

INTERNATIONAL GIRLS IN ICT DAY

23 APRIL 2026



Graduate Women International (GWI)



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Girls shaping the digital future through education, rights, and leadership.

Graduate Women International (GWI) marks International Girls in ICT* Day 2026 by highlighting emerging global trends that are redefining how girls engage with digital technologies. While access remains essential, the global agenda is evolving. The priority now is meaningful participation that ensures girls and women are equipped to understand, influence, and lead in digital and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven environments.

***ICT stands for Information and Communication Technology**



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Across regions, progress is visible, yet disparities persist. Girls continue to face barriers linked to affordability, safety, social norms, and unequal access to quality education. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated action across education systems, policy frameworks, and international cooperation.

Source: United Nations



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**Did you
Know?**

In most countries, girls match or outperform boys in general digital literacy during early education, yet their participation drops sharply at the point where systems transition from basic use to advanced pathways such as coding, AI, and engineering. The shift is not explained by ability. It aligns with how education systems, incentives, and exposure are structured at that stage. This inflection point determines who moves from user to builder in the digital economy, and it remains one of the least addressed constraints in shaping female participation in ICT.

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10 Emerging Trends

This section introduces the **ten emerging trends** linked to the 2026 theme of International Girls in ICT Day 2026, **AI for Development: Girls Shaping the Digital Future**. They reflect the shift from access to **meaningful participation**, where education, rights, and leadership determine outcomes. Together, they define where progress is being shaped and where **targeted action can deliver measurable impact**. For GWI, this provides a clear framework to align efforts with the areas influencing participation and advancement for girls.



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1. AI Literacy As A Foundational Skill

AI is moving into core curricula at secondary and tertiary levels. Countries are introducing basic machine learning concepts, data literacy, and algorithmic awareness early in education systems. This shifts digital education from usage to understanding systems that shape decisions.



Source: UNESCO Recommendation On The Ethics Of Artificial Intelligence; UNESCO AI Competency Framework For Students (2024–2025)

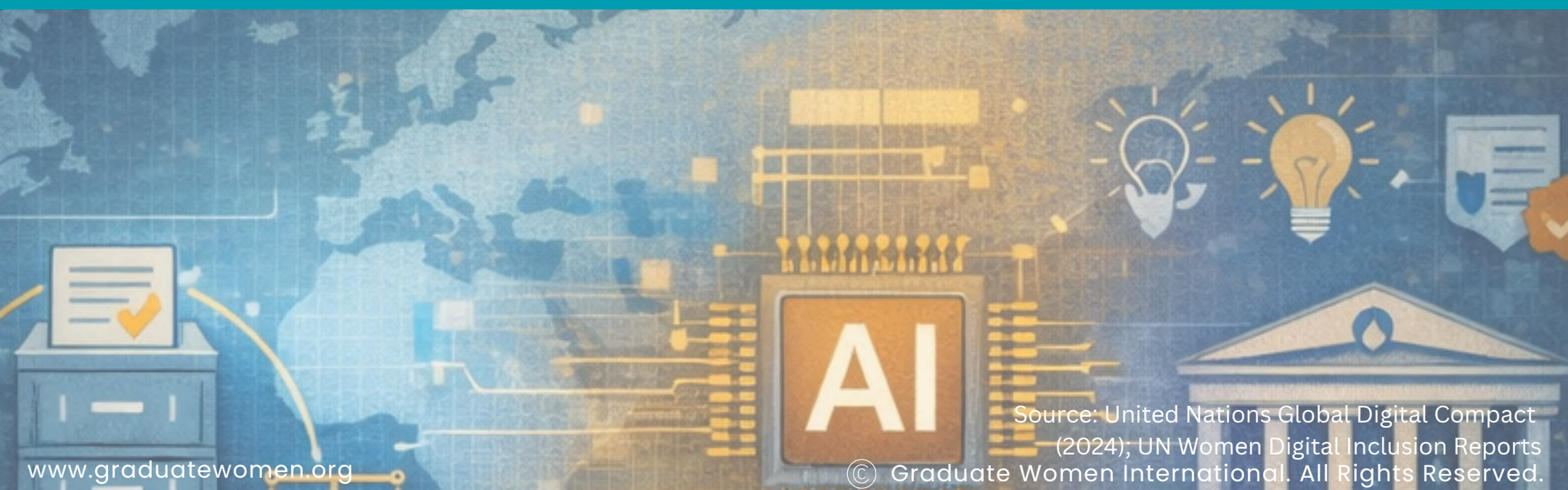
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2. Women and Girls As Digital Decision-Makers

Policy frameworks increasingly include targets for women's representation in AI governance, tech leadership, and regulatory bodies. This expands participation into decision-making roles that influence system design and deployment.



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3. Teacher Capacity Shaping Outcomes

Teacher training programs are being redesigned to include digital pedagogy and AI tools. Evidence shows that trained teachers directly increase girls' retention and performance in STEM fields.



Source: OECD Education Policy Outlook;
OECD Digital Education Studies (2023–2025)

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4. From Connectivity To Meaningful Access

Policy has shifted from infrastructure rollout to affordability, device access, and quality of connection. Programs now measure effective usage rather than simple connectivity rates.



Source: International Telecommunication Union
Measuring Digital Development Reports (2024–2025)

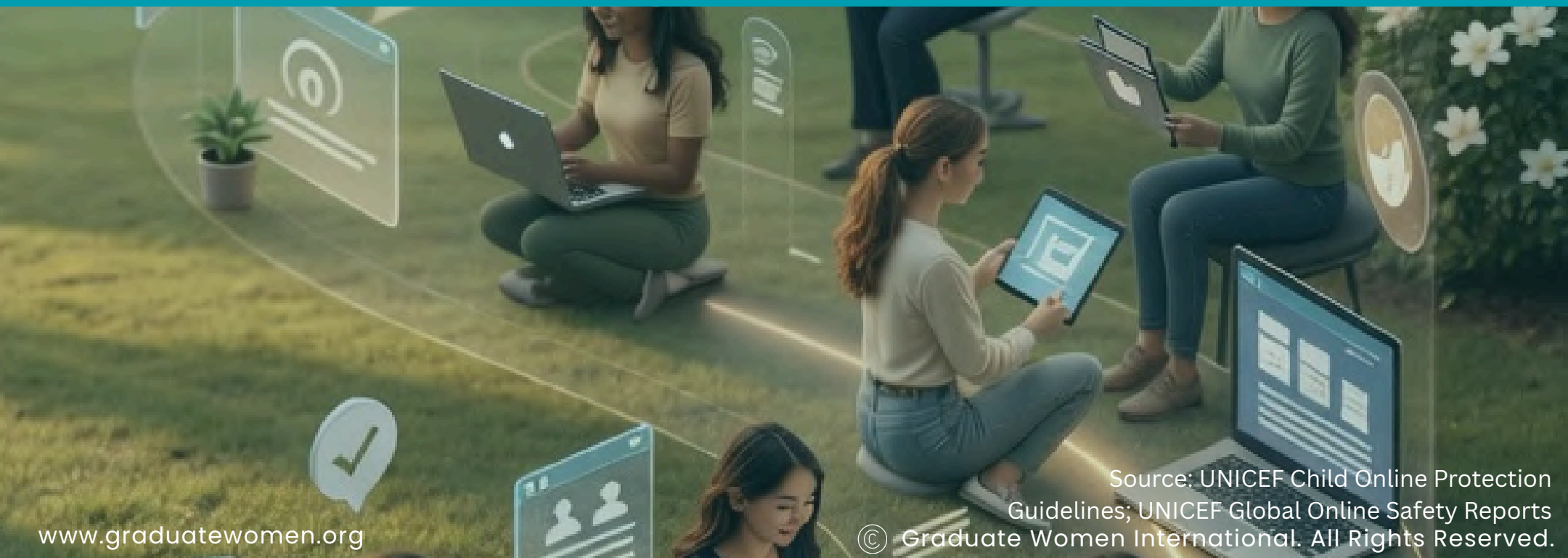
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5. Online Safety As A Prerequisite For Participation

Governments are implementing stricter online safety regulations, including platform accountability and digital literacy programs focused on risk awareness. This directly impacts participation levels among girls.



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6. Pathways From Education To Employment

There is a measurable expansion of programs linking digital education with labor markets through apprenticeships, certifications, and public-private partnerships. Focus is on employability outcomes rather than academic completion alone.



Source: World Bank Digital Jobs And Skills Reports; World Bank Human Capital Project (2024)

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7. Intersectional Digital Inclusion

Data is increasingly disaggregated by gender, geography, and income, revealing uneven outcomes. Programs are now designed with targeted interventions for rural, low-income, and marginalized

groups.



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8. Ethical Governance of Digital Education

AI deployment in education is now subject to governance frameworks covering data use, bias, and accountability. Institutions are required to align with ethical standards before large-scale implementation.



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9. Evidence-Driven Approaches

Governments and institutions are shifting toward measurable indicators, including learning outcomes, employment rates, and digital competency benchmarks. Funding is increasingly tied to data-backed performance.



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10. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

Large-scale digital inclusion programs now involve governments, private sector, NGOs, and multilateral institutions. Execution depends on aligned incentives across infrastructure, education, and policy.



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Seven Solutions that Actually Move the Needle

This section moves from trending direction to execution, focusing on actions that have already delivered measurable results.



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Early exposure with continuity

Programs that introduce coding or digital logic before age 12 and maintain progression into secondary education show materially higher retention of girls in ICT professions.

Female instructor presence

Schools and programs with visible female teachers in STEM fields report higher participation and persistence rates among girls.

Direct link to income

Training programs connected to real earning opportunities, including freelancing, apprenticeships, or entry-level digital jobs, significantly increase completion rates.

Safe access points

Provision of controlled environments, including school-based labs or supervised digital spaces, increases usage where household access is limited or restricted.



Source: UNESCO; ITU;
World Bank; OECD; ILO; UNICEF; GSMA

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Certification with market value

Short-cycle certifications aligned with employer demand produce faster transitions into the workforce than traditional academic tracks alone.

Parental inclusion

Programs that engage families directly reduce drop-off linked to social norms and perceived risks of digital exposure.

Device ownership, not shared access

Individual access to devices correlates strongly with skill acquisition and sustained engagement.



Source: World Bank; OECD; UNESCO; GSMA; UNICEF

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Closing Position

GWI positions digital inclusion within education systems, enforceable rights, and measurable participation outcomes. The priority is not access alone but capability, progression, and representation in decision-making. Girls and women must be equipped to operate, influence, and lead across digital and AI-driven environments, with clear pathways from education into economic participation and policy engagement.



Source: GWI CSW69 Written Statement

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Contact GWI at
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[Click here to see the GWI 2025
International Girls in ICT infographic](#)
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