

## [UPDATE]

Visit the **Digital Natives Google group**.  
You are invited to join & email  
the community through:  
[digitalnatives@googlegroups.com](mailto:digitalnatives@googlegroups.com)



## Write-shop in pictures

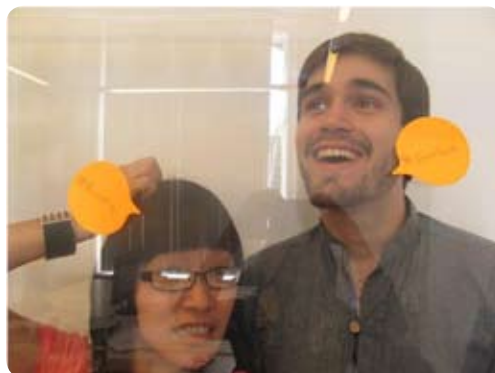
From May 9 to the 13th, a group of people consisting mainly from Hivos and the Centre for Internet and Society were part of an editorial conclave. During those 5 days,

they were tasked with conceptually shaping, organizing and reviewing the content for the Digital Natives book and kit. A tiresome but very rewarding affair, the write-shop was

a major milestone in the now 2 years and going "Digital Natives with a Cause?" research project. Here are some photos from the more picturesque moments of the week.



Nishant and Fieke, editors of the Digital Natives book



#brainfry and #Inspired: The two mental states the team oscillated between



The editing team at the write-shop, consisting of Fieke, Josine and Maesy from Hivos, Marlieke from the Institute of Social Sciences and Samuel, Shweta and Nishant from CIS

# Buzz

## Around Town

**Maureen Agena did a digital native dance and Shafika Isaacs danced with a python at the African eLearning 2011 conference in Dar es Salaam.**

**Do you think the Internet should be free from Government control, legislation and interference?**  
**Wonder Nilofar.**

**How do digital natives flirt?**  
**Maesy Angelina and co have some suggestions, like:**

""To be without you, is like facebook without friends, myspace without bands, google with no results."  
"Your name must be Google, because you've got everything I've ever searched for."  
"Your homepage or mine?"



The Hivos Ladies

## Some Digisaur Tweets

#digisaur My 52-year-old mommy dearest: "without the net i felt disconnected frm the world 4 the past one month". Context? She is in our native place in southern India with Plug-n-Play Internet connection, which simply conked off. I felt her p.a.i.n. at being disconnected.

At 56, my dad says "The internet is the global network of computers linked together via telecoms. It is different from the World Wide Web, which is a collection html, etc files that can be accessed via the Internet."...Who you callin' #digisaur? :D

"The internet is a place where they do everything: er... now what cant be done on the internet?"  
My 26yr-old nonDN #digisaur #DigitalNatives

## Other News

Digital Natives are not a "new new thing," but an even higher octane version of an old thing, the literate brain:

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-gee/digital-natives-digital-b\\_b\\_865263.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-gee/digital-natives-digital-b_b_865263.html)

A quick intro to cats and memes:

<http://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/metroplus/article2054140.ece>

Tweet story-telling is happening Mon Jun 13. Details coming soon!  
Flash mobs are not only for fun anymore:

<http://www.npr.org/2011/05/26/136578945/flash-mobs-arent-just-for-fun-anymore?sc=17&f=1001>

**Next issue: June 15th**

**Topic: Digital Dinosaurs: An exploration into everything and everyone which is not digital**

**Send your contributions By June 13th to:**  
**jamesmlambo@gmail.com and Tettner@cis-india.org**

# Re-Engineering Talk II: Revisiting Online Activism

By Nilofar Ansher

Quiz time: what's the quickest way to show you care for a cause (say, domestic violence) without stepping out of your home? Well, just like it. Sorry, that should be 'Like', as in, visit Facebook.com, search for the name of the NGO or cause – planting trees and green environment, saving abused kids, literacy for all – click on Like and there you have it, you are one among thousands of Facebook users who support the cause of domestic violence.

## Defining digital activism: online petitioning

Digital activism or slacktivism, allows one to participate in causes, read literature or material related to the issue, and voice your opinion (or just lurk on the Facebook group), without the condition of visiting the NGO's office, meeting up with the troubled people – the abused housewife in the case of domestic violence – plan a series of mobilization efforts, or any of the other traditional ways of drawing attention to a cause and subscribing to it. (Click here for my post on: unconventional ways to protest in the 21st century: Kissing and Walking!)

Subscriptions in the digital age are significantly dominated by the eye-catching buttons – I call it the button culture – which entice you to Sign Up! Join Today, Subscribe Now, Submit, and click on the ubiquitous Like (and that's why the sobriquet of clicktivism. It doesn't take analysis of the kind you would engage in if you were to join a cause at the ground level: would I have a free weekend, do I have spare donation money for this charity, would I be in trouble if I participate in a street demonstration, I do not want my parents to catch me supporting an anti-abortion / pro-choice march, it's dangerous, police could hurt me, or worse, I could get killed. Honestly, the gravity of supporting a cause should not be taken lightly. When you subscribe to a cause – offline – it means devoting time, energy, money, efforts, and sometimes, your blood and life. Do I really want to pay for the freedom of abused children with MY Life?

## Why Digital Activism: how does it work?

Are online campaigns restricted to merely Likes and Clicks and Sign-ups and becoming a follower of an NGO with an online presence? Well, many NGOs merely join Facebook and other social networking platforms and micro-blogging sites such as Twitter to reach a wider audience than what their physi-

cal campaigning efforts would reach. It's also easier to promote your event or workshops, conferences and seminars online as news goes viral within seconds. Thousands of youth who don't read newspapers or pick up brochures and pamphlets at schools, malls or



from the hands of a volunteer, would definitely see an online message or marketing campaign centered on a particular cause. It's the psychology of minimal effort and maximum rewards. Efforts involve subscribing to the cause and keeping up with news or events created by the NGOs, participating in surveys and discussions, and contributing advocacy ideas that will in real time / offline have an impact on the cause. And the rewards are surely manifold, the least is that you will now be seen as a supporter of important societal issues. A cynical viewpoint?

Marketing Gimmick: Follow, Like, Sign-up

Where having an online presence was once seen as an aid to offline mobilization efforts, I see an increasing marketing frenzy accompanying causes online; it's more about presence than substance. "Please RT this message or Like Us on Facebook" is a common reminder on Twitter accounts, as is, "Help us reach 1,000 Likes by this weekend"! (I see the same method employed by friends when they are promoting the music or art work of their friends on Facebook: please support my friend's work by Liking his Facebook page.)

This is an artificial method to boost your ratings and presence, visitor hits per day, follower base per month, and crucially, show your boss a great Google Analytics dashboard with stratospheric graph charts. Online causes (causes with only a digital presence) and causes which also have an online presence clutch on to the digital mantra of ROI – return on investment. But it gets rather meaningless after a while as you mistake increasing subscriber base to a good ROI on the number of social media hours you put in

you boost your cause – with the real support required offline not accounted for. A majority NGOs also hire social media specialists to connect with audience online. Tell me, if the person didn't have the time to visit your office, donate money or participate in a short street play or write a letter to the local member of parliament, how does having her email id or Facebook Like help your cause?

In speaking for offline mobilization efforts, I do not disparage online petitions, however, they cannot be the only way to measure effectiveness of a campaign

## Online & Offline | mobilization in real time

How can having 2 million followers and a 160,000 email subscription base promote the cause of domestic violence? Mostly, online causes help raise awareness and could be looked upon as an additional means of letting people know that there is trouble brewing in these areas as well. Awareness campaigns have to be hard-hitting and make your audience sit up and feel empathetic to spreading the message. Beyond that, online discussion boards help bounce off new ideas and help you to recruit potential 'ground staff'. Beyond that, it would take a kindred soul to be interested in the activities of an NGO, enough to go beyond Liking and Following and attend fortnightly meetings, shoot off letters to government departments, write letters to newspapers, spend time with the constituents (the people who face abuse) and make your time and resources available – without pay, as a volunteer.

The real success of any campaign – whether political, marketing or a social cause – is how well you mobilize support in real time for the afflicted and affected groups. Has their plight lessened? Are they able to talk about their problems on the platform you operate on – World Wide Web? Do they have access to digital technology? Do you look at them as "charity" cases who need help but cannot contribute to the success of their own well-being? Please don't! If you were the victim of such abuse, what kind of support or help would you expect from an NGO and its supporters? Stop patting yourself on the back because you have 1,000 new Likes since last weekend! Pass the baton of change to the victims. They have a lot to say about mobilizing support. Let me end with this wonderful quote: Activism proceeds best when it is persistent, positive, respectful; filled with facts & hope ~ Billie Jean King. (via @SheSpeaksNow on Twitter)