|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Physical Open Consultations of the  Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues** |  |
| **Geneva, 22 January 2018** |  |
|  |  |
|  | **Document OPCWGINT6/2-E (Rev. 1)** |
| **12 January 2018** |
| **English only** |

PHYSICAL OPEN CONSULTATIONS OF THE COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-RELATED PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

**Compilation of responses to the Online Open Consultation   
(October 2017- January 2018)**

The Plenipotentiary Conference 2014 instructed the ITU Council to revise its Resolution 1344 to direct the Council Working Group on international Internet-related public policy issues (CWG-Internet), limited to Member States, with open consultation to all stakeholders, and to conduct such open consultation according to specific guidelines. As a result the ITU Council at its 2015 session resolved that the CWG-Internet should hold both online open consultations and physical open consultation meetings, with remote participation, within a defined period prior to each CWG-Internet meeting.

ITU Council also resolved that all relevant inputs received in the open consultation will be available to the CWG-Internet and all other stakeholders on a dedicated publicly accessible webpage of the CWG-Internet website. Relevant inputs from the open online consultation on the topic(s) decided by the CWG-Internet will form the basis of discussion at the physical open consultation meetings and all relevant responses will be submitted to the CWG-Internet for consideration of the issues chosen for its next meeting.

Upon request of the Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet), the 2017 Session of the ITU Council decided on 25 May 2017 to hold an open consultation (online and physical) on the following topic:

**"Bridging the Digital Gender Divide**

CWG-Internet invites all stakeholders to submit contributions on achieving gender equality for Internet users, focusing on the following questions:

1. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?

2. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the access and use of ICTs by SMEs in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?

3. Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises?

4. What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?

5. What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?"

You can find below the compilation of the responses received.

*NOTE: Please note that due to the different formats used by the online respondents:*

* *Inputs to the “Comment box” of the online form- serving either as sole contribution, summary or comment- have been copied and pasted;*
* *When available, indicated summaries have been copied and pasted;*
* *Unless a summary is available, submitted documents of up to 1000 words have been copied and pasted, as well as hyperlinked. Longer documents have been hyperlinked only;*
* *Footnotes found in the submitted documents were not included in the present document.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Date** | **Submitter** | **Response** |
|  | September 28, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=5) | **Text provided in comment box:**  I refer to the previous open consultation. There were many submission and an excellent discussion at the physical meeting. A very good summary of the discussions was prepared. So I was disappointed that there was no discussion in CWG-Internet of the substance of the report of the open consultation. There was time in the meeting to do so. And Member States had several days to prepare after the end of the open consultation and before the beginning of CWG-Internet. Based on that experience, I would like to propose that, during the physical meeting of the present open consultation, we agree to invite Member States to discuss the substance of the report of the open consultation at the CWG-Internet meeting that will take place after the open consultation. |
|  | September 28, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=6) | **Text provided in comment box:**  I would like to propose the following topic for the next open consultation: "Dealing with the aspects within the mandate of ITU of the externalities and asymmetric information that may result in market failures with respect to the security of IoT devices." |
|  | September 28, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=7) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box)**  The factors impede Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls are largely the factors that we have discussed in our previous submissions to CWG-Internet, in particular the urgent need to reduce the cost of connectivity in developing countries. This can be achieved by fostering competition (which may include functional separation), funding infrastructure, taking steps to reduce the cost of international connectivity, supporting the development of local content, capacity building, and a proper governance system.  It is also necessary to improve trust and security. It is urgent to recognize that market failures are partly the cause of the current lack of security of the Internet. Steps must be taken to address the externalities arising from lack of security (entities that do not secure their systems sufficiently do not bear all the costs of security breaches), and to address information asymmetries (consumers have no way of knowing which services are sufficiently secure). At the same time, it is imperative to protect human rights, protect data privacy, protect consumers and workers (in particular against abuse by dominant platforms), curtail unnecessary and disproportionate mass surveillance, address the issue of job destruction and wealth concentration engendered by the Internet’s current governance mechanisms, address the ethical issues arising from automation and artificial intelligence, and deal with platform dominance.  The body of the paper contains specific recommendations for each of these issues, as well as specific recommendations regarding how to address the under-representation of women in key decision-making structures in the ITU.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/7/CWG-Internet%202018.docx) |
|  | October 03, 2017 | [Independent  (St.Lucia)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=8) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box)**  The questions posed in this consultation are not about “gender equality”. They are about improving access to the Internet for women and girls: which is a laudable aim but only a part of “gender issues” and gender equality. We provide a link to a web site that provides extensive information on approaches and examples of good practices. We note that many women work in the informal sector, so there often aren’t adequate sources for measuring women’s participation. Measures and policies to foster the role of women include caring for children and the elderly; ICT training; measures to facilitate e-commerce including e-payments, reduction of customs duties, fast, reliable and inexpensive shipments. It is important to integrate ICTs in everyday life. Literacy is a continuing gap and it is important to develop digital literacy. Role models such as Governor General Dame Pearlette Louisy of Saint Lucia (in the Caribbean) are important. And it is important to recognise that in some parts of the world there are emerging concerns regarding marginalised young men and boys.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/8/CWG-Internet%202018%20Deirdre.docx) |
|  | October 11, 2017 | [IT for Change (India)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=9) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box)**  Through a feminist lens that brings together economic justice and gender justice concerns, this contribution traces the key elements of the right to access, right to knowledge and right to development in the network society context. It highlights how this three-pronged approach to scoping the “right to communicate” can serve as a guiding framework for feminist analysis and action at the intersections of gender, digital technologies and development. It also demonstrates how the prevailing discourse on women’s human rights needs to move beyond the online-offline binary to discern the rights violations occurring in the hybrid contexts of techno-mediated life, in the unfreedoms wrought by data, digitalisation and networks.  This contribution chalks out strategic directions for feminist advocacy in relation to information and communications technologies (ICTs), at different scales and spaces – global, national and local. Specific agendas for advocacy in relation to critical global forums and national governments are sketched out along with the work needed for feminist movement building.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/9/CWG-Internet%202018-Anita%20IT%20for%20Change.pdf) |
|  | October 11, 2017 | [achrafsellam.com Universal Market (Morocco)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=10) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Dear ITU CWG, Please, find an attachment to this comment. Thank you, Sir. ACHRAF SELLAM  **Text provided in submitted document:**  Dear ITU CWG,  I think strongly that when we talk about Gender problems, we have only one choice and chance which is summarized in one word “Education for Her”.  How Top-Level Engineers can imagine to make the best device when they are bordered by the conscience that “we don’t know”. When manufacturing devices, we must be aware that the End-User must be able to manipulate it with success. I do not pretend to deceive Engineers, but I am concerned by the way ignorant people are using the device. A simple question we can ask all before any financial matter is to address eachothers if we speak the same tone, I mean language.  Generally, Smart Technology is a leading technology in our days. How Global Financial Authorities will invest in [Smart Technology] in order to have a global accountancy for all the Earth?  This is a big view about how Gender Problems can change the way Engineers are conceiving their device. I agree with ITU Engineers when they classify the Earth as either [Developed Nation] or [Least Developed Nation] like we can see that the lamp is switched either [on] or [off].  A big challenge for ITU CWG to dare discussing the Analphabet People and the Smart Technology in order to develop a better world. Technology Problems are Financial Problems, how we can imagine a [Smart Economy] while we have [Analphabet Problems]?  In a right line, [Gender Problems] either female or male are in main issues [Illiteracy Problems]. From Skilled Writers to Letters Ignorants, we can have a large range of choices in order to design That-Device-For-That-One.  I wonder how the shadow forces of the Internet Top Governors or as I could understand stakeholders can do in order to work for two goals to target: first, Better Investment for Education. Second, Better Global Financial Networks.  I hope I have delivered my remarks in a short note.  Willing to see a smart life for all.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/10/itu-cwg-achrafsellam-summary-2017.pdf) |
|  | October 13, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=11) | **Text provided in comment box:**  In 1.2 of our submission of 28 September to this consultation, we proposed that ITU conduct a survey on perceptions of gender diversity in ITU analogous to the one conducted by ICANN in June 2017. ICANN has now published the results of its survey, they are available at: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/gender-diversity-participation-survey-report-2017-10-11-en |
|  | October 20, 2017 | [Nakaseke Telecentre (Uganda)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=12) | **Text provided in comment box:** The Gender digital devide can be reduced by increasing access to affordable digital devices which are reliable with cheaper internet connectivity in Rural areas especially in Africa. |
|  | October 26, 2017 | [Dig It (Republic of the Congo)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=13) | **Text provided in comment box:** I am a manger of Dig It, society of IT. |
|  | November 13, 2017 | [Ministry of Communication, Telecommunications, Posts And Digital Economy (Senegal)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=15) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box):**  My contribution is:  Call on Governments, Private Sector, Media, Civil Society, and International Organisations to:  1) Integrate and promote gender perspectives in the development of public policy through the integration of gender equality targets and key performance indicators into strategies, policies, plans and budgets, with a specific focus on ensuring policy dialogue at the grassroots level between public policy decision-makers, media and civil society, particularly women and youth. This must entail synergies between all ministries and government agencies, for effective gender mainstreaming.  2) Address the barriers women face in both access, use, and production of local content on the internet that impede gender equality online, and promote:  a. unlimited and unfettered access to affordable internet;  b. women’s safety and digital rights online, as well as the use of ICTs to ensure women are involved in the fight against online harassment, trolling, and bullying, violation of privacy, radicalisation and violent extremism;  c. digital equality, literacy and skills, and confidence, through the promotion of multi-stakeholder and public-private partnerships to promote digital citizenship, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship;  d. availability of relevant and localised content, applications, and services developed by and for women and girls;  e. mobilisation of and dialogue with communities working already on gender data-driven initiatives, and work to minimise duplication of efforts while maximising the scalability of interventions.  3) Support concrete multi-stakeholder cooperation, with a focus on the Francophone Africa region, through the development of tools and policies to support local, national and international efforts; effective sharing of best practices and methodologies to address the digital gender gap, as well as the development of sustainable and scalable initiatives, working with grassroots and international organisations of women and girls, public policy decision-makers, the private sector, and innovators and entrepreneurs, to ensure the expansion and scaling of successful initiatives and best practices. Consider the implementation of periodic convenings to foster knowledge exchange and accountability of governments.  4) Commit to and advocate for the collection and analysis of gender-based data. Secure resources to enable gender data collection and dissemination to monitor progress on digital equality. This data must be open to all to see, open licensed, and machine-readable; open gender data is essential in encouraging regional accountability and enabling transnational knowledge exchange.  5) Advocate for appropriate financial investment from international, regional, sub-regional, national, and local funding mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the aforementioned policies and programmes developed to promote gender equality in the online sphere and ICT sector.  6) Accelerate the adoption, consolidation and implementation of requisite legislation, such as Right to Information laws and rights-based cybersecurity laws, integration of cyber security and mobilisation on the dangers of ICTs in gender policies and programmes.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/15/AccessibleForm_OpenConsultations_Oct2017%20(2).doc) |
|  | November 20, 2017 | [Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society (Ecuador)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=16) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box):** In 2017, the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society (MINTEL) established a public policy schedule for the development of telecommunications an information society in Ecuador. Many of the policies developed in framework of this schedule considered the transversal initiative to “promote universal access, especially in rural areas and slums, taking special attention to gender equality”.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/16/SUMMARY.docx) |
|  | November 26, 2017 | [CITRA (Kuwait)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=17) | [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/17/Response%20to%20ITU%20Gender%20Divide%20v.2%202017.docx) |
|  | December 01, 2017 | [Ministry of Interior, General Secretariat for Gender Equality (Greece)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=18) | **Text provided in submitted document and comment box:**  **A comprehensive list of policies and actions initiated by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality on the promotion of digital agenda**  **A.** The National Action Plan on Gender Equality serves as the roadmap for the governmental policies on equality between women and men in Greece during the period 2016-2020.  In particular, the priorities of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016-2020 are in accordance with the guidelines of the European Commission to the 28 EU Member-States and concern the following policy areas:  1) social cohesion, poverty, immigration and multiple discrimination  2) gender-based violence  3) labour market and reconciliation of family and professional life  4) education, training, culture, sports and mass media  5) health  6) decision-making.  The issue of digital literacy in favour of women and girls has been emphatically incorporated in all policy areas for the period 2016-2020 through further development of synergies among competent stakeholders from the public and the private sector.  **B.** A Protocol of Cooperation has been activated between the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE), the Research Centre for Gender Equality (an entity supervised by the Ministry), the National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government and the Ministry of Education, Research & Religious Affairs on the promotion of gender equality in the primary education (a number of training seminars to the educational personnel of primary schools are in the process of implementation throughout the country, so that the principles of equality and non-discrimination between the two sexes are perceived by the young generation at a very early stage); the issue of digital literacy can be included in the curricula of the training seminars aiming at the development of methods and tools for the advancement of gender equality from an early stage.  It is noted that the bilateral cooperation between the GSGE, i.e. the governmental organization in charge of equality between women and men in Greece, and the Ministry of Education has been extended to all three educational levels (primary, secondary and tertiary education).  **C.** The political leadership in charge of gender equality has contacted a number of representatives of Ministries, Agencies and social partners aiming at a holistic approach to the implementation of gender equality policies. In the framework of these initiatives, the final draft of a Bill on substantive gender equality has already submitted to the competent Minister of Interior, which is expected to be forwarded to the Hellenic Parliament for further elaboration and adoption; the issue of female digital empowerment is covered by the provisions of the Bill.  **D.** An "Observatory on Gender Equality" has been set up in the General Secretariat for Gender Equality. The Flagship Project is entitled "Service organization for the integration, monitoring and evaluation of Gender Equality Policies in all aspects of Public Sector's Actions (Observatory)"; its aim is to support Public Administration and Local Governments to design, implement and evaluate policies concerning gender equality through detailed gender-segregated data on equality issues (statistics and surveys) deriving from the development and function of relevant tools. The issue of digital literacy and ICT is concisely included in the competences of the GSGE Observatory.  It has to be underlined that the specific project has been selected by the European Commission as a national good practice in the Annual Report on Equality between Women and Men in the European Union 2015 (Brussels, March 2016): page 40 of the Report  http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual\_reports/2016\_annual\_report\_2015\_web\_en.pdf .  **E.** Cooperation between the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, i.e. the governmental organization in charge of equality between women and men in Greece, and the National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government, i.e. the national strategic agent for the development of the human resources of the public administration and local government, has been set up aiming to gender mainstreaming in the curricula and the activities of the National Centre for Public Administration & Local Administration (digital literacy and ICT included).  **F.** The General Secretariat for Gender Equality has supported the creation of methodologies and toolkits aiming to gender mainstreaming in public policies of the 13 Regions and the 15 most populated Municipalities of Greece (Programming Period 2007-2013 co-financed by the European Union). The issue of female digital empowerment has been incorporated in the outcome of the specific Project.  **G.** In the framework of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January-June 2014), the General Secretariat for Gender Equality organised, in collaboration with the European Centre for Women and Technology and in cooperation with National and European Stakeholders, the Conference entitled “Women & Girls Go Digital, National Action Plan for increasing the female talent in digital jobs” (Athens, 4-4-2014).  In the context of Europe 2020 Strategy and in particular of the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Europe, the objective of the Conference has been to demonstrate the link between e-Skills, Gender Diversity and ICT as a key factor for economic growth based on the creation of digital jobs. The Conference addressed the digital skills gap and raised awareness about the added value by including female talent in digital jobs, research and innovation. Emphasis was given to the promotion of new opportunities for young digital entrepreneurs and to the challenges of the role of the media in the new digital era.  The Initiative “Women & Girls Go Digital in Greece – WGGDG” aims to increase the female talent in Digital Jobs based on the European Commission’s Initiative Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs and elaborated in collaboration with national and European stakeholders.  Positive reference to the Greek initiative is made in the 2015 Report by the European Parliament entitled “Empowering women on the Internet” (pages 16-17): http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/536473/IPOL\_IDA(2015)536473\_EN.pdf .  Thanks to the specific Initiative, Greece won a major international award in the category of “digital opportunity”. The WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards is a biannual event for the recognition of excellence in digital technology, established by the World Information Technology and Services Alliance. The award for the “Women and Girls Go Digital” Initiative in the category of “digital opportunity” was announced on September 30th 2014, as part of the 19th World Information Technology and Services Conference held in Mexico. The WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards are granted to institutions and enterprises that capitalize on ICT innovation for the benefit of the public sector and the citizen, creating new opportunities for employment and sustainable development (press release in English: https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016805969a9 ).  A very concrete positive outcome of our coalition is the fact that on the 8th of September, 2016 the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) announced a public call for five scholarships to Greek female graduates for attending the Postgraduate Programme in Business Administration offered by the Hellenic Management Association (EEDE) in Athens: https://www.wegate.eu/public-call-five-scholarships-greek-female-graduates-attend-postgraduate-programme-business .  **H.** The General Secretariat for Gender Equality has been a partner of the Project entitled “Innovation and Employability for Women, E-Women” co-financed by the European Economic Area (EEA Grants 2009-2014). Its aim has been to identify the current evolution of technology in relation to women’s participation and sensitization, especially for young women, associated with ICT and employment (employment/employability and entrepreneurship). The Project E-Women started in January 2016 and concluded in March 2017: http://www.iewomen.eu/1\_2/ieWomen .  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/18/ITU%20-%20Greece%20Dimosthenis%20Tremos.doc) |
|  | December 13, 2017 | [National Telecommunications Corporation – NTC (Sudan)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=19) | **Text provided in submitted document and comment box:**   1. As an internet public policy: All of ICT stakeholders must work together to give women affordable internet access and digital literacy with smart devices. 2. To promote women access in the areas of SMEs by adapting ICT technologies , better chances in Micro-finance schemes have to provided to them so that they can achieve greater contribution in the digital economy . 3. Tailored job descriptions, gender-balanced applicant quotas and balanced recruitment panels are representing appropriate sources and mechanism for women participating in the digital economy. Moreover, annual statistics of women SME- owned projects should be reported and reviewed by the concerned ministries. 4. To foster the role of women in Sudan, all Initiatives and Innovation in SMEs managed by women should be awarded and encouraged by the government. 5. Formal planning, sponsoring programs and gender-specific training are some examples of challenges that encounter the government to address. Therefore, phase-back programs to fill the talent pipelines are required, particularly at management levels which will be the most relevant role for the government to play. 6. Furthermore, awareness and outreach programs to equip young girls and women with the skills and inspiration needed to pursue a career in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and relevant qualifications.   [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/19/Bridging%20the%20Digital%20Gender%20Divide%20-%20Sudan%20Coments.docx) |
|  | December 13, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=20) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The attached statement is not a direct response to the questions posed in the present open consultation. Nevertheless, I believe that it could be of interest, because it makes the point that actions need to be taken to ensure social equity in general, not just for women, and that a focus on gender issues can be used to mask an unwillingness to tackle fundamental issues that impede the development of all people, not just women. Or, worse, actions promoted as favoring women, could actually favor only a small fraction of women and lead to exacerbating the fundamental divides that are drivers of gender inequality. As the paper puts the matter: "It is now clear, that the neoliberal project involving austerity, privatisation, deregulation of finance, markets and corporations, and trade and investment liberalization has had a devastating and discriminatory impact on women. Neoliberalism is sexist and is simply incapable of supporting gender-­‐equitable and just sustainable development, no matter how it is spun."  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/20/Feminist%20WTO%20Statement%20with%20FINAL%20164%20Endorsements.pdf) |
|  | December 15, 2017 | [International Chamber of Commerce  (France)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=21) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Speaking on behalf of businesses from all sectors and sizes in every part of the world, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Business Action to Support the Information Society (BASIS) is of the view that information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Internet are enablers to growth, development and inclusion. They empower citizens, support the spread of knowledge, facilitate communication and participation and allow for continuous innovation and emerging technologies. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for several advances by the year 2030. The UN 2030 Agenda cites access to and deployment of ICT as specific targets in four of the SDGs (4, 5, 9 and 17). SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and calls for enhanced use of enabling technology – ICT in particular – to promote the empowerment of women. While ICT can contribute to the advancement of all 17 goals, the specific target in SDG 5 is a testament to the equalizing power of the Internet and the enormous potential ICT has on the empowerment of women and girls worldwide. ICC would like to take this opportunity to share global business perspectives on the topics addressed in the consultation.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/21/ICC%20BASIS_ITU%20CWG%20OC_Gender_151217.pdf) |
|  | December 15, 2017 | [U.S. Council for International Business (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=22) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box):**  The U.S. Council for International Business (USCIB) appreciates the opportunity to participate in the open consultation convened by the ITU Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet) on the topic of “Bridging the Digital Gender Divide.” USCIB is a U.S.-based trade association composed of more than 300 multinational companies, law firms, and business associations from every sector of the U.S. economy, with operations in every region of the world. In particular, USCIB Members include a broad cross-section of the leading global companies in the information and communications technology (ICT) sectors.  USCIB organized a workshop at the 2016 Internet Governance Forum (IGF), “An Internet of Women by 2020: WSIS Vision into Reality.” This submission highlights key points from that workshop that address questions posed in this open consultation. It also provides insights from USCIB Members about challenges they have encountered in their efforts to bridge the gender digital divide and a sampling of industry initiatives aimed to close this gap. Highlights are as follows:  • The challenge of bridging the gender digital divide must be addressed holistically; there is no one single factor driving the division or the resolution;  • There is a dearth of data and metrics focused on the extent of female participation in the digital economy, which hampers efforts to identify gaps;  • Efforts to measure engagement in the digital economy do not appropriately account for cultural factors that often serve as the most stubborn barrier to bridging the gender digital divide;  • Partnerships are critical, between the public and private sectors, business and non-profits, intergovernmental organizations, and between local and national governments. No one organization can tackle this problem alone;  • Women need to be assured that the online environment is safe;  • Policy implementation and follow-through are critical; and  • Efforts to bridge the gender digital divide are most effectively addressed via multistakeholder processes.  Our complete submission is attached.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/22/USCIB%20comments.Dig.Gender.Divide.121517.final.pdf) |
|  | December 21, 2017 | [Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (Sweden)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=23) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The enclosed comments are submitted on behalf of Sweden.  **Text provided in submitted document:**  **1. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?**  On digital literacy: Initiatives that allow girls and women to increase their understanding of digitization are commendable and should be supported. The Swedish government recently launched a digital strategy for the educational system, which puts a strong focus on building and encouraging digital skills, including programming, for all students already from an early age. There are also a number of private and non-profit organizations that offer training in programming and which target students as well as graduated women. For seniors, courses in basic computer and Internet are offered in many libraries and by senior citizens groups.  **2. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the access and use of ICTs by SMEs in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?**  ---  **3. Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises?**  Gathering gender disaggregated data in areas related to entrepreneurship is crucial for highlighting women entrepreneurs and women’s participation in business and for designing suitable and efficient policies.  --- N/A  **4. What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?**  Promoting female entrepreneurs and managers as role models makes women's entrepreneurship more visible and contributes to influencing attitudes and structures. Governments play an important part and can promote women’s entrepreneurship through, inter alia, eliminating regulatory obstacles, easing access to (micro) finance, encouraging entrepreneurship and fostering entrepreneurial skills from an early age and ensuring that information on starting and running a business is easily available. Promoting and supporting women’s leadership strengthens the resilience and overall competence of economies.  **5. What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?**  Women’s entrepreneurship needs to be fully recognized as a factor for economic growth. This insight is the first step in ensuring a business promotion system that also meets women entrepreneurs’ needs. Making use of women’s entrepreneurial potential and business ideas conduces to growth, sustainability, and competitiveness for the entire economy.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/23/Open%20consultation%20submission%20from%20S.docx) |
|  | December 21, 2017 | [Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (Pakistan)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=24) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Please find attached the response from our side. We welcome any query in this regard to address and take the process forward.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/24/Open%20Consultation_Pakistan_response.docx) |
|  | December 21, 2017 | [Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=25) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The primary obstacles to women’s access to the digital economy are the same as those preventing access to the formal economy. Overcoming the digital gender divide to increase female entrepreneurship and M/SME participation in LDCs and emerging markets first requires commitment by governments to pass common sense policy and institutional reforms. The high costs to join the formal-digital economy are indeed exacerbated by poor ICT infrastructure, low internet penetration, low technical capacity, and limited access to capital, but three familiar barriers persist in many markets: disincentives to join the formal economy; inflexible labor laws; lack of trust in contract enforcement (on and offline). (i) Disincentives to formalize are often high cost and time barriers to business registration, vulnerability to bribery and extortion, arbitrary rules and taxation, etc. (ii) Inflexible labor laws prevent entrepreneurs from hiring staff to grow into larger SMEs, limit risk taking requiring short-term resource investment in technical capacity or skills, and prevents educational transfer among women in industries. (iii) Lack of trust in contract enforcement on and offline disincentivize commerce, especially B2B transactions in a weak legal environment. Addressing the gender digital divide in commerce in many economies first requires an adequate and equitable business environment offline. Reforms that promote technological transfer or greater access through subsidies are not sufficient to overcome the larger market obstacles facing female entrepreneurs and small business owners. |
|  | December 21, 2017 | [GSMA (United Kingdom)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=26) | **Text provided in comment box:**  This GSMA Connected Women submission highlights the importance of accelerating digital inclusion for women, the challenges of doing so, and examples of what industry, policy-makers and other stakeholders are doing or could do to address these challenges.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/26/GSMA%20ITU%20Gender%20Consultation%20final.docx) |
|  | December 22, 2017 | [TURIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (Italy)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=27) | **Text provided in submitted document and comment box:**  **Question 1:**  **What approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?** The Turin Chamber of commerce by its Women in business committee (WBC) in September 2017 established an European Network to share contents and best practices and to define some guidelines to abate gender gap in digital economy.  From November 2017 to February 2018 the Women in business committee will organize some meeting with stakeholders to look for issues that will be submitted to the European Network on March 2018.  The European Network in 2018 will collect all the suggestions in a document containing proposal to submit to European Commission in order to define guidelines and project focused to abate gender gap in digital economy.  **Question 2:**  **What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the access and use of ICTs by SMEs in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?** WBC last Autumn organized two event to promote the use of ICTs by SMEs: “Skills and Innovation: a female potentials” and “Digital Innovation Driver 4 Empowerment” focused to present the opportunity to use digital instrument and to consider digital economy the opportunity to make the SMEs more competitive.  Furthermore, digitalization would be an opportunity for the female empowerment and for the female professional growth.  Also in 2018 WBC intend project some activities to make know entrepreneurial good practices in order to sensitize SMEs to use ICTs.  About Turin Chamber of Commerce, it helps SMEs to approach the themes of Industry 4.0, in particular digitization.  It’s in fact one of the "Digital Business Points (PID)", envisaged by the National Industry 4.0 Plan to disseminate at a local level the basic knowledge on technologies in the Industry 4.0 field.  In particular, within the framework of the Industry 4.0 national network, the PIDs of the Chambers of Commerce:   * Provide a basic understanding of the "Industry 4.0" technologies among companies, including through the organization of seminars and training courses * Check The digital maturity of companies * Support individual assistance and mentoring plans * Orientate companies, for more specialized services, towards Competence Centers and Digital Innovation Hubs * Economically support SMEs in digital transformation processes   In 2017, in 2017 the project “digital excellence” was organized: theoretical and practical training seminars, to which entrepreneurs would be able to know the best strategies to be online. At the end of each seminar, moreover, some tutors was available for further personalized sessions that help them to start a concrete digital journey. All seminars and insights was free.  **Question 3:**  **Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises?**  At the moment the Chamber or commerce and WBC don’t have an instrument for measuring women’s participation in the digital economy but they would promote some analysis in order to know how many SMEs and micro enterprises use ICTs and how many women are involved in digital activities or digital functions.  The results of the analysis could be important to start a constant monitor of the situation and help to find some solution to abate the female digital gap in SMEs.  **Question 4:**  **What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?** In 2018, the WIC will be involved in a project aimed at identifying a model of female leadership in order to strengthen the role of women in decision-making and top management roles.  A specific part of the project will be focused to introduce the digital leader: skills, characteristics and opportunities.  We think that the digitalization is an opportunity for women and help them to empower themselves.  **Question 5:**  **What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?** The most important gap is that there are too few girls approaching STEM subjects; consequently there are few women involved in Science and Technologies and ICTs. So that it would be important that governments take measures to encourage girls to approach the STEM subjects and support them in their training process.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/27/AccessibleForm_OpenConsultations_Oct2017.docx) |
|  | December 22, 2017 | [Ministry of Popular Power of Universitary Education, Science and Technology (Venezuela)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=28) | [View submitted document in Spanish](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/28/Cuestionario%20GTC-%20Internet%20_Brecha%20de%20Genero-RBV.pdf)  [View submitted document in English](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/28/GTC-INTERNET%20-%20Brecha%20de%20G%C3%A9nero%20Ingles%20-%201.odt) |
|  | December 23, 2017 | [Comune di Milano (Italy)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=29) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box):**  In September 2016, the Mayor of Milan set up the office of Councillor for Digital Transformation and Citizen Services. Since then, the very core of our work is to increase girls and women participation to all the different STEM careers and training, giving them all the information and chances to pursue a scientific / technological career, furthermore enhancing the existing competences.  For this very purpose #STEMintheCity was born, consisting of technical, digital and soft skills trainings, hackathons, sessions for inspiring girls with tech role models, conferences and many other activities.  This is our way of bridging the digital gender divide: supporting every kind of initiatives that help girls and women to approach technology and increase their knowledge and confidence and overcome differences, prejudices and obstacls, promoting ICT as a way to lighten workload and reduce errors, monitoring women’s participation in the digital economy and promoting case studies about successful females.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/29/Bridging%20the%20Digital%20Gender%20Divide.docx) |
|  | December 27, 2017 | [Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Developmnent (BMZ)  (Germany)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=30) | **Text provided in submitted document:**   1. What **approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy** of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?   The #eSkills4Girls initiative by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) aims to increase the participation of women and girls in the digital economy and successfully raised awareness among the G20. At their summit in Hamburg in July 2017, the G20 leaders endorsed the #eSkills4Girls statement as an annex to their Leaders’ Declaration. The statement defines common goals to facilitate education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women and girls in the digital economy.  On a practical level, the BMZ supports the development of coding skills of women and girls in Africa. With the support of Germany, the Africa Code Week, a joint initiative by SAP, the Cape Town Science Centre and the Galway Education Centre, took place in 35 African countries in 2017, enabling 1.3 million, among them more than 40% women and girls to take part in coding lessons and training 800 teachers.  In Rwanda, Ghana and Indonesia for example, the BMZ implements projects that aim at encouraging more women to pursue a career in the male dominated tech industry. To this end, the BMZ supports its partners in updating the quality of technical vocational education and training. A main goal of these projects is to involve stakeholders from the private sector to allow practice-oriented trainings.  In the Palestinian territories, a BMZ funded programme qualifies women in non-traditional courses of higher education, such as IT or electrical engineering through dual study courses which link institutions of higher education and commercial enterprises as places of learning.  For more information, see: https://www.eskills4girls.org/learn/g20-flagship-projects/   1. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the **access and use of ICTs by SMEs** in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?   Digital entrepreneurship is a key driver behind a society’s digital transformation. Tech entrepreneurs provide innovative, marketable digital solutions and services that address important needs and problems hindering development, such as lack of information and skills, reliable provision of electricity or basic healthcare. At the same time, these entrepreneurs create new employment opportunities and have a positive impact on the economies and societies of their countries.  Many technology start-ups in developing and emerging countries do not succeed on regional or international markets because they lack access to capital, clients, talented staff and digital infrastructure. For female, young or non-metropolitan entrepreneurs it is even harder to cope with these challenges.  The Make-IT Alliance is a joint initiative of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) that, together with stakeholders from the private sector and civil society, improves the framework for technology start-ups and entrepreneurs in developing and emerging countries. The aim of the Make-IT Alliance is to contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth through promoting tech entrepreneurship. This is realized through the cooperation of German and international businesses, industry associations, investors, funding institutions and further local partners on site.   1. Which are the available **sources and mechanisms for measuring** women’s participation in the digital economy with focus on SME’s and micro-enterprises?   The research group of EQUALS, the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age, is working on mechanisms to track the progress of women's and girls’ access to and use of ICT as well as their digital skills.   1. What **measures / policies could be envisioned in order to focus the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs**, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?  * Support and promote a digital entrepreneurial culture for African women through the promotion and financial support of * International, regional and national peer-to-peer exchange networks; * mentoring for women and to further strengthen the role of women in existing programmes; * public and private training programmes, including the improvement of curricula and the capacity of trainers and mentors * Strengthen the capacity of intermediaries to sustain the local and regional support mechanisms * Collaborate with the local entrepreneurial ecosystem in order to increase the number of activities and trainings targeted to female entrepreneurs and to create diversity policies that go beyond focusing on the recruitment of women in order to promote sustainable economic development and leadership * Support Africa’s governments to provide suitable and well-targeted monetary, fiscal and regulatory measures and financial support, including subsidies, grants, credit and tax incentives for women * Expand access to education and training through digital technology and other innovative services  1. What are the **gaps in addressing these challenges**? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?   Depending on geographic and social conditions women face numerous challenges to financing, owning, and growing businesses, including access to capital and networks and foundational literacy and digital skills, as well as legal and policy obstacles to business ownership and development.  Among policy-makers, there is a need to raise awareness on the digital inclusion of women and girls and to jointly commit to promote **the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs**. This is why the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has developed the initiative #eSkills4Girls to contribute to improved digital skills and employment perspectives for women and girls in the digital economy, particularly in developing and emerging countries. The initiative was launched during Germany’s G20 presidency, calling for more action at a global level.  In the G20 statement [“Transforming the future of women and girls in the digital economy”](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23556/2017-g20-initiative-eskills4girls-en.pdf), the G20 committed to: “work towards improving an enabling environment – including through private sector engagement – for women to facilitate their entrepreneurship, innovation and participation in the digital economy including through support programmes such as entrepreneurship education and training, financing schemes, incubators and support networks. We support initiatives for strengthening womenʼs and girlsʼ ability to generate and disseminate their own content that reflects their viewpoints and experiences. We also support initiatives to develop digital financial services that are accessible and appropriate for women.”  The recommendations developed by the [Africa-EU Youth Lab](https://make-it-initiative.org/africa/activities/events/africa-eu-youthlab-2017/) that took place on the occasion of the 6th EU-Africa Business Forum in November 2017 in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, also include a paragraph on women in digital entrepreneurship and call to: “Create safe online and offline spaces for women to promote and exchange ideas and experiences on digital entrepreneurship and connect with role models from the tech world, as well as dedicated spaces to ensure the promotion of women in the ICT sector.”  It is the role of governments to establish a policy framework that (1) assures fair and equal access for all people to ICTs, including the most vulnerable; (2) sets up a legal and regulatory framework that addresses market failures; (3) design education systems to equip women and girls with the skills needed in the digital economy.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/30/Online%20consultation%20on%20bridging%20the%20digital%20gender%20divide%20.docx) |
|  | December 29, 2017 | [Global Affairs Canada (Canada)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=31) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document):**  Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the main focus of Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy. This includes promoting equal access for women to capital, markets, digital technology and business development services. In addition, Canada is focused on using innovative approaches, which includes (but is not limited to) the use of digital technologies to support programming that addresses deep-rooted gender inequalities. This may include building digital literacy skills and using digital technologies to build self-confidence, increase independence and influence and make better-informed decisions; and enabling women to communicate with peers online, to exchange information and build solidarity and to lobby decision-makers.  However, while digital technologies have the potential to be used in transformative ways to empower women and girls and advance gender equality, they have also enabled new forms of violence against women and girls. Canada believes that advancing gender equality and bridging the gender digital divide must include promoting and protecting the human rights of all women and girls to access and use digital technologies without being targeted by online violence and abuse.  Canada believes that additional research on the effectiveness of gender-responsive policies in the area of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), including ones that address barriers to affordability, threats that hamper access and use, digital literacy and confidence, and the availability of relevant content, applications and services, could help inform evidence-based programs and projects.  Canada welcomes ITU efforts to overcome the Gender Digital Divide through these open consultations. It is a discussion that is long overdue and considering that the majority of the 3.1 billion individuals who remain unconnected are women, this is a topic towards which ITU should divert significant resources.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/31/Globalf%20Affairs%20Canada%20ITU%20submission.DOCX) |
|  | January 03, 2018 | [General Space Affair Management Office (Angola)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=32) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The General Space Affair Management Office of Angola, give his contribution for this topic by submitting the answers, according to the issues and solutions being studied in Angola.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/32/UIT_FINAL.docx) |
|  | January 03, 2018 | [ICANN (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=33) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box):**  ICANN is honoured to have the opportunity to take part in this important Open Consultation. It is also a timely consultation in the wake of an ever-increasing awareness of the economic and social costs of maintaining a gender divide. The approach taken in the consultation rightly moves on from just the participation of women and girls in the ICT labour market (though this of course is important) to explore their participation in decision-making processes, whether in the private or public sectors, that affect all of our lives. In terms of Internet governance, we hope this consultation, on bridging the gender divide, will enhance the role of women and girls in policy making processes at the UN, in IGOs, in governments, in the technical Community, in civil society and in businesses. There is a lot of work to be done.  ICANN, within the Internet Eco-system, has an important but limited role to play. We do though, in our policy decision making process with respect to Internet identifiers and the DNS, recognise the need to do more to encourage and foster the role of women and girls. The Survey (and Report) on Gender Diversity and Participation elaborated on below is a first, but significant, step in this process.  We look forward to discussion these important issues during the physical consultation in Geneva later in January.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/33/CWG%20open%20consultation%20-%20gender%20divide%20.pdf) |
|  | January 03, 2018 | [Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=34) | **Text provided in comment box:**  BRIDGING THE GENDER DIVIDE  1. INTRODUCTION  This paper looks at the issues currently under consultation which include examples of good practices available to increase internet access and digital literacy for women and girls. Good practices that promote access and use of ITCs by SMEs, particularly those managed by women, available sources and mechanisms for measuring women participation in the digital economy as well as related policies.  While the developed world has made a lot of progress towards gender equality and empowerment, women and girls still suffer from various levels of discrimination. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and is also critical for a prosperous and sustainable world. It is also a key ingridient for the achievement of sustainable development goals SDGs.  According to the World Telecommunications ICT indicators data base 2016, ICT indicators for developed and developing countries and the world (totals and penetration rates), global Internet use has increased significantly over the past 10 years from 20.6% of the world online in 2007, to an estimated 47.1% in 2016. According to the ITU world facts, the global Internet user gender gap grew from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016. The gap remains large particularly in the world’s Least Developed Countries (LDCs), at 31%. In 2016, the regional gender gap is largest in Africa (23%) and smallest in the Americas (2%).  For Zimbabwe, According to the Country’s Census 2012 National Report, 8 777 094 people live in rural areas, while 4 284 145 live in urban areas. Of the people in rural areas, 4 390 228 are females, while 4 386 866 are males. According to an ICT access by households and use by individuals 2014 report produced by the Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office, in collaboration with the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), more than 60.18 % of the rural dwellers were found to have no access to a computer, the internet, mobile telephone and financial services, compared to about 20%, in urban areas. Accordingly, given that the majority of the female population lives in rural areas, not only the Urban to Rural Digital Divide, but also the Gender Digital Divide is wide.  One cannot dispute the potential of ICTs as a tool for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. However, with regards to ICTs themselves, the digital gender divide is also quite wide. It is necessary to bridge this gap for ITCs to make an impact on the general Digital Divide. Suggestions as to how, are contained under the consultation question headings in this Paper.  2. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?  The approaches and examples are outlined below:  • Embed ICT literacy training in early education systems that is, pre-school, primary and secondary education and then ensure that facilities that promote ITC learning and use are in place in tertiary educational institutions. The practice of introducing e-learning, particularly in schools can help. Examples of countries that have embraced the use of E-Learning include Senegal, Zambia, Somalia and Zimbabwe. For Zimbabwe the vision is to implement e-learning in 9000 Government owned schools starting with 1300 which are being connected to the internet currently. The Private schools are already doing a good job of embracing e-learning.  • For grown up women who have missed the ICT boat during their formal education a good approach is to ensure that they use basic ICT resources available on everyday gadgets like mobile phones.  • Providing computers for use in the activities of women in social communal clubs.  • Introducing ICT access points at the grass root level in the communities. Examples are India’s public libraries and Zimbabwe’s ICT Community Information Centres where people including women running small economic projects can access ICT equipment and the internet at very affordable charges or for free.  3. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the access and use of ICTs by SMEs in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?  The approaches and good practice examples include the following:  • To have good ICT infrastructure in place for easy and wide uptake of broadband services  • To encourage and promote technology transfer  • Introduce incentives for investment in ICTs, such as tax holidays  • Build confidence in the use of ICTs through cybersecurity in order to ensure protection of trade secrets , intellectual property and consumer protection  • Waive import duty on ICT equipment. Zimbabwe waived import duty on laptops and this saw most SMEs managing to buy computers for their businesses. A number of ICT companies headed by women also came into operation. Other examples of countries with Zero duty on laptops are Sri Lanka, South Africa and Israel.  • Incentivise e-procurement, as the benefit of reduction in leaks in revenue encourages uptake of ICTs  • Provide relevant content for SMEs. In some cases women and women owned businesses may not embrace the use of ICTs because of lack of relevant content. It is therefore necessary for Policy makers to ensure that appropriate content is developed and made available.  4 . Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises?  • Incorporate questions to determine the extent of ownership of ICT gadgets such as computers ,smartphones, radios and television whenever a national population census is conducted  • Carry out regular surveys on access to ICT by gender  • Carry out survey using public statistical institutions to determine the number of women managed institutions that use computers and ICT applications to manage any and/or all aspects of their businesses. Zimbabwe has adopted this approach and it has helped establish the extent of the digital divide in the country  5. What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?  Intervention needs to be at education level as well as business level and suggested measures/policies are outlined below:  • Affirmative action in university intake of women both for business classes and ICT degree programmes. The university of Zimbabwe adopted this and the uptake by girls increased  • Developing countries should share best practices among themselves and with the Developed countries  • Multi-stakeholder cooperation involving Government, inter-governmental organisations, the private sector, academia and nongovernmental organisations will help find sound solutions.  • Introduce incentives for the girl child to take up science and ICT related subjects, that is, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and eventually careers. Zimbabwe’s STEM programme has made a difference.  • Policy consultations should involve gender activist organisations that have sufficient knowledge of gender needs.  6. What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments  • Prohibitive costs in developing infrastructure which then limits access , particularly by rural communities  • Culture, particularly in some African countries where women are expected to stay pregnant and in the kitchen  • The content found on the internet may not be relevant to what the women are interested in  • Most people feel more comfortable accessing information in their mother language. Information accessed on the internet is generally in English or a few major languages which are foreign to developing countries  • ICT training is offered by private colleges, which are often very expensive. For Zimbabwe concentration on ICT training is generally in universities, which means that those who do not get a chance to attend university remain with no basic ICT training  • ICT Gadgets are expensive and most developing countries generally do not manufacture gadgets, thereby having no choice but to import at high prices.  The Following is what Governments can do:  • promote investment in ICTs so as to drive costs down  • Have government institutions that offer ICT training at affordable rates to SME employees  • Come up with a sound research and Development as well as innovation policy.  • Improve ICT network infrastructure so that investment becomes cheaper for the SMEs  • Run e-business awareness programmes  • Encourage use of e- transactions at the local levels.  Zimbabwe is one country where more than 80% of the local financial transactions are now electronic. One of the reasons for this was the need to relieve pressure on the country’s cash resources which made the drive by Government to promote e transactions through public media vigorous. This was also supported by the publicity surrounding the country’s pipeline legislation on electronic transactions, cybersecurity and Data protection, which allayed the fears of SMEs and the general public on the security of e-transactions. To ensure that even women running market stores were not left behind, Point of sale machines were made widely available. Currently the informal sector and people’s markets, use not only point of sale machines, but internet transfers and mobile money, extensively. Point of sale machines are even made available temporarily at weddings and house warming parties or any other function where monetary gifts may be offered by attendees.  7. Conclusion  It is clear that there is no single method that can effectively bridge the Gender divide. If however most of the proposals proposed in this paper which include investment in infrastructure, embedding ICTs in education systems and women related affirmative action in ICT training and education are used, significant inroads will be made. Working closely with organisations that work with women and promote the interests of women will also help as such organisations are better placed to identify the needs of the female Gender. A multi-stakeholder approach when setting policies is recommended in order to achieve buy in, by women and girls to any policy changes. It is also important to look at good practices across the world so that measures that work in one country are shared, customised and utilised by other countries. |
|  | January 04, 2018 | [Department of Communications and the Arts  (Australia)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=35) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document):**  The Australian Government believes that women should have equal opportunity to access and make the most of the digital economy. Australia has implemented a range of policy initiatives and development programs, both domestically and internationally, with the aim of bridging the digital gender divide. Australia recognises that governments need to work in partnership with businesses and the community to bridge this divide.  The Australian Government is investing in a variety of policy initiatives and development programs to enable women and girls to improve their digital literacy and participate in the digital economy. The Government is investing in a digital technologies curriculum as well as a grants program to foster women and girls’ participation in science, technology, engineering and entrepreneurship sectors. Bridging the digital gender divide is not just about skills and access, but about supporting women to have meaningful careers, especially as digital entrepreneurs and as leaders in the digital economy. Australia is strongly committed to being at the forefront of efforts to ensure the digital economy equally benefits women and girls, with opportunities and resources to reach their full potential.  Women’s participation in the digital economy is only possible when they feel respected and safe in the workplace and online. The Australian Government provides a range of services and initiatives to raise awareness, to assist women and girls to be safe online and support victims of gender-based violence through digital technologies.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/35/January%202018%20-%20Australia%20Submission%20-%20CWG%20Internet%20Open%20Consultation.pdf) |
|  | January 04, 2018 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=36) | **Text provided in comment box:**  We note that several of the contributions state the providing affordable access and security (including data protection) are key elements in bridging the gender divide. We trust that that will be reflected in the summary report of the open consultation. We note with regret that relatively few of the countries that proposed the theme of this open consultations actually submitted contributions. |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Access Partnership (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=37) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The WSIS Coalition is an industry group representing major global ICT companies involved in many aspects of the Internet ecosystem. We affirm our commitment to bridging the Digital Gender Divide and through effective cooperation with governments, the private sector, civil society and multilateral organizations, aim to convert this shared commitment into action.  In our submission, we reiterate the critical actions laid out by the Action Plan to Close the Digital Gender Gap, which was launched by WSIS+10 in 2015:  1. Developing gender responsive strategies and policies.  2. Ensuring access to ICTs by women and girls and addressing the factors that hinder their use of technology.  3. Building the digital capacities of women and girls.  4. Promoting women in the technology sector, particularly in positions of decision-making.  5. Establish multi-stakeholder partnerships.  **Text provided in submitted document:**  The WSIS Coalition represents major global ICT companies involved in many aspects of the Internet ecosystem. We are strong supporters of the multi-stakeholder model for policy development and seek to promote the goals of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). We are dedicated to the continued development of a global open, secure, and interoperable Internet to foster social and economic development for all people. We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the ITU Council Working Group on Internet Public Policy’s public consultation.  We affirm our commitment to bridging the Digital Gender Divide and through effective cooperation with governments, the private sector, civil society and multilateral organizations, aim to convert this shared commitment into action.  We reiterate the critical actions laid out by the Action Plan to Close the Digital Gender Gap, which was launched by WSIS+10 in 2015:  1. Developing gender responsive strategies and policies: This requires the incorporation of a gender equality perspective in all decision-making processes including strategies, planning, policies and funding mechanisms.  2. Ensuring access to ICTs by women and girls and addressing the factors that hinder their use of technology: Data obtained from national census and findings issued by international agencies need to be studied from a gender perspective and used as foundations for identifying issues. Moreover, threats emerging from ICTs, most notably cyber-related violence must be mitigated, responded to and prevented. This can be done by introducing policies that counter traditional gender roles and providing safe and accountable channels for grievance redressal.  3. Building the digital capacities of women and girls: This includes investing in targeted skills development for women and girls, and supporting relevant content, applications and services by and for women. This also includes modifying and updating existing formal education curricula so that they provide women and girls with the necessary ICT skills and information.  4. Promoting women in the technology sector, particularly in positions of decision-making: Particularly in developing and least-developed countries, providing incentives and opportunities for women’s higher education, promoting women’s recruitment and promotion to decision-making positions in the technology sector are all important steps. Stakeholders, particularly those in the private sector can introduce internal policies which encourage participation of women in the Information Society.  5. Establish multi-stakeholder partnerships: governments, civil society, international organizations like the UN and the private sector must all pursue joint measures for the creation of new avenues, and facilitating policy discussions both within and among nations. Recognition of good practices through events like the ITU’s Equals in Tech Awards also help raise awareness about organizations and individuals contributing to the close of the gender divide.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/37/WSIS%20Coalition%20Response%20to%20CWG%20Internet%20Consultation.docx) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [ITU-APT Foundation of India  (India)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=38) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Attached  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/38/Responses%20on%20bridging%20the%20digital%20gender%20divide.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [CAICT (China)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=39) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The goal of SDG5 is "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Currently, in most developing countries and the least developed countries, the gender divide of access and use of internet is still prominent. Concerning this subject of open consultation, China has taken the suggestion into consideration from the following four aspects are some considerations on bridging the gender divide and promoting women's participation in the digital economy including the role of ITU, strengthening the construction of information infrastructure, protecting women's rights and urging women to participate in the digital economy and initiating women’s interests  **Text provided in submitted document:**  **Bridging the Digital Gender Divide**  The goal of SDG5 is "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Currently, in most developing countries and the least developed countries, the gender divide of access and use of Internet is still prominent. Concerning this subject of open consultation, China has taken the suggestion into consideration from the following four aspects are some considerations on bridging the gender divide and promoting women's participation in the digital economy including the role of ITU, strengthening the construction of information infrastructure, protecting women's rights and urging women to participate in the digital economy and initiating women’ s interests  1. Role of ITU.  UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. As a specialized agency engaged in the field of Telecommunications and ICT, ITU should play the role of technical support in Telecommunications and ICT, cooperating with UN Women and other agencies to achieve the goal of gender equality.  2. Strengthening the construction of information infrastructure  In some countries and regions, the construction of information infrastructure is in low level, or the telecom tariffs are very high, resulting in relatively limited information acquisition, which making some people, especially women, unable to access and use the Internet conveniently. We should continue to promote the construction of the information infrastructure in all countries, especially in developing countries and the least developed countries, to promote broadband, 3G/4G, and to reduce the user tariff for Internet access, so that more female users are able to use affordable internet. For example, China’s strategy of “Facilitating Faster and More Affordable Internet Connection” has achieved great success. By the three quarter of 2017, the average download rate has reached 16.40 Mbit/s, increased by 35% compared to the end of 2016. Tariff is reduced continuously, by reducing the international long distance, and the elimination of domestic long- distance mobile phone roaming charges.  3. Protecting women's rights and urging women to participate in the digital economy  -- It’ s necessary to protect women's equal right to education and work according to law. We should strengthen the protection of women's digital rights and provide channels for women to maintain their legal rights.  -- We need to carry out various brand activities, set up excellent Internet female example and stimulate women’ s consciousness and enthusiasm to participate in the digital economy.  -- We need to strengthen the training and education of women, improve women's skills, and enhance women's competitive advantage in the Internet and digital economy.  In China, there are agencies such as All-China Women's Federation and China Women's Development Foundation is committed to promoting women play a greater role in the digital economy. A series of brand activities such as "@ her entrepreneurial plan" were held. Platform such as "micro help" was established.  4. Initiating women’ s interests  The development of the Internet has promoted the emergence and popularization of various Internet applications, such as social software, payment tools, and car rental tools, which has brought great convenience to users' lives. Through the users’ word of mouth and the application companies’ advertisement and promotion, more women began to use those convenient tools.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/39/Open%C2%A0Consultation.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [World Wide Web Foundation/Alliance for Affordable Internet (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=41) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box):**  Better broadband policies offer a clear path to improving women’s internet access and use, and to moving forward toward universal access goals. However, our recent research of 58 low and middle income countries national broadband policies indicates that only a handful of governments have taken any action at the policy level to advance true progress toward closing the digital gender divide. This finding reflects the very limited progress that has been made since previous assessments (most notably those by the Broadband Commission in 2013 and the Web Foundation in 2014) which revealed similarly serious shortcomings in advancing women’s opportunities for online access and use. Without a specific focus on improving access and use opportunities for women, policies will continue to exclude half the population. Creating a more accessible and empowering internet for women requires policy that focuses on a number of key areas, easily remembered as R.E.A.C.T: Rights, Education, Access, Content, and Targets.  In addition to developing policies that focus on rights, education, access, content, and targets, as outlined above, it is critical that women are included in the actual policymaking process. Policy designed for all citizens — and particularly policy focused on affecting women — should be designed with women, and governments must work to secure women’s participation in the policymaking process. In many countries, women’s organisations have made significant contributions to incorporating gender perspectives in policy across various sectors such as health, education, and the environment. Unfortunately, this is not the case in many other countries, where women’s voices are left entirely out of the policymaking process. It is now time for governments to take responsibility and immediate action to maximise the benefits of the internet and emerging technologies for all people.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/41/A4AI_ITU%20Gender%20Digital%20Divide%20Consultation%20.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [UNESCO (France)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=42) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Enclosed, please find the response from UNESCO.  **Text provided in submitted document:**  **UNESCO’s Consultation Response**  UNESCO appreciates the opportunity to respond to the ITU’s CWG - Internet consultation to address gender equality for Internet users.   1. What **approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy** of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?   Ensuring that everyone has the necessary digital skills to succeed in today’s technology-driven world is of global importance. Modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) are increasingly central to work and education, and acquiring skills to leverage these technologies is needed to address many of the global challenges outlined in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.  Digital skills and competencies have already fostered the creativity and innovation that have brought about improvements in many aspects of life, such as health and well-being, infrastructure, sustainable energy production, agriculture and other sectors. Digital technologies have also demonstrated their potential to be a powerful catalyst for the political, economic and social empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of gender equality. They can be an important driver for information and exchange and can make female voices heard; they can enhance participation in public decision-making and can provide access to education, financing and networks.  UNESCO’s strong intersectoral collaboration across the Education and Communication and Information (CI) Sectors optimises the achievement of results. The following examples are initiatives taken by UNESCO to address some of the complex social, economic and cultural barriers that prevent women from internet access and digital literacy:   * 1. As Co-Vice-chair of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, UNESCO led on the development of the publication Digital Skills for Life and Work, which examines how the education sector can ensure that all people develop essential digital skills for life and work. The Report’s policy recommendations and examples of innovative practice will be an important foundation for the products developed through this initiative. As a follow-up to the report, UNESCO is establishing a working group to develop an internationally recognized frameworks for digital skills in order to promote the equitable development of digital skills and the monitoring of progress towards SDG target 4.4.   2. UNESCO’s Education Sector has been implementing ICT in education projects in more than 50 countries which aim to develop national ICT in education policies and master plans with a focus on reducing the digital divide, and building teachers’ ICT competency through its ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (ICT CFT). More specifically, UNESCO has been supporting field projects in harnessing mobile technology to empower women and girls in South Asian and Sub-Saharan African countries.   3. UNESCO hosts an annual Mobile Learning Week conference which is recognized as a pre-eminent conference on mobile learning and attracts education leaders and practitioners from around the world. The theme of the 2018 Conference is “Skills for a connected world”, and will offer an important platform for the EQUALS Skills Coalition to a wide range of participants, including policy-makers, project managers, educators, researchers, and representatives of NGOs, international organizations and private companies.   4. UNESCO’s Youth Mobile Initiative is providing young people with basic technical skills and the confidence to develop, promote, and sell locally relevant mobile apps, and professional skills to advance confidence, empathy and persistence. Active in over 25 countries, reaching more than 5,000 beneficiaries, the initiative will also provide an important platform to reach youth and youth-led organizations, contributing to the improved relevance and sustainability of the products developed through this proposal.  1. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the **access and use of ICTs by SMEs** in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?   -   1. Which are the available **sources and mechanisms for measuring** women’s participation in the digital economy with focus on SME’s and micro-enterprises?   The **UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)** is the statistical office of UNESCO and is the primary UN depository for cross-nationally comparable statistics on education, science and technology, culture, and communication covering more than 200 countries and territories. As sex-disaggregated indicators are systematically integrated into all UIS data collections, gender equality data in education, science, culture and communication can be easily searched on its data base, “[UIS.Stat](http://data.uis.unesco.org/)”.  Specifically, under the theme “[Science, technology and innovation: Women in Science](http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/women-science),” fact sheets and [visualized reports](http://uis.unesco.org/apps/visualisations/women-in-science/#!lang=en) can be found on the status quo of women’s participation in the field of science, technology and innovation. More data can be searched directly in the [database](http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=118&export) using indicators such as “Researchers by function and by sex”, “Researchers by sector of employment and sex”, “Researchers by field of R&D and sex”.  In 2015, UNESCO started the implementation of the project “**Improved Measurement of Gender Equality in Science and Engineering**”, also known as [**SAGA**](https://en.unesco.org/saga), with the objective to develop and access evidence to assess STI policies using sex-disaggregated data, and by collecting information on drivers and barriers in STEM. The SAGA project aims to contribute to improving the situation of women and reducing the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields in all countries at all levels of education and research. To achieve these objectives, it determines, measures and assesses sex-disaggregated data, as well as supports the design and implementation of science, technology and innovation (STI) policy instruments that affect gender equality in STEM. Moreover, SAGA aims to analyse how policies affect the gender balance in STEM, undertake inventories of STI gender equality policies, develop new and better indicators to provide tools for evidence-based policy-making, build capacity in Member States for data collection on gender in STEM, and prepare methodological documents to support the collection of statistics.   1. What **measures/policies could be envisioned in order to focus the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs**, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?   -   1. What are the **gaps in addressing these challenges**? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?   The term “digital divide” has been used to describe inequalities between certain social groups in their access to computers and the internet, but is also an issue in terms of digital skills acquisition and use. Recent reports show that worldwide, only 18% of graduates with computer science degrees are women. Women are 1.6 times more likely to report lack of skills as a barrier to internet use than men.  Illiteracy is a significant obstacle for girls’ and women’s digital skills development. Two-thirds of the world’s over 700 million illiterate adults are women. Bridging the digital divide will require equal access to learning opportunities in school and through training programmes, particularly for those who are most vulnerable to being left behind.  There is a need for innovative, long-term and holistic programmes that address this gender digital divide, and that empower women and girls in acquiring basic competences and digital skills that will help them to become both ICT users and creators in the digital world as well as in broader science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/42/UNESCO%20ITU%20Gender%20Consultation.docx) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [ESOA (Belgium)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=43) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The following comments are submitted on behalf of ESOA members. ESOA is a non-profit organisation established with the objective of serving and promoting the common interests of satellite operators from Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the CIS. Satellite communications contribute to bridging the Digital Gender Divide by bringing education to rural areas or refugee camps, enabling digital financial inclusion or allowing citizens to participate in democratic elections.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/43/ESOA_ConsultGenderDivide.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Global Partners Digital (United Kingdom)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=45) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box):**  In this consultation response, we identify a number of barriers which prevent or limit women’s access and use of the internet, as well as digital literacy more broadly, and make a number of recommendations as to how they can be addressed. In particular, we focus on six key barriers: (i) cost/affordability; (ii) a lack of technical/digital literacy/skills; (iii) poor infrastructure, quality or coverage; (iv) harassment; (v) a lack of relevant content/lack of time; and (iv) a low level of women’s participation in internet-related policymaking and the technology sector.  We also note that the digital gender divide is both a symptom and a cause of the underrepresentation of women in internet-related policymaking and the technology sector. We therefore set out a number of specific steps that existing policymakers should take to help ensure that internet-related policies tackle, rather than ignore or exacerbate, the digital gender divide.  Finally, with respect to the role of governments, we consider that in addition to the specific barriers identified, there are three broader issues which need to be addressed, and where governments have a specific role: (i) tackling gender inequality more broadly, (ii) collecting better and gender-disaggregated data, and (iii) ensuring that ICT-related policies are developed through open, inclusive and transparent processes.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/45/ITU%20CWG-Internet%20Consultation%20on%20the%20Gender%20Digital%20Divide.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [US Department of State  (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=46) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Access and usage of digital tools empower women and girls by providing essential information and services for health, safety, education, and economic growth opportunities. The lack of access to the Internet and basic digital skills limits women’s ability to participate in the digital economy, obtain good education, access healthcare services and participate in the civil discourse. The United States believes that without major changes in policies concomitant with a significant increase in investment many of the benefits of technological changes will be out of the reach of women, thus potentially exacerbating current gender inequalities.  **Text provided in submitted document:**  **Introduction**  Access and usage of digital tools empowers women and girls by providing essential information and services for health, safety, education, and economic growth opportunities—all of which are crucial for societies to realize their full economic potential. While the reach of digital technologies continues to rapidly expand, the gap between men and women accessing the Internet has widened over the last three years. A woman is 14 percent less likely than a man to own a phone in low and middle-income countries. Globally, this equates to a mobile phone gender gap of roughly 200 million women. Moreover, high costs of devices and Internet service, lack of digital literacy, and prohibitive social norms disproportionately impact women. The lack of access to the Internet and lack of basic digital skills limits women’s ability to participate in the digital economy, obtain good education, access healthcare services and participate in the civil discourse.  The United States believes that without major changes in policies concomitant with a significant increase in investment many of the benefits of technological changes will be out of the reach of women, thus potentially exacerbating current gender inequalities. The following includes a sample of programs, which reflect the United States’ commitment to promoting ICT use by women and girls all over the world.  **Enabling Device Ownership and Promoting Digital Literacy**  Connected Women Program (Worldwide)  The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) partners with AusAID (Australia’s government aid agency), GSM Association (GSMA), and Visa — known as the GSMA Connected Women Program — enabled 15 million underserved women to own and effectively use mobile phones in order to increase their access to vital information, networks, and services to improve their family's quality of life.  Women and the Web Alliance (Kenya and Nigeria)  Women and the Web, a three-year training program in Kenya and Nigeria, was a partnership between USAID, NetHope, World Vision, and Intel. The program trained over 100,000 women in digital literacy, computer, and Internet skills. After receiving training, many of the trainees began microenterprises and began receiving microloans. Other trainees have started one-woman internet cafés.  WomenConnect Challenge  Launched by USAID Administrator Mark Green at the 2017 Global Entrepreneurship Summit, the WomenConnect Challenge is focused on holistic approaches to closing the digital gender divide that address affordability, digital skills, and prohibitive social norms. An open call for proposals will be announced in early 2018.  **Developing Research and Tools**  Gender and ICT Survey Toolkit  USAID’s Gender and ICT Survey Toolkit addresses the challenge of poor gender disaggregated data at the sub-national level. The Toolkit was developed to facilitate the collection of genderdisaggregated information by providing draft survey questions and research design around women’s access and use of ICTs. In a parallel effort launched in October 2017, USAID’s Gender and ICT Training Course focuses on integrating gender and ICT programming for USAID staff and implementing partners.  USAID Support for the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP)  USAID has provided policy guidance to financial regulators to address specific constraints women face (i.e. limited access to national IDs, restrictions on movement, asset ownership, etc.). Data and research projects, such as the recent smallholder national surveys, embed analysis to draw out special considerations for women's segment. Experiments with financial services providers that test different features (i.e., user interfaces, real-time communication, and delivery channels), which take into consideration the design requirements for female users. The program also creates a community of practice to coordinate donor advancement for women's financial inclusion.  **Supporting Policy Advocacy for the Right of Women to Participate in the Digital Economy**  mSTAR (Bangladesh)  USAID’s Mobile Solutions Technical Assistance and Research Project (mSTAR) in Bangladesh, supports the transition away from traditional cash payment methods to mobile financial services (MFS). The mSTAR program focused on increasing digital transactions and providing access to mobile financial services to women, with three quarters of the program’s total transactions going to women.  Better Than Cash Alliance (Afghanistan)  The Government of Afghanistan joined the Better Than Cash Alliance (BTCA) in 2013. The BTCA is supporting policy guidance, advocacy, and research that integrate gender equality and women’s economic empowerment into global and national government policies impacting the inclusion of women by way of government to person (G2P) and business to person (B2P) payments systems.  APEC Policy Partnership on Women in the Economy (ASIA)  USAID, in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, has actively promoted women’s entrepreneurship in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), an organization of 21 economies working together to promote reform. Through the APEC Technical Assistance to Advance Regional Integration (ATAARI) project, USAID has supported the development of an APEC web-based platform for women’s business networking and support. The website includes a women’s business directory, resources, an information forum, and information on financing opportunities for women entrepreneurs.  **Domestic Support for STEM Education**  The United States is committed to STEM education as a key to engaging more women in technology fields. In February 2017, President Trump signed two bills into law:  • INSPIRE Women Act – which stands for Inspiring the Next Space Pioneers, Innovators, Researchers, and Explorers -- NASA will support women’s involvement in the fields of aerospace and space exploration, encouraging women and girls to pursue STEM studies and careers in aerospace and space.  • Promoting Women in Entrepreneurship Act – expanding National Science Foundation efforts on behalf of women in science and engineering to encourage its entrepreneurial programs to recruit and support women to extend their focus beyond the laboratory and into the commercial world.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/46/US%20Contribution%20Open%20Consult%20Gender.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Anatel (National Telecommunications Agency); Psychology Institute - UnB (University of Brasília) (Brazil)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=47) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document):**  The conceptual survey conducted by the Ombudsman Anatel is anchored on the need for understanding of the reasons why, in general, men and women are well-defined career choices which can be understood as a gender construction linked to the absence of models or even taken decision that characterize these choices as a vocational option and based on skills that, in theory, can be developed or learned by men and women, boys and girls. Therefore, you have to that change is inserted through teaching strategies in the context of primary and secondary education, with proper planning to set learning objectives and in view, therefore, to their level of complexity to better adapt the technique teaching.  It is observed that, of the five cases chosen as examples of good practice, three are focused on academic learning, all use the teaching process focusing on the student, and the teacher more as a supporter of the learning experience and enlightening questions and advisor. The other two other cases, one is based on the construction of a public policy of government, but does not, however, the consequences of this policy in terms of effectiveness. Furthermore, when considering the question of ownership of equality for economic, exclusively, there is huge possibility of failure in isolated such policies, given that economic inequalities are increasing and universal and are directly related to the unequal distribution of capital .  In turn, it is understood that forums such as the Women in Information Technology (WIT), the SBC initiative, are important, but not sufficient if we consider that gender issues are elaborated in the symbolic reality and that reality has interface with the culture, values and beliefs. Thus, such events open public space for debate without, however, being a transformative process. Interesting that these forums are promoted by the students who went through the experience in academic level, not as a single space of speech, but speech with results that can be improved. Thus, the Ombudsman Anatel believes that the debate on gender diversity in the technology sector should be focused on educators and researchers in the social sciences.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/47/Contributions%20from%20Anatel%20Ombudsman%20to%20the%20Public%20Consultation%20on%20ITU%20Gender.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [CUTS International (India)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=48) | **Text provided in comment box:** Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS International, www.cuts-international.org) is pleased to respond to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) - Council Working Group (CWG) Consultation Paper on Bridging the Digital Gender Divide, as a part of the International Internet related Public Policy Issues.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/48/180501_ITU_BridgingTheDigitalGenderDivide_CUTS%20International.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [National Committee for Information society (Saudi Arabia)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=49) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Please find our contribution to Bridging the Digital Gender Divide in the attached file.  **Text provided in submitted document:**  **Bridging the Digital Gender Divide**  In order to answer the questions raised by the CWG-Internet consultation , it would be essential to provide a background relevant to this topic.  **Background**  There are important facts related to the gender equality in KSA that should be highlighted to put the answers in the right perspective; key examples on the current statues of women, in various fields are given as follow:   1. **University Education:** At present, over “50 %” of the university graduates in the country are females; and “KSA Vision 2030” states that the country “will continue to develop their talent and invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future, and contribute to the development of the society and the economy”. 2. **Workforce:** The following highlights the women contribution as one of the essential element of the national workforce.    1. In the medical sector “40 %” of Saudi doctors are females.    2. The current women’s employment in “civil service” is around “40%”; and the “National Transformation Program (NTP)” of KSA vision is targeting “42%” by the year 2020. 3. **Business & Investment:** The following summarizes the role of women in business and investment.    1. Saudi business women own “20 thousand Small to Medium Enterprises (SME)”.    2. The invested capital by Saudi women in investment funds represents “20%” of the total investment in these funds. 4. **Political Influence & Key Positions:** This is summarized in the following.    1. Regarding the political influence of woman in the country, “20%” of the members of the Saudi “Consultative Assembly (Shura Council)” are woman. This proportion is equivalent to that of the US Senate and of the US house of representative.    2. NTP of KSA vision is working toward increasing the number of women in key civil service leadership positions in the country. 5. **Use of the “Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** A recent survey by the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) and King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) indicates that among the Saudi population aged between 12 and 65 years, the following have been revealed:    1. “96 % of females and 88 % of males use the Internet”.    2. “99 % of males, and of females use mobile voice”.    3. “78 % of females and “72 % of males use the mobile Internet services”;    4. “99 % of males, and of females use online social networks.”    5. “15 % of females and 13 % of males spend over 8 hours per day using the Internet”.    6. Those spending “4 to 8 hours per day using the Internet are 45 % females and 25 % males”.   The answers given below to the consultation will consider the facts of the background.  **Question (1)**  **What approaches, and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?**  **Answer to Question (1)**  KSA followed successful approaches and practices that enabled its achievement of the following:   * The Internet access of women in KSA exceeds that of men (Paragraph E, Part: 1 of the background). * Digital literacy among women in KSA is high and this is reflected by their ICT access and use (Paragraph E), and by their university education (Paragraph A). * Decision making processes on Internet public policy have led to the current ICT use (Paragraph E). * The NTP direction toward having more women in key civil service position; together with their political influence (Paragraphs: D & E) will further enhance women empowerment in the country, in general, and in ICT in particular.   **Question (2)**  **What approaches, and examples of good practices are available to promote the access and use of ICTs by SMEs in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?**  **Answer to Question (2)**  KSA followed successful approaches and practices that enabled the achievement of the following:   * Women own “20 thousand” SMEs (Paragraph C, Part 1 of the background). * Women access and use of ICT exceeds that of men (Paragraph E). * Therefore, women in KSA provide substantial contribution to: SMEs, use of ICT, and consequently participation in the digital economy.   **Question (3)**  **Q3: Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises.**  **Answer to Question (3)**  The government of KSA has a department concerned with statistics, known as the “General Authority of Statistics”, which works with the various other specialized government departments on collecting statistical information concerned with development. This is an important source of “quantitative” measures concerned with the various Saudi facts and activities, including women participation in the digital economy, and contribution to business, including SMEs. Various facts presented in the background are based on this source. Another important source of measures is survey studies like the one done by CITC and KFUPM emphasizing ICT use by females and males, and providing useful “qualitative measures” of development (Paragraph E of the background).  **Question (4)**  **Q4: What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?**  **Answer to Question (4)**  KSA has periodic national and international economic meetings held in the various parts of the country. Economic leaders and experts contribute to these meetings, which are usually attended by a wide spectrum of business women and men, and by the public, including of course women and men. Examples of these meeting are “Riyadh Economic Forum (REF)” and “Jeddah Economic Forum (JEF)”, which are held annually. These meetings involve knowledge sharing on various business issues, encouraging business activities, including supporting the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs. At present KSA has “20 thousand SMEs” owned by women (Paragraph: C; Part: 1).  **Question (5)**  **Q5: What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?**  The above background and answers to the first four given questions have explored the current distinguished women participation and contribution to ICT use and to economic activities in KSA. In addition, KSA vision 2030 and its NTP are carrying this further toward an even more active role in this regard. Having explored this potential, and continuing to do so, the country now enjoys great experience from which other countries can benefit.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/49/Bridging%20the%20Digital%20Gender%20Divide.docx) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Centro Internacional de Investigación Científica en Telecomunicaciones, Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones (CITIC) (Ecuador)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=51) | **Text provided in comment box (in English):**  Telecommunication, ICT sector is one of the lowest participation of women and it is for this reason that we have a special interest in joining the objective of ITU to create an environment that empowers girls, young women and women with the use and appropriation of ICT.  **Text provided in comment box (in Spanish):**  El sector de Telecomunicaciones y TIC, es uno de los que menor participación de mujeres tiene y es por esta razón que tenemos un especial interés en sumarnos al objetivo de la UIT para crear un entorno que empodere a niñas, jóvenes y mujeres con el uso y apropiación de las Telecomunicaciones y TIC.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/51/Bridging%20the%20Digital%20Gender%20Divide.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [General Secretariat For Gender Equality (Greece)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=52) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Actions that can promote the participation of women in technology and entrepreneurship  1. Developing a common definition and understanding of what digital skills and competences are.  2. Improving the understanding and definition of digital skills needs.  3. Upgrading the digital skills of the labour force with a focus on professional-related digital skills.  4. Overcoming the obstacles and/or limitations some people face to obtaining digital skills- including lack of interest, awareness, resources and/or knowledge, as well as fear of technology.  5. Providing relevant digital skills training opportunities for all.  Actions that will enhance the role of women in the field of technology and STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), either as an employee or as an entrepreneur  1. Making the ICT profession more attractive as a career choice, with a focus on encouraging more women to participate.  2. Increasing the number of young people trained for ICT professions (ICT graduates and conversions to ICT).  3. Ensuring certification and standardisation.  4. Improving managers' digital skills or so-called "e-Leadership" skills.  5. Upskilling of ICT professionals in a life-long-learning perspective.  6. Strengthening collaboration across relevant stakeholders  Training actions to support the entry of women into the labor market on equal terms regarding ICT skills and competences needed.  1. Provide the adequate ICT environment where teaching and training will be in close relation with the labour market.  2. Up-skilling of digital skills should become a target for the educational and VET curricula.  3. All the changes should be aligned with a Future need skills regional approach.  4. Strengthening collaboration across relevant stakeholders.  Regarding specific skills that could support the entry of women into the labor market and/or the improvement of their positions these include:  • Management of IT  • Basic ICT skills  • Advanced ICT skills  • Internet applications for networking and cooperation  • Technical skills  • Web page design  • Programming and software development  Especially for women aspiring to become entrepreneurs, specific skills are required which will enable them to promote online their products/services, to collect customer insight, and target specific audiences through the use of social media:  • Social media marketing (e.g. Blogs, Microblogs, Social Networks, Media-Sharing Sites, Social Bookmarking and selection Sites, analysis Sites, forum and effective Worlds).  However, in order for digital skills to be effectively implemented they have to be accompanied by generic competences such as:  • Effective communication skills  • Problem solving skills  • Teamwork skills  The above conclusions and recommendations were elaborated during the implementation of the project “Innovation and Employability for Women (e-Women), financed by the Financial Mechanism (XM) of the European Economic Area (EEA) Period 2009-2014, controlled by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (Greece's Ministry of Education) from January 2016 to March 2017.  The project’s goal was to determine the status of technology in terms of participation and awareness among women, particularly young women in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the benefits arising from their use in the field of employment. The General Secretariat for Gender Equality was one of the project's 5 partners.  For more details please see the relevant website <http://www.iewomen.eu/1_2/ieWomen> |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [International Network of Women in Engineering and Sciences Europe (United Kingdom)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=53) | **SUMMARY (provided in submitted document and comment box)**  INWES-Europe is a network of European women working in STEM is a regional group of the International Women’s Network of Engineers and Scientists.  Good practices in order to reduce the gender divide in internet access include role models, coding classes, equal opportunities for job progression. Learning ICT skills through a variety of ways including gaming needs to be recognised and adapted to ensure girls are included, as cultural and personal preferences may affect the uptake.  International organisations and governments should work together with women networks in order to support women in SMEs, through mentorship schemes, financial support, facilitation, and recognition of individual time management needs and business risk-attitude cultural approaches.  The gender divide should be monitored at local, national, regional and international level and robust mechanisms should be develop to that effect.  The role of government and international organisations is key to the bridging of the gender divide. Through the development of appropriate policies, including regulations to protect women online against harassment and cyber-crime, women in STEM and ICT, entrepreneurs, and in SMEs should be supported.  Women networks are key to achieve this objective, through the development of programmes and projects, connecting women through events, informal meetings, social media, and being a voice for women at all levels will allow to support this key agenda item. And of course, men need to support these networks and gender diversity in order to ensure a sustainable success of these actions.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/53/ITU%20Consultation%20on%20Gender%20Divide%20INWES%20Europe%20response.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Association for Progressive Communications  (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=54) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the work of the ITU Council Working Group-Internet (CWG-I) Open Consultation on Bridging the Digital Gender Divide.  APC considers the gender digital divide as both a symptom and cause of violations of women’s human rights. It is a symptom, in that the discrimination that women face on the basis of social and cultural norms is one of the most pronounced causes of the gender digital divide. To put it simply, all disparities in internet access are situated within other disparities that women face in society, be they based on location, economic power, age, gender, racial or ethnic origin, social and cultural norms, education, or other factors. These are causes of violations of women’s human rights, because the internet can be a critical enabler of human rights, and the gender digital divide leaves women who are without meaningful internet access less equipped to exercise their human rights and participate in public life/society. Barriers to women’s meaningful access to the internet are multifaceted, and include:   * Availability (e.g. women have no broadband access, public internet centres are in spaces that women do not usually have access to, etc.) * Affordability (e.g. insufficient income to pay for data, cannot afford a device, etc.) * Culture and norms (e.g. boys are prioritised for technology use at home, online gender-based violence, restrictions to movement, etc.) * Capacity and skills (e.g. gender literacy gap, lack of skills and confidence to access the internet or explore technology, etc.) * Availability of relevant content (e.g. language issues, lack of content that speaks to women's contexts, gender-related content is censored/restricted, etc.) * Women's participation in decision-making roles pertaining to the internet and/or in the technology sector (e.g. when women are not able to pursue careers in science and technology, when their participation in relevant policy-making forums is restricted).   Given the range of barriers contributing to the gender digital divides outlined above, and the fact that barriers to women’s meaningful access to the internet are deeply rooted in cultural norms and values, we encourage the ITU to focus its efforts on barriers that fall within its remit, such as availability and affordability, as well as increasing women's participation in decision-making roles within the ITU itself. All efforts by the ITU to increase affordable and meaningful access to the internet should integrate a women’s rights perspective.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/54/APCSubmission_ITU_BridgingGenderDigitalDivide.pdf) |
|  | January 07, 2018 | [ARTICLE 19  (United Kingdom)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=55) | **Text provided in comment box:**  ARTICLE 19 welcomes the efforts of the ITU and its Council Working Group on International Internet-Related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet) to engage in a multistakeholder process by holding this Open Consultation.  Generally, digital divides are gaps between individuals, households, businesses, and geographic areas that are at different levels, whether socially or economically, with regard to their opportunities to use, develop, and benefit from the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs). The gender digital divide is both a consequence and cause of systemic violations of women’s human rights, both online and offline. It is a reflection of existing realities: the discrimination and marginalization that women face in society--not only on the basis of gender, but also through compounding factors rooted in location, economic status, age, racial or ethnic origin, and education--yield barriers to using, developing, and benefiting from the Internet and ICTs. Fundamentally, it is the free and full exercise of human rights that determine our ability to use, develop, and benefit from these technologies.  This submission responds to two of the five questions provided in this open consultation.  In response to Question Five, we assert that although infrastructural access remains a major challenge to bridging the gender digital divide, technology-related violence against women that exists even when women are able to access the Internet and ICTs remains a major issue that is not yet sufficiently addressed by relevant stakeholders. In response to this gap, these stakeholders should adopt a human rights framework in considering the gender digital divide.  In response to Question One, we contend that to ensure the opportunities necessary for women to use and benefit from the Internet, the spaces in which Internet-related policy and standards decision-making occurs must be upheld by structures that deliberately foster and encourage the inclusion of individuals that have been disproportionately disenfranchised from access, including women. Specifically, we note the anti-harassment measures undertaken in recent years by the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (​ICANN​) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (​IETF​). The initiatives taken by these respective communities serve as examples from which other bodies, including the ITU, can draw. |
|  | January 08, 2018 | [International Development Research Centre (IDRC) (Canada)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=56) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Digital technologies - the Internet and mobile phones among others - are vital for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The Networked Economies program of Canada’s International Development Research Centre has supported research that has demonstrated that under the right conditions, digital technologies contribute to achieving the SDG targets by fostering economic growth, improving governance, and delivering better outcomes in education and health.  At the same time the positive effects of digital innovation can be too easily counteracted by technologies’ role in amplifying economic and social inequalities. For instance, women and girls in the developing world often do not have the skills to use, nor equal levels of access to, digital tools. This not only entrenches the significant wage gaps that already exist, but also means that women will struggle to harness 21st century employment opportunities as more jobs move online. A deeper emerging problem is that women who do acquire online skills and access often face severe harassment – as targets for online “trolls” who seek to shame, taunt and marginalize female voices. The digital bias is compounded by the fact that women are underrepresented in fields such as computer science and engineering which shape the design of technologies. Ensuring women contribute in these spaces means technological innovations will be designed with their needs in mind, for instance to counter bias or harassment, to provide information on better sanitation, or to support flexible work.  The goal of the NE program is to understand how digital innovation in developing and middle income countries can support inclusive economic opportunities and democracy. The program aims to deliver on this goal by improving the governance of cyberspace; connecting people in the global South to the online sphere and economic opportunities; and by testing and scaling digital innovations to improve entrepreneurship, education, and democracy.  The program aims to support better gender-related outcomes through technology and development in three related areas:  1) Enhancing pro-women policies and rights online;  2) Improving governance and creating economic opportunities that empower women by testing and scaling digital innovations; and  3) Improving access to technology and the skills needed to create and innovate.  This document outlines current projects that support these efforts to support the achievement of SDG 5 through the Internet.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/56/Empowering%20women%20through%20the%20Internet_Jan2018.pdf) |
|  | January 08, 2018 | [EQUALS Global Partnership (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=59) | **Text provided in comment box:**  This input is a contribution to the open consultation from EQUALS, the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age. The contribution is based on the data received from a mapping conducted within EQUALS of close to 500 initiatives working on gender digital inclusion. The attached PDF is presented to support the questions under discussion in this Online Open Consultation. Further information about EQUALS is available at [www.equals.org](http://www.equals.org).  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/59/1801%20Input%20EQUALS%20Action%20Map%20CWG%20Internet%20Consultation.%20v4.pdf) |
|  | January 10, 2018 | [Research ICT Africa  (South Africa)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=60) | **Text provided in comment box:**  Research ICT Africa and its new African Digital Policy Project believes that evidence-based policymaking is crucial to not only overcoming disparities in Internet access among men and women in Africa and beyond, but also to ensuring that the Internet can be a force for sustainable development. Our work has indicated that women’s ability to access and use the Internet depends on a number of interrelated barriers that are inextricably rooted in socioeconomic circumstances. Approaches and examples of good practices to increase Internet access therefore tend to be ones that take due cognisance of women’s unique contexts and circumstances.  **Text provided in submitted document:**  **What approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?**  Research ICT Africa and its recently established African Digital Policy Project believes that evidence-based policymaking is crucial to not only overcoming disparities in Internet access among men and women in Africa and beyond, but also to ensuring that the Internet can be a force for sustainable development. This is also one of the reasons why RIA has worked incessantly over more than ten years to develop and gather data on universal indicators on ICT access and use in Africa.  Our work has indicated that women’s ability to access and use the Internet depends on a number of interrelated barriers that are inextricably rooted in socioeconomic circumstances. Approaches and examples of good practices to increase Internet access therefore tend to be ones that take due cognizance of women’s unique contexts and circumstances. These factors influence women’s ability to gain education, be employed, have the skills needed to use ICTs, have the disposable income and time to benefit from ICT access, and to actively protect themselves from online threats or harm. Our research shows that alongside cost, digital literacy skills and related confidence in using ICTs can have an even more significant impact on people’s ability to access and use the Internet than gender.  **Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises?**  One of the most sustainable ways in which in which gender inequities in access can be properly addressed is through evidence-based policymaking. For more than a decade, Research ICT Africa has provided policymakers and other stakeholders with such evidence through the development and gathering of universal indicators on ICT access and use.  RIA’s informal sector, household and individual surveys is conducted in seven African countries (Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Mozambique, Ghana and Nigeria), with sex-disaggregated data being collected on social networking, cybersecurity awareness and practices, digital finance, microwork and others aspects of sharing economy. As the surveys are nationally representative, the data can be and is disaggregated on the basis of gender, location (urban and rural), income and education levels. Among other things, these indicators therefore provide a holistic view of women’s participation in the digital economy, including SMEs and micro-enterprises.  The surveys are part of a global initiative on producing much needed quality data on ICT access and use in the global South. RIA coordinates the surveys with her sister networks, LIRNEasia in six Asian countries (India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Cambodia), and DIRSI in five Latin American (Peru, Guatemala, Colombia, Argentina and Paraguay).  **What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?**  From a research perspective, RIA has noticed that descriptive statistics around the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs tend to dominate any evidence that is done to guide policies and measures to bolster women’s roles in this field. This is dangerous, as the formulation of policies and measures to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers without proper evidence of the need for and priority areas for intervention lead to wasted resources and other adverse effects.  We believe there is a clear need to move beyond descriptive statistics, as they tend to mask the underlying factors of gender (and other) inequality factors. Supply and demand side data is needed to provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors impacting and determining gender and other inequalities.  **What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?**  The primary gap in addressing challenges related to gender inequality in access to and use of ICTs is a systemic one, and relates to the lack of quality data (supply and demand-side) available that facilitates a better understanding of the so-called gender digital divide. RIA believes that evidence-based policymaking is crucial to not only overcoming disparities in Internet access among men and women in Africa and beyond, but also to ensuring that the Internet can be a force for sustainable development. This is one of the reasons why RIA has worked incessantly over more than ten years to develop and gather data on universal indicators on ICT access and use in Africa.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/60/CWG%20Gender_draft%20submission%2028112017.pdf) |
|  | January 11, 2018 | [Internet Society (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=61) | **Text provided in comment box:**  The Internet Society (ISOC) is pleased to participate in the CWG-Internet Open Consultation on “Bridging the Digital Gender Divide.” This is an important discussion given the tremendous progress that still needs to be made to increase Internet penetration rates amongst women and girls, and to close the wide geographic and regional disparities that exist between women and men in Internet access and digital literacy.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/61/Internet%20Society%20Contribution%20to%20the%20CWG-Internet%20Open%20Consultation%20on%20_Bridging%20the%20Gender%20Digital%20Divide__01_11_18_EN.pdf) |

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_