TECH AGE GIRLS

READ Global
Inspiring Rural Prosperity

IREX

While technology is changing the world and bringing opportunity to Nepal, women and girls have been largely left out. Poverty and gender gaps have led to disparities in access to technology and opportunities to develop 21st-century skills compared with their male counterparts.

- Only 25% of Nepal's internet users are women.
- Only 21% of women participate in technical and vocational education and training programs.
- Only up to 10% of people in the IT industry are women; as young girls, they are discouraged from using computers.
- Only 27% of women actively participate in public decision-making processes at the local level.

Moreover, **social norms in South Asia prioritize a son receiving higher education, so the daughter often loses out on continuing her studies**. Limited access to education and career opportunities makes girls and women vulnerable to abuse as they are unaware of their rights and do not know how to respond to cases of gender-based discrimination, which continue to rise during the pandemic.

TECH AGE GIRLS

In partnership with IREX, an international education and development organization that has worked in 100 countries around the globe, READ Global launched **Tech Age Girls (TAG)** in 2019 to support our commitment to realizing gender equality in the communities we serve.

TAG is a holistic girls leadership and empowerment program that provides young Nepalese women **with a blend of rigorous ICT and professional skills training, complemented by leadership development and community projects** to empower tomorrow's women leaders, to help them combat gender stereotypes, and to grow into leaders in both the community and the workforce.

The program is grounded in the belief that **more than training, a girl needs access to a supportive ecosystem of mentors and like-minded peers** to reach her full potential and learn how to assess and then address her own needs.

TAG AND READ CENTERS

READ Global partners with communities to create safe spaces–called **READ Centers**–for community members where they can access educational and skills-building opportunities. READ Centers offer women and young girls the chance to step into leadership positions that empower them as individuals and help shift gender norms in their communities. The Centers also serve as platforms for READ's other programs, including promoting education and literacy, providing equitable access to technology, and conducting livelihood and life skills trainings

Implementing TAG through READ Centers offers added impact as the **Centers will serve not only as venues and organizers for specific trainings, but as gateways for participants and their families to a comprehensive, long-term holistic support system** that can offer ongoing development opportunities and work to change the perception of the roles of girls and women in the community.

TAG IMPACT

Since 2005, IREX has implemented TAG to create opportunities for over a thousand girls in nine countries.

BOOSTING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

81% felt more confident to pursue educational opportunities

34% received a scholarship to study

INCREASING EMPLOYABILITY

80% report that tech skills made them more competitive in the job market

34% pursued additional career-related training

TAG APPROACH

Mentoring Other Youth

Throughout the program, Tech Age Girls train and mentor other young people in IT and leadership skills to further develop their own leadership while expanding opportunities for others in their community

Professional Skills

- Advanced training in IT, project management, and job skills

- Application of leadership skills through innovative community development projects and the creation of online content relevant to young women in local languages

Months

Foundation

- Training in basic IT skills, digital literacy, content creation, leadership, and project design

- Regional peer learning meetings

Leadership Conference

- Young women participate in interactive panels and debates with leading women role models

- Guest speakers introduce girls to new ideas and opportunities to apply their skills

- Participants hone their skills through public presentation

- Networking opportunities and exposure visits to leading IT companies and other businesses

Exposure Trips

- Internships with national and local IT companies, and government offices

- Remote internships for rural participants

Stage 1: Basic Skills Training: Young women are selected to receive training in technology skills such as MS Office, email and internet use, and beginner photo and video editing. Participants also receive life skills training and career counseling, including activities to help match their interests and skill sets with potential job opportunities.

Stage 2: Advanced Skills Training: Based on an ICT skills test and the strength of their assignments, high-performing participants are selected for more specialized trainings. Participants work in small groups to host formal training sessions on a variety of topics such as women's leadership, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), employability and job skills, and basic ICT.

Stage 3: National Leadership Conference and Internships: Twenty-five (25) top finalists are chosen to attend a week-long conference that will bring in experts to conduct advanced ICT, jobs, and leadership skills training. The conference also provides TAG participants with opportunities to spend time at area businesses, tech companies, and women-led organizations.

Success Story: Providing Young Girls with Opportunities to Transform Their Lives

READ Global has already proven the success of the TAG program in Nepal. In our experience, we know that when provided the right support and opportunity, **our participants can transform their lives and become leaders** regardless of gender, age, or status.

One of our TAG participants, **Samjhana**, found the confidence to transform her future and speak up against repressive gender taboos in her community. Before TAG, Samjhana had no plans past 12th grade. Through TAG, Samjhana gained ICT skills and the confidence to aspire to a career as a bank manager. With her recent graduation, **she is on her way to a new job at a local savings and credit institution**. Samjhana also leads conversations addressing the social tradition of monthly isolation called chaupadi in Nepal, which prohibits menstruating women from participating in family and social activities for the duration of their period. **TAG's GESI sessions helped Samjhana convince her parents to abandon the practice, and she is now working with other girls to help them do the same.**