Operationalization

While digital technology holds the promise of real and intangible benefits for women and girls, there are several barriers to its full utilization, including a lack of opportunities, lower exposure to digital literacy skills, lesser technical confidence, and real and perceived threats. The Safe Space to Learn Digital Literacy Curriculum aims to strengthen women and adolescent girls' digital literacy with a curriculum that is designed to be used in Women and Girls Safe Spaces.

Equipping women and girls with digital skills requires a deliberate approach to digital literacy. This guide explores the essential considerations for planning and implementing the Safe Space to Learn digital literacy program, including budget, timeline, personnel, device management and feedback collection.

Core Operational Considerations

Minimum Requirements
- ☐ Functioning Women and Girls Safe Space in which to hold the sessions
- ☐ Mobile devices (smartphones, tablets, laptops) or the ability and budget to procure
- ☐ Consistent internet connectivity
- ☐ Dedicated facilitators
- ☐ 18-24 weeks for learning sessions

Session Location

One of the most essential elements of the Safe Space to Learn program is the location of the sessions. Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) are physical spaces where women and adolescent girls can be free from harm and harassment. They are also places where women and adolescent girls can gain knowledge and skills; access GBV response services or other available services; and foster opportunities for mutual support and collective action in their community. They have been used for decades by GBV actors in humanitarian programming as an entry point for women and adolescent girls to report protection concerns and voice their needs. There are several objectives of a WGSS. Among them are the objectives to: "facilitate access for all women and adolescent girls to knowledge, skills and a range of relevant services," "To serve as a place where women and adolescent girls can organize and access information and resources to reduce risk of violence," and "provide a place where women and adolescent girls are safe and encouraged to use their voice and collectively raise attention to their rights and needs."[1] These objectives align with those of this curriculum.

Because of the harmful attitudes and perceptions about women and girls' use of technology, the Safe Space to Learn curriculum is suggested to be implemented in a WGSS.

[1] Women and Girls Safe Spaces: A Toolkit for Advancing Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Humanitarian Settings, p. 26-27.

WGSS are essential because "In too many countries and communities worldwide, too few spaces are considered safe for women and adolescent girls. The systematic discrimination women and adolescent girls face in the context of global patriarchal systems increases their risk of harassment and violence in their households, schools, workplaces, and communities-at-large. Caught between a rock and a hard place as a result of gender-based inequality, not only are they more likely to experience certain types of violence but they are also less likely to have the options, resources, and power to leave an unsafe or violent situation."

Time Considerations

Depending on your pace and prior knowledge, the curriculum could take between 18 and 24 weeks to complete. To determine the number of sessions needed for your setting, preliminary discussions with staff or women and girls are recommended. This can identify which modules should be covered, in how many sessions, and other modifications/additions needed. This can be mapped out to determine how many weeks are needed for the curriculum.

Size of the Groups

Groups of 10-20 are recommended for this curriculum. Any group sizes higher than 20 participants will require more facilitators. It is also recommended that participants are in similar age groups. This is not a requirement but may help facilitate the sessions because of similar interests. It is also recommended that participants have comparable results on the digital literacy knowledge assessment. Having participants in a group with similar interests and digital abilities will help facilitate sessions.

Budget Considerations

In order to determine the budget needed to roll out the curriculum, it's helpful to read through the curriculum and see how it fits with your setting. You will need to determine, based on the existing skills of participants, which modules need to be covered and in how many sessions. That will have an effect on the budget needed. However, as a starting point, below are sample items to include in a digital literacy budget:

Item	Notes
Personnel	1-2 facilitators to run the sessions. Oversight from program coordinator
Hardware	1 device per participant and facilitators 2-5 back-up devices (recommended)
Translation	*If needed
Internet	Enough for all participants and facilitators to complete the sessions
Device Chargers	One per device 1-2 back up chargers (recommended)
Power Bank	3-4 *if needed because of electricity outages
Flipchart	2-3
Markers	2-3
Projector	1
Capstone Materials	*Depending on capstone project selected, this may include additional materials

Preparing the Curriculum and Sessions

Follow these steps to prepare for the implementation of the Digital Literacy Curriculum Sessions:

Community Outreach

Ask women and girls (older adolescents) if they are interested in digital literacy training. Note: Be clear about the content of the sessions and access limitations to devices. If devices will not be loaned outside of the safe space, clarify this from the start. Avoid any misunderstanding that devices will be gifted, if that is not the intent of the program.

Preliminary Participant List

Determine the number of interested participants and possible age groupings to determine the number of groups or if participants will need to be on a waitlist.

Registration

During the registration phase/identification of participants, identify any additional requests or needs shared by participants and incorporate them into the knowledge assessment and curriculum as needed. Use this information to adjust curriculum as needed.

Knowledge Assessment

Conduct the Digital Literacy Knowledge Assessment to determine if participants meet the bar for literacy and numeracy to participate. Document the results of selected participants to be able to compare to end scores.

Form Groups

Determine how many groups you will have (based on age group, digital literacy level, number of interested participants, available facilitators, availability of WGSS, etc.). Propose a division of the group (if needed) and ask them for their digital literacy goals.

Module Choices

Based on the assessment results, identify what modules of the curriculum will be relevant for the group(s) and in what order to progress through them. Adjust the module order of the curriculum to meet the specific needs of your program. Based on the assessment results, and looking through each module, determine how much of each module can be covered in one session.

Meeting Date and Time

Determine (with participants) the schedule of sessions (i.e. morning or afternoon, frequency, etc.)

Committment

Share schedule with the proposed group(s) to see if they can commit to the sessions for the needed number of weeks. Before starting the sessions, ask each participant about their experience with digital technology. Write this information down. It will be used in the final session.

Feedback

Determine your method of feedback for each session. Ideally, you will ask for goals from each participant to start the session and collect feedback at the end. Digital literacy training must be flexible, adaptable and paced according to the participants.

Implementation Support

Provide ongoing support for facilitation team. Schedule ongoing check-ins (i.e. 1x per month) with the implementation team to offer opportunities to address questions, concerns, challenges, etc. Identify in-country staff to support ad hoc needs, such as data management and IT staff.   Be prepared with service referral information for participants, i.e. education, livelihoods, case management, etc.

Decision to be Made

Device Handling

One of the reasons for the digital gender gap is the prohibitive costs of devices and data. Devices should be provided as part of the Safe Space to Learn Curriculum alongside internet access. Any devices provided for the curriculum will be owned by the program but will be loaned out during the sessions. Often, there are delays in procurement, and therefore every effort to procure the devices should be made prior to the start date of the program. It is recommended to start procurement 2-6 months prior to program start date.

It is recommended that each device has a program sticker on it, to avoid confusion about ownership and to appropriately track devices. Additionally, before any devices are loaned for use during the sessions the type, device, date, location, borrower, and facilitator information must be documented. Each borrower will sign (or verbally acknowledge with a facilitator noting this) that this device is only to be used in the session and cannot be removed from the premises. At the end of each session, participants will return the devices, and this will be documented. They will also agree not to download any applications or other software without discussion with the facilitator. No potentially harmful or sexually explicit material or websites will be accessed on the devices. For this, a template agreement has been provided below to ensure content on the phones is in line with ethical standards for device use and safeguarding policies.

Note to Program Coordinator:
You may determine based on safety of participants, program reputation, similar protocols about in-kind assistance, budget for future sessions, if you choose to gift hardware after the capstone session of the curriculum. This should align with other internal policies on gifting materials, in-kind assistance, and procurement rules.

Template Agreement:
Safe Space to Learn Participant Device Use Agreement Form

It is clear to participants that access to the network and devices provided by the organization are a privilege and not a right.

Device Ownership

The technology devices given to participants are the property of [the organization] and are intended solely for educational purposes. Any use of these devices for anything other than educational purposes may result in disciplinary action, including the revocation of the device.

Participant Obligations and Responsibilities

It is expected of participants to utilize [organization] devices in a safe, responsible, and educational manner. The participant who has been issued the device is accountable for its proper utilization at all times. Sharing of personal account information, passwords, or any other identification details is strictly prohibited. The use of [organization] devices for any improper activities such as posting discriminatory, obscene, or sexually explicit material, cyberbullying, disclosing personal information of others, violating intellectual property rights, disrupting [organization] technology or operations, installing unauthorized software, hacking into the system, or engaging in unethical or illegal practices, is strictly prohibited and may result in removal from the program or other consequences.

Privacy

Participants should understand that when using [organization] devices, their privacy is not guaranteed. The [organization] has the right to monitor and record all activities performed on [organization] devices, including but not limited to internet usage, social media access, and communications sent or received. This monitoring can be done at any time without prior notice and is done for various legal reasons such as investigation of inappropriate behavior. It's also important for participants to be aware that in most cases, their actions on [organization] devices, such as web searches and emails, cannot be erased or deleted.

Personally Owned Devices

If a participant uses their own device to access [organization] technology, they must comply with all relevant policies and regulations.

Consequences for Violation

If a participant breaks any laws, policies, or agreements related to the use of [organization] technology, they may face consequences such as the loss of their access to the technology, or disciplinary actions like suspension or expulsion from the Safe Space to Learn program. In addition, if the violation is serious, it may be reported to the authorities for further legal actions.

My name is _____ I am a participant in the Safe Space to Learn Digital

First Name   Last Name

Literacy Curriculum program. I acknowledge receipt, comprehension, and commitment to follow the guidelines set forth in this agreement, as well as any other relevant laws and regulations regarding the use of [organization] technology. I acknowledge that there is no privacy assurance when using [organization]technology and that any violation may lead to the revocation of my access, disciplinary measures, and/or legal consequences.

_____   _____
Participant Signature   **Date**

Feedback

<u>Session feedback template</u>:

Receiving feedback following each session will aid in improvements to the program, its facilitation, the content, and the delivery. Below are some sample questions. It is recommended to at least include questions aiming to understand the content, delivery, structure, and outcomes.

- Reflection on the session content: I am lost, I need some help, I can teach others
- Were the training objectives clearly stated before you started the session?
- Did the session achieve the stated objectives?
- Was the course's content too challenging for an average learner to understand?
- Was the content in-depth enough?
- Was the facilitator able to explain the topic in a way that the audience can relate to? Did the instructor offer enough support to the learners during the session?
- Rate the session on how engaging it was (use Likert 5-point scale)
- How would you rate the overall course content?
- Which sections did you feel were lacking? In what way were they lacking?
- Do you feel that your knowledge or skills have improved by taking the course?
- How would you rate your overall learning experience?
- How could we improve the learning experience? What changes they would like to apply to the program? What future ideas would support program improvement? (Require learners to name at least two suggestions to improve training effectiveness)

Final Evaluation

<u>Final Evaluation Template:</u>

At the end of the final session, you will need to ask learners for a final evaluation. Questions to consider:

- Overall Reflection on the curriculum content: I am lost, I need some help, I can teach others
- Would you consider further training on the topic on your own?
- Do you feel that your knowledge or skills have improved by taking the course?
- How would you rate your overall learning experience?
- How could we improve the learning experience?
- Name the things you enjoyed the most in this course.
- At any time during the course, did learning the materials feel unsafe in any way?
- Would you recommend this course to a colleague?
- Were your training expectations fulfilled?
- How would you rate the course?
- If asked, would you be able to summarize the goal of this course in three sentences?
- What would you like to do with your new knowledge and skills?
- What, if anything, related to digital literacy would you like to learn more about?

Conclusion

This operationalization guide equips programs with the tools and resources to implement the Safe Space to Learn digital literacy curriculum for women and girls. As you implement this curriculum, remember to adapt and refine according to your setting, context and the participants. Women and girls in their setting will have the best ideas about how to establish a safe, collaborative and inclusive learning environment. Listen to them!

The digital landscape is ever-changing, and so are the opportunities it holds. This curriculum equips women and girls not just with tools, but with the agility to adapt and thrive. It's a compass for navigating a dynamic world, ensuring women and girls remain active participants in shaping a future where technology serves everyone equally.

Embrace the journey, embrace the challenges, and celebrate the transformations!

Case Study:
Safe Space to Learn Digital Literacy Curriculum Pilot in Yemen

Women and girls were empowered to register for the Safe Space to Learn digital literacy curriculum through dedicated awareness efforts tailored to the program's offerings. These were facilitated through the Women and Girls Safe Space. Over 100 women and girls of varying ages expressed interest. Fifty participants were identified between the ages of 19 - 35, and two groups of 25 people were formed, though the max recommendation of participants is 20. The first group's ages range from 19 to 26, and the second group from 28 to 35.

Selection criteria was based on age, time and availability, and the results of a knowledge assessment, indicating literacy and numeracy skills. Those results also determined the group formation, ensuring participants had a similar level of comfort with tech. There were women and girls who were interested, but they were not able to join because of their literacy level. They were then referred to a different program specific to literacy skills. After reviewing the knowledge assessment results, the participants were divided into two groups according to their level, with 25 women in each group.

Focus Group Discussions were held to identify the best time for participants to meet. Mornings (from 9am – 11am) were confirmed to be the most convenient time for women and girls. Each group decided to meet 2x per week, meaning that facilitators had four sessions per week to cover.

Although this schedule was determined ahead of the launch of the curriculum, it was quickly realized that scheduling changes were required to meet the needs of facilitators and participants. The final schedule was Mondays and Tuesdays. One group meets from 9-11AM on these days, and the other group meets from 2-4PM.

While participants were being recruited, there was a training for facilitators that included a walk-through of the modules. Then the opportunity to go through the training themselves as a self-guided group activity.

Sessions

After breaking the ice, the opening session outlined the program's guiding principles, timeframe, and thematic areas for the upcoming six months. Participants were then invited to share their thoughts, requests, and suggestions on the curriculum and its duration.

During registration, participants identified digital needs outside of curriculum, such as setting alarms, changing times in phones, etc. Additional questions were added to the knowledge assessment to identify participants skill levels based on this feedback:
- Can you create a new contact in your phone?
- Can you compose a text message and send it?
- Can you set an alarm on your phone?
- Can you adjust the clock settings on your phone?

In Yemen, the curriculum order was adjusted to be:
- Module 1: Introduction to the Digital Space, 3-4 weeks
- Module 4: Staying Safe Online, 3-4 weeks
- Module 3: Finding Information Online 2-3 weeks
- Module 2: Digital Accounts and Applications, 3-4 weeks
- Module 5: Social Media, 3-4 weeks
- Module 6: Employment and Education Skills, 2-3 weeks
- Module 7: Capstone (Graduation Project), 2 weeks

Challenges

Devices and Connectivity
- There were challenges in procuring the necessary devices for the curriculum. This delayed the launch of the program by multiple weeks.
- Despite there being WiFi at the WGSS, there were still challenges with internet connectivity, which caused disruptions during the learning sessions.

Participation
- There was a significant demand for the digital literacy curriculum. Unfortunately, due to limited funding and space in participation, many women and girls were unable to participate, even after adding 10 additional seats.
- Women coming for the digital literacy curriculum have been perceived as "special" by their peers at the WGSS, causing some tension within the WGSS. This is in part because there are phones attached to the learning, while women otherwise only have access to henna or sewing machines. The phones were confusing other women not enrolled in the curriculum, and they didn't understand the aim of the session. The Coordinator explained that all women and girls using the center are equal. The phones remain in the sessions and have to be signed out and in by participants.

Outcomes

The program demonstrably enhanced participants' skills in crucial digital citizenship areas, including online navigation, secure account management, and proactive online safety strategies. This translated into tangible benefits, with participants highlighting improved access to information and opportunities, including resume writing, new job platforms, and online skill development programs.

Participants reported an increase in their digital self-efficacy, evidenced by heightened confidence in online engagement. They described feeling empowered and in control of their online experiences, citing their ability to navigate the internet with assurance and manage potential online challenges effectively.

Because of the program's gender-sensitive content and its deployment in the Women and Girls Safe Spaces, it fostered a supportive community amongst participants, promoting cooperation and knowledge sharing. This collaborative spirit extended beyond the program, as evidenced by participants assisting family and friends with their digital navigation.

Learning from the sessions sparked a ripple effect! Following sessions, participants requested printed copies, eager to share their newfound knowledge with other women. This desire to spread the word signifies the powerful impact the program is having, and the need to translate the curriculum into training PowerPoints.

Participants suggested additional topics to be covered in future modules:
- accessing information platforms
- mobile phone repair to alleviate concerns about device safety
- digital currency
- photography

Key Takeaways

1. Determine sessions logistics with participants: Set up a time to discuss with potential participants the best dates and times to hold the sessions.
2. Tailor the learning journey: Arrange the curriculum modules in a way that makes sense for your audience and context. This could include coverage of additional sub-topics as is important to participants.
3. Tech up your trainers: Prioritize time for facilitators to master the digital literacy curriculum and tools used in the program. This will equip them to support participants throughout.