

My perspectives on the workshop

Having been a tech practitioner in Nepal since more than four years and leading a startup that has been involved in development of tech solutions for contemporary problems in the context of Nepal, scaling technical tools to wider geographies and bigger user base has always been a challenge to me. Technological tools work perfectly when used by predictable user base and geographies but when they need to be scaled up, that's when the chaos starts. It becomes greater resource intensive in terms of personnel working, server capabilities and more. Sustainability of the product is directly dependent upon its scalability but scaling without proper planning can affect sustainability itself. So, in most cases, trying to scale a product can lead to premature death of the product when things do not work as anticipated.

I got an opportunity to participate in the second phase of Digital Technologies for Resilience Workshop on November 27 and 28, 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand. It was the continuation of the Digital Technologies for Resilience Workshop in 2017 organized by FHI 360 with funding and support from the Rockefeller Foundation. Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL) contributed to the design and implementation of the workshop as a resource partner. The 2017 workshop focused on thinking about scale and this year, it was more about how to better plan for sustainable scaling of technical tools.

The workshop comprised of presentations, group works and insightful case studies that made it quite unique due to its spot on agenda and engaging sessions. My experience of participating in the two days of the workshop has been very different to other workshops that tend to be monotonous and distractive from the core theme. This workshop was specific to sustainable scaling and facilitation by Josh Woodard was really engaging. The sessions were well laid out in the schedule and provided enough space for networking, experience sharing, tech showcase and team engagement.

Among the variety of sessions, I particularly liked the presentations from successfully scaled tech tools from several nations. Ramadhi Irawan from Atma Connect, Indonesia shared his experience of how a mobile app suddenly scaled up to millions of users and how the team coped with the challenges during the scale up. He also shared how the application had to be reiterated in terms of features and user experience before it actually took off. His experience has been really inspiring to me. Other presentations from Dimagi, mPower, Yoti, Grameen Foundation, Viamo, make sense, ONOW and DIAL were full of learning from experiences and really inspirational. They provided a sense of common challenges faced by tech products while trying to scale and a lot could be learnt from their experience while we do similar scaling of IT products in Nepal.

Another great session was the Resilience and Economic Stability Simulation, a dice game that provided insights on how small growth in favorable parameters or mitigation of unfavorable parameters can substantially stabilize the economic standpoint of a family/business. It seemed obvious but never really thought a lot about and hence quite insightful.

Overall, the workshop was well managed and focused on the agenda. It was a really good platform for participants to learn from experience of one another and network with people in the similar domain from around the globe. The diverse backgrounds of the participants made the workshop more interesting. I really appreciate the opportunity that I got and look forward to engaging with the community in future.

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