

**REPORT ON A ONE DAY SEMINAR ORGANIZED BY SAVANA SIGNATURES ON
“THE ROLE OF THE FEMALE TEACHER IN PROMOTING FEMALE
PARTICIPATION IN ICT”**



In this global age where ICT has become the vehicle for both personal and national development, most Ghanaian female professionals still perceive ICT as the preserve of men and as such are not too keen to develop and nurture their information literacy skills. It has also been observed that female teachers who are at the fore front of imparting knowledge to the next generation of future leaders have very little ICT knowledge or not at all. Savana Signatures (SavSign) realized that until these female teachers are given the requisite training to enable them embrace information literacy as part of their daily development, the country will be tottering on the road to mainstreaming of ICT into the educational sector in Ghana. SavSign, against this back drop, organized a one day sensitization workshop on the topic *the role of the female teacher in promoting female participation in ICT*.

The workshop drew participants from the Tamale College of Education, members of the Female ICT teachers Association (FICTTA), Students from the Tamale Girls Senior High School, female teachers and Female Heads of Basic schools. Welcoming participants to the one day workshop, the Director of Savana Signatures, Mr. John Stephen Agbenyo entreated them to take active part in all the discussions and feel free to express their thoughts on issues since that was the only way they could better understand and benefit from the workshop. He explained that SavSign has a vision of creating a new ICT world where women are the key movers of affairs through the use of ICT.

Speaking on the topic, the Executive Director of Women and Development Project (WADEP), Patricia Formadi explained that as teachers they have a responsibility and duty to provide education to students by inculcating knowledge and skills with the ultimate aim of transforming the attitudinal tendencies of each student. She said that the term *ICT* is also used to refer to the merging of audio-visual and telephone networks with computer networks through a single cabling or link system to either create or disseminate information and that Information and

communication Technology (ICT) plays an increasingly important role in the world, and new technology and devices are constantly being developed daily and it was high time women accepted the reality and fastened their seat belts for the wind of change that has come to stay.

Explaining the relevance of ICT to the female in the 21st century, Patricia explained that ICTs



help to empower women by improving their ability to access information, education, and services, such as market prices for crops, professional development opportunities, and tools that promote the health of their families'. She further explained that ICTs also help empower women by improving the *availability* of information important to their lives and said that through technology women can have a voice beyond their local community, allowing them to network with other women around the world and

better advocate greater government responsiveness and transparency, greater economic opportunity, greater equality, and greater recognition and protection of their legal and human rights. Touching on practical application of the use of ICT and how it can help the female become more functional in this diversified world, Patricia explained that ICT has introduced to the world E-education for women who for one reason or the other cannot be in classrooms for their personal development. She also mentioned E-commerce initiatives that link women directly to global markets through the Internet, as well as providing support activities with market and production information on radio and T V platforms. E-governance programmes make government services more accessible to citizens by providing them electronically, in some cases with an explicit strategy to ensure that these services reach women and others who face barriers to access. The free access to Health education programmes on radio and/or television to communicate information related to women's sexual and reproductive health enables women in remote areas to access telemedicine. She reiterated that with the growing importance, however, it is apparent that not everybody is benefitting from these new opportunities that ICT hold and that there is a yawning gap in the digital world between men and women. She said that ICT is not gender neutral and acknowledged the fact that ICTs are not equally accessed, managed and controlled but the main challenge now is how women/females can access and use of ICT to their advantage.

Madam Patricia while encouraging females to venture into the ICT world and not view it as the preserve of men however, lamented that there are several challenges that militate against the full participation of women into ICT. These challenges she enumerated were among other things cost of access and connectivity where she said that most women still earn less income than men, and as such have limited or no control over financial resources. She also regretted that some women have misplaced priorities and do not know how to invest in things that will contribute towards

their personal development. She blamed this kind of negative attitude on illiteracy or limited knowledge of foreign languages that dominate modern technology, especially the internet.

Another major factor impeding female participation in information literacy identified by the resource person is Social perceptions and attitudes women are perceived as inferior vessels that must depend solely on men for their daily existence. The scheduled work load on the rural woman where she has to take care of the family prevents her from attend trainings in community centers or using internet in internet cafes because their culture does not allow them to be there. This she said can be minimized if there are some female ICT role models who serve as icons for the young ones to emulate. It was against this background that she threw the challenge to the female teacher and the young female teacher trainees from Tamale College of Education to lead the way and be the light to the Female ICT revolution. In ending here presentation Madam Patricia stated that the best way to surmount the challenges that females in the area of ICT is training and building the capacity fo more females to use ICT skills for their development and encourage them to see the remuneration that comes with it to change our situation for the better. She further challenged women to set the pace and tell the world that women can make it in the field of ICT and so families should not resist allowing women to access ICT trainings. It is only then that society will also change their perception about women who are going the “extra mile” participating in the trainings. To achieve she suggested a total over hauling of perceptive attitude towards the subject as female teachers, make time to go through the trainings first to our advantage and also support our colleagues to get there. It is believed that “Peer to peer support is identified as the most effective way to further ICT integration in the world”. She came down the pulpit with the message that *“We have been left behind in so many things; this is the time for us to be poised, go along with others and get there together”*.

Making the second presentation, Siobhan Duvigneau, the Information Literacy Manager of the British Library for Development Studies at the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom, narrated her personal experiences as she grew up and said that her mother made a great influence in her life and made her believe that she was special and that she could make it just like the men. She challenged participants to develop a sense of inner importance and believe in their potentials and as teachers, they should endeavour to encourage their students to look at their strengths.



Siobhan took participants down the memory lane and retraced the origin of computer by examining the critical roles that women played in making ICT a reality in today’s ICT world. She said that women are very logical in their reasoning and as such information technology will

suffer greatly if women who are very good at code designing that allows computer to communicate are unavailable. Siobhan shared that she spent over ten years of her life working in ICT and in the midst of men but never felt intimidated by the men by of the inspiration her mother's words had on her. She stated that “ *I did not allow my emotions get in my way, so I remained professional at all times and this kept me focused!*” .

Siobhan emphasized the point that for women to come apar with their male counterparts in all aspects of professional life, they need to acquire more knowledge and skills and that this comes with great commitment and practice. She identified the key role that government needs to play



in the promotion of female participation in ICT and said there is the need for government to be committed to rolling out proactive ICT policies to enable students learn in a conducive classroom environment that is ICT friendly. She encouraged teachers to teach students the principles of the use of information Technology tools by ensuring that information and communication technology is not just taught as a subject but should be integrated into the teaching and learning

process to give students an idea of how ICT can be used practically. “*Catch them young by introducing ICT to them at an early age and they shall grow to be geeks forever*” she said. She enjoined teachers guide students to embrace the positive aspects of the use of the internet and other ICT applications and suggested that schools that have ICT centers and connected to the internet can adopt systems where times are allotted for students to under take research works and surfing on facebook and other social networks.

The participants on their part were very grateful to Savana Signatures for organizing the workshop and urged that it should not remain a nine day wonder. Most of the students' who were present expressed their joy for being part of the workshop saying that it has energized them to learn to believe in themselves and set realistic future goals for their lives. Most of the female teachers shared their personal experiences about the challenges they went through during their school days at the hands of their teachers and admonished the young ones to stay focused and never give up in the face of trials and tribulations.



Siobhan led a discussion session on the following questions.

1. What can you do to encourage young learners to explore technology?
2. How will you prepare them to compete, globally?
3. How can you inspire girls to move into ICT?

Responses from the discussion session is attached as appendix 1



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