

Leveraging Post-2015 development framework to close digital gender gap

Call to Action

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations (UN) specialized agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and UN Women, the UN entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, issue this Call to Action as part of the post-2015 development framework.

Almost twelve years after the first Phase of WSIS held in Geneva and ten years after the second Phase which took place in Tunis, continuing challenges persist in harnessing the full potential of ICTs for women and girls. The WSIS Outcome Documents clearly underline the need to continue efforts to bridge the gender digital gap. Furthermore, twenty years ago, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action notably included as a full pillar and strategic objective the need to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication. Today, the overall picture is a slow and uneven implementation of those commitments.

2015 is a landmark year for the entire UN development agenda: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 20-year review¹ is taking place in conjunction with the adoption of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to be completed by 2030. The goals and targets outlined in the Open Working Group's report are the basis of ongoing negotiations and will likely become a core pillar of the newly adopted post-2015 development framework. ICTs have been specifically identified as key enablers of development. The catalytic power of ICTs for development is cited specifically in 4 of the 17 goals, and critically, the gender goal contains a key implementation target on women's access to enabling technologies for gender equality.² In addition to the SDG framework, in 2013, the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Digital Development established its Target 5 calling for gender equality in access to broadband³. Also the ongoing negotiations of the resolution on the role of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for development by CSTD include gender dimensions.⁴

This is the time for all stakeholders to create a sustainable digital society at the heart of our sustainable future to bring the digital gender divide to an end and ensure that all women and girls have equitable and meaningful access to, and play a leading role in, the development of ICTs as a tool of empowerment. We urge all stakeholders to draw on experiences and lessons learned and ensure that future SDG and WSIS frameworks delivers transformative change in the lives of women and girls through ICTs; only by closing the digital gender gap shall we be able to realize the full potential of ICTs as a catalytic and transformative tool for sustainable development.⁵

In particular, ITU and UN Women appeal to WSIS Forum stakeholders to:

- Ensure that the post-2015 framework recognizes the vital role of, and leads to investments in, transformative ICT solutions that promote women's empowerment and close the digital gender gap.
- Create an enabling policy framework that supports innovative ICT solutions in areas such as health, education and employment, while also including a gender dimension.
- Accelerate actions to promote women as innovators and decision-makers in the ICT sector.
- Create internationally comparable gender disaggregated data and sound monitoring mechanisms to better understand and coordinate policies, programs and efforts to achieve digital equality for women and girls.

We invite all stakeholders to pledge their support to these commitments through the work of their agencies, countries, and affiliations so that all women and girls have the opportunity to unlock their full potential and benefit equally from ICTs.

ITU and UN Women are committed to working with all stakeholders to realize the catalytic and transformative power of ICT solutions to address today's most urgent challenges and foster sustainable development for all.

¹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/02/beijing-synthesis-report>

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

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf>

³ By 2020, the worldwide gender digital gap should be eliminated.

<http://www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/reports/bb-annualreport2014.pdf>

⁴ <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=606>

⁵ The Broadband Commission Working Group on Broadband and Gender:

<http://www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/publications/bb-doubling-digital-2013.pdf>

