Mapping and bridging the gender gap
Testimonies from the Indian Wikimedia community

ANWESHA CHAKRABORTY & NETHA HUSSAIN
Context of the research

- Started in November 2017
- Findings from the gender research mapping project by Rosie Stephenson-Goodknight
- One year later, Donna Strickland’s Wikipedia biography sparked a discussion on gender bias and poor visibility of women's biographies on Wikipedia
Barriers for participation

- Lack of internet access
- Lack of discretionary time
- Lesser internet skills
- Less self-confidence
- Real or perceived harassment
- Lack of role models
- Inability to withstand Wikipedia’s polemical culture
Content bias on Wikipedia

“Gender bias in Wikipedia is not just restricted to participation but spills over to the content of article. Women and men are presented differently in Wikipedia’s articles. A woman’s existence in the digital world is still determined by her connections with men”.

Chakraborty A. et al, WikiWorkshop 2018
### Content bias on Wikipedia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Female biographies</th>
<th>Male biographies</th>
<th>Percentage of female biographies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangla</td>
<td>4341</td>
<td>15017</td>
<td>22.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malayalam</td>
<td>4368</td>
<td>9486</td>
<td>31.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>3314</td>
<td>4813</td>
<td>40.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>3978</td>
<td>12973</td>
<td>30.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>1381</td>
<td>16.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odiya</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>1613</td>
<td>36.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>3587</td>
<td>18244</td>
<td>16.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>2841</td>
<td>22.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why study now?

- Only 3% of editors from India were women (2012). No country specific gender gap studies since 2012.
- Cisco forecast: Internet penetration in India is projected to increase sharply by 2021, from 28% to 59% of the population (2017).
- Thus, more women are likely to have access to the internet and subsequently some to Wikipedia.
Data collection

- Semi-structured interviews carried out on Skype, recorded with consent, lasting approximately 40 minutes
- Timeframe: October 2017 and November 2018
- Respondents from various academic backgrounds, different regions of India, contributing to different language versions, of various age groups, existing Wikipedians as well as ones who have stopped contributing; Wikipedians working on various aspects such as content creation, outreach and specific projects.
- 10 female and 6 male respondents
Barriers to contribute - I

Discretionary time

Indian women perform significantly more housework than men.

Working women have the double responsibility of job and household chores, due to which they don’t prefer to spend any time on volunteering.

“Wikipedia is like my third job”

“I use the very little freetime I have for editing Wikipedia”

“I stopped editing Wikipedia because I had to take up a bigger role in my family”
Barriers to contribute - II

- Internet use of younger women is monitored by (mostly male) parents, permitted to use the internet only for study purposes.
- For many young women, mobility, for eg. to participate in outreach programs, is itself a barrier.
- Many women, regardless of their age, do not possess devices (laptops, mobile phones) compared to men of similar age groups and socioeconomic status.
- Older women often lack the technical skills for editing Wikipedia.
Motivations to contribute

- sharing of knowledge and stories in mother tongues
- caring deeply about fields of expertise or interest
- duty to share knowledge in a particular subject area with the wider world
- honing writing skills
- exercising management and leadership skills in outreach sessions
- narrating stories, facts and sharing photos, audio clips (from India)

Image by Kim Dodson, Randall Benson, CC-BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons
Bridging gaps

- Recruiting new editors through outreach at universities
- Making online tech spaces more inclusive
- Making editorial interface user-friendly (especially in Indian languages)
- Better support groups for women and minorities
- Encouraging housewives, especially those who help with homework of kids
- Better mentoring for women to become mentors
- Making user friendly editorial space

Image by Chinmayi SK, CC-BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia India blog
THANK YOU

anwesha@chalmers.se
nethahussain@gmail.com

Image by Krish Dulal CC BY-SA 4.0