



## #eSkills4Girls

A global initiative to promote digital skills for women and girls

### The digital divide is female ...

The digital transformation is changing our world and the ways we live, work and learn. Particularly people in developing countries are at risk of being excluded from the benefits of the digital transformation and most of them are girls and women. Worldwide, more than 250 million fewer women than men have access to the internet, even though being online is one of today's key requirements for social and economic participation. The digital divide is not only a matter of access to infrastructure and technology, but it is also a matter of digital skills. The acquisition of relevant digital skills for women is often restricted by multiple factors at the individual, family, school and society-level eventually leading to the underrepresentation of women in digital education and the tech industry. Greater female inclusion online and in the digital sector can also turn into a threat for girls' digital privacy and security, manifesting in cyber violence, sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

### ... but the digital future can only be built together

Never before have there been as many movements for women in tech as there were in recent years and entrepreneurs, policy makers and activists worldwide advocate for the empowerment of women in technology. Digital skills and knowledge of digital technologies are key to provide access to information and to give women a voice online and offline. To this end, women develop innovative platforms which strengthen participation and women's rights, support digital skills trainings for girls and young women at schools and universities and found start-ups enabling employment and future prospects. All of the supporters send a clear message: Women can – and should – play crucial roles in the digital world: as learners, as users, as employees, as entrepreneurs, and as leaders.

### #eSkills4Girls: Making the case for the digital empowerment of women and girls through education

Since Germany's G20 presidency 2017, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) works on the initiative #eSkills4Girls to overcome the gender digital divide and to promote the participation of women and girls in the digital economy. At the G20 summit in Hamburg in 2017, the G20 leaders endorsed the [#eSkills4Girls statement](#) as an annex to their Leaders' Declaration. The statement defines common goals to facilitate education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women and girls in the digital economy.

To translate the political commitments into practice, BMZ implements numerous activities under the framework of the initiative #eSkills4Girls, which are the result of the collaboration between governments, private sector, academia and civil society organizations:



- Promoting role models of women and girls in tech**  
 Female role models who have created successful tech careers are an inspiration for young women and girls to discover STEM subjects as well as professions in the digital economy. The book “Women in Tech: Inspiration. No Fairytales” portrays 30 inspirational women from all over the world who have made their way into the tech industry and challenge existing gender roles and stereotypes.



“If men alone are left to build technologies, half of the world’s population is left out of the digital revolution”.

Zandile Keebine, Girlcode © Karin Desmarowitz/GIZ

- Setting up new networks to foster learning between grassroots initiatives**  
 BMZ fosters networks between female tech leaders from all over Africa, for example during the #eSkills4Girls Africa Meetup. The event offered a unique opportunity to network, discuss challenges and effective approaches and further develop capacities and strategies for successfully running and scaling up initiatives related to girls’ digital skills development. Moreover, BMZ set up the #eSkills4Girls network to promote an exchange between grassroots initiatives.
- Strategic partnerships with the private sector to promote local innovations**  
 Since 2016, BMZ is supporting Africa Code Week, which was initiated by the German software company SAP. Africa Code Week is a continent-wide digital literacy initiative reaching out to hundreds of schools, teachers, governments, businesses and non-profits. For the 2018 edition, 20 BMZ grants were awarded to support digital literacy events and workshops for women and girls across 17 African countries. Implemented by volunteer trainers and teachers these workshops introduced 27,000 women and girls to the basics of coding.
- An online platform to allow knowledge exchange**  
 The #eSkills4Girls online platform showcases about 30 flagship projects on digital skills, shares stories about female role models and bundles information about studies, data and events by different G20 partners.

## GHANA

### #eSkills4Girls in German Development Cooperation

Less than 20% of Ghanaian women have access to the internet and are thus less likely to use the internet for economic and political empowerment. The Programme for Sustainable Economic Development (PSED) implemented in Ghana by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of BMZ supports women and girls in pursuing a career in the tech sector with a focus on training. Main activities include capacity development of six vocational training providers all over the country which will be delivering demand-oriented ICT training in various areas. In the non-formal sector, the project has conducted a 2-months ICT training for women and the promotion of their businesses in cooperation with Developers in Vogue. Further activities include awareness campaigns to promote gender equality in the digital world as well as entrepreneurship trainings, combining technical skills training, business incubation and mentoring.



A technical advisor supervising a 3D-modelling introductory training session for beneficiaries. ©PSED/GIZ

## CAMEROON

The Environment and Forest Programme, implemented by GIZ on behalf of BMZ is supporting women networks in the production, transformation and marketing of non-timber forest products (NTFP) in Cameroon. Although digital solutions have the potential to facilitate their professionalization and an increase in income, most of the rural business women have poor internet access and no ICT experience. As part of the #eSkills4Girls initiative, as of 2019 about 300 women are being trained and equipped as local digital ambassadors in four regions of Cameroon, to promote the use of ICT among the networks of NTFP entrepreneurs. Additionally, digital solutions will be developed jointly with the business women to meet their needs and improve the functioning of the NTFP value chain.



Three young women sharing knowledge on how to use their tablet for business promotion.  
© Lem Akongwi/GIZ

- **Implementation of #eSkills4Girls projects**

BMZ expands its portfolio with new projects and a special focus on #eSkills4Girls in Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia (see boxes). The projects focus on digital skills trainings for women and girls, the integration of digital technologies in vocational trainings and non-formal education settings and on raising awareness for career prospects in the tech sector.

- **The EQUALS partnership – Advancing gender equality in the digital age**

#eSkills4Girls is just a first step to making the digital inclusion of women and girls a matter of course. It takes joint and long-term efforts

by governments, the private sector, civil society and academia. To this end, BMZ is part of the Skills Coalition of EQUALS – a multi-stakeholder partnership to achieve gender equality in the digital age. The EQUALS Skills Coalition aims at ensuring that digital skills are taught to all children and girls in particular. The members work on improving the data base on women's digital skills and develop principles for gender-inclusive digital trainings. The Digital Skills Fund supports grassroots initiatives in scaling their digital skills trainings. In the first call, 20 initiatives from Africa, Latin America and Asia received support.

## RWANDA

In Rwanda, digitalization has the potential to create new, well-paid jobs. However, since the IT-sector is traditionally a masculine domain, so far mainly men have profited from this development. WeCode is a Rwandan software academy that works to close the gender gap by supporting women in the IT-sector. As part of GIZ's Promotion of Economy and Employment Programme, WeCode trains women for the local and the international market. In the local market approach women are trained to become full-stack or mobile-app developers in a period of 25 weeks. The graduates are matched with regional and local employers. The international market approach consists of a two-months competency-based training. Besides skills in Quality Assurance (QA) and Software Testing, the women learn work-readiness competencies that are needed to adapt to the needs of clients in the quickly changing IT-sector. The women are trained in teams, ranging from project managers to QA experts. After graduation they can gain work experience with WeCode in a four-months internship, where they continue to work in teams on international tech services projects brought into Rwanda and delivered in Rwanda.



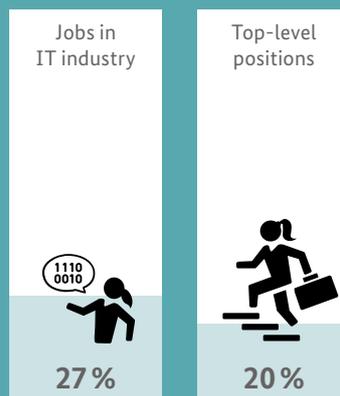
Women are being trained in Software Quality Assurance in Rwanda.  
© Karin Desmarowitz/GIZ

## ICT & Gender

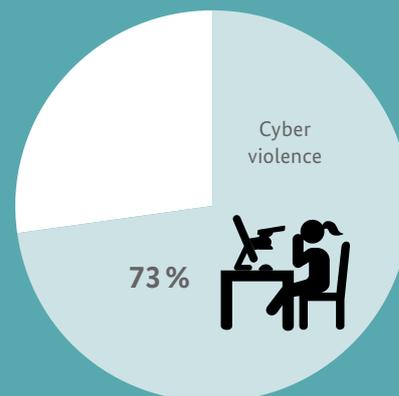
ITU 2017 data shows that globally, the proportion of men who can write a computer programme is twice that of females (7.8% versus 3.5%).



Occupying only 27% of all jobs in the IT industry worldwide and commanding just 20% of top-level positions, women are still heavily under-represented in the digital economy.



Worldwide close to 73% of women online have been exposed to cyber violence.



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### More Information:

[BMZ #eSkills4Girls](#)

[EQUALS Partnership](#)

[#eSkills4Girls Platform](#)

[Women in Tech: Inspiration. No Fairytales](#)

[Women's Pathways to the Digital Sector: Stories of Opportunities and Challenges](#)



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