



# THINK LABOR

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## Youth's Readiness to Digital Learning?

A study by Nielsen says that rural India has 352 million internet users, which is almost 20% higher than urban India's 294 million active internet users. However, the study also revealed that almost 60% of the rural population is still not actively using the internet.

Dr. Rukmini Banerji, CEO Pratham Education Foundation said, "Traditional teaching-learning methods should be combined effectively with newer ways of reaching/learning. Just because families have devices and connectivity doesn't automatically mean learning is happening effectively."

Pratham at present is working on the English pilot program at Aurangabad, Ahmednagar & Latur district in Maharashtra. For this, Pratham has joined hands with Amira, an EdTech Company that works on students' English speaking skills with its Artificial Intelligence software. The objective of the pilot is to improve students' communication skill & confidence which will help them get better placement opportunities.

For the pilot program, we are observing students from different educational and socio-economic backgrounds from the rural parts of Maharashtra. A baseline assessment of their English communication skill was conducted. For most of these students, Marathi was the medium of instruction during their schooling and they lacked familiarity with the English language. We found that few students struggled to read words with more than 5 alphabets, and few of them found it difficult to read words more than 3 alphabets. Additionally, the remaining few struggled to recognize alphabets.

The female students seemed to be much more sincere & enthusiastic about the program compared to that of male students. Most of the male students owned an android phone which made it easier for them to use the computer, thus, resulting in them adapting to the technology quickly. Female students lacked ownership of smart devices and used their parent's or husband's phones, resulting in them needing more time to learn using smart devices.

Since the pilot is being conducted at different locations in Maharashtra, we observed different approaches of students towards it. A major concern is that rural India is unfamiliar with smart devices as a mechanism to learn new things. The Covid-19 has made it essential more than ever before for them to develop their basic digital consciousness to keep them moving forward with the world. The need is not merely to provide access to smart devices but also to encourage and enable it as a means of learning and co-learning further to bridge the digital divide gap.

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