

National Consultation on CSW67

Jointly organized by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and UN Women

23 February 2023

Honorable State Minister Ms. Indira, MP, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; today's chair, Secretary, Mr. Kallol, distinguished guests from line ministries, civil society and development partners.

Assalamu'alaikum and Shubho Shakal.

I am very pleased to join the national consultation ahead of the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67), to be held from March 6-17, 2023, in New York.

Globally and in Bangladesh, we have seen advancements on women's empowerment and gender equality. However, with the converging crises of climate change, costs of living, conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic, we are witnessing a reversal in gender equality outcomes. This has further magnified the unequal pace of digital transformation within and across countries, amplifying structural and systemic barriers for women and girls.

I want to start by sharing some data gaps:

- 76 percent of the population living in Least Development Countries is covered by a mobile broadband signal. However, only 25 are online with men 52 percent more likely to be online than women<sup>1</sup>.
- Only 28 percent of engineering graduates and 22 percent artificial intelligence workers, globally are women, while girls do as well as boys in science in most countries<sup>2</sup>.
- In the technology sector globally, women, occupy less than one third of positions, face gender pay gap of 21 percent and 48 percent have experienced workplace harassment<sup>3</sup>.
- A survey on women journalists from 125 countries found that 73 respondents had suffered online violence in the course of their work, 30 percent reporting they self-censored in response<sup>4</sup>.

CSW67 provides a unique opportunity to shape a future where technology contributes to transforming social norms, amplifying women’s voices, pushing back against online harassment, preventing the perpetuation of algorithmic biases, and distributing the benefits of digitalization equally to achieve the SDGs.

We need to call for a great paradigm shift, to reassert human agency over technology and explore new avenues to adopt a human-centric approach to digitalization, with the feminist principles of inclusion, intersectionality and systemic change at its core.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://webfoundation.org/2020/03/the-gender-gap-in-internet-access-using-a-women-centred-method>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-research-shows-women-career-scientists-still-face-gender-bias>

<sup>3</sup> Women who Tech, “The state of women in tech and startups” (2020).

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, Online violence Against Women Journalists: A Global Snapshot of Incidence and Impacts (2020).

Today's consultation also marks the start of the International Women's Day commemoration under the theme: "*DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality*<sup>5</sup>."

Colleagues, for technology and innovation to respond to the needs of women and girls and offer transformative digital solutions, five points are critical:

1. **We need** digital equity and inclusion in all national policies to be prioritized and implemented to remove the barriers women and girls face in all their diversity – the implementation deficit needs to be addressed.
2. **We need** sustained financing in the technology sector so that the digital programmes, research, grants and procurement expand gender analysis and interventions. This includes ensuring we invest in enhancing disaggregated data that effectively captures the gendered dimensions of technological change and protects the privacy of women's sensitive personal data.
3. **We need** the focus on education to create the conditions for gender-responsive digital learning environments, remove stereotypes, transform STEM education and include digital citizenship teaching in schools' curricula.
4. **We need** to promote women's participation, employment and leadership in tech and innovation, which not only requires access to productive resources, skilling/reskilling opportunities and the redistribution of unpaid care and domestic burden but also establishment of labour regulations and protections AND last but certainly not the least

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<sup>5</sup> [International Women's Day 2023](#). (UN Women, 2022)

5. **We need** to strengthen fairness, transparency and accountability by adopting mandatory measures to better identify, prevent and mitigate societal risks and the negative impacts of digital technology on women, including the need for our collective action to prevent and eliminate technology-facilitated gender-based violence and protect the rights of women and girls online- through better legislation, increased capacities and new safeguards.

UN Women stands ready to support the Government of Bangladesh, civil society and development partners to take forward the Agreed Conclusions from next month's CSW session.

I end with a quote from the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, I quote.

*“Gender parity is essential to meet the expectations of the people we serve and to build a more sustainable, just, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous world for all.”* End quote.

Women and girls cannot wait any longer. The time for action is now.

Thank you.

References:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw67-2023/official-documents>