



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - New York



Group of Friends for Education
& Lifelong Learning



Rewiring the network:

Digital education and skills for girls' and women's empowerment



67th Commission on the Status of Women

**7th March 2023, 8.15 – 9.30 am
Conference Room 4, UN HQs**

Background

Harnessing the power of the digital revolution to ensure quality education and lifelong learning for all, including the most marginalized, is more important now than ever before.

In today's age of new technologies, social exclusion and discrimination against women and girls and the gender digital divide threaten the progress made on women's and girls' education in recent years and the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While digitalization and COVID-19 created a sudden and profound shift in education systems around the world, the number of women and girls who have access to technology and to the possibility of study online is much lower than that of boys and young men. In the least developed countries, only 30% of women use the internet compared to 43% of men. In the countries and contexts where girls and young women could stand to benefit most from online learning, they are the least likely to have access to it.

In many contexts, parents and caregivers limit girls' time online out of growing concerns about girls' safety online, including risks of sexual exploitation, cyberbullying and exposure to harmful content. Girls and women routinely face gender-based harassment online and it can be more difficult for them to navigate digital spaces safely than for boys and men.

There is also a gender gap in digital skills. Gender disparities exist at every level, from simpler tasks such as using apps on a mobile phone to advanced skills like coding. Women are 4 times less likely to know

how to program computers, and 13 times less likely to file for technology patents. These gaps appear to be growing, despite decades of interventions to move the world closer to gender equality.

Women are also significantly under-represented in STEM – notably in engineering and technology, even though girls are doing at least as well as boys in mathematics and science in the majority of countries. In 2018, only 28 percent of engineering and 40 percent of computer science graduates were women. Girls and women are the great untapped population to advance technology and social innovation to achieve sustainable development. We must invest in their talent and make them more competitive in computer and technological skills that are necessary to enter and advance in the labour market, also considering maternity choices. Digital education should also focus on the specific needs of older women, who often lack basic digital skills.

In 2022, the international community mobilized around the United Nations Secretary-General's Transforming Education Summit to reconsider the future of digital technology in education systems in the aftermath of COVID-19. We must guarantee women and girls equal access to new technologies and close gender gaps in STEM, but above all, make 'digital equality' a priority on governmental agendas and policy design, recognizing access and informed use of technologies and soft skills as fundamental rights.

This event, organized by Italy, UNESCO, UNICEF and the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning, in collaboration with UN Women, addresses the priority theme of the 67th session of CSW, and a key theme for girls' and women's empowerment. It will consider:

- **Content.** Ensuring high-quality and gender-transformative digital teaching and learning content
- **Capacity.** Strengthening teachers', learners' and other education stakeholders' capacity to use digital learning to ensure gender-transformative learning, with particular focus on STEM disciplines.
- **Connectivity.** Facilitating equal access to safe, inclusive and gender-transformative digital spaces.
- **Cooperation.** Building partnerships to enhance girls' and women's digital skills and empowerment so they can take their rightful place as the innovators, creators and leaders of today and tomorrow.

Objectives

Specifically, this event will:

- Examine progress and persistent gender disparities in digital access, skills and online learning.
- Highlight the critical role the digital revolution can play in expanding access to quality gender-transformative education and lifelong learning, and empowering women and girls.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and cooperation on the innovative collective, intergenerational and sustained actions needed to create safe, equitable, inclusive and gender-transformative digital spaces, including the design of curriculum and training to meet labour market needs, and the social and economic conditions for girls' and women's participation in traditionally male-dominated fields.
- Share updates on advancements since the Transforming Education Summit and mobilize support for multistakeholder partnerships being spearheaded by UNESCO and UNICEF.

Audience

Representatives of ministries working on gender equality, women's affairs and education, delegates to the United Nations, civil society actors, women-, feminist- and youth-led organizations, and development partners from all regions of the world are invited to contribute to the session.

New resources!

UNESCO together with the Global Education Monitoring Report will launch a factsheet on gender gaps in innovation and technology as well as strategies to advance girls' and women's digital access, skills and online learning and participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

Draft Programme

8.15 – 8.30
15 minutes

Opening

Justine Sass, Chief of Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality, UNESCO, Moderator of the event

Welcome remarks

- H.E. Eugenia Roccella, Minister of Family, Natality, and Equal Opportunities, Italy
- H.E. Klára Šimáčková Laurenčíková, Commissioner of the Czech Government for Human Rights, on behalf of the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning

8.30 – 9.10
40 minutes

Power up: Leveraging technology to empower girls and women for work and life

This panel will present good practice on how education systems can help to create safe, equitable, inclusive and gender-transformative online spaces, and leverage technology to advance girls' and women's education and gender equality.

- **Steering digital learning policies to advance gender equality:** MS Representative
- **Creating a movement: Girls as tech innovators, creators and leaders:** Tara Chklovski, Founder, CEO, Technovation
- **Building a gender-transformative system: the Gateways initiative to public digital learning:** Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO (Video-message)
- **Leveraging tools and technology to advance gender equality:** Dame Barbara Woodward, UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations
- **Driving innovation to advance girls and women's education and empowerment:** Mr Omar Abdi, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF
- **Breaking the bias for girls in STEM:** Motunrayo Fatoke, Education Partnership Centre, Nigeria, Youth leader, Global Partnership for Education
- **Pursuing second chances: Lessons on inclusive e-learning,** Testimonial from Nakoa Pitt and Oneeva Tu'uhetoka, Australia, introduced by Anita Bhatia, UN Women Deputy Executive Director for UN Coordination, Partnerships, Resources and Sustainability

9.10 – 9.25
15 minutes

Discussion: Building the bandwidth: Key actions to create equal, safe, transformative and empowering online spaces for women and girls

The event will conclude with a moderated discussion with inputs from the audience and those online on the key actions for governments, companies and partners to make online spaces equal, safe and empowering, and build girls' and women's digital skills for life and the jobs of today and tomorrow. Results will be captured by an online illustrator.

9.25 – 9.30
5 minutes

Closing remarks

Mr Amandeep Singh Gill, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology