**International Women’s Day (IWD)**

**DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality”.**

**8 March 2023**

Our lives depend on strong technological integration: attending a course, calling loved ones, making a bank transaction, or booking a medical appointment. Everything currently goes through a digital process. However[, 37% of women do not use the internet](https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/PR-2022-11-30-Facts-Figures-2022.aspx) (ITU Nov.2022). 259 million fewer women have access to the Internet than men, even though they account for nearly half the world's population.

Suppose women cannot access the Internet and do not feel safe online. In that case, they cannot develop the necessary digital skills to engage in digital spaces, diminishing their opportunities to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related fields. By 2050, 75% of jobs will be related to STEM areas. Yet today, women hold just [22 % of positions in artificial intelligence](https://www.un.org/en/observances/womens-day), to name just one.

The United Nations Observance of IWD this year, under the theme [“DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality”](https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/announcement/2022/12/international-womens-day-2023-digitall-innovation-and-technology-for-gender-equality?gclid=Cj0KCQiA6fafBhC1ARIsAIJjL8lJwnLXOfUCXVGG9kZ-7TN-HoPv2kzjvSYViIXOizdTNvbJPejs6vwaAkM6EALw_wcB,), recognises and celebrates the women and girls championing the advancement of transformative technology and digital education. The observance will explore the impact of the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities. It will also spotlight the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in digital spaces and addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence. This theme is aligned with the priority theme for the upcoming 67th Session of the [Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-67)](https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw67-2023), “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”.

Bringing women and other marginalised groups into technology results in [more creative solutions and has more significant potential](https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/announcement/2022/12/international-womens-day-2023-digitall-innovation-and-technology-for-gender-equality?gclid=Cj0KCQiA6fafBhC1ARIsAIJjL8lJwnLXOfUCXVGG9kZ-7TN-HoPv2kzjvSYViIXOizdTNvbJPejs6vwaAkM6EALw_wcB) for innovations that meet women’s needs and promote gender equality. Their lack of inclusion, by contrast, comes with massive costs: as per [UN Women’s Gender Snapshot 2022 report](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en_0.pdf), women’s exclusion from the digital world has shaved $1 trillion from the gross domestic product of low- and middle-income countries in the last decade—a loss that will grow to $1.5 trillion by 2025 without action. Reversing this trend will require tackling the problem of online violence, which a study of 51 countries revealed 38 per cent of women had personally experienced.

In the context of Kuwait, strategic transformation of education takes a whole-of-government-private sector-civil society approach to get ready for 21st century skills. For this, it is important to make human capital development to be more future-oriented and agile, in order to meet needs of future generations – both men and women - and evolving labor market needs, towards more diversified, knowledge-based and increasingly digitalized economy, notes, Dr. Khaled Mahdi, the Secretary General for the Supreme Council for Planning and Development.

Kuwait has achieved a high level of connectivity and broadband penetration, with almost 100 percent of individuals with internet access and 171.6 mobile-cellular subscriptions per 100 people. At the same time, Kuwait has been exploring ways in which broader elements of the digital ecosystems for educational gains could be strengthened, notes Hideko Hadzialic, UNDP Resident Representative.

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Science, technology and innovation (STI) can be crucial in meeting internationally agreed development goals. However, they cannot effectively facilitate equitable and sustainable development unless [women's and men's aims, concerns, situations and abilities](https://unctad.org/news/applying-gender-lens-science-technology-and-innovation) are considered when formulating STI policies. Additionally, integrating a gendered perspective on STI initiatives is smart economics.

To celebrate International Women’s Day this year, the Supreme Council for Planning and Development and the Women’s Research and Studies Center/Kuwait University, in partnerships with the UN in Kuwait, UNDP and UN Women, will be holding a discussion panel to highlight the importance of Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development, to discuss the role of Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) as a set of principles offering guidance to businesses on how to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community, and to share and promote achievements and initiatives undertaken by the private sector as well as UNDP and UN Women in promoting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment, in particular economic empowerment of women in their workplaces and communities. Optimizing women’s perspectives, skills and innovative ideas – whether in the markets or workplaces – is key to business development and inclusive development.

“A new approach to financing where public and private sector investments are tailored to women’s and girls’ needs, can transform the technology and innovation ecosystem,” said Susanne Mikhail, UN Women Regional Director for the Arab States. “If we apply strategic financial levers such as public sector digital programmes, research grants and procurement, and private sector investments, we can transform innovation ecosystems. Public and private sectors must fund gender analysis and interventions in all digital policies and programmes, research grants and procurement,” she added.  “UN Women has prioritized innovation and technology as one of the drivers of change to achieve gender equality and the SDG

“On International Women’s Day, we have to shed light on how the number of Companies in Kuwait that signed the Women’s Empowerment Principles at the UN Women site are increasing. From only 7 companies in 2017 to over 45 companies at present. They have not only signed but shown their commitment by implementing policies that have empowered women in their organizations. While competition is common in the economic sector, in Kuwait these companies have worked together whether offering training to women for leadership positions from different companies like RISE in National bank of Kuwait or corporate training for women in society as their commitment to Social Responsibility by the Gulf bank or the Diversity and Inclusion initiative of Zain telecommunications. It is important to get more companies to sign as encouraging nationals to join the Private Sector is essential for Sustainable Development and in alignment with Kuwait’s National Development plan.” - Dr. Lubna Alkazi, Director Women's Research & Studies Center in Kuwait University

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