

Session Outcome Document

Beyond the Access Gap: Gendered Realities of Digital Inclusion in Africa with Evidence from Four Countries

Research ICT Africa, Women of Uganda Network, Paradigm Initiative, Zeina Foundation

Tuesday, 6 July 2026, 10:00–10:45 (UTC+02:00)

[Session Page Link](#)

Key Issues discussed: (5–8 bullet points summarising the main discussion)

- Global digital inclusion metrics still equate device or internet access with meaningful participation, obscuring the deeper barriers women face.
- An affordability paradox forces many women to ration data or rely on shared/borrowed devices, undermining consistent connectivity.
- Domestic power dynamics often give male household members control over phone and internet access, limiting women's autonomous use.
- Cultural norms frame women's online visibility as transgressive, discouraging active digital participation.
- Technology-facilitated gender-based violence functions as a structural constraint on women's digital engagement, not merely an individual risk.
- Informal peer networks, rather than formal government or NGO programmes, are the main channel through which women build digital skills.
- Disability compounds gendered digital exclusion, adding further barriers for women with disabilities.
- National context shapes the gender digital divide differently across Ethiopia (post-conflict landscape), Ghana (North-South infrastructure divide), Nigeria (digital spaces as sites of gendered power), and Uganda (state-mandated digital systems).

Key Outcomes of the session (concise bullet points capturing the concrete results of the session)

- Panellists agreed that access-based metrics are insufficient and must be complemented by qualitative, gender-disaggregated evidence such as the After Access Gender Study.

- Discussion converged on technology-facilitated gender-based violence and informal peer-learning networks as two under-addressed factors that policymakers must factor into digital inclusion strategies.
- Country comparisons showed that a single, uniform approach cannot close the gender digital divide across diverse national contexts.
- Each panellist closed with a distinct policy ask, reflecting shared support for structural, rights-based interventions over infrastructure-only solutions.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Actions (2–5 bullet points outlining practical and actionable recommendations to support WSIS implementation towards 2035)

- Embed qualitative, gender-disaggregated research into national and regional digital inclusion strategies to move measurement beyond simple access indicators.
- Treat technology-facilitated gender-based violence as a structural governance issue, with accountability mechanisms for both governments and platforms.
- Formally recognise and support informal peer networks as legitimate digital-skills pathways for women, alongside formal digital literacy programmes.
- Localise digital-safety tools and platform interfaces into local languages to make protective features accessible to all women.
- Pair state-mandated digitalisation initiatives with parallel investment in infrastructure and literacy so adoption does not outpace communities' readiness.