

Gender and ICTD V2

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WSIS 10 year review

Despite the previous decade's achievements in ICT and connectivity, there are still significant digital divides, between and within countries and between women and men.

The gender digital divide persists in women's access to and use of ICTs, including in education, employment and other areas of economic and social development.

WSIS 10 year review

The report emphasised that ending the gender digital divide and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender and are mutually reinforcing efforts and identified the following actions:

- mainstreaming gender in the WSIS process, with a new emphasis on gender in the implementation and monitoring of the action lines
- immediate measures to achieve gender equality in Internet users by 2020, especially by significantly enhancing women's and girls' education and participation in ICTs, as users, content creators, employees, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders
- ensuring women's full participation in decision -making processes related to information and communications technologies

SDGs, gender and ICT

The UN **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** includes gender equality as a goal (target 5c) and universal, affordable ICT access as a target (target 9c).

5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

9.c Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020

#1 Understanding barriers to access and use

- The **gender data gap** in access and use limits our capacity to identify needs and develop solutions
- **Affordability** is affected by disparity in incomes between women and men
- Persisting **disparity in digital literacy and education** prevents women and girls from fully benefitting from ICTs
- **Culture and norms** underlie almost all disparity and inequality in access

Data on Digital gender gap

ITU estimates that the overall global Internet user gender gap grew from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016.

Internet user penetration rates are higher for men than for women in all regions of the world with the smallest gaps observed for the Americas (<2%) and CIS (5%), and largest gaps found in Africa (23%), Arab States (20%) and **Asia-Pacific (17%)**. The gap is also growing in the LDCs at 31%, up from almost 29% in 2013.

GSMA estimates that there was an **overall gap of 202 million fewer women than men owning a mobile phone.**

Data gap

The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, established in 2004, has developed a core list of ICT indicators. The latest version of the list (2013) includes 57 indicators, 12 of which are collected and disaggregated by sex.

- Education – Teachers, pupils, students and graduates in non-tertiary and tertiary ICT or computer courses
- Small business owners using mobiles and internet
- Persons in government routinely using computers and internet

Data gap

- No **globally representative data sets** on internet access that are sex-disaggregated; and the availability of data sets concerning the ways in which women access and use the internet is limited.
- National statistical offices in many countries also often **lack the resources to gather sex-disaggregated data**, and few countries or communications operators publish such data.

Unless data are sex-disaggregated, gender differences are masked, an understanding of the reasons for the gender gap will be limited, and inappropriate policymaking and targets become more likely.

A4AI, GSMA, UNCTAD, Web Foundation, BCWWG

Affordability

Cost is one of the most pertinent factors determining whether or not women can access and benefit from the Internet.

- **World Wide Web Foundation** research in 2015 across 10 countries in the global south indicates that **women are 50% less likely than men to access the Internet** and the two main reasons for this are: the high cost of connectivity and the lack of technical know-how.
- Cost is the most important barrier overall to owning and using a mobile phone, particularly for women. *GSMA*

Income disparities and lack of access to resources

- Gaps in wages and in purchasing power are major determinants of the different abilities of women and men to access ICTs'
- Decision-making on household incomes affects women and girls' access to phones and other communication devices
- The cost of broadband in developing countries is still way above what is generally considered "affordable Internet" (as per Broadband Commission for Digital Development, target 2, May 2010, an entry-level broadband plan is less than 5 percent of monthly average national income,) women may remain unable to afford their own equipment or much connectivity.

Education and Digital Literacy

Gender disparities in access to education still prevent women and girls from benefiting from opportunities and constrain their ability to gain more advanced online skills.

- UNESCO notes that in 2011, women represented two-thirds of the 775m illiterate adults worldwide. Women with such disadvantages often lack, or believe they lack, the digital skills and confidence needed to use the Internet, leading to them failing to gain access or restricting their use
- New skills are also required as technology becomes increasingly pervasive in political, cultural, social and economic life. UNESCO points out that women without digital competences may be excluded from services and face increasing difficulties in managing their day-to-day lives.
- According to recent research from the OECD, despite concerted efforts by policy-makers, the gender gap between men/women in Science, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) careers is in fact widening in many European countries.
- Persisting attitudes favoring boys and preventing girls from science and technology courses, including beliefs that girls do not have the technical minds.

Gender and cultural norms, attitudes and beliefs

“Gaps limit the potential of ICTs for women and girls and perpetuate inequalities between boys and girls. Some barriers may be obvious (such as affordability or lack of access to or decision-making over money and resources or limitations over women’s physical and social mobility); other barriers may be more subtle – such as prioritizing access by boys to available computers and phones or lack of access for girls and women to safe and women-friendly cyber-café’s and public spaces with ICT facilities.”

A 2016 report focusing on access by the IGF Best Practice Forum on Gender have found that patriarchal culture and norms, including gender-based violence mediated by technology, underlie gender disparities in access to ICTs.

Gender and cultural norms, attitudes and beliefs

Many studies demonstrate how gender norms, attitudes and beliefs affects women's access:

- A study in Myanmar on gender, mobile phones and the Internet shows that women are 29% less likely to own a smartphone than men in Myanmar due to a combination of reasons, including low income and traditional gender roles. Men in the country tend to have a more prominent role in households 'based on the religious belief that only men can become a Buddha'.
- A study conducted in two mid-sized towns in India, Bhadohi and Ferozabad districts of Uttar Pradesh showed that among internet users, the three major barriers or challenges women faced in accessing the Internet at cybercafes included social and family restrictions in the form of parental curfews or involvement in household duties emerged as the main barriers in accessing cybercafes, which were not considered suitable places for single girls because these places are popular for watching pornography.

#2 A human rights framework for bridging the gender digital divide

A human rights-based approach applies human rights norms and standards to relevant policies and programmes. This includes establishing and maintaining key principles such as accountability, equality and non-discrimination, participation, transparency, empowerment and sustainability. Additionally, an Internet governance structure premised on human rights should ensure that individuals can challenge violations of their rights and that remedies are accessible and effective

- right to privacy
- Rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and of association
- Right to work and to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work
- Right to health
- Right to education and to participate in cultural life
- Rights of women with disabilities
- Rights of the child, particularly girls

#2 A human rights framework for bridging the gender digital divide

Emerging issues:

The advent of big data and artificial intelligence may have an impact on women's rights and on the gender digital divide. Data-driven technologies may provide new opportunities to solve societal problems and perform a range of complex tasks in everyday life, but there is also a risk of increasing disparities for those who do not have access, and of reinforcing, or even amplifying, gender inequalities due to data gaps and bias. For example, while big data analytics may offer possibilities to make gender-based discrimination more visible and to quantify women's political, economic, social and health status, there is also a risk that it may not pick up information about the diverse experiences of women, owing to underrepresentation or exclusion of particular groups online and a lack of reporting.

Another widely shared concern is that of algorithmic discrimination and bias. Studies indicate that as the use of artificial intelligence systems becomes more pervasive, there may be disproportionate and disparate impacts on certain groups facing systemic inequalities, including women within those groups

Gender-based violence

Specific groups of women, in particular young women, women belonging to ethnic minorities and indigenous women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, women with disabilities and women from marginalized groups may be at greater risk and may experience particularly severe forms of online violence. Women human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers and those critiquing sexist media practices online may also face particular harassment or threats online, such as interference with Internet services, computer confiscation, virus and spyware attacks and online defamation campaigns aimed at discrediting them or inciting other abuses against them.

Gender-based violence

- A helpline in Uttar Pradesh has a helpline number, 1090, which focuses overwhelmingly on technology-related harassment and abuse. By 30 September 2016, the helpline had received more than 600,000 calls. Almost almost 550,000 of these had to do with harassment through phones; less than ten thousand complaints were related to social media sites.
- In Pakistan, a man who killed his sister justified the murder by saying the “shameful” pictures his sister posted to social media necessitated that he kill her for the sake of “family honor.” Baloch was a model who challenged social restrictions online. Her brother has been convicted
- These examples are not meant to single out specific countries because the rising trend of gender-based violence is worldwide and affects women and girls whether they are poor or in positions of power.

Gender-based violence

States have obligations to combat online violence against women while safeguarding the right to access information about sexual and reproductive health and rights. Business enterprises have similar responsibilities. Actions to be taken to protect women against acts of online violence should be preventive, such as education campaigns or the provision of technical features enabling users to block content, and reactive, such as the urgent removal of unlawful content, investigation and action against perpetrators, and the provision of redress and reparation to victims. Any such measures should comply with international human rights norms and standards; in particular, no action may amount to undue restrictions on freedom of expression.

Gender-based violence

Inputs received from some States for the report outlined measures implemented to combat online violence against women, including education, legislation, preventive actions, reporting mechanisms and various other initiatives. A number of States have examined how they can use or clarify existing laws to address online violence against women, while others have adopted laws specifically addressing online violence, often in a gender-neutral manner. However, reports indicate that in many States, law enforcement agencies and courts are failing to take appropriate action in situations of online violence against women, or are using such laws as a pretext to restrict freedom of expression.

#3 Engaging gender politics in internet governance

Gender politics is not only about inclusion of women. It is equally the right to shape an internet whose very architecture promotes gender and social justice. This can only be done if more support is provided for gender advocates and feminists engage with the structural issues of the internet architecture.

APC has spearheaded a gender report card at the global IGF which has also been adopted in some regional IGFs.

#4 Integrating gender in strategies, plans, policies and budgets

The gender gap can be addressed by dedicated policy attention to investing in **gender-inclusive universal access and public access strategies.**

*Affordability Report 2016: “Very few countries currently take a gender-focused approach to their policy development — **only 10 out of 109 countries** covered in the 2013 Broadband Commission Working Group on Gender Report have policies that include references to gender. Only seven of a small sample of 17 developing countries analysed in further detail for our own affordability research have broadband plans in place, and only two (Nigeria and Colombia) have plans that include specific targets for ICT gender equity, with budget allocated to achieve these targets. Without a specific focus on gender equality goals, policies and national plans will continue to fail 50% of their population.”*

#4 Integrating gender in strategies, plans, policies and budgets

The working group on the gender digital divide of the Broadband Commission outlines several recommendations:

- Political will among decision makers and policy makers - gender focal point can no longer be an add-on or a voluntary position.
- Financing for gender responsive strategies and programs, investment and appropriate financing were also highlighted in the UN GA's WSIS +10 review
- Building capacity in gender analysis, planning and evaluation that includes intersectionality and power.
- Setting gender equality targets for internet access and use
- Assessing strategies, policies, plans and budgets for gender equality considerations.