



**A4AI** ALLIANCE FOR AFFORDABLE INTERNET



# Unlocking Africa's Digital Future

## First Summit on Women and Girls in Technology

September 13-14, 2016, Accra, Ghana

Bridging the digital gender gap is a critical step toward the vision of a thriving Africa—yet women are up to 50% less likely than men to be online. Join us to design solutions that will enable millions of African women and girls to benefit from access to technology—and use their skills to build a better Africa for all.

### Why women and technology

All women and girls deserve the opportunity to take part in the technology that is transforming our world. While recent years saw important progress, today there are still 25% fewer women and girls online than men and boys. In sub-Saharan Africa, this gap is over 40%. The need to tackle the digital gender gaps is especially urgent because technology is such a powerful tool to empower women to address other persistent inequalities.

Through cooperation between governments and partnerships among all stakeholders, we are already seeing how effective national policies can unlock the potential of ICTs to achieve gender equity and advance global and national development goals. However, key challenges around access and the gender divide persist:

- **Affordability** – High broadband prices disproportionately affect women due to the fact that they often have less income than men.
- **Access to digital skills training** – According to the Web Foundation's 2015 global report on [Women's Rights Online](#), women are almost twice more likely than men to report lack of skills as one of the main barriers to Internet use. Women reported limited opportunities to improve their digital literacy—including through skills like coding for the Web that could help women and girls improve their livelihoods and empower them to become technology innovators.
- **Access to higher education** – The WRO report also found access to education, especially higher education, to be a strong determinant of Internet use among women in poor urban areas. Yet, disparities persist in opportunities for girls to complete Science, Technology, and Math education.

- **Awareness at the policy level** – Lack of awareness around the digital gender divide hinders appropriate policy development and investments.

## **About the technology policy summit**

The summit is a critical forum focused on how technology policies and plans can further the rights and interests of African women and girls. It will engage high-level participants, including leading African women in technology, to debate policy solutions and contribute to policy processes on broadband Internet access, women's empowerment, and sustainable development.

Based on the main barriers identified by the Women's Rights Online research, the summit will focus on four areas: affordable broadband; women's rights online; access to information; and the creation of more relevant content, services, and capacities.

The activities will take place over two days and include:

- Keynote speeches
- Panel discussions with and on women leaders in technology and technology policy
- Break-out sessions around focus areas and key goals
- Visual and digital showcase of women-led technology initiatives.

In addition, we also seek to include virtual participation through streaming of key sessions.

## **Policy impact**

Through this annual gathering, we will connect women's rights advocates and gender policy experts with Internet rights advocates, broadband policy leaders, and leading and aspiring women technologists and innovators in Africa.

The summit will serve as a platform for participants to gain a clear understanding of key technology policy issues that affect African women's empowerment and rights. In addition, it will define specific action steps for participants to contribute to ongoing processes that shape the policy, practice, and investments of ICTs on the continent.

## **Together, we can fix the digital gender gap in Africa!**

This First Summit on Women and Girls in Technology is a collaboration between the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), the World Wide Web Foundation, the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Center of Excellence in ICT (AITI-KACE), the African Development Bank and UN Women.

Individuals and organisations interested in becoming a partner should contact Onica Makwakwa, A4AI Africa Regional Coordinator, at [onica.makwakwa@webfoundation.org](mailto:onica.makwakwa@webfoundation.org) and Karolle Rabarison, A4AI Membership Coordinator, at [karolle.rabarison@webfoundation.org](mailto:karolle.rabarison@webfoundation.org).