

Women and Girls in ICT

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Amina, (not the real name) a Computer Engineering university graduate was becoming frustrated at her inability to get a required job; somehow it looked odd for a woman to be looking for a job in a male dominated field.

Even though she was not so surprised at peoples reaction when she sent application to work, since she was the only woman in a class of 45.

After tireless efforts to get a job proved futile, she went to the office of the then Spacefon and acquired a license to start "Space to Space" a kind of business where one provide commercial phone services such as making calls for people, selling recharge cards, among others.

Amina eventually expanded her business to include providing internet services for people and now operates a big internet café at a suburb of Accra.

Amina benefitted from the operations of the telecommunications company indirectly, her example is not that of a one-in-a -million, many women and girls would confess to have benefitted from the activities of telecommunications companies directly or indirectly.

The introduction of ICT and telecommunications in developing countries such as Ghana has helped transformed many lives, since it is no doubt that ICTs are tools that can help accelerate progress towards the development that the nation wants to achieve.

The celebration of World Telecommunications Day, a day set aside to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of internet and other Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can bring to societies and economies as well as ways to bridge the digital divide is in the right direction.

"Women and Girls in ICT" the theme for this year's celebration aims at ensuring that women and girls usually the most vulnerable in our societies could maximize the opportunities of ICT to enable them march forward as equals.

World Telecommunications Day marked 17th May every year marks the anniversary of the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention and the creation of the International Telecommunication Union.

Today Amina can stand tall among others because she is economically empowered through the use of ICT. In Ghana the activities and contributions of the Telecoms in terms of their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) cannot be over-emphasized.

The Telecoms are visible in many sectors of the economy including health, environmental sanitation, media development and education.

MTN, Vodafone, Airtel and Tigo are involved in many activities that affect the lives of people especially the vulnerable in society.

For instance, for two consecutive years Vodafone has paid the outstanding medical bills of insolvent patients in government hospitals around the country. Overall, over four hundred people have been allowed to go home after being detained in Hospitals for nonpayment of their medical bills. Each patient were also given a mobile phone and transport money to go home. This initiative has helped many individuals, some of whom had been in hospital for three months with no means of paying their bills – many were resigned to their fate. It also relieved bed space for the hospital who were detaining the patients until their bills were paid.

That is not all the organization is involved in a health education programme dubbed: “Health line” to augment the fact that the doctor to patient ratio in this country is below the figures recommended by the World Health Organisation – which means that Ghanaians are not getting adequate health information and advice.

MTN has a Foundation that is working mostly in the Northern part of Ghana and has constructed 20 boreholes in selected communities in that part of the country which goes a long way to help women and girls in the communities whose tradition role is to fetch water for the home.

One cannot forget Tigo’s involvement in educational seminars, especially the Young Entrepreneurs’ programme that helps give students in the universities and other tertiary institutions entrepreneurial ideas.

Airtel has also been involved in activities that impacts that lives of individual and communities as a whole. Many Ghanaians would testify to that fact that the telecoms have helped make life a little easier.

Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General in a message to commemorate the World Telecommunications Day said: “We should work to optimize the power of information and communication technology to support sustainable development by gathering, disseminating and analyzing information to accelerate action to protect natural resources, combat climate change and help vulnerable people including women and girls.”

Women are surely the bedrock of our societies.

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