DRIVE: Digital Research and Impact for Vulnerable E-citizens

**Project Impact Review
September 2023**

This review has been produced
within the DRIVE project, supported
by a grant from Luminate.

Tackling digital vulnerability

The following review provides insights into addressing **digital vulnerability**. This term refers to situations and conditions when individuals lack adequate access, devices, skills, or awareness of digital advancements and tools. As a result, they cannot utilize e-services and solutions or participate digitally in decision-making processes. In essence, they can only partially benefit from the digital transformation.

Such vulnerabilities are of concern because they can **adversely affect individuals' rights, interests, and daily lives**, potentially leading to more extensive isolation for those who are digitally vulnerable.

Several **factors contribute** to digital vulnerability, including digital skills, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, connectivity, trust in systems, concerns about data and privacy, poor user experience, disabilities, digital literacy, cyber hygiene, geopolitical conflicts, and stakeholder relations in general. It's important to note that **vulnerability** is not necessarily tied to an individual's identity but **may be linked to their circumstances**.

Digital vulnerability remains a pressing issue for all countries and communities. However, there is a silver lining: **it is possible to recognize digital vulnerability and understand how to prevent and mitigate it**. This is especially true with collaboration among activists, civil society organizations (CSOs), public authorities, academia, tech companies, and the media.

Addressing this challenge requires awareness, skills, and a proactive stance from citizens and institutions, including public authorities and CSOs. These are precisely the topics that the **DRIVE project**, detailed in the subsequent sections, **tackled**.

The DRIVE project partners sincerely appreciate the time, extensive knowledge, and effort all participants contributed to the process and the success of the project.

Let's make digital transformation happen and digital vulnerability disappear!

Kristina Mänd

Project coordinator
Senior Expert at the e-Governance Academy

The DRIVE Project

The project **"DRIVE: Digital Research and Impact for Vulnerable E-citizens"** was led by e-Governance Academy (eGA) in Estonia in partnership with the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) from Georgia, and NGO GOLOCAL and 2030: Tech for Public Good from Ukraine to address digital vulnerability.

Duration: September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2023.

Funder: Luminate, a global foundation.

> In the DRIVE context, **Digitally Vulnerable Groups** were defined as those whose digital engagement in political decision-making and e-services is hindered by their lack of awareness of digital issues, access to technological benefits, and/or digital literacy and skills.

The aim of the DRIVE project was for the digitally **vulnerable citizen groups in Ukraine and Georgia** to have **a changed quality of life** by being **digitally engaged in political decision-making** (advanced policy development) and **services**, and to have **necessary conditions, awareness, and skills** for that.

Though a large number of different elements can contribute to a changed quality of life and digital engagement, **the DRIVE project aimed** at two objectives:

○ **Public Authorities (PAs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are aware** of digitally vulnerable groups, understand their specific needs, and recognize gaps in their digital literacy and access;

○ PAs and CSOs are **able to work together effectively** and have the necessary skills in designing and implementing smart, transparent, and accountable solutions to address the digital divide.

To achieve these objectives, the DRIVE project used a **service design method**. The method helps approach service development holistically, considering the real experiences of different users and stakeholders throughout their entire interaction with the service, from initial need to successful resolution. The service design method was used through **masterclasses** "Nothing for me without me" conducted by J. Margus Klaar, a respected expert in the field.

The main takeaways

Most Significant Impact	Lesson Learned	Legacy
Increased recognition and awareness of digital vulnerability.	Maintaining a flexible Theory of Change allows partners to have agility in their activities.	• Comprehensive needs analysis and research. • Proposals and materials to build further activities on. • Experience with using service design as an effective method for designing services, projects or interventions.

The project activities

1. Learning and Identifying	Research on digital ecosystems was conducted in Ukraine and Georgia. eGA and partners analyzed data and information on digital maturity, identified two digitally vulnerable groups - youth and elderly, provided a comprehensive view of the key problems and needs of these groups to plan further activities in the project, and found out the needs of PAs and CSOs to address digital vulnerability.
2. Sharing and Harvesting	Using the research findings, partners prepared recommendations to PA and CSO stakeholders to reduce and prevent the digital divide and decided to use the service design method as capacity-building approach.
3. Empowering and Planning	Based on the recommendations, teams of CSOs and PAs worked on action proposals to work with their specific target groups during masterclasses organized by eGA. The teams received mentoring and support throughout the whole process.
4. Planning and Implementing	A jury of experts selected three action proposals to become pilot projects - one in Georgia and two in Ukraine. In Ukraine, digital ambassadors were trained to promote the Diia app for e-services.
5. Collaborating and Leading	eGA organized outreach events and webinars on digital vulnerability, held a session at the 2023 e-governance conference in Tallinn, and created two podcasts. The partners coordinated various regional outreach initiatives and handled media activities in their countries.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID and the war against Ukraine, the project was completed on time, within budget, and with a positive spirit. It delivered the planned outputs and outcomes. The efficiency, commitment, feedback, motivation, and expertise of all those involved were truly outstanding, creating a lasting impact and legacy.

Information about the DRIVE project's activities and outcomes was gathered from various sources. Project partners and subgrantees collected feedback from beneficiaries using questionnaires and analyzed social media engagement from their platforms. Systemic changes were identified through semi-structured interviews with the partners.

Find moreinformation

The DRIVE project website.

The DRIVE project-based session "Digital vulnerability cannot be fixed in a boardroom" at the e-governance conference of 2023.

Podcast and blog "Digital vulnerability cannot be fixed in a boardroom."

Blog on masterclasses in Georgia.

Podcast and blog "Addressing digital vulnerabilities to empower citizens."

Interview about the DRIVE project in the Caucasian journal.

Activities in Georgia

Implemented by the Institute for Development of Freedom (IDFI)

Summary of activities

- A comprehensive study on digital vulnerabilities in Georgia.
- Capacity building and outreach activities for various stakeholders.
- Masterclasses on project design and planning, resulting in project proposals to address digital vulnerabilities.
- Engagement with key stakeholders on e-governance in Georgia and beyond.

Results and impact

Needs addressed

- Before DRIVE, digital vulnerability was an understudied issue in Georgia.
- The term "digital vulnerability" was introduced, offering a cohesive perspective on interconnected challenges.

Outputs and results

- The first-ever report in Georgia detailing digital challenges and vulnerabilities holistically.
- Capacity-building activities based on the report's recommendations for civil society organizations, journalists, students, public servants, and activists on digital participation, cybersecurity, monitoring and evaluation, misinformation, etc. The events were attended by 135 people, including three regional trainings for CSOs, students, academia, and media representatives.
- Two offline service design masterclasses for 37 individuals from 14 teams of representatives of CSOs and public institutions. The masterclasses led to a change in stakeholder approach. They emphasized the importance of understanding and addressing the beneficiaries' needs.
- 10 project proposals were developed; one was selected and supported during implementation.

**Organizational
benefits**

- IDFI gained insights into digital vulnerabilities and expanded its network.

- Knowledge gained from the masterclasses was integrated into IDFI's project planning.

- Participation in the 2023 e-governance conference in Tallinn resulted in more profound knowledge on e-governance issues and new connections from several countries, including Ukraine.

**Public - civil
society collaboration**

- Effective communication with public authorities, including the Communications Commission, Georgian regulatory authority of broadcasting and electronic communications field, leading to review and consideration of the report on digital vulnerabilities.

- There is potential for enhanced coordination in future digital vulnerability projects. This includes identifying and engaging digitally vulnerable groups and the core stakeholders of the DRIVE project.

**Media and public
outreach**

- Multiple references and discussions of the DRIVE report in online media, TV programs, and interviews.

- The Georgian country report on digital vulnerability was referenced in the Freedom House's annual Freedom House's annual survey and analysis of internet freedom around the world, "Freedom on the Net 2023".

Lessons learned

- Onsite events offer more tangible feedback than online activities.

- The format of activities matters; online events during the COVID-19 period saw reduced participant motivation.

Project legacy

- IDFI will incorporate findings from the report into future activities.

- Masterclass insights have influenced IDFI project proposals.

- Plans for future digital literacy and e-services projects, utilizing findings from the DRIVE project.

Testimonials from the service design masterclasses participants

"You need to try and see the world from your beneficiary's perspective"

"I am planning to continue doing observation and research, thinking more of what a problem is before actually seeking for solutions"

"I am going to rethink traditional methods of project proposal delivery"

Find more information

Institute for Development of Freedom
www.idfi.ge

The Georgian country report on digital vulnerability.

Freedom House's annual survey and analysis of internet freedom around the world "Freedom on the Net 2023 - Georgia".

An online media report featuring Teona Turashvili from IDFI discussing the DRIVE report results on Georgia's major digitally vulnerable groups.

Teona Turashvili from IDFI discusses the research findings (focusing on children and women) on a TV program about cyber security threats in Georgia.

Digital Education and Awareness of Parents – DEAP

Implemented by the DRIVE project subgrantee Parents for Education (P4E)
January – July 2023

Project summary

The DEAP project aimed to enhance digital literacy among parents, enabling them to navigate the digital world safely and effectively. The project was implemented in Tbilisi, Gori, and Bolnisi, focusing on parents, and/or legal guardians of children, schools, kindergartens, and children as the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries. It significantly enhanced digital literacy among parents, ensuring a safer online environment for children. It has the potential for replication in other regions.

Aims:

- Increase digital literacy among parents and and/or legal guardians of children.

- Engage parents in decision-making at local and regional levels.

- Foster a safe and informed digital environment for children.

Activities, outputs and results

- An online manual and course on basic media literacy were developed, covering essential digital skills such as internet safety and phishing awareness, and parental control.

- 180 parents from 12 educational institutions across three regions received training on digital literacy, becoming a resource for their communities. In total, 12 trainings were delivered to six groups of parents.

- 15 Digital Ambassadors were trained who shared their knowledge within their local communities.

- Memoranda of Cooperation were signed with 12 educational institutions and Education Resource Centers of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

- A successful social media campaign on digital awareness and cyber-security was executed from March to July 2023, reaching a total of 440,000, including the engagement of 19,000 people, and 121,000 video blog views.

Assessment

- **Beneficiaries:** The primary beneficiaries, parents, reported increased confidence in identifying fake information online and felt better equipped to guide their children on online safety. The project's indirect beneficiaries, the children, benefited from a safer online environment fostered by informed parents.

- **Stakeholders:** Educational institutions reported increased parent participation and expressed a willingness to host future digital literacy initiatives. Some schools even sent their IT specialists to attend DEAP training.

- **Organizational benefits:** P4E gained visibility in media literacy and cybersecurity. The project opened doors to new partnerships, media appearances, and opportunities for team members.

- **Insights:** While the DEAO project achieved significant success, there was a noted drop in participation over time. More collaboration with stakeholders could address this in future iterations.

- **Legacy:** The materials created, especially the digital literacy manual, stand as a legacy of the project. The group of Digital Ambassadors also represents a continued commitment to digital literacy in the partner regions.

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Testimonials from the parents who attended the regional trainings

"I learned about cybercrime. And I now can tell trolls and bots from actual users."

"I learned about the dangers of the Internet, how misinformation works, how to distinguish between false and true information, recognize screen addiction and prevent it for my child. And how educational the internet can be when used correctly."

"I am already actively using the knowledge I received from you, and it has made the relationship between me and my son better, calmer and more pleasant when it comes to using the gadgets."

"

Find more information

The DEAP project video (with English subtitles).

Digital Literacy Manual in Georgian.

Activities in Ukraine

Implemented by NGO GOLOCAL
(November 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023)
Implemented by 2030: Tech for Public Good
(September 1, 2021 – April 1, 2022)

Summary of activities

- A comprehensive study on digital vulnerabilities in Ukraine.

- Engagement in training sessions, masterclasses, and information campaigns.

- Masterclasses on project design and planning, resulting in project proposals to address digital vulnerabilities.

- Creating a network of Digital Ambassadors to facilitate access to the Diia platform[1].

Results and impact

Needs addressed

- Identified a prevalent digital divide in Ukraine.

- 53% of Ukrainians lack basic digital literacy, with 15% lacking digital skills.

- Despite the Diia platform's existence, many could not use it due to lacking skills or resources.

Outputs and results

- Engaged 32 Digital Ambassadors (DAs) and trained 690 digitally vulnerable individuals on the Diia platform.

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1   A mobile app, a web portal and a brand of e-governance in Ukraine. Launched in 2020, the Diia app allows Ukrainian citizens to use digital documents on their smartphones instead of physical ones for identification and sharing purposes. The Diia portal allows access to over 50 government services.

○ Service design masterclasses for 32 individuals from 8 teams. As a result, 10 project concepts developed; two of which were fully realized by August 2023.

  ○ The "Blogging Against Cyberbullying" project engaged 11 bloggers, and achieved a higher awareness on cyberbullying prevention among teenagers and parents.

  ○ The "Digital transformation of teachers of the Hoshcha Community" project trained 200 teachers on digital literacy.

○ Overall, digital skills, project management capabilities, and digital awareness were developed among stakeholders.

Organizational benefits

○ Gained competencies in digitalization and crisis management.

○ Attracted motivated participants and public organization owners.

○ Amplified online presence through media collaboration.

Public - civil society collaboration

○ Engaged with state bodies on teacher-focused projects and cyberbullying.

○ Two of the bloggers directed activities towards public authorities, highlighting public-civil collaboration.

Media and public outreach

○ Achieved significant media outreach on topics like cyberbullying.

○ Engaged with media through articles, interviews, and dedicated website content.

Lessons learned

○ Recognized the importance of adaptability, especially during unstable conditions because of the war.

○ Understood the transformative power of education in addressing the digital divide.

○ Identified the necessity of feedback loops for project refinement.

Project legacy

○ Digitally vulnerable individuals acquired knowledge on using the Diia platform.

○ Masterclasses participants learned about project development, implementation, and sustainability. This ensures the DRIVE project's benefits continue as they assist digitally vulnerable community members.

○ Enhanced media relations and outreach.

○ Added a successful project to the organizational portfolio.

Testimonials from the service design masterclasses participants

"It was an invaluable experience of working in a team, exchanging thoughts and ideas with colleagues who, like me, are as interested in improving the digital skills of Ukrainian citizens as I am."

"During the training, I realized that I need to research the target audience and their needs in detail before building the content line of the project."

"The way of presenting information and learning in general was interesting and effective for me. I would especially like to thank the trainer for the theoretical basis I received. With the knowledge gained, along with my perseverance and great motivation, I was able to prepare a project application and win."

Find more information

NGO GOLOCAL
www.golocal-ukraine.com

The Ukrainian country report on digital vulnerability.

Blogging Against Cyberbullying

Implemented by the DRIVE project subgrantee Eugeniy Trykoza
(March – August 2023)

Project summary

The "Blogging Against Cyberbullying" project aimed to raise awareness about cyberbullying among young people in Ukraine. The project used bloggers to disseminate information and resources to help teenagers and their parents navigate the online world safely.

The project significantly contributed to raising awareness about cyberbullying in Ukraine. The project reached a large audience through the combined efforts of the bloggers, media and a dedicated website. The project's website will continue to serve as a beacon of information and support for those affected by cyberbullying.

Blogger recounts personal experience of being bullied by a school teacher:
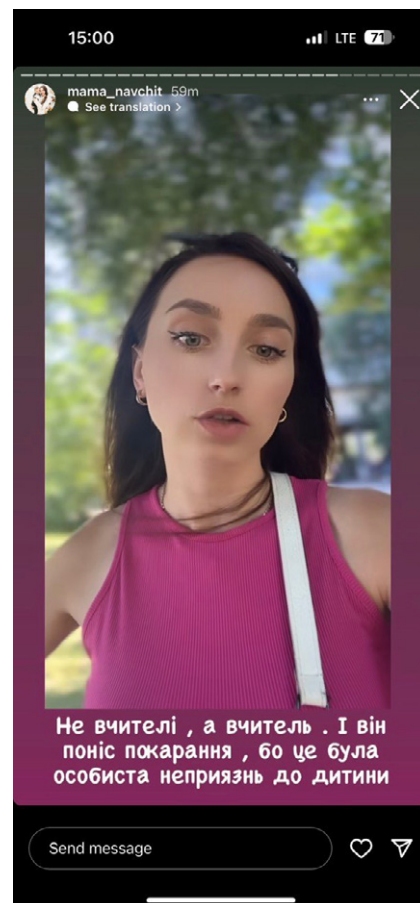
Aim

Educate and protect teenagers aged 11-16 and their parents from the threats of cyberbullying by leveraging the reach of bloggers and a dedicated website.

Activities, outputs and results

- Two press kits were developed targeting bloggers with youth and parent audiences.

- Eleven bloggers were recruited, surpassing the initial target of four.

- A website was created to provide information, resources, and support. It received 8200 visitors and 11 000 views.

- The campaign resulted in 21 publications in various media outlets and an interview on the DIM TV channel.

Assessment

- **Beneficiaries:** The direct beneficiaries were teenagers and their parents. The project equipped them with knowledge and resources to combat cyberbullying.

- **Stakeholders:** The stakeholders included eight bloggers, mass media, and the government, particularly the Ministry of Education.

- **Organizational benefits:** The project leader gained insights into project development and implementation. The collaboration with NGO GOLOCAL enhanced the project's visibility.

- **Insights:** Meticulous planning of the project goals and activities is crucial for achieving desired outcomes.

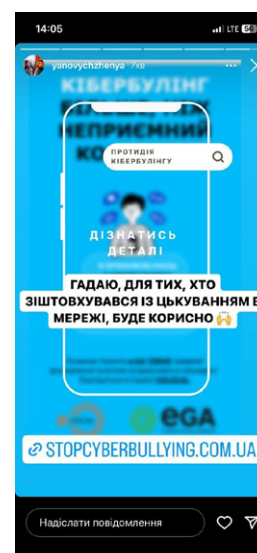- **Legacy:** The project leaves behind a website that will continue to serve as a resource for years.

Find more information

The project´s website.

Yuliia Lidich from GOLOCAL discusses the project on a TV program.

Digital transformation of teachers of the Hoshcha Community

Implemented by the DRIVE project subgrantee Center for Professional Development of Teachers of Goshchansk Community
(March – August 2023)

Project summary

The project wanted to enhance teachers' digital literacy within the Hoshcha community. With the shift to online education due to unforeseen circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic and military actions, there was a recognized need for teachers to upgrade their digital competencies. Based on the initial survey, 76% of teachers were not satisfied with their level of digital literacy, and more than 40% wanted to improve their digital competencies.

Through various activities and training sessions, the project empowered teachers with the necessary digital skills, ensuring they are better equipped to navigate the challenges of online teaching. The project's success is evident in the positive feedback from the beneficiaries and stakeholders and the tangible improvements in digital understanding among participants.

Aim

Address the digital literacy gap among teachers in the Hoshcha community, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate the digital teaching landscape effectively.

Activities, outputs and results

- Created a dedicated project page on the Center for Professional Development of Pedagogical Workers website.

- Organized working meetings with local authorities, civil society organizations, and directors of educational institutions.

- Successfully conducted 15 training sessions, directly benefiting 207 teachers from the Hoshcha community.

- 450% improvement in understanding of digital tools among participants. 83% of respondents indicated that they will use the results of the training in their everyday life and professional activities.

- Increased visibility and partnerships with educational institutions in the district.

- Coordinated and executed a PR campaign.

- Published 2 articles in the local newspaper "Ridnyi Kray" and 22 publications on social media platforms.

- Organized a successful "Digital Literacy Picnic" with 50 participants.

- Prepared and published a video presentation.

Assessment

- **Beneficiaries:** The primary beneficiaries were the teachers of the Hoshcha community. Feedback forms indicated a 50% increase in confidence in using digital tools among these teachers.

- **Stakeholders:** Local authorities, educational institutions, students, and parents. Local educational institutions recognized the importance of the project and expressed interest in future collaborations.

- **Organizational benefits:** The project team improved their design thinking skills, joined specialized communities for grant funding, and established partnerships with educational institutions in the district.

- **Insights:** Emphasized the importance of understanding the target audience's needs during project planning.

- **Legacy:** The project leaves behind a legacy of enhanced digital skills among teachers, which will benefit the online learning process for students.

Testimonials from the training participants

"Thank you for the excellent webinar for teaching staff. It was fun, interesting, and informative! I liked the learning method, when colleagues introduced us to Google applications, which we must use in practice."

"Many thanks to the organizers for an interesting event. The training was held at a high level, meaningful, supported by practical tasks. We took a lot of interesting, useful information for ourselves, which we will be able to use in our work."

Find more information

An online media article about the project.

A video about the project´s implementation.

The DRIVE project
was implemented by:

Estonia, e-Governance Academy, www.ega.ee

Kristina Mänd, general project coordinator

Kristina Reinsalu, expert

Katrin Nyman-Metcalf, expert

Georgia, Institute for Development of Freedom (IDFI), www.idfi.ge

Teona Turashvili, Georgia project coordinator

David Eristavi, expert

Gvantsa Nikuradze, expert

Ukraine, NGO GOLOCAL. www.golocal-ukraine.com (November 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023)

Yuliia Lidich, Ukraine project coordinator

Igor Komendo, expert

Ukraine, 2030: Tech for Public Good (September 1, 2021 – April 1, 2022)

Yaroslav Kotlyarevskyy, Ukraine project coordinator

Ruslana Rudnitska, expert

Project Advisory Board

Maryna Shevtsova, Ukraine

Irakli Gvenetadze, Georgia

Independent experts

Federico Plantera, researcher

J. Margus Klaar, service design expert and trainer

Jaan Aps, monitoring and evaluation expert