



**WORLD WIDE WEB
FOUNDATION**

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ONLINE

REPORT CARDS



Information and communications technologies (ICTs) are powerful tools for achieving everything from enhanced incomes and wider access to credit, to quality education and healthcare for all and more accountable government. Recognising this, the United Nations has put ICTs at the centre of its new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with countries pledging to achieve universal and gender-equitable Internet access, and to enhance the use of ICTs to empower women.

Yet a formidable gender gap in Internet access, digital skills, and online rights remains to be closed. Last year, survey research carried out by our Women's Rights Online network revealed extreme gender and poverty inequalities in digital empowerment across urban poor areas in 10 cities. Women were 50% less likely than men to be online, and 30-50% less likely to use the Internet for economic and political empowerment.

The research also shed light on the root causes of this digital gender divide: high costs, lack of know-how, scarcity of content that is relevant and empowering for women, and barriers to women speaking freely and privately online.¹

Our inaugural Digital Gender Gap Audit follows up on the survey results by assessing the policy efforts and progress made in 10 countries around the main challenges identified through our research. We based our scores on 14 simple indicators (described below) for which reliable empirical evidence exists, and grading was done in the second quarter of 2016.²

THE BAD NEWS:

None of the 10 countries covered is doing nearly enough to achieve the SDG targets by 2030. Only one country (Colombia) scraped a passing grade, with an overall mark of 60%. Without a major escalation of policy effort and investment, most of the benefits of technological change in all 10 countries will be captured by men — making gender inequality worse, not better.

THE GOOD NEWS:

Women's exclusion from the digital revolution is primarily due to policy failure, and policy failure can be reversed. Rapid progress is possible in all countries through simple steps like reducing the cost to connect, introducing digital literacy in schools, and expanding public access facilities. Every national report card sets out five context-specific steps that each country can take in the next year to work toward closing the digital gender gap.

1 Our findings are affirmed by several other studies including Intel (2013), GSMA Connected Women (2015), UN Broadband Commission Working Group on Gender (2013).

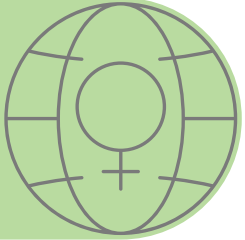
2 A full methodology is available on the World Wide Web Foundation website.

Measuring Progress, Driving Action



COUNTRIES WE ASSESSED

Kenya	Mozambique	Ghana	Colombia	Indonesia
Uganda	Nigeria	Egypt	India	Philippines



INTERNET ACCESS AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

INDICATORS:

- Existence in national ICT strategies or broadband plans of clear, time-bound gender equity targets, with budget for implementation (Source: Web Index with recent review)
- Percentage of women with Internet access (Source: Women's Rights Online)
- Gender gap in Internet access (Source: Women's Rights Online and Pew Global Attitudes Survey)
- Women's empowerment through the Web (Source: Women's Rights Online)³
- Collection of national sex-disaggregated ICT data (Source: ITU)

Governments have a long road ahead to achieve SDG commitments on ensuring equal access to new technology for all women and men by 2030, and leveraging ICTs to empower women. Although nearly every woman we surveyed in our Women's Rights Online research owned or had access to a phone, the ICT revolution **is not yet transforming** their lives. Of the countries reviewed, only Colombia, Nigeria, India, and Ghana have national or sub-national policies to encourage increased access, training, and use of the Web by women and girls. But in many of these cases (as in other countries reviewed), no official, concrete targets exist. A report by the **Broadband Commission's Working Group on Gender** found that a vast majority of National Broadband Plans fail to include gender targets (2013).

Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to track progress. Currently, only 64 countries currently submit gender-disaggregated data on Internet use to the UN agency responsible for tracking this indicator (the International Telecommunications Union (ITU)). Colombia, Egypt and Indonesia are the only countries in our sample to do so. The ITU has no gender-disaggregated data at all on other important ICT indicators. This has to change. SDG 17 commits governments to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely, and reliable gender-disaggregated data.



AFFORDABILITY

INDICATORS:

- Internet affordability (price of 1GB of mobile data as a proportion of average monthly income) (Source: ITU⁴ and World Bank)
- Existence of specific policies to promote free or low-cost public Internet access (e.g., budget allocations for Internet access in public libraries, schools, and community centres; provisions of free spectrum for community Wi-Fi) (Source: Alliance for Affordable Internet)

The SDGs commit governments to strive to achieve universal, affordable Internet access by 2020. But **high costs** are keeping billions offline. Women — who earn **almost 25% less** than men globally — are particularly impacted by this high cost to connect and, as a result, face limited digital opportunities. Countries such as Uganda and Mozambique with the highest Internet costs (as a proportion of average per capita income) have the lowest numbers of women online and the largest Internet gender gaps. In Uganda, 1GB of mobile broadband costs more than 22% of average monthly income. In Mozambique, 1GB costs around 10% of average income.

Only Colombia, Indonesia, and the Philippines meet the Alliance for Affordable Internet's **new proposed affordability target** of 1GB data priced at 2% or less of average monthly income. Egypt comes close at 2.15%, but has lost ground since 2014, when it was actually under the 2% target.

Colombia is making the most extensive efforts to promote free or low-cost public Internet access, followed by Egypt, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Recent commitments in Kenya to roll out free Wi-Fi in libraries and towns nationwide are a sign of progress.

³ This is a composite indicator including data on the percentage of women who have used the Internet to: a) look for work, b) seek information, c) voice opinion online.

⁴ We used 2015 price basket estimates released by ITU in July 2016. The final version of this data will only be available in November 2016, and there may be some revisions. Nevertheless, we felt it was preferable to use the most recent available comparable data on prices. Even so, readers should be aware that prices in some of the countries covered have fallen further as of the date of publication.



DIGITAL SKILLS AND EDUCATION

“Not knowing how” to use the Internet was the barrier most widely cited by poor, urban women who don’t use the Internet in our **study**. Digital capabilities are also increasingly critical to maximise women’s **earnings and employment prospects**. As **Melinda Gates** recently pointed out, “public schools are the only place we can ensure that all students, from all walks of life, have the chance” to acquire technology skills, starting with basic digital and data literacy.

So, we took a close look at what countries are doing to promote digital literacy for all. Colombia, Egypt, and Indonesia have connected at least 50% of secondary schools to the Internet — a positive, but not sufficient, first step. Disappointingly, the majority of countries surveyed provide little or no Internet access in schools, teacher training in ICTs, or community digital literacy training, and/or collect no data to monitor progress in these areas.

INDICATORS:

- Proportion of ICT-qualified teachers in schools (Source: UNESCO)
- Percentage of women in technology and engineering research and development (Source: UNESCO)
- Secondary schools with Internet access ⁵ (Source: UNESCO)



RELEVANT CONTENT AND SERVICES

Due to the extra burden of unpaid care work that women carry, they not only have less income than men but also less free time. As a result, time and money spent on the Internet come at a high opportunity cost, and many women we interviewed said they simply don’t feel that what they find online is worth their while. While there are many kinds of content and services that might inspire, entertain, or assist women, we singled out two that are particularly critical to their rights and opportunities, and are also directly relevant to SDG targets: (1) online availability of sexual and reproductive health information ⁶ and (2) digital financial services.⁷ Kenya fares well in this area, with 55% of women using **mobile financial services** (World Bank). However, women’s access to mobile banking remains low in most other countries, and user-friendly, locally relevant information on sexual and reproductive health rights is also surprisingly scarce.

INDICATORS:

- Availability of user-friendly, locally relevant information via ICTs about reproductive and sexual health rights and services for women and girls (Source: Web Index, with recent review)
- Percentage of women personally using mobile financial services (Source: World Bank Global FinDex Database)



ONLINE SAFETY

Women we surveyed said they value the Internet as a safe space to access and share ideas and information of any kind, and express themselves without fear. Although vital to SDG 16 — Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions — the Internet’s role as a safe space for expression is being undermined by an epidemic of harassment and violence against women online, as well as growing intrusions on Internet users’ right to privacy. As **Lyon (2003:1)** notes, “Surveillance today sorts people into categories, assigning worth or risk, in ways that have real effects on their life-chances. Deep discrimination occurs, thus making surveillance not merely a matter of personal privacy but of social justice.” If these trends do not change, the spread of ICTs could ultimately reinforce offline patterns of female subordination and silence.

However, legal frameworks to protect the right to privacy in the digital era are ineffective or missing across countries reviewed. While several countries, **like Uganda**, have pending legislation to protect the privacy of personal data, it is important that these are reviewed to ensure they are robust enough to stop discrimination or repression based on misuse of personal data and private communications. In addition, the law enforcement response to ICT-based violence against women remains unacceptably weak. The Philippines is an exception among the countries reviewed, with specific laws in place for victims to seek legal recourse.

INDICATORS:

- Extent to which law enforcement agencies and the courts are taking action in cases where ICT tools are used to commit acts of gender-based violence (Source: Web Index, with recent review)
- Existence and robustness of national data protection laws (Source: Open Data Barometer)

⁵ In some cases, on-the-ground roll-out of Internet access in schools may lag behind the data that governments report to UNESCO for this indicator

⁶ SDG 3, Good Health and Well-Being, commits countries to “ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education” by 2020.

⁷ SDG 1, No Poverty includes this target: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have...access to financial services including microfinance”. SDG 5, Gender Equality, also includes a target on women’s access to financial services.

CONCLUSION

OUR ACTION AGENDA: COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ACROSS THE 10 NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

Progress towards gender equality online must be grounded in solutions that are led and owned by local stakeholders and respond to local realities. Each of the 10 country action plans presented here was developed by Women's Rights Online country partners, in consultation with other local stakeholders such as government officials, community groups, and business, and so each one is different. However, they do share some strong common priorities.

We propose these shared priorities as a starting point for broad regional and global consultation, in order to agree an international action agenda. By working together to close the gender digital divide, we can ensure that the full power of ICTs and the Internet is harnessed by women, putting their agency at the forefront of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

TARGETS

- Incorporate concrete gender equity targets, backed by adequate budget allocations, into national ICT policies and/or broadband plans.
- Monitor gender equality in the implementation of ICT strategies by collecting data disaggregated by gender, income, and location. Develop quantitative and qualitative indicators that measure public ICT initiatives and their impact on women.

ACCESS

- Prioritise policy reforms to cut the prohibitive cost of connecting. Work towards the Alliance for Affordable Internet affordability target: 1 GB of prepaid mobile data costing no more than 2% of average per capita monthly income.
- Expand free Internet access in public places, including all schools, clinics, job centres, and community centres.
- Improve infrastructure and support the development of innovative last mile-connectivity models, including by women's collectives and organisations.
- Consider access measures specifically targeting women, such as a free basic data allowance focused on women.

CAPABILITIES

- Integrate basic digital literacy in school curricula at all levels — from primary to tertiary — and ensure that teachers are qualified and supported to teach it.
- Ensure digital literacy goes beyond technical skills to support the ability of women and girls to participate in society and make life choices.
- Support female micro-entrepreneurs to gain digital capabilities.

CONTENT

- Expand availability of government services and data online, as well as channels for citizens to engage leaders and officials through ICTs.
- Prioritise wide online availability of user-friendly, local-language information, services and products that empower women and enhance their livelihoods.
- Audit all government websites to assess the relevance of their content for women, and their effectiveness in supporting women to access information.

RIGHTS

- Strengthen legal protection of the online rights and privacy of women and men, including through stronger data protection laws.
- Ensure that women and girls are able to take legal action against perpetrators of online violence, and that police and judiciary have training and resources to pursue such cases.
- Invest in large-scale, ongoing national awareness campaigns to stamp out online gender violence and educate users on their rights, privacy, and security.



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