

Nivi

Providing More Accessible Healthcare for Women



Change Social Norms & Cultural Perceptions



Create Economic Opportunities



Cultivate Women's Confidence



Design Creative Women-Centric Technology



Develop Community Support

Challenge

Around the world, many women struggle with accessing healthcare services and reliable health information. This is particularly true for women in rural areas where the nearest health clinic might be several hours away, or where women need permission from a male relative, like their father or husband, to seek care. Digital platforms can change how both women and men think about healthcare access, enabling everyone—regardless of their gender or socio-economic status—equitable and affordable access to high-quality healthcare that is personalized to their needs through the deployment of digital marketplaces for health.

To provide more accessible healthcare for women, USAID's WomenConnect Challenge (WCC) awarded a grant to Nivi, a consumer-facing digital health company, to expand its chatbot partnerships in Kenya, India, and Nigeria and bring health systems closer to consumers.

Solution

Chatbots are virtual agents that simulate human conversation and interactions by using machine learning and artificial intelligence to produce appropriate, automated text responses and engage with human users. Unlike early versions of messaging services, chatbots engage users through dialogue, prompts, and questions rather than just pushing information. Nivi developed its askNivi chatbot as a tool for other organizations to embed into their online offerings to better engage with and respond to their customers.

When incorporated into health initiatives, Nivi's chatbot educates and connects individuals to relevant health services and products, helping them develop a positive relationship with health care and gain greater confidence in areas that are traditionally not spoken about or considered taboo. People discover askNivi via social media and offline campaigns that connect the chatbot on Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp on their smartphones. In India, for example, Nivi partner Jhpiego designed and distributed an informational flier on family planning with a QR code that opened up to Nivi's WhatsApp chatbot on the user's phone. Based on the user's input, askNivi guides them to localized information on relevant health topics, uses interactive quizzes to test their health knowledge, and recommends health services and products using evidence-based health screening algorithms.

Confidential chat is critical to building trust, so Nivi's text-based system emphasizes privacy. A user can erase their chat conversations after reading the information. When a user is ready to take action based on the information they receive and go through a specific health screening, such as askNivi's family planning screening, Nivi can provide customized referrals.

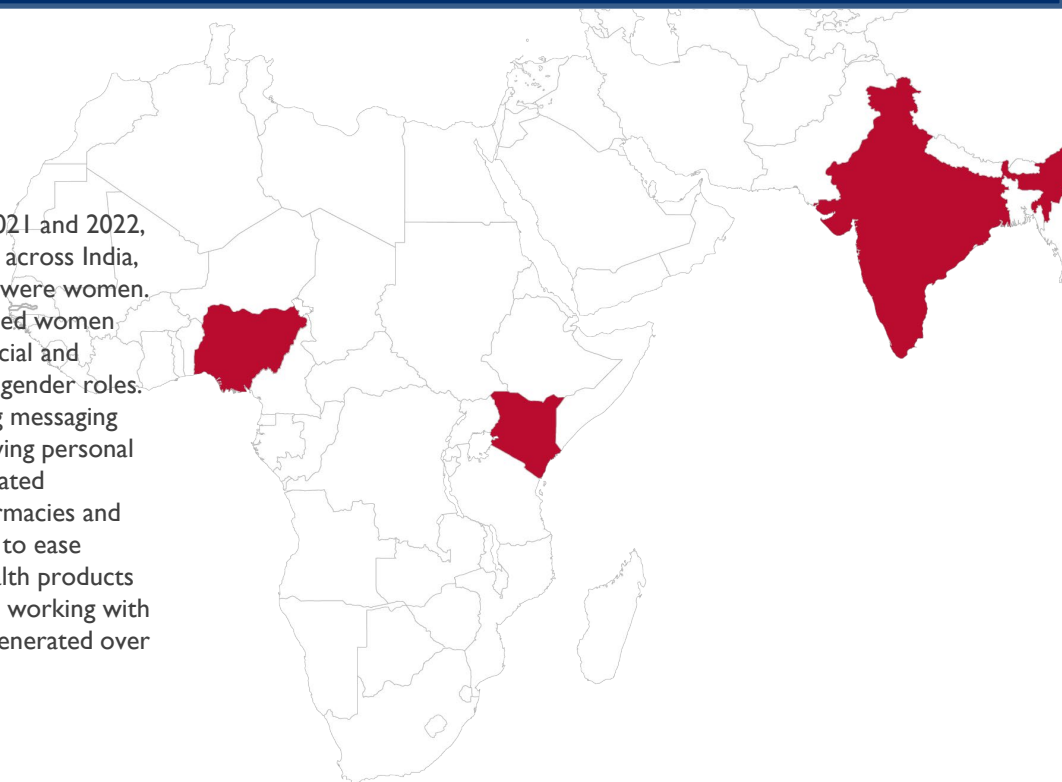
In addition to working on family planning with Jhpiego in India, Nivi's WCC grant has allowed it to partner with organizations in India, Kenya, and Nigeria. In India, Nivi and MTV Staying Alive Foundation (SAF) developed a chatbot tie-in to MTV/SAF's popular multimedia drama, Nishedh. MTV SAF has used Nivi's English and Hindi conversational resources to encourage MTV's target audience to explore information on sexual and reproductive health and tuberculosis (TB) screening as well as seek referrals to access healthcare services.

In Kenya, inSupplyHealth featured Nivi on a project to raise awareness of and provide referrals to family planning services at pharmacies, by allowing the chatbot to provide information in English and Swahili on a self-injectable female contraceptive approved by Kenya's Ministry of Health. Improving access to female-controlled contraceptives is an important priority for Nivi and inSupply Health since many women may not feel empowered to insist their male sexual partners wear condoms.

In Nigeria, FHI 360 used Nivi in three USAID-funded HIV projects that are expanding access to HIV/AIDS and TB prevention and treatment services, reproductive health, and family planning services at health facilities in Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Lagos, Edo, Bayelsa, and Niger states. Information on the chatbot is available in both English and Hausa.

Impact

Over the course of the WCC grant in 2021 and 2022, the Nivi platform reached 95,933 people across India, Kenya, and Nigeria, of which 59 percent were women. Nivi's core behavior change model reached women with information to challenge harmful social and cultural perceptions, particularly around gender roles. It also engaged women with empowering messaging that builds a sense of agency while achieving personal goals along their health journey. Nivi created partnerships with public and private pharmacies and healthcare facilities in all three countries to ease referrals for sexual and reproductive health products and services; 884 of these facilities began working with Nivi, and 26,701 patient referrals were generated over the course of the WCC grant.



Strategies Employed

Through the WCC, USAID has identified five proven strategies to close the gender digital divide and increase women's economic empowerment. Nivi tapped into two of these—increasing women's confidence and developing women-centric technology—as the basis for its work.



Cultivating Women's Confidence—Giving women an easy-to-access, trusted, and confidential source of health information allows them to take better care of themselves and their families, in turn giving them confidence that they are making comprehensive health care decisions.



Designing Women-Centric Technology—Nivi's chatbot brings the health system to women through personalized services and product offerings relevant to their life and health journey.



Photo: Nivi

Advancing women's digital connectivity and meaningful use of technology are key components to ensuring women's socio-economic empowerment. The WomenConnect Challenge is a global call for solutions to improve women's participation in everyday life by significantly changing the ways women access and use technology.

www.womenconnectchallenge.org



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