National Girls in ICT Day Celebrations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

27 April 2023

Concept Note

Background

Digital technologies are an essential pathway to gender equality and empowerment and as such, it has become increasingly fundamental to engage girls and young women more closely in the digital transformation process.

According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), globally, the percentage of females and males using the internet is 63 per cent and 69 per cent respectively, and in Africa the percentage of females and males using the internet is 34 per cent and 45 per cent respectively[1].

Over the past years, ITU in collaboration with different partners have come together to celebrate the annual International Girls in ICT Day. The event, which takes place every year on the fourth Thursday of April, aims to inspire and encourage girls to pursue careers in science, engineering, technology, mathematic (STEAM), and other fields and engage effectively in the digital sector.
The proportion of females to males who graduate with STEAM degrees is significantly smaller on the continent and bridging this gap by building awareness about the gender digital divide, supporting technology education and skills training, and encouraging more girls and young women to actively pursue careers in STEAM.

Collective efforts to raise awareness, encourage and empower girls and young women with digital skills to use digital technologies, are important to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) around human capital by providing quality education and enabling learners to create more opportunities for everyone in the digital era.

Bridging the gender digital divide is a collective effort and as such Governments, national ICT regulatory authorities, ICT companies, academic institutions, UN agencies, NGOs and all stakeholders across the world join in initiatives and l encourage the celebration of International Girls in ICT Day.

Alternative educational and training options to acquire digital skills such as boot camps and incubators have been emerging globally and in 2020, among collaborative efforts the ECA in collaboration with ITU and UN Women launched the 'Connected African Girls' coding camp initiative in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to bridge the gap and advance ICT skills across the continent. Thus far ECA organized seven effective hybrid coding camps reaching more than 30,000 young women and girls and successfully implemented a women led start-up incubation series (Tech African Women initiative).

For collaborators to carry on with joined efforts such events can create platform and involve the sharing of updates and progress made on the different gender related activities being delivered and

---

[1] https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-2022

explore possible areas of collaboration to empower girls and women to engage in the digital sector and the digital society at large.

Objective:

This year (2023) will mark the 12th year since the annual celebrations began and the **Girls in ICT Day theme for 2023 is "Digital Skills for Life"[2]**. Digital skills remain a key component for girls and young women to thrive in STEM careers and engage in the local digital ecosystems.

The global Girls in ICT event will be celebrated on 27 April 2023 in Zimbabwe as part of the Transform Africa Summit 2023 in coordination and collaboration with the Postal and Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) and Smart Africa. In addition to the global Girls in ICT celebrations, activities will take place to celebrate the day with the support of ITU Regional and Area Offices at regional and national levels across the continent.

Girls in ICT Celebrations 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ITU Regional Office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and other stakeholders, will organize a national celebration for the Girls in ICT Day on **27 April 2023 at the UN Conference Centre**. The event aims to bring together different stakeholders including mentors, young women and girls to exchange their experiences and share knowledge around digital skills for life and address different topics related to digital skills such as mentorship, education, youth engagement among others.

The knowledge sharing activities and exchange of experiences will inspire the girls to engage and participate in the ICT field, pursue careers related to digital technologies, develop and strengthen their digital skills in order to leverage digital technologies and actively engage in the local digital ecosystem.

With consideration of the different gender related activities that have been undertaken in Ethiopia, the event will bring together some of the beneficiaries of the activities undertaken to exchange their experiences and share some of the lessons learnt from such initiatives[3]. Experiences drawn from the ongoing and previous gender focused initiatives will provide an opportunity to build a community from the different project beneficiaries, gain a better understanding of what works well in different contexts for continued improvement, explore sustainability of different initiatives in Ethiopia and their contribution to the local digital ecosystem to bridge the digital gender divide.

---

[2] https://www.itu.int/women-and-girls/girls-in-ict/international-girls-in-ict-day-2023/

[3] The Joint ITU-Enhanced Integrated Framework project that focuses on enhancing economic opportunities for women through workshops and skills training and works with policy makers to mainstream gender in domestic policies and regulations to ensure women participate fully in the digital economy.

The African Girls Can Code Initiative aims to create opportunities for young girls by equipping them with digital skills and coding capabilities that can empower them for future career choices in the ICT sector.

The ITU-International Labour Organization collaboration on youth employment opportunities in the digital economy in Ethiopia under the broader umbrella of the ITU-ILO joint programme on Boosting decent jobs and enhancing skills in Africa's digital economy.

Expected Outcomes:

- Gain a better understanding of the current gaps, challenges and opportunities within Ethiopia in developing and strengthening digital skills among girls, young women, and youth, among others.
- Sharing of knowledge and exchange of experiences from mentors, project beneficiaries and others to inspire the girls and young women to leverage digital technologies, develop and strengthen their digital skills to actively engage and contribute to the digital transformation process in Ethiopia.
- Build a community among the young girls, mentors, project beneficiaries and the local digital ecosystem to facilitate continuous learning and knowledge share on gender related activities to bridge the digital gender divide in Ethiopia.