

Digital Literacy: Navigating the Online World as a Sex Worker Activist

VAMP Institute Training

Sex Workers and Allies South Asia

8th and 9th September 2024,

Alok Centre, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Mirpur, Dhaka



Participants: SWASA partners in Bangladesh

SL	Name	Organisation	Designation
1	Forida Akter	Sandhi Nari Sangha, Sylhet	President
2	Fatema Akter	Alokito Nari Unnayan Shamiti, Khulna	President
3	Suity Yeasmin	Alor Michil Nari Kallyan Sangstha, Rajshahi	President
4	Shrabonty Shrabon	Sacheton Hijra Odhikar Jubo Sangha, Dhaka	Executive Director
5	Rahima Begum	Durjoy Nari Sangha, Dhaka	President
6	Nabila Khan	Badhan Hijra Sangha, Dhaka	Member
7	Hena Akter	Ulka Nari Sangha, Dhaka	President
8	Rina Akter	Kallyanmoyee Nari Sangha, Dhaka	President
9	Kazol Akter	Akkhay Nari Sangha, Narayanganj	President
10	Nur Nahar Begum	Bonchita Mohila & Shishu Unnayan Sanstha, Jashore	President
11	Rahela Akter	Porosh Mohila Unnayan Sangstha, Rangpur	President
12	Farida Pervin	Obohelito Nari Sangha, Daulatdia	President
13	Aklima Akhter	Nari Mukti Sangha, Tangail	Member
14	Nazma Akter	Alor Prodeep Nari Unnayan Shamiti, Sayedpur	President
15	Abdur Rahman	Ashar Alo Society	Acting Executive Director
16	Asraful Sikder	Ashar Alo Society	Programme Associate

Facilitators:

1. Rajkumary, Trainer, Digital Safety and Security
2. Zannat Husna, Bangladesh Coordinator, Sex Workers and Allies South Asia

Rapporteur:

1. Atanu Roy Chowdhury, Sub-Editor, The New Age

Objectives:

1. Strengthening and amplifying the voices and online presence of sex workers' activists and organisations
2. Enhancing the workers' basic digital literacy

3. Promoting online communication and etiquette
4. Strengthening digital safety and privacy awareness



Day 1: 8th September, 2024

Agenda:

▽ **Session 1**

▽ **Registration and introduction**

o **Facilitator: Zannat Husna & Rajkumary**

- Rajkumary started the introduction session by requesting the participants to introduce themselves by stating their names and the organisations they represent and then mentioning an item that they usually carry with them and why the item is important to them
- Zannat explained what VAMP Institute is to the participants
- She also explained the agenda for the two-day training

- She explained what “digital” and “digital literacy” means and why this particular topic was chosen for this VAMP Institute training
- She explained how a strong online presence of the CBOs and the activists can contribute to the sex workers’ rights movement. The participants also reiterated the need for digital literacy for the sex workers’ rights activists
- She informed the participants about the next two days schedule and how the training could help them in developing a better understanding of the digital world

∇ Session 2

∇ Building a digital foundation: An overview of the common online tools

○ Facilitators: Rajkumary & Zannat Husna

- Rajkumary began by asking how many of the participants use smartphones and why they use smartphones for
- Most participants replied that they use smartphones to communicate for personal and professional use
- All participants except two did not have smartphones
- Most of the participants were found to have struggled with operating smartphones and different online activities
- Zannat asked the participants if they all had Google Meet, Gmail and Zoom apps on their phone
- Eight participants among the 14 responded that they have Meet on their phones; six had Zoom along with Google Meet
- A few participants identified that some mobile apps they used for personal work, such as Facebook, Messenger, Imo, etc., and some for organisational work, such as Meet, Zoom, etc.
- The facilitators asked the participants if they had email accounts and if they knew how to check their emails. No one except Shrabonti from Shochetan Hijra Odhikar Jubo Shongha knew how to write or read an email. A few participants mentioned they did not have email accounts of their own; some use their son’s or daughter’s account
- The facilitators helped the participants identify the Gmail app on their smartphones
- Rajkumary explained the process of sending an email in a simple manner
- She then gave the participants a task
 - ◆ **Task: Send an email to SWASA’s address mentioning their names**

- ◆ The facilitators then helped the participants with the task – how to find the Gmail app, then the Compose option, type the email address, write their names, and send the email
- ◆ Since Shrabonti knew how to send emails, she, along with the facilitators, helped her peers send emails to SWASA
- ◆ All participants except Srabonti had difficulty in typing the email address as they were not well acquainted with the English alphabet, the keyboard, and the overall process of sending an email
- ◆ With the help of the facilitators and Shrabonti, all the participants were able to complete the task
- ◆ Zannat asked the participants to do the task one more time; participants again required support from the facilitators and Shrabonti and were able to complete the task



∇ **Zooming in: Engaging, leading, and participating in virtual meetings**

○ **Facilitators: Zannat Husna & Rajkumary**

- Zannat demonstrated on screen how to create instant meeting links on the Google Meet app and share them with others
- She then asked the participants to create a meeting link and share it with the person sitting next to them via WhatsApp
- With the help of the facilitators, the participants were able to create a meeting link, share it, join the meeting, and then end the meeting
- Zannat explained the necessity of being able to do this as it would help them hold meetings by themselves in the future
- Then she asked Shrabonti to create a meeting link on Meet and share it in the WhatsApp group, which she was able to do
- Zannat then explained how to mute/unmute, turn video on/off, raise hand, how to avoid sharing screen accidentally during online meetings
- After the participants joined the meeting via the link shared previously, Rajkumary gave them a task
 - ◆ **Task: Rajkumary would call the name of a participant, who would then unmute, speak, and then mute again**
 - ◆ With the help of the facilitators, the participants who had smartphones were able to complete the task
- The facilitators asked the participants if they had any questions or comments about the training so far
 - ◆ Participants asked the facilitators to show them how to write an email one more time and how to create a Meet meeting link
 - ◆ Some were found to still have difficulty finding the Gmail app
 - ◆ Facilitators showed the participants how to write an email, how to create a Meet meeting link, and how to locate the Gmail app

∇ **Session 4**

∇ **Virtual etiquette: How to navigate the online world with respect and confidence**

○ **Facilitator: Zannat Husna**

- Mentioning the weekly online meetings held with the participants starting from 1st July 2024, Zannat invited the participants to comment on how the meetings went. Some participants pointed out that there were always some disturbances in those meetings as the participants were not familiar with online meeting etiquette

- Zannat informed the participants that learning virtual etiquette was important as it would enable them to join meetings with different national and international stakeholders/beneficiaries
- The following etiquettes of online meetings were shared with the participants:
 - ◆ Not to turn on the mic unless they have something to say; only say relevant things
 - ◆ Keeping the mic off protects a person's privacy as it makes sure nobody's personal conversation is shared during online meetings
 - ◆ Keep the mic off when others speak
 - ◆ Use the Raise Hand feature before speaking
 - ◆ Only turn on the video if it is necessary
 - ◆ Join the meeting at least five minutes before the meeting is scheduled
 - ◆ In the case of group chats, always be mindful of who is present in the group
 - ◆ Do not share personal info or photos without other's consent



- Participants pointed out that as they were not used to attending online meetings, they had trouble maintaining the aforementioned etiquette

- Zannat then asked the participants if they wanted to learn about Zoom meetings. Participants said that they did
- She explained to the participants how Zoom is similar to Meet, especially in terms of interface
- Zannat, Rajkumary, and Asraful helped the participants sign up on Zoom so that they can quickly join Zoom meetings in the future
- They then helped the participants join a Zoom meeting; all except two were able to join
- Zannat showed the participants that the interface on Zoom, viz mute/unmute video on/off, etc., are similar to Meet; participants were able to understand

▽ Session 5

▽ **Group work:** Hands-on experience of managing and attending online meetings

o **Facilitators: Rajkumary & Zannat**

- They gave the participants a task after dividing the participants in three groups
 - ◆ Group A: Srabonti, Hena, Nabila, Forida Parvin
 - ◆ Group B: Sweety, Rahima, Rina, Rahela
 - ◆ Group C: Farida Begum, Kazol, Akhi, Ranu
 - ◆ **Task: One person from each group will create and share a Meet link, using which other members of the group will join the meeting; after joining the meeting, the group members will discuss what activity they are planning to do using the funds provided by SWASA/Ashar Alo Society**
 - ◆ The facilitators then helped the participants complete the task
 - ◆ After the task was completed, each of the participants came forward and shared with the room about their experience of attending the online meeting along with what activities they planned, who the coordinator of the activity would be, and how they would use the funds
 - ◆ Zannat provided feedback to every participant
 - ◆ Zannat asked the participants to send in their activity plan and budget plan by 20th September
- Zannat then announced the close of the first day of the training

Day 2: 9th September, 2024

Agenda:

▽ **Session 1**

▽ **Reflection on the first day: Participants' experience and feedback**

○ **Facilitator: Zannat Husna**

- She asked the participants to go over the topics covered in the previous day's training
- Participants responded by mentioning they learned about email, how to send emails, create and share Meet links, join the meeting via the link, meeting etiquette, how to join Zoom meetings, etc.
- She then asked the participants to provide feedback on the previous day's training



▪ **Feedback:**

- ◆ Shrabonti said that she believed they had already learned a lot about the digital world. She added that while this training was beneficial for her and others, she would like a longer training with more detailed information on email and online meeting

- › Facilitators said that they would try to arrange a longer training next year
- ◆ Suity said that she learned how to send an email and sent an email to her colleague in Rajshahi, and her colleagues found it impressive
- ◆ She also asked the facilitators how one could protect their information on social media; she mentioned that someone she knew had their phone hacked and had their photos leaked from a deleted folder
 - › Zannat said that a session on that was scheduled later in that day

▽ Session 2 & 3

▽ Digital Self-defense: Essential safety and security practices

▽ Consent in the digital age: Setting boundaries and protecting privacy

o Facilitators: Zannat & Rajkumary

- Rajkumary began by talking about safety on social media
- She informed the participants that a lot of times, social media accounts get hacked because people share their passwords with individuals who then take advantage of them
- She shared the importance of having a strong password
- Participants tend to forget their password or share it with untrustworthy people, so the facilitator focused on how to handle such situations better
 - ◆ One could use the same password for every platform. In this way, they would not forget it
 - ◆ One could share the password with somebody they fully trust, such as their colleagues and family member
- Rajkumary informed the participants that they should not say their passwords and PINs aloud
- She also informed the participants if they ever click on a link on social media and if it asked for their password, they should never enter it
- Zannat said that hacking does not always involve social media, as somebody can enter one of the participant's phones. She pointed out that while helping the participants, she noticed many did not use protective PINs or passwords for their lock screen. If they lose their phones, then anyone could get access to all the info in that phone and that would put at risk anybody whose info is also in that phone
- She then added that if a password-protected phone gets stolen, the thief would reset the phone leading to the deletion of all the info in the phone, which in turn would protect anybody whose information was in that phone
- After this, the facilitators offered to set password protection on the participants' phones that needed it
-
-



- Then Hena, one of the participants, said that people who were not her friends on FB were able to see her content and even comment on her posts; she asked the facilitators how that could be prevented
- Rajkumary then said that it was due to the fact that her FB profile was not locked
- She then showed the difference between locked and regular FB profiles on the projector screen. The participants asked for help locking their FB profiles
- She also informed them not to add just anybody who sends them a friend request on FB. Participants should always check the person's profile before accepting their friend request
- Zannat then showed a demo of the process on the projector screen
- After this, Shrabonti asked how she could keep people as Followers on FB without adding them. Rajkumary said that FB has a feature that needs to be turned on in order to have people as followers
- Hena apa then said that many sex workers used social media to earn money, but many had their accounts hacked; she asked the facilitators if they could provide any insight on that matter
- Rajkumary answered that a lot of times, people fall prey to scams, such as “send Tk 500 and you will win an iPhone”. She told the participants that if

they receive any scam calls or scam messages on social media or if somebody sends them bad images, they should block them

- Then, Zannat, Rajkumary, and Asraful assist the participants by showing them how to block somebody on FB, WhatsApp, and Messenger
- Rajkumary then asked the participants what they learned about FB security so far
 - ◆ They responded by saying that they learned not to share their passwords with people they do not trust, to lock their FB profiles and mobile phones
- Following this, Rajkumary informed the participants that they should not personal info, such as their home address or any photo that may indicate their address on social media
- Zannat then informed the participants that they should take consent before taking somebody's photo and before sharing that photo on social media, One can share their own photos on social media if it pleases them, but others cannot share that same photo on their social media account just because the first person shared it on theirs
- This also applies to photos shared in group conversations
- After this, Farida Parvin, one of the participants, said that some journalists took photos of sex workers' children forcibly and asked about their personal info. When the sex workers were angry about the article, Farida took responsibility of the breach of privacy as she was the one who asked the sex workers to give interviews
- Hearing this, Zannat said that one can deny giving info about themselves to others, even if they are journalists. She added that consent matters even when sharing somebody's address, mobile number, etc.
- She said that consent should be sought before tagging somebody on a post/photo on social media
- She told the participants that when sharing photos in group chat, one should also mention if they are okay with others sharing those photos
- Rajkumary added that obtaining consent should be practiced in day-to-day life
- After this, she then asked the participants who among them needed to set up password protection on their phone, lock their FB profile, and block somebody's account/number
 - ◆ The facilitators then went to each of the participants to help them in these matters
- Zannat then informed the participants Information and Communication ACT 2006 (ICT Act Bangladesh) regarding the laws centering on fake news and personal security
 - ◆ Electronic distribution of false, offensive, or defamatory material: Whoever commits the offence of publishing false, profane, or defamatory information in electronic form shall be punished with imprisonment for a minimum of 7 years and a maximum of 14 years, a fine of up to 10 lacs Taka, or both

- ◆ Unauthorised access to a computer system: Whoever commits hacking of a computer system shall be punished with imprisonment for a minimum of 7 years and a maximum of 14 years, a fine of up to 10 lacs Taka, or both
- ◆ Disclosure of confidential and private information: Disclosure of confidential or private information is punishable by up to two years in prison or a fine of up to two million Taka, or both



- Hena then asked her what she could do regarding videos of her speaking at a press conference being circulated on various platforms, especially TikTok. Zannat answered that as the press conference was a public event, there was nothing to be done regarding the videos being circulated; if it was a private event, Hena apa could have sought legal help. That being said, the facilitators suggested that everyone should report the videos
- Zannat informed the participants that they should be mindful of the laws mentioned earlier. They should use the laws to ensure their rights in cases where journalists violate their privacy. She also pointed out that the participants should be mindful of protecting others' privacy while sharing content online
- Hena apa then asked if there was anything to do regarding derogatory comments posted under the aforementioned videos

- Zannat informed her that the comments could be reported to the social media platform

▽ Session 4

▽ Amplify your voice: Building a strong social media presence for your community

o Facilitator: Rajkumary & Zannat

- Rajkumary began the session by asking how many of the participants' organizations had FB pages; a few responded that they had pages
- Rajkumary then asked who posted on those pages, to which participants responded that their staff did it
- She then asked them what kind of posts they shared on the pages, to which participants responded that they posted photos of events, meetings, protests, day events, abuse of sex workers, collaboration with other organisations, and also "shared" other relevant posts
- Rajkumary then told the participants that they should try to publicise their organisational work more than what they usually do
- Zannat added that by sharing their work online, they can show others how much work they are doing
- She also informed them that an organisation's FB account should be in the form of a page, not as a profile, and personal content should not be shared on the organisation's page
- She mentioned that someone skilled in social media should handle the pages, and as most of the participants lacked this skill, they should give the responsibility of online page management to somebody they trust, preferably someone from their organisation
- She told the participants that they should be mindful of the content they share on the pages; if any photo could cause a security risk, it should be uploaded blurred or taken in a way that does not reveal the identities of the people in the photo
- After a small break, the facilitators resumed the session by asking the participants to go over the content they previously shared on their pages (only a few had FB pages) and check if they were appropriate for the page or not, and if not, figured out what they can do to resolve that
- Participants actively engaged in discussions at their tables and worked on it
- The facilitators then demonstrate to the participants the differences between an FB profile and an FB page
- Rajkumary reiterated that the responsibility of managing the page should be given to someone skilled, as they will be able to moderate the page well and if needed, even remove derogatory remarks and block accounts
- She told the participants that it was important to keep the page active to show that the organisation it belonged to was active as well, as movement today is done both online and offline
-
-



- Zannat explained that in terms of offline movement building, a person has to be there physically, but they can keep their identities safe online while still proceeding with the movement
- The facilitators then proposed that a future workshop could be arranged where the participants can bring somebody skilled in social media, and they can create FB pages right at the workshop
- If possible, they asked the participants to create a page and share it with them so that the facilitators could check if the structure were good to go
- After this, based on the requests of the participants, the facilitators helped the participants go over how to send emails and maintain online meeting etiquette
- When that was done, they asked the participants what they learned so far, and they responded the following:
 - ◆ How to check and send emails
 - ◆ Maintaining online meeting etiquette for both Zoom and Google Meet
 - ◆ Digital security and laws
 - › ICT Act 2006
 - › Keeping identity safe online
 - › Organisational safety and security
 - › Personal safety and security

- ◆ Importance of online presence of the organizations
- Zannat thanked the participants and pointed out that their etiquette was top-notch during the two-day training, especially compared to the previous meetings. She hoped they would be able to carry this ton online meetings as well
- Then some participants shared concern regarding how sometimes others, even journalists, video record them without consent
- The facilitators told the participants that if such incidents happen, and if the videos get shared online, there were ways to remove them; SWASA would help them if needed
- When asked what kinds of training the participants wanted in the future, they responded:
 - ◆ Detailed session on Gmail
 - › Writing emails
 - ◆ Basic English language skills
 - ◆ Facebook page maintenance
 - ◆ Long-term capacity building
 - ◆ Meeting scheduling on Google Meet (only instant meeting was covered in this training)
 - ◆ Content designing
 - › Logo, banners, etc.
- The facilitators closed the second and last day of the training by asking the participants to include young and tech-savvy people in their organisations as it would help them manage social media, etc.
- They also asked the participants to bring such people to future workshops so that they can discuss more technical and advanced topics

▽ **Outcome:**

Feedback at the end of the training provided by the 14 participants stated that the two-day training titled ‘Digital Literacy: Navigating the Online World as a Sex Worker Activist’ was successful in terms of providing the sex workers with basic knowledge about digital literacy. Prior to the training, the participants had almost no knowledge of the topics covered in the meeting. The facilitators were very patient and enthusiastic to help the participants learn, even when the latter sometimes became disorderly. After the training, the participants felt more confident about themselves while handling smartphones, and they showed eagerness to learn more in future training.