Women and the Web Alliance is a public-private partnership between USAID, NetHope, Intel Corporation, World Pulse, World Vision, UN Women, and Women in Technology in Nigeria to get more girls and young women online to develop their digital literacy skills, improve their employability, and reduce the Internet ‘gender gap.’ The alliance seeks to create a ‘movement,’ bringing more than 600,000 girls and young women online in Nigeria and Kenya in the next three years.

The Alliance’s partners share a common interest in increasing opportunities for young women to generate greater income, receive a quality education, increase their sense of empowerment and equity, extend their support networks and increase their community participation.

**Bridging the Internet gender gap**

Increasingly, technology skills are vital in education and business, but women in sub-Saharan Africa are disproportionately left behind in accessing the Internet and the benefits it holds. Only 40 million women in sub-Saharan Africa have access to and use of the Internet compared to 70 million men. This difference of 30 million is sub-Saharan Africa’s gender-based ‘Internet gap’.

The barriers to technology access and use for women around the world include a range of factors, such as:

- Cultural norms discouraging or prohibiting women from using information and communications technologies (ICTs)
- Higher levels of illiteracy among girls and women
- Low accessibility and availability of ICT infrastructure

12-year-old Tulasha does research on a computer at a Community Learning Centre in Kenya.

The Women and the Web Alliance supports getting more girls and women online in order to develop digital literacy skills, improve employability for women and reduce the Internet gender gap.
Connecting women and girls to the world, together

The Alliance is working to make the Internet more accessible, relevant and engaging for girls and women, specifically those between the ages of 15 – 25, who comprise a large and growing population lacking opportunities for employment and skills development. Key pillars of the programme include:

1 Digital literacy: The integration of digital literacy training into gender and development programmes enables women to access hardware, software, Internet connectivity and ongoing support. With mobile platforms, individuals can follow different learning paths through a variety of channels, including phone and tablet applications.

2 Knowledge and voices: The power of digital media connects women and gives them a global voice. The Internet can empower women by providing them with an opportunity to connect with people outside of their communities, which, in turn, creates a strong incentive for women to continue using ICTs. This will provide long-term benefits in increased confidence and expression.

3 Economic opportunities: Internet use can increase the opportunities for women and girls in employment, online work or improved businesses. ICT-enabled employment opportunities and skills training can generate social and economic opportunities for those employed, their families and their communities.

4 The ‘movement’: System-level collaborations can enhance the inclusion of women and girls in the information society. Together, the alliance will help create a movement to address the challenges of the Internet gender gap by building, fostering and supporting partners.

How World Vision is helping

The Women and the Web Alliance begins by leveraging the work that World Vision is conducting in 18 school-based technology centres in impoverished areas of Western Kenya. This involves:

- Making the centres available to communities during evenings and weekends, specifically targeting over 6,000 women and girls.

- Implementing and scaling the Intel® Learn Easy Steps training programme in school-based computer labs, which will be made available for community access, especially for women and girls, both in the training and in becoming trainers of others.

- As part of an innovative approach to delivering digital literacy skills, the project will link women and girls to a global social network of women called World Pulse.

- Women and girls will be trained on a basic customised entrepreneurship module as part of the Intel® Learn Easy Steps training programme, to equip them with business skills they need to become entrepreneurs. Where possible, World Vision will also work with local government and the private sector to link women and girls to grant and loan programmes to support them in starting their own businesses.

For more information about Women and the Web Alliance, please email the Child Development and Protection Team at World Vision United States: lawillia@worldvision.org

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organisation dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.