

# Connecting the dots .....

## Stories of change: Young Women in Local Government

### Closing the digital gender gap

#### *Summary*

Sharon Mwape, student, Rockview University, Ndola, Zambia  
Project involvement: Young Women in Local Government network ad workshops

*Sharon Mwape, a 21 year old university student, was inspired by the Connecting the Dots project to help encourage more young women learn about information technology and to pursue careers in IT as well as using social media as a platform to have their voice heard.*

#### *Background*

Sharon Bwalya Mwape, is a 21-year-old student from Ndola, Zambia. She is in the 4th year studying at Rockview university for a BA in Development Studies. She is also a distributor of Herbalife products to help bring in an income to support her studies.

As part of her studies Sharon conducted a research on women in IT at a number of companies including AIRTEL and ZAMTEL, as well as amongst IT students at Rockview University and Liquid Dip in Lusaka province. Sharon had to limit the number of companies she could include due to the limited resources for transport and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic but was supported by her family and university throughout.

#### *Aims*

Sharon had noted that there is a lack of women in IT areas and was keen to see to see this rectified but first wanted to know why the problem exists. She wanted to help to increase the number of women in information technology so decided to undertake research to assess the causes of this and the challenges women face in IT by looking at the experiences in some selected companies in Zambia.

Getting involved in the Connecting the Dots project was a good fit for Sharon to further her research, discuss it with women in the network, and further explore the issue of the lack of women in IT with her peers.

#### *How the CtD project has helped*

Through the capacity building and mentorship programmes from the Connecting the Dots project, Sharon realised the extent to which many women lack knowledge in Information Technology.

She was able to use other women involved in the project as a sounding board, giving Sharon a deeper understanding and insight into the issues and the barriers as to why women do not get more involved in IT.

After being mentored in public speaking, Sharon gained more confidence in taking a lead to talk through the issue and inspire other young women to have a more positive attitude to IT. They responded to her questions and welcomed her into the network, with positive results in their attitudes to IT and closing the digital gender gap.

“Despite a problem with resources, the journey has been wonderful and the training and experience I have gained has imparted me with new knowledge and understanding, says Sharon.

“The Young Women in Local Government network has really been of great help.”

### *Impact*

Through the discussions focusing on women and IT, there were some positive outcomes, with many women changing their attitudes to IT. Many of the women were inspired and are ready to take action narrow the gender gap in IT.

“I have always been a shy person but after being mentored on public speaking, I gained my confidence and am proud of myself for going out and being able to inspire women to higher standards of being able to come out and have a positive mind set in taking chance to learn more about information technology,” comments Sharon.

### *Looking forward*

Sharon would like to see more practical projects to inspire more young women to go out and try their hand not only in IT but also in politics, for instance teaching young women how to use social media platforms effectively to profile themselves and be ready for 2026 elections.

