



Trust Mamla 2024

13th November, 2024 | Bengaluru

Event Reverb

Enigmatic to define yet a most simple instinct, **trust is a 'mamla', a universal issue that attracts perspectives from a diversity of digital users, builders, and regulators.** In light of our growing relationship with platforms, services, and artificial intelligence, trust emerges as crucial to its building and maintenance. It builds transparency, encourages conscientious design, and inspires user confidence and participation.

Trust Mamla 2024 spotlighted **Aapti's inquiry on women's digital trust** and invited participants to locate **a user-centric conception of trust in their work.** The event featured panel discussions with practitioners to think beyond traditional conceptions of digital security and trust to examine them both as community processes and digital products. Participants also engaged with technical demonstrations that explored trust-building in industry practices and on-ground digital initiatives that seek to enhance women's engagement with technology.

We would like to thank our participants—**researchers, civil society organisations, industry professionals**—for engaging with our work, and giving us even more to think about.

An Ontology of Women’s Digital Trust

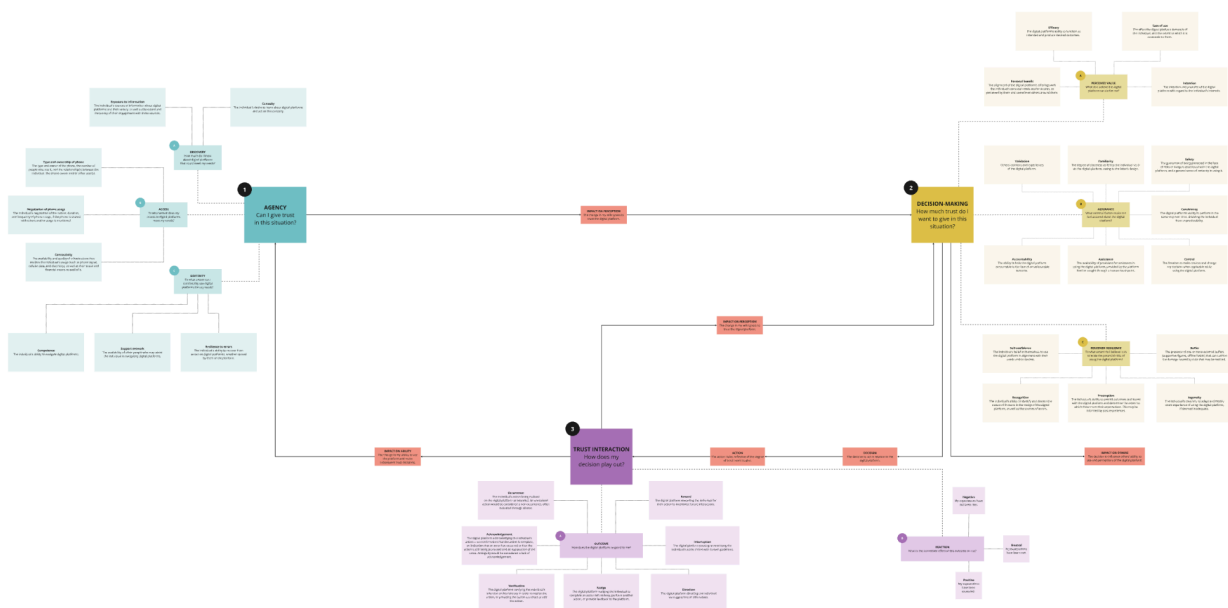
Astha Kapoor, co-founder of Aapti Institute, kicked off the event by delving into the various meanings of ‘mamla,’ its place in our individual and collective vocabularies, and how—as with trust—each of us interprets the idea through our own lived experiences.

The Aapti team presented an ontology of women’s digital trust, built from insights gained from two years of research, including from human-centered design activities. These activities, circumventing traditional interview methods to get to the personal and affective aspects of women’s digital experiences, were conducted with 73 women participants across four Indian states.

Existing conceptualisations of digital trust fall short on the inclusion of the user’s perspective and role in establishing trust with technology. **Digital trust is often defined from a tech-centric and gender-agnostic lens, with roots in Global North thinking on user safety.**

The ontology extends beyond these conceptions to describe the user-platform trust relationship as one of negotiation. It centres the user and their willingness to give trust, and accounts for positive expressions of trust and bonding as well as instances of distrust and harms resolution. **The ontology formalises a complex web of relationships between the individual, digital platform, household, community, intermediaries, and the state.**

The ontology of women’s digital trust set the context for a set of exciting and thought-provoking conversations through the day. The intention was to offer participants a shared vocabulary with which to engage with the idea of digital trust, while simultaneously emphasising its ‘mamla-ness’. After all, trust is an issue for everyone to grapple with, as well as make their own.



PANEL DISCUSSION

Trust as (Collective) Process



SPEAKERS



Pallavi Madhok
Women's World Banking



Arjun Venkatraman
The Bill and Melinda
Gates Foundation



Tanvi Lall
People+AI



Dr. Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay
Participatory Research
in Asia (PRIA)

MODERATOR



Aditi Surie
Indian Institute for Human
Settlements (IHS)

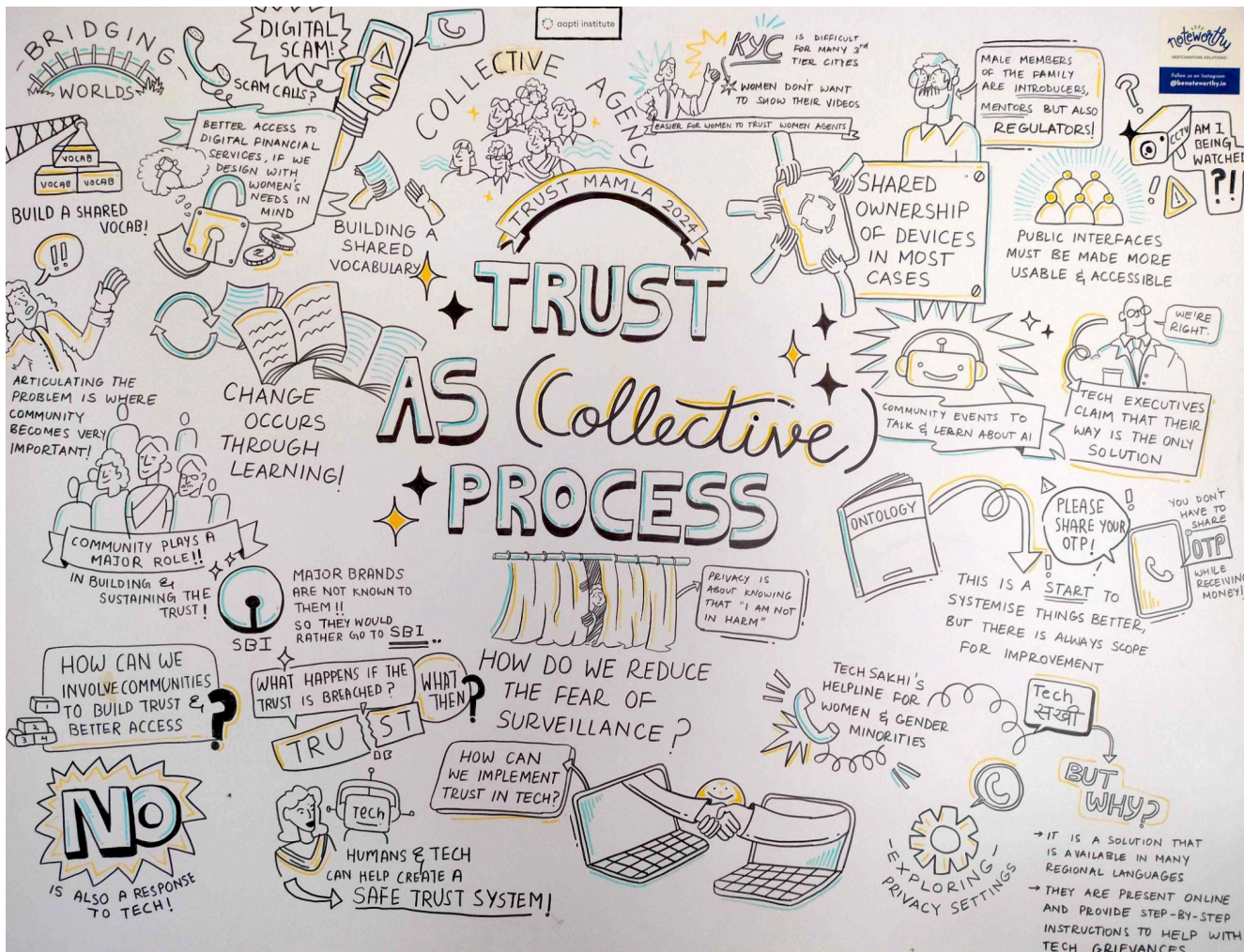
The panel explored **trust-building as an ongoing, multi-directional process for women**, influenced by user-device interaction, socio-cultural networks, and collective experiences. Digital trust is fostered through community-driven interactions, particularly within local contexts or through intermediaries like BC Sakhis, ASHAs, and SHG leaders. The panellists situated **community as a critical component of trust within women's digital experiences**.

Some takeaways from the panel include:

- ❖ There exists a dialectic relationship between community intermediaries like SHG coordinators and group members, which fosters mutual learning and strengthens trust and collaboration.
- ❖ Fintech outreach to women is currently inadequate, underutilising community-driven strategies that can locate and engage women entrepreneurs working from home. It is important to provide them support post-onboarding through role models, troubleshooting, and sustained engagement to build lasting trust.
- ❖ Although co-designing solutions is essential, it is not without its challenges. Grassroots voices are often excluded during tech design and development. There is a need for intentionally embedding users' lived experiences within these processes.

- ❖ AI in India necessitates a collaborative approach that involves stakeholders across data, models, compute, and talent development. For instance, empowering small-scale local compute providers helps strengthen the larger ecosystem by generating an effective market of demand and supply.

It is important to ensure the right representation and diversity in decision-making spaces. Trust emerges as a powerful framework to guide this process, but how can we collectively take this forward?



PANEL DISCUSSION

Trust as Product



SPEAKERS



Zainab Bawa
Hasgeek



Saranya Gopinath
Razorpay



Deepthaa Kumar
Haqdarshak

MODERATOR



Astha Kapoor
Aapti Institute

The panel explored **how trust and trustworthiness are encoded and maintained in digital artefacts**, focusing on women's relationships with these systems and defining digitally trustworthy products. It brought together experts to discuss privacy affordances, inclusion, and governance-tech practices with a gendered lens.

Some takeaways from the panel include:

- ❖ There is a tension between trust and convenience. While privacy is valued, tech development decisions often prioritize convenience. A push for better systems that extend beyond this singular benefit is needed.
- ❖ Users have implicit trust in government digital systems owing to well-established and long-standing trust in the state. In contrast, attitudes towards private platforms are riddled with mistrust due to fears of misuse and lack of tangible accountability.
- ❖ Trust-building is rarely the north star to product building, treated instead as a part of a separate inclusion journey that is often deemed inessential.

Trust is conceived of in diverse ways—whether as belief, safety, or faith, but remains salient for improving women's digital experiences. Learning from both public and private tech, how can we ensure that this becomes a priority in the digital ecosystem?



TECH DEMO

TechSakhi: Empowering Women against Online Harms

The role of hotline response in trust-building and risk mitigation for women's online safety challenges



Chhaya Rajput
 Helpline Facilitator,
 Point of View



Jahnabi Mitra
 Knowledge Associate,
 Point of View

TechSakhi operates a helpline to help women users combat digital risks and harms. Chhaya Rajput and Jahnabi Mitra from the team talked about their work and used case studies to explain their approach, learnings, and challenges they face.

Takeaways from the demo include:

- ❖ Helpline **callers have little trust in legal systems or digital platforms**, so the helpline becomes crucial in its ability to offer to women what other spaces lack.
- ❖ Callers, in addition to dealing with the online harms, must navigate challenges of accessing the helpline. For many, privacy remains a huge obstacle owing to a lack of physical space or of independent access to a phone.
- ❖ Helpline responders are trained to adopt a survivor-centric approach, and to demonstrate empathy and care during calls.
- ❖ TechSakhi customizes solutions for each caller, ensuring clear communication of a **step-by-step process and leveraging community support where possible**.

While helplines and communities play an essential role in offering systems of support to women, how can we embed some of these traits within digital platforms themselves?

TECH DEMO

Karya: Generating Digital Livelihoods for Women

The importance of gaining community trust and improving women's participation in the digital economy



Safiya Husain
Chief Impact Officer
& Co-Founder

Karya is a digital platform that divides AI-data tasks into microtasks and distributes them to individuals. The platform's success relies heavily on building trust, as workers invest their time with the expectation of fair compensation. Safiya Husain, Co-Founder and CIO of Karya, discussed their mission to generate digital livelihoods for women and shared insights into the strategies they used to build trust among workers, especially women.

Takeaways from the demo include:

- ❖ Building trust with communities is essential, particularly when work from roles are often viewed with skepticism due to prevalent scams.

- ❖ Karya tries to **build trust by respecting local knowledge and agency**, their approach trusts the individual to not only know their language best but teach it to a computer.
- ❖ **Trust is built and reinforced through structured "trust tests"** implemented at various stages—onboarding, training, active work phases, and new project initiation.
- ❖ Recognizing that many women find opportunities to work at night, Karya offers a 24/7 helpline with features like screen sharing to provide immediate support.
- ❖ Training is conducted by familiar and relatable human names, people trust that they can reach out to them for help whenever they need.
- ❖ Finally, trust is retained through “kept promises”, where only what is consistently possible is openly guaranteed to workers.

In an ecosystem with complex stakeholder needs and priorities, how can we design systems that inherently build and sustain trust while addressing these diverse complexities?

Stitching Pathways for Collective Action



Participants reflected on the nuances of digital trust, which manifested as a plethora of ideas and questions raised over the course of the day. Reflections include:

- ❖ There is a **need to distinguish between usage and trust**. People use private apps despite inherent risks, which does not necessarily equate to trust.
- ❖ Trust is a gradual process, strengthened through collective and community efforts. Building last-mile trust is challenging but essential, as **rushing to transactional engagement risks losing participation**.
- ❖ User-friendly features like phone numbers in UPI systems **build trust by reducing fear of costly errors**.
- ❖ It is important to **use trust as a lens in designing on-ground solutions** and to develop a lexicon around it.

Way forward

The ontology is receiving a few final (for now!) tweaks. Stay tuned for the launch of our microsite, which will house an interactive version of the ontology, as well as other outputs from the work.

As the project nears its end, we will also be publishing a report shortly.

We value your insights and invite you to continue the conversation. **Reach out to us at contact@aapti.in** or visit our website at <https://aapti.in/>.

Resources

- ❖ [Centering User Perspectives: An Ontology of Digital Trust](#)
- ❖ [Closing the Gender Digital Divide: The Role of Trust in Women's Digital Inclusion](#)
- ❖ [Customising Trust Relationships: Why Women Need Digital Control](#)
- ❖ [Trustworthy Women: Deconstructing India's Last Mile Intermediaries](#)
- ❖ [Bas kuchh baatcheet: Restitching participant-researcher relationships through conversation & reciprocity \(page 25\)](#)

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