

WOMEN IN CYBER

A Newsletter by the UNODC Global Programme on Cybercrime



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- Kenyan women gain prominence in cybersecurity
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NEXUS BETWEEN STEM PROGRAMS AND FEMALE UNDERREPRESENTATION IN CYBER CAREERS

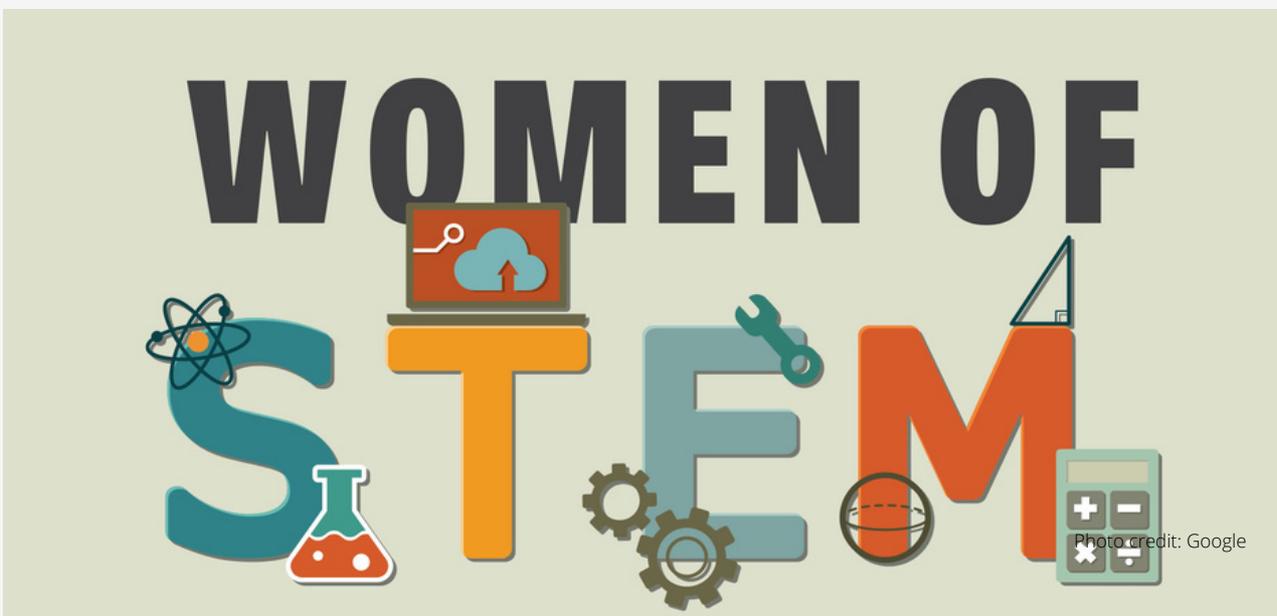
In Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), young women are underrepresented, and stereotypes and misconceptions persist. According to Barbara Maigret, Global Head of Sustainability & CSR at Fortinet, ICT, and Cybersecurity are generally seen as male-only careers. Pervasive gender biases, few female role models, mistaken beliefs about technology being a male-oriented industry, and, sadly, teachers and parents who steer girls away from technology studies have combined to break the confidence of many young women otherwise suited to pursue STEM-related degrees.

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In many African countries particularly, women continue to be underrepresented in the cybersecurity and cybercrime industry. This lack of gender equity has also directly contributed to the low percentage of women who hold cybersecurity leadership roles.

The first-level gender digital divide is the most prevalent. The gap is accentuated in terms of gender, age, education level, and social network, to the detriment of women, the elderly, individuals with a low level of education and individuals with less access to technology respectively.

The second-level digital divide related to computer training tends to decrease between young women and young men. But the usual digital divide reveals that the generational and gender divides still exist.



Disparities in men's and women's access to and control over ICTs, their content, and the skills to use them, penalize women for high participation in cybercrime. Most ICT promotion policies do not explicitly take into account the socio-economic realities of African women. Most analysts of ICT issues, be they economists, sociologists, or politicians, agree that including ICTs in the logic of the fight against poverty requires actions to be taken so that the sector benefits men and women equitably (Women's access to new media, Draft report presented by Mrs. Gisèle Guigma, Deputy of Burkina Faso).

Although the digital gender gap is diminishing, much remains to be done in the area of technical and scientific training for girls and women professionals in the cybersecurity and cybercrime sectors. Indeed, the securing of IT networks constitutes an important foundation in the fight against cybercrime.

KNOWBE4 LAUNCHES CYBERSECURITY SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN OF COLOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA

STEM education is of paramount importance for women's participation in the cyber and digital professions and some initiatives in favor of girls and women are to be encouraged and emulated. In South Africa, KnowBe4, one of the world's largest security awareness training and simulated phishing platforms, announced the introduction of the 'KnowBe4 Women in Cybersecurity Scholarship' targeting women of colour in collaboration with the Centre for Cyber Safety and Education. According to the SANS Institute (SysAdmin, Audit, Network, Security), women account for only 9% of cybersecurity specialists on the African continent as of 2021. Furthermore, South Africa currently has a 34.5 percent unemployment rate.

"This new scholarship is part of a broader effort by KnowBe4 to drive opportunities that help to create more diversity throughout the cybersecurity workforce in South Africa and beyond" (Anna Collard, SVP of content strategy & evangelist, KnowBe4 Africa, [onewsonline.org](https://www.onewsonline.org), June 1, 2022). The application period opens on 1 June 2022 and closes on September 19, 2022 (For more information on how to apply see iamcybersafe.org).

KENYAN WOMEN GAIN PROMINENCE IN CYBERSECURITY



Most Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) professions still suffer from a lack of women in their ranks, even after decades of equal gender rights initiatives. Today, there are several successful women in cybersecurity, a predominantly male field. The demand for cybersecurity is high globally. In Kenya, for instance, most females in the profession are

self-taught through online platforms. Many successful Kenyan women are now working in the field as IT security experts, outsourced data protection officers and security engineers/architects, cyber law experts, judges, magistrates, and more (For more, see Wanja Mbutia & Amina Wako: Decoding the female trailblazers in cybersecurity, February 07, 2022). Even though these women have to overcome multiple gender stereotypes, they are shifting the paradigm by improving leadership in the sector and expanding females' knowledge in technology, cybersecurity, and cybercrime. There is no doubt that Kenyan women in Cyber will strengthen knowledge management, the transfer of experience and partnerships at the national and international levels.

At the national level, the new Kenyan Committee on cybercrime could give a new boost to the gender approach process. On November 4, 2021, Kenya officially launched

the National Computer and Cyber Crimes Coordination Committee (NCCCC) as part of its wider efforts to combat the rising cybercrime threats across the globe (For more information, see Capital News). The NCCC has been tasked with consolidating action on the detection, investigation, and prosecution of cyber crimes. The operationalization of the committee was timely in the quest to protect the country's critical information infrastructure. This means strong laws and people whose day-to-day job, including professional women, is focused on making sure that infrastructure and systems are working. The best recommendation this committee could give within its mandate is to call for full inclusive governance. Thus, it could reduce the gender gap while also creating new strategies and mechanisms to empower professional women in cybercrime and cybersecurity.

There are signs of hope for gender-balance and more commitment of women in Kenya's new strategies. This is evident by the many prizes won by women in the cyber field between 2020 and 2021. The cybersecurity and cybercrime field continues to be dominated by men. However, women are gradually gaining prominence, winning awards in and outside of Kenya including Cyber Leadership Program Skills Embodiment 2020, Cybersecurity Woman Barrier Breaker of the Year 2020, Top 35 under 35 in Kenya 2020, Top 50 Women in Cybersecurity Africa 2020, Opportunity Desk Impact 30 under 30 Changemakers in Africa, and the Zuri Awards-STEM category nominee 2020.

IN FOCUS: WOMEN VOICE THEIR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF WOMEN IN CYBER CAREERS

A winning strategy in the fight against cybercrime is to increase women's participation in the digital ecosystem. Gender equality and women's empowerment are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Some women in cyber-related fields reveal their hopes for the future.



"Bringing more women to cybercrime will provide for more ideas and perspectives, and to build better solutions to the global problem of cybercrime"

Carmen Corbin, USA

*Global Programme on Cybercrime
West and Central Africa, UNODC*

"It is essential to ensure women's participation in fighting cybercrime because they understand the interplay between cybercrime and gender."

Ifeoma E. Nwafor, Nigeria

Tech Lawyer, Cyberlaw Expert



"Women's voices matter in security because they are more risk averse, compliant with rules and regulations; and more attentive to organizational controls and structures than men."

Claudia Jematia, Kenya

Global Tactical Intelligence & Monitoring

"Women need to know that they are potential targets of Cyber Fraud hence need to imbibe safety measures that will help them stay safe while doing business on cyberspace."

Fitswemila Stephanie Philip, Nigeria

Financial Crimes Investigator



Integrating gender-balanced, and more women in the cybersecurity and cybercrime field requires the adoption of winning strategies and policies that are inclusive and based on human rights, particularly the rights of women and children. All stakeholders in the digital ecosystem should be involved in the implementation of policies adopted for optimal security sector reform (SSR) that are participatory and inclusive of the specific needs of professional women and their strategic interests.

UNODC has adopted the Gender Strategy 2018-2021 for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, to improve global performance and strategic policies.

Empowering professional women in the sector allows us to better understand the issues and challenges of integrating the gender approach. More women in cybercrime show the importance of inclusive governance for better results. Challenges and issues identified in cybercrime show that technological advances are outpacing the legal framework and human rights. ICT and cybercrime pointed out that the gender approach is necessary to support the digital economy.

UNODC AFRICA WOMEN IN CYBER NETWORKING PLATFORM 'CYBER CAFÉ' RETURNS

'Cyber Café' is the UNODC Global Programme on Cybercrime's monthly professional exchange platform where African women involved in the digital sector, including cybersecurity and cybercrime present and share their experiences with other women in the Cyber sector

The last session, organized on June 22nd, returned after two months under the theme, "Building effective women's empowerment strategies in Cybercrime".



Upcoming events

- **Cyber Diva bootcamp** - September 2022

Dear Reader,

We hope you enjoy this issue of the UNODC-Cybercrime 'Women in Cyber' Newsletter. Kindly note that we will be on break for the months of July and August 2022. Your favorite newsletter on women breaking barriers in various cyber fields will return in September 2022.

Thank you!

