

## Women's Empowerment in the Digital Age: Action Plan Global Normative Framework References

The following document provides language from global normative frameworks – and their reviews – which touch on intersections between gender equality and women's empowerment and ICT for development. The references are broken down by focus area rather than by platforms in order to illustrate commonality across commitments in line with the Action Plan which this document supports.

Key: Agenda 2030 (SDGs); Financing for Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda (FfD); WSIS Outcomes (WO) -> General Assembly Review Outcome Document 2015 (GAO); Geneva Declaration of Principles (GDP), Geneva Plan of Action (GPA), Tunis Commitment (TC), Tunis Agenda for the Information Society (TAIS), WSIS +10 2014 Review Process (WRev); Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), Beijing SG Review Reports (BPFARev+5, +10, +20); CSW Agreed Conclusions (CSW AC + year); ITU Connect 2020 Agenda (CC2020); ITU Resolution 70 rev. Busan 2014 (ITU Res.70).

### General Vision

- Promote women's use of technology, especially ICTs, for empowerment. [SDG 5b](#)
- We recognize that ending the gender digital divide and achievement of SDG 5 on gender are mutually reinforcing efforts. [WO GAO para 32](#)
- "...harness ICTs [for] ... promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.." [WO GDP para 2](#)
- "...full and equal access and participation in ...technology for women of all ages are imperative for achieving gender equality..." [CSW 2011 AC, para 9](#)
- ICTs are fundamental to women's and girls' full and effective participation in civil, political, economic and social and cultural life. [BPFARev +20 para 311](#)
- Mainstream a gender equality perspective and use ICTs as a tool for women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society. [WO GDP para 12](#)
- We reaffirm the importance of promoting and maintaining gender equality and women's empowerment, guaranteeing the inclusion of women in the emerging global ICT society and taking into account the mandate of the newly established agency UN-WOMEN, the recommendations of the High Level Panel in the post-2015, The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.. [WRev A.preamble para 3](#)
- Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are tools through which gender equality and women's empowerment can be advanced, and are integral to the creation of societies in which both women and men can substantively contribute and participate [ITU Res.70 \(RESOLUTION 70 \(REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 3, letter b\) \)](#)
- ... the full participation of women in the Information Society is necessary to ensure the inclusiveness and respect for human rights within the Information Society." [WO TC para 23](#)
- "Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. Women therefore need to be involved in decision-making regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully in their growth and impact." [BPFA Section J para 237](#)
- "...enhanced access to and use of ICTs." [BPFARev+20 Political Declaration para 6](#)

### 1) Strategies and Policies

## *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Strategies, Policies, Plans, and Funding Mechanisms*

- We express concern, however, that there are still significant digital divides, such as between and within countries and between women and men, which need to be addressed through, among other actions, strengthened enabling policy environments and international cooperation to improve affordability, access, education, capacity-building, multilingualism, cultural preservation, investment and appropriate financing. Further, we acknowledge that a gender divide exists as part of the digital divides, and encourage all stakeholders to ensure the full participation of women in the information society and women's access to new technologies, especially ICTs for development. **WO GAO, para 11**
- We reaffirm our commitment to ensure women's full participation in decision-making processes related to ICTs. **WO GAO, para 32**
- "mainstream a gender equality perspective in all decision-making processes and use ICTs as a tool for women's empowerment." **WO GDP para 12; WRev A.preamble para 3**
- Support women's participation in decision-making processes and to contribute to shaping all spheres of the Information Society at international, regional and national levels **WO TC para 23**
- "mainstream a gender perspective in legislation, policies and programmes...in order to address unequal participation of women and girls in science and technology **CSW 2001 AC para 22.a**
- "create a non-discriminatory legal regulatory and policy environment" **WO GPA C6. Para 13**
- "Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in new technologies of communication" **BPFA Strategic Objective J.1**
- Develop approaches and train experts to apply gender analysis [media]... **BPFA J para 244e**
- Aim at gender balance in the appointment of women and men to all advisory, management, regulatory or monitoring bodies, **BPFA para 239 d)**
- "Actively involve women in the definition, design, development, implementation and gender impact evaluation of policies...." **BPFARev+5 para 40**
- ..increased investment and financial incentives from government for investment in gender equality measures in the sectors of the media and such technologies.. **BPARev+20 para 313**
- To undertake further or new actions, promoting the commitment to mainstreaming the gender perspective in government, the public and private and sectors, academia and industry, for the purpose of promoting innovation in telecommunication/ICT learning on an equal footing for men and women so as to foster the empowerment of women and girls, with special emphasis on rural and remote areas; **ITU Res.70 (RESOLUTION 70 (REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 5, point 1)**
- The Digital Solidarity Agenda aims at putting in place the conditions for mobilizing human, financial and technological resources for inclusion of all men and women in the emerging Information Society. **WO GPA D Digital Solidarity Agenda, para 27**

## *Review Existing Policies and Programmes for Gender Responsiveness*

- WSIS+10 2015
- "...where appropriate,..review of existing policies and programmes to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in technology... **CSW 2011 AC, para 22.3**
- To review their policies and strategies related to the information society to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective in all activities and the fostering of gender balance to secure equal opportunities through the use and appropriation of telecommunications/ICTs; **ITU Res.70 (RESOLUTION 70 (REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 5, point 4)**

*Take Holistic and Cross-cutting Approaches in addressing Gender Equality and ICT*

- “addressing the barriers to equal access of women and girls to...science and technology...requires a systematic, comprehensive, integrated, sustainable, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach, including policy legislative and programmatic interventions and, as appropriate, gender-responsive budgeting at all levels.” [CSW 2011 AC, para 21](#)
- “Governments, in collaboration with stakeholders, are encouraged to formulate conducive ICT policies that foster entrepreneurship, innovation and investment, and with particular reference to the promotion of participation by women.” [WO GPA C6. EE para 13.i](#)
- “Mainstreaming gender issues across all WSIS action lines and from strategies and planning through to implementation, to ensure action lines take account of continuing gender issues, redress discrimination..” [WRev B. Priority Areas para 8](#)
- There is a need to further develop the understanding of the gender dimensions of access to and use of ICTs and how ICT can be used as a tool for the promotion of gender equality. [BPFARev +10 para 621](#)
- When developing recommendations and actions [on gender and tech], a dual strategy of gender mainstreaming in ICT-related policies and programmes and targeted interventions for women and girls will be needed, as laid out in the Platform for Action. [BPFARev +10 para 622](#)

*Put in place data and monitoring and evaluation tools around gender equality and ICT*

- ..we commit to mainstream gender in the WSIS process, including through a new emphasis on gender in the implementation and monitoring of WSIS Action Lines, with the support of relevant United Nations entities, including UN Women. [WO GAO para 32](#)
- “Gender-specific indicators on ICT use and needs should be developed, and measurable performance indicators should be identified to assess the impact of funded ICT projects on the lives of women and girls.” [WO GPA E. Follow up and Evaluation para d\)](#) [CSW 2011 AC, para 22.c](#)
- The development of reliable indicators and statistics is crucial and should be used in national surveys. [BPFARev +10 para 621](#)
- Gender specific indicators on ICT use and needs should be developed and measurable performance indicators identified to assess the impact of funded ICT projects on the lives of women and girls. [BPFARev+10 para 599](#)
- Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are needed to ensure implementation of gender-sensitive policies and regulations in this field. [BPFARev +10 para 623](#)
- ...establishment of monitoring mechanisms that integrate gender perspectives for increased accountability around the implementation of commitments [around ICTs]. [BPARev+20 para 313](#)
- Improved sex-disaggregated data, research and analysis of participation, access, use of ICTs and their impact on women and girls. [BPARev+20 para 314](#)
- “develop specific gender-disaggregated indicators to measure the digital divide in its various dimensions.” [WO TAIS para 114 d\)](#)
- Improve research and gender impact assessment for evidence based decision making ...” [CSW 2011 AC, para 22.rr](#)
- Target 2.5.A: Gender equality among Internet users should be reached by 2020 (target set by ITU Member States) [CC2020](#)
- There is a need for ITU to study, gather data, analyse, build statistics, assess and evaluate effects and promote a better understanding of the impact of telecommunications/ICTs on gender equality; - [ITU Res.70 \(RESOLUTION 70 \(REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 4, letter a\)](#)

- Establishing gender-relevant indicators for the telecommunication/ICT sector that would contribute to reducing disparities in terms of access to and appropriation of ICTs and to national, regional and international mainstreaming of a gender perspective - **ITU Res.70 (RESOLUTION 70 (REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 4, letter b))**
- "...commitments to advance gender equality perspectives and undertake the necessary actions throughout the WSIS outcomes, as called for in Para 3 of Preamble under this document, should also be implemented, reviewed and monitored, consistent with other Action Lines, by UN Women in cooperation with other Action Line Facilitators." **WRev C III Action Lines – Looking to the Future**

## 2) Ensuring Access to ICTs by women and girls and Mitigating or responding the threats online that hinder women's access to and use of technology

### *Ensuring women's and girls' affordable access to ICTs*

- We call for immediate measures to achieve gender equality in internet users by 2020, especially by significantly enhancing women's and girls' education and participation in ICTs, as users, content creators employees, entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders. **WO GAO para 32**
- Despite the last decade's achievements in ICT connectivity, we express concern that many forms of digital divides remain, both between and within countries – as well as between women and men. We note that divides are often closely linked to education levels and existing inequalities, and we recognize that further divides can emerge in the future, slowing sustainable development. Indicatively, we acknowledge that, as of 2015, only around 43 per cent of people globally have internet access, only 41 per cent of women have internet access, and an estimated 80 per cent of online content is available in only one of 10 languages. The poor are the most excluded from the benefits of ICT. **WO GAO para 26**
- Universal and affordable access to ICTs and monitored according to sex-disaggregated data. **SDG 9.c**
- ...we note with concern the persistent "digital divide" and the uneven innovative capacity, connectivity and access to technology, including information and communications technology, within and between countries. We will promote the development and use of information and communications technology infrastructure, as well as capacity-building, particularly in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, including rapid universal and affordable access to the Internet. We will promote access to technology and science for women...**FfD G para 114**
- There is a growing need to bridge the digital divide in order to empower women, with special attention to women in rural and marginalized urban areas that are subject to traditional constraints which reinforce discrimination **ITU Res.70 (RESOLUTION 70 (REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 3, letter f))**
- "Infrastructure is central in achieving the goal of digital inclusion, enabling universal, sustainable, ubiquitous and affordable access to ICTs by all" **WO GPA C2 Infrastructure para 9**
- "...Encourage the design and production of ICT equipment and services so that everyone has easy and affordable access to them ... **WO GPA C2 Infrastructure para 9 f)**
- Promote research and development to facilitate accessibility of ICTs for all, including disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable groups." **WO GPA C3 Access to Info para 10 c)**

- Greater efforts are needed to ensure women's and girls' equal access to and use of media and information and communications technologies, especially in rural areas and among marginalized groups. [BPFARev+20 para 313](#)
- Increase women's and girls' access to digital technologies including through local communication campaigns [CSW 2011 AC, paras 22.tt](#)
- Accessibility and cost are two of the most serious challenges to women's use of ICT. Countries and stakeholders should consider the ways that policies and projects allocate ICT related resources. Universal access policies, resources for training and capacity building for women in the use of ICT and the use of funds for projects targeted to women and girls deserve particular attention. [BPFARev +10 para 623](#)
- In many countries, access to ICTs for women in rural areas depends on extending common-use facilities in place convenient and accessible to women. [BPFARev +10 para 624](#)

#### *Mitigating and responding the threats that arise from ICTs*

- Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs for sustainable development should also be a priority, especially given growing challenges, including the abuse of ICTs for harmful activities from harassment, [WO GAO para 15](#)
- Address "gaps in policies and regulations that govern ICTs with respect to ethics, privacy, security and safety and which create significant risks for women and girls. [BPFARev+20 para 303](#)
- "The Information Society should be subject to universally held values and promote the common good and prevent abusive uses of ICTs." [WO GPA C10. Ethics para 25 a\)](#)
- "Support the development and use of ICT and social media as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls, including access to information on the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls; and develop mechanisms to combat the use of ICT and social media to perpetrate violence against women and girls, including the criminal misuse of ICT for sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, child pornography and trafficking in women and girls, and emerging forms of violence such as cyber stalking, cyber bullying and privacy violations that compromise women's and girls' safety." [CSW 2013 AC, B Addressing Structural Causes, para ww](#)
- Develop comprehensive approaches to eradicate cyber-related violence against women and girls online [WRev B. Priority Areas para 8](#)
- "Promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women and men by the media." [WO GPA C9 Media para 24 e\);](#) [BPFA Strategic objective J.2](#)
- Governments in collaboration with all stakeholders, must urgently address the negative use of ICT and the ways in which it contributes to the sexual exploitation of women and children. E-governance policies must address the gender gaps in access to government services and political processes, especially for women living in rural or remote areas or who are otherwise marginalized. [BPFARev +10 para 624](#)
- ..avoid perpetuating existing inequalities and discrimination, including the sexual exploitation of women, through ... new technologies. [BPFARev +10 para 598](#)
- ..threats presented by those technologies and media should also be reflected through gender mainstreaming in corresponding national action plans and strategies.. [BPFARev +20 para 313](#)
- Address offline inequalities that hinder women's full engagement in the digital society, including stereotypes around women and technology [CSW 2011 AC, paras 13, 14 and 22.v](#)

3) Ensuring Women and Girls have the “necessary skills and knowledge to understand, participate actively in, and benefit fully from” the digital society and that content, applications, services are made by and for women. [WO GDP section 4\) para 29](#)

- We emphasize our concern that only 41% of women have internet access and draw attention to the gender digital divide, which persists in access to and use of ICTs, and also in ICT education, employment and other economic and social development factors. [WO GAO para 29](#)
- We call for immediate measures to achieve gender equality in internet users by 2020, especially by significantly enhancing women’s and girls’ education and participation in ICTs, as users, content creators employees, entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders. [WO GAO para 32](#)

*Capacities and Skills Development*

- “Strengthen programmes focused on gender-sensitive curricula in formal and non-formal education for all and enhancing communication and media literacy for women with a view to building the capacity of girls and women to understand and to develop ICT content.” [WO GPA C8 Cultural Diversity para 23 h\)](#)
- Investments in building the technological capabilities and digital literacies of women and girls are necessary and should include efforts within formal education systems. [BPFARev +20 para 313](#)
- Train women to make greater use of information technology for communication and the media, including at the international level; BPA J 242.b
- strengthen [technology related] educational curricula so that they are relevant to the needs of women and girls [CSW 2011 AC, para 22.b](#)
- “support women’s ability to create, access new information and communications technology, including through the establishment and support of programmes to build the capacity of women’s non-governmental organizations in this regard; [BPFARev+5 para 94b](#)
- Build capacity for all and confidence in the use of ICTs by all—including youth, older persons, women... [WO TAIS para 90 c](#)

*Development of Relevant Content*

- “strengthen capacities to ensure that developments in science and technology can directly benefit [women]”, that technology and innovation responds to women’s needs and that they are developed by a user-driven approach. ” [CSW 2011 AC, para 22.b, 22.pp, 22.qq, 22.rr](#)
- “Encourage the development of best practices for e-workers and e-employers built, at the national level, on principles of fairness and gender equality, respecting all relevant international norms.” [WO GPA C7 ICT applications 19 E-employment para a\)](#)
- “Promote teleworking to increase employment opportunities for women.” [WO GPA C7 ICT applications 19 E-employment para c\)](#)
- Improve and expand women’s and girls’ access to distance education, e-learning, ...” [CSW 2011 AC, paras 22.m and 22.n](#)
- E-governance policies must address the gender gaps in access to government services and political processes, especially for women living in rural or remote areas or who are otherwise marginalized. [BPFARev +10 para 623](#)

- Formulation of gender responsive ICT strategies and policies which seek to improve the relevance of content and services. [BPFARev +20 para 313](#)
- Women’s NGOs and civil society organizations need resources to support their efforts for advocacy and political empowerment through the use of ICT. E-governance policies must address the gender gaps in access to government services and political processes, especially for women living in rural or remote areas or who are otherwise marginalized. [BPFARev +10 para 624](#)
- “Facilitate access to locally relevant content resources for strengthening public health research and prevention programmes and promoting women’s and men’s health, such as content on sexual and reproductive health...” [WO GPA C7 ICT applications 18 E-health para b\)](#)
- to encourage more women to take advantage of the opportunities offered by ICTs to establish and develop a business and to foster potential contributions to economic growth, [ITU Res.70 \(RESOLUTION 70 \(REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 5, point 7\)](#)
- We resolve to undertake legislation and administrative reforms to give women equal rights with men to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and appropriate new technology. We further encourage the private sector to contribute to advancing gender equality through striving to ensure women’s full and productive employment and decent work, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and equal opportunities, as well as protecting them against discrimination and abuse in the workplace. We support the Women’s Empowerment Principles established by UN-Women and the Global Compact, and encourage increased investments in female-owned companies or businesses. [FfD para 41](#)
- technology and innovation policies address constraints of women entrepreneurs and facilitate access to capital, training, information and business services [CSW 2011 AC, paras 22.nn](#)
- Encourage and recognize women’s media networks, including electronic networks and other new technologies of communication, as a means for the dissemination of information and the exchange of views, including at the international level, and support women’s groups active in all media work and systems of communications to that end. [BPA Section J para 239 f\)](#)
- Encourage the use of communication systems, including new technologies, as a means of strengthening women’s participation in democratic processes [BPA Section J para 241 b\)](#)
- To significantly increase investment, in both scale and scope, to close the financing gaps that hinder progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment, with ICTs as a tool for financial inclusion. [FfD](#)
- “Capitalize on the new information technologies, including the Internet, to improve the global sharing of information, research, strengths, lessons learned from women’s experiences.” [BPFARev+5 para 94c](#)

#### 4) Promoting Women in the Technology Sector, including into positions of Decision-Making

- “Work on removing the gender barriers to ICT education and training and promoting equal training opportunities in ICT-related fields for women and girls. Early intervention programmes in science and technology should target young girls with the aim of increasing the number of women in ICT careers. Promote the exchange of best practices on the integration of gender perspectives in ICT education.” [WO GPA C4. Para g](#)
- Promote early intervention programmes in science and technology that should target young girls to increase the number of women in ICT carriers. [WO GPA C4. Para g and C7 19 d\); BPFARev +5 para 67a](#)

- Increase private and public investment in education and training for women and girls in technology sectors [CSW 2011 AC, para 22.f](#) and address include gender perspectives in technology and innovation educational curricula [CSW 2011 AC, para 22.rr](#)
- “[undertake] policy research to identify specific gaps in education and career pathways so as to promote the retention of women and girls in different fields of technology...” [CSW 2011 AC, para 22.f](#)
- Develop clear and transparent criteria for and promote achievement of gender balance in recruiting, promoting and recognition of women in technology in public and private sectors. [CSW 2011 AC, para 22.ii](#)
- Take steps such as creating positive role models in technology (22.aa), positive images in media (22.bb), learning, networking and mentoring opportunities 22.11 and 22.mm) [CSW 2011 AC](#)
- Implementing effective training and education, particularly in ICT science and technology, that motivates and promotes participation and active involvement of girls and women in the decision-making process of building the Information Society. [WO TAIS para 90 d](#)); [BPFARev+5 para 82i](#)
- The perspectives, needs, rights and leadership of women in the media and such technologies is therefore critical, including within decision- and policymaking bodies and systems and at the ownership level. Increasing women’s participation in media and those technologies at all levels of decision-making requires continued provision of formal and technical vocational education and training, including in the areas of management and leadership. To strengthen the retention and advancement of women within the media and information and communications technologies fields, governments should ensure equal pay and decent work conditions and policies that enable the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, in addition to ensuring safe and harassment-free environments. [BPFARev+20 paras 311](#)
- There are a growing number of women in the telecommunication/ICT field with decision-making power, including in relevant ministries, national regulatory authorities and industry, who could promote the work of ITU so as to encourage girls to choose a career in the field of telecommunications/ICT and foster the use of ICTs for the social and economic empowerment of women and girls; [ITU Res.70 \(RESOLUTION 70 \(REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 3, letter e\)](#)
- Need for ICT tools and applications to empower women and facilitate their access to the job market in non-traditional fields - [ITU Res.70 \(RESOLUTION 70 \(REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 5, letter e\)](#)
- To facilitate the capacity building and employment of women and men equally in the telecommunication/ICT field including at senior levels of responsibility in telecommunication/ICT administrations, government and regulatory bodies and intergovernmental organizations and in the private sector [ITU Res.70 \(RESOLUTION 70 \(REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 5, point 3\)](#)
- to promote and increase the interest of, and opportunities for, women and girls in telecommunication/ICT careers, with special focus on women and girls in rural areas, during elementary, secondary and higher education and lifelong education; [ITU Res.70 \(RESOLUTION 70 \(REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 5, point 5\)](#)
- to attract more women and girls to study computer science, and acknowledge the achievements of leading women in relevant areas, particularly in innovation; [ITU Res.70 \(RESOLUTION 70 \(REV. BUSAN, 2014 page 5, point 6\)](#)

## 5) Build Partnerships and Platforms for Cooperation

- “[Pursue] practical and joint measures to advance women's empowerment within the Information Society, in order to continue to realize women's meaningful access to ICTs and full integration of women's needs and perspectives, and their full and effective participation. [WRev C III Action Lines – Looking to the Future](#)



- “Strengthen international cooperation in the area of access and participation of women and girls in technology... and encourage in this regard, S-S, N-S and triangular cooperation” [CSW 2011 AC, para 22.i](#)
- Create and reinforce a platform for advancing women’s meaningful engagement with ICTs and to improve capture and sharing of good practices and lessons and to highlight role models [CSW 2011 AC, para 23](#)
- The exchange of good practices and lessons learned on women and technology should also be encouraged within and across nations. [BPFARev+20 para 314](#)

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