



PROGRAM REPORT

Community-Led Digital Safety Pilot

Digital Literacy & Safety for Refugee Women and Girls in Border Communities

Implemented by Mayhem Threads

With the support of Share-Net International

September 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the support of Share-Net International, Mayhem Threads carried out a community-led digital safety pilot across three border communities, placing digital literacy and online safety directly in the hands of the women and girls it was designed to protect. Rather than a top-down training programme, the pilot relied on peer-to-peer facilitation, equipping participants with the knowledge and confidence to recognise and respond to digital threats within their own social networks.

The pilot reached 45 refugee women and girls through a series of peer-led sessions addressing three pressing digital risks: SIM-swap scams, image-based abuse, and misinformation amid a rising tide of fake news. The results point to a meaningful shift in both knowledge and agency: participants reported a 70% increase in their confidence to deal with digital challenges, and six women from the community have since gone on to lead their own sessions, extending the pilot's reach well beyond its original cohort.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Border communities present a distinct set of digital safety challenges. Refugee women and girls living in these areas often face limited access to formal digital literacy resources, precarious connectivity, and heightened exposure to exploitation, scams, and misinformation — risks that are frequently compounded by displacement, language barriers, and unfamiliarity with local digital ecosystems.

In response, Mayhem Threads designed a pilot program to test whether a community-led, peer-to-peer model could build durable digital safety skills more effectively than conventional, externally delivered training. The pilot was made possible with the support of Share-Net International, and was implemented across three border communities selected for their high concentration of refugee women and girls and their limited prior access to digital safety programming.

PILOT DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Community-Led, Peer-to-Peer Approach

At the core of the pilot was a community-led design: rather than relying solely on external facilitators, the program trained and supported women from within the participating communities to lead sessions for their peers. This approach was intended to build trust, ensure cultural and linguistic relevance, and create a foundation for the knowledge to keep spreading after the pilot's formal end.

Reach

The pilot engaged 45 refugee women and girls across 3 border communities through a series of structured peer-to-peer sessions.

Focus Areas

Sessions concentrated on three digital risks identified as most pressing for participants:

- **SIM-swap scams** – how fraudsters hijack phone numbers to gain access to accounts, and the steps participants could take to protect their SIM cards and identities.
- **Image-based abuse** – recognising, preventing, and responding to the non-consensual sharing or exploitation of personal images.
- **Misinformation** – building the skills to critically evaluate content and navigate a media environment saturated with fake news.

KEY RESULTS

The pilot's outcomes reflect both an immediate gain in participant confidence and the early signs of a self-sustaining, community-owned model of digital safety education.

3	45	70%	6
Border communities reached	Refugee women & girls engaged	Increase in participant confidence	New peer facilitators emerged

Confidence Gains

Following the pilot, participants reported a 70% increase in their confidence in dealing with digital challenges — a strong indicator that the peer-led, hands-on format translated into

real, felt gains in participants' ability to identify and respond to threats like SIM-swap scams, image-based abuse, and misinformation.

Emerging Community Leadership

Perhaps the pilot's most significant outcome is its multiplier effect: six women from the participating communities have gone on to lead their own digital safety sessions. This organic transition from participant to facilitator suggests that the peer-to-peer model is not only transferring knowledge but also cultivating local leadership and ownership — a strong signal of the pilot's sustainability beyond its initial timeframe and funding.

IMPACT & SIGNIFICANCE

The pilot demonstrates that digital safety education can be both effective and self-propagating when designed around community leadership rather than one-off external delivery. By equipping women and girls to lead their own sessions, Mayhem Threads has laid the groundwork for a model where digital literacy continues to spread organically through trusted peer networks long after the formal program concludes.

For refugee women and girls in border communities — populations often underserved by mainstream digital safety initiatives — this approach offers a scalable pathway to closing the digital literacy gap while strengthening social cohesion and mutual support within the community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mayhem Threads gratefully acknowledges the support of Share-Net International, whose partnership made this pilot possible. Sincere thanks also go to the 45 participants and, in particular, the six emerging peer leaders whose commitment and courage are already extending the impact of this work.