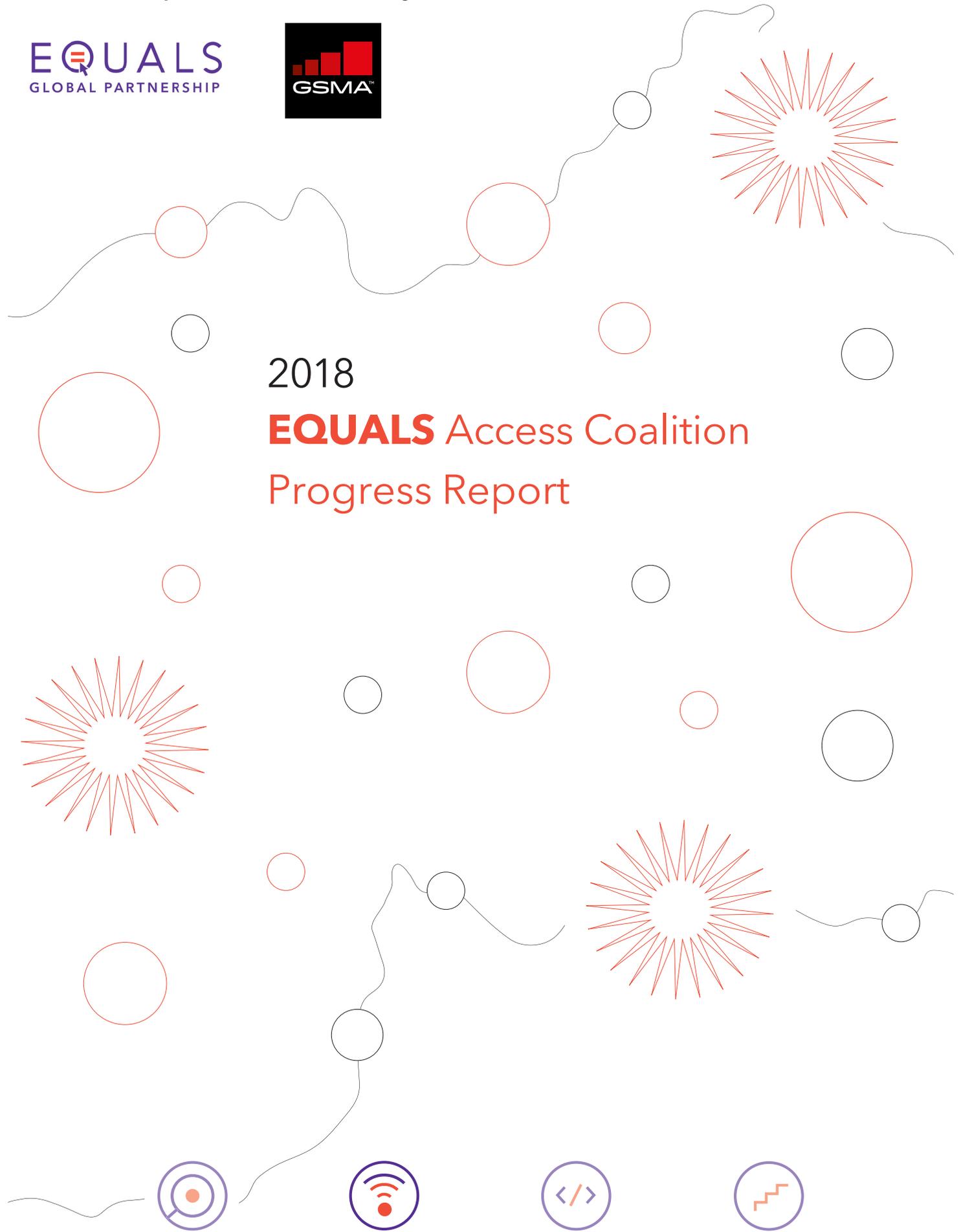


An EQUALS product coordinated by:



2018

EQUALS Access Coalition
Progress Report



Access

EQUALS

About EQUALS

In 2016, ITU, the GSMA, UN Women, United Nations University (UNU) and the International Trade Centre (ITC), launched *EQUALS, the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age*. EQUALS is a multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together international organizations, the private sector, government agencies, civil society organizations, and academia to address the growing digital gender divide.



About the Access Coalition

The Access Coalition led by the GSMA focuses on reducing the gender gap in internet access and use to empower women and reduce inequality. Through its activities the Access coalition aims to increase women's access to and use of the internet in countries where targeted action has been taken by EQUALS partners and to share insights and evidence based case studies which provide examples of how to increase women's access to and use of the internet.

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FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION AND PROGRESS DELIVERED BY THE ACCESS COALITION AND ITS MEMBERS



INTRODUCTION

Internet penetration rates are higher for men than women in all regions of the world today. Latest estimates from the ITU¹ suggest that women globally are 12% less likely than men to have internet access. The digital gender gap for internet access in developed countries is estimated to be 3%, while in LDCs (least developed countries), where internet access tends to be very low, the gap is estimated at 33%.

Women are also less likely than men to own or use a mobile phone, the most common to access the internet in developing countries. A 2018 study by the GSMA² found that women who live in low- and middle-income countries are on average 10% less likely to own a mobile than men – which translates into 184 million fewer women than men owning mobile phones – and 26% less likely to use mobile internet. Like that for the internet, this gender gap is also wider in some parts of the world. GSMA data suggests that women who live in South Asia are 26% less likely to own a mobile than men, and 70% less likely to use mobile internet.

The gender gap in internet access and use is not going to close on its own and requires targeted intervention by all stakeholders. The EQUALS Access Coalition focus is to reduce the gender gap in internet access and use to empower women and reduce inequality. The Coalition builds on existing work, including the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development's Working Group on the Digital Gender Divide report on [*Recommendations for action: bridging the gender gap in Internet and broadband access and use.*](#)

1. ITU, 2017.

2. GSMA, 2018.

DELIVERING CHANGE

The gender divide in internet access and use is driven by a complex set of social, economic and cultural barriers. It requires a holistic approach and action by all stakeholders if it is to be effectively addressed. The Access Coalition follows the framework of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development's Working Group on the Digital Gender Divide and focuses its work across four main areas of action:

1

Data and evidence base:

The first area is concerned with the need for sex-disaggregated data and for stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the relevant contexts and evidence base on women and girls access to and use of the internet to inform policy and strategy development, implementation and monitoring. This includes an analysis of the factors limiting women's access to and use of the internet in specific contexts. This action area will be undertaken in partnership with the Research Group of EQUALS.

Some examples of initiatives taken by Coalition members against this first action area are:

- A4AI, the Web Foundation, the GSMA, and APC developed a [toolkit](#) to understand women's internet access and use better. It outlines research topics for stakeholders who are interested in integrating gender into their research projects and provides example questions for both qualitative and quantitative research.
- APC completed a [global mapping](#) of actors and initiatives of gender and digital technology to identify key issues and gaps, which includes a focus on access.
- The Internet Society is co-facilitating the [Best Practice Forum on Gender and Access](#) that studies the challenges women from diverse communities face in gaining meaningful internet access. The final report will be launched at the Internet Governance Forum 2018.

2

Integrating gender in policies, strategies, plans and budgets:

The second area is concerned with ensuring that gender perspectives are effectively integrated into relevant strategies, policies, plans, and budgets (that internet/broadband policies and strategies effectively integrate an explicit focus on gender equality and that relevant gender-related policies support digital inclusion for women). This includes establishing targets and assessing existing strategies, policies, plans and budgets for gender equality considerations. It also includes examining different sources of finance to ensure that gender needs are fully funded.

Some examples of initiatives taken by Coalition members against this second action area are:

- The GSMA integrated the Broadband Commission Working Group on the Digital Gender Divide's recommendations for governments into a practical training course for government officials and regulators. This "Women and Mobile: Bridging the Gender Gap" course is being delivered free of charge [online](#) and as a one-day face-to-face training course for policymakers on an ongoing basis.
- A4AI and the Web Foundation developed a gender-responsive ICT policy curriculum to train policymakers across regions in key policy areas to address the digital gender gap. The first set of [four training modules](#) were piloted at the Regional Conference for Francophone Africa on Gender Mainstreaming in ICT Policies and Programmes.

3

Addressing the barriers women face:

The third area seeks to address the barriers that women face to accessing and using the internet including affordable access; issues around safety and harassment; digital literacy and confidence; highlighting the benefits that using the internet can bring; and the availability of relevant content, applications and services. Work in this area will take into account the needs, circumstances, and preferences of women in different local contexts, and the factors limiting women's access to and use of the internet, including cultural and social norms and engaging with men and boys.

Some examples of initiatives taken by Coalition members against this third action area are:

- Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT), in collaboration with the Rwanda Ministry of Information, Technology and Communications (MITEC), is implementing the Digital Ambassadors Programme in Rwanda. This programme aims to train and empower young individuals to become Digital Ambassadors who can share knowledge of digital skills in their communities to drive digital inclusion. The programme recently concluded

its first implementation phase where 50 Digital Ambassadors impacted 17,647 citizens, 49% of which are female.

- The GSMA supports the [Connected Women Commitment Initiative](#) through which mobile operators have made formal commitments to increase the proportion of women in their mobile internet and/or mobile money customer base by 2020. Through this initiative, mobile operator partners have already reached millions of women, acquiring over 12 million new female mobile internet or mobile money customers since making their commitment.
- APC's local connectivity access project is developing case studies of community networks that will include a gender perspective to understand barriers for women's participation.
- The ITU continues to work on online protection as guided by the Council Working Group on Child Online Protection (CWG COP), which includes the protection of girls and young women online.
- The Internet Society organised a workshop during the [Africa Internet Summit 2018](#) to discuss how to make the internet safer and more inclusive for women. The outcome of the session was a set of recommendations about women's safety online and women's participation in policymaking processes.
- OHCHR (the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) organized two [panel discussions](#) on how access to and the use (and misuse) of ICTs expand or restrict the potential for women and girls to enjoy their human rights.

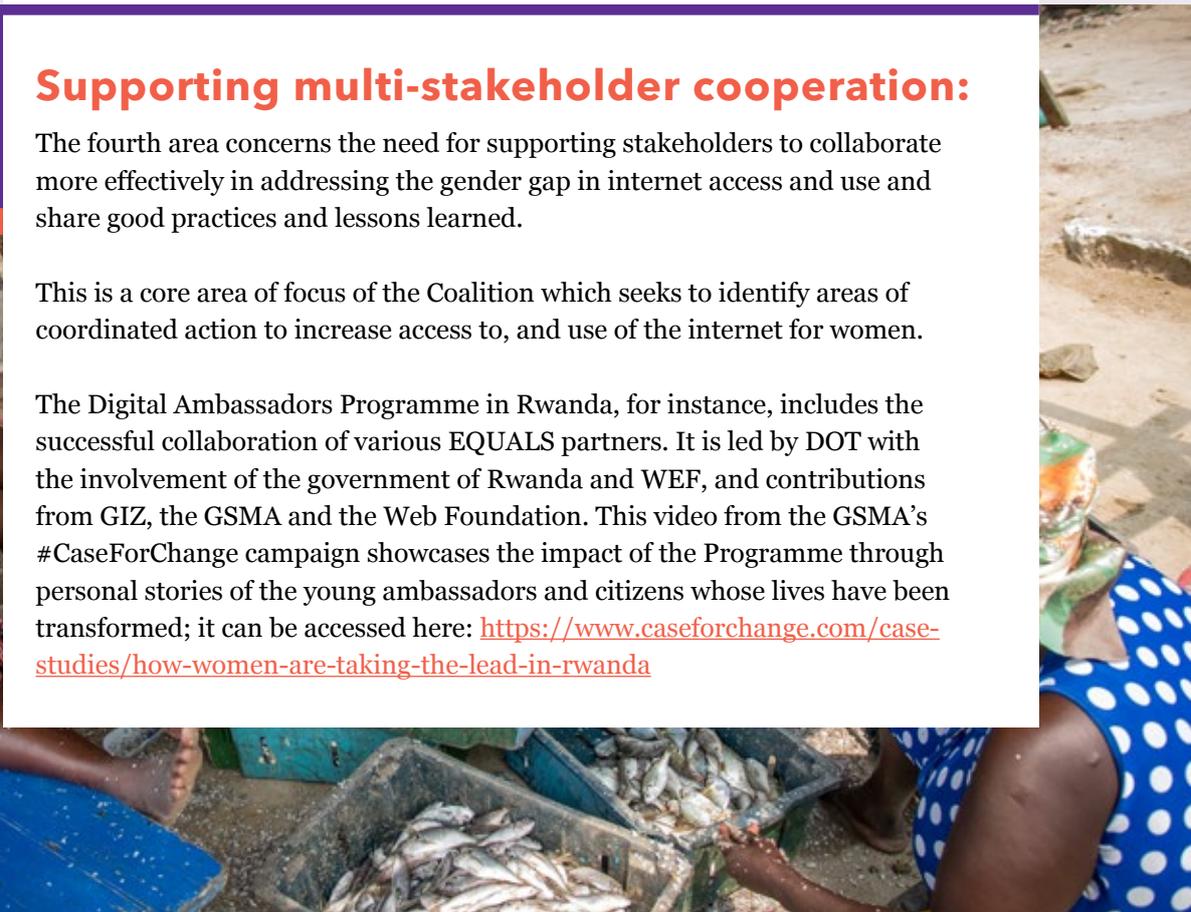
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Supporting multi-stakeholder cooperation:

The fourth area concerns the need for supporting stakeholders to collaborate more effectively in addressing the gender gap in internet access and use and share good practices and lessons learned.

This is a core area of focus of the Coalition which seeks to identify areas of coordinated action to increase access to, and use of the internet for women.

The Digital Ambassadors Programme in Rwanda, for instance, includes the successful collaboration of various EQUALS partners. It is led by DOT with the involvement of the government of Rwanda and WEF, and contributions from GIZ, the GSMA and the Web Foundation. This video from the GSMA's #CaseForChange campaign showcases the impact of the Programme through personal stories of the young ambassadors and citizens whose lives have been transformed; it can be accessed here: <https://www.caseforchange.com/case-studies/how-women-are-taking-the-lead-in-rwanda>



NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

The Access Coalition aims to respond to the challenges identified above and to continue building on the Broadband Commission Recommendations for action to deliver tangible results. The Access Coalition invites stakeholders to join our work by taking the following actions:

- Sharing your research, insights and experience on the digital gender gap within EQUALS.
- Identifying high-impact initiatives or actions that can be undertaken by the Access Coalition members to increase access to, and use of the internet for women.
- Identifying countries where there can be coordinated action by the Access Coalition members to increase access to, and use of the internet for women.
- Contributing to the development of implementation plans for the actions identified.
- Reporting on the delivery of actions by the Access Coalition members and their impact.

Effective, tangible and measurable action is now essential and urgently needed from a wide range of different stakeholders to overcome the digital gender gap in access to ensure that women and girls can also benefit from the developmental capacity of information and communication technologies (ICTs). When women thrive, societies, businesses and economies thrive.



THE DIGITAL AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME IN RWANDA

INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies - including the internet, mobile and broadband communications, and other rapidly evolving information and communication technologies (ICTs) - contribute positively to the economic, social and political development and facilitate the enjoyment of civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights.

ICTs have the potential, in particular, to empower women and help them to overcome some of the inequalities and barriers to opportunity and achievement that they face. This potential will only be realized if women have the same opportunities as men to access, use, and benefit from digital technologies. However, the latest estimates from the ITU (2017) suggest that globally, women are 12% less likely than men to have internet access.

This case study illustrates an example of the collaboration of the members of EQUALS in Rwanda, a country targeted for coordinated action selected by the Access Coalition. It highlights the importance of working together to address the barriers to women's access and use of internet and ICTs.





RWANDA: COUNTRY CONTEXT



Rwanda ranks fourth in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index,³ which assesses four key areas: health, education, economy, and politics. The country has one of the highest rates of female labour force participation in the world at 86%. Rwanda also has a narrow gender pay gap: women earn 88 cents for every dollar men do; comparatively, in the US, women make 74 cents for every dollar men make (Payscale, 2017). Moreover, women in Rwanda benefit from three months of paid maternity leave (ILO, 2016). This is in large part thanks to quotas put in place after the genocide, which stipulate that women must make up 30% of parliamentarians.

In spite of all the progress made in areas such as constitutional rights and equal pay, there is a digital gender gap that is yet to be closed. According to RIA (2017), mobile phone ownership figures are 60.4% for men vs 37.4% for women, and 46.2% for men vs 28.9% for women for internet use. The mobile money gender gap is 29% according to the World Bank's Global Findex 2017. This means that Rwandan women are less likely to own a mobile phone, use the internet and use mobile money. Consequently, they are missing out on the benefits of full participation in a digital society.

3. WEF, 2017.

THE DIGITAL AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

The Rwanda Digital Ambassador Programme (R-DAP), or “Intore mw’Ikoranabuhanga”, is a national programme of the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications (MITEC) that aims to increase the digital literacy of millions of citizens, a priority of the government’s Digital Talent Policy and the Smart Rwanda Master Plan. R-DAP also responds to the World Economic Forum Internet for All initiative. Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) Rwanda designed the youth-led model and is the lead implementing organisation.

R-DAP is increasing the adoption and use of digital services (such as e-government, mobile money, and e-business services) to improve lives and livelihoods by leveraging DOT’s model which equips young leaders to deliver digital literacy training to citizens. The programme helps to ensure that Rwandan citizens can benefit from the digital transformations occurring around them while simultaneously cultivating the leadership potential of youth.

The R-DAP model is doubly impactful: it is expanding the numbers of digitally literate citizens, and engaging young women and men as leaders of digital transformation, and aims to mobilize 5,000 young leaders to transform the lives of five million citizens.

DOT collaborated with MITEC to design and implement the programme’s proof of concept phase, which began in September 2017 and concluded in June 2018. During this first phase, 50 Digital Ambassadors (DAs) received monthly capacity building workshops, alongside continuous engagement in DOT’s Youth Leadership Programme (YLP). Through the YLP, DAs received training in gender equality, digital citizenship, community leadership, and social innovation.

Fifty DAs have impacted 17,647 citizens, 49% of whom are female. In phase two, the programme will be scaled to a national level and a gender strategy will be rolled out to further enhance access to technology, digital skills, and leadership roles for women and girls.



THE BARRIERS ADDRESSED: DIGITAL SKILLS, SAFETY, AND RELEVANCE

According to a recent evaluation carried out by DOT and MITEC, R-DAP is an effective model to bridge the gender digital divide through promoting digital skills and enhancing the social and economic inclusion of women.

The programme evaluation reveals numerous anticipated and unanticipated positive impacts on gender-related indicators, including the social and economic inclusion of female citizens who participated in DAP. Quantitative and qualitative data demonstrate positive results on the following gender-related indicators for female citizens:

- 1 Uptake of digital tools and services
- 2 Improved digital skills and increased confidence to use ICTs
- 3 Improved capacities to create and sustain a small business
- 4 Increased financial inclusion, household income and savings
- 5 Increased participation in household decision-making



EXAMPLES OF IMPACT

Digital Literacy Builds Confidence of Rural Women

Cooperative Reberaho Ukore Munyarwanda (CORUMU) in Rulindo has 30 members. The cooperative brings together women specializing in knitting and tailoring. Cooperative members participated in R-DAP and attested to how they have become more confident technology users.



“The Digital Ambassador Programme provided us with skills to develop an online presence using our phones,” shared Christiane, the Cooperative’s President. “We learned to protect our accounts from unauthorized access. With these new skills, we are able to make mobile money transactions. We also use IREMBO services without support. We are grateful to the programme. We have discovered strategies to run safe mobile transactions.”

The programme's success is a result of the holistic approach it takes to tackle the multiple barriers to ICT access and use that women face.

The main barriers that this project addresses are:

1

Digital Literacy:

Technical literacy and confidence is a key concern for women. In many countries, a higher proportion of women than men are illiterate or have experienced lower levels of education

(UNESCO, 2015). Research suggests that women with such disadvantages often lack the digital skills or confidence required to use the internet, leading to women failing to gain access or restricting their use to a limited number of services and applications (GSMA & LIRNEasia, 2015; GSMA, 2015; Web Foundation, 2015). Women are also excluded from many of the social and economic benefits of internet inclusivity, including the ability to use digital technologies and services to have greater participation in household and community decision-making, save financially and plan for the future, improve small business productivity, and strengthen personal and professional networks.

There is sufficient evidence that participation in R-DAP enhances confidence among citizens to use new technologies, and use familiar technology in new ways. Increased confidence is translating into improved uptake and use: the evaluation demonstrates a 129% increase in the use of e-government services, and a 50% increase in the use of mobile money services among citizens who participated in R-DAP.

Seventy-five percent of women reported greater motivation and confidence to use digital technology. In particular, women report increased confidence to use a variety of e-services, including e-government services, mobile banking and social media; this saves them time and money, and allows them to plan their finances, save for the future, and start or grow small businesses. For example, uptake of mobile banking services after the training was significantly higher among women, with 70% reporting daily use of these services, 70% reporting paying taxes with their mobile phones, and 35% reporting use of IREMBO (the e-platform to access government services in Rwanda).

The evaluation also demonstrates the positive impact on the use of smartphones, with an increase of almost 30% in the number of citizens using smartphones on a daily basis. There is anecdotal evidence that improved digital literacy is leading citizens to purchase smartphones.



2

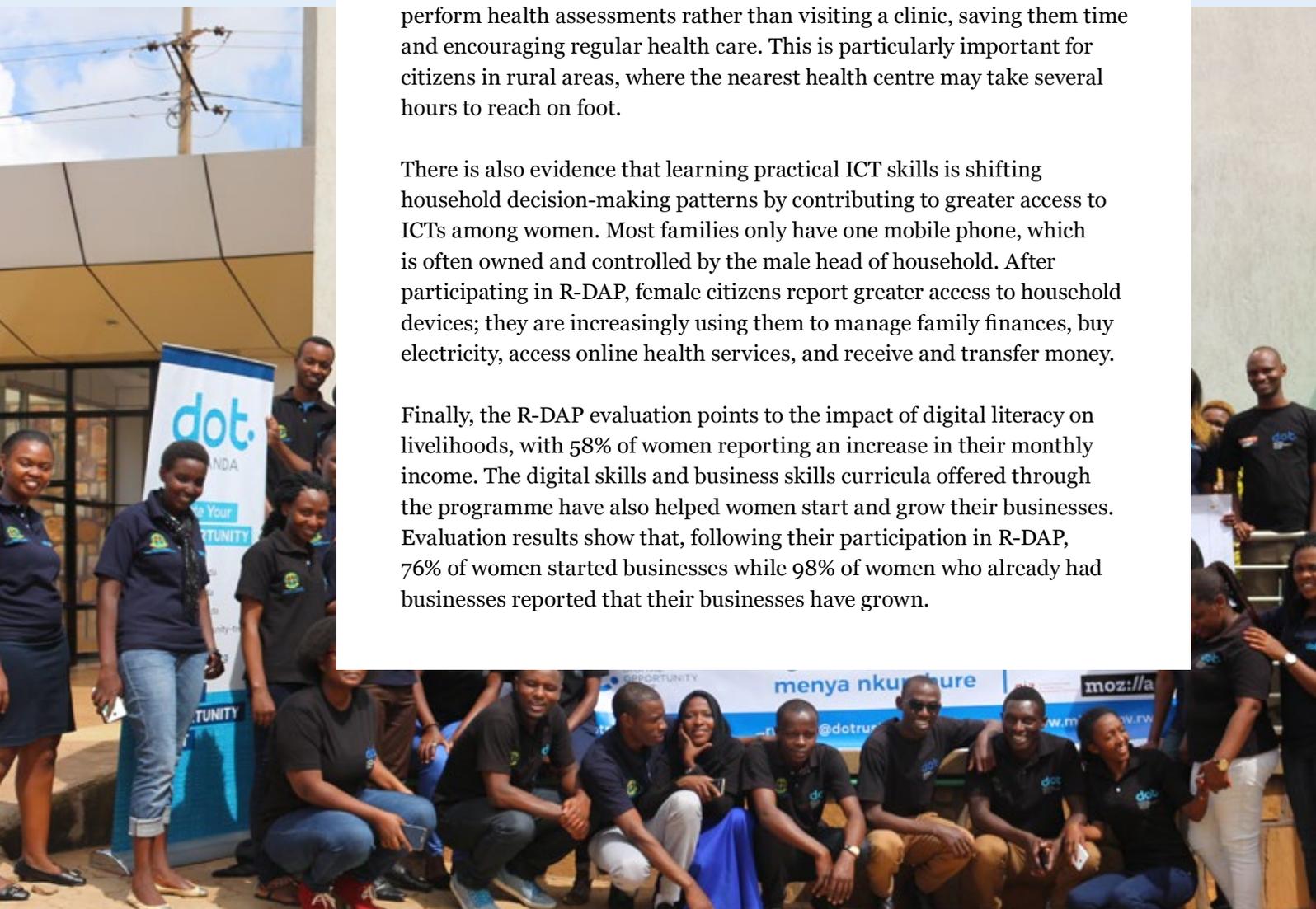
Relevant Content, Applications, and Services:

Some women who are not connected to the internet cite a lack of relevant content as a reason for not making more extensive use of the internet, while others feel that they will gain little value from internet access or content (Broadband Commission Working Group on Broadband and Gender, 2013).

The R-DAP programme helps to make technology and the internet relevant by delivering digital skills training through DAs, who are from the same community and who therefore understand the local cultural conditions and constraints, and who speak the same language as the women they are training. After the training citizens report they are using ICTs primarily to pay for services such as health insurance and electricity via mobile money, and for connecting with friends and family. Many citizens report they are now using IREMBO to pay taxes and obtain official documents (such as birth, driving, and property certificates), which is saving them significant time and money. Previously, many citizens had to travel significant distances to official government centres, and were required to queue for a long time to access services. Others are also using mobile phones to perform health assessments rather than visiting a clinic, saving them time and encouraging regular health care. This is particularly important for citizens in rural areas, where the nearest health centre may take several hours to reach on foot.

There is also evidence that learning practical ICT skills is shifting household decision-making patterns by contributing to greater access to ICTs among women. Most families only have one mobile phone, which is often owned and controlled by the male head of household. After participating in R-DAP, female citizens report greater access to household devices; they are increasingly using them to manage family finances, buy electricity, access online health services, and receive and transfer money.

Finally, the R-DAP evaluation points to the impact of digital literacy on livelihoods, with 58% of women reporting an increase in their monthly income. The digital skills and business skills curricula offered through the programme have also helped women start and grow their businesses. Evaluation results show that, following their participation in R-DAP, 76% of women started businesses while 98% of women who already had businesses reported that their businesses have grown.



3

Safety:

Studies show that fears about safety and harassment are significant barriers that inhibit some women from benefitting from or even wanting to access the internet. Some women are concerned about potential physical violence related to the devices they own or borrow, including vulnerability to theft. Women may struggle to access public ICT facilities due to unsafe roads or because facilities are considered unsuitable for women. Once online, women can face fears of intimidation, harassment, violence, surveillance, and/or illegal data retention (e.g., APC, 2015; Cummings & O’Neil, 2015; GSMA, 2015; GSMA & LIRNEasia, 2015; IGF BPF, 2015).

R-DAP has helped participants overcome safety concerns by incorporating security considerations into the programme, including how to stay safe online and ensure privacy. Digital Citizen Clubs are also made available to participants, which offer a safe space for them to engage in continuous peer-to-peer learning, practice their newly acquired digital skills, expand their networks, and develop group savings and loans to support the acquisition of mobile phones and the growth of small businesses.

EXAMPLES OF IMPACT**A Young Artist Discovers the Power of Technology**

Amuri Kasaga is using technology as a vehicle for showcasing his artistic talent and expanding his livelihood opportunities. *“The digital literacy training is helping me to discover different technology tools, which I didn’t know before,”* said Amuri. *“eZ Cash enabled me to have a cash account in my mobile phone.”*

Amuri has also used his digital literacy skills to market his music which has introduced him to new opportunities.



“The digital literacy training helped me to tell the world what I am good at,” said Amuri. “As an unknown artist, I got an opportunity to be connected to established musicians, designers and others with the same talents. I am confident that these collaborations will attract big brand sponsors for each individual project.”

WORKING TOGETHER: LESSONS LEARNED AND ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

R-DAP is an example of successful multi-stakeholder collaboration. It is led by the Government of Rwanda (MITEC), with DOT as the implementing partner. It is aligned with both national (Digital Talent Policy) and international (WEF Internet for All) policy frameworks.

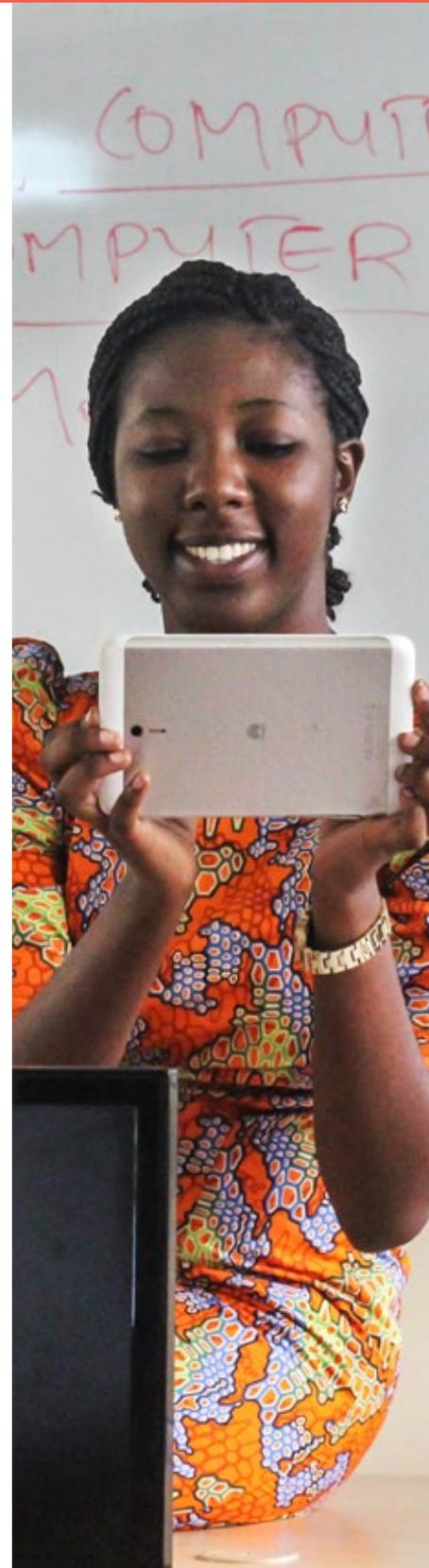
Assembling a robust partnership ecosystem spanning the public, private and civil society sectors is a policy of DOT's and has been crucial to R-DAP's implementation. Leveraging Canadian government support, this includes international partners such as the Mozilla Foundation, GIZ, the GSMA, Next 3B, Web Foundation, Girl Effect, World Vision, and others. Strong engagement of Rwanda partners, in particular, local government and e-organisations such as Rwanda Online is driving local ownership and sustainability. This is enhanced by the EQUALS Access Coalition which has identified Rwanda as a focal country for coordinated action and R-DAP as a key initiative for collaboration.

In November 2017, DOT hosted a workshop with DAs to gather early programme findings and lessons learned. The reflections from this workshop were used to make immediate programmatic adjustments, and, combined with the formal evaluation conducted by DOT and MITEC, contributed to programmatic adjustments for phase two of R-DAP. Key learnings point towards the need to continue to address affordable access and relevant content; to consider the role of social norms in women's ability to access and use the internet; and to develop new mechanisms to measure the social and economic impact of digital inclusion.

Affordable Access:

Connectivity and device costs have a significant effect on women's ability to benefit from the internet, as women often have lower incomes, less financial independence, and limited access to external sources of finance (A4AI, 2016; APC, 2015; GSMA, 2015; Broadband Commission Working Group on Broadband and Gender, 2013). As a result, women are more likely to have poorer quality devices and to obtain these later than their male peers (A4AI, 2016).

An important challenge for R-DAP is internet connectivity, which continues to be an issue for many citizens. Despite the fact that internet penetration in Rwanda is among the highest on the continent, with 4G networks reaching 90% of the population, many citizens still cannot access the internet due to the cost of data bundles, or lack of access to devices.



Wifi connections are absent in many training facilities, and mobile connectivity is costly. Results show that publicly accessible ICT facilities are important for those who cannot afford their own devices or data, and can provide further opportunities for capacity development. For example, access to internet connectivity and a computer lab at least once a week resulted in increased motivation of citizens to regularly attend training and complete the R-DAP programme.

An additional outcome was that, upon recognizing the added value of digital devices through R-DAP, many citizens expressed an interest in buying smartphones. Therefore, there is an opportunity to engage financial service providers and mobile operators to work alongside policymakers to address the demand for affordable smartphones and feature phones with internet connectivity.

Relevant Content:

The R-DAP programme draws attention to the fact that a lack of locally relevant content and applications poses a barrier to adoption and use of ICTs. This is particularly true for women. Rwanda is currently developing its local content promotion strategy to address this gap, but this is not enough. Efforts need to be made to give women an opportunity to become content producers as well as consumers, thereby increasing the relevance of content to their everyday lives.

Cultural Norms:

Socio-cultural norms in society have a powerful influence on women's access to and use of the internet, and often explain why women experience certain barriers more acutely than men. Consistently, insights from R-DAP workshops and the formal evaluation demonstrate that, in order to facilitate greater attendance, especially among women, training schedules need to be adapted to accommodate women's daily activities.

Robust longitudinal evidence linking digital access and use to economic development:

While the R-DAP programme demonstrates self-reported and anecdotal evidence of positive shifts in household income stability and resilience, it highlights the lack of robust systems for measuring long-term impacts; in particular, the impact of digital uptake on micro- and macroeconomic development. Additional efforts should be made to assess the effect of digital inclusion on the social and economic inclusion of women.

CALL TO ACTION

Based on the lessons learned and successes of the proof of concept phase of R-DAP, the most immediate goal is to enhance and scale the initiative in Rwanda, and to consider its potential for replication in other African countries. In phase two, R-DAP will be scaled to a national level and a gender strategy will be developed to enhance access to technology, digital skills and leadership roles for women and girls in a digital society, aligned to Rwanda's new Gender Dividend Strategy.

EQUALS invites all stakeholders to join this successful initiative and to collaborate in its growth, as well as to propose other high-impact initiatives for the Access Coalition to continue advancing digital inclusion for women and girls in Rwanda.



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