ESCAP Asia-Pacific Regional Conference 2026

Community-based digital inclusion and AI for older persons

Lessons from Kyrgyzstan for Central Asia

Nurdin Satarov
Project Coordinator, Resource Center for the Elderly

Digital skills + human support = inclusion

Why digital inclusion matters now

Population ageing and digital transformation are happening at the same time

Two transformations, one risk

Digital services are becoming the default route to public services, health appointments, payments and civic participation.

≈670k
people above working age in 2025

>9%
of total population

2.1×
more older women than men

Without targeted support, digital transformation can become digital exclusion.

Resource Center for the Elderly · Kyrgyzstan



The digital divide is practical, emotional and social

The barriers are interconnected — skills, access, trust, design and confidence

Skills

Smartphone basics
Apps, forms, passwords

Access

Devices, Internet quality and costs

Trust

Fraud, phishing, money and personal data

Design

Small fonts, complex UI and language barriers

Confidence

Fear of mistakes and being judged

The problem is not simply a lack of skills.
The barriers are interconnected.

A human story from Balykchy

One woman, one taxi

A 72-year-old woman had a smartphone, but used it mainly for calls. After three training sessions, she opened a taxi app, entered her address and ordered a car herself.



“Now I do not have to wait for my son. I can do it myself.”

Independence · confidence · dignity

The Kyrgyzstan model

Community-based, bilingual, repeated — from learning to participation

1	2	3	4
TRAIN	**PRACTICE**	**CONNECT**	**ADVOCATE**
Smartphone basics Public services Online safety	Tunduk portal QR codes, apps, payments Own device	Video lessons E-textbook RU + KY WhatsApp sharing	bilem.kg · jol.kg · jmd.kg Appeals & suggestions Local dialogue



Bring digital learning to places where older people already gather — day centres, community groups and partner organisations.

Project: Digital Technologies for the Empowerment of Older People in Kyrgyzstan · April–September 2025

Results: six months, measurable change

Training empowered older people to use digital services and civic platforms.

OLDER PEOPLE.
STRONGER COMMUNITIES.
A MORE INCLUSIVE
DIGITAL KYRGYZSTAN.

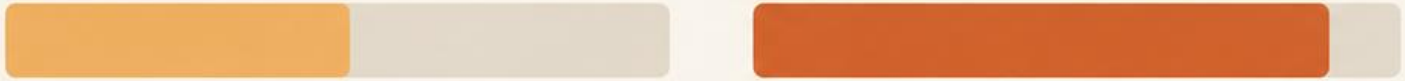
360
people trained

216
women
(60%)

144
men
(40%)

15
digital civic appeals submitted

Knowledge level



50%
Before training

90%
After training

Average knowledge level increased from **50% to 90%.**

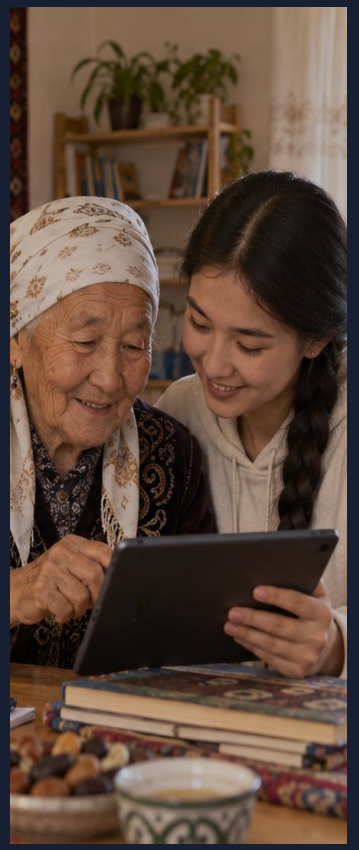
Participants began to:

- Access state services via Tunduk
- Book medical appointments online
- Make digital payments independently
- Submit appeals on civic platforms (bilem.kg, jol.kg, jmd.kg)
- Use other useful and navigation apps

Five lessons from older learners

Small design choices determine whether digital learning becomes usable

1	**One session is not enough**	3–5 sessions with time for practice
2	**Teach on real devices**	Each step repeated on their own phone
3	**Accessibility is the foundation**	Large fonts, simple language, subtitles
4	**Trust is part of literacy**	Online safety and fraud prevention
5	**Youth can be digital mentors**	Intergenerational support reduces fear



Accessibility is not a feature — it is the foundation.

And now comes AI

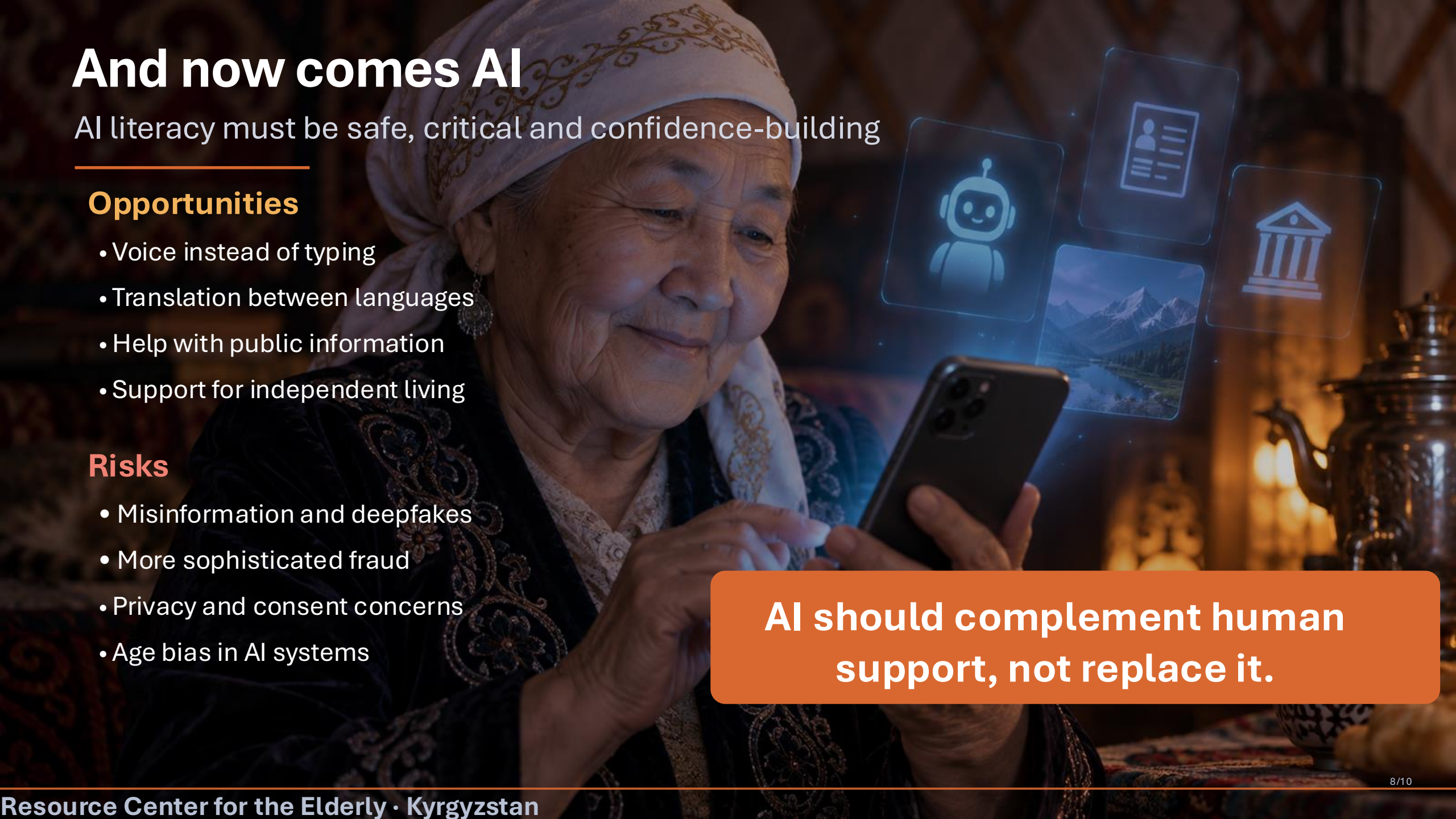
AI literacy must be safe, critical and confidence-building

Opportunities

- Voice instead of typing
- Translation between languages
- Help with public information
- Support for independent living

Risks

- Misinformation and deepfakes
- More sophisticated fraud
- Privacy and consent concerns
- Age bias in AI systems



AI should complement human support, not replace it.

From pilot project to policy

A scalable model for Central Asia: policy + local spaces + age-friendly content + human support

Policy

Embed digital literacy in active ageing and lifelong learning policies

+

Local spaces

Support day centres, self-help groups and NGOs

+

Age-friendly content

Design services with older users, not only for them

+

Human support

Build youth digital mentorship with universities

Scalable inclusion requires an ecosystem — no single organisation can deliver it alone.

Technology becomes inclusive only when combined with

Trust

Safe learning spaces
Online safety education
No fear of judgment

Practice

Repeated sessions
Personal devices
Bilingual materials

Human support

Patient trainers
Youth mentors
Community networks

For older persons in Central Asia, community-based digital learning can strengthen independence, safety, access to services and voice in local decision-making.

Thank you!!