



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 December 2022

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6–17 March 2023

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Les femmes, la force du changement, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Statement on How Gender Equality and Empowerment Can Be Achieved With Innovation and Education in the Digital Age

The digital age has created new opportunities for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. With the right mix of education and technology, we believe that we can close the gender gap and ensure that all women and girls have the opportunity to reach their full potential. However, there are still many challenges to achieving gender equality in the digital age that need to be addressed before we can fully reap the benefits of this new era.

One of the key challenges is ensuring that women and girls have access to quality education and training that will enable them to participate fully in the digital economy.

For instance, rural women and girls often lack access to technology and education, which limits their ability to take advantage of new opportunities. Since they do not get targeted support to help them catch up, they are further behind in the skills development race. They also face higher levels of violence and discrimination, which can prevent them from asserting their rights and participating fully in society.

In many countries, particularly in the less developed world, gender stereotypes and biases still exist. Women and girls are considered to be inferior to men and boys, and this belief is perpetuated not just through gender-based violence but also by gender stereotypes.

Men and boys are sent to go to school at a higher rate than women and girls, which creates a significant gender gap in education. Women and girls are pushed to stay at home, where they often have to care for families and do household chores. This limits their opportunities to learn new skills, get a job, and earn an income. This also leads them to be highly dependent on men, which can make them more vulnerable to various types of abuse.

Additionally, even when women and girls have access to technology and education, they often face gender-based barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential. For example, they may be expected to take on a “female” role in the technological field, such as being a secretary or an administrator, rather than being encouraged to become a developer or an engineer, which are wrongly thought to be “male” roles.

This leads to a lack of female role models in the digital world. While men are enjoying the lion’s share of leadership positions and high-paying jobs in the tech industry, women in the tech industry are working in low-level jobs. This gender imbalance reinforces the idea that women are not capable of being successful in the tech sector, and thus, they are less likely to pursue careers in this field.

We also need to address the gender digital divide, which refers to the fact that women are less likely to have access to and use digital technologies than men. This is one of the most significant challenges to achieving gender equality in the digital age. In rural areas, many families do not have access to the internet, and even when they do, women and girls are often not given the same opportunities as men and boys to use it.

Without access to technology, women and girls are at a severe disadvantage. They are less likely to be able to get an education, participate in the workforce, and start their own businesses. As previously mentioned, this also opens them up to abuse because they become reliant on the men around them.

See, gender stereotypes, the gender digital divide, and gender-based violence are just some of the challenges we need to address in order to achieve gender equality in the digital age. There are many more issues that need to be addressed, such as the gender pay gap and the lack of women in leadership positions.

Fortunately, there are plenty of new opportunities that we can take advantage of, as well.

First of all, technology and innovation can play a vital role in closing the gender divide and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

For instance, mobile technology can help connect women and girls to the internet, which can give them access to a wealth of information and opportunities. There are many apps today that are specifically designed to help women and girls, such as period-tracking apps and safety apps. These apps show that more and more people are recognizing the importance of gender equality.

Furthermore, online platforms can be used to provide women and girls with access to education, job training, and entrepreneurship resources. It can help them connect with mentors and role models and give them the opportunity to build their own businesses. We can create women-specific spaces online where women can feel safe and supported and where they can share their experiences and knowledge.

Another promising opportunity is “digital literacy” programs, which can teach women and girls the skills they need to use technology effectively. Online courses and MOOCs (massive open online courses) can provide women and girls with access to education that they would not otherwise have. These programs can help close the gender digital divide and empower women and girls to participate fully in the digital economy. This is especially needed by women and girls living in rural areas, where access to technology is often limited.

However, considering their circumstances, it should be up to local governments to reach out and provide these services. Programs should be developed specifically for women and girls in rural areas, and they should be both affordable and accessible.

Digital literacy programs can also help women and girls to protect themselves online. For example, they can learn how to spot online scams, how to use social media safely, and how to keep their personal information private. These skills are crucial in today’s digital world, and they can help protect women and girls from cybercrime and online harassment, which are still rampant problems.

In order to take advantage of these opportunities, we need to create policies and regulations that support gender equality in the digital sphere. To do that, we need to ensure that women and girls are represented in the decision-making process when it comes to technology. They need to have a seat at the table when new technologies are being developed, and they need to be involved in shaping policy. Otherwise, we will continue to see technologies that perpetuate gender inequality.

Additionally, we need more women in leadership positions in the technology sector in order to achieve gender equality. Women need to be visible role models in order to inspire other women and girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

We also need to give women equal opportunities to succeed, which means giving them the opportunity to work on cutting-edge projects, providing them with the necessary resources, and investing in their professional development. By doing this, we can create a more diverse and inclusive workforce that is better equipped to meet the challenges of the digital age.

Of course, before we can tackle all these, it is critical to build a strong foundation of gender equality first. We should start teaching children about gender equality from a young age and continuously challenge gender norms and stereotypes.

We need to ensure that more women and girls, especially in rural areas, can get easier access to education right from the start. Education is a powerful tool that can help women and girls achieve gender equality. When women and girls are educated, they have the power to make decisions about their lives, they are more likely to be employed, and they are less likely to experience violence. Additionally, they are more likely to have a healthy lifestyle and make informed choices about their reproductive health.

Finally, it is important to remember that gender equality is not just a women's issue. It is an issue that affects us all. Men need to be involved in the fight for gender equality. They need to be allies and advocates for women and girls.

Together, and with the right technology and education, we can create a world where gender equality is the norm. We believe that this is the key to ensuring that all women and girls have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Technology and education can not only change the world for women and girls, but for men and boys, as well. Ultimately, when we invest in gender equality, we invest in a fairer and more just world for everyone.
