

IMPROVING WOMEN AND GIRLS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) EDUCATION AND USAGE OF EXISTING FACILITIES



“...Narrowing the (digital) gender divide is not about “fixing women”, or perpetuating existing roles with the aid of technology. Rather, the focus needs to be on putting in place concrete policy actions fostering women’s and girls’ full participation and inclusion in the digital economy, while at the same time addressing ingrained stereotypes and social norms that lead to discrimination and even violence against women.”

- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Information and communications technology (ICT) is an extensional term for information technology (IT) that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals) and computers, as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage, and audiovisual systems, that enable users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information - *Wikipedia*.

ICT benefits to human lives include but not limited to increased agricultural productivity, mobile and Internet banking, online education, research and e-library, hospital equipments using lasers and cameras including e-health, e-commerce, social networking among others.

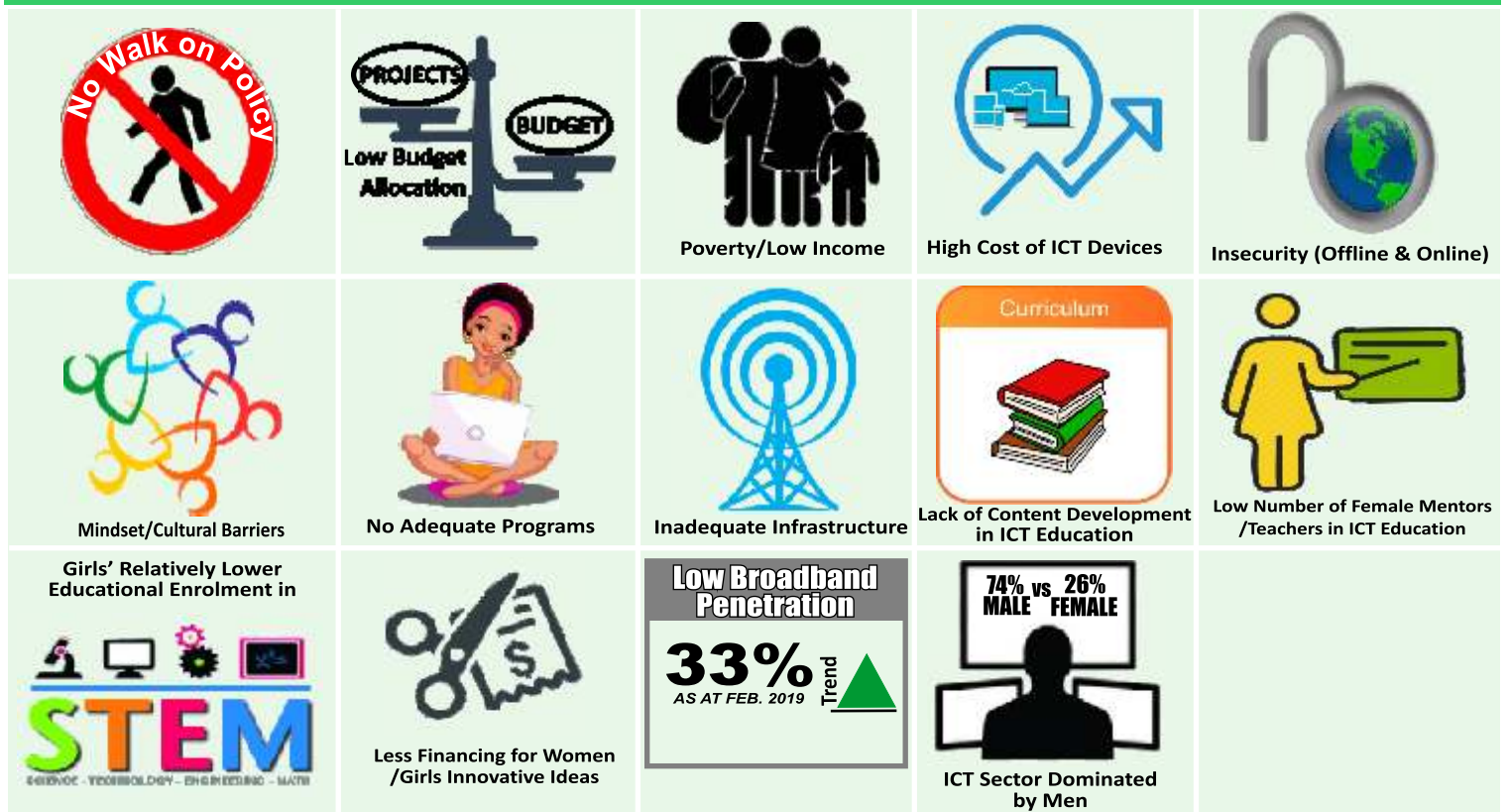
ICT potentials and contributions to human development is currently compromised by uneven access and availability of these technologies across social structures. What is quite surprising then is that while ICT has become an integral part of our

lives, the barriers to women access to ICT is widening in Nigeria. Women and girls are still under-represented in terms of access and use. The gender imbalance is very much evident as the mean number of female participation in ICT is less than half of their male counterparts - 26% female versus 74% male (*National Bureau of Statistics Labour Force 2017*).

Many women and girls are already disadvantaged in socio-economic and political space and thus are reflected in their minimal presence in ICT. Despite of the fact that this group make up the majority of the population workforce and play a pivotal role in the development of their societies, their impact has not been felt in ICT due to lack of access and necessary skills for the operation amongst other several obstacles.

It is, therefore, very crucial to address this disparity, while moving towards a gender-balanced information society in Nigeria through proper human resources development initiatives in ICT.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S ICT ACCESS IN NIGERIA



FACTS ABOUT NIGERIA EXISTING ICT, RESOURCE AND KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

- Only about 1200 ICT Centres are located in about 740 out of 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria.
- Most of these centres are located in urban and rural communities including schools, community centres and institutions.
- Over 200,000 ICT equipments were distributed to 1200 centres between 2006 and 2016 by NCC/USPF, NITDA, OSSAP SDGs and FME.
- Most of these ICT centres still lack infrastructure, personnel, equipments, power supply, furniture, etc to function.
- In the last 3 years, these centres had not been maintained, functional and optimally utilized, e.g. In Abuja, Lugbe and Karu centres do not have computers, furniture and power supply.

CURRENT 1200 ICT CENTRES SPREAD ACROSS THE COUNTRY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BRINGS 63.6MILLION WOMEN AND GIRLS ONLINE IN ONE YEAR

If one computer functions for at least 6hours in a day:

- If using in pair, one computer will bring at least 8 women/girls online.
- If a software developer is engaged, she can train at least 88 female software developer within 3 months using one computer.
- One computer have the potential to bring 264 women and girls to study and learn online in one month.
- In all, more than 1200 ICT centres can bring over 1.2 million women and girls online in a month.
- Nigeria can compete with the likes of India and China, if the rural ICT Centres were being used to produce 3.8 million female IT Professionals per year
- 1200 ICT centres are more than enough for JAMB CBT Centres with over 200,000 computers - demonstrating public sector partnership and collaboration.
- Over 200,000 computers in all these centres can generate more than 1.2 billion naira annually from JAMB alone as JAMB pays N600 to CBT centres per one candidate
- 1200 ICT centres if properly managed and utilized will provide jobs for the youths and contribute to reduce trafficking and youths rural - urban migration.

Studies have shown women and girls can bring substantial growth into rural health, agriculture and business if their digital skills are properly enhanced and harnessed.

Improving women and girls' ICT access is a shared responsibility between the Ministry, line agencies, private companies and the Civil Societies. Therefore, the action points focused on five critical areas which include:

COLLABORATION

Bringing stakeholders together to participate in the dialogue, decision making, and implementation of solutions to focus problems or goals

EDUCATION & HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Deployment of personnel, training and improved curriculum

FUNDING

Increase budget allocation to implement programs

INFRASTRUCTURE

Availability of equipment, software, Internet access and other similar resources

MONITORING & EVALUATION

Review and evaluate access and use of ICT infrastructure and programs

ACTION POINTS FOR THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS

- Review the current National ICT Development Plan that actively aim to close the ICT access for women and girls, adoption and usage gaps, and improve the affordability of digital technologies while enhancing online safety.
- Increase budget allocation to implement National ICT Development Plan, particularly the provision to provide ICT access for women and girls by 50% and support and coordinate USPF, NCC, NITDA to allocate funds to facilitate women empowerment and build digital skills for girls.
- Set up a Gender Desk in the Ministry with adequate human resource, skills, training and funding including Monitoring and Evaluation Committee to review and evaluate access and use of existing public and private ICT centres in the FCT and other States of the Federation.
- Improve coordination of all ICT programs and activities in related departments and agencies under your purview.
- Reduce the cost of accessing ICT devices, discounted prices for laptops, computers, on a favorable installment.
- Provide Internet facilities to libraries and ICT centres for research purposes and other positive benefits and impact on women and girls and the society.
- Liaise with the Federal Ministry of Education to design and implement specific, up-to-date, tailored ICT education and digital skills for women and girls in areas such as: entrepreneurship, trade and e-Commerce, agriculture, coding, networking & telecommunication, ICT and open apprenticeship, Internet governance, digital rights, data science, cybersecurity and e-Health.

ACTION POINTS FOR THE EXECUTIVE VICE-CHAIRMAN, NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (NCC)

- Expedite action on developing regulatory framework and deployment/utilization of Television White Space to provide broadband services in rural areas.
- Increase budget allocation for ICT programs for women and girls.
- Create fund and grant schemes aimed at enhancing the enrolment of women and girls in ICT education
- Create safe spaces, guidelines and best practices for online safety for women and girls to access and use internet facilities.

ACTION POINTS FOR THE SECRETARY, UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROVISION FUND (USPF)

- Bring sustainability into the existing centres to include training for educators and teachers in schools.
- Designate ICT safe space for women and girls.
- Provide financial support to professional Institutes such as Computer Professionals of Nigeria, Computer Society of Nigeria academic institutions and ICT focus NGOs to organize and train computer teachers and mentors.
- Provide subsidies to private operators to deploy Television White Space to rural areas for internet connectivity.
- Increase budget allocation to women and girls' ICT access by 50% to facilitate women empowerment and build digital skills for girls.
- Create fund and grant schemes aimed at enhancing the enrolment of women and girls in ICT education.
- Establish awards and prizes enhancing the visibility of women and girls in ICT sectors.

ACTION POINTS FOR THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, NATIONAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

- Create programs to implement National ICT Development Plan that actively aim to close the gender digital access, adoption and usage gaps, and improve the affordability of digital technologies while enhancing online safety.
- Create fund and grant schemes aimed at enhancing the enrolment of women and girls in ICT education
- Provide a safe and protective measure for women and girls to prevent online gender violence, girls bullying and online harassment.
- Collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data for programming and policy development.

ACTION POINTS FOR ICT FOCUS CSOs/NGOs

- Create awareness on government ICT policies and programs.
- Create awareness campaigns tackling socio-cultural norms and biases and stereotypes.
- Organize digital skills training for teachers and mentors.
- Conduct advocacy for parents, religious leaders, traditional rulers and community gatekeepers in ensuring women and girls access ICT centres and use the facilities for personal growth, community development and civic engagements.
- Create demand for the use of existing ICT centres especially by women and girls.
- Advocate to policymakers to improve ICT access and utilization.

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and

ICT Access for Women and Girls in Nigeria Coalition

(A Coalition of organizations and individuals working to promote ICT access for women and girls between the aged of 15 - 24)



Funding is provided by Rise Up, a program of the Public Health Institute, through funding from the Cummins Foundation