

CSW67 YOUTH DECLARATION

— BY THE —
**SHE LEADS UN YOUTH
ADVOCACY COHORT**



"Girls are being left out in my community; they have not been exposed to digital opportunities and gadgets or even how to use them."
(Paula, Uganda)

"I remember during the lock down.... Because of the online teaching method which was adopted. I could not complete quizzes due to poor network. It affected my grades and I became so depressed."
(Hiqmat, Ghana)

"A friend of mine grew up with a father who had not allowed her access to mobile phone or social media. He didn't want her to get in contact with any guy or post anything about herself online. He invested fear in her instead of guiding her how to maintain safety online."
(Lynn, Lebanon)

CSW Youth Declaration

We, the She Leads UN Youth Cohort, believe that while digital technology have great potential to empower women and girls, we face substantial political, economic, and social barriers that prevent us from falling behind. At every stage of life, girls encounter paths at the intersection of age and gender. Individuals who are most severely afflicted by various and overlapping forms of discrimination have additional hurdles brought on by entrenched social and gender norms and prejudice. Girls and young women have a harder time taking use of the advantages and opportunities that digital technologies and spaces offer due to the gender gap in digital access, digital literacy, ICT education, and occupations. Where access is available, there is also a higher danger of violence, abuse, harassment, and other negative behaviors including hate speech and false information. Digital access, digital literacy, ICT Gender gaps in education and work prevent girls and young women from accessing the benefits and opportunities offered by digital technologies and innovative spaces. Access without proper measurements also increases the risk of violence, abuse, harassment and other harmful practices, including hate speech and misinformation.

Across the world, women and girls increasingly face gender-based barriers that prevent them from accessing, using, and designing technology and digital tools at the same level as boys and men. There is also a stark gender disparity in Internet access, which limits the ability of girls to access information, participate in public life, and benefit from many opportunities that the digital environment and digital economy can bring.

The digital gender gap is driven by economic gender inequality. Inequalities in Education and Digital Literacy and Skills. Gender norms and stereotypes that prevent girls and women from accessing technology and the digital environment, in addition to concerns about safety and security. Other major obstacles are valuable digital devices and high-cost, low-quality Internet connections. Girls, especially in developing countries, are deprived of educational and technological opportunities to build digital literacy and ICT skills, which are essential for economic and social empowerment in an increasingly digital economy. Globally, 18% of girls in tertiary education are pursuing Science, Technology, Engineering, Math degrees, compared to 35% of boys (UNICEF, 2020), and at 15 years old, 0.5% of girls wish to become ICT professionals, compared to 5% of boys (OECD, 2019). In ICT occupations, Big Tech companies self-report that women make up only an average of 24 percent of tech roles, and 29.6 percent of leadership roles. This gender gap, in turn, impedes the creation of technologies and innovation that respond to the needs of women and girls.

Technology is not gender neutral. The design process requires choices about which - data, metadata and other- sources to use; the functions, behaviors, appearance, and the needs that products address. Biases held and assumptions made by designers, and biases inherent in their data sources and design process are reflected in those outputs.

While the digitalization of education has significant benefits for ensuring the continuation of education in times of crisis, it also has significant drawbacks. Switching to online learning alternatives has caused learning loss and a worsening of context-based inequities. Where it is still difficult for many students and teachers to have significant access to the Internet and digital devices. Additional barriers to the effectiveness of digital education include a lack of relaxing study spaces at home, insufficient parental and teacher support, and low levels of student, teacher, and parent digital knowledge and expertise.

While the digitalization of education has major advantages for guaranteeing educational continuation in times of crisis, it also comes with enormous problems. Learning loss and a worsening of context-based disparities have resulted from switching to online learning alternatives. Where many students and teachers still struggle to have meaningful access to the Internet and digital devices. Lack of comfortable study areas at home, inadequate parental and teacher support, and poor levels of student, teacher, and parent digital literacy and skill are further factors that limit the success of digital education.

Online harassment, abuse, and other kinds of violence are not effectively recognized or addressed by current laws and procedures. Many jurisdictions do not have laws against cyberbullying, cyber stalking, unsolicited sending of pornographic photographs, or doxxing. Girls and women who report crimes to the police consequently regularly encounter inaction and are unable to use pertinent support and safe networks.

Cases are not looked into, survivors are left without recourse or access to justice, and offenders continue to behave illegally and go unpunished. Additionally ineffectual are the internal enforcement systems of social media platforms. According to Plan International, 35% of girls have reported or stopped their harassers, yet abuse continues as a result of major deficiencies in corporate reporting and enforcement procedures and frequently incorrect review decisions made by algorithms and human moderators.

By updating and reforming legal frameworks, establishing efficient enforcement procedures, and enhancing the skills of law enforcement and other first responders, **steps must be taken to keep girls and women safe**. We must make sure survivors receive the assistance they require, such as access to justice and accountability.

- 1. We demand member states** to adapt gender transformative policies to bridge the digital gender divide and ensure that girls and women in all of their diversity have equal opportunities to safely and meaningfully access, use, lead, and design technology and innovation;
- 2. We demand** member states to institutionalize and ensure meaningful and safe participation of girls and young women in all of their diversity in policy-making processes concerning innovation, technology, online safety, as well as other decisions shaping their digital experiences and interactions and affecting their lives;
- 3. We call upon** member states to provide universal access to affordable and meaningful internet for all girls and women, including those in low-income or rural areas, through improving infrastructure, extending network coverage, reducing the cost of internet, and other measures to address the connectivity gap between genders, countries, and regions within countries;
- 4. We demand** member states to take measures to ensure equal access to affordable digital devices, such as smart phones, laptops, computers, for all girls and women;
- 5. We especially urge** member states to expand digital literacy and skills of girls and young women through delivering up-to date digital literacy and skills training, including for marginalized groups, such as rural communities and people with disabilities, that are an enabler of employment, economic empowerment, political participation, activism, accessing knowledge and information, and exercising their rights in an increasingly digital world;
- 6. We call upon** member states to increase educational enrolment of girls and young women in ICT disciplines to enable them to gain advanced knowledge and skills to become ICT professionals and leaders so that they can actively participate in increasingly digitized economies as creators and designers of technologies, not only as users and consumers;
- 7. We particularly call upon** member states to treat digital education a tool for realizing right to education for all, not an end goal by itself; ensure digitalization of education is accompanied by adequate safeguards to mitigate risks, including equitable access, privacy, data protection, safety, that can be detrimental to the rights of girls and young women;
- 8. We urge** member states to identify and address gaps in laws and policy frameworks that do not adequately recognize and address new technology-facilitated forms of gender-based violence, such as online harassment, abuse, cyber bullying, cyber stalking, unsolicited sending of obscene images, doxing; bring legal clarity to the definitions and handling of, all forms of online violence and clarify the responsibilities of internet intermediaries, platforms, regulatory authorities, and law enforcement in address it, ensuring effective enforcement mechanisms and access to justice for victims;
- 9. We demand** member states to provide children, young people, and parents with gender transformative educational programs on digital citizenship, digital safety and security, digital literacy, and other relevant subjects to support children and young people learn their rights in the digital environment (including privacy and security), understand wide range of online risks (including abuse, harassment, scams, false information, identity theft, among others) to avoid them turning into harms, and navigate safely, critically, and responsibly in digital spaces;

10. We call upon member states to recommit to increase investments towards feminist technology and innovation to support women's leadership as innovators and better respond to women and girls' most pressing needs;

11. We urge member states to strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure that technology companies and other corporations respect human rights, including the rights of girls and women, in the design and deployment of ICT-based technologies, digital products and services; undertake age and gender responsive human rights due diligence, in compliance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; and identify and prevent rights impacts for girls and women that may arise from their products, services, and business activities.

Guided by the above principles, purposes, and demands, we are committed to stand in solidarity with every advocate and individual in the world in order to ensure the empowerment and enhancement of every young girl and women to reach their full potentials and rights equally and globally.