



**Author: S. Poll**

**Article Title: WTISD-25: Gender equality in digital transformation**

**Publication Date: May 13, 2025**

**Website Name: ITU News Blog**

**URL: <https://www.itu.int/hub/2025/05/wtisd-25-gender-equality-in-digital-transformation/>**

This PDF is provided by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Library & Archives Service from an officially produced electronic file.

Ce PDF a été élaboré par le Service de la bibliothèque et des archives de l'Union internationale des télécommunications (UIT) à partir d'une publication officielle sous forme électronique.

Este documento PDF lo facilita el Servicio de Biblioteca y Archivos de la Unión Internacional de Telecomunicaciones (UIT) a partir de un archivo electrónico producido oficialmente.

هذه النسخة الإلكترونية (PDF) مقدمة من قسم المكتبة والمحفوظات في الاتحاد الدولي للاتصالات (ITU) نقلاً من ملف إلكتروني صادر رسمياً.

本PDF版本由国际电信联盟（ITU）图书馆和档案服务室提供。来源为正式出版的电子文件。

Настоящий файл в формате PDF предоставлен библиотечно-архивной службой Международного союза электросвязи (МСЭ) на основе официально созданного электронного файла.

# WTISD-25: Gender equality in digital transformation

News 13 May 2025



*By Sylvia Poll, Senior Gender and Youth Advisor, ITU*

On 17 May, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) celebrates World Telecommunication and Information Society Day ([WTISD](#)), marking the organization's founding in 1865. This year, WTISD is dedicated to "Gender equality in digital transformation," as resolved by ITU Council 2023 in Resolution 1416.

The theme highlights the urgent need to close gender gaps in digital access, affordability, skills, and leadership to ensure that women and girls can fully engage in the digital future.

When everyone is empowered through digital technologies, entire communities benefit. Access to digital tools like mobile phones and the Internet enables women and girls to participate more fully in every aspect of life.

They can start a business, pursue education, communicate with anyone they wish, look for employment, and access essential health, financial and government services. This empowerment improves their individual lives and the overall development and prosperity of their families and communities.

ITU, as the United Nations (UN) agency for digital technologies, is at the forefront of the mission to achieve gender equality in digital transformation. With a focus on empowerment for all women and girls, fostering collaboration, and raising awareness, ITU is leading efforts to bridge the digital gender gap and create a level playing field for all.

## Why women need to be included

Digital technologies have the power to accelerate progress across every sector of society. Yet that potential remains out of reach for many. Most of the estimated 2.6 billion people still offline globally are women and girls. Gaps in digital skills and affordability of digital devices and the Internet, as well as having access to a safe online environment, continue to hinder the participation of women and girls in today's digitalized world and in shaping tomorrow's digital solutions.

ITU's [Facts and Figures 2024](#) measured the digital gender divide, tracking over 200 indicators that can help countries evaluate and develop policies to address gender-related issues effectively.

Globally, 70 per cent of men use the Internet, compared to 65 per cent of women, resulting in 189 million more men online than women. Although the global digital gender gap has decreased since 2021, when it stood at 277 million, it has actually widened in the least developed countries (LDCs). In 2024, only 29 per cent of women in LDCs were using the Internet, compared to 41 per cent of men.

The disparity is stark when viewed through a socio-economic lens; only 21 per cent of women in low-income countries use the Internet, compared to 93 per cent of women in high-income countries.

Goal 2 in ITU's [Connect 2030 Agenda](#) outlines a special target to achieve gender equality in global Internet usage and mobile phone ownership. Bridging the digital gender divide is essential to unlocking new pathways for economic growth and global development.

# Equality in global digital development

A key initiative to promote gender equality in the digital sector is the [EQUALS Global Partnership](#) founded in 2016 by ITU, the UN University (UNU), UN Women, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the mobile telecom industry association GSMA in 2016. EQUALS is a multistakeholder initiative that brings together over 100 public and private sector actors to provide women and girls with opportunities for collaboration, education, and networking. This partnership ensures that women and girls worldwide have the access, leadership, and knowledge needed to participate in and shape the digital landscape.

The EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age recently reaffirmed its commitment to empowering women and girls in the digital world with the launch of its new mission and vision. To harness the potential of emerging digital trends, the new EQUALS vision firmly puts women and girls at the center of digital transformation, putting them at the centre of progress, participating, leading and innovating. By equipping them with digital skills, resources, and opportunities, EQUALS aims to empower 100 million women and girls within the next decade to become active contributors to the digital economy.

Each year, the [EQUALS in Tech Awards](#) celebrate individuals and organizations that are making significant contributions to helping women and girls gain equal access to the Internet, develop digital skills, and seize opportunities in the tech industry.

ITU also leads targeted programmes to deliver the most impact. In collaboration with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), ITU runs a project for [Enhancing the Digital Ecosystem and Digital Skills for the economic empowerment of women in LDCs](#), specifically in Burundi, Ethiopia, and Haiti. The project aims to improve policy and regulatory conditions and encourage governments to integrate gender considerations into national digital initiatives. The project also focuses on equipping working-age women with essential digital skills, increasing their professional opportunities.

ITU also leads continent-wide initiatives. Regional coding camps and workshops, like the [African Girls Can Code Initiative](#) (AGCCI) and [Americas Girls Can Code \(AGCC\)](#), train young women and girls to become computer programmers, tech creators, and designers. Participants will then act as role models in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, sharing digital knowledge and support through an active online community.

The [Women in Cybersecurity Mentorship](#) pilot programme has engaged young professionals and those seeking to enter the cybersecurity workforce in Africa and Arab regions with role models and leaders worldwide. The programme includes mentorship circles, inspirational keynotes, and training in technical and soft skills. By addressing systemic barriers, the initiative encourages women to take on leadership roles in cybersecurity.

## Nurturing untapped talent worldwide

ITU also recognizes the importance of education to bridge the digital gender divide. More than 100 courses available at [ITU Academy](#) serve to train policymakers and professionals worldwide. Notable courses include “Causes and consequences of the digital divide” and “Gender Analysis and Digital Inclusion: How to Achieve Gender Equality in the Digital Sector.” Many of these courses are developed in collaboration with partners such as UN Women and UN University.

ITU celebrates [Girls in ICT Day](#) annually on the fourth Thursday in April. This initiative introduces information and communication technologies (ICTs) to young women and girls as a possible career path. Since its launch in 2011, over 377,000 girls and young women have participated in more than 11,400 celebrations across 171 countries. This year’s theme: “Girls in ICT for inclusive digital transformation”, was celebrated with a global event in two regions simultaneously, co-hosted by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Arab States regions.

Additionally, the [Talking Tech: Girls and Women in ICT](#) interview series provides aspiring young women in the tech sector with the opportunity to interview leading women and role models in the field, further inspiring the next generation of female tech leaders.

As part of ITU's 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2025, the [ITU160 Gender Champions](#) initiative will bring nine young women, who are working on digital development projects in their communities, to participate in key international meetings in Geneva, Switzerland, including the AI for Good Global Summit, WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event, and further ITU anniversary events between 7 and 11 July.

The young women will co-design and facilitate a workshop focused on promoting gender equality in digital transformation, while engaging with key stakeholders in the tech sector. ITU had applications from more than 1200 young women in every ITU region, in developing countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states, as well as young indigenous women and those with disabilities, to empower diverse voices in shaping our digital future.

## Leading by example

In 1998, ITU's Member States, representing nearly every country in the world, adopted [Resolution 70](#), which established a proactive stance on gender equality. The resolution provides a framework for integrating a gender perspective into ITU's operations, ensuring that gender equality is central to its decision-making and activities. [Lyndall Shope-Mafole](#) (South Africa) was the first woman to chair ITU Council in 1999, just one year after the adoption of Resolution 70.

Since then, women have achieved leadership positions in nearly all areas of the organization, with Doreen Bogdan-Martin being elected to the highest position, as ITU Secretary-General, in 2023.

Although women now fill 40 per cent of high-skill occupations globally, their participation in ICT-related fields continues to be low. Women are nearly absent from software development, in engineering and technology research, artificial intelligence, academia and at the highest levels of policy making. They also tend to leave science and technology jobs at higher rates than men.

While there is a leadership gender gap in every industry, the largest gaps are found in the STEM fields. Women in ICT tend to be in junior or support roles rather than in managerial roles, with little opportunity for advancement. They are also less likely to hold an executive position, to become ICT entrepreneurs, or be represented among science and technology policymakers.

As an International Gender Champion, Bogdan-Martin is committed to the Panel Parity Pledge and the Gender-Based Violence Pledge, upholding a zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence and sexist attitudes and behaviors.

ITU also ensures the visibility and representation of women in its work and decision-making through a vibrant internal support network, with active Network of Women (NoW) communities promoting communication, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among women delegates from the Radiocommunication, Standardization, and Development sectors. Each sector has its own chapter, with overarching coordination to promote cross-sectoral collaboration and support.

This year, we are planning to hold the second edition of the Network of Women (NoW) Ministers and Leaders in ICT meeting, during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) +20 High-Level Event 2025 and the annual AI for Good Summit. This second session will build on the success of the inaugural edition held in 2024 and aims to provide a high-level stage for women Ministers and Leaders in ICT to engage in strategic and interactive dialogue and share experiences.

The session also seeks to launch the new NoW Ministers and Leaders in ICT platform, a programme to leverage and strengthen the work of women leaders in bridging the gender digital divide, especially in new emerging technologies. This high-level network will serve as a strong and supportive community of women leaders and mentors in the tech sector, who together wish to accelerate inclusive digital leadership, strategic governance and partnerships.