



CSW67: Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

Unlocking digital opportunities for women and girls for the gender responsive socio-economic recovery and sustainable development

Regional Consultation for Central Asia to prepare for Commission on Status of Women 67 session

DRAFT Concept Note

Date: 28 February 2023

Time: 14:00 Bishkek/Astana time 13:00 Ashgabat/Dushanbe/Tashkent time 11:00 Istanbul time

Format: (Hybrid) consultations

Venue: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Connection arrangements: to be provided to all confirmed participants (tbc)

Language: Russian and English with simultaneous translation ¹

I. Background

In accordance with its multi-year programme of work (2021- 2024), [the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW\) in 2023](#) will consider “**Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls**” as its priority theme “**Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls**” as the review theme. The CSW67 priority theme brings a unique opportunity to revisit the gendered impacts of innovation and technology and to identify recommendations that will allow for a more inclusive and equitable digital evolution. The UN Secretary-General’s report on the CSW67 priority theme is underway (*to be changed to “has been issued” once it is out*) to provide an analysis of how to harness technology so that women and girls enjoy full political, economic and social equality, participate in innovation processes from design to application, monitoring and evaluation and shape the values and principles that should underpin their governance.

To take stock of the current progress in Central Asia countries in terms of achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of emerging technologies, digitalization, and innovation, as well as discuss the main challenges and obstacles and agree on the main actions to be taken to make the required changes, the Government of Kyrgyzstan and UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECA RO) will convene sub-regional consultations on the priority theme to be held in a hybrid format on 28 February, 2023.

The changing nature of work as a result of the proliferation of digital platforms and other changes associated with the digital revolution, in developed and developing countries, holds new possibilities

¹ All logistical technical arrangements will be supported by UN Women

for women's employment but also presents risks. According to research by ILO, the online economy will be no more inclusive than the regular economy; women represent only one out of every three crowd-workers and the gender balance is particularly skewed in developing countries². Particularly in the developing world, e-commerce gives business owners and SMEs access to new markets and higher revenues. Lack of access to the digital market or inadequate skills to enter it, along with difficulty obtaining financing, are growing barriers for women entrepreneurs and women-led SMEs in an environment of accelerating globalization.

Rapid changes in technology and media are creating new spaces for the perpetration of violence against women and girls³. Examples of cyber-violence include cyber-stalking; non-consensual pornography (or 'revenge porn'); gender-based slurs and harassment; 'slut shaming'; unsolicited pornography; 'sextortion'; rape and death threats; and electronically enabled trafficking. ICTs also facilitate the abuse and harassment of female participants in politics in the forms of disinformation campaigns and digital forgeries.

Rural women tend to spend more time than their urban counterparts on unpaid care and domestic work, given generally poorer access to infrastructure such as running water or labour-saving technology. The development of ICT can generate unique opportunities to strategically address challenges associated with achieving Sustainable Development Goals, such as sustainable food production; access to clean and safe water; and green energy generation and usage. All of these have gender targets and disproportionately affect women around the globe, especially in low and middle-income economies.

Gender equality in digitalization profile in Central Asia

In Europe and Central Asia (ECA) (including Russia), 52 million women lack access to the mobile internet, they are four percent less likely to use the mobile internet, even though they are two percent more likely to be owners of mobile phones⁴. For instance, in Kazakhstan 85.9 percent of people are internet users, out of which women constitute 84.9 percent in comparison to 87.1 percent of men, whereas in Uzbekistan women constitute only 65.9 percent versus 74.9 percent of men.⁵ The cost of smart gadgets and the accessibility of the internet are also significantly contributing factors that disproportionately affect women, girls, and the poor, including in the region⁶. Across all levels of digital literacy, women are generally less likely than males to possess digital abilities; for example, they are 25% less likely to utilize ICT for fundamental tasks like utilizing arithmetic formulas in a spreadsheet; they are four times less likely to have advanced ICT skills.

A significant gender gap is observed in STEM fields in Central Asia. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, a considerable number of female students are concentrated in STEM subjects, such as the Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics. However, the proportion of female graduates in STEM at tertiary level accounts for no more than 30 percent in these two countries. Moreover, further gender differences arise when it comes to career or academic advancement in STEM fields. In Kazakhstan, while 53 percent of researchers in STEM are women, they remain under-represented among key leadership positions. In Tajikistan share of women researches in STEM constitute 33.6 percent. In Kyrgyzstan, share of women researchers in STEM is 46%, whereas the share of women working in ICT drops to 36.3 percent. In Uzbekistan share of women graduates in ICT and engineering programmes is

² ILO, Digital Labour Platforms and the Future of Work: Towards Decent Work in the Online World (Geneva, 2018).

³ Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective (A/HRC/38/47).

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

only 17.7 percent, whereas women researchers in STEM constitute 34.5 percent. In Kazakhstan women are 43 percent of employees in the ICT sector. In Kyrgyzstan, the share of women in the ICT workforce has risen from 28.2 percent in 2015 to 36.3 percent in 2019. However, significant underrepresentation in leadership positions for women in the region is a common challenge. Overall, opportunities in the ICT and tech fields are scarce. For instance, in Kazakhstan women account for only 7.4 percent of founders.

Efficient access to ICT and digital literacy and skills have become critical ways to enable equal access to administrative services, education, and distance learning, support economic activities and entrepreneurship development. This also allows the women and girls in mountain areas of the countries in Central Asia to have access to necessary resources and assets to start and develop their businesses and be formally employed. Targeted support is needed to ensure that national digitalization/IT ecosystems and address needs and priorities for gender equality and support women and girls meaningfully as actors for change for the digitalization revolution.

Purpose and objectives of the consultation:

The consultation is organized in the context of [the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW\) in 2023 which focuses on “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”](#). CSW67 dialogue is expected to address misconceptions of gendered dimensions of technology and innovation that hinder GEWE progress, to move beyond a binary vision of the gender digital divide and shape inclusive innovation ecosystems and address online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination.

The objective of this event is to support the countries in Central Asia to prepare for the CSW67 consultations and jointly agree on key joint messages to form the sub-regional vision, its perspectives, experiences, and recommendations on the game-changing actions in the innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for gender equality as well as empowerment of rural women and girls in mountain areas.

Rural women’s professional profile and earning potential can be raised by training young women in information technologies, computers, and digitalization. These new directions require proper financial support and specially designed training programmes geared toward rural women and men that are tailored to their age and skills. One recommended approach is to apply gender equality mainstreaming principles for ensuring women’s enrolment and developing financial support guidelines in targeted fields of study. These measures will increase women’s decision-making powers in the family and community. Greater economic empowerment of rural women will lead to higher investments, economic growth and better outcomes in household and children’s welfare, and importantly contribute to rural ecosystems transformation.

It will allow to discuss and explore how technology and digital solutions are playing an integral role in addressing the socio-economic needs of women across the region and how technologies and digital economy could efficiently facilitate the gender inequalities reduce the existing gender digital gaps.

The discussion will focus on the following issues:

- Access to digital technologies and skills for women and girls in mountain areas and meaningful connectivity as a means for sustainable livelihoods – how international development

assistance and humanitarian response and recovery can help address gender digital gaps in employment and economic participation;

- Innovative solutions and measures underway to support women entrepreneurs in mountain areas with necessary skills and access to the most recent technologies and digital platforms as well as financial resources to sustain and scale up their businesses;
- Digitalization governance and gender responsive economic recovery – skills, technologies for equal access to decent work in countries of Central Asia;
- Addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination and protecting the rights of women and girls online.

The specific objectives are to:

- Present and discuss how digitalization and the development of new technologies can provide effective solutions to address the priorities and needs of economic security of women and girls in Central Asia from the perspective of the [Mountain Partnership](#).
- Share best practices and examples of empowering women in the digital era and highlighting the unique contribution women have made for enhanced innovation and productivity by bringing more diverse technological breadth to address socio-economic issues in Central Asia.
- Agree on the joint recommendations on gender responsive digitalization governance, suggested pledges and commitments of development partners to overcome gender digital gaps for women and girls in mountain areas to be further presented by the Government of Kyrgyzstan at CSW67 session as contributions to the CSW67 outcome document.

Format of the consultation

The consultation **will consist of two parts organized as an** interactive hybrid moderated discussion:

The first part will be devoted to an assessment of the current challenges and opportunities to advance gender equality through digitalization and technological solutions for women and girls in mountain areas of Central Asia and to share emerging best practices.

The second part will be focused on the actions and the key messages to be shared at CSW67.

Suggested Programme:

Time	Sessions
13:30-14:00	Coffee break
14.00 -14.10	Brief introduction on CSW67 and expected outcome: Mr. Bazarbaev Kudaibergen Bazarbaevich, Minister of Labor, Social Security and Migration. Kyrgyzstan
14.10 -14.20	Opening session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Zhaparov Akylbek Usenbekovich, Chairperson of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic - Head of the President's Administration • Ms. Alia El-Yassir, UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia
14:20-15:20	Panel 1 – Gender transformative ICT ecosystem for sustained social economic recovery and development Questions to discuss:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What national policies and actions are in place to reduce the digital gender gap? ➤ How to ensure the substantive and meaningful participation of women as agents of change in innovation and digitalization strategies, policies, programmes, and projects? ➤ What capacities and resources are needed to ensure women are leading the way towards more equitable and sustainable solutions to digital transformation, while ‘leaving no one behind’? ➤ What are the barriers both legal and policy hampering women’s and girls’ voice in rural and/or mountain areas, their leadership and participation, including access to quality and affordable education, skills and vocational training? <p>Panel discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Daulet Bekmanov, Chairperson of the Public Services Committee of the Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace (in presence), Kazakhstan • Mrs. Nigorakhon Gafforzoda, The First Deputy of Chairperson, the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Tajikistan (online) • Ms. Asel Kenenbaeva, Director Infocom Agency. under the Ministry of Digitalisation, Kyrgyzstan • Representative of Turkmenistan – (online) tbc • Representative of Uzbekistan – (online) tbc <p>Moderator: Ms. Indira Sharshenova, First Deputy Minister of Digitalization, Kyrgyzstan</p> <p><i>Interventions will be followed by interactive discussions</i></p>
15:20-15.30	Joint photo (on line & off-line)
15:30-16:30	<p>Panel 2. Gender responsive digitalization for economic empowerment of women and girls in mountain and rural areas to support address gender digital gaps in employment context:</p> <p>Panel discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Alina Abdrakhmanova, Member of the National Commission for Women, Family, and Demographic Policy/Astana Hub, Kazakhstan (online) • Ms. Nargiza Zhakypova, Entrepreneur and co-founder of IT-RUN academy network, IT-RUN Kids, Kyrgyzstan • Ms. Habiba Aslonova, Director/Alif Academy, Tajikistan • Representative of Turkmenistan – (online) tbc • Assel Marchenko, Chief Technology Officer at Halyk Finance JSC, Kazakhstan • Ms. Aliya Chynybaeva, Chairman of the Board, Halyk Bank Kyrgyzstan OJSC, Leader of the Techno Women Kyrgyzstan movement • Representative from Uzbekistan – (online) - tbc <p>Questions to discuss:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the best practices and examples of success stories of women-led initiatives aimed at empowering women and girls to use ITC to improve their livelihoods in the context of socio-economic recovery? ➤ How to mainstream gender in digital policies and investments – both public and private, and increase women’s participation in digital cooperation in the recovery context? ➤ What steps have governments, in partnership with other stakeholders, taken to ensure that ICT and other technologies reach and empower women and girls in rural and/or mountain areas in your country? <p>Moderator: Ms. Janyl Alybaeva, Deputy Minister of Labor, Social Security and Migration, Kyrgyzstan</p> <p><i>Interventions will be followed by interactive discussions</i></p>
16:30-16:40	<p>Closing remarks by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H.E Baisalov Edil Joldubaevich, First Deputy Chairperson of the Cabinet of Ministers, Kyrgyzstan - Ms. Alia El-Yassir, UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia
16:40-17:00	Coffee break

A summary of discussions will be prepared and shared with participants within a week after the consultations.

Organizers: the Government of Kyrgyzstan and UN Women (Europe and Central Asia Regional Office and Kyrgyzstan Country Office)

UN Women will provide all necessary advisory support, provide logistical support to arrange the meeting, capture the findings, and facilitate the dissemination of the outcome of the consultations at the global platforms/events by the host country.

Participants will come from the relevant state institutions in Central Asia countries responsible for ICT, humanitarian right and gender equality, Parliaments, CSOs and youth representatives, gender experts, research centers and think tanks, IT companies, United Nations System and other inter-governmental organizations with relevant mandates and expertise, also the relevant regional bodies and mechanisms.

Resource materials:

- CSW 67 [Expert Group Meeting](#) – concept note
- [UN Women Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2022](#)
- [UNCTAD Technology and innovation report 2021](#)
- [Harnessing Technology and Innovation to Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls](#)
- [EGM/RWG/Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the CSW 62 Priority Theme](#)

- [FAO. 2022. Food policy, rural development and gender equality in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Summary and recommendations of the International forum \(10, 12, 17 March 2021\).](#)
- [2018 Commission On The Status Of Women Agreed Conclusions](#)
- [ESCAP “Realizing Digital Potential in North and Central Asia” \(2020\)](#)
- [UNDP Gender Equality in Digitalization \(2021\)](#)
- [FAO. 2014 Rural Women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Key Issues](#)
- [2018 Commission On The Status Of Women Agreed Conclusions](#)

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