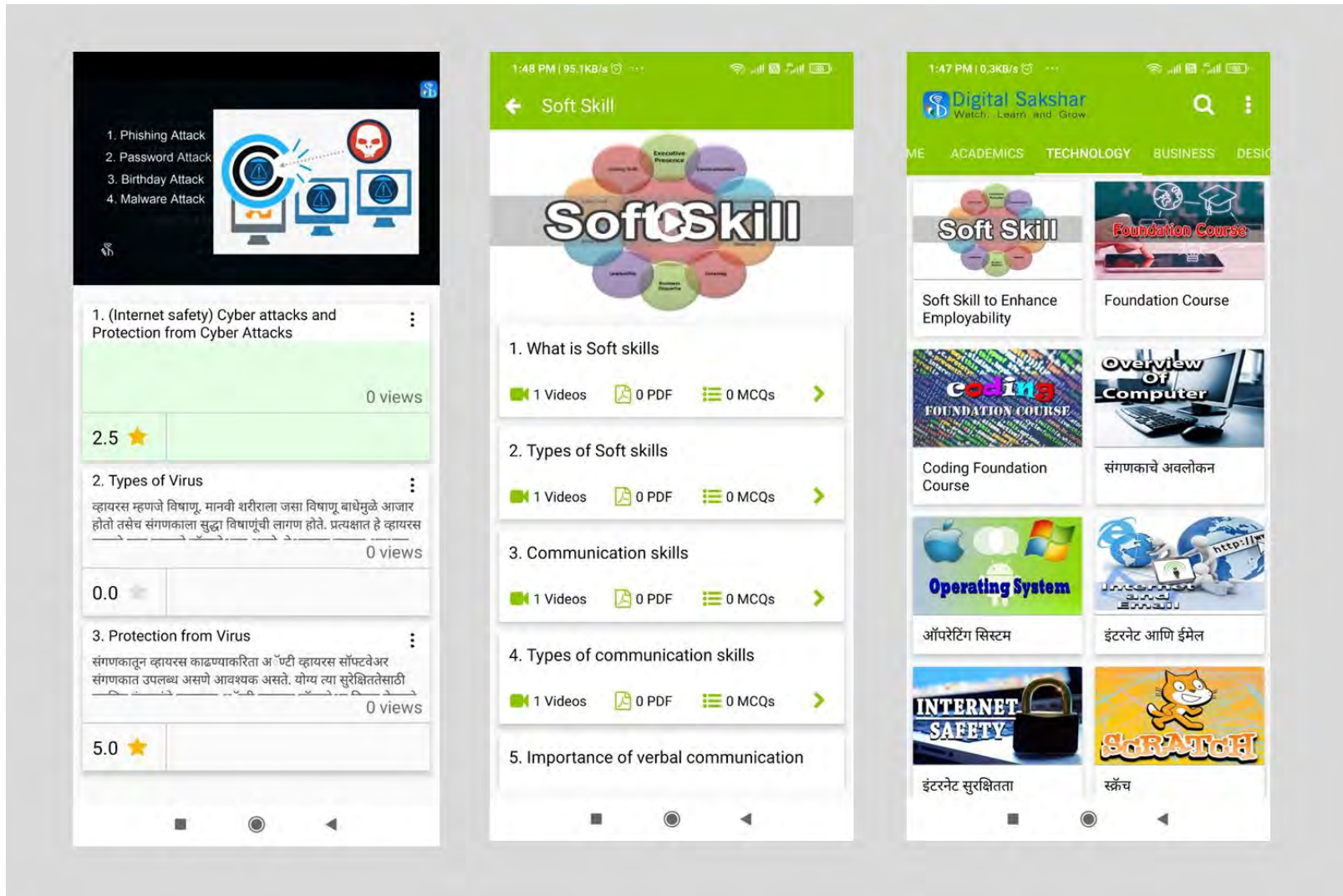


Figure 26 1. Digital Sakshar App - Contents of the Digital Skills Program, 2. Digital Sakshar App - Contents of Soft Skills Program, 3. Digital Skills App - Interface in English and vernacular

7.2 Textbook and Contents

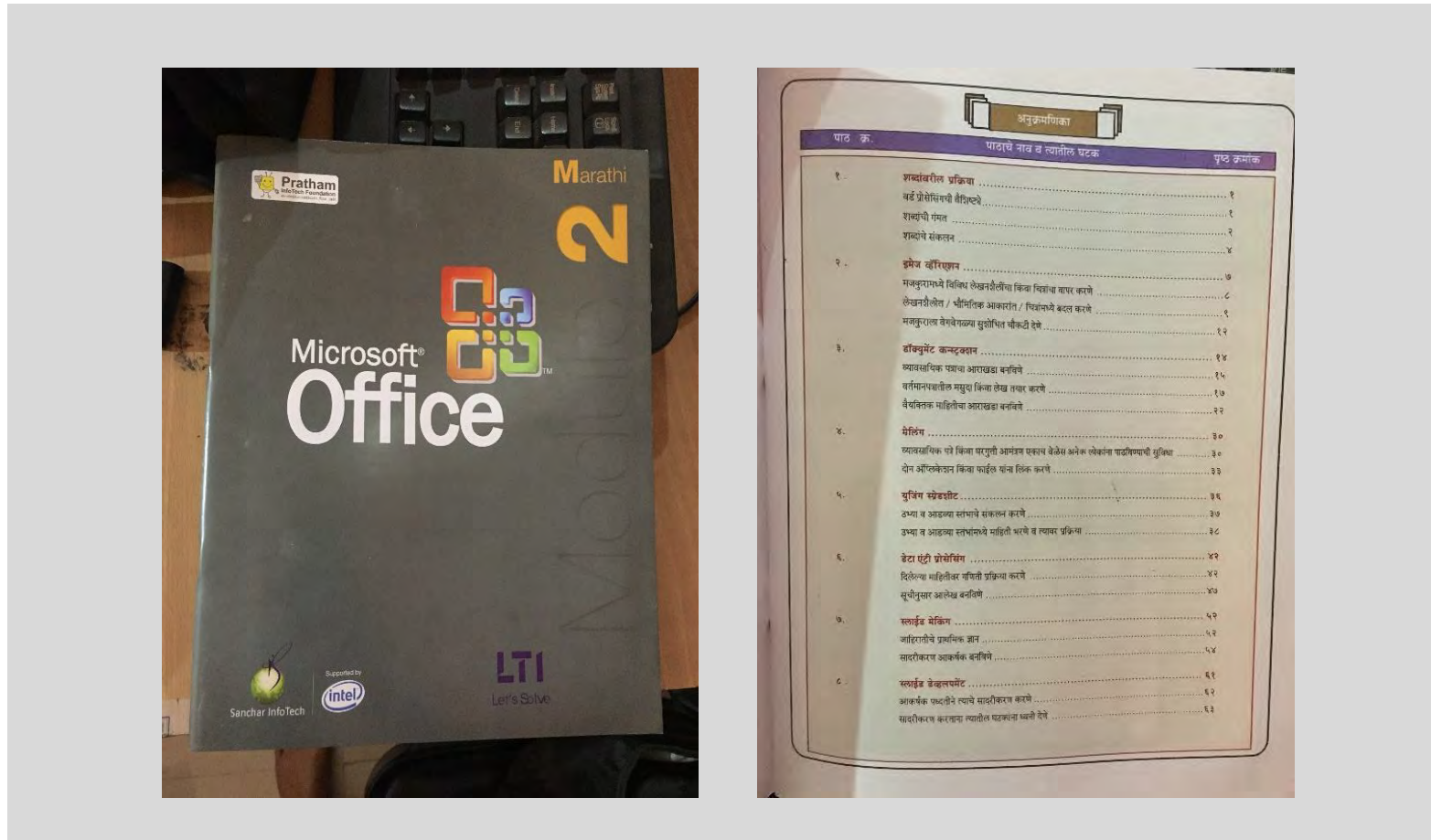


Figure 27 L - Digital Skills Textbook R - Contents of the Digital Skills Textbook (Marathi)

7.3 Certification



Figure 28 Certification for Employability skills

Supported by



Certificate of Completion

This is to certify that

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

has successfully completed the online course

Digital Sakshar for Financial Literacy Skills

With Grade **B**

Conducted from **21 Jun 2021** to **21 Aug 2021** .

Prem Yadav
Co-founder and CEO
Pratham InfoTech Foundation
Mumbai, India



Figure 29 Certification for Financial Literacy skills

7.4 Facebook Alumni Page

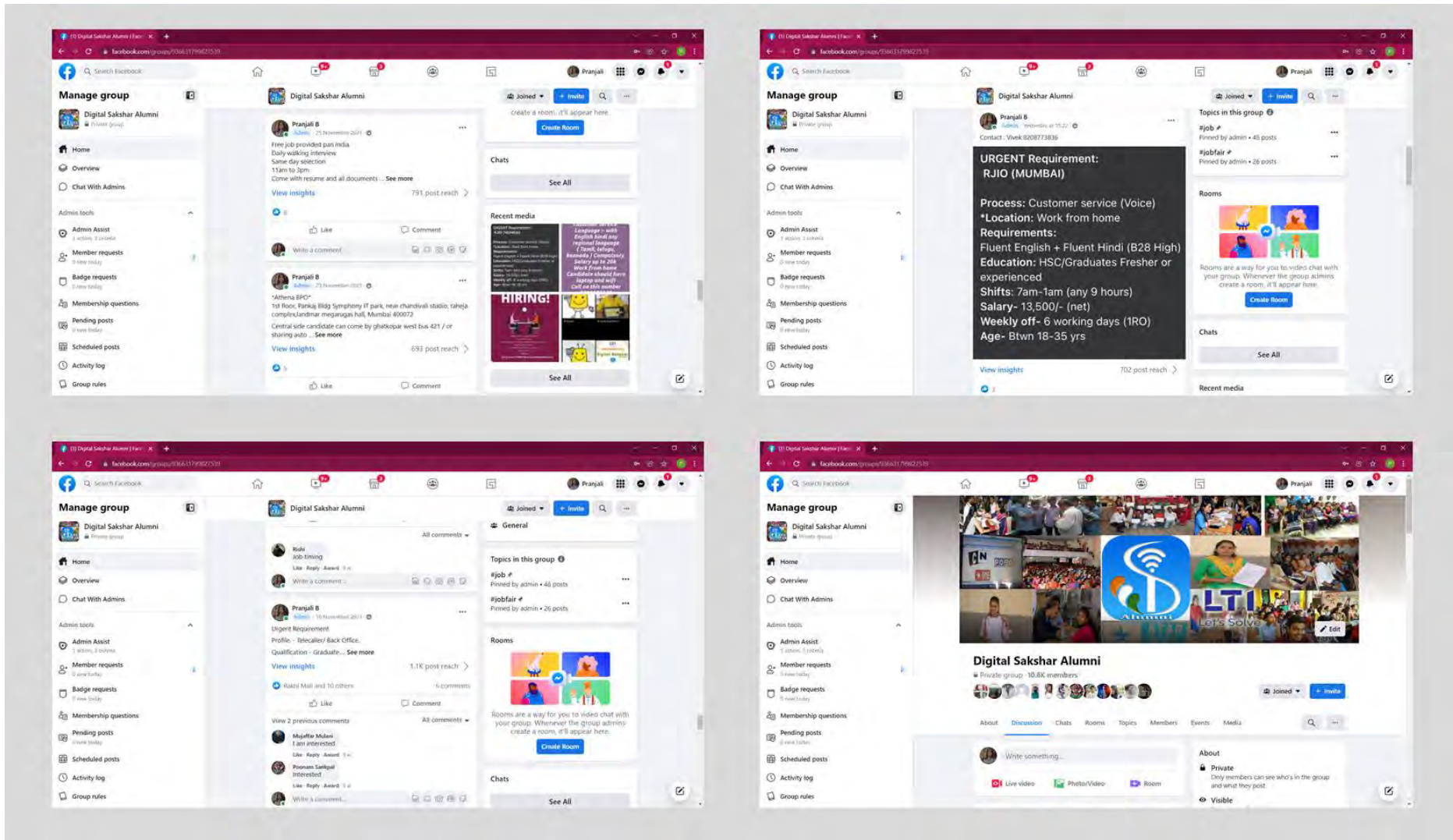


Figure 29 Screen images of Digital Sakshar Facebook Alumni Page

7.5 YouTube Tutorials

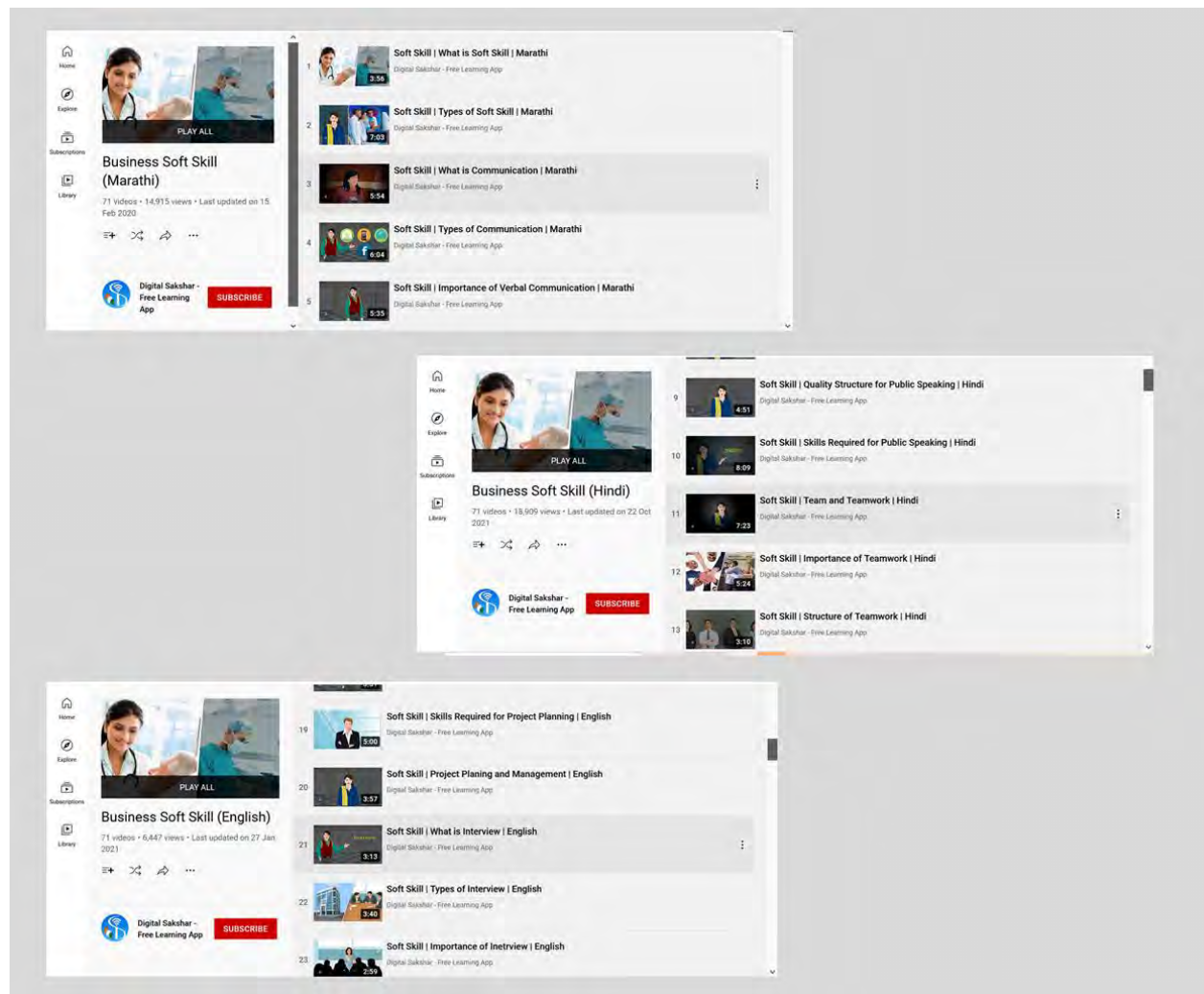


Figure 30 YouTube tutorials - Employability Skills

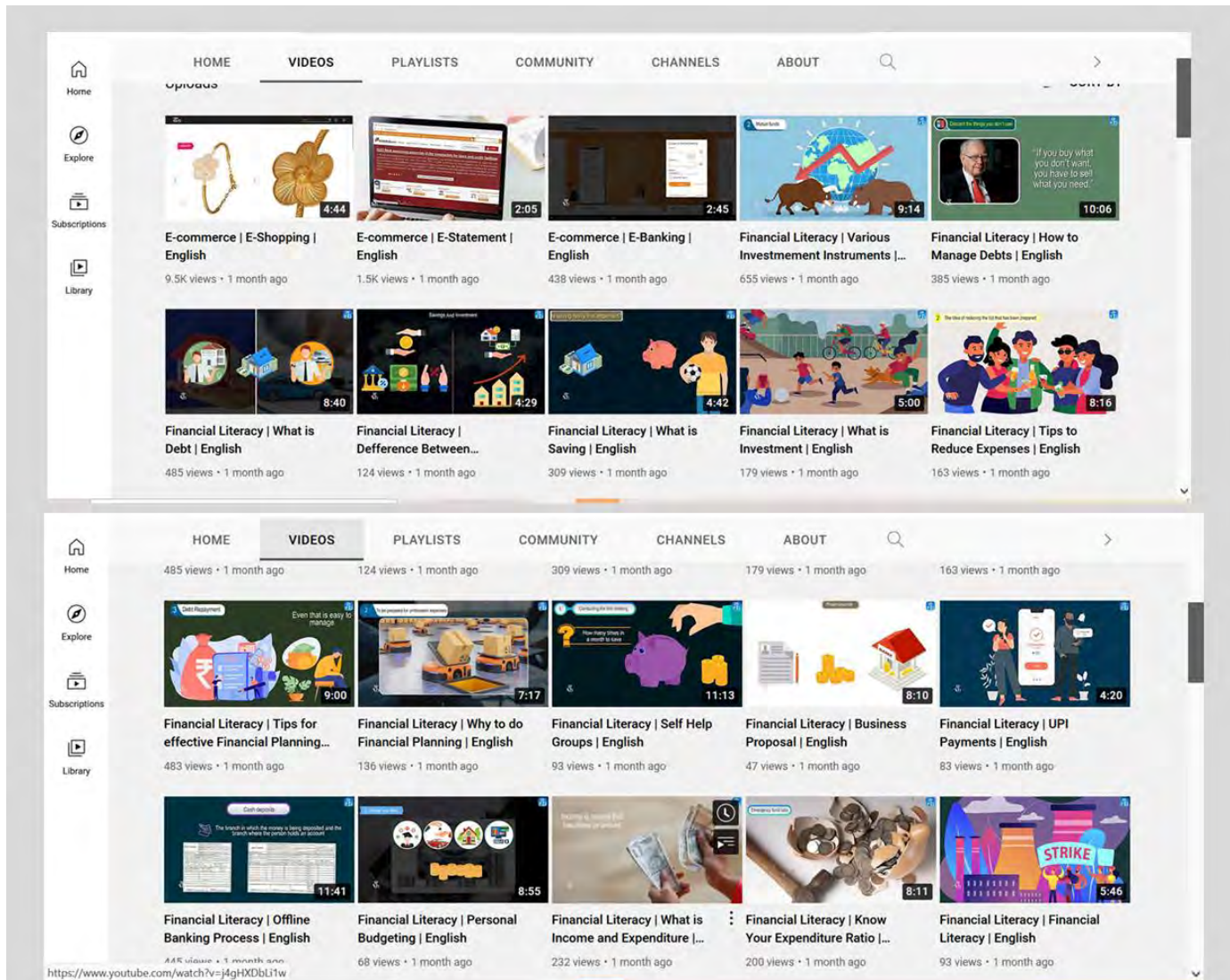


Figure 31 YouTube tutorials - Financial Literacy Skills

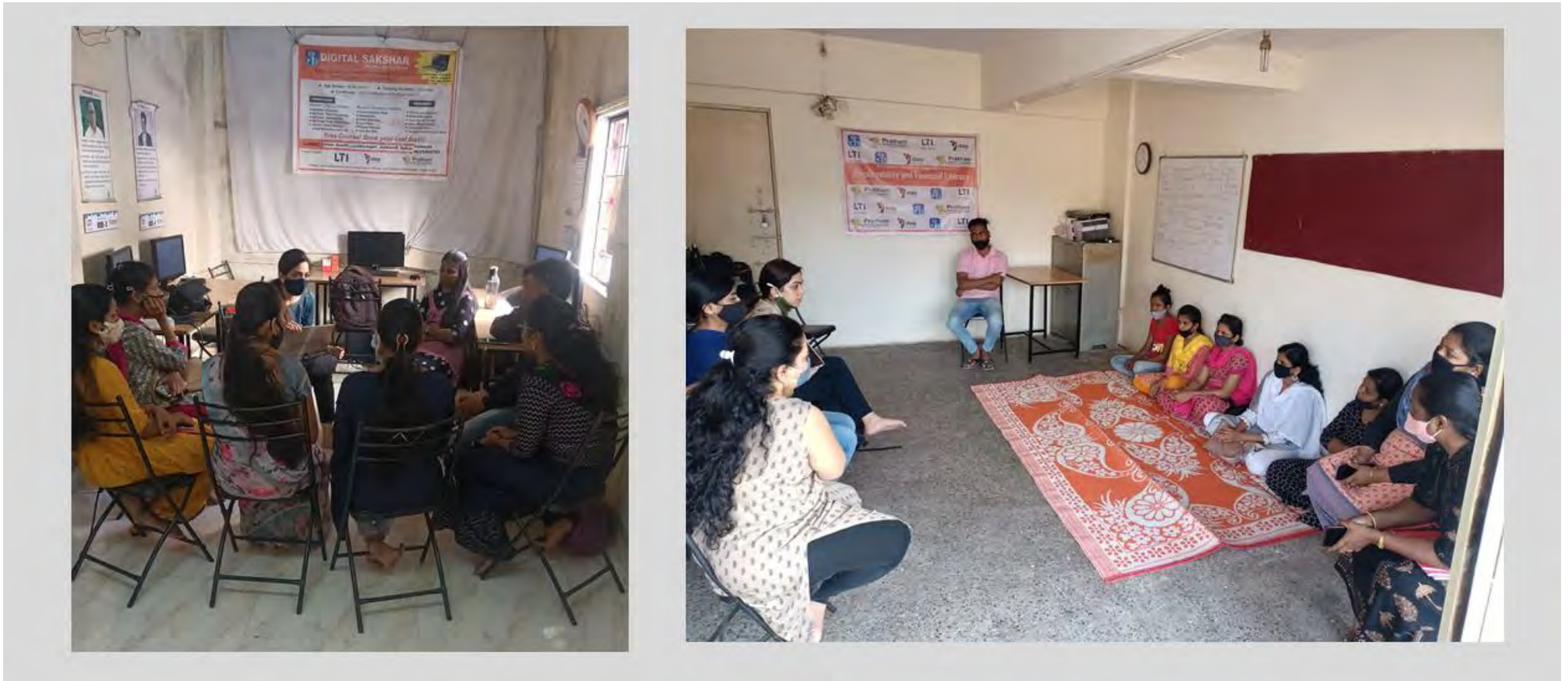


Figure 32 Interactions at Kalewadi and Vishrantwadi Centres, Pune



Thank you