

Report on Google Digital Literacy, Safety & Security Workshop

Tura (Meghalaya) Dated 22nd Aug; 2014

Introduction:

The 1990s commercialization of the internet resulted in its popularity and penetration into all aspects of life of the mainstream people around the globe. Virtual existence has become the modern human way of life. The internet is a vast world existent only virtually but shaping the modern lifestyle of an average individual in all its possible ways with the advent of e-learning, internet banking, online shopping, social media only to name a few. Just like the physical world around us is populated with people with good agenda and others with harmful agendas, similarly, the World Wide Web is also filled with good and bad. Like the way we take care of ourselves while crossing the road, when passing through a strange place or while interacting with strangers; it is equally important to take care of ourselves while participating in the internet.

Even though around the world Indians are known to be thorough with the computer but in mainland India the awareness with regard to Internet safety and security measures are not widespread. While speaking of the remote corners of the country especially some of the remote pockets of the North-east such knowledge is significantly poor. Moreover, in some remote areas people are still estranged from the use of the computer and the Internet and in some they are very new to its use. Tura is a small town in the West Garo Hill district of Meghalaya; it is one such place where people are relatively new to the use of the computer, internet, smart phones, etc. It is populated by the indigenous *Garo* tribes of the *Garo* Hills living predominantly a traditional life. Now, certainly as they are being bombarded with the modern tools and technologies such as the computer, smart phone, and internet which are anew to them; they need to know how to steer through the virtual world keeping thugs, negative experiences at bay. The *Google Digital Literacy, Safety & Security Workshop in Tura* is a small step in this direction.

The workshop was a warm interactive gathering with strength of one hundred and forty (140) participants from varied backgrounds. The workshop was in local collaboration with the *P.A Sangma Foundation College* and *Tura Internet & Services Centre*; the local workstation of Digital Empowerment Foundation. The local collaborators contributed greatly in selecting quality persons to participate in the workshop.

Among the one hundred and forty (140) participants there were hundred (100) college students pursuing various courses, there were eight (8) faculty members of the college, six (6) school teachers, five (5) participants from various NGOs and twenty one (21) of them were local residents roughly in the age group of twenty (20) to thirty five (35).

The participants were mostly new to the use of the internet, smart phone and computer. With the increasing digitalization of the mainstream India it has become very important to update oneself to the latest on goings in order to be included in the mainstream and avail opportunities around the world. The agenda of the participants was quest for knowledge; the increasing needs to peep a glimpse into this new unknown world.

Workshop proceedings:

The workshop was inaugurated by Mr. Swarup Chetry, Principal of P.A.S.F College. He inaugurated the session with an inspiring speech, encouraging the participants to participate actively and learn a lot of new things about the Information communication Technology sector from the workshop.

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- Stay safe and secure in a digital world
- Trace & manage digital footprints
- Identify & track online scams
- Good practices for keeping safe online
- Introduction of HWGO programme

The workshop was held in three sessions:

The *first* session was on ***Staying Safe Online***. This session was taken over by *Partha Das*, faculty member of Tura College of I.T. The central focus of this session was on how to keep passwords safe i.e. speaking on how to create strong passwords, how to keep it confidential. What is the 2-step verification process? The importances of keeping one's system clean and how to keep it clean? Also disseminating the know how to take control of the settings of a computer in order to keep one's system safe and secure.

The *second* session was on ***Search and Safety***. This session was taken over by *Prativa Borah*, DEF. The central focus of this session pertained to Hacking: What is hacking? What are its types? What are hacked sites? How are these sites hacked? How does spam and malware spread through the internet? What are the possible signs of being hacked? What are the motives of the hacker? How to identify hacked sites online? How and where to report such cases?

The *third* session was on the topic ***Identify and Prevent Online Scams***. This session was taken over by *Harun Ahmed*, Regional Coordinator, DEF. The central focus of this session was on safe online surfing. It addressed to the concerns such as: How to stay safe online; what rules to follow? How to identify and avoid cyber tricks, online scams and phishing scams? How to keep oneself safe at social networking sites? How much information to provide online and what not to provide online? And how to go about if something goes wrong?

All the three sessions were made through Power point presentations, short video clips and lively discussions. The Questions that came across during these sessions were: How can someone access our personal information through spreading virus? Is the internet not safe? Is it safe to upload photos on facebook? Is it safe to provide phone no online? Is it necessary to use anti-virus? Etc. The questions were addressed to the satisfaction of the participants.

The Workshop was a day long affair in order to ensure quality dissemination of information and exchange of knowledge. The registration was opened at 9:00 Am which was closed by 10:30 AM, the registration process was smoothly carried out within the time frame. The inaugural session took place from 10:30 – 11:00 Am. From 11:00 am to 5:00 pm the workshop was smoothly carried out with three sessions and two breaks in between.

An overview:

The internet, the computer and the smart phone may be a very usual affair in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, New York and all other cosmopolitan spaces around the globe but however not so in a remote North-Eastern pocket of India. Tura is one such small hilly town where infrastructure is constrained by the mighty hills around it. If an electricity wire is broken down in a geographically inaccessible location; the electricity may not be restored in a week's time. In such a situation, in such a location where such are the constraints, the World Wide Web and its tools have still found ways to penetrate yet it is an arena relatively unfamiliar to the people in Tura. Hence, in order to steer away the people from negative experiences while using the internet the *Google Digital Literacy, Safety & Security Workshop* was a initiative step.

As mentioned earlier the participants are from varied backgrounds, however the participants were mostly the youth. The middle aged and the old aged people are not so acquainted with the internet and its tools in Tura. Especially, as they are predominated by their rich indigenous culture and heritage, the youth are the utmost traders in mingling with the new world setting themselves aside from the elderly. The young people seem inspired by the western way of life as they mostly wear western outfits and also speak English. They aspire to be prosperous and modern, even though they have welcomed this new technology and way of life; they need proper guidance and knowledge of the do's and don'ts.

In the morning when registration was opened and slowly the participants started turning in, there were a lot of fresh faces eager to learn and know about the workshop. All the sessions were carried out with much liveliness as it was interactive with both the parties participating in the sessions. The short video clips with animated figures demonstrating the dos and don'ts with relevance to the topics of the sessions added to the cheer of the audience.

The question answer session was loaded with interesting questions and also some frequently asked questions. However, with all the interaction some of the things that have come up are that; they are very new to the use of the internet, they are interested and fascinated by its use value, they need to be encouraged to use new technologies to make life easier.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the day long workshop can be said to be successful and it created interest and awareness among participants. In a place like Tura, there is need of more such initiatives to remove misconceptions among the people regarding the use of the internet and to create more and more awareness regarding its good use. It is not possible to change everything within a single day, holistic approach can bring change.