

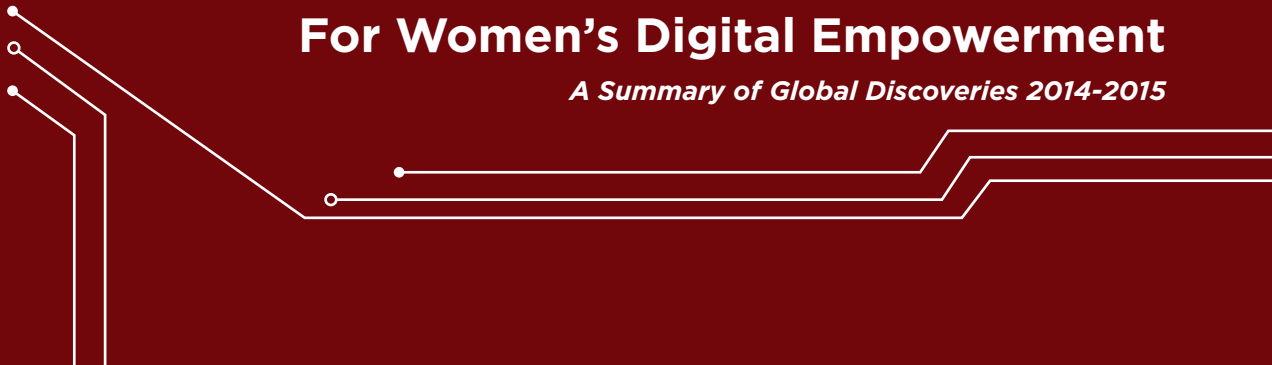
WORLD PULSE™

WOMEN WEAVE THE WEB



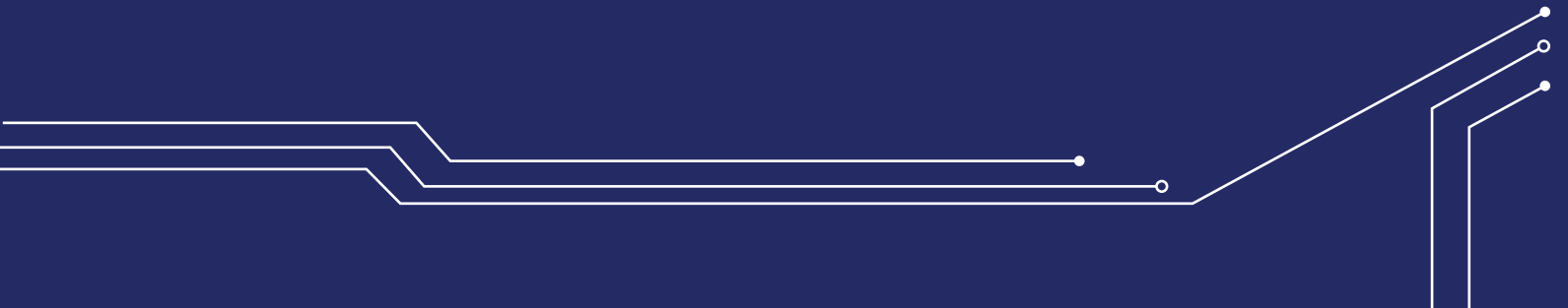
RECOMMENDATIONS For Women's Digital Empowerment

A Summary of Global Discoveries 2014-2015



WORLD PULSE™

Photo © Charlotte Kesli-World Bank



From the Founder



By Jensine Larsen, Founder and CEO, World Pulse

Today, two hundred million more men have access to the Internet than women. In mid- to low-income countries this statistic soars to a 25-40% access gap between women and men. A host of cultural, economic, social, and infrastructural barriers keep women from accessing the empowerment potential of logging online.

But while global experts search for solutions to bridge the worsening digital divide, it turns out the answers are at our fingertips.

In 2014, World Pulse launched a global crowdsourcing campaign to collect homegrown solutions and ideas to spread digital empowerment. In this report, we have carefully collated the top solutions, stories, and quotes that emerged.

If global experts can heed the recommendations of women worldwide and combine the best of the global technology industry with the ingenuity of women on the ground to solve the digital divide challenge, we can unlock a colossal wave of human potential and freedom for future generations.

World Pulse encourages top development experts, technology leaders, philanthropists, and policy-makers to partner with grassroots women the world over and rise to the task. The women I work with every day are ready. With support, these local women leaders can reveal the way and open doors for billions of people in their communities.

“With ingenuity and resourcefulness, women are coding new strategies to bring more women online and empower them. World leaders and technology firms should be paying attention to their solutions—and backing them up.”

About World Pulse

The time is now for a woman-led global digital revolution.

World Pulse is a powerful online community of tens of thousands of women and collaborators from 190 countries, speaking out and building solutions to today's biggest challenges. The World Pulse mission is to accelerate the global changes women seek by using digital communication to unite and amplify their voices, solutions, and impact worldwide. We:

- Unite changemakers everywhere via our online platform;
- Advance women's digital and leadership skills; and
- Amplify women's voices to accelerate change.

We invite you to join the vocal uprising!

www.WorldPulse.com



“My turning point was when I met fellow women on World Pulse who shared experiences, resources, and encouragement.”

- IKIRIMAT, UGANDA

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WOMEN
WEAVE
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Campaign Methodology

The 2014 Women Weave the Web Campaign utilized the unique World Pulse platform to crowdsource women's personal testimonies and recommendations for improving Digital Access, Digital Literacy, and Digital Empowerment. Nearly 600 submissions from 71 countries were sent by women eager to share their solutions for breaking down digital barriers. Not only were personal narratives submitted to the World Pulse website, but factual analyses, journalistic articles, and even poetry were received.

The findings in this report were distilled from aggregation and highly sensitive, cross-cultural analysis of the content of these submissions. In order to not only validate the analysis in terms of community input, but also bring it to life, individual member quotes and submissions are included throughout the report. These individual voices were selected for being representative of all the voices that participated from many different countries.

These recommendations highlight solutions to global problems while maintaining the integrity of individual experiences worldwide. It is the voices of the women that produce the recommendations. Thank you to all the women and men who added their voice on World Pulse.





Guide to This Report

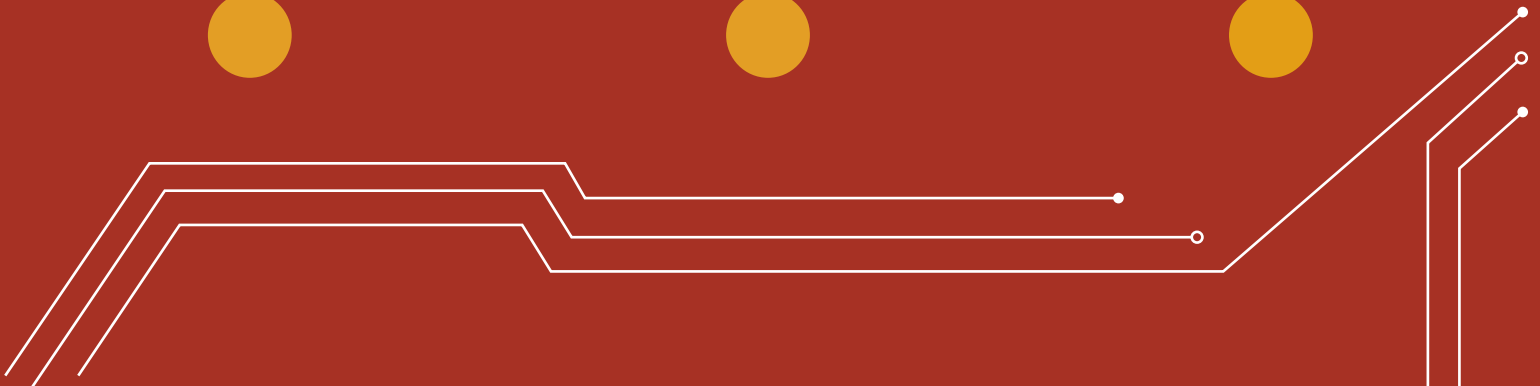
Our Women Weave the Web campaign unrolled in three progressive phases. Each phase comprises a separate section in this report. Definitions below.



In the Digital Access phase, women told us about challenges and barriers they face in accessing the Internet at the most fundamental levels.

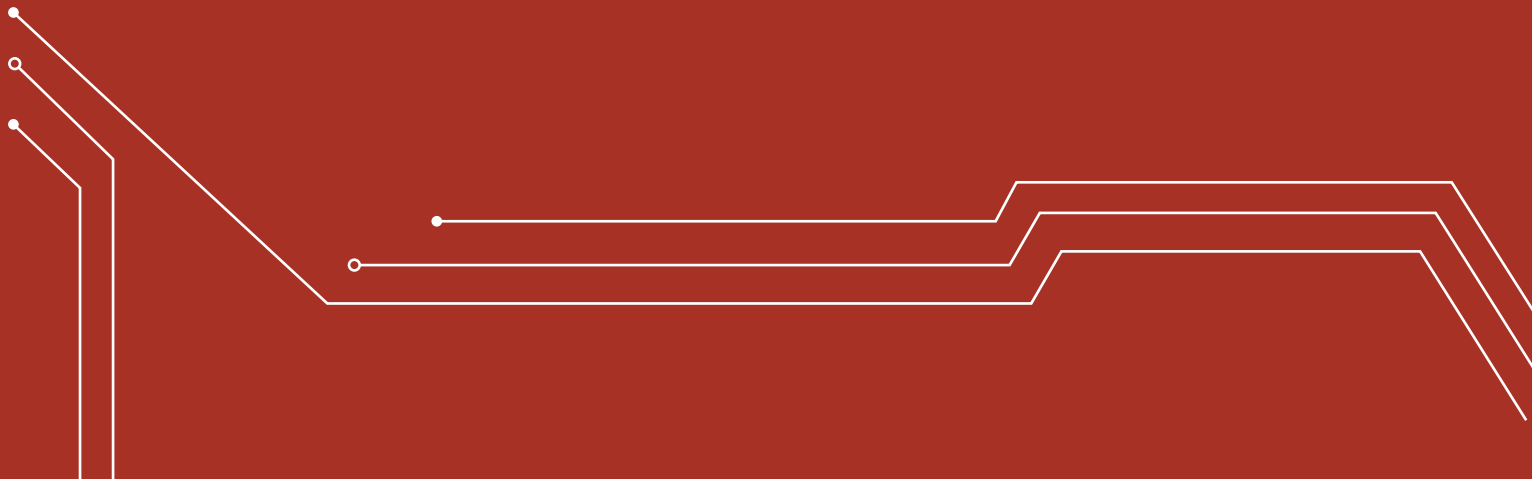
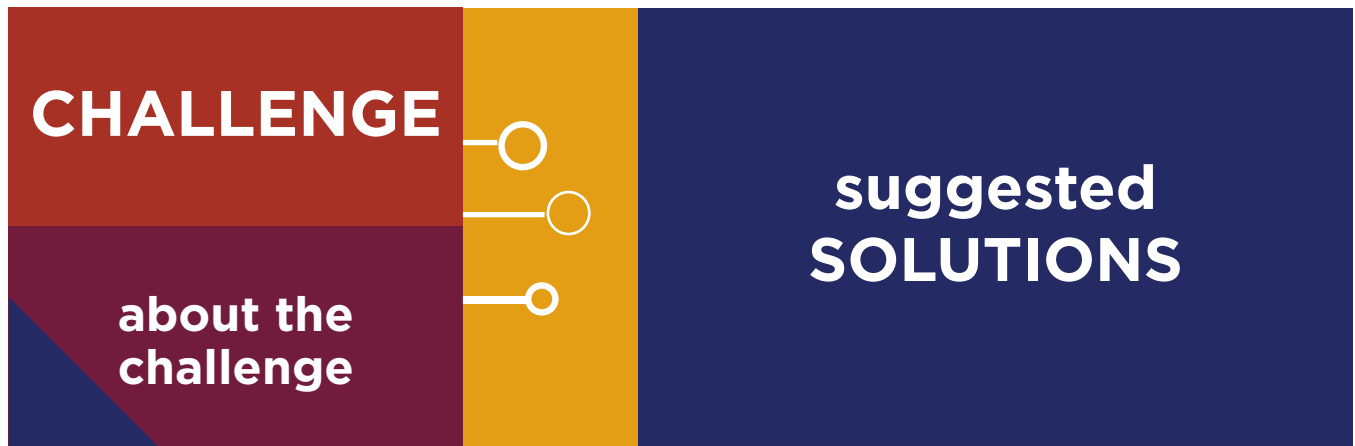
In the Digital Literacy phase, women told us about challenges they face in maximizing the Internet as a tool for empowerment and helping others understand why it can help improve their lives.

In the Digital Empowerment phase, women offered overall recommendations for translating Digital Access and Digital Literacy into the larger value of overall Digital Empowerment.



Recommendations

Each section contains a distillation of top challenges, a definition of that challenge, and potential solutions women participants offered.



Digital Access: What Women Say

“We can set up Internet points in rural communities for women and girls to enable them to narrate their ordeals to us—we stream them on our online human rights channel, Dignity Television.”

- Gwain Colbert, A Common Future, Cameroon

INFRASTRUCTURE

CULTURE

“..Many women’s access to Internet is determined by the men.”

-Pelagia Mutunzi,
Zimbabwe

“In my town, obstacles are within our own homes, husbands and relatives.”

-Martha, Colombia

PRIVACY

“The main challenge in finding a voice online was initially to write in English”

- Gunu_k, India

“Work towards free Internet access as a basic human right!”

- Martha, Colombia

LANGUAGE

AFFORDABILITY

INFRASTRUCTURE

Location, electricity,
mobile networks, roads



Bring Internet to rural areas, local libraries, and community centers

Push governments and global funders to prioritize Internet access as highly as key development goals

Use alternative energy sources and mobile technologies to reach the most rural areas

AFFORDABILITY

Prohibitive cost of
computers, mobile
phones, data plans



Gain global support from multi-national organizations like A4AI (a4ai.org)

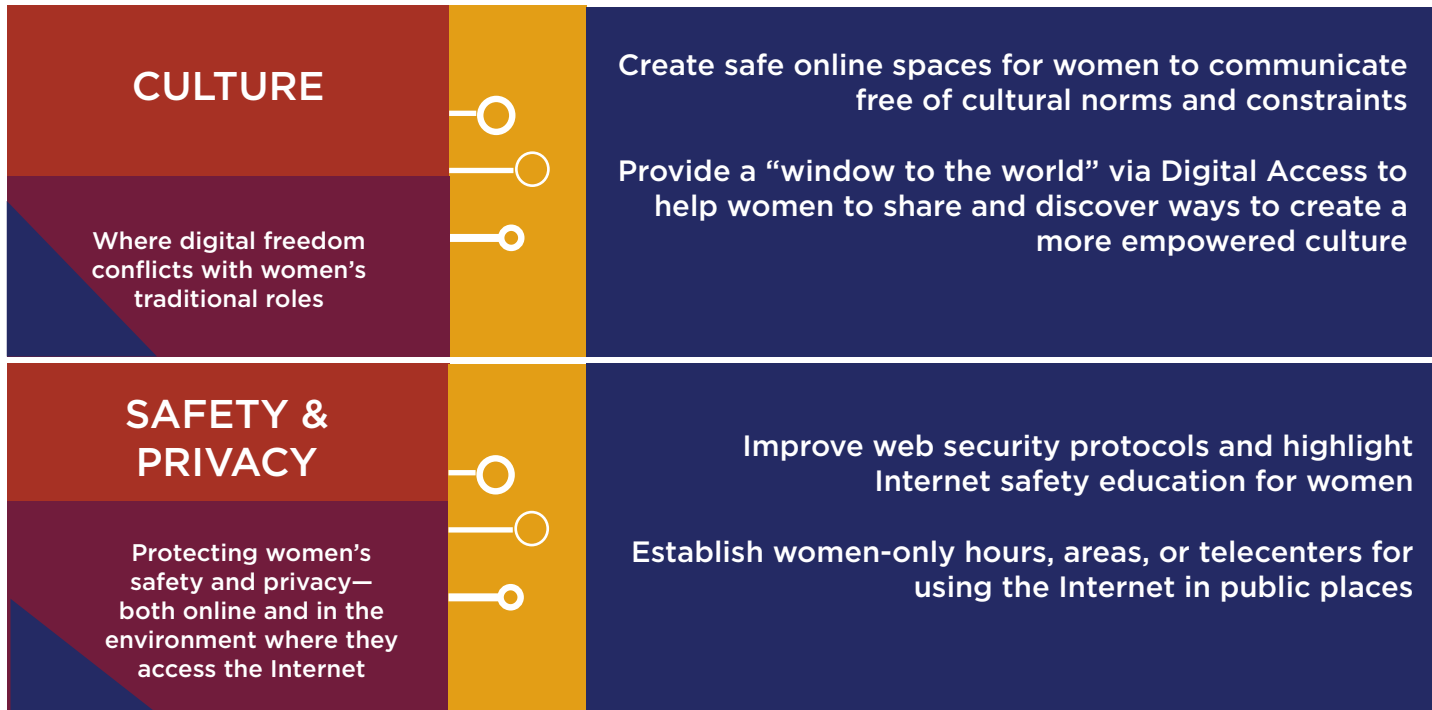
Put more low-cost devices in the hands of mentors who can disperse training at the grassroots

LANGUAGE

Non-English Speakers
have limited access



Support the development of websites, mobile apps, and software translation that makes use of non-English and native languages and scripts



“To me, this is what technology is all about: empowering one woman to help empower another, bridging the gap between the urban and the rural, the vocal and the voiceless.”

- Stella Paul, India

Anthills to Airwaves

BY LOYCE KYOGABIRWE, KAMPALA, UGANDA

WOMEN CONFRONT VIOLENCE USING ICTS: EXPERIENCES FROM A REMOTE FISHING COMMUNITY IN EASTERN UGANDA

I was privileged to coordinate a project on combating violence against women using ICTs. I conducted trainings with grassroots women in a remote fishing community of Namaingo located on the shores of Lake Victoria.

During the training, a 59-year-old participant shared an experience of how, many years ago, women used creative local platforms to combat violence against women. She shared that when she was a young girl, women used to look for strategic locations in the village to broadcast their messages. This location was usually an anthill. The woman would stand on top of the anthill and shout about

her husband's bad behaviors. She would say, "My husband is bad; he beats me when I give meat to the children; he is a glutton, and he abuses me all the time..." This was to let every one in the village hear about her husband's abusive behaviors. It would prompt the villagers to gossip about him. Musicians would even compose songs about the husband's behavior. The shame would cause him to eventually change his ways.

Today, technology has provided much more advanced platforms compared to anthills. I've taught women to use SMS technology to send messages to local leaders, clan leaders, and the general public condemning acts of violence against women in the community. Mobile phones, Internet, and computers are making it possible for women to make noise so the whole world can hear us.



Photo © Loyce

“...The new source of power today is not money in the hands of a few, but information in the hands of many.”

- ACommonFuture, Cameroon



Digital Literacy: What Women Say

“We use the Internet to make our dreams possible. To make our communities better places for us. Safer places. And we become, more and more every day, the rulers of our destinies.”

- Jacqueline Patiño, Bolivia

“...This was my first transition... the internet was no longer a place for only viewing pictures. It was now a space for communication and friendship.”

- Antego2010, Nigeria

“We urge women and girls to see themselves not as passive recipients of information, but as active knowledge and technology developers and sharers...”

- Community Outreach Africa

AWARENESS-BUILDING

How do we convey why it's important for women to get online?

At the grassroots, community leaders can share real, culturally relevant digital empowerment success stories with women who have not yet gotten online

BASIC LITERACY

Literacy skills are essential, but digital context can offer a different approach

Prioritize a foundation of literacy—begin with reading and writing skills for women who need it

Acknowledge SMS and other “texting” languages in teaching women with limited literacy to communicate online

Include mobile phone literacy in areas where phones provide the majority of digital access

TRAINING CURRICULUM

What is the content of digital literacy training?

First listen, then focus on topics that women report are most relevant to their lives

Reproductive Health, Freedom from Violence, and Economic Opportunities are reported among the top needs for women seeking support online

GLOBAL DIGITAL CULTURE

Including women in a globally male-dominated tech culture

Build awareness that gaps in digital literacy exist in both the developing and developed world

Prioritize digital inclusion of women at all levels in all cultures

Introduce more women to coding and related technologies

Support employment of women in the ICT sector

“I want to connect to and see the world too!” she announced.



Mama Philomena

BY WORLD PULSE COMMUNITY MEMBER, OLANIKE OLUGBOJI, NIGERIA

A few weeks ago, the digital side of me got stirred up when I visited Mama Philomena Lahu Fokchetke in her home. At the age of 94, I wondered if this octogenarian knew anything about computers and if she could possibly have interest in technology.

In carrying out my spontaneously planned research, I showed her a laptop, an iPad, and a Blackberry smart phone. I went on to explain how each of these devices can be used to document information and connect with people, information, and opportunities globally. Mama Philomena's face beamed a radiant girlish smile as she listened with childlike curiosity.

Done with my unsolicited lecture, I picked up the iPad and accessed a video I had produced and posted on World Pulse. Her eyes glowed in amazement. She chuckled intermittently as she watched the video.

Suddenly, she stretched out her hands towards the iPad, and said, "Please can you give me this one?"

Her request caught me off guard. I was speechless and became lost in thought as I tried hard to figure out what she was up to. "I want to connect to and see the world too!" she announced.

I was quite excited by her keen interest in accessing and experiencing the wealth of resources the Internet offers, but could not ignore the fact that it would be a Herculean task for her to productively navigate her way online without help: Mama Philomena can neither read nor write. I am, however, certain that if she ever gains informed ability to use digital tools, she will find joy in using it to share her wealth of life's experience and wisdom with the rest of the world.

Digital Empowerment: What Women Say

“What I’m learning about digital empowerment is something simple: I am the person who is best able to write about my own life. I am the first person that has to believe that my own point of view is valid and my message is important.”

- Diariolgualdad, Mexico

“Digital technologies changed my life, changed my community. Technologies let us know about state controlled information that is never shown through televisions and radios.”

- Loek Sreyneang, Cambodia

“When I show them what I did (create software or digital design), they all stay speechless. What I always want to do is show the country and the whole world that ICT is not for men. Us women can also do many things and bring innovation and creativity to the technology world.”

- Josiane Irakiza, Rwanda



POLITICAL & CULTURAL CENSORSHIP

How do women find empowerment when the state itself may be limiting their Digital Access?



Women with more digital literacy can mentor others and organize communities to become stronger advocates

Basic awareness that the state is potentially limiting their access is an important first step

WOMEN UNDER- REPRESENTED IN MEDIA

Digital Access and Literacy must grow exponentially in order to tip the scale on women's representation in media



Reach the "last mile" of women in poverty and isolation by maximizing mobile technologies, alternative power sources, and resources in native languages

Simultaneously, women in the developed world also need ongoing support, visibility, and training

FROM DIGITAL "INPUT" TO DIGITAL "OUTPUT"

Digital research and discovery is essential to Empowerment, but it's just the beginning...



Include women in technology education, career training, and coding

Empowerment comes as women become not only the consumers of digital information but also the creators of their own digital futures

A Digital Reunion

BY WORLD PULSE COMMUNITY MEMBER,
ANI GHUKASYAN, ARMENIA

In Armenia more than 70% of the population can't imagine their lives without the Internet. The 30% who don't know how to switch on a computer are adults living in villages or towns.

I met with Arus, a 75-year-old woman living in Gyumri, a city in northern Armenia. She had a very sad story: She had lost her son after an earthquake and had no information on his whereabouts. She thought that her son had died.

Arus liked to talk to me, to tell her story, to know about my life. One day she asked me how I got my job. When I answered that I found my job through an announcement, she thought that I meant a printed notice. When I explained to her that I found my job online, she was very surprised.

"Oh my God, that technical machine helped you to find a job! I don't believe you; I'm sorry. Times really have changed," she exclaimed. After a few moments, her astonishment shifted to interest. "If you could find job through that strange instrument, can't you try to find a

WHEN A YOUNG WOMAN TAKES THE TIME TO PASS ON DIGITAL TRAINING TO HER ELDERLY, LIVES ARE CHANGED FOREVER

person?" Her eyes were shining as if hope were renewed in her maternal, sad heart. She wanted to find her son.

The next day I brought my laptop to her home, and she told me some information about her son. I quickly typed it into Google and... What a wonder! Her son was alive, living abroad, and most importantly—found! Through my searches, I discovered his email, his number, and his Skype information. It was an incredibly touching scene to see Mother and Son talk after so many years apart. In that moment, I realized the importance of the Internet.

Arus did, too. She thanked all the creators of that "Strange Machine" that helped her find her son. Now she visits Google almost every day and has decided to break the stereotype that "the Internet is not for adult Armenian women."

I encourage all the women of the world to connect to modern technology, as the world is changing rapidly. Why not use online platforms to be free, empowered, and informed!

A woman with dark hair and bangs, wearing a dark top, is looking at a laptop screen. She is in a classroom or office setting with a green chalkboard in the background. Another person's hand is visible on the laptop keyboard in the foreground.

“Deep within the mountains of my country we are women with the right to new technology..., women capable of transforming the world. Our ideas strengthen our organizations, families, and society. ”

“Ucapantasma,” Nicaragua

WOMEN WEAVE THE WEB

Thanks to our Women Weave the Web Campaign Partners:





***Read all the Campaign
submissions at
worldpulse.com/www***

WORLD PULSE™

“Internet Access at the grassroots is an effective tool for rapid community development and global development processes.”

- AchiengNas, Uganda

www.WorldPulse.com