Throughout the developing world, people are realizing the power of the internet to connect citizens to information, to the world, and to each other. Yet this realization alone does not bridge the growing digital divide between haves and have-nots. In order to close this gap and empower citizens of The Gambia, communities need access to resources and training.

Bwiam presents a unique opportunity to promote and develop both access to and knowledge of the Internet in a large rural community in West Africa at minimal expense.

Located in West Coast Region of The Gambia, Bwiam is an educational, cultural and occupational hub. Due to the presence of many schools, the hospital, and various organizations, there is a high concentration of professionals and educated youth. Between this professional concentration and Bwiam’s geographic and cultural influence on the Foni region, village leaders have an influence not only in Bwiam but in the region as a whole.

Bwiam’s professionals historically have had neither access nor training on the Internet. In order to maximize their impact on the community, they need to have a better understanding of the power of the Internet to connect people to information and each other, and of the techniques and best practices of its use.

Professionals and village youth leaders need to be more proficient in internet use so that they can conduct research on topics such as sexual and reproductive health issues, micro finance, and modern farming techniques, so that they can maximize their influence on the local community.

Affiliate groups located throughout The Gambia require their leaders to have proficiency with internet use and social networking skills.

The Bwiam branch of the Youth Action Movement (YAM) is a youth group sponsored by the Gambia Family Planning Association. Members of YAM are young, well-educated, and seen throughout the community as role models for their peers.

We propose to provide capacity-building training for YAM leaders in key areas of internet use, and to empower them to then transfer their newfound skills to the community at large.

Training members in internet research skills will allow them to provide more thorough and informative community sensitization campaigns

Taking advantage of the enhanced communication and coordination abilities imparted by modern social networks would further build capacity of affiliate groups

Youth group leaders' previously held advocacy expertise would effect skills transfer to associate group members and community members at large.