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Empower People by Closing the Technology Access and Training Gap

When technology connects people to their potential—particularly women and other underserved populations—opportunity expands for them, their families, communities, and nations

Executive Summary

Extending technology access to the underserved doesn't just empower an individual—it creates a ripple effect with an expanding impact of economic empowerment for all.

Governments and industry must act together now to provide technology access to everyone—particularly to women and other underserved populations— and to provide the digital literacy skills necessary for these populations to take advantage of that access. Equipping all people with these skills opens up the potential for employability, allowing them to take advantage of new opportunities available in the rapidly expanding digital economy. Additionally, access to technology enables local governments to more efficiently deliver information access to their citizens.

There are an estimated 3.2 billion Internet users around the world.[1] Those with digital skills and access to the Internet can participate in online learning (formal and informal), engage with peers and mentors, and access financial information, health information, job opportunities, and other important resources. For example, when people have the ability to use digital technology, government services can be moved online—and the resulting access to birth certificates, driver's licenses, and real estate documentation enables individual empowerment—expanding economic opportunities for families, communities, and nations.

Unfortunately, the benefits of the Internet have not reached everyone. In much of the world, Internet availability is uneven at best. In fact, roughly 60 percent of the world's population remains off-line. Studies show that even in developing countries, Internet access for low income and female citizens is lagging behind.[2]

Where Internet access is becoming more available, underserved populations are often hampered by a lack of digital literacy—that is, they haven't developed the ability to use digital technology, tools, and networks, or information from multiple digital formats and a wide range of sources. The root cause of such literacy barriers is often an under-resourced education system.[2]

Girls and Women Are Being Left Behind

According to Women and the Web Report, girls and women are noticeably underrepresented in their opportunities to access the Internet. On average, nearly 25 percent fewer women than men are online in the developing world—a difference of 200 million people. In regions like sub-Saharan Africa, the gender gap soars to nearly 45 percent.[3]

Even in rapidly developing economies the gender gap is significant. In South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa nearly 35 percent fewer women than men enjoy Internet access. And, in relatively developed areas like parts of Europe and across Central Asia, about 30 percent fewer women than men have access.[3]

Lack of Access and Digital Skills Is Limiting Economic Opportunities

Research indicates that this lack of Internet availability is limiting economic opportunities for women.[4] As fewer women reach their full potential, their families, communities, and countries lose their opportunity for economic and social contributions.

When individuals gain digital skills, their lives can be transformed. Combining access with digital skills can enable individuals to discover new job opportunities, start their own businesses, and communicate with the wider world.

Digital Skills Are Critical

Investing in the empowerment of today's underserved populations—particularly girls and women—is not only the right thing to do, it is critical to long-term economic development. For economies to grow and thrive, nations must bring to bear all the talent that their countries hold.

Bringing another 600 million women online and giving them the digital skills they need to use the Internet effectively could contribute an estimated $13 to $18 billion to the annual gross domestic product across 144 developing countries, in addition to providing important social benefits.[3]

Recommendations for Action

There is a significant opportunity for governments, NGOs, companies, and educational systems to come together to lower the barriers to Internet use and raise digital literacy. Specifically, they can:

- Help raise awareness in their countries and communities about the value of getting connected online and the opportunities this opens up

- Develop programs to teach people—especially girls and women—how to use the Internet safely, send email, use word processing and spreadsheet programs, and other critical skills

- Create an economic and regulatory environment that attracts investment and collaboration in Internet infrastructure—for example, extending broadband to community centers in local communities

Intel® Learn Easy Steps

Intel's digital literacy curricula provides simple, practical, and relevant instruction in basic technology skills that enhance an individual's opportunities for social engagement and economic self-sufficiency. This free learning program teaches adults and young people how to access the Internet, send email, use word processing and spreadsheet programs, and other critical digital skills.

Intel® She Will Connect

In response to the Internet gender gap, Intel created the Intel® She Will Connect program. The initiative brings together global and local partners, including the USAID-led Women and the Web Alliance to reach 5 million women in sub-Saharan Africa by:

- Providing digital literacy training in face-to-face classes through local partner organizations

- Developing new mobile apps and an interactive online learning platform that helps women develop their skills and learn about the importance of online safety

- Expanding access to online gender-relevant content and resources to help women see the value of the Internet and how they can use it to achieve their goals

- Connecting women to online peer networks where they can continue to develop their new digital literacy skills

Why Work with Intel?

Intel has worked for decades to improve education globally, investing more than $1 billion in the past decade alone, and continuing to invest at a rate of approximately $100 million a year. We have a strong commitment to girls' and women's empowerment—from our work to support girls' access to education through our role as a founding strategic partner of the Girl Rising campaign to our work to connect women to opportunity through technology access.

Learn more about Intel's technology access and empowerment programs at: **intel.com/innovate/tech-access**

Learn more about Intel programs for girls and women at: **intel.com/women**

1. "Number of Worldwide Internet Users from 2000 to 2015 (in millions)." Statista.com, 2015.
2. "Offline and Falling Behind: Barriers to Internet Adoption." McKinsey.com, 2014.
3. "Women and the Web: Bridging the Internet Gap and Creating New Global Opportunities in Low- and Middle-Income Countries." Intel Corporation, Dalberg Global Development Advisors, GlobeScan, 2013.
4. Malhotra, A., Schulte, J., Patel, P., and Petesch, P. "Innovation for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality." International Center for Research on Women, 2009.

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