COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)

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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2025 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 29th 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.

UNICEF WSIS Report 2025

UNICEF's reporting for 2025 focuses on the reporting template **Part Three: Innovative policies, programmes and projects** which have been undertaken, and future actions.

C1. The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

UNICEF and UNESCO launched the Gateways to Public Digital Learning Initiative at the Transforming Education Summit (TES) during UNGA 2022. This initiative aids countries in establishing public digital learning as a public good through high-quality, inclusive public digital learning platforms. It promotes knowledge exchange among countries and enhances global digital learning to ensure all children have access to quality digital education. As of October 2025, 28 countries have formally joined the Gateways initiative: Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Finland, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Singapore, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, the United States, Uruguay and Zambia.

UNICEF has helped embed open innovation and Digital Public Goods (DPGs) into public systems and global policy through the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and through its country office partnerships, the establishment of government-led DPG governance bodies and DPG policy commitments, including open-source first principles.

C2. Information and communication infrastructure / C7. ICT Applications: e-Learning / WSIS Target 2: To connect universities, colleges, secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs, To connect all secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs

The joint UNICEF/ITU Giga initiative supports governments to connect schools to the internet by providing mapping, modelling, financing and contracting tools, and at WSIS 2025 showcased school-as-a-hub models advancing community-led digital inclusion.

C3. Access to Information and Knowledge

UNICEF is building on and expanding its 2024 AI-powered translation work in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burkina Faso to make information and civic engagement in underserved languages more accessible in West and Central Africa.

C.4. Capacity building

UNICEF advanced efforts to integrate online sexual violence prevention into digital and blended parenting programs with partners including the University of Oxford and Parenting for Lifelong Health. It published *Parenting for the Digital Age*, summarizing findings from a rapid evidence synthesis and consultations with over 50 experts across UN agencies, NGOs, academia, and survivor-led organizations.

In partnership with Child Helpline International, UNICEF worked to strengthen helpline capacity to support children and families in the digital environment. The project engages 30 helplines globally to deliver operator training and build community awareness of helpline services.

UNICEF continued to advance efforts to promote child rights and responsible business conduct in relation to the digital environment. The D-CRIA Toolbox for industry, containing detailed guidance on conducting child rights impact assessments in relation to the digital environment, was launched in

June. In July, UNICEF launched corporate disclosure recommendations on child rights impacts in relation to the digital environment, drawing links between child rights disclosures and existing mandatory and voluntary reporting standards and frameworks.

C6. Enabling environment

UNICEF provides technical assistance to global, regional, and national bodies in developing policies and legislation on digital issues impacting children's rights and protection. It launched a project to strengthen technology regulation for child rights and safety, supported by an expert advisory group. UNICEF published *Artificial Intelligence Governance in Motion: A Rapid Global Review of AI Regulation and Its Implications for Children's Rights* to inform ongoing efforts to strengthen AI regulation. Separately, UNICEF published a policy note, *Drawing a Line in Digital Spaces*, highlighting key considerations for legislators, policymakers, and other stakeholders considering age-based limits for social media. UNICEF country offices around the world also supported national governments in policy and legislative reform.

C7. ICT Applications: e-Learning

UNICEF partners with governments through two global programs aimed at improving education system capacity. The Technology for Education Technical Assistance Initiative (Tech4Ed TAI) collaborates with Ministries of Education to enhance their ability to coordinate the digital transformation of education systems, including EMIS, evidence generation and use, and the design and implementation of digital education strategies to improve quality and equity of teaching and learning. Tech4Ed TAI is delivered in partnership with the Global Partnership for Education, the EdTech Hub, and the governments of El Salvador, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Laos, Lesotho, Malawi, Maldives, and Tajikistan. The second program, Learning Pioneers, connects education authorities with innovators to address country-specific challenges. Using a human-centered design approach, Learning Pioneers works with the innovation ecosystem to visualize possible futures and develop key steps to achieve them, leveraging technology to catalyze education system transformation. The first cohort of Learning Pioneers countries is active in Egypt, Ghana, Malaysia, Rwanda, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe with a second country cohort set to begin implementation projects in 2026, comprising Cote d'Ivoire, Jordan, Lao PDR, Pakistan, Tanzania and Ukraine.

UNICEF has led the development of the EdTech for Good Framework, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland, Arm, ADB, and transdisciplinary partners across education and the EdTech industry. It enables the evaluation and curation of safe and impactful EdTech solutions, guiding education decision-makers in selecting the best solutions for any given context and system. True to its collaborative nature, after its beta release in November 2024, UNICEF continues to co-create and refine the Framework through recurring review cycles, incorporating feedback from key stakeholders, partners and EdTech experts. Additionally, UNICEF is actively pursuing a global endorsement to ensure that the EdTech for Good Framework becomes the globally recognized reference for decision-makers in selecting, scaling, and investing in EdTech solutions.

UNICEF's Learning Passport is a digital learning programme and supporting ecosystem adaptable to the specific needs of learners and educators—from foundational learning to skills development—across various contexts. Launched in 2018, it offers a flexible and highly adaptable platform that functions with or without internet connectivity, enabling children and young people to access quality

educational content anytime, anywhere. The Learning Passport is live in 50 countries with over 11.9 million users.

The UNICEF-Akelius Digital Learning Programme is one of the longest-standing digital learning programs supported by UNICEF. Its primary aim is to enhance educational outcomes through digital learning, focusing particularly on second- and foreign-language acquisition for marginalized children and adolescents – often refugees and migrants – aged 6 to 15 years. Launched in 2018, this initiative operates across various educational settings in 15 countries.

UNICEF's Accessible Digital Textbooks (ADT) Programme, launched in 2016, has driven innovation in accessible education by developing digital tools based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. The programme makes curriculum-based digital textbooks and picture books accessible for children with and without disabilities, through features like narration, sign language video, interactive exercises, simple language, mother tongue translation, and audio description of images, promoting equal learning opportunities according to needs. ADTs, produced to date in collaboration with 12 governments, are versatile, customizable, and device agnostic. In 2024, UNICEF started co-developing with a major AI company an AI-powered pipeline that streamlines and largely automates the production of accessible digital textbooks and storybooks. This greatly cuts the time, human resources and cost involved compared to traditional production methods. The AI pipeline is now Open source and LLM agnostic, ready to be used by Ministries of Education and partners for scale up.

Education technology (EdTech) offers powerful opportunities to improve learning outcomes, personalize instruction, and expand access to quality education, particularly in low-resource settings and for children with disabilities. At the same time, the collection and use of student data present significant risks -- to help address these challenges, UNICEF and partners produced a global landscape review on data governance in EdTech, and policy recommendations that demonstrate how sound data governance principles can be applied within the EdTech sector. Case studies of innovations in data governance for children were also published.

UNICEF Ventures portfolio startup, Tilli, received growth funding to enhance its socio-emotional learning platform and is conducting a pilot in Jordan with UNRWA.

C7. ICT Applications: e-Health

UNICEF's community health worker programme has been strengthened in 13 African countries, focusing on recruitment, upskilling, and performance improvement via digital interventions. Focus areas include geolocated health workforce registries, digital learning, digital literacy, and eCHIS.

UNICEF also developed the first draft of a Community Health Worker Digital Adaption Kit, with a full draft of target software standards. The Organization has also developed the first-ever Gavi Alliance-wide human resources for health strategy with programme funding guidelines for countries to use to adopt to their country context.

C7. ICT Applications: e-Environment

UNICEF Ventures' first climate investment cohort culminated this year; UNICEF also supported AI-powered air quality monitoring in Laos.

C10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society

UNICEF is finalizing the update of the *Guidance on AI and Children*, which remains the only UN guidance on the topic. It was published in 2021 and is being updated to reflect advances in AI technology and policies. The guidance covers all aspects of children's rights and AI systems, including safety, education, privacy and development.

UNICEF published the report *Childhood in the Digital Age*, which provides a detailed, evidence-based picture of screen time, digital skills and mental health with recommendations on how to protect and empower children. This report describes the evolving landscape of children's digital lives, documenting what is known about their access, digital skills and impacts on mental health. Presenting global and comparative data that have not been previously analysed together, it explores how lack of digital access can influence a child's digital skills development and highlights the potential for digital technology to exacerbate inequalities.

UNICEF published the report *Neurotechnology and Children's Rights: Preparing for the Future*, which explores the emerging intersection of neurotechnology and children's rights, offering a foresight-driven examination of both the risks and opportunities ahead. Key recommendations include embedding children's rights into regulatory frameworks, supporting child-centered research and innovation, and ensuring inclusive global dialogue that involves children themselves.