



SMARTPHONE DISTRIBUTION GUIDE

Objective

To facilitate access to smartphones for women in rural communities by engaging with gatekeepers, allies, and reference groups such as husbands, religious leaders, parents, local leaders, women leaders, advisory council members, and male peers.

Step 1: Research and Understand the Community

- 1.1. Conduct background research on the community's social, cultural, economic, and religious aspects.
- 1.2. Identify key gatekeepers in the community, such as husbands, religious leaders, and parents. Develop a risk matrix to understand the anticipated negative consequences to the program as well as solutions and allies to address such problems.

Step 2: Build a Local Team

- 2.1. Recruit local staff and volunteers who are familiar with the community's customs and norms.
- 2.2. Provide gender-sensitivity training to your team to ensure they are equipped to navigate the community effectively. This includes understanding levels of digital capability among staff and building on areas that need improvement.
- 2.3. Establish partnerships with local organizations and NGOs working on gender empowerment and digital inclusion.



Step 3: Develop a Culturally Sensitive Approach

3.1. Design your smartphone distribution program to be culturally sensitive and appropriate, considering gender norms, roles, and power dynamics.

3.2. Ensure the chosen smartphones are affordable and user-friendly for the target audience. 3.3. Develop gender-responsive marketing materials that highlight the benefits of smartphones for women.

Step 4: Engage Gatekeepers, Allies, and Reference Groups

4.1. Organize meetings and workshops with key gatekeepers, allies, and reference groups to discuss the objectives and benefits of the smartphone distribution program.

- Invite key gatekeepers, allies, and reference groups to meetings within their community to discuss the purpose of the DCP. Use the digital capability messaging guide to lead a conversation about the benefits of putting technology in women's hands for the entire community.
- Identify allies prior to the meeting to speak about why they support women's use of smartphones, how they have personally benefited, or to share positive masculinity messages (as a GBVH prevention mechanism).
- Invite male partners of VSLA members to a VSLA meeting prior to distributing smartphones to educate them about the program and provide them with resources to answer their questions. Ask allies to be available to speak to male partners, particularly in the early weeks of distribution.

4.2. Emphasize the potential positive impacts on the community, such as increased access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

- Messaging around smartphone distribution to women MUST emphasize the benefits to households and communities.
- Messaging should not include restrictions on women's use of the device. For example, men are worried that women will neglect their household chores if they have a smartphone. Do not advise women to avoid looking at their phones during their chores. Instead, encourage a household to agree on rules and limits to use of technology together that apply to everyone. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of a smartphone without placing rules on their use.

4.3. Address concerns and misconceptions about the program and potential negative consequences. Build digital capability of community stakeholders.

4.4. Seek the support and endorsement of gatekeepers for the program. Invite allies to create on-going conversations with gatekeepers and reference groups to create sustained support for the DCP.



Step 5: Phone Distribution: Tailor Training Programs for Women and Gatekeepers

5.1. Develop gender-responsive training programs for women to teach them how to use smartphones effectively and safely.

- Identify digital champions within the VSLA and community. These are women who are familiar with feature and smartphones. They are comfortable using technology and can effectively support other women in their learning process. Encourage the digital champions to invite interested women to discuss technology and demonstrate how they use technology day to day.
- Again, messaging should not include restrictions on women's use of the device. Women will have heard of examples of men being angry at their wives for burning dinner because they were distracted by their phones. Do not advise women to avoid this behavior. Instead, encourage a household to agree on rules and limits to use of technology together that apply to everyone. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of a smartphone without placing rules on their use.
- Some women do not have phones and are not interested in owning one. This is ok – we do not want to force any member to purchase a phone unless they are ready.

5.2. Separate workshops for gatekeepers, allies, and reference groups should be ongoing during this process. The meetings should focus on the benefits of the program and strategies to the community for supporting women's digital inclusion.

5.3. Where possible offer the training programs in local languages and incorporating local cultural elements.



Step 6: Monitor and Evaluate Progress

6.1. Track the number of smartphones distributed and the number of women and gatekeepers participating in training programs.

- Prior to phone distribution set up a feedback mechanism with CBTs or VAs. This could be a WhatsApp group chat or other forum. Use this mechanism to 1) distribute messaging on the DCP for key community stakeholders, 2) messaging for VSLA members and their male partners, and 3) solicit input and feedback from community members about questions, concerns, or positive feedback.

6.2. Monitor changes in women's access to information, education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

- Prior to phone distribution identify key areas of interest and relevance that you want to monitor. Where do you see feature and smartphones benefiting VSLA members? Develop a list of key indicators for success. Monitor changes based on these indicators.
- Identify regular moments during the project that data will be collected. Regular data collection will ensure 1) that you track the changes you hope to see and 2) that you identify problems within the program that you can address quickly.

6.3. Evaluate the effectiveness of your engagement with gatekeepers, allies, and reference groups and make any necessary adjustments to your approach.

- Engaging gatekeepers, allies, and reference groups is not a one-time activity. Particularly when distributing technology into women's hands, it is critical to set up on-going engagement to ensure male partners and other gatekeepers are not perpetuating violence against women. On-going engagement with allies will help you identify shifts in attitudes among gatekeepers and identify individuals who may need further support.

6.4. Collect feedback from women and gatekeepers to inform improvements to the program.



Step 7: Share Success Stories and Lessons Learned

- 7.1. Document success stories and lessons learned throughout the implementation of the program.
- 7.2. Share these stories with the community, gatekeepers, and local partners to demonstrate the positive impact of the program.
- 7.3. Use success stories to advocate for further support and resources for women's digital inclusion in rural communities.

