

# ICT AS A TOOL FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: PERU & AFGHANISTAN.

Gender digital divide must be furthered studied to strive sustainable goals for development.

**Goals of development:** “Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women”

Latest research (Wagner, 2017; Cia Alves, 2017; Castillo, 2017) have shown that not stakeholders should worry about ICT access, but rather in the **content** they are having access to.

The definition of empowerment includes **agency** in women that means acting in one's own behalf to make own choices (Kaaber, 2015).



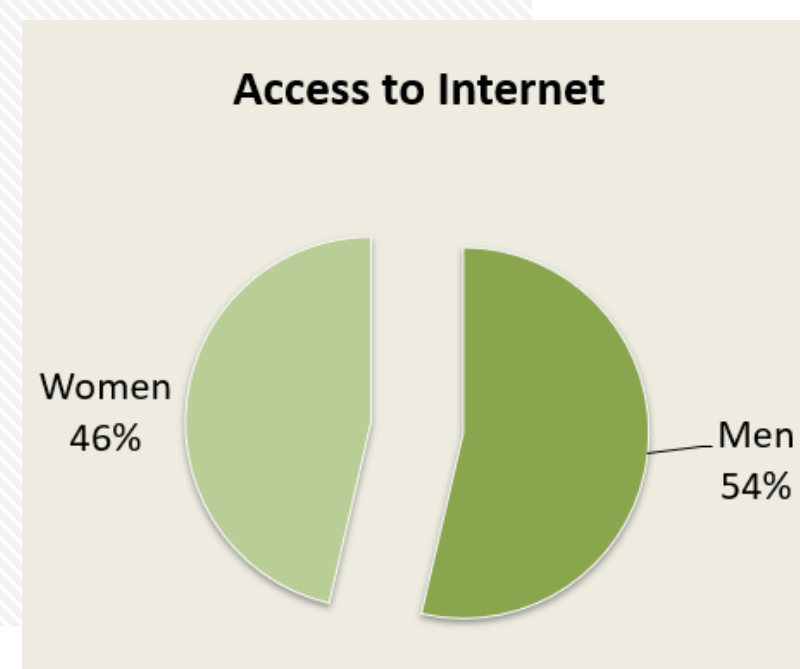
## Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a **male-dominated** space (Rahman, 2017) has a low-income economy with one of the highest index of **gender inequality** in the world (World Bank, 2015).

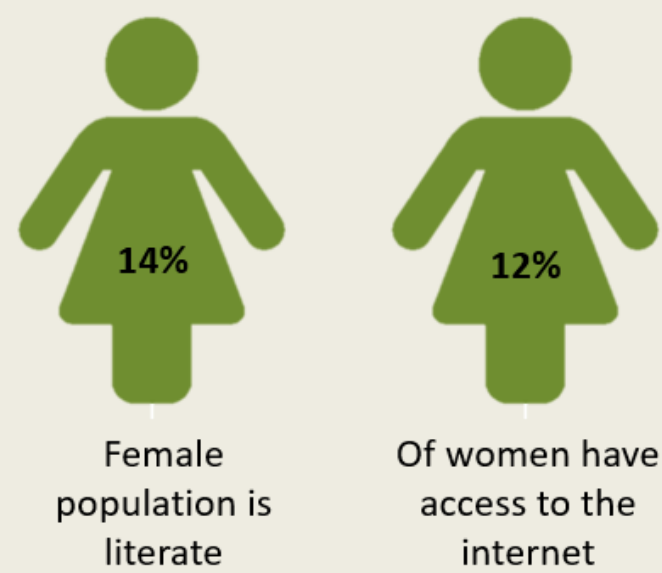
**Women** in Afghanistan are facing social changes: Life in a context that is socially and politically unstable → Accessing more opportunities but at the same time facing strong **cultural resistance**.



Most women in rural villages **needed help** from peers, partner or sons to **access the internet** (Diaz & Urquhart, 2007)



Similar to Afghanistan in Peru research of gender digital divide is almost **inexistent**, but there are micro-studies that could help understand the current situation and guide future efforts of ICT usage within minority populations (Navarro & Sanchez, 2011).



Only small part of the sample used ICTs to question patriarchal goals, looking for rights about divorce, issues of domestic violence or pursuing romantic relationship of their own choice and interest. (Hussain & Amin, 2018; Rahman, 2017)



(Equality for peace and democracy, 2015).

## Technology as a Maharam?

- During the interviews, women disclosed that ICTs in Afghanistan were often being used to reinforce gender inequalities. A participant related cell phone use to “**Maharam**”, a protective eye of the male relative that supposedly protected women.
- In this case cell phone ownership is being used for male surveillance of women, making them feel even more controlled. (Hussain & Amin, 2018).

Access is not as important as **agency and context**. For example, **Peru** is one of the most emerging economies in Latin America, people are having more access to technological devices but social factors as patriarchal societies are still getting in the way. **Afghanistan** there are also many project that give people access to ICT but women are not using this tools to empower themselves because they are hindered by a male-dominated society.

## Conclusions/ Implications

- When comparing such different countries as Afghanistan and Peru that have distinct religious, cultural, and political situations there are some similarities that can help us draw a line to base gender and technology future projects.
- Despite the efforts of various non-profit organisms and governments, this development trends to be uneven sometimes even between same countries and different social groups, so capturing the net effects is a complex task (Cia Alves & Quirinos, 2016).
- Control over ICT is an analogy of the patriarchal control that men have over women, as the research led by Farhana Rahman (2017) argues that when women start fighting for their control over ICT it will be a first step for their empowerment.