



# SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN ICT OUTREACH & DIGITAL LITERACY INITIATIVES



Women and girls are more vulnerable to risks not only because they have lower levels of digital literacy and confidence, but also because they often do not know what to do when faced with negative (digital) events. ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives can help women and girls (and their networks) understand how to use mobile and Internet safely and protect themselves from the risks.

Activities and strategies fall under four areas, discussed in detail below: 1) strengthening and supporting ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives for women and girls; 2) partnering with others to avoid duplication of efforts; 3) including information on risks in ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives, for women and girls and their families and wider networks; and, 4) using or adapting existing materials and toolkits.

## BOX 1. BE AWARE OF SOCIAL NORMS AND STANDALONE DIGITAL LITERACY INITIATIVES.

While many ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives have done much to change social norms and unseat negative perceptions of ICT, there is also a risk that these programs only actually reach the women and girls who are able to access or attend sessions or content in the first place, or who will not face retribution for doing so—rather than the women and girls who need it the most.

It is therefore crucial to first understand the context: Do social norms govern whether women and girls can access ICT outreach or digital literacy initiatives and/or content? Why are they offline in the first place? Then, use that information to build avenues that keep women and girls online. ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives may be an important part of these avenues, but they are not the only avenue.

Generally speaking, the most successful initiatives that help to get more women and girls online and that help to mitigate the risks of their coming online are ones that include ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives as one component of a more extensive program.

## STRENGTHENING AND SUPPORTING ICT OUTREACH AND DIGITAL LITERACY INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

- Strengthen and support existing mobile and digital skills initiatives for women and girls to help them become more comfortable with ICT. Initiatives need to be properly thought out to take social norms into account so that they are reaching the women and girls who need them most, and delivering the content and skills they need.

How are we strengthening and supporting existing initiatives and taking social norms into account?

- Ensure that any ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives are relevant to the devices and platforms that women and girls use. For example, if women and girls in a community only use mobile devices, it does not make sense to focus on computer use.

List the devices and platforms relevant to women and girls in the target community.



### HOW DOES THIS LINK TO WEEGE?

#### ADS 205 Domains

Cultural Norms and Beliefs

#### WEEGE Principles

7 – Address Gender-based Violence

10 – Embrace Emerging Innovations

- ❑ Think beyond coding and bootcamps. Digital literacy is most often developed through regular use of devices and the Internet, through self-exploration, and through use of other digital services. Support initiatives that accommodate this blended approach, giving female users more confidence and agency in their ICT use.

What are some initiatives apart from coding and bootcamps that we can use to develop digital literacy?

- ❑ Support initiatives that utilize audio or visuals to be more inclusive and reach illiterate users.

How are we being inclusive in order to reach illiterate users?



### WEEGE IN ACTION



#### Using mobile to strengthen digital literacy skills for women

As part of the USAID Women Connect Challenge, [Viamo](#) is delivering digital literacy training and mobile Internet information to women in Tanzania and Pakistan through voice messages on their mobile phones, as part of tackling low digital and mobile literacy skills among women. The messages are audio-only, as part of the wider 3-2-1 mobile service delivered through Interactive Voice Response (IVR), and so can be accessed on any phone and by users with low or no literacy—reaching women on the devices they already have. Each message is 90 seconds long and in local language. The platforms use “edutainment” learning techniques to teach female users digital literacy skills, such as how to navigate mobile Internet browsers and how to purchase data bundles. The messages also seek to address the perception that mobile Internet is not valuable for women.

## PARTNER WITH OTHERS TO AVOID DUPLICATION OF EFFORTS

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

- Work with national governments to include mobile and digital literacy in formal school curricula, including in primary schools, to ensure that girls are reached while they are still in school. It is crucial to look downstream and reach girls from an early age.

How are we working with national governments to reach girls from an early age?

- Collaborate with the private sector to support their existing ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives for women and girls in emerging markets, particularly addressing the risks of ICT and how users can protect themselves.

List your points of contact in the private sector:



### HOW DOES THIS LINK TO WEEGE?

ADS 205 Domains

Access and Control

WEEGE Principles

5 – Collaborate

7 – Address Gender-based Violence

10 – Embrace Emerging Innovations



### WEEGE IN ACTION



#### ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives through public-private partnerships

Many organizations in the private sector are active in digital literacy initiatives and ICT outreach, especially for girls, of fering them content and clubs. [Mozilla Foundation](#)—focusing on web capability, digital literacy, skill training, and privacy—has partnered with UN Women to set up [Mozilla Clubs for Women and Girls](#). There are now 30 clubs worldwide, set up in schools and community centers and designed to help women and girls with digital and web literacy, which will help them to participate online in inclusive and engaging ways.

Other partnerships involve mobile operators. The mobile operator group Orange has partnered with the German government (through GIZ) together with local universities to establish [digital hubs](#) in Africa and the Middle East, offering young people access to digital skills and literacy opportunities, including information about safety and security risks.

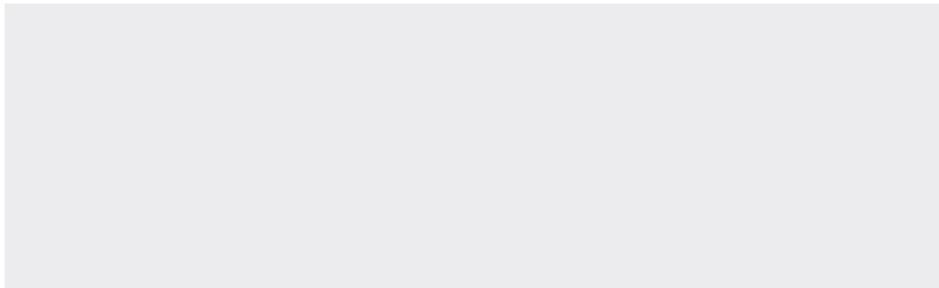
Some initiatives include partnerships with Internet service providers. As part of the USAID Women Connect Challenge, the [Women in Network \(WIN\)](#) project in Mozambique is a partnership between GAPI (a development finance institution) and Bluetown (an Internet service provider) which promotes digital literacy skill development for women on smartphone and mobile Internet use at a community level.

## INCORPORATE RISKS INTO ICT OUTREACH AND DIGITAL LITERACY INITIATIVES

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

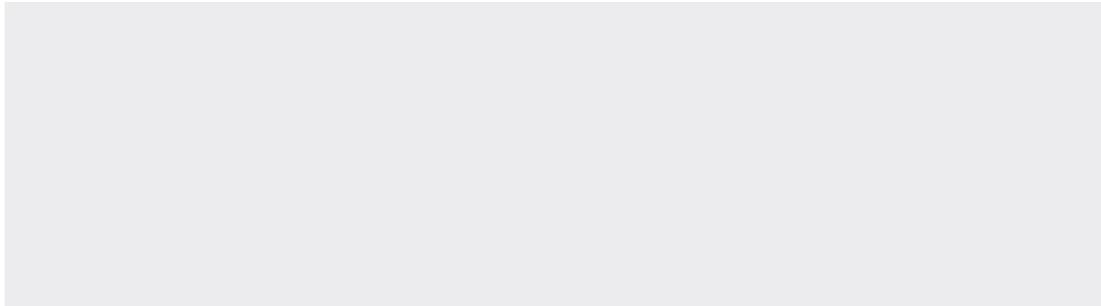
- Ensure that any ICT outreach and digital literacy initiatives delivered to women and girls include modules or sections on how to use mobile devices and the Internet safely, including practical advice on how to protect against potential threats.

How are we demonstrating how to use mobile devices and the Internet safely?



- Ensure that any content includes in-country information such as: the helplines or organizations where women and girls can get help or advice if needed; any legal frameworks that protect users; where and how to report any issues (with step-by-step instructions if available).

List local resources for advice and legal guidance, as well as the process for reporting risks.



### HOW DOES THIS LINK TO WEEGE?

ADS 205 Domains  
Access and Control

WEEGE Principles  
7 – Address Gender-based Violence  
10 – Embrace Emerging Innovations



### WEEGE IN ACTION



*Photo: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment*

#### Risk training for women and girls

Across South Asia, starting in India, [Facebook is working with ICT and gender ministries](#), as well as women’s rights organizations, to incorporate digital risks—especially for women and girls—into their digital literacy initiatives. Activities include educating female users about online privacy, safety, and security through short animations, cartoons, and videos. The initiative also includes broader digital literacy training for all users

about how to critically assess and evaluate online content (to combat misinformation and “fake news”), as well as building digital resilience, digital emotional intelligence, and “netiquette.”

## SUPPORT ICT OUTREACH AND DIGITAL LITERACY INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FAMILIES AND WIDER NETWORKS

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

- Educate participants' children—both sons and daughters—on the risks of ICT, including how to mitigate these risks and where to turn to for help.

Often, a woman's children can be a source of knowledge and guidance for her in using mobile or the Internet; they are often better educated and have a willingness to experiment with ICT, and so can help teach mothers.

Children can also act as change agents vis-à-vis fathers and other male/female gatekeepers, relatives, or the wider community. If children are able to teach others about what the risks are, and how women and girls can stay safe online, this can help address some of the social norms and fears around the gendered use of the Internet.

How are we involving participants' children in the process?

- Inform others within women's and girls' wider networks—spouses, parents, brothers, guardians, teachers, and caretakers—on what the risks are and how their daughters and sisters can stay safe online, including how to get help.

Who are some members of women's and girls' networks we will reach out to?



### HOW DOES THIS LINK TO WEEGE?

#### ADS 205 Domains

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

#### WEEGE Principles

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

- Work with partners to inform influential people in the community, such as local government officials, on digital literacy and risks, to help overcome any trust issues around mobile or the Internet.

If women and girls (or their male/female gatekeepers) see these influencers using ICT safely, and mitigating the risks, over time this demonstration effect may encourage others to use ICT, allowing male gatekeepers to overcome their concerns about the risks to women and girls.

How are we working with influential partners in the community?

- Train and inform influential women and girls in the community as a priority, and as a critical factor for social norm change.

Make a list of the top influential organizations and individuals in the community to partner with and ensure they are informed and trained to mitigate risks.



## WEEGE IN ACTION



### Staying safe online

Save the Children's Connected and Safe program in the Balkans delivers training for teachers and parents (in consultation with children) on staying safe online. It also works with community members to train them to be aware of signs of risks or technology-facilitated GBV (particularly sexual harassment and abuse), so they can then model safe use of the Internet to children, especially girls.

### Women-led community networks

As part of the USAID Women Connect Challenge, [AFCHIX set up women-led Community Networks](#) to provide connectivity in Senegal, Kenya, Morocco, and Namibia in previously unconnected communities. Women are specifically involved as leaders and key focal points within the communities, and are trained in both ICT infrastructure and digital literacy skills. As well as leading the Community Networks, they also share their knowledge of how to safely and confidently use digital tools with younger women in the community, inspiring girls to be safe and confident ICT users—and changing social norms in the process.

## USE OR ADAPT EXISTING MATERIALS AND TOOLKITS

### CHECKLIST FOR ACTIONS

There are many digital literacy training materials available that have been developed, tested, and used with women and girls in emerging markets. Rather than creating completely new materials (which takes time and resources), USAID can promote the use and adaptation of these tools and resources to be suitable for women and girls in low-income contexts and with lower levels of literacy or differing levels of access to ICT. Many of these materials are in multiple languages, and all of them can be adapted and contextualized to help create Internet risk mitigation programming.

A list of these resources for different audience types, and the languages they are available in, can be found in [Resource 2](#) of this Gender Digital Divide Risk Mitigation Technical Note.

- Support making the tools available in local languages, if not already available.

What are some local languages that need to be considered?

- Support making the tools available in a more visual format for women and girls with lower levels of literacy.

How are we supporting women and girls with lower levels of literacy?

- Support the adaptation of content to be appropriate for the context. For example, focus training on mobile Internet (rather than computer) if that is how women and girls go online in that context.

What digital applications are most appropriate in this context?



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#### ADS 205 Domains

Access and Control

#### WEEGE Principles

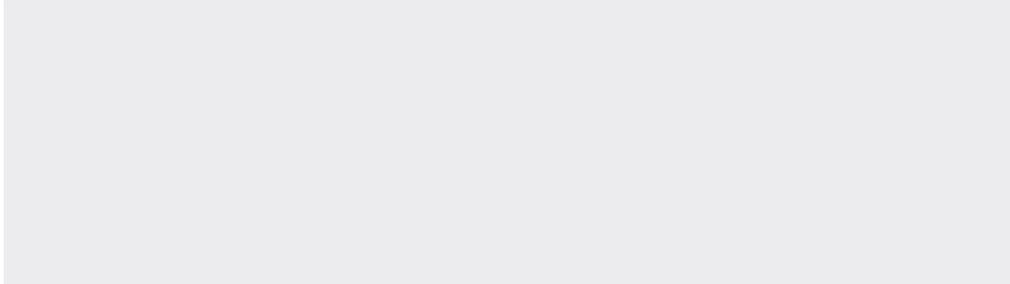
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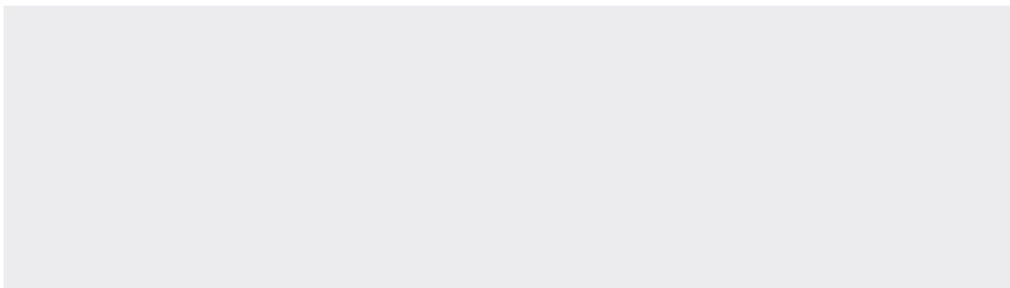
- Support the repurposing of the course for mobile versions that deliver the courses through IVR (voice) or visual means, rather than online or face-to-face only, to reach more women and girls who may only have access to voice or audio or who may have lower levels of literacy.

How can we repurpose the content for mobile versions through IVR or visual means?



- Support the adaptation of these tools to train (male) gatekeepers as well, to overcome social restrictions and address fears about their female relatives going online.

How can we involve male gatekeepers and address their fears?



### WEEGE IN ACTION



#### Digital literacy training via mobile

In Guatemala, the non-governmental organization SHEVA delivers digital literacy training to women and girls through face-to-face workshops, using computers. However, they quickly realized that this was not sustainable: the young women they work with often have no access to laptops or computers and only access the Internet via mobile devices; also, it was challenging for them to attend sessions in person. As a solution, SHE

VA adapted the [GSMA Mobile Internet Skills Training Toolkit](#) for the Guatemalan context; they worked with [EduMe](#) to further adapt the resources to be delivered to women and girls directly through their mobile phones, using EduMe's learning platform.

# 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