CLOSING THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Through the WomenConnect Challenge, USAID has identified five proven strategies to close the gender digital divide and increase women's economic empowerment.

The projects from WomenConnect Round One emphasized the need to incorporate women-centric programming, challenge perceptions, and generate economic opportunities.

Challenge Social and Cultural Norms

In many poor or rural communities, access to technology and the internet by women is often seen as immoral, inappropriate, or unnecessary. It is important to work on perceptions with those frequently in power, such as men, community and religious leaders, and elders. Tackling these existing social and cultural norms will help women gain access to information and opportunities, build confidence, and feel empowered.

Develop Tech or Online Job Opportunities

When trained on using technology, women can access increased economic opportunities, from serving as community technology leaders to entrepreneurs. Once men are educated about online workforce opportunities for women, they often become supportive of technology access due to the increased family income. In turn, a woman's financial gains allows her to have more liberty and be able to afford additional internet access, educating and empowering her further.

Build Confidence

In many developing countries, ingrained traditional gender roles lead women and men to believe that women are unable or not smart enough to use technology, enforcing a gender digital divide and lack of confidence. Targeted programs have helped women address gender stereotypes in their communities, learn to use technology, and feel empowered. Some women have gone on to train community members, positioning them as leaders, further breaking down gender norms.

Grow Community Advocates

As poor or rural women gain access to technology, many choose to advocate for change in their communities. When given a platform to communicate with local leaders, they have championed issues disproportionately affecting women such as gender-based violence and access to finance or government programs.

Design Creative Women-Centric Technology

To close the gender digital divide, programs must use technology options tailored to women in developing countries, many of whom are illiterate or have low literacy levels. Innovative video and audio platforms allow women who speak primarily oral languages to readily communicate and learn. Free offline content on a range of livelihood topics can help continue to educate women who otherwise do not receive targeted information.

Learn more about the WomenConnect Challenge at womenconnectchallenge.org