

Michelle B.: Well, good morning, everyone. What is digital inclusion? Instead of me telling you, I thought it would be better this morning to show you. This is [Georget 00:00:21] here on the screen from Madagascar. For years, like many women around the world, Georget suffered from abuse and domestic violence.

[00:00:30]

[00:01:00] One day, in a very simple act, her sister came over with a small Nokia phone. She told Georget about a toll-free public hotline that she could call. Through this hotline and this free information, Georget was told about her rights, that gender-based violence is never right and how to seek help in counseling. This empowered Georget. It also created a shift in her family life. At one point when she had gained the capacity and the self-confidence, she actually shared the phone number with her husband and her husband started calling in and talking and learning about these ideas. I'm so proud to tell you today that that simple phone and that simple phone number has changed the course of Georget's life. Digital inclusion is one less woman who suffers from domestic violence.

[00:01:30] This is [Ayshah 00:01:33] from Bangladesh. Ayshah, like so many women, especially in the developing world, struggle when it comes to the proper nutrition, water, sanitation and access to medical care to care for their children. Again, through a simple phone and through text messages and voice mails, Ayshah, through a program sponsored through USAID, called the MAMA program, would get information delivered for free to her to tell her about when her children should be immunized, what type of foods they should be eating at their age and help identifying concerning health traits. Digital inclusion is two less children who suffer from preventable diseases or are lost to infant mortality.

[00:02:30] This is Mary from Ghana. Mary is a small shop owner and mobile banking changed, not only her life, but her family's life. As many of you know, when a woman owns her own income, it does not just affect her, it affects her family, her community. Statistic say that 90¢ out of every dollar a woman earns is put directly back into her family. Through mobile banking, not only could Mary make her own money, she had direct access to it and control about how those funds were dispersed. Every month, the first fee that she paid was for her young daughter to go to school. She was also able to save credits through her mobile phone texting that she was able to put back into running in her business. Digital inclusion is one less household that suffers from poverty.

[00:03:30] Then what is the gender divide? Today, 5.1 billion people across the world are mobile phone users. 3.6 billion people what we would consider online. They're on the internet. Yet, in this world, especially here in the United States, when we talk about technology, we talk about the fast, fast, fast nature and aspect. We want lightning fast down speeds. We want to Snapchat. We want a voice activated texting. The faster this technology is developed, the slower and slower women are being left behind.

[00:04:00]

USAID research estimates that 1.7 billion women do not even own these mobile phones. Women across the world are 14% less likely than men to own a phone at

[00:04:30] all. When we look at the global internet usage, what we talked about earlier, women for the last three years have continued to fall in usage rates. The issue is this disparity and this digital gender divide affects everyone.

[00:05:00] Here at USAID, we recognize that harnessing the power of technology really helps us to carry out our mission. It helps us to better meet our goals to end extreme poverty, to foster economic growth and to help people and societies realize their full potential. By addressing this gender digital divide through our programs, we're able to improve the economic livelihoods and financial inclusion of women, especially those in emerging markets. We're able to support more efficient and effective delivery of our own programs and we're able to cultivate private investment, expand markets for US firms and reduce a country's reliance on foreign aid. Intel estimates that by bringing 600 million women online, it could contribute up to \$18 billion in GDP across 144 developing countries.

[00:06:00] Here at USAID, we're constantly looking at how we can attack this divide. One of the ways is by partnering with many of you here in the room, our private sector colleagues, to maximize our resources, our distribution chains and technology development. Our Connected Women partnership with GSMA has provided over 15 million women in 35 countries with access to mobile technology. In Iraq, USAID worked with Asiacell, the local mobile network operator, to develop products specifically for women's usage. In less than two years, Asiacell increased the share of female subscribers from 20 to 40% leading to 1.8 million Iraqi women connected to family and friends socially and becoming more financially independent.

[00:07:00] It's important to also ensure that we're working in the policy realm. We support policy advocacy for the rights of women to participate in the digital economy. We started the Alliance for Affordable Internet. This seeks to work with public policymakers to ensure that prices are not prohibitive for anyone to be able to access technology. Our hope is that we can bring the next two billion online, especially those with limited financial resources.

[00:07:30] We're developing tools designed to integrate gender in technology into the ways we design all of our programs here at USAID. To that end today, I'm absolutely delighted to announce to you the release of USAID's Gender and ICT Survey Toolkit. This toolkit is an important tool for us and it helps us actually cultivate the data we need on this important issue of the gender gap and the digital divide. This is going to allow us in our programs to really get to the root of the problem of why women aren't online. What are the barriers? What are the access issues? To ensure that USAID programming is not only responsive, but it's innovative to meeting these needs.

[00:08:30] However, the challenge is large and we recognize that closing the access gap is only the start. We must also ask ourselves, once women do come online, how can we keep them safe? How can we make sure that their usage of technology is not leading to harmful practices such as cyber stalking? We hear about things like this. How do we ensure that the digital space is not actually reinforcing negative social norms and how, at the end of the day, do we make sure we're not looking at

women just as consumers, but as contributors?

[00:09:00]

We here at USAID are definitely committed to pushing the boundaries of this work throughout our own programs and missions overseas. We can't tackle this alone. This room here today, you all present some of the finest thought leaders and incubators both in the United States and across the world. I implore you to continue to come to us with your big ideas and your big passion. Together, I am absolutely certain that we can unleash the full potential of women in the world through this technology. Thank you.