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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2019 to implement the outcomes 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 23rd 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.

WSIS Reporting: UNICEF Activities Report – October 2019

UNICEF's reporting for 2019 is presented as evidence and policy work, and programmes and field implementations.

Evidence and policy

Evidence generation on children's digital lives

Since 2016, UNICEF's Global Kids Online initiative has surveyed more than 25,000 children from 18 countries outside of Europe about their engagement with digital technology, enabling UNICEF as an organization to represent their voices and experiences locally and globally. Working together with colleagues in UNICEF and with external partners, this project represents state-of-the-art evidence generation and constitutes the most widely implemented comparative research effort in the world on this topic. In 2019, UNICEF started/completed new Global Kids Online projects in Peru and Costa Rica. A first comparative 11-country report on children's opportunities and risks online was published by UNICEF's Office of Research in November 2019.

Child online protection research and industry support

Extending these evidence generation efforts, UNICEF is currently designing and implementing a 14-country project on online child sexual exploitation and abuse under the Disrupting Harm research project, implemented together with ECPAT International and INTERPOL. The household survey component of the project builds on the Global Kids Online methodology and will be used to generate new evidence on the scope and nature of online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Southern and Eastern Africa and South-East Asia.

To support internal capacity building, UNICEF developed a set of training materials on key considerations and topics for working with the ICT industry and understanding ICT industry responsibilities and action towards ensuring child online protection. These cover a wide range of topics, including promoting children's responsible behavior online, freedom of expression and participation, child sexual abuse materials and online child sexual abuse and exploitation and digital marketing. The package also builds critical understanding of balancing the need between the right to protection and opportunities for children when they navigate the online world.

Understanding digital sexuality education

In East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF has explored digital sexuality education through a desk study to understand what is already being offered online to children and adolescents. The peer reviewed report 'The Opportunity for Digital Sexuality Education in East Asia Pacific' was published in 2019. It illustrates existing digital sexuality education platforms (multi-media suites, social media, videos, websites and mobile apps) and provides a foundation for understanding this digital eco-system. The recommendations call for a mechanism to ensure the quality of digital sexuality education and a positive approach with age-appropriate, appealing content that promotes healthy relationships and gender equality. Together with UNESCO, UNFPA, LoveFrankie and YouthLEAD collaborative efforts were developed to expand the research on digital groups providing online sexuality education across the Asia

region. A regional event '*TURNED ON – Sexuality Education in the Digital Space*' brought digital groups together in Bangkok and fostered learnings and the emergence of a network. Going forward, UNICEF and partners will continue to focus on this topic and support the growing eco-system.

Online gaming and child rights

In September 2019, UNICEF released a discussion paper on [Children's Rights in Online Gaming](#), as a first attempt to apply a child rights framework to the challenging conjunction of gaming and the Internet to improve the online gaming environment for children. Aimed specifically at online gaming companies, the paper discusses how child rights may be impacted by online gaming and business models of gaming companies, to encourage further debate and joint work among different stakeholders, taking the set of issues outlined here as a starting point. (quote from the paper, p. 6). This paper benefitted from input from and debate with key industry stakeholders.

Artificial intelligence and child rights

Children are using digital tools that utilize artificial intelligence (AI) systems – from social media face filters and content recommenders to language translation apps – or are being impacted by AI systems employed in social welfare, education and other sectors. To help create environments that support the safe and beneficial use of AI systems for children's development, UNICEF, in partnership with the Government of Finland and other organizations part of [Generation AI](#), is developing a [policy guidance](#) for governments, businesses, the non-profit sector and the Organization itself. The initiative kicked-off with a workshop in New York in June 2019 (see the [website](#) and [report](#)). In order to ensure that the policy guidance is globally informed and balanced, UNICEF will host a series of regional workshops for local input in 2019 and 2020.

Scoping digital literacy for children

In today's world, children need to be digitally literate to fully participate in digital life, be safe online, and develop critical and analytical skills. In order to help UNICEF move towards a holistic approach to implementing digital literacy programs, a [paper](#) was written that reviews existing digital competence frameworks, analyzes their applicability to UNICEF's needs and proposes a working definition of digital literacy. The study was based on a literature review, interviews with external experts, and a survey of 37 UNICEF offices about their digital literacy efforts and needs on the ground.

UNICEF programmes and field implementations

Of the more than 1,000 Technology for Development initiatives by UNICEF, some 400 of them are currently in the stages of piloting, evidence generation and/or scaling across the globe in support of ICT enabled digital programming solutions. Below are highlighted initiatives.

GIGA: A "GAVI for Gigabytes"

"GIGA" is a new initiative by UNICEF and ITU to connect every school to the internet, and every young person to information, opportunity and choice. GIGA is anchored in the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation's findings 1A and 1B which state, respectively, that by "2030 every adult should have affordable access to digital networks" and calls for "a broad, multi-stakeholder alliance, involving the UN, create a platform for sharing digital public goods." GIGA has four pillars:

Map every school's connectivity: In partnership with governments, GIGA is mapping connectivity demand using schools as a base point. This involves mapping the physical location of all schools and their current connectivity usage in real time to estimate their connectivity needs. These numbers will be aggregated across multiple countries to create a demand pool. Already more than 800,000 schools have been mapped, and are viewable, live, at www.projectconnect.world

Finance the common bid: GIGA will aggregate connectivity demand - pooled across multiple countries - and create a cost forecasting model. Regional business cases and bids will be created that demand bid-applicants have a plan to connect all schools. Bids will be presented to the private sector and financing partners to create layered funding packages and incentives for providers.

Connect every school: In partnership with industry, GIGA will determine possible solutions based on the connectivity requirements. GIGA will help oversee the implementation of solutions with a focus on good governance and security. Solutions will also be developed to monitor connectivity usage in real time.

Empower young people with skills: Building on the investments by UNICEF's Venture Fund in open source solutions, solutions will be delivered and scaled by governments and local industry to make digital content, information and skills available to children, teachers, and administrators.

Assistive Technology for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

All children, including those with severe communication challenges, have the right to learn. Assistive Technology for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AT AAC) is being made available to young children with complex communication needs in the Europe and Central Asia region in order to help them develop language skills and thus participate in education and social life, right from the early years.

AAC supports children to communicate within their environment, to learn and function independently and improve developmental outcomes. In the medium- to long-term, this results in educational inclusion, participation and community living, as opposed to social exclusion or institutionalization.

UNICEF is advancing the availability and use of affordable AAC: an open source on-line training package, which includes pictographic symbol sets used for communication, has been developed for early intervention professionals to give them the skills to support children with assistive technology in the domain of communication. An open license AAC tablet-based communicator, Cboard, which has been customized for languages in the pilot countries, will be tested for effectiveness.

U-Report

Originally a mobile phone-based social messaging tool engaging young people as positive agents of change – today U-Report also functions on digital channels outside mobile phones, such as for example Facebook messenger. U-Report is adapted to the local context in each country depending on the needs and priorities of youth and their civil society allies - but in each case it provides essential information to young people and communities (in their local languages), and it works to increase civic engagement with the ultimate goal of achieving positive change for children youth and families. In 2019 U-Report scaled from 6 million users in 55 countries to 8 million users in 65 countries.

National systems strengthening through real-time monitoring

Globally, UNICEF is supporting real-time monitoring (RTM) in some 66 counties to enable national partners to support Digital Health, Water and Sanitation, Social Inclusion, Education, and other initiatives across countries. For example:

- Georgia has established the real-time electronic MIS, or Birth Registry – tracking every mother and newborn through pregnancy and delivery. An Immunization electronic module was developed and operational at the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, with UNICEF support.
- In Madagascar, KoboCollect was used to collect data on the effectiveness of trainings given to teachers and head teachers by the Ministry of Education, while its health section used DataWinners to monitor incidence of a series of childhood illnesses in the country.
- In the Maldives, Open EMIS was scaled up to cover all the government schools in the country.
- In Lao, DHIS2 and Interactive Voice Response was used for Infant and Young Child Feeding programming.

UNICEF is currently supporting 36 active deployments of RapidPro as an RTM solution to help UNICEF and national partners improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes and course correct based on RTM information generated by ICTs using mobile technology. To strengthen national systems capacity, an initiative to support RTM in 12 countries was launched, and implemented during the course of 2019. Through this initiative, more than 37 million children and 32 million families reached/covered across WASH, Health, Early Childhood Development (ECD), Disabilities and other Social Protection interventions.

A joint programme with UNFPA to advance maternal and child health through RapidPro was launched with the Government of Rwanda in 2019. Based on this experience, and external partner interest, UNICEF is currently developing sectoral guidance on the use of RTM for Immunization with Johns Hopkins University, and in the Water and Sanitation sector, to support further mainstreaming and scale of digital programming approaches with the support of technology.

In order to have real-time data available at national level for planning and monitoring of civil registration service performance, a routine administrative data collection system has been developed using Rapid Pro. This simple data collection tool can considerably increase the availability of aggregate real-time data on the number of births (and deaths) registered. In 2019, RapidPro for birth registration has been piloted in selected regions in Benin, Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Senegal with a view to assessing completeness and quality of data for scaling up the system and for extension to other countries, including Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia.

Digital citizenship for children

UNICEF is committed to providing platforms, tools, and resources for young people to engage as citizens and positive change makers in online communities where they can showcase their voices, ideas and actions in support of children's rights. In support of this objective, in January 2019, UNICEF re-launched the Voices of Youth website, which serves as a dynamic and safe hub for young people to showcase their activities; inspires them to become change makers and advocates; and offers tools and resources on communication and advocacy. The new site has had nearly 1 million unique visitors since launch and

published hundreds of pieces of content developed by young people from across the world in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

#ENDViolence online activities

For Safer Internet Day 2019, UNICEF called on adolescents and youth to be kind online as a way to promote positivity in online spaces, in response to the issue of cyberbullying. This was supported by major social networks, several high-profile UN accounts and agencies, and UNICEF offices around the world. Later in the year, K-pop stars [BTS](#) kicked off International Day of Friendship calling on young people to commit to be kind, by sharing kind notes with each other. Within 36 hours there were 1.4 million mentions of the call to action and 5.2 million engagements online.

Through its youth engagement tool U-Report, and in collaboration with the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence Against Children, in 2019 UNICEF polled over 170,000 youth between the ages 13 and 24 in over 30 countries about their experiences online. They reported that one in three respondents had been a victim of peer-to-peer violence online, with one in five reporting having skipped school due to cyberbullying and violence. Almost three-quarters of young people also said social networks, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, are the most common place for online bullying. To help prevent and address both in person and online bullying, UNICEF published [Tips](#) for parents on [how to speak to their children](#), [their schools](#), and [their decision-makers](#) to prevent and address bullying.

Menstrual health and hygiene information and period tracking for and with girls

In order to address the lack of menstruation information and to harness the opportunity of digital to deliver period tracking and learning directly into girls' hands, UNICEF in East Asia and the Pacific is developing a mobile phone menstruation tracker app with and for adolescent girls. The app, Oky, aims to transform stress and shame into empowerment, by delivering evidence-based information that is accessible on the digital tools girls use every day, to help them make informed decisions about their reproductive health, and with a core focus on data privacy. Features include a predictive algorithm for tracking cycles, a visual display of historical data, a menstruation information section with FAQs, quizzes and gamified components, and a chatbot. Oky is based on open source principles, and UNICEF will work with girls and partners across the globe to improve, adapt and expand the code and content, deploy Oky to new markets and scale globally.

Digital literacy and entrepreneurial acumen for girls

Girls aged 15-19 are more than twice as likely than boys of the same age to be outside education, employment or training. Women in the workforce also contend with occupational segregation, limited access to capital and networks as entrepreneurs and, globally, earn only 77% of what men earn. Girls are less likely than boys to benefit from digital literacy opportunities and so tend to have lower levels of digital literacy skills; they are 1.5 less likely to own a mobile device, and use mobile devices in different ways from boys (often using less complex mobile services). Gender norms also restrict their overall digital exposure and learning.

In 2019, under a new partnership with Chloe, UNICEF is supporting programming models that equip adolescent girls and young women with digital and technology skills, entrepreneurial capacity and spirit, and access to market opportunities and pathways for success. In Tajikistan, Senegal, Morocco, Bolivia

and Jordan, UNICEF works on modeling Innovation Labs and Tech for Girls programmes for scaling across other countries.

Closing the gender digital divide

As part of UNICEF's commitment to greater digital inclusivity for girls, it co-leads the International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA) Gender Working Group and has facilitated the collection and curation of gender-based violence innovations, for learning, show-casing and potential collaborative investment by IDIA members. Further, UNICEF constantly undertakes communication and advocacy activities to encourages girls to code, to embrace a continuum of digital skills from basic to advanced, and to develop marketable skills bundles for girls' empowerment and future careers.

Collectively, the UNICEF's work in ICT contributes to the following targets:

1. To connect all villages with ICTs and establish community access points

2. To connect all secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs

5. To connect all health centres and hospitals with ICTs

6. To connect all central government departments and establish websites

9. To encourage the development of content and to put in place technical conditions in order to facilitate the presence and use of all world languages on the Internet

10. To ensure that more than half the world's inhabitants have access to ICTs within their reach and make use of them