






Photo Credit: Ramundo Media for DAI


Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team


When communities are unmapped, especially those of extremely poor or marginalized persons, they tend to be overlooked in development and policy discussions. Maps help draw attention to community needs and a lack of resources and can serve as an advocacy tool to affect positive change. They are even more critical for women, who often do not have a voice in their communities and have limited access to technology. Maps can help women and girls by illustrating and bringing awareness to some of the most pressing issues they face. For example, maps can help determine access to educational facilities or identify places where there are high incidences of sexual harassment and violence.

As a winner of the [WomenConnect Challenge](#), USAID's global call to close the gender digital divide, [Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team](#) trained young women and male allies in Tanzania and Peru to create free, open source maps and plot data.

The #LetGirlsMap project

-  Empowered local females by teaching them how to use technology.
-  Created maps addressing critical issues for women, such as female genital mutilation and gender-based violence.
-  Highlighted pressing issues in communities and positioned women as agents of change.

 In Tanzania, the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team partnered with YouthMappers and the Tanzania Development Trust to train women in 78 villages across the Serengeti to create maps. These maps allowed police and social workers to more easily locate rural villages when responding to emergency calls to rescue girls about to undergo female genital mutilation. Previously, the responders had difficulty locating the girls when they received these calls. Because of the use of these maps, hundreds of girls were safely rescued and placed in safe houses. The mappers also collected data on reported cases of gender-based violence in order to raise the profile of the persistent issue and advocate for solutions.

 In Peru, the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team worked with students in five secondary schools to collect data and map gender-specific issues in their communities, such as gender-based violence, opinions on machismo, political participation, and women's participation in labor markets. These efforts led to the creation of a YouthMappers chapter at a local Cusco university and the adoption of mapping technologies by regional government offices in their gender empowerment initiatives.

#LetGirlsMap successfully gave women and girls a voice, new technological skills, and a platform to advocate for their own needs.