

**COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT
(CSTD)**

**Twenty-first session
Geneva, 14 to 18 May 2018**

**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on
their efforts in 2017 to implement the outcome of the WSIS**

Submission by

United Nations Children's Fund

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 21st session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

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WSIS Reporting: UNICEF Activities Report; January 2018

State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World

In its annual "State of the World's Children" report (www.unicef.org/publications/index_101992.html) in 2017, UNICEF presented a comprehensive survey of the impact of digital and information technology on the lives of children around the world. The report set out to examine the impact in four main areas:

- The opportunities such technologies are creating for children in areas like education, learning, social and economic participation, play, and socialization.
- The potential of first- and second-level digital divides to deepen existing socioeconomic inequality.
- The risks technologies pose in areas like cyberbullying, online sexual predation and to children's data and privacy.
- The potential impact of technologies on children's health and happiness.

The report presented a series of policy and other recommendations for a range of stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, educators, parents, and children themselves grouped under the following six headings:

1. Provide all children with affordable access to high-quality online resources.
2. Protect children from harm online.
3. Safeguard children's privacy.
4. Teach digital literacy to keep children informed, engaged and safe online.
5. Leverage the power of the private sector to advance ethical standards and practices that protect and benefit children online.
6. Put children at the centre of digital policy.

The report highlighted a number of themes of special relevance in the context of WSIS reporting, including the following:

The impact of first- and second-level digital divides: Drawing on estimates from the ITU, The report states that around 29% of young people (15-24-year-olds) – or around 346 million individuals – have no internet access, and that the bulk of these non-users are concentrated in low- and middle-income countries, mainly in Africa and Asia. This divide also mirrors broader socioeconomic gaps in terms of income, gender, and location (urban/rural divides).

But as well as this "first-level" digital divide, the report warns of persistent "second-level" divides, which greatly limit the quality of children's online access and its usefulness in their lives. These second-level reflect factors, including the following:

- **Device type:** The report notes that mobile phones are not functionally equivalent to personal computers and may provide users with only a 'second-best' online experience, greatly limiting their capacity to take advantage of opportunities in areas like education and learning. It cites findings from UNICEF's Global Kids Online survey that "suggest that the user experience of children who have internet access via mobile phone alone may differ from that of others because 'the small screen limits the amount and complexity of content that can be readily viewed.' When searching for information online, for example, 'mobile users tend to scan content rather than process and analyse it more deeply.'"

- **The absence of relevant content and languages:** The report notes that, despite improvements, many children still struggle to find useful online content in their native language. “This may discourage potential users from trying to go online,” the report warns, adding that “it raises a bigger concern, too: namely, that the absence of content that speaks directly to children’s diverse cultural contexts and experiences may widen knowledge gaps.”

Overall, the persistence of these divides, both first- and second-level, risks greatly undermining the potential of the internet to deliver economic and other opportunity to children in low-income settings. “The risk that connectivity can become a driver of inequity, not an equalizer of opportunity, is both real and immediate,” the report warns.

The continuing absence of children’s concerns in internet governance: The report strongly notes the absence of children’s concerns in internet governance and policymaking: “Regulatory frameworks for digital protection, digital opportunity, digital governance and digital accountability are not keeping pace with the rapidly changing digital landscape and are overlooking the unique impact digital technologies have on children.” It warns that, “If left unclosed, those regulatory gaps will quickly be exploited.”

The lack of reliable information and data on children’s internet usage: The report draws repeated attention to the absence of data on how many children are accessing the internet and how they are using the internet and digital technologies. “It is vital to invest in the collection of data on children’s connectivity,” the report states. “Data should be disaggregated by wealth, geography, gender, age and other factors to spotlight disparities in access and opportunity and to target programmes and monitor progress. Evidence should be used to guide policymaking, monitor and evaluate the impact of government policies and strategies, and support the international sharing of best practices.”

Through its Global Kids Online project, UNICEF is exploring children’s use of digital technologies in a growing number of countries. In addition, for *The State of the World’s Children 2017*, a series of workshops was carried by UNICEF Country Offices and National Committees in cooperation with researchers at Western Sydney University to explore children’s attitudes towards internet connectivity. A report from the workshops is available here: www.unicef.org/publications/index_102310.html

UNICEF’s work to protect children online and promote children’s digital citizenship

UNICEF works in at least 35 countries worldwide,¹ undertaking research on the impact of ICT’s on children, implementing awareness raising campaigns and working with Governments, civil society and the private sector to create specific programmes to protect children online and promote children’s digital citizenship.

UNICEF aims to strengthen the implementation of a coordinated national and international response to the protection of children online and promotion of children’s digital citizenship, with engagement of different stakeholders, including ministries of information and communication technologies, justice, social welfare and education, legislators, law enforcement agencies, the ICT industry, civil society including faith-based organisations, families and children themselves.

¹ Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Macedonia, Madagascar, Maldives, Malaysia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Serbia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Vietnam, Uganda and Uruguay.

Key strategies are:

- **Legal and policy reform and implementation:** UNICEF supports Governments, civil society and the ICT industry in the creation of an enabling national and international legal and policy framework for child online protection, which is effectively implemented and enforced.
- **Support to children who have experienced online violence and abuse:** UNICEF works to build capacity of Governments and civil society in the provision of services for children who have experienced online violence and abuse. This includes supporting telephone helplines and online platforms where children and families may report violence and abuse.
- **Industry engagement:** UNICEF collaborates with the ICT industry in developing and implementing tools and guidelines on child online risks, and supports capacity building of the industry on children's rights in the online environment, including child online protection.
- **Education and awareness raising:** UNICEF supports awareness raising campaigns and training/education of children, parents, teachers and other caregivers on online risks, how to report incidents and general Internet safety. This is key for the prevention of online violence and abuse and for the reporting of these crimes.
- **Research and evidence generation:** UNICEF works with partners to generate evidence and data on the extent, nature and consequences of online violence and abuse, and current responses in countries with the aim to inform policy and practice.

At global level, UNICEF has developed global goods, tools and capacity building materials to support the work of UNICEF and partners. This included providing technical support to the development of the Council of Europe guidelines for Governments, civil society and private sector to respect, protect and fulfill children's right in the digital environment, which were adopted in November 2017. The guidelines will put a practical and comprehensive framework in place for governments and other stakeholders, including business to protect and empower children in exercising their full range of right online. They are the first instrument of their kind, and will help Europe to lead the way in setting sound global policy standard on children's right in the digital world.

In collaboration with ECPAT and Religious for Peace UNICEF published a resource for faith-based communities 'Protecting children from online sexual exploitation: A guide to action for religious leaders and communities'

(https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/FBO_Guide_for_Religious_Leaders_and_Communities_ENG.pdf) and in collaboration with Child Helpline International 'A new reality: child helplines report on online child sexual exploitation and abuse from around the world'

([https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/LEAP_report_CHI_and_UNICEF_\(final\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/LEAP_report_CHI_and_UNICEF_(final).pdf)) was published.

UNICEF is also engaged in global advocacy and partnerships, including as a member of the We PROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online. UNICEF raised the issue of child online protection in various international fora and platforms in 2017, including at the International Parliamentary Conference on National Security and Cybersecurity in London in March, the WSIS Forum in Geneva in May, the Global Network for Children Forum in Panama in May, the Child Dignity Congress in Rome in October, and the Internet Governance Forum in Geneva in December 2017 and contributed to the UN Women Orange campaign spotlighting the issue of child online protection and UNICEF's work.

During 2017, UNICEFs had many other notable achievements, engagements, initiatives and partnerships related to the programme of work of the WSIS, some examples;

- [Safer Internet Day](#), which is a renewed push of the #ReplyforAll campaign and other engaging assets -- further empowering young people and reaching out to the general public. Advocacy and communication efforts resulted in widespread country uptake, with **63** countries engaging and deploying the assets. The larger theme for the international day was: *Be the Change, Unite for a Better Internet*. DOC repackaged the UNICEF/WeProtect powerful assets on Online Sexual Violence and Digital Safety. The call to action focused on getting audiences, especially children and young people, to share advice on how to deal with online abuse/risks in the comments section and to raise awareness among their friends by sharing the campaign content on their own channels. The actions built on the 2016 year's launch of the UNICEF/WeProtect partnership. The package included digital assets led by the #ReplyforAll Tumblr, graphics and tips from young people, a photo essay, videos and a revamped website.
- ***A Safer Internet for Children and Adolescents in China*** project. Tencent Foundation and UNICEF signed a grant agreement in March 2017, in which Tencent Foundation agrees to donate 10 million RMB to UNICEF China to support "A Safer Internet for Children and Adolescents in China" project. The ultimate objective of this project is that all children benefit from a safer and more secure internet by making child online safety a priority for the government, the ICT industry as well as parents, caregivers, educators, and communities.
- UNICEF was a key partner in the program development & session moderation at the ITU hosted "**AI for good**" event.
- UNICEF Co-led the data innovation LABs series of events to strengthen system uptake and awareness of new use of big data in support of humanitarian health and education challenges
- UNICEF incorporated ICTs and new digital technologies as a key enabler in the new UNICEF strategic plan 2018-2021
- UNICEF increasingly use ICTs in our programme work for design insight and real time monitoring of programme implementation across all sectors, eg Education, Child protection, Health etc.

Note: The above content is a summary from across the organization, and has many authors, so no specific individual needs to be mentioned in your report other than "Contributed by UNICEF staff".