

ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A CALL TO ACTION

POLICY AND ADVOCACY BRIEF FOR THE 67TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW67)

SUMMARY

Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action, the digital revolution has drastically transformed our societies and economies. COVID-19 has further accelerated the use of digital technologies at an unprecedented pace in almost every aspect of our lives from health to education, from activism to employment – this has presented new and positive opportunities for users worldwide. The internet can be a powerful tool for advancing gender equality and the human rights of all girls: enabling and empowering them to fulfil their potential and pursue their ambitions as leaders and active citizens.

Nevertheless, in almost every aspect of their lives, girls face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination due to entrenched social and gender norms as well as discriminatory policies. These unequal power relations and structural inequalities are then deeply ingrained in the design, availability and use of technology. For adolescent girls, gender norms, stereotypes, and inequalities begin shaping and differentiating their access to, experience of, and competencies in digital technologies and environments in early years, in the home, in the community and at school. Girls and adolescent girls, particularly in low-income contexts, are less likely to access the internet and digital devices and get less practical exposure to build digital literacy and skills.

For girls and adolescent girls making important decisions— planning their futures, education and careers, civic engagement and sexual and reproductive health — safe and meaningful access to reliable, factual information is fundamental.

The risk that patterns of inequalities are instead repeated and amplified is nevertheless substantial. At CSW67, Member States must therefore commit to addressing the unique challenges faced by girls and adolescent girls in particular in all action and decision-making related to the digital environment. If Member States are to achieve the blueprint for gender equality set out in the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action, the immense potential of the global digital transformation must be harnessed in an inclusive, participatory, gender transformative and age responsive manner in order to promote and advance the empowerment and human rights of all girls and adolescent girls, in all their diversity.

PRIORITIES FOR CSW67

AT A GLANCE:

States must prioritise and invest to:

- 1) **Bridge** the gender digital divide, recognising in particular the specific challenges faced by girls and adolescent girls
- 2) **Prevent and eliminate** all forms of online gender-based violence, discrimination and child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- 3) **Enact legislation and policies to address** false information, misinformation and disinformation online
- 4) **Ensure** the meaningful and safe participation of girls and adolescent girls, and particularly those most impacted, in all policies, programmes and decision-making processes concerning the digital environment
- 5) **Enact and enforce** laws requiring business enterprises in the technology sector to carry out age- and gender-responsive human rights due diligence

A FOCUS ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS

At the intersection of age and gender, policies and legislation designed for either children or women often fail to address the unique challenges faced by adolescent girls in all their diversity and are inadequate to guarantee the realisation of their rights.

Adolescence is a critical period of transition for girls. It is a unique window when life changing events happen and offers a distinct opportunity to break cycles of poverty and deprivation. However, early adolescence is a period where worlds shrink and opportunities are curtailed due to norms and expectations of their social environments. The double discrimination they face due to their gender and age is compounded by poverty and other factors of discrimination such as disability, sexual identity or ethnicity. Often, they enter adulthood already at a severe disadvantage as a result of violence, early pregnancy, child marriage and limited opportunities for education and employment.

There are 1.8 billion adolescents in the world today. Defined by the United Nations as those between the ages of 10 and 19, adolescents experience a transition period between childhood and adulthood and with it, significant growth and development. As children up to the age of 18, most adolescents are protected under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, their vulnerabilities and needs are distinctly different from those of children and therefore often remain unaddressed. *UNICEF Adolescent Data Portal*

The Agreed Conclusions should recognise adolescent girls as a distinct group.

Language such as 'girls, including adolescent girls' is insufficient as this allows their unique experiences to be subsumed and rendered invisible.

Recognize the specific needs of adolescents and implement specific appropriate programmes, such as education and information on sexual and reproductive health issues and on sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, Beijing Platform for Action Paragraph 107(g)

Adolescents today are the most digitally connected generation in history. They are increasingly turning to online platforms and are at the forefront of new and emerging technologies including social media for informal and formal learning and to engage with politics, and social movements. Their knowledge, opinions and civic dispositions are constituted through their relationships with their peers and family but also through their relationships with technology.

For adolescent girls in particular, entrenched gender stereotypes and harmful social norms begin shaping and differentiating their access to, experience of, and competencies in digital technologies and environments in early years, in the home, in the community and at school. Girls and adolescent girls, particularly in low-income contexts, are less likely to access the internet and digital devices and get less practical exposure to build digital literacy and skills, particularly when their identities intersect with race, disability, sexual identity and geographic location. Online, they are exposed to a whole world of false information, misogyny and stereotyping, and for adolescent girls, learning about the world and their place in it, can be devastating. For many girls with access to digital devices and the internet, their first experience of online harassment is aged 14-16.

Adolescent girls' specific needs in accessing, using and creating technology and online content must be recognised and systematically addressed in policies, programmes and decision-making or we risk a whole generation of girls who are unable to reap the benefits that technology has to offer. Prioritising adolescent girls' healthy, safe and successful transition to adulthood, through digital means, will have a positive impact both on societies in the long term, and on the overall achievement of gender equality. In failing adolescents in the digital era, Member States will jeopardise the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the pledge to Leave No One Behind.

A PIVOTAL MOMENT AT THE UN

- The Secretary General's **Our Common Agenda Report** places both digital technologies and gender equality as central to achieving its objectives.
- 2023 marks the **midpoint of the SDGs**. All actions to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic will require the harnessing of digital acceleration to achieve gender equality across the goals.
- At the 77th Session of the General Assembly's **Third Committee**, the following key areas were agreed:
 - *Child, Early and Forced Marriage* ([A/RES/77/202](#), OPs 9, 19)
 - Calls for consultation with adolescents in digital spaces and the right of girls to continue to receive digital literacy education;
 - Recognizes the gender digital divide in school and vast disparities in the availability of learning material including access to the Internet and communication devices...which leads to limited access or lack of access to quality education for many children, particularly girls
 - *Violence Against Women and Girls* ([A/RES/77/193](#), OPs, 5 n, p, q, r, s)
 - Recognises the impact of violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment and abuse, in digital contexts, especially on social media;
 - Recognises that violence may include...trends against women and girls in digital contexts, such as trolling, cyberbullying and other forms of cyber harassment, including unwanted verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, arbitrary or unlawful surveillance and tracking, trafficking in persons, extortion, censorship and the hacking of digital accounts, mobile telephones and other electronic devices

OVERVIEW: THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

While online access is exponentially increasing year on year, the digital gender gap remains high. There are 250 million fewer women online than men.¹

Across the world, girls and adolescent girls face gender- and age-based barriers that prevent them from accessing, using, and designing technology and digital tools at the same level as boys and men. The gender divide in digital access, digital literacy, and ICT education and occupations hinders girls and adolescent girls' access to the benefits and opportunities that digital technologies offer. The digital gender divide is driven by intersecting axes of marginality including: economic gender inequalities; inequalities in education and digital literacy and skills; gender norms and stereotypes discouraging girls and women from accessing technology and digital environments; and concerns over safety and security. Unaffordable digital devices, high cost and low quality of internet connection, linked to lack of internet infrastructure, are also key barriers.

General Comment 25 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child specifically recognises that '*Specific measures will be required to close the gender-related digital divide for girls and to ensure that particular attention is given to access, digital literacy, privacy and online safety*'.

Sustainable Development Goal 5.b specifically calls on States to "*enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communication technology, to promote the empowerment of women*".

Girls, particularly in low-income contexts, are less likely to access the internet and digital devices and have less practical exposure to build digital literacy and ICT skills in their early years. Then as adolescents, their access to technology and internet increases but they are less equipped to navigate online spaces safely and benefit from the many educational, social, economic, and health resources that digital spaces and

¹ OECD, 'Bridging the digital gender divide: Include, upskill, innovate', 2018, retrieved 23 June 2021, <https://www.oecd.org/digital/bridging-the-digital-gender-divide.pdf>

technologies offer. This is even worse for adolescent girls in conflict afflicted contexts, who are most often on the move with little or no access to internet connection, nor have the ability to purchase digital devices including telephones. They are less likely to benefit from ICT education due to their limited access to education and interrupted schooling associated with frequent displacement, lack of access to electricity and internet connection, as well as poverty.

OVERVIEW: ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, ABUSE, HARASSMENT AND EXPLOITATION

Online gender-based violence is a continuation and reflection of violence offline and is driven by the same harmful stereotypes, norms, and gender inequalities. Abuse, harassment, and gender-based violence predate the internet and are deeply entrenched in our societies. Technology has scaled them up, enabled impunity, and helped them gain new online forms, the impacts of which are just as severe.

Plan International's *Free to be Online?* research found that of the 14,000 girls and adolescents interviewed across 31 countries and multiple continents, 58% have experienced online harassment, with 47% girls who have been harassed threatened with physical or sexual violence. In this research, 50% of girls said they face more online harassment than street harassment. Girls report online harassment impacts their self-esteem, confidence and mental health and can make them feel physically unsafe. Racism, identifying as LGBTIQ+, having a disability, or just being a girl and existing on social media are all drivers of harassment. Activists are targeted particularly viciously with 47% of interview respondents reported being attacked for their opinions. Online gender-based violence is pervasive and frightening. Rather than being free and empowered to express themselves online, girls are harassed, abused and driven from online spaces.

Child sexual exploitation and abuse online occurs when child sexual exploitation and abuse is partly or entirely facilitated by technology, this can include: creating child sexual abuse material by taking a photo/video/audio recording; grooming or manipulating children to send naked or sexual images or videos of themselves or perform sexual acts live on webcam; or online re-sharing of self-produced sexual imagery. The Internet Watch Foundation found almost all (97%) child sexual abuse material identified in 2021 showed girls, with sexual abuse imagery of children aged 11-13 as the most prevalent, accounting for almost 70% of instances.²

In addition to preventing girls and adolescent girls from expressing themselves freely online, OGBV and CSEA has significant impacts on mental and physical health and those who experience violence online are more likely to experience violence and abuse from other adults and peers later in life, perpetuating the cycle of online and offline violence.

Gender transformative education, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), plays a critical role in eliminating all types of online and offline violence through promoting gender equality, addressing harmful stereotypes and norms, and providing access to essential services that prevent and respond to violence. Digital technologies provide opportunities to increase access to learning, to remove gender bias from curricula and to support girls and young women to make informed choices about their bodies and lives through access to CSE.

Specific and comprehensive measures must be taken to prevent and eliminate all forms of OGBV and CSEA online, including holding perpetrators accountable. Adolescent girls must be empowered to navigate the online space meaningfully, freely and safely.

OVERVIEW: MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Misinformation and disinformation online is a human rights issue: affecting adolescent girls' rights to participation, to education and to freedom of expression.

² Internet Watch Foundation. 2022. *Annual Report 2021*. <https://www.iwf.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/annual-report-2021/>

Informal online learning takes many forms and present many opportunities, users are in control of their learning experience, instead of being passive recipients of information they can select the content that they wish to engage with. In Plan International's *The Truth Gap* research, surveying 26,000 adolescent girls and young women across 26 countries, girls shared that social media platforms were the most common platforms for informal online learning. Half of the adolescent girls and young women who participated in the survey felt that online information has helped them understand and feel more confident about the topics they care about, while 39% have changed their opinion on a topic because of online information and 38% have learned about a new issue online and began actively engaging in it. As such adolescent girls' knowledge and learning can be shaped positively or negatively by information and ideas on the internet.

It is widely recognised that access to reliable information is being increasingly compromised. The internet, and particularly social media, have played an active role in increasing polarisation, with trust being eroded and healthy debate made increasingly difficult.

Disinformation methods have become weapons in the manufacture of false and misleading content, designed to smear girls' and women's personal and professional reputations, hold them up to ridicule, humiliate them and undermine their credibility. Girls and young women see the relentless trolling and the threats and lies told about women in the public eye. They are fed images and stories on what is "appropriate" behaviour for girls and stepping into the limelight becomes frightening and out of reach. Disinformation like this is part of wider violence and harassment against women of all ages off and online.

False information creates a hostile environment online, it instils fear in girls, and blocks the use of good information for useful purposes. It can lead to physical harm, censorship and threaten freedom of expression. Some adolescent girls and young women have shared that it has limited their online activity.

Girls and adolescent girls need the skills and ability to deal effectively with a potentially endless stream of online information but also need the skills and critical thinking to be able to search, organise, and filter out misinformation and disinformation. It is imperative to ensure that informal learning online is grounded in truth and that girls and young women are in a position to avoid compromised information as they learn.

OVERVIEW: PARTICIPATION OF GIRLS, ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY DESIGN

The digital devices, products, tools, and systems that increasingly underpin our societies are primarily designed and created by men.

Only around a quarter of technology developers in leading technology sector companies are female. This gender gap and lack of diversity results in technology designed and developed without sufficient consideration of gender and age factors that may affect how these products may be used or misused. The lack of diversity in technology design manifests itself in the form of products which could be deployed for malign purposes harmful to girls and young women, or reinforces gender stereotypes and inequalities. This translates to – among other things - an internet rife with gender-based violence, harassment and abuse, and algorithms that discriminate against women and girls, in all their diversity.

For a digital future where everyone can participate and thrive, girls, adolescent girls and young women must be engaged as creators of technology, from design, development to application and meaningfully engaged in all policies, programmes and decision-making processes concerning the digital environment.

OVERVIEW: ACCOUNTABILITY FOR BUSINESS ENTERPRISES IN THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

Corporate human rights due diligence is a way for companies to proactively manage potential and actual adverse human rights impacts linked to their operations, products, services, value chains, and business relationships. (including subsidiaries). It concerns human rights risks to people, including employees, workers in their supply chains, end-users of their products or services, and communities living around their operations. It covers the full range of human rights risks, including risks to civil and political rights, social, economic, and cultural rights, the rights of the children, non-discrimination and gender equality, and environmental rights, among others.

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, stipulates that corporations must undertake human rights due diligence, a process for identifying, preventing, mitigating, and accounting for actual and potential adverse human rights impacts.

The UN Guiding Principles of Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), endorsed unanimously by the Human Rights Council in 2011, is the global standard for ensuring and fostering business respect for human rights. UNGPs highlight that “The responsibility to respect human rights is a global standard of expected conduct for all business enterprises”, meaning that “they should avoid infringing on the human rights of others and should address adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved. UNGPs stipulate that corporations must undertake human rights due diligence, a process for identifying, preventing, mitigating, and accounting for actual and potential adverse human rights impacts.

Human rights due diligence must be age and gender responsive to recognise that girls and adolescent girls experience adverse impacts of technology and digital transformation differently and often disproportionately. They also face additional barriers in accessing effective remedies when harm occurs. Integrating gender and age perspectives in technology design and human rights due diligence is essential to analyse how a new digital tool, product, or service may differently affect girls and young women due to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities shaping their realities and lives.

Plan International makes the following recommendations to Member States ahead of the 67th Session:

1. Prioritise, invest in and take comprehensive measures to bridge the digital gender divide by ensuring that policies, programmes and decision-making are gender-transformative and age-responsive.

- Recognise that the digital gender divide begins in the early stages of life and continues through education and employment, leading to digital exclusion of girls, adolescent girls and women in increasingly digitised economies and societies;
- Ensure all policies and programmes provide for specific actions to address the disproportionate challenges adolescent girls face to their digital rights due to their age and gender;
- Ensure policies, programmes and decision-making related to the digital environment, uphold the full respect, protection and fulfilment of all international human rights standards relating to adolescent girls and the digital environment including access to information, privacy, expression and protection from discrimination, violence and abuse;
- Implement gender-transformative policies, programmes, and investments to bridge the gap in digital access, literacy, and skills between boys and girls and ensure that girls and adolescent girls in all their diversity have equal opportunities to safely and meaningfully access, use, lead, and design technology and innovation;
 - i. Provide free access to internet and digital devices in dedicated public locations, such as schools, libraries, and community centres, where girls and adolescent girls can use internet safely;
 - ii. Invest and implement awareness-raising programmes with the aim of dismantling harmful gender norms, stereotypes, and attitudes of caregivers, educators, and communities that contribute to gender gap in digital access, literacy, and skills

between boys and girls and raise awareness of the importance of digital skills for girls and adolescent girls, including online rights and safety, and available safeguards and controls;

- iii. Increase educational enrolment of girls and adolescent girls in ICT disciplines to enable them to gain advanced knowledge and skills to become ICT professionals and leaders so that they can actively participate in increasingly digitised economies as creators and designers of technologies, by creating and funding grant and scholarship opportunities;
- iv. Ensure policies on internet access are inclusive and prioritise more affordable, meaningful connectivity for everyone, especially girls, adolescent girls and young women. Governments should adopt meaningful connectivity as a new target for the internet, focusing on four components: regular internet use, an appropriate device, enough data and a fast connection.
- v. Invest in the safe and ethical collection of high-quality, timely, reliable data disaggregated by inter alia, gender and age, to track digital inclusion, monitoring access to connectivity, digital literacy and digital industrialisation. This should include data on girls' and adolescent girls' participation in ICT education and their transition and participation in ICT workforce;
- vi. Invest in gender transformative and age responsive educational programmes which include ICT education and digital literacy and skills training in national curricula at all levels of education, in addition to investing in informal opportunities to complement and build on school-based approaches. ICT education must support girls and adolescent girls to navigate digital environments safely, critically, and responsibly, and include misinformation, disinformation and online risks and how to mitigate them;
- vii. Invest in ICT education and digital literacy by supporting community-led and peer-driven digital skills and empowerment initiatives for girls and adolescent girls in all their diversity: focused on problem solving, group mentorship, information and data literacy, content creation, and leadership skills, in addition to technical skills;
- viii. Ensure that investment in educational technology reaches the most marginalised schools and communities, and responds to girls and adolescent girls needs and challenges

2. Eliminate, prevent and respond to all forms of online gender-based violence, discrimination and child sexual exploitation and abuse and exploitation through comprehensive, multisectoral legislative, policy, educational, and other measures that are age responsive and gender transformative and grounded in the respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of girls, and adolescent girls, in all their diversity.

- Recognise that girls, and particularly adolescent girls are disproportionately affected by online gender-based violence and discrimination and enact specific measures to increase their protection online whilst ensuring the full respect of their human right to access to information.
- Ensure that all action to prevent and eliminate OGBV takes a holistic, multisectoral, survivor-centred approach involving prevention, protection, prosecution, and redress, which, must be designed and implemented in a gender-transformative, age-responsive and rights-based manner meeting the unique needs of girls and adolescent girls;
- Ensure all legislation, policies, action and decision-making take a life course approach and priorities investment in engaging children and parents/caregivers from early childhood and through adolescence to break intergenerational cycles of violence and ensure long-term and effective change.
- Update and reform legislative frameworks to deal with online harassment and violence against girls and young women, in all their diversity. Address gaps in laws and policy frameworks resulting in impunity and lack of redress for novel and online forms of gender-based violence that disproportionately affect adolescent girls and young women, such as

online harassment, abuse, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, unsolicited sending of obscene images and doxxing,

- Ensure that laws being reformed or introduced to protect adolescents online and prevent online gender-based violence and CSEA are gender transformative and underpinned by all applicable human rights standards including their protection from discrimination, violence and abuse, privacy, autonomy, and access to information;
- Ensure that the standards, procedures and duties of internet intermediaries, platforms, regulatory authorities, and law enforcement for tackling online GBV and CSEA are defined and clarified and implemented in a gender- and age-responsive manner and enact innovative laws addressing violence against women and girls, holding social media platforms and other third-party internet platforms to account.
- Enable the effective implementation, by all relevant government departments – such as the police, the judiciary, and the prosecution services – of laws and policies addressing online harassment of and online violence against girls and adolescent girls in all their diversity.
- Ensure that girls who are targeted with online harassment and violence have access to justice from local to national levels, actively addressing the structural barriers to access and including promoting awareness of reporting mechanisms and capacity strengthening of justice actors.
- Invest in education on how to be safe online; giving students the skills to recognise, avoid and prevent online harassment and violence against women and girls, including the ability to use reporting mechanisms. Curricula should also include harmful gender stereotypes, norms, and attitudes as critical for preventing OGBV.
- Invest in the collection of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data by age and gender on online gender-based violence, including new and emerging forms of OGBV, and in particular on the prevalence of OGBV against adolescent girls.
- Ensure safe and unfettered access to gender-transformative and age-responsive services for adolescents which prevent and respond to online and offline GBV and which meet the unique needs of children and adolescents;
- Work with boys to challenge attitudes and behaviours towards OGBV, on issues of masculinities and to promote positive gender norms;
- Create spaces for girls, adolescent girls, young women, and their organizations to be heard in policy discussions and decision-making spaces regarding OGBV, ensuring their meaningful participation of girls, adolescent girls and young women, and their organisations in policy discussions, creation of technical solutions, and at all stages of the policy-making processes regarding OGBV including the formation of Youth Advisory Boards and other initiatives;
- Ensure that when OGBV occurs, survivors' victims have access to effective remedy and that the presence of internal complaint handling mechanisms of tech companies does not preclude access to courts or other state-based redress mechanisms.

3. Address false information, misinformation and disinformation through comprehensive, multisectoral legislative, policy, educational, and other measures that are age responsive and gender transformative and grounded in the respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of girls, and adolescent girls, in all their diversity

- Invest in digital citizenship education for children and adolescents: in particular with reference to accessing information, promoting civic participation, protection and privacy, in accordance with their evolving capacities, and in a way that ensures a gender and diversity approach;
- Investigate and address the implications of misinformation and disinformation on girls and adolescent girls, connecting this with efforts to address online gender-based violence through programming and policy interventions;

- Update legislative frameworks and enact policies relating to digital violence, harassment and hate speech and their prevention, reflecting how disinformation and misinformation contribute to misogyny, racial abuse and other harmful content online;
 - Ensure discussions around government regulation of social media companies and other internet platforms centre on reforms to practices and product designs that ultimately make online experiences safer, particularly for girls and marginalised individuals. Regulatory frameworks must include independent oversight bodies that meet calls for greater transparency and accountability;
 - Meaningfully engage in policy and legislative discussions to ensure that the regulation of online platforms, strategies to encourage girls' connectivity and tackle digital violence and the roll-out of digital literacy initiatives are fit for purpose -reflecting girls' diverse needs and lived experiences. Initiatives should also include steps to mitigate the stress and psychological impact of experiencing hostility whilst navigating online spaces.
4. **Ensure the meaningful and safe participation and consultation of girls, adolescent girls and young women, and particularly those most impacted, in all policies, programmes and decision-making processes concerning the digital environment, including in the design of digital, technology, and innovation policies and solutions affecting girls' lives and experiences in the digital age**
- Uphold and promoting the right to the full, effective, equal, meaningful participation of girls, adolescent girls and young women in all their diversity in decision-making processes concerning the digital gender divide, online safety, internet policy, broadband policy, digital access, digital literacy and skills development, ICT education, as well as other decisions shaping their digital access, interactions and experiences in digital environments;
 - Strengthen the capacities of girl and adolescent girl activists on digital presence.
 - Address gender and age-based barriers to participation in policy processes, creating enabling environments that facilitate the meaningful participation of girls throughout their childhood, adolescence and adulthood.
 - Ensure that adolescent girls and young women are meaningfully included in the development, review, implementation and monitoring of all digital policies and programmes.
 - Uphold and promoting the right of girls and young women to participate in digital decision-making processes on at all levels, including in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes,
 - Ensure information on digital measures and relevant policy frameworks is easily accessible and age and gender responsive. Information should promote human rights and gender equality and challenge entrenched gender norms that impact girls' rights.
 - Create safe spaces for adolescent girls and young women, in digital decision making at all levels, to meaningfully engage, ensuring an enabling environment for adolescent girls and young women's engagement where their views and recommendations are respected, valued and they have a real opportunity to influence decision making.
 - Actively encourage opportunities for girls and adolescent girls to engage in digital processes through formal and informal channels such as schools, school clubs and social media.
 - Provide financial support to girl- and adolescent-led groups and networks and supporting them in accessing formal platforms and spaces, including local, regional, national, and global decision-making forums.
5. **Enact and enforce laws requiring business enterprises in the technology sector to carry out age and gender responsive human rights due diligence to proactively identify and prevent gender bias and the actual and potential risks to girls, adolescent girls and violations of their rights that may arise from their digital products, services, and tools**

- Strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure that technology companies and other corporations respect human rights, including the rights of girls, adolescent girls and young women in all their diversity, in the design and implementation ICT-based technologies, digital products and services;
- Ensure that technology companies undertake age and gender responsive human rights due diligence, in compliance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; and identify and prevent rights impacts for girls, adolescent girls and women that may arise from their products, services, and business activities;
- Enact legislation to hold technology companies, especially social media firms, responsible for gender-based malicious abuse and harassment perpetrated on their platforms, including collecting and publishing high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by inter alia, age and gender.
- Ensure participatory and inclusive consultation processes on regulation that gender and age responsive and ultimately make online experiences safer, particularly for girls, adolescents and those most vulnerable;
- Ensure that regulatory frameworks, include the creation of independent oversight bodies that meet calls for greater transparency and accountability.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- [State of the World's Girls: The Truth Gap](#), Plan International, 2021
- [Free to be online](#), Plan International, 2020
- [Briefing Paper: Digital Empowerment of Girls](#), Plan International, April 2018
- [Girls' Rights are Human Rights](#), Plan International, 2017
- [Time to Act! Let's Go Digital. Using Digital Technology to End Child Marriage and Reduce Adolescent Pregnancy](#), Plan International Asia Pacific 2021