



# INVEST IN, SUPPORT, AND SHARE INSIGHTS ON DIGITAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT MITIGATE RISKS



As more women and girls are using ICT, USAID needs to be investing in ICT and services that work for women and girls to help overcome the associated risks, designing them with a gender and safety or risk lens.

USAID should also be sharing the insights from these initiatives to the wider gender and ICT community, to build the evidence base of what works and what does not and what can be scaled and replicated.

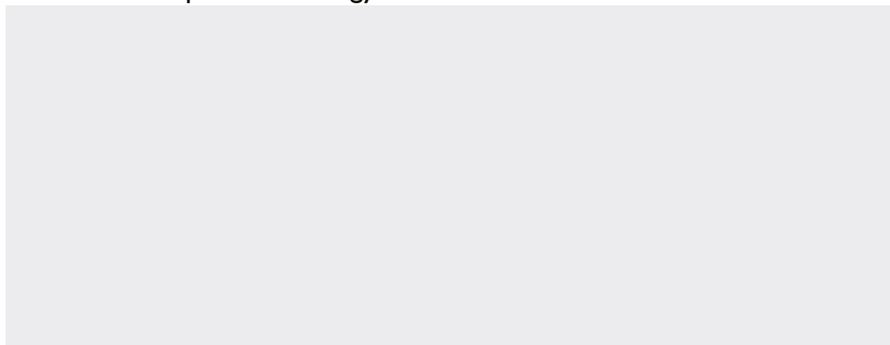
USAID can support several different types of digital initiatives, products, and services to make it safer for women and girls to access and use ICT.

## SUPPORT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT HELP USERS SHARE, REPORT, AND GET RECOURSE

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

- Support digital products and services which allow users to track and report technology-facilitated GBV crimes, helping to prosecute perpetrators more effectively and strengthening confidence in the legal system (both at the individual level and more broadly).

How have we supported digital products and services which allow users to track and report technology-facilitated GBV crimes?



### HOW DOES THIS LINK TO WEEGE?

#### ADS 205 Domains

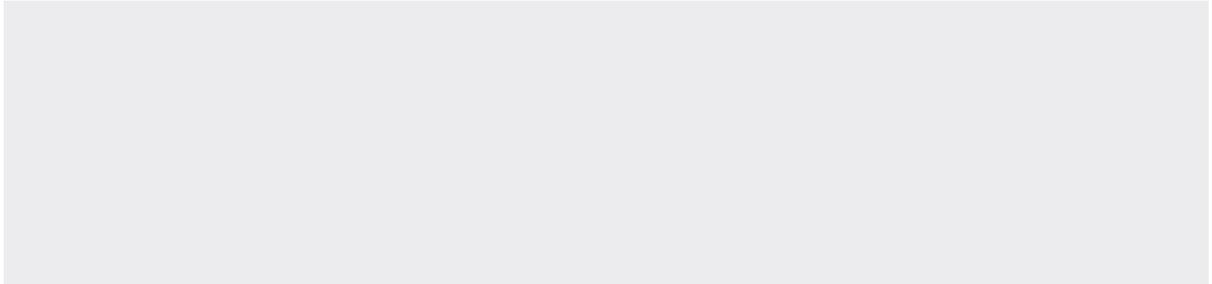
- Access and Control
- Power and Decision-making

#### WEEGE Principles

- 2 – Amplify Women’s Voices
- 5 – Collaborate
- 6 – Establish the Evidence
- 7 – Address Gender-based Violence
- 10 – Embrace Emerging Innovations

- Support digital products and services that allow female users to share and report their own experiences, by crowdsourcing information and putting control into the hands of users.

How are we supporting digital products and services that allow female users to share and report their own experiences?



## WEEGE IN ACTION



### Tracking

[HarassMap](#) is an app developed in Egypt (and now rolled out in other countries, such as Afghanistan and India) to help female users track incidents of cyber violence, and to encourage more positive action and responses to such crimes. It allows victims to record the type of cybercrime committed, the date, and the exact location. It also allows other users to report incidents, promoting positive action within societies while establishing a support service or network for victims.

Other similar examples include [HarassTracker](#) in Lebanon, [Ramallah Street Watch](#) in Palestine, and [Bijoya](#) in Bangladesh.

The [Trade Route Incident Mapping System \(TMRIS\)](#) is an app in Nigeria through which traders can (anonymously) report requests for unofficial payments, as well as incidents of sexual or physical harassment. The app collects information on location, bribe paid, sexual or physical harassment suffered, any time delays, the entity involved, commodity traded, and the sex of the trader. These trade route incidents are mapped and accessible to the public in real time, providing female traders with valuable information on safety and risk. Because the app collects sex-disaggregated data, it also allows customs officials to respond and to better structure safety and security solutions for women traders.



## WEEGE IN ACTION CONT'D

### Sharing and crowdsourcing

As part of the USAID Women Connect Challenge, [Humanitarian Open Street Map Team \(HOT\)](#) is training young women and vocal male allies in Tanzania to use mobile-based mapping platforms and crowdsourcing to identify and report instances of GBV.

[Safetipin](#) is an app that uses crowdsourced information from women and girls to map areas in cities, creating safety audits (parameters that together contribute to the perception of safety). This allows other female users to know how safe they might feel in a place after dark. The app also has a function to alert friends or family if something unusual happens, thus increasing the user's sense of personal safety.

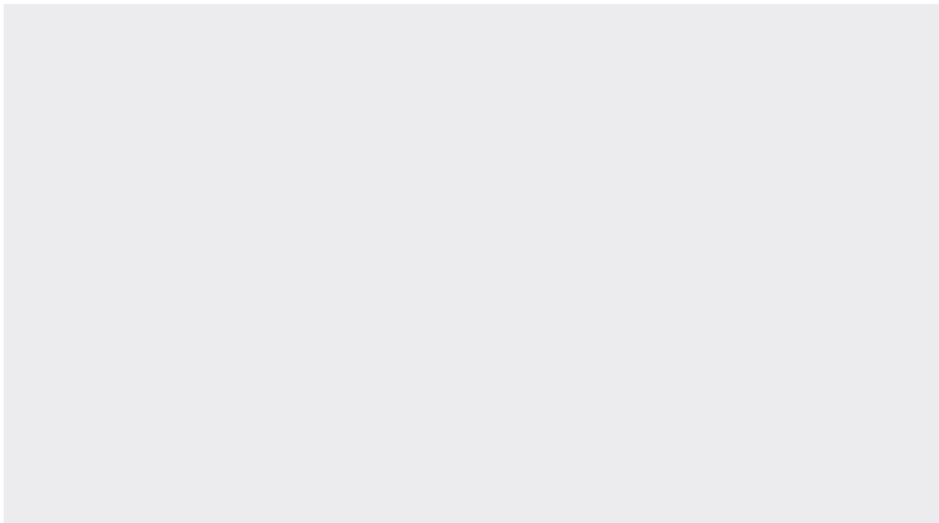
Other examples include [Safe City](#) in India, the global [Watch Over Me](#) app, and Plan's [Free to Be](#), targeted to adolescent girls.

## SUPPORT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT PROTECT WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' PERSONAL PRIVACY FROM OUTSIDE MONITORING

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

- Support digital products and services that are specifically designed for women and girls to protect their personal privacy if their use is being monitored. For example, biometrics used for locking phones can allow only the female users to unlock them—and not their husbands, fathers, or other male/female/family gatekeepers, who may want to monitor what they are doing.

How are we supporting digital products and services that are specifically designed for women and girls to protect their personal privacy?



### HOW DOES THIS LINK TO WEEGE?

#### ADS 205 Domains

- Access and Control
- Power and Decision-making
- Cultural Norms and Beliefs

#### WEEGE Principles

- 2 – Amplify Women's Voices
- 5 – Collaborate
- 6 – Establish the Evidence
- 7 – Address Gender-based Violence
- 10 – Embrace Emerging Innovations



## WEEGE IN ACTION



*Photo: Riaz Jahanpour for USAID Tanzania / Digital Development Communications*

### Protecting personal privacy

Orange Egypt's Private Recharge allows users to recharge their phone credit anonymously, either in stores or online. This mitigates the issue of male shop vendors or bystanders recording their phone numbers and then contacting them without permission.

Vodafone's India Sakhi service allows female customers to generate a personal identification number which they can use to top up their phone, without disclosing their personal phone number.

Truecaller is a call-blocking app that blocks unwanted calls and texts, helping reduce the amount of unsolicited and harassing calls and texts that women and girls receive. Fifty percent of their user base is in India. Truecaller is available in multiple languages and is designed for users with low digital literacy, making it particularly appropriate for women and girls.

Plan International leverages digital platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, to build safe private networks and to interact with young girls on the platforms they already access. Their Girls Out Loud initiative provides safe private online spaces for girls, moderated by Plan staff, to discuss key gender issues such as self-image, self-confidence, and health. Plan mitigates the risks to female users by using private online platforms and creating safe spaces for private engagement, as there is much more risk for female users if content and groups are public.

## BOX 1. POWER DYNAMICS AND PERSONAL PRIVACY SOLUTIONS: "FIRST, DO NO HARM"

Password or biometric locks on phones and apps, and designing discreet apps or services, do offer discretion to female users. However, there is also a risk that gatekeepers may perceive their female relatives to be hiding things or having secrets. This can in some cases put the female user at more risk of gender-based restrictions or even physical violence, and can also add an extra burden of keeping secrets.

Any project or activity that takes this approach needs to fully understand the cultural context and power dynamics involved, and what potential additional harm this approach could bring, before starting any work. It should also always be implemented in conjunction with engaging with gatekeepers (male/female/family relatives) to get their buy-in, and should be designed with female users' input to make sure it fully meets their needs and does not put them at any additional risk.

## SUPPORT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT ARE RESPONSIBLE AND TRANSPARENT WITH DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Many digital products and services put users at risk by not safeguarding their personal information or data; this is particularly acute for women and girls, who have lower levels of digital literacy and knowledge about the risks, and so are less able to understand (or consent to) what they are signing up for.

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

- Ensure any digital products and services that are supported put women's and girls' data privacy and security (and their needs) front and center.

How are we ensuring that women's and girls' data privacy and security (and their needs) are made priority in digital products and services?

- Ensure any digital products and services that are supported are transparent regarding how they treat users' personal information and data.

How have we ensured that digital products and services are transparent regarding how they treat users' personal information and data?



### HOW DOES THIS LINK TO WEEGE?

#### ADS 205 Domains

- Access and Control
- Cultural Norms and Beliefs

#### WEEGE Principles

- 2 – Amplify Women's Voices
- 5 – Collaborate
- 6 – Establish the Evidence
- 7 – Address Gender-based Violence
- 9 – Walk The Talk
- 10 – Embrace Emerging Innovations

- **Ensure any digital products and services that are supported actively seek user consent in a very clear way.**

How are we ensuring that digital products and services actively seek user consent in a very clear way?

- **Ensure any digital products and services that are supported follow best practices for digital safeguarding and security, such as the [Girl Effect guidelines](#).**

How have we ensured that any digital products and services that are supported follow best practices for digital safeguarding and security?



## WEEGE IN ACTION



*Photo: Riaz Jahandpour for USAID Tanzania / Digital Development Communications*

### Putting data protection and privacy first

Girl Effect has created safeguarding and privacy principles and guidelines for digital platforms; they ensure that all of their digital products for girls (including [Springster](#) and the [Big Sis](#) chatbot) abide by these principles.

Plan's [Girls Out Loud](#) digital safe spaces initiative has a social listening dashboard which analyzes discussions girls are having using artificial intelligence. This allows

Plan to pull insights from the data to use in their own data and research design. Plan is transparent with users about how their personal data is used and has developed user-friendly terms and conditions and privacy policies to help female users understand what they are signing up for, to enable informed consent.

The Everyday Sexism Project, which encourages women and girls to report experiences of sexism, provides [guidelines on digital security](#) and on keeping personal information and data private when women and girls report their experiences online.

## SUPPORT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT ARE DESIGNED WITH AND FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Best practice in gender tech means involving female users and co-creating with them. Putting women and girls front and center in the design process is crucial to bringing more women and girls into the digital economy and closing the gender digital divide, as one of the barriers to access and use is the lack of products and services designed for female user needs. This is especially crucial for addressing potential risks. Because ICT has the potential to increase the level of regimenting, monitoring, and controlling women, anyone involved in creating a product or service must keep a gender lens, with a clear understanding of the tension between potential positive and negative effects.

Any product or service that USAID supports must be designed for women and girls while constantly seeking their feedback; it must incorporate awareness of their realities, their gatekeepers, and their institutions, in both design and roll-out. When consulted, women and girls regularly say that they want



### HOW DOES THIS LINK TO WEEGE?

#### ADS 205 Domains

- Access and Control
- Cultural Norms and Beliefs

#### WEEGE Principles

- 2 – Amplify Women's Voices
- 5 – Collaborate
- 6 – Establish the Evidence
- 7 – Address Gender-based Violence
- 8 – Partner With Women
- 9 – Walk The Talk
- 10 – Embrace Emerging Innovations

safer online experiences: any product or service needs to work with women and girls to ensure that they (1) are user-friendly and engaging, and (2) have the safety and privacy features that users want—and that work intuitively. This will allow women and girls to use the service freely and minimize their own (or their gatekeepers’) doubts about their online safety.

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

- Run human-centered design and co-creation activities with potential female users, to get their ideas and design the features they want in a digital product.

What human-centered design and co-creation activities do we plan to do with potential female users?

- Involve women and girls in every step of the process, including content creation.

How are we involving women and girls in every step of the process?

- User test the product with female users as often as possible to get their feedback, iterating regularly to make sure it suits their needs and is the right fit.

How often are we testing our product with female users? Are there opportunities for more frequent tests?

- ❑ **Ensure any digital products and services follow best practices for digital safeguarding and security, such as the [Girl Effect guidelines](#).**

How have we ensured that any digital products and services that are supported follow best practices for digital safeguarding and security?

- ❑ **Get regular feedback from female users, even after the service is live, to make sure the feedback loops and channels are always open and that female users' opinions are solicited.**

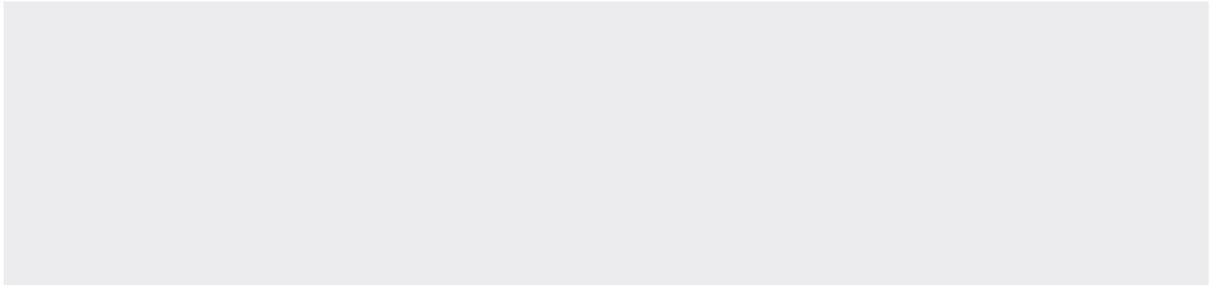
How will we solicit female users' opinions during development and after launch? How often will we do this?

- ❑ **Follow best practices in designing with and for women and girls, to ensure that there are no unforeseen negative consequences.**

How have we ensured that there are no unforeseen negative consequences as a result of our design?

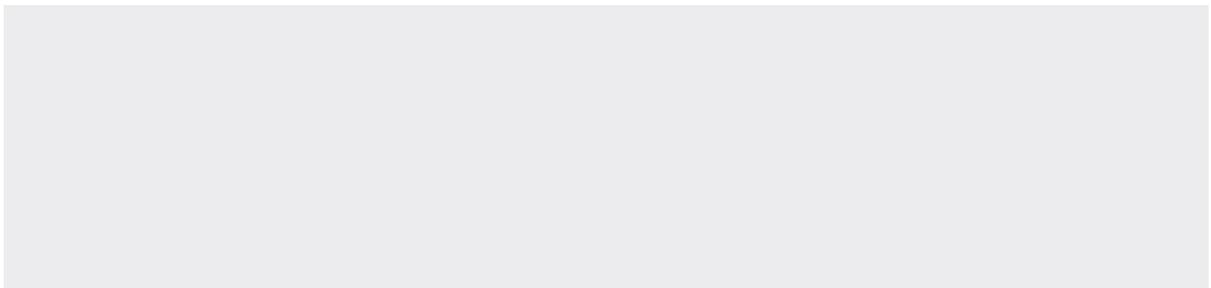
- Support products and services created by organizations that have gender diversity in their core team (for example, female leaders, developers, designers, and product managers), or by funding female-led start-ups.

How are we supporting products and services created by organizations that have gender diversity in their core team?



- Support initiatives and activities that actively promote women and girls, not just as users of ICT, but as students, creators, and employees of ICT or within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. For example, working with organizations that address the underrepresentation of women and girls as innovators and leaders through mentorship, role models, or supporting innovation and co-design challenges specifically for women and girls.

How are we supporting initiatives and activities that actively promote women and girls?



## WEEGE IN ACTION



### Platforms and apps designed for and run by female users

As part of the USAID Women Connect Challenge, [GraamVani](#) has created a [voice-based community media platform](#) for women, where users run the platform themselves and generate their own content on their own topics. The platforms are entirely participatory and user-led, and are a place where female users can discuss the topics they want to discuss: for example, how to get government money, what GBV is, or child marriage.



## WEEGE IN ACTION CONT'D

Also as part of the USAID Women Connect Challenge, [Mali Health](#) created a voice-only social networking app, targeted at illiterate women in Mali. The networking app is highly visual and designed for the devices users already had. It was also designed with extensive feedback and testing with the female users at every stage, therefore designing for the female users' particular needs.

### Best practices for co-creation

There are a few publicly available resources that clearly lay out best practices and step-by-step approaches for co-creation and co-design with women and girls. These include:

[GSMA mHealth Gender Toolkit](#)

[Girl Effect blog](#) on five ways to design tech for and with girls

[Panoply Digital blog](#) on how to do user testing for women and girls

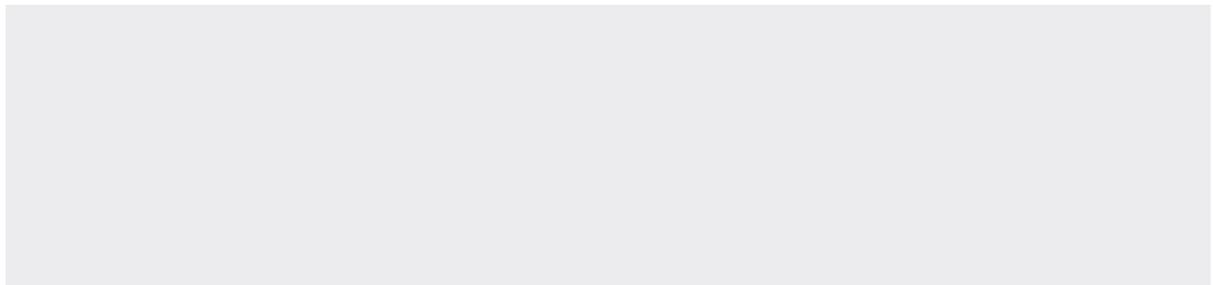
## SUPPORT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT TRAIN AUTHORITY FIGURES

Often, there is a lack of clear policies and regulation to address technology-facilitated GBV—including in law enforcement and in online spaces. This leads to a lack of trust in authority figures, who are not equipped to deal with and manage these situations, and in turn leads to under-reporting and a lack of recourse mechanisms for women and girls.

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

- Support digital products and services that train law enforcement on how to respond to online GBV.

How are we supporting digital products and services that train law enforcement on how to respond to online GBV?



### HOW DOES THIS LINK TO WEEGE?

#### ADS 205 Domains

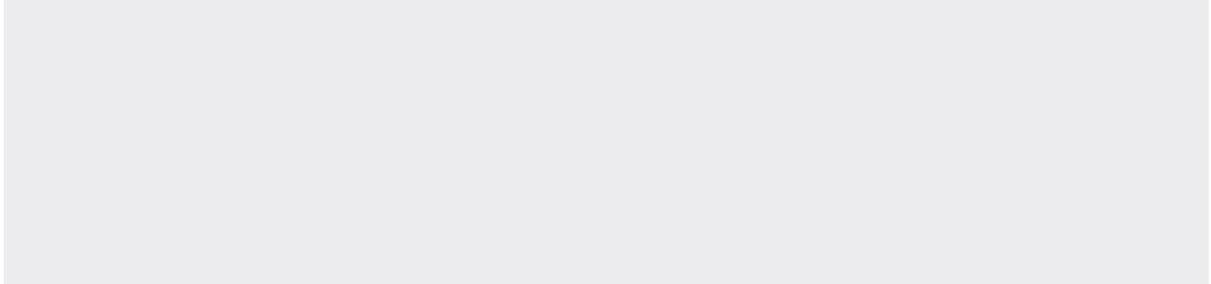
- Access and Control
- Cultural Norms and Beliefs
- Laws and Policies

#### WEEGE Principles

- 2 – Amplify Women's Voices
- 4 – Engage With Men And Boys
- 5 – Collaborate
- 6 – Establish the Evidence
- 7 – Address Gender-based Violence
- 10 – Embrace Emerging Innovations

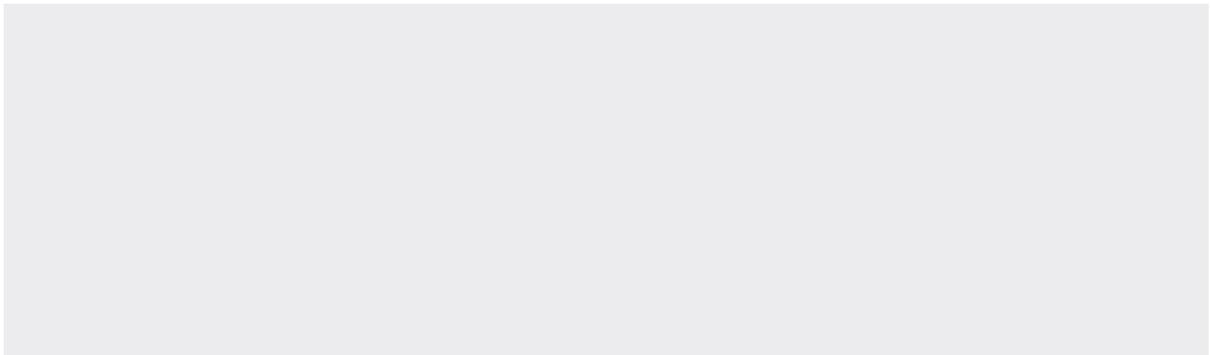
- Support digital products and services that train caregivers or authority or community figures on how to recognize and respond to online GBV.

How are we supporting digital products and services that train caregivers or authority or community figures on how to recognize and respond to online GBV?



- Support digital products and services that train moderators and other authority figures in online spaces on how to recognize and respond to online GBV.

How are we supporting digital products and services that train moderators and other authority figures in online spaces?



Often, there is a lack of clear policies and regulation to address technology-facilitated GBV—including in law enforcement and in online spaces.



Photo: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment



## WEEGE IN ACTION



### Digital solutions that train police and other adults in authority

In Kenya, one in three girls experience sexual violence before the age of 18, but it is rarely reported due to lack of faith in the police and the criminal justice system. [Equality Effect](#), a mobile app, has been used by police officers to train on the best practices for investigating abuse (including online sexual abuse), helping to keep law enforcement accountable and educated.

### Digital solutions that train parents and teachers

Ericsson is working with the World Childhood Foundation to develop the [Stewards of Children Prevention Toolkit](#), a training app that equips adults—caretakers, teachers, parents—with the skills and resources necessary to recognize, prevent, and respond to online sexual abuse of girls.

### Digital solutions that train community workers and leaders

In India, the [Mobilise! App](#) supports government health workers and other community leaders, providing standardized guidelines, protocols, and job aids on how to respond to instances of GBV in their communities. It also helps users link victims to law enforcement agencies.

### Digital solutions that train online moderators

[Jigsaw](#) is a research project by Google that uses technology to tackle digital security challenges. Some relevant tools include [Perspective](#), an open application programming interface, and [Moderator](#), an open source code available on GitHub. Both use machine learning to help moderators identify and reduce harassment and toxicity in forums and comment sections.

# DOCUMENTS IN THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE RISK MITIGATION TECHNICAL NOTE



## HOW TO USE THIS GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE RISK MITIGATION TECHNICAL NOTE



## UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS OF ICT TO WOMEN AND GIRLS



## TOOL 1: PRACTICAL RISK MITIGATION STRATEGIES

- » STRATEGY 1: UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT AND THE RISKS: “FIRST, DO NO HARM”
- » STRATEGY 2: INVEST IN, SUPPORT, AND SHARE INSIGHTS ON DIGITAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT MITIGATE RISKS
- » STRATEGY 3: SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN ICT OUTREACH AND DIGITAL LITERACY INITIATIVES
- » STRATEGY 4: SUPPORT INITIATIVES THAT INVOLVE (MALE/FEMALE/FAMILY) GATEKEEPERS
- » STRATEGY 5: RAISE AWARENESS
- » STRATEGY 6: COLLABORATE AND WORK WITH OTHER NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS
- » STRATEGY 7: STRENGTHEN INTERNAL AND PARTNER CAPACITY FOR RISK MITIGATION AND SAFEGUARDING



## RESOURCES 1–3: KEY DOCUMENTS