

DIGITAL INJOT

(Light)

Digital Empowerment of Tea Tribe & Adivasi Communities in Assam



Tea garden workers in Upper Assam — the communities at the heart of Project Digital Injot

Implementing Agency: Council for Social and Digital Development (CSDD)

Strategic Partners: Digital Society Foundation (DSF), North East Development Foundation

Regional Language Note: “Injot” means Light in the Sadri lingua franca

Geographic Coverage: 7 districts across Upper, Central, Lower Assam & the BTR region



Executive Summary & Framework

The Tea Tribe and Adivasi communities constitute roughly 20% of Assam's total population. Despite driving more than half of India's overall tea production, these communities historically encounter extreme social, geographic, and economic isolation. As public services, banking, and citizen entitlements aggressively migrate online, this structural exclusion has manifested as severe Digital Exclusion. Remote tea garden settlements experience minimal telecom prioritization, leaving youth without adequate network access, hardware, or digital literacy.

To address this crisis, the Council for Social and Digital Development (CSDD), in strategic collaboration with grassroot partners and national networks like the Digital Society Foundation (DSF) and North East Development Foundation, pioneered Project Digital Injot (Light) during 2024–2025. Translating to “Light” in the regional Sadri lingua franca, the initiative functions as a digital mainstreaming engine. By establishing physical access points, upgrading localized network infrastructure, and building a network of rural micro-entrepreneurs, Project Digital Injot transforms isolated tea gardens into digitally integrated hubs.



Inside a youth-run Digital One Centre — three laptops, one bright green room, and a community gaining ground

Geographical Coverage & Target Districts

Project Digital Injot targets high-density tea plantation regions across Upper, Central, and Lower Assam. Recognizing that topological hurdles vary across the state, the project strategically deploys resources across multiple administrative districts to optimize outreach:

- **Dibrugarh & Tinsukia** — Functioning as the core anchors in Upper Assam, these districts represent the dense hub of the tea manufacturing ecosystem and act as primary testing grounds for the pilot deployments.
- **Jorhat** — Serving as an educational and operational gateway to drive higher youth engagement and specialized skilling tracks.

- **Sonitpur & Udalguri** — Covering the North Bank territory, capturing geographically fragmented communities vulnerable to informational blackouts.
- **Kokrajhar** — Located in the BTR region, focusing on historically underserved, economically marginalized peripheral gardens facing distinct structural lags.

Key Operational Metrics & Numbers

The structural footprint of Project Digital Injot relies on clear, scalable interventions to measure field impact. The project's architecture translates into the following quantifiable data matrix:

20 Community Digital One Centres set up across target tea gardens	20+ Digipreneurs created — Youth Leaders trained as revenue-earning Information Entrepreneurs
5,000+ Individuals directly trained in fundamental and critical digital capacities	2,000 Households targeted for systematic integration into public benefit ecosystems
100+ Community Leaders and institutional volunteers upskilled to sustain operations	

Core Technical & Operational Strategy

Project Digital Injot avoids standard “top-down” computer lab models, prioritizing community ownership and localized infrastructure optimization instead.

01 The Community Internet Centre Model

Because mainstream telecom providers frequently deprioritize remote tea estates due to high infrastructure costs, CSDD set up physical Community Internet Libraries. This hybrid setup converts fragile, low-grade cellular signals into reliable, high-speed local Wi-Fi networks capable of powering local educational activities.



A Community Internet Library session at Letekoojan Tea Estate, Jorhat

02 Empowering the “Digipreneurs”

Each Centre is entirely owned and managed by an educated youth selected directly from within that specific tea garden community. Trained as a Digipreneur (Information Entrepreneur), these youths operate a self-sustaining business model. They provide essential commercial services like digital scanning, online ticket booking, photocopy facilities, and government scheme applications for a nominal fee, ensuring long-term institutional survival beyond external funding.

03 Critical Digital Literacy

The curriculum moves past basic computer mechanics to prioritize operational digital survival skills. Beneficiaries learn safe mobile banking usage, Unified Payment Interface (UPI) applications, interactive online safety habits to counter financial fraud, and procedures to search and verify public employment portals.



A classroom skilling session for tea garden youth

Multi-Dimensional Impacts

The socioeconomic shifts initiated by Project Digital Injot extend far beyond providing simple screen access, reshaping everyday community dynamics.

01 Direct Civic & Entitlement Access

Before this intervention, tracking government subsidies, direct benefit transfers (DBT), ration cards, or basic labor updates required tea garden laborers to sacrifice a full day's wage to travel to district headquarters. By positioning Centres directly within the settlement limits, households can seamlessly verify their entitlements. This immediate proximity significantly limits exploitation by middlemen and improves the deployment rate of public welfare programs.

02 Economic & Youth Livelihood Diversification

The tea community has historically experienced generational lock-in, where youth feel structurally funneled into manual estate labor. Certified digital training changes this dynamic. By equipping youth with verifiable computer operations literacy, the project helps them secure formal data-entry roles, retail management positions, and off-garden administrative jobs, introducing vital income diversity to vulnerable households.

03 Financial Inclusion & Independence

By bridging the gap to online banking, the project empowers women and elder tea workers to access formal savings accounts and insurance frameworks. This transition significantly lowers community dependence on high-interest local informal moneylenders, providing a secure foundation to manage household finance.



Tea garden youth gathered around a shared screen during a digital training session

Future Roadmap & Challenges

While Project Digital Injot proves that community-led connectivity models can successfully counter deep-rooted marginalization, scaling up requires addressing systemic bottlenecks:

- **Capital Outlay Costs** — High-grade hardware, reliable power back-ups (such as solar inverters to beat regular grid failures), and high-gain network antennas demand consistent funding.
- **Institutional Integration** — Maximizing long-term stability requires building stronger administrative bridges between these standalone youth hubs and the state's existing Common Service Centre (CSC) networks.

Conclusion

Through Project Digital Injot, the Council for Social and Digital Development demonstrates that digital inclusion is a prerequisite for contemporary social justice. By transforming tea tribe and Adivasi youth from passive consumers into active digital managers, the initiative provides a blueprint for bridging complex human divides across Northeast India.

“ Digital inclusion is the light that turns isolated tea gardens into connected, self-determined communities. ”

With gratitude to the Digipreneurs, Centre volunteers, and tea garden communities of Assam who made Project Digital Injot possible.

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