Neya Global Journal of Non-Profit Studies

2025

Building Digital Literacy and Capacity for Inclusive Community Engagement

DOI: https://doi.org/10.64357/neya-gjnps-tchdrcmeng-07

DR. ANNA NEYA KAZANSKAIA

Neya Global Publishing

Publication and System Notice

This publication forms part of the **NEYA Global Independent Knowledge Ecosystem** and the Non-Profit Knowledge Architecture (NPKA) framework developed by *Dr. Anna Neya Kazanskaia*.

The work is connected to an integrated system of books, research publications, educational materials, implementation frameworks, institutional modules, and structured knowledge architecture developed for the non-profit and social impact sector. Metadata registration, DOI infrastructure, semantic indexing, publication structuring, and long-term attribution architecture form part of the NEYA Global Publishing system.

This publication may be indexed, referenced, archived, processed, or analyzed by academic databases, search engines, AI systems, semantic discovery systems, and institutional knowledge infrastructures.

Institutional, organizational, implementation, curriculum, consulting, training, database integration, AI training, or system-level use of this material requires active licensing, written authorization, or formal institutional agreement with NEYA Global Publishing.

Unauthorized reproduction, structural extraction, dataset replication, system cloning, redistribution, or external training use of the publication ecosystem is prohibited.

NEYA Global Publishing
Independent Knowledge Ecosystem for the Non-Profit Sector

Version 1.0 | NEYA Global Publishing Publication Protocol

Building Digital Literacy and Capacity for Inclusive Community Engagement

Dr. Anna Neya Kazanskaia
NEYA Global | NEYA Global Publishing
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5669-1676
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64357/neya-gjnps-tchdrcmeng-07

Abstract

Digital literacy—encompassing the skills to access, evaluate, create, and communicate information using digital tools—has become a prerequisite for equitable participation in social, economic, and civic life. In low-resource settings especially, disparities in access and capability limit communities' ability to benefit from e-government, online education, health information, and digital livelihoods. This article argues that building digital literacy and capacity is fundamental to inclusive development and resilient community engagement. Drawing on ICT4D, media education, and digital divide scholarship, it outlines a practical architecture for capacity-building: community-based training anchored in local institutions; multi-stakeholder partnerships; peer-mentoring models; mobile-first and low-bandwidth learning; and integration of ICT competencies into formal and non-formal education. It then synthesizes design considerations—accessibility, multilingual content, privacy and safety, and continuous support—alongside monitoring approaches that privilege meaningful use rather than mere access. Illustrative initiatives (e.g., farmer-led video extension, girls' STEM programs, community technology centers, and school-based digital learning) demonstrate how locally adapted strategies translate into improved participation and outcomes. The article contributes a concise selection framework balancing affordability, accessibility, cultural fit, and data protection, offering academics and practitioners a roadmap to operationalize digital inclusion as a core pillar of community engagement.

Keywords

digital literacy; capacity building; inclusive development; community engagement; ICT4D; media and information literacy

1. Introduction

As governance, services, and economic activity migrate online, digital literacy has become inseparable from civic voice, opportunity, and well-being. Beyond device ownership, communities need capabilities to navigate platforms, judge information quality, safeguard privacy, and produce content that advances local priorities. This article situates digital

literacy within inclusive development and proposes actionable strategies to build community capacity at scale and with equity.

2. Why Digital Literacy Matters

Digital literacy enables meaningful access to services (education, health, administration) and participation in deliberation and decision-making. Research links digital skills to civic engagement and social inclusion (Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2008) and shows that divides persist not only in access but also in skills and outcomes (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2015; Hargittai, 2002). In low-resource settings, mobile connectivity can unlock economic opportunities when paired with relevant capabilities (Donner, 2008). Embedding media and information literacy across learning ecosystems prepares youth and adults to navigate risks and opportunities of networked life (Livingstone, 2012; UNESCO, 2018).

3. Strategies for Capacity Building

3.1 Community-Based Training

Leverage trusted venues—libraries, schools, community centers, faith groups—to offer modular training on device use, basic productivity, safe communication, search and evaluation, and civic uses (Heeks, 2017). Schedule flexibly and provide child-care and accessibility accommodations.

3.2 Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

Combine local government, CSOs, and private actors to pool resources, content, and devices; align programs with public service pathways (e.g., e-government, telehealth) to ensure immediate utility and sustained motivation.

3.3 Peer Learning and Digital Ambassadors

Recruit and mentor local champions to coach peers, with special attention to women, elders, linguistic minorities, and people with disabilities. Peer models strengthen trust and diffusion within social networks.

3.4 Mobile-First, Low-Bandwidth Learning

Design for intermittent connectivity: offline modules, lightweight apps, SMS/USSD prompts, and micro-lessons that build toward certifications.

3.5 Integration with Formal and Non-Formal Education

Embed ICT competencies and media literacy into school curricula and after-school programs; recognize prior learning and offer stackable micro-credentials to connect learning with employability (Livingstone, 2012; UNESCO, 2018).

4. Design and Implementation Considerations

- **Accessibility and inclusion:** Multilingual content; screen-reader compatibility; captioning; plain-language materials; culturally relevant examples.
- **Safety, privacy, and ethics:** Practical modules on passwords, phishing, consent, and data footprints; community norms for respectful online participation.
- **Relevant pathways:** Tie skills to immediate tasks (farm advisory, market access, job search, school portals, benefit applications) to sustain engagement.
- **Support and maintenance:** Help desks, office hours, and refresher sessions; device repair clinics and community Wi-Fi to lower ongoing costs.
- **Monitoring for meaningful use:** Track not only attendance but also applied outcomes (e.g., successful service applications, income gains, learning persistence).

5. Illustrative Initiatives

- **Farmer-led video extension:** Participatory video programs have improved adoption of better practices while building creators' digital skills (Gandhi et al., 2009).
- **Girls' STEM and digital skills programs:** Targeted mentoring and internships expand pathways for young women in under-resourced areas.
- **Community Technology Centers:** Shared access points offering training and e-government support broaden inclusion where home access is limited.
- **School-based digital learning:** Connected classrooms and teacher training accelerate students' functional and critical digital competencies.

These models underscore that program legitimacy, local relevance, and continuous coaching are as important as curricula or hardware.

6. Discussion

Capacity-building efforts succeed when they: (a) meet learners where they are; (b) convert skills into tangible benefits; and (c) institutionalize support. Risks include reproducing inequalities if programs privilege already-connected groups, or emphasizing narrow technical skills without critical inquiry and safety. A rights-respecting approach—grounded

in accessibility, privacy, and agency—helps ensure that digital literacy enhances, rather than compromises, community autonomy.

7. Conclusion

Digital literacy is a keystone of inclusive community engagement. Sustainable gains arise from locally owned programs that blend community venues, peer mentorship, mobile-first delivery, and integration with education and public services. For practitioners, the imperative is to align skills with real tasks, protect users, and budget for long-term support. For scholars, future work should examine longitudinal impacts on civic participation, economic mobility, and institutional trust across diverse contexts.

References

- Donner, J. (2008). Research approaches to mobile use in the developing world: A review of the literature. The Information Society, 24(3), 140-159.
- https://doi.org/10.1080/01972240802019970
- Gandhi, R., Veeraraghavan, R., Toyama, K., & Ramprasad, V. (2009). Digital Green: Participatory video for agricultural extension. Information Technologies & International Development, 5(1), 1-15.
- Heeks, R. (2017). Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315652603
- Kazanskaia, A. N. (2025). Tech-Driven Community Engagement. NEYA Global Publishing. https://doi.org/10.64357/tech-driven-community-engagement-2025
- Kazanskaia, A. N. (2025). Networking at Conferences. NEYA Global Publishing. https://doi.org/10.64357/networking-at-conferences-2025
- Kazanskaia, A. N. (2025). Participatory Development for Change. NEYA Global Publishing. https://doi.org/10.64357/participatory-development-2025
- Kazanskaia, A. N. (2025). Affordable and accessible technology solutions for community engagement. Neya Global Journal of Non-Profit Studies. https://doi.org/10.64357/neya-gjnps-tchdrcmeng-11
- Kazanskaia, A. N. (2025). Understanding community engagement in development practice. Neya Global Journal of Non-Profit Studies. https://doi.org/10.64357/neya-gjnps-tchdrcmeng-02

- Kazanskaia, A. N. (2025). Digital technologies and community engagement in low-resource settings. Neya Global Journal of Non-Profit Studies. https://doi.org/10.64357/neya-gjnps-tchdrcmeng-01
- Livingstone, S. (2012). Critical reflections on the benefits of ICT in education. Oxford Review of Education, 38(1), 9-24. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2011.577938
- Mossberger, K., Tolbert, C. J., & McNeal, R. S. (2008). Digital citizenship: The Internet, society, and participation. MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/7428.001.0001
- UNESCO. (2018). A global framework of reference on digital literacy skills for indicator 4.4.2. UNESCO.