**2023**

# GIRLS AND MOBILE REPORT

Partners

Girl Effect

Vodafone Americas Foundation

unicef
for every child

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# Foreword from the Youth Advisory Panel

The world we are living in is almost completely digital in all aspects of life. Today, having access to technology – especially a mobile phone – is crucial for success and effectiveness. Nevertheless, many teenagers, especially girls, face numerous barriers while trying to get access to and use mobile phones.

The Girls & Mobile research generated insights to help raise awareness and advocate for the importance of addressing gender inequality in access to technology and the digital divide. This could lead to greater investment in programs and initiatives that aim to increase girls' access to mobile phones and digital technologies, which could have positive impacts on the wellbeing of adolescent girls across the world.

By involving young people in this research and making sure they are a part of the decision-making processes, we can guarantee that policies and programs are more relevant, effective, and inclusive, while also developing a sense of ownership and empowerment amongst boys and girls. In a society where young people are frequently disregarded and their opinions are not heard, being a part of a Youth Advisory Panel has enabled us to share ideas and use our voices to make sure our experiences are heard. This, we hope, will empower and amplify the voices of the next generation.

We also hope that this research will be the wake-up call people need to realize the value of girls using technology, especially the Internet. Overall, the 2023 Girls & Mobile Report has the potential to contribute significantly to the wellbeing of youth by informing the design of evidence-based interventions that can improve their health, education, and overall well-being. Moreover, it could give adolescents the relief that they are not alone and that someone is there working to create change, to advocate for girls, and to take the first step toward solving and breaking down the boundaries girls are facing.

We are excited to see the results of this research and to have had the opportunity to be a part of this important project. We hope this research will motivate activists to act, use social media, and spread awareness about how mobile and the Internet benefits girls. We hope more young people will join us in the future as we continue to share ideas and promote a more equal digital world for all.

**2023 GIRLS & MOBILE
YOUTH ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERS**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alice | Faiza | Rekha | Yvonne |
| Daniyan | Nidhi | Sandra | Zelalem |
| Edlawit | Peninah | Sheila | |
| Faith | Rania | Umi | |
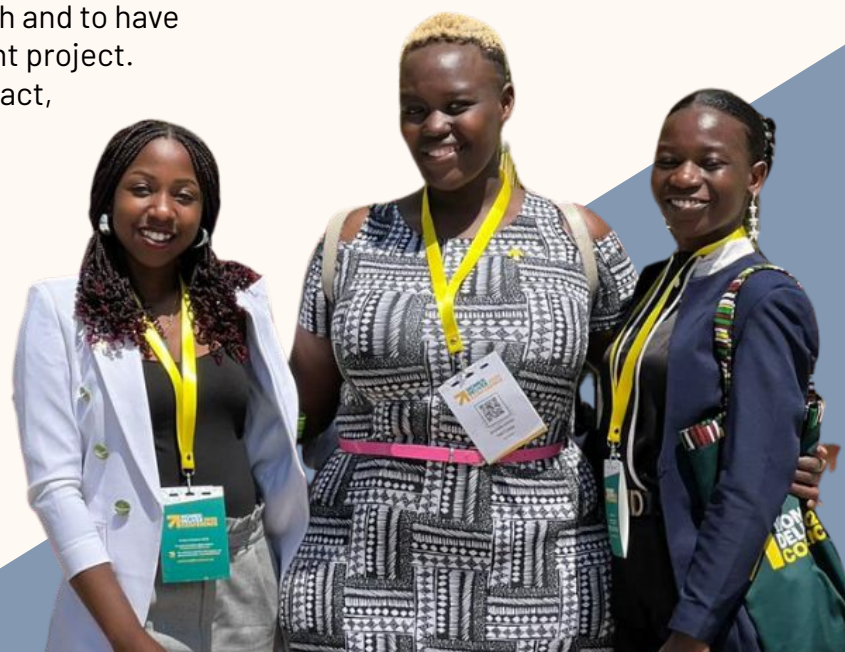
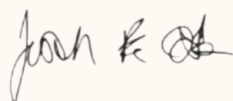# A note from Girl Effect's CEO

Digital technology is rapidly changing the world around us. It's redefining how we connect, learn, and communicate with others. Consequently, it is also shaping who has and who does not have access to this exciting new online world.

The *2023 Girls & Mobile Report* provides new data and qualitative insights from girls and boys who are navigating a world that's becoming increasingly more online. It is our hope that this report will help us better understand how youth – especially girls – are accessing the Internet, and how offline social norms are influencing their online behaviors.

Overall, the youth we surveyed share excitement, some apprehension, and an overwhelming sense of possibility for a digitally connected future. Both boys and girls want to be a part of this world, but their ability to access is different. The digital gender divide is real and is creating public spaces where women, especially girls, are being left behind. They are being told they are 'vulnerable,' 'less competent,' and unable to protect themselves online. This offline sexism is not just preventing girls from accessing today's digital devices; it is shaping their own beliefs about their ability to participate and engage online. We can't bridge the digital divide with devices and access alone; we need to start by articulating and addressing the deeper social and structural challenges girls experience everyday.

This report serves as a strong reminder that we are living in a critical moment of history. We can decide how this new digital world evolves and operates. We can choose whether this space is open and inclusive or, like the public domains of our past, it remains gendered and inaccessible to women. This report presents us with an opportunity to integrate youth experiences into the products we build and to ensure that everyone – especially girls – can access all that this world has to offer.

Jessica Posner Odede
CEO
Girl Effect

# Introduction

Mobile technology is changing the world around us. It's redefining how we connect, how we consume, and how we exchange information and ideas. It is creating an increasingly evolving landscape that is transforming how knowledge is shared and economic opportunities gained. **It is paving the way for a more connected and accessible digital future for all users, but not all people.**

The **digital gender divide** has been robustly and consistently evidenced across many countries. The _2023 Mobile Gender Gap Report_ from GSMA highlighted that women across low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are 7% less likely than men to own a mobile phone, and are 19% less likely to use mobile internet [1]. This means we need to reach an estimated 900 million women in LMICs to close the mobile internet gender gap by 2030 [2].

**Women across LMICs are:**

**7%** less likely than men to own a mobile phone.

**19%** less likely to use mobile internet.

**Ultimately, research shows that very little has changed and that the gender gap in smartphone ownership has stalled for the second year in a row.**

The gender digital divide exists not just in terms of access but also in terms of usage and experiences online. Research has found that women use a smaller range of mobile services than men and are less likely than men to participate in free massive open online courses, which can provide a gateway to education and employment [3]. In addition, UN Women propose that the digital revolution has exacerbated existing and even created new forms of gendered inequalities and oppression, including technology-facilitated violence against women [4].

# About the 2018 Girls & Mobile Report

While these figures help us capture the scope of the gender digital divide, there is limited global research that focuses on younger adults – on girls' and boys' access to and use of mobile phones. In 2018, Girl Effect undertook an extensive, first-of-its-kind research study, **_Girls & Mobile_**, to understand adolescent girls' needs, access, and usage of mobile technologies [5]. We were able to leverage Girl Effect's network of girls and trained Technology Enabled Girl Ambassadors (TEGAs) to go into communities and gather insights, stories, and experiences from youth to better understand the barriers they face when coming online.

The study revealed that boys from low- to medium- income countries (LMICs) were **1.5 times more likely to own a mobile phone than girls**, and that despite girls' desire to come online, they were being restricted and left behind due to social norms that prescribed them as unskilled and unequipped [6].

**Full report**

**Real girls, real lives, connected**

A global study of girls' access and usage of mobile, told through 3000 voices

**2018 study**

Boys were **1.5X** more likely to own a mobile phone than girls

Vodafone Foundation | Girl Effect

# Building on our previous work

But the world has changed in many ways since 2018. We've seen significant advances in mobile technology, witnessed a shift towards automation and AI, lived through a pandemic, and experienced many other factors that influence how girls and boys alike access and use mobile phones. This presents a new opportunity to reimagine our first Girls & Mobile study and apply this research approach to understand the needs, motivations, and challenges youth face today.

Fast forward to 2023 – four years after the inaugural *Girls & Mobile Report* – we are publishing our next iteration of this study to:

- **Update the sector's knowledge and understanding of how and why youth – with a focus on girls – are accessing and using mobile and digital technologies**, and the challenges they face in doing so.

- **Unpack the mediating factors that make accessing online spaces positive or negative for youth**, and how these barriers are contributing to the gender digital divide.

- **Create a baseline understanding of girls' experiences and opportunities to achieve greater digital access**, especially coming out of COVID-19.

# About the 2023 Girls & Mobile Report

In 2022, Girl Effect partnered with Vodafone Americas Foundation and UNICEF to survey over 10,000 young participants (aged 14-21) and their parents. Our goal was to hear directly from youth, especially girls, about their experiences using the Internet and the barriers they face when coming online. Our goal was to capture experiences from the full spectrum of digital connectivity, including those who are:

- **Digitally connected**: youth who access the internet on 3 or more days in a typical week
- **Digitally deprived**: youth who access the internet on 1 day or less in a typical week
- **Cross-sectional**: youth randomly selected from a sampling region or location

Over the course of nine months (September 2022 - May 2023), we collected qualitative and quantitative data from participants in Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania. We also surveyed participants in the UK and USA to provide comparative data between youth living in early adopter markets with high levels of digital saturation.

The 2023 Girls & Mobile research was not designed to prove that the digital gender divide exists; we already have extensive evidence demonstrating this. Instead, our goal was to bring qualitative nuance and to use youth perspectives and insights to better understand the underlying causes of the divide and what solutions might help close it.

# Our research approach

Borrowing from the principles of Human Centered Design (HCD), the 2023 Girls & Mobile research spanned three iterative phases of data collection: the **Review Phase**, the **Explore Phase**, and the **Validate Phase**.

Each phase addressed a distinct set of research questions that required different methodologies. This allowed for an exploratory and evolving approach to data collection, which spanned nine months between September 2022 and May 2023 (*for a more comprehensive breakdown of the research approach, Appendix A: Our Methodology*).

## REVIEW PHASE

Conducted a literature review and research to explore existing data and refine the objectives and approach for Girls & Mobile.

*30+ research reports/thought-leadership articles reviewed*

## EXPLORE PHASE

Completed face-to-face interviews with youth, organized focus groups, surveyed online communities, and mot to gain a broad understanding of how young people are accessing and using digital technologies in 2022/23, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted this.

*Spoke with 2,050 girls and boys (aged 14-21) and 698 parents*

## VALIDATE PHASE

Continued focus group discussions, online surveys, and face-to-face interviews to test the hypotheses derived from the Explore Phase and to close any gaps in knowledge and understanding.

*7,490 girls and boys (aged 14-21) and 84 parents*

To ensure that we reached youth across the full spectrum of digital access, we designed our research to sample three cohorts. The audiences engaged in this research include adolescent girls and boys (defined as those aged between 14 and 21), the parents of adolescent girls, and also experts in the field of digital, tech, and gender.

# Our focus countries

We wanted to survey girls, boys, parents, and experts in countries with different levels of digital access. Data was therefore collected in seven focus countries: Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, with comparative data from the UK, and the USA. These geographic locations were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Tanzania:** these are countries with varied levels of digital access and also active within the Girl Effect network, which enabled us to leverage our youth researchers (TEGAs) and robust girl-led data collection to go deeper into communities.

- **Kenya and India** : Are countries with rapidly growing digital access.

- **Jordan**: this is a priority upper-middle-income country for UNICEF, which considers Jordan a market of focus.

- **The UK and the USA**: these countries provide a digitally saturated benchmark to compare with the insights gathered from the LMICs in the study (included in Validate phase only).

We also wanted to make sure that we surveyed culturally diverse groups as well, as we know different political, social, and structural contexts influence how girls and boys come online. By focusing on these countries, we were able to engage a diverse sample of respondents and more accurately identify common themes, trends, and barriers across the full spectrum of digital access.

# Our Core Principles

## YOUTH-LED

At Girl Effect, we put youth at the center of all that we do. This includes helping inform our programs and approaches, and often co-creating solutions with youth that effectively engage their peers. To ensure that our research was youth-led, we launched a Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) at the start of the project to provide ongoing consulting to our team and to make sure that our objectives, approaches, tools, analysis, and interpretation of the findings were framed with a youth perspective. The YAP consisted of 14 young people (aged 18-21), from Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania (f*or full biographies of YAP members, see Appendix B: Youth Advisory Panel Members*).

## ACTIONABLE

We want this research to be used to create real solutions that help close the gender digital divide. At the start of the project, we convened a Steering Committee of experts from the tech, gender, and development sectors to help inform our milestones and to incorporate their own research into our findings (*for full biographies of Steering Committee members and the experts interviewed, see Appendix C: Steering Committee Members*).

## GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

All methodologies and tools were designed through a gender transformative lens, ensuring that the social, psychological, and structural norms that affect adolescent girls would not impact participation or engagement in the 2023 Girls & Mobile project. This included extensive piloting, training adolescent girls as data collectors (our TEGAs), and working with gender-focused grassroots organizations in each location.

# Our key takeaways

We know that girls are excited to come online. The hard and soft barriers they face, however, are mostly based on the expectations, gender norms, and offline permissions being assigned to them by their parents, their peers, and sometimes themselves.

1. **The digital divide exists.** In order to effectively address the divide, we need to look at the underlying barriers preventing youth, especially girls, from accessing mobile devices and the Internet.

2. **The pandemic increased digital access for many youth.** For students living in both digitally disadvantaged and digitally connected communities, online education during the pandemic created opportunities for many youth to be lent, loaned, or purchased mobile phones for the first time.

3. **Youth are excited to use mobile phones for daily activities.** Where there are barriers to access, online education can be a gateway for youth, especially girls. This may be shaped by the permissions girls are granted to use mobile phones, but we also have anecdotal evidence that shows girls' using phones for other purposes and opportunities.

4. **Fears around internet safety are shaping how girls behave online.** Girls and boys have similar attitudes and interests when using mobile phones for connecting on social media or accessing entertainment. But their experiences are different. Existing offline gender norms, fears or experiences of harassment, and sexism is translating into online spaces and shaping how girls are able to access the Internet.

5. **Girls must be empowered, not minimized.** Both girls and boys are susceptible to online scams and harassment, yet only girls are being told that they are vulnerable and not as competent when using mobile devices. From our qualitative data, this perception is shared by boys and girls equally, and highest among parents. Girls being told – and then believing – that they are vulnerable and less competent is having a much bigger impact on their self-confidence and self-efficacy, and is directly shaping their behaviors and ability to use mobile devices to access the information about their health, education, and future opportunities.

6. **We can't forget the generational divide.** Parents are key gatekeepers for youth, but many are also just coming online for the first time. Across all of the groups we interviewed, there seems to be a significant generational divide; youth are hungry for more access, and parents are concerned about the implications of their children being online. Parents' lack of digital literacy may be contributing to their hesitancy and mistrust of mobile devices.

In the following sections, we will dive deeper into the attitudes driving these behaviors and contributing to the gender digital divide. We will use the insights and experiences shared by girls, boys, parents, and others to not just identify, but articulate the gender norms preventing girls from equal access and usage. These insights, we believe, are critical to making more informed decisions around the solutions needed to help youth overcome the social, structural, and psychological barriers to being online.

# Making this research actionable

Each of the following chapters dives deeper into the underlying factors impacting the gender digital divide. We will explore key research questions by providing survey data alongside first-hand anecdotal evidence and stories shared by youth, which clearly portray young people's real-world digital experiences.

We also use each chapter to highlight girls' perspectives and articulate the social norms and barriers they are facing. We will conclude each section with key recommendations practitioners, researchers, community leaders, caregivers, and youth themselves can use to build a better, more equal digital future for all.
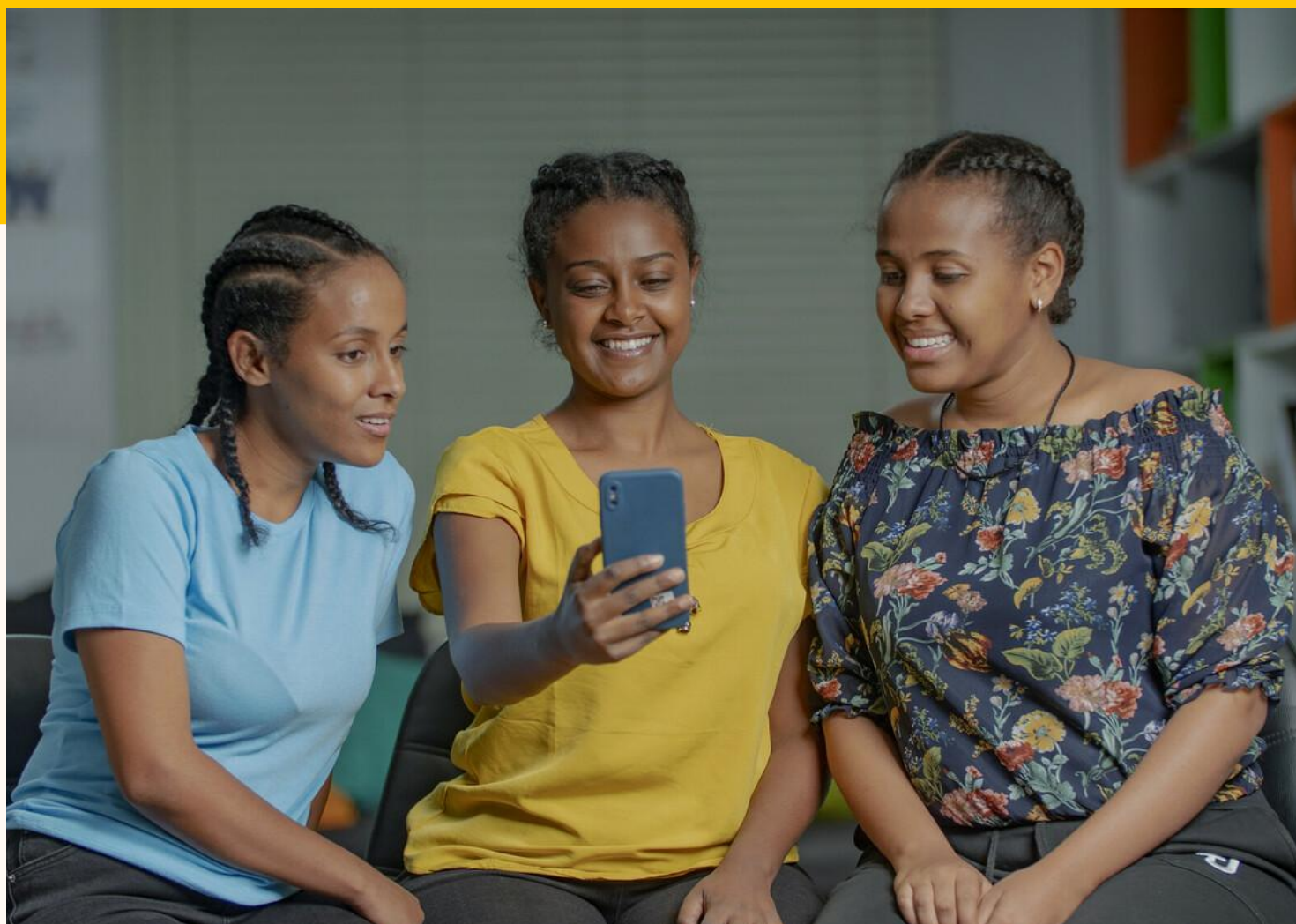
# 1 | SAME DIVIDE, NEW BARRIERS

"THE BOY CHILD HAS MORE FREEDOM BECAUSE THE COMMUNITY VALUES THEM MORE."

Girl, Kenya, age 14–17
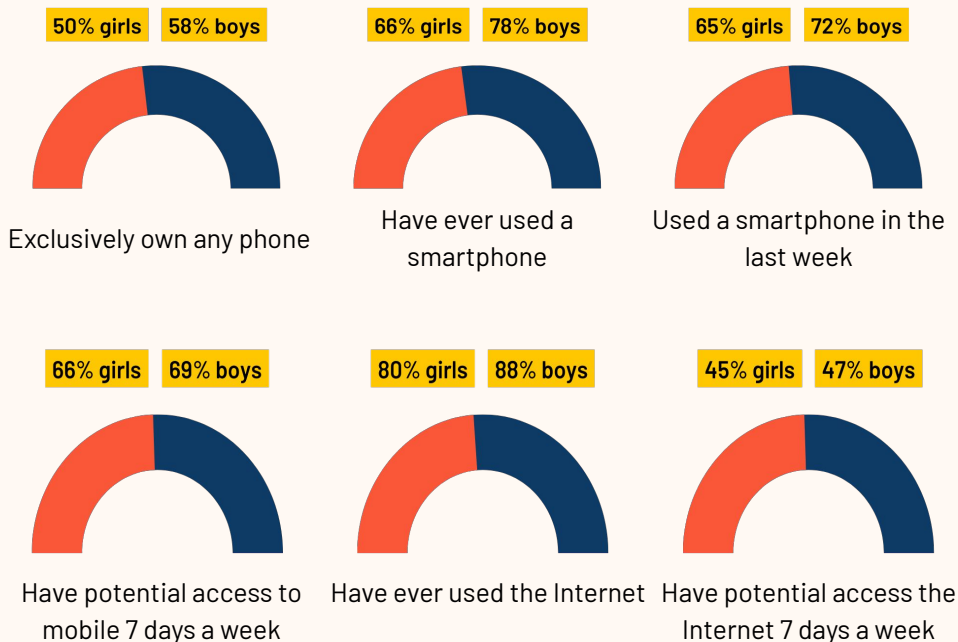
# Acknowledging the gender digital divide

We can't talk about youth mobile access without acknowledging the gender digital divide. In addition to the GSMA findings, an early 2023 UNICEF study reported that among 54 countries and territories the median gender parity ratio is only 71, meaning that for every 100 adolescent boys and young men who use the internet, only 71 adolescent girls and young women do [7].



For every 100 boys and young men who use the Internet, only 71 adolescent girls and young women do.

**While survey samples and intentions of studies may differ, research across the sector all point to the same conclusion: the gender digital divide still exists and leaves many youth, especially girls, at a disadvantage.**

The data we collected from random populations across our seven focus countries is consistent with GSMA, UNICEF, and other organizations' findings, confirming that adolescent girls are less likely than their male counterparts to:

| 50% girls | 58% boys |
|---|---|



Exclusively own any phone

| 66% girls | 78% boys |
|---|---|



Have ever used a smartphone

| 65% girls | 72% boys |
|---|---|



Used a smartphone in the last week

| 66% girls | 69% boys |
|---|---|



Have potential access to mobile 7 days a week

| 80% girls | 88% boys |
|---|---|



Have ever used the Internet

| 45% girls | 47% boys |
|---|---|



Have potential access the Internet 7 days a week

> *"We retell the story of the data gaps, and the numbers haven't necessarily gotten better. The data highlights the wealth gap, the access gap, the financing gap, pay gap and much more – but there are very few solutions that truly try to understand root causes and 'the how' towards change. Although we can always use more data and insights, we should also already assume that there is an existing and persisting gender gap, and already begin towards creating solutions that can try to close these gaps."*

**– Mansi Gupta, Founder, Unconform & Women-Centric Design**

UNCONFORMING

# Understanding how youth access phones

Just because an adolescent says that they have access to a mobile phone, or to mobile internet, this does not necessarily mean that all access is equal. This is because youth are often accessing borrowed devices, relying on the generosity of others to let them spend data, and navigating permissions and negotiations in order to use phones.

Consistent with the insights from the *2018 Girls & Mobile Report*, nearly **half of youth are borrowing mobile phones or sharing or lending them**, rather than exclusively owning the device (8).* When youth borrow phones, they typically do so from their parents and therefore need to address parents' fears and concerns, and their various assumptions about girls coming online versus boys (*see Section 6 of this report*).

In some cases, young people own **SIM Cards without devices**, in order to insert them into other people's phones when the opportunity arises. They are finding innovative solutions to get access even when phone ownership is not possible.

In order to overcome the significant restrictions around phone ownership and access, many youth reported that they know people who **use mobile phones in secret**. This was more common for girls than boys, most likely due to the more intensive gatekeeping and lower mobile access and ownership, among girls.

**Borrowing, sharing, or lending phones:**

| | |
|---|---|
| | 50% Girls |
| | 58% Boys |
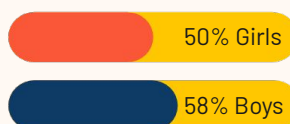
**Sim cards:**

| | |
|---|---|
| | 13% Girls |
| | 11% Boys |
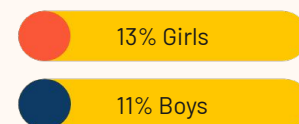
*"Yes there is a girl in our neighborhood who accesses the Internet without the knowledge of her parents. She accesses the Internet secretly because these things are not allowed at her home. She doesn't have a personal mobile, so she uses other people's phones. She goes to her friends when both are free. She uses Instagram on other people's phones. She will be scolded if she uses a phone at home. She will be told that these things are unacceptable. People will ask her why she did this, she should have informed about this...and these things are not allowed in our house."*
**– Girl, India, age 14–17**

*"Our children do not have a phone but they can use their older siblings' phone or my own..."*
**– Mother, Kenya**

*"Since I do not own a phone, I use other people's phones, maybe at most once every two weeks... If someone at home has not gone to work due to illness or has a break, or if they have nothing to do on their phone, I use the opportunity to take their phone and use it."*
**– Girl, Ethiopia, age 18–21**

*\*Among the population of low-income youth interviewed qualitatively, an even greater proportion of youth reported only accessing mobile phones through devices owned by other people.*

# Phone borrowers have fewer digital freedom

Borrowing a phone is a solution for many youth, but this doesn't necessarily mean that youth get full access to all of the opportunities phones provide. In fact, we found that **borrowing phones is associated with greater restrictions on usage and access.**

When it comes to borrowing phones, most of the youth we surveyed rely on their parents. This often requires negotiations to use the phone, which is typically restricted to educational purposes or to connect with relatives.

We also learned that boys are less likely than girls to have to ask for permission before using a mobile phone, and that parents are often more likely to refuse access to their daughters compared to their sons.



26% encourage often/very often

37% never or hardly ever
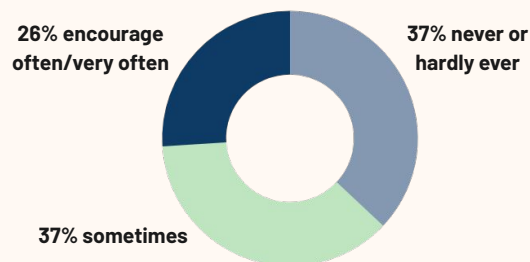
37% sometimes

*Nearly 40% of parents hardly ever (or never) encourage their children to use phones to browse, explore, and experiment.*

*"It's not easy to borrow a phone from a parent, even if it is for schoolwork. Sometimes, when they lend you their phone, they have to sit right there with you checking everything you are doing because they are afraid you are going to start chatting with boys who are going to trick you."* - **Girl, Rwanda, age 18-21**

*"I only provide mobile to my daughter for study related purpose and nothing other than that."* - **Father, India**

## Spotlight on digitally connected youth

If we look at our data from the digitally connected youth, approximately **40% of this cohort are borrowing or sharing phones**. By definition, this group is using the Internet more than 3 days per week, meaning that a significant proportion of digitally connected youth (31%) still have to seek permission to use a phone. This is consistent between girls and boys.

Youth who borrow a phone use it for considerably fewer activities than those who solely/jointly own a phone; on average borrowers reported using the phone for 6 activities in the past month compared to 10 activities reported by owners. Girls who borrow phones also perform fewer activities than boys who borrow phones (an average of 5 activities for girls and 7 for boys).



6 borrowers
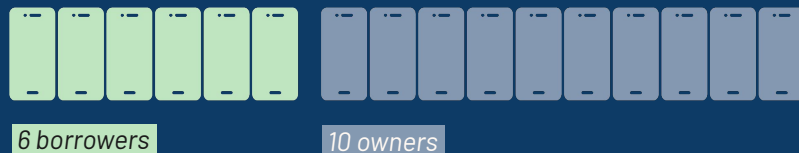
10 owners

*On average the borrower from the digitally connected adolescents reported using the phone for 6 activities compared to 10 activities in the past month reported by the owners, with girls doing fewer activities than boys ( 5 activities for girls and 7 for boys).*

# Access and ownership are leaving girls at a disadvantage

In both the digitally connected and digitally deprived communities we learned that permission to use a phone is very often conditional on the adolescent completing household chores or homework.

According to a 2016 UNICEF report, girls around the world spend an estimated 160 million more hours than boys doing household chores everyday (9). **Existing gender norms and social structures are placing additional barriers for girls to get permissions to access this technology, often forcing them to resort to secret usage**. This sends a clear message to girls that phones are "not for them" – an attitude that can be traced to some of the core social factors contributing to the gender digital divide.



*"'Girls are not like boys.' That is what they say. Boys can go out whenever they want. Boys can have a phone. Not like girls...for girls everything is forbidden."* **– Girl, Jordan, age 18–21**

*"When a girl has a phone, she talks to many boys and we parents are afraid of her developing bad behaviors. So, we restrict our daughters from spending so much time on phones."* **– Mother, Rwanda**

*"My mom will insist we will Google with her and does not trust me with the Internet alone."* **– Girl, Kenya, age 18–21**

# Recommendations

Accessibility is an issue for many youth. Barriers to phone ownership, for instance, continue to prevent youth, especially those from low- to middle-income communities, from coming online. Many youth are working around this by sharing phones or borrowing phones in secret.

In addition to addressing the gender norms and permission barriers girls face, we also need to think about solutions that promote safe and easy device sharing, and that assume that one phone is being used across an entire household.

- **We should create content assuming youth are sharing or borrowing devices**. Mobile products should be created with clear log-in/log-out instructions, multi-factor authentication, and easy functions to allow youth to not leave a digital footprint on borrowed phones.

- **We need to address the social norms that make it more acceptable for boys to have access and phone ownership versus girls**.

- **Mobile companies can introduce features to make it easier for youth to share phones or SIM cards**, helping more youth access the Internet on borrowed devices.

# 2 | THE PANDEMIC INCREASED DIGITAL ACCESS FOR MANY YOUTH

"IT'S ONLY AFTER COVID-19, THAT MY FATHER BOUGHT A SMARTPHONE AND I GOT TO KNOW ABOUT WHATSAPP, ZOOM, GOOGLE MEET, AND OTHER ONLINE PLATFORMS."

Girl, India, age 14–17

# Online education as a gateway to the Internet

Many countries, including those we surveyed, faced lockdowns during the pandemic. In March 2020 the entire 1.3 billion population of India was ordered to stay home [10]. In April 2020 Ethiopia announced a state of emergency and schools were closed across the country [11]. Jordan imposed one of the world's strictest lockdowns in March 2020, closing most schools, shops, and places of work [12]. As a result, many students were kept home from school and expected to continue with their education online.

**For students living in both digitally disadvantaged and digitally connected communities, the move to online education resulted in many youth being lent, loaned, or purchased mobile phones for the first time**. Overall, more than half of the youth we surveyed reported that they gained greater access to mobile phones and mobile internet during the lockdown periods. Furthermore, for those who did gain greater access, a significant number reported a sustained increase in access after the lockdowns had lifted. This means that for many, online education during the pandemic increased digital access for youth in the immediate and longer term.

## 50%
### ACCESS GAINED DURING LOCKDOWN

of the adolescents we surveyed reported that they gained greater access to mobile phones and mobile internet during the lockdown periods.

## 47%
### ACCESS SUSTAINED AFTER LOCKDOWN

of the adolescents we spoke to said that their parents are "more positive" about mobile phones coming out of the pandemic than they were pre-pandemic.

> *"We definitely saw a pickup of use during COVID because so many were in lockdown...We saw a lot more people attempting to use a lot of self-service things that were never accessed before."*
>
> **– Rosa Wang, Author, Strategist, and Public Communicator on Transformative Technologies**

> *"Our families could not say no to us when we wanted to access the Internet for education-related reasons. My level of mobile access has increased after the COVID-19 pandemic."* **– Boy, Ethiopia, age 18–21**

> *"I believe that parents who previously refused to buy a mobile phone for their children were forced to do so. School materials were being sent via Telegram. If the child does not have a mobile phone and access to the Internet, he/she will not receive assignments and other school materials. So parents were forced to buy."* **– Father, Ethiopia**

# Rising costs after the pandemic are creating new barriers to youth access

While our data shows that online education provided a gateway for many to access mobile devices during the pandemic, we know this was not the case for all youth.

**Approximately 34% of girls and 27% boys reported a drop in access during the pandemic and after lockdowns were lifted**. In fact, some of the digitally deprived youth we surveyed shared that their lack of access was actually a great cause of stress and shame, as they feared falling behind their peers in school.

*"One time we didn't have Internet on my mom's phone, so I went to school and it turned out that there was homework I didn't know about. When I told the teacher, she told me that no one in the world doesn't have an Internet connection".*
**- Girl, Jordan, age 14–17**
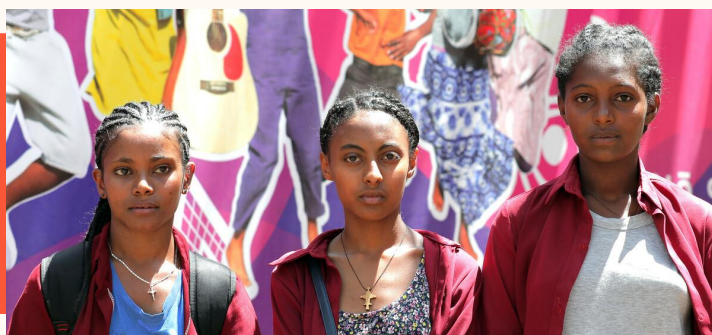


For many families, this was due to the rising costs of phones and data – costs that were compounded by increased unemployment and global inflation during the pandemic. Overall, **78% of youth agree that "the rising costs of devices prevent me from owning or using a mobile phone as much as I would like to."**

*"Many people used to save money, but the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak came abruptly. No one was ready for it and it shook the economic status of people. The Internet is now used by rich people. Poor people do not use the Internet because they can't afford to buy smartphones."* - **Boy, Rwanda, age 18–21**



*"When the corona pandemic happened, [my mother] was not getting any money. She was not spending money unnecessarily in buying data. I was not online because we had no money. It was very difficult to get money. Many things got stuck during the corona pandemic."*
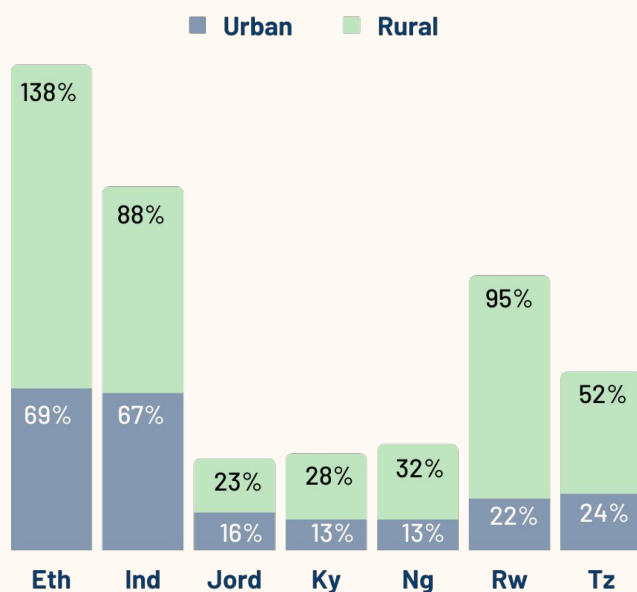**- Girl, Tanzania, age 18–21**

# Hard barriers like costs leave low-income communities at a greater disadvantage

Even before the pandemic, mobile phones and data were prohibitively expensive for those in low-income households.

When looking at secondary data for the average monthly income in each of the core countries we surveyed, a smartphone can set someone living in rural Ethiopia back 138% of their monthly income. This tracks with the responses we received from a random cross-section of youth, many of whom cited **cost as the main barrier to obtaining a mobile phone and purchasing data packs**.

*Cost of smartphones in proportion to average monthly income*

■ **Urban**  ■ **Rural**

| Country | Urban | Rural |
|---|---|---|
| Eth | 69% | 138% |
| Ind | 67% | 88% |
| Jord | 16% | 23% |
| Ky | 13% | 28% |
| Ng | 13% | 32% |
| Rw | 22% | 95% |
| Tz | 24% | 52% |



Among digitally connected youth, **ongoing costs such as making calls, sending texts, and paying for data, are the main barriers preventing them from using mobile internet as much as they would like to**. This is especially true for youth who pay for mobile costs themselves .

**Getting access to the internet is too expensive - often/very often**

25% Girls

21% Boys
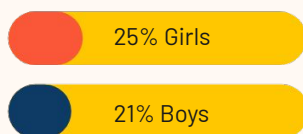
**Using a mobile phone to make calls or text is too expensive- often/very often**

21% Girls

24% Boys
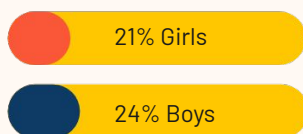
**Paying for internet/data is too expensive - often/very often**

32% Girls

32% Boys

# Girls are left with fewer opportunities to access mobile phones

While we learned that cost is a barrier for all youth, we also heard that it is disproportionately impacting adolescent girls, as they are less likely to be allowed to find employment and earn their own income.

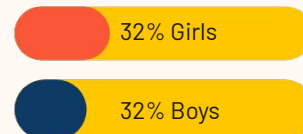In the qualitative data collected in Ethiopia, India, Rwanda, and Tanzania it was indicated that **boys are more likely to have either part-time or full-time employment compared to girls of the same age**. Girls, in comparison, reported that they are more likely to spend their free time doing unpaid domestic chores.

This is reflected in the secondary data as well: according to the 2020 *Global Employment Trends for Youth Report*, the under 25 years youth employment-to-population ratio (EPR) in Sub-Saharan Africa is 41.3% for girls and 45.9% for boys, while in Asia (including India) it is 42.3% for boys and 25.9% for girls [13]. This may explain how in our research, we found that digitally connected boys are significantly more likely to be paying for the data they use themselves compared to girls.

**"I usually pay for the top-up or the monthly contract myself - I usually pay for this myself."**

49% Girls

67% Boys

*"Due to losses, many employers reduced their staff...it is very hard for a girl like me to get a job."*
**- Girl, Rwanda, age 18-21**

*"The boy is OK; you don't have to worry about him since anytime he wants he can look for a job...but when the girl leaves, she meets a lot of temptations. She gets a job but is accompanied by the temptations."*
**- Father, Rwanda**

# Recommendations

Overall, the pandemic created more opportunities for youth to come online. This is mainly because it became a necessity for education, which resulted in more parents granting permission for their children to acquire or borrow mobile phones.

These shifts are important to measure as they highlight opportunities for organizations and schools to provide digitally deprived youth, especially girls, with greater access to mobile technologies.

The hard barriers and costs of owning a phone still exist and will need to be addressed in order to ensure that youth can not just come, but stay online.

- **Education and online learning programs are a gateway for youth, especially girls, to access mobile devices.** This is especially relevant given the limited permissions and extra conditions placed upon girls to use these devices.

- **The pandemic created a moment when mobile phones were more commonly shared with youth in households.** At the time, this was a crisis response, but it could provide a blueprint to expand mobile distribution, especially in LMICs.

- **Coming out of the pandemic, parents were more positive about allowing their children to use mobile devices, especially for educational purposes.** This demonstrated a shift in their perceptions that could influence their existing biases toward girls' usage.

- **Costs, and barriers to girls getting employment, are still a big factor preventing youth (especially girls) from phone ownership and regular usage.** More affordable solutions may need to be provided to ensure that youth maintain access.

# 3 | YOUTH ATTITUDES ABOUT COMING ONLINE

"I WANT TO USE IT MORE. THIS IS BECAUSE, CURRENTLY, EVERYTHING IS ONLINE. IT WILL INCREASE IN THE FUTURE, SO THIS IS THE REASON."

Girl, Ethiopia, age 18–21

# Youth are hungry to get online

The digital gender divide extends beyond access; it also restricts the ways in which girls are using technologies and expressing themselves online. To fully understand girls' experience, we need to examine how girls are using phones when they do access them, and how these behaviors differ from those of their male peers.

**Our research shows that both boys and girls are hungry for more access**, with 60% saying that they wish they could use a mobile phone more and 64% saying that they wish they could use the Internet more than they currently do. Even those who are already digitally connected are wishing for greater access.

*"I would be overjoyed [to have a mobile] because I could view different things, watch country-related matters, watch a lot of education-related matters, and I would mostly acquire a lot of knowledge. Overall, I would feel so delighted. Which means my brain will be prompted to watch and discover everything. I would use it for Facebook, YouTube, and other social media platforms to know different things that people talk about regarding a country."*

**- Girl, Ethiopia, age 14–17**

**Overall, 66% of the youth we surveyed feel that young people without access to mobile phones are being left behind.**

*"When it comes to tech, you can think of it as a way of opening up your world to very diverse perspectives. And/or you can think about it as reinforcing entrenched harmful norms."*

**- Theresa Hwang, Deputy Director, Gender Equality, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

BILL&MELINDA GATES *foundation*

# Both boys and girls recognize the opportunities the Internet brings

Youth talk about the Internet as though it is a space with uncapped opportunities. They are excited about all of the things they could do online: the money they could earn, the skills and knowledge they could learn, and the connections they could make.

That being said, **there is a disconnect between these intentions and their actual usage of mobile devices**. This is consistent across both the digitally deprived and digitally connected youth we surveyed, with most youth using phones to watch entertaining content, listen to music, or to complete schoolwork (with the digitally deprived cohort typically borrowing phones or using them alongside the owner). Overall, youth are not using mobile phones to do the things they say that phones could be used for, such as looking for employment, buying and selling goods online, or managing financial transactions.

We also looked at how often youth used mobile devices to conduct activities online. On average, digitally connected youth reported doing 9 activities using their smartphones in the last month. This is consistent by gender but is slightly higher for the 18-21 cohort compared to the 14–17-year-olds.



| | Mean number of online activities carried out in the last month amongst digitally connected youth |
|---|---|
| Girls | 8.6 |
| Boys | 9.1 |
| Age 14–17 | 7.9 |
| Age 18–21 | 9.7 |

# Activities youth do (or want to do) online

The activities girls and boys do online are fairly similar but with some key differences. The biggest disparity is in playing online games (girls -17% vs boys), posting photos or comments (girls -10% vs boys), attending online classes (girls +5% vs boys), and using the Internet for schoolwork (girls +8%).

This in many ways reflects the assumptions and realities girls face when accessing these devices: that girls should use only phones for more educational and 'meaningful' purposes compared to boys.

| | Total boys | Total girls | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Playing online games | 55% | 38% | −17% |
| Posting photos or comments online (e.g. on Facebook or a blog) | 57% | 47% | -10% |
| Talking to people I don't know offline (e.g. by Skype) | 24% | 15% | -9% |
| Visiting social network sites | 61% | 54% | -7% |
| Looking at the news online | 54% | 49% | -5% |
| Selling something online | 17% | 12% | -5% |
| Using instant messaging | 58% | 54% | -4% |
| Transferring or receiving money online | 28% | 24% | -4% |
| Listening to music online (by downloading or streaming) | 63% | 59% | -4% |
| Following celebrities or public figures on social media | 49% | 46% | -3% |
| Watching video clips | 64% | 62% | -2% |
| Using the Internet to seek mentoring or emotional support | 23% | 22% | -1% |
| Creating videos or music and uploading it to share | 26% | 25% | -1% |
| Talking to family or friends (e.g. by Skype) | 47% | 47% | 0% |
| Looking for health information for themselves or someone they know | 35% | 36% | 1% |
| Buying something online | 27% | 27% | 0% |
| Looking for information about work or study opportunities | 46% | 47% | 1% |
| Talking to a boyfriend/girlfriend/romantic interest online | 34% | 35% | 1% |
| Watching TV shows or movies | 55% | 57% | 2% |
| Attending classes online | 38% | 43% | 5% |
| Using the internet for schoolwork | 55% | 63% | 8% |

# Youth are generally positive about being online

When asked about the different benefits of coming online, many youths shared that using the Internet can help them **broaden their minds**, **find new economic opportunities**, and **build their social networks**.

| 37% girls | 33% boys |
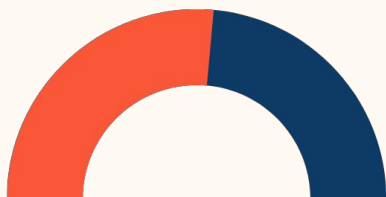
Feel that the time they spend on social media is enlightening

| 49% girls | 55% boys |
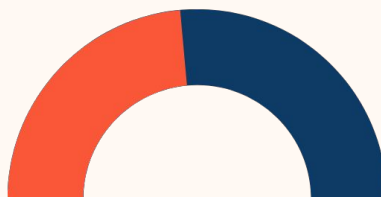
Feel that the time they spend online makes them feel more intelligent

| 47% girls | 46% boys |
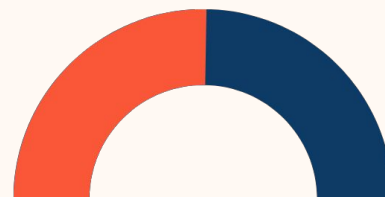
Look online for information about work or study opportunities

*"People can learn a lot from mobile and Internet, they are able to get vaccines [which] earlier this could not be done, as any information was dependent on newspapers, books or people. Mobile and Internet help us in building confidence by not only providing us with sufficient knowledge, but also by helping us socialize with people via WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegrams. "*

**- Girl, India, age 18–21**

# Youth experiences using the Internet

**Social media is entertaining and not a waste of time**

Most youth reported that when it comes to entertainment, they used their phones to watch videos or listen to music. **Only about 15% of boys and girls (respectively) think their time on social media is wasted**. Of those who try to cut down on their social media, they report that they do so because they are worried about potentially wasting the time they have online.

Many of the youth we spoke to highlighted how mobile devices are providing them with tools to connect with others, whether that's through social media, text messages, or other channels. Over half of the digitally connected youth said that in the last month they used their phone to:

**Feeling connected versus isolated**

Nearly 60% of both the girls and boys we surveyed report feeling more connected with others when using social media. Predominantly these are connections with people they already know, although we do see **nearly 10% more boys than girls use social media to meet new people**.
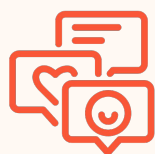
15% girls    24% boys
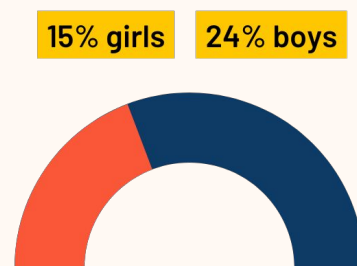


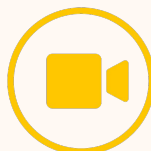Use social media to meet new people

56% send instant messages

35% talk to a romantic interest

57% visit a social network site

47% talk to friends or family via video calling services

**The majority of digitally connected youth (89%) have an account on at least one of the popular sites in their country.**

# Some youth fear addiction to the Internet

**Youth are aware of the positive and negative impacts digital media can have on mental health**

**55%** **61%**
**of girls** **of boys**

in the digitally connected cohort shared that they use their devices so many times a day that they lose track of how much they are using it.

**31%**
**of youth**

said that they have reduced the amount of phone time they have because they are worried about the amount of time they were spending online.

*"If you always use the Internet, then you will be distracted and fail to do the activities you were supposed to do. In addition, if you have the money you were given to do something else with, you might spend that money on mobile credit. So, if you use it less, you will have better money and time management. "*
**– Girl, Ethiopia, age 14–17**

*"They don't understand the impact of heavy usage on their young minds. People get addicted and their brain remains undeveloped."*
– **Father, India**

In particular, youth from both the digitally deprived and digitally connected cohorts reported that they are afraid of becoming addicted to the Internet. This fear seems to stem from anecdotes and news reports where young people have been unable to fulfill educational goals, maintain social relationships, or support their families because they have become hooked on mobile devices.

This concern is shared by parents, who also worry – and perhaps reinforce – these fears that their children are wasting their time being online all day, rather than spending this time doing something 'more productive'. **For 14% of youth, this fear prevented them from using the Internet**.

**Boosting mental health**

39% girls | 38% boys
Say using social media makes them feel confident

22% girls | 23% boys
Use the internet to seek mentoring or emotional support

47% girls | 50% boys
Think the time they spend on social media has a positive impact on their mental-health and well-being

**Eroding mental health**
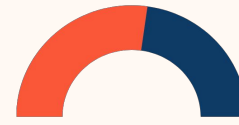
45% girls | 33% boys
Say using social media makes them feel self-conscious

13% girls | 8% boys
Say using social media makes them feel unattractive

37% girls | 31% boys
Have tried to cut down their time online because it was negatively impacting their mental health

# Online education can be a gateway for girls

Boys and girls have similar attitudes and behaviors when using mobile phones for connecting on social media or entertainment. Where we see their actions differ is around education; **more girls than boys are using mobile phones to attend classes and/or get help with their homework**. This may be shaped by parents granting girls more permissions for educational use (as explored in Section 1 of this report), but we also have anecdotal evidence that shows girls' understanding of how this technology can be a gateway to future opportunities.

Young people are eager to use online tools to support their education. However, the majority of those using mobile for school tasks are using basic features to do so. For example, the most commonly used tools to support assignments included Google search, YouTube, and chat-groups. When asked how students were using mobile to support their education, few respondents mentioned specific educational programs or tools.

**Using the Internet to help with homework:**

63% Girls

55% Girls

**Attend online classes:**

43% Girls

38% Girls

> *"Online education is the best...it also enables girls who have restricted mobility to pursue education."*
> – **Girl, India, age 18–21**

> *"The Internet helped me to get online learning opportunities and search for scholarships."*
> – **Girl, Ethiopia, age 18–21**

# Recommendations

Overall, youth view the Internet as a positive resource and gateway for learning, entertainment, connection, and opportunities. There is not a great difference in the ways girls and boys activate online, with many youth using phones to connect with friends, consume content, and access entertainment.

Young people across the groups we surveyed are also aware and fearful of the risks and dangers online – including harassment, scams, and addiction – but they overwhelmingly see the benefits and the opportunities the Internet brings.

- **Youth can be reached via social media.** They use this to connect, watch videos, listen to music, and stay on top of the day's trends. This is a great gateway to positively engage them.

- **Older youth (18 - 21 year olds) tend to complete more online activities each week than the younger groups we surveyed.** Content can be created to more effectively engage this age group.

- **Digital experiences for youth should pay attention to their concerns and awareness for their own mental health.** Youth are aware of the effects the Internet can have on mental health. They fear addiction and some limit their own use to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

- **Education apps and programs can provide more opportunities for girls to access the Internet.** Girls tend to use the Internet more than boys for educational purposes. This may be due to the permissions they are given to come online, but it could be a good starting point for more girls to access and use mobile devices on a regular basis.

# 4 | FEARS AROUND INTERNET SAFETY ARE SHAPING HOW GIRLS BEHAVE ONLINE

"IT IS RELATIVELY DIFFICULT FOR FEMALES. [FAMILIES] PERCEIVE THAT WOMEN COULD EASILY GET AFFECTED BY [THE INTERNET] AND THEY POSE RELATIVELY HIGH PRESSURE ON FEMALES THAN MALES. THERE IS NO SUCH CULTURE TOWARDS MALES."

**Girl, Ethiopia, age 18–21**

# Offline sexism is shaping online experiences

We know that both boys and girls across digitally connected and digitally deprived communities are hungry to come online. We also know that while their interests and usage may be similar, the ability to access is not. This is mostly due to pervasive gender norms, biases, and perceptions that girls are more 'vulnerable' – that their modesty is at risk – and that they are 'less competent' than boys.



Modesty is loosely defined as avoiding unwanted pregnancies and not being seen in public 'cavorting' with boys. In many contexts, girls' modesty is heavily guarded in the offline realm, whereby her physical freedoms are often restricted and her behavior heavily scrutinized by those around them. This perception often results in a protectionist stance over women. Within the academic literature, this is known as **benevolent sexism**: women are deemed as needing care and protection from men [14]. This results in control and coercion over women, under the guise that it is for their own safety and protection.

These norms may have been conceived of in offline realms but they are now traversing into online spaces; there are huge concerns that being on the Internet will lead girls to unwanted pregnancies and increase the possibility of her 'ruining her reputation'. As a result, girls are either kept away from digital technologies or their online activity is heavily monitored.

> "I think society will always be more concerned about girls' access than boys' access because again of the potential threats of predators online. While some of these concerns may apply to both boys and girls, we often see parents expressing greater concern for young women."
>
> **– Eunice Muthengi, Senior Evidence, Measurement & Evaluation Manager, CIFF**

CIFF CHILDREN'S INVESTMENT FUND FOUNDATION

# Attitudes towards girls using phones

**WHAT PARENTS SAY**

*"We can't provide our girls access to unlimited internet as they can run away from home by entering into a relationship with someone online. We hear this happening in other villages and in the news. It harms our social status." –* **Father, India**

*"...it is not good for the girls to have a mobile. If she has one, she will only talk to strangers and get spoilt. Who will marry her then?" –* **Father, India**

*"Most of our society thinks the girl does wrong things. Even if the boys want to do bad things or if they focus on mobile phones, there is no one who notices the boys. The people in our community only say this girl is bad or good. In our surrounding they do not notice the boys that much." –* **Father, Ethiopia**

*"We put more eyes on our female children so we try to place more restriction on the female children - more than the male children because there's this saying that females are like eggs, once they are broken it is very difficult to fix." –* **Father, Nigeria**

*"If you want to compare a girl child and a boy child it is advisable for someone to focus more on the girl child...they have soft minds and can always be led into things that are not good." –* **Mother, Nigeria**

**WHAT BOYS SAY**

*"Nowadays, girls end up being impregnated because of using mobile phones at a lower age. They kill their future dreams. Boys are self-aware, so they can use phones because they have a few challenges compared to girls." –* **Boy, Tanzania, age 18–21**

*"The difference is there; it is harder for a parent to get a phone for a female child than for a male child because they encounter more temptations compared to a male child." –* **Boy, Tanzania, age 14–17**
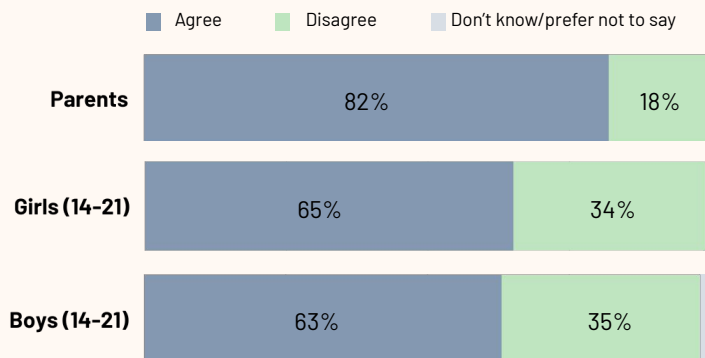
**WHAT GIRLS SAY**

*"I do not think parents will be convinced at all. It is deeply rooted idea that they have. That's it...if this girl gets hold of a phone, she is going to do something wrong. They have no idea that the phone has good things, and that she will benefit from it. All they believe that the phone is used to do something wrong." –* **Girl, Jordan, age 18–21**

# Girls are being perceived as 'less competent' than boys

Across all countries, and especially in Jordan and Tanzania, there is a sense that girls are in greater need of protection than boys. The prevailing belief is that girls are more likely to succumb to distraction or temptations online, and are therefore more likely to 'get herself into trouble'. It is also felt that when a girl ruins her own reputation, this also reflects badly on the family as a whole.

**From the qualitative data, this is a perception shared by boys and girls equally, and highest among parents**. There is very little acknowledgment of the role of males and how vulnerable they may be online, or how tempted they might be to approach girls. Instead, the blame is placed entirely on the girl.

Responses to the question:
*"Young women are more likely to get themselves into trouble if they have their own mobile phone – do you agree or disagree?"*

Agree ■  Disagree ■  Don't know/prefer not to say ■

| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| Parents | 82% | 18% |
| Girls (14–21) | 65% | 34% |
| Boys (14–21) | 63% | 35% |

> *"Personally, I believe a teenage boy owning an Internet phone is more important than a teenage girl because a girl is weak and easy to convince. She might focus on romance affairs and be impregnated, but also a teenage boy may become a thug, though not to a great percentage. So, a boy may use a phone and be affected, but not at that much to cost the whole community or parents. "*
>
> **– Boy, Tanzania, age 14–17**

**Yet the data we collected tells a different story: that while girls do experience harassment and unwanted attention online, they are very aware of these dangers and are more likely to set up safety parameters compared to their male peers**. This is resulting in real behavior differences between girls and boys when it comes to Internet safety and sharing, with girls often implementing safety best practices in order to protect themselves and mitigate their risks.

# Girls are setting up more online protections than boys

When we look at data from the digitally connected youth, we see that girls are more likely than boys to block someone, report unwanted behavior to website administrators, and set social media accounts to private. We see this across the countries we collected data from: **girls are aware of the risks and dangers online and are taking steps to protect themselves against it**.

**75%** Girls   **62%** Boys

Are more likely than boys to block someone

**40%** Girls   **31%** Boys
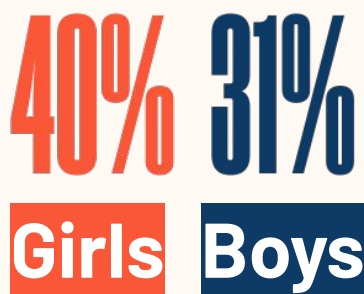
Report unwanted behavior to web admins

**65%** Girls   **57%** Boys
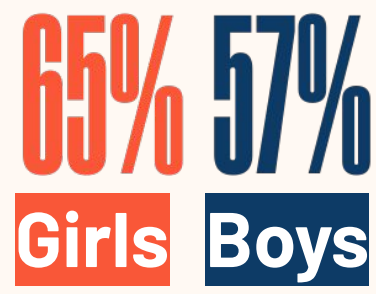
Set social media accounts to private

**Despite these self-protective behaviors, girls are still being told that they are 'less competent' than boys and more at risk when using the Internet.**

*"...as a girl child, they (parents) don't think you have any capability. They don't believe you can access the Internet without their guidance."*

**- Girl, Kenya, age 18-21**

# Girls are setting up parameters to avoid harassment, embarrassment, and risk

Every person – regardless of their age, gender, digital confidence, and competence – is susceptible to online harassment and scamming. From our research, about **one-third (28%) of digitally connected youth (both boys and girls) reported that something worrying or concerning had happened to them or someone they know while using social media**. The most commonly cited issues involved harassment and receiving unsolicited content from people online.

Youth also report facing issues relating to safety and security online. The main types of scams mentioned include being sold fake goods, being tricked into thinking the scammer belonged to a bank or loan company, or being told that a relative was in trouble and needed money. Both girls and boys reported these instances, but overall within our data sample data **we saw a higher percentage of boys falling for these scams than girls.**

In the past year, has any of the following happened to you on the internet?

**Girls**  **Boys**

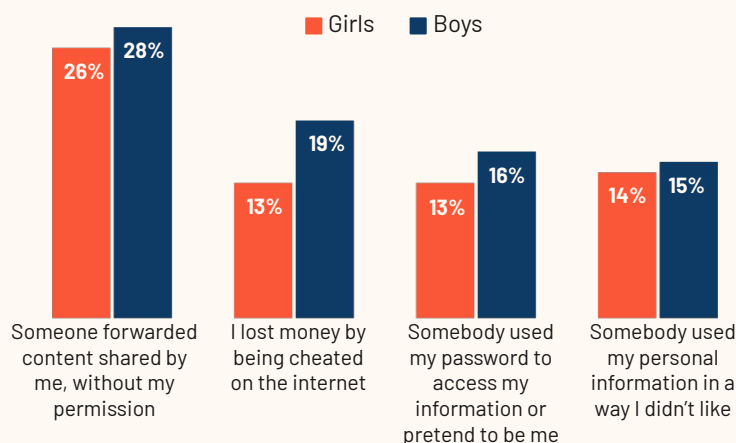| | Girls | Boys |
|---|---|---|
| Someone forwarded content shared by me, without my permission | 26% | 28% |
| I lost money by being cheated on the internet | 13% | 19% |
| Somebody used my password to access my information or pretend to be me | 13% | 16% |
| Somebody used my personal information in a way I didn't like | 14% | 15% |

We also heard that girls, slightly more than boys, are wary of the information they receive online. This includes being aware of potential fake news and general information people post on social media. We see this most with influencer content: **12% more boys than girls believe that the things online influencers show them to be true**.

43% girls   40% boys

Aware of potential fake news

49% girls   45% boys

General information people post on social media

34% girls   46% boys

Believe that the things online influencers show them to be true
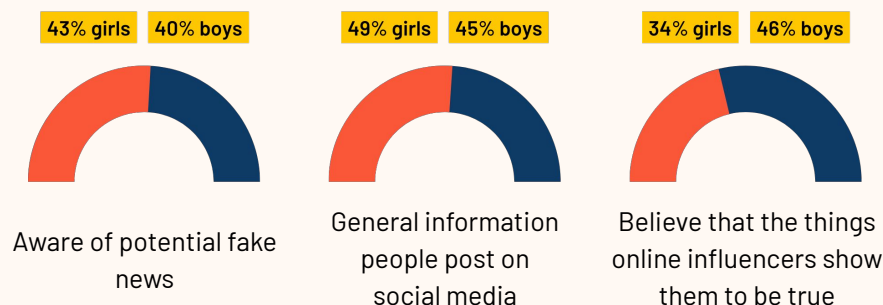
*"I will not be so confident because not everything on the internet is correct. They might have added some misleading things so I will still find information in a textbook to crosscheck with what I will find on the Internet."*

**– Girl, Kenya, age 14–17**

# Both boys and girls wish that the Internet was a safer space

Despite having different experiences and barriers online, Internet safety is a major concern to both boy and girl users. Overall, nearly **90% of youth wish that the Internet was a safer space for young people** (90% girls, 89% boys) and that they knew more about using the Internet on a mobile phone.

Of the digitally connected cohort, only 38% of youth said that they feel safe online, and 59% said that they know what to do if someone acts inappropriately online.

# Recommendations

Both girls and boys experience scams and harassment online and wish they had more information about how to safely use the Internet on mobile phones.

Yet unlike boys, girls are constantly being monitored and being told they are vulnerable and not competent online. This is resulting in girls setting up more protections and behaving more conservatively when connecting with others and sharing personal information online.

These attitudes, however, are not just impacting girls' access and usage, but they are influencing their self-confidence and shaping their own perceptions of their ability to use these tools to pursue their social, educational, and/or intellectual interests.

- **Internet safety is a concern for both girls and boys.** There should be clearer parameters to help guide youth in protecting themselves when online.

- **Young people want to feel that someone is accountable for what happens to them online.**

- **We need to create solutions that break down the stereotype that girls are less competent online than boys.** This misperception is leading to girls self-censoring, not fully participating, and to having their access limited by others and by themselves.

- **Girls are aware of the dangers online and set up more protections to ensure their safety on the Internet**. There could be more education to help increase their confidence using online platforms and products.

- **Boys, just like girls, need to be taught to protect themselves online.** Based on our sample, boys were more likely to fall to online scams. We also need to think about how to protect boys online and to make sure all youth are set up to safely access and use these devices.

# 5 | GIRLS MUST BE EMPOWERED, NOT MINIMIZED

"SOME PEOPLE ARE VERY BACKWARD, AND THEY THINK THEIR DAUGHTERS SHOULD NOT HAVE A PHONE. THEY THINK IF SHE HAS A PHONE, SHE WILL DO SOMETHING WRONG."

**Girl, Jordan, age 14–17**

# Girls are self-censoring online

The data we collected shows that girls, more than boys, have a tendency to protect themselves online, question the content and information they consume, and avoid online scams. Yet despite these behaviors, **girls are internalizing what they are being told (that they are 'vulnerable') and engaging online in a way that reinforces these gender norms and limits their own use**. This perspective also places blame on the victim rather than addressing why and how these instances are happening to girls in the first place.

Girls believing they are 'more vulnerable' and 'less competent' can have a much broader impact on their self-confidence, self-esteem, and ability to use mobile devices to access the information and connections they need to support their health, education, and future opportunities.

Among the digitally connected youth, **12% more girls than boys reported that they feel self-conscious** using social media and cite a fear of being blackmailed if someone got hold of compromising photos or having people insult them in response to content shared online. In fact, girls are **11% less likely to post photos or comments online** compared to boys of the same age.

*"You may post your picture on your profile or anywhere else and someone takes it, saves their phone and edits you naked which makes you look bad when that isn't you really are."*

**- Girl, Rwanda, age 18–21**

*"...if a girl talked to a guy for example, and she sent him her pictures, he could threaten her, or blackmail her...he could end up saying I have your pictures and I will upload them."*

**- Girl, Jordan, age 18–21**

"
*"When we talk about the issue that women and young people face on the Internet, we are mostly talking about harassment, cyberbullying, and all of the things that we are also exposed to on the Internet.*

*The lack of training opportunities and digital skills, combined with the fear of discrimination or fear of being harassed on social networks or on the Internet in general could prevent youth and women from accessing technologies in more meaningful ways or using them for a more meaningful purpose."*

**- Simone Toussi, Francophone/Central Africa Project Officer, CIPESA**

# Attitudes that girls are 'vulnerable' are shaping how they behave online

Cultural attitudes that girls are 'more vulnerable' and 'less competent' than boys are having a real impact on how girls engage online. They are not just shaping girls' digital experiences; they are influencing how she perceives herself in an increasingly digital and mobile world.

In order to effectively close the gender digital divide, we cannot only address the external and hard barriers for girls to access these devices (such as phone ownership, costs, and permissions); **we must also look at the internal attitudes girls are forming about their own ability to safely participate online**.

## Drivers impacting girls' perceptions & experiences

Girl Effect's Theory of Change outlines eight drivers to explain how behaviors manifest among adolescent girls. Each of the drivers can be used to unpick the psychological mechanisms that are holding girls back from experiencing the digital world across a range of geographical and socio-economic contexts:

- **Self-identity**: Who an individual sees themself to be, and the thoughts and behaviors that align with their self-perception.

- **Social identity**: An individual's reference group – who one compares one's actions and beliefs against, and what one believes to be normal for others in one's reference group.

- **Outcome expectation**: The perceived risks and benefits associated with performing a behavior (also referred to as behavioral beliefs).

- **Perceived social support**: The perceived level of support by people in performing a behavior.

- **Self-efficacy**: An individual's self-confidence in their ability to perform a behavior.

- **Perceived control:** The perception of the level of difficulty of performing a behavior based on the perceived external barriers faced.

- **Attitudes**: How an individual evaluates a behavior as good or bad, important or unimportant, relevant or irrelevant.

- **Knowledge**: An individual's knowledge pertaining to the behavior.

# Addressing the psychological barriers girls face

When we take the data and insights gathered from our research and organize them into these drivers, we can conclude that **a girl's social identity, perceived social support, and perceived control were the key psychological drivers impacting girls' online access and usage.**

This tracks with the other findings outlined in this report: **girls are excited to come online but they are being held back by social expectations, gender norms, and the permissions assigned to them by their parents, their peers, and sometimes themselves**. We must prioritize solutions that address these barriers and work with the wider community – parents, teachers, girls, and their male peers – on shifting attitudes around girls' vulnerability and safety online.

| PERCEIVED CONTROL | SOCIAL IDENTITY | PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT |
|---|---|---|
| KNOWLEDGE | SELF-IDENTITY | OUTCOME EXPECTATIONS |
| SELF-EFFICACY | | ATTITUDES |
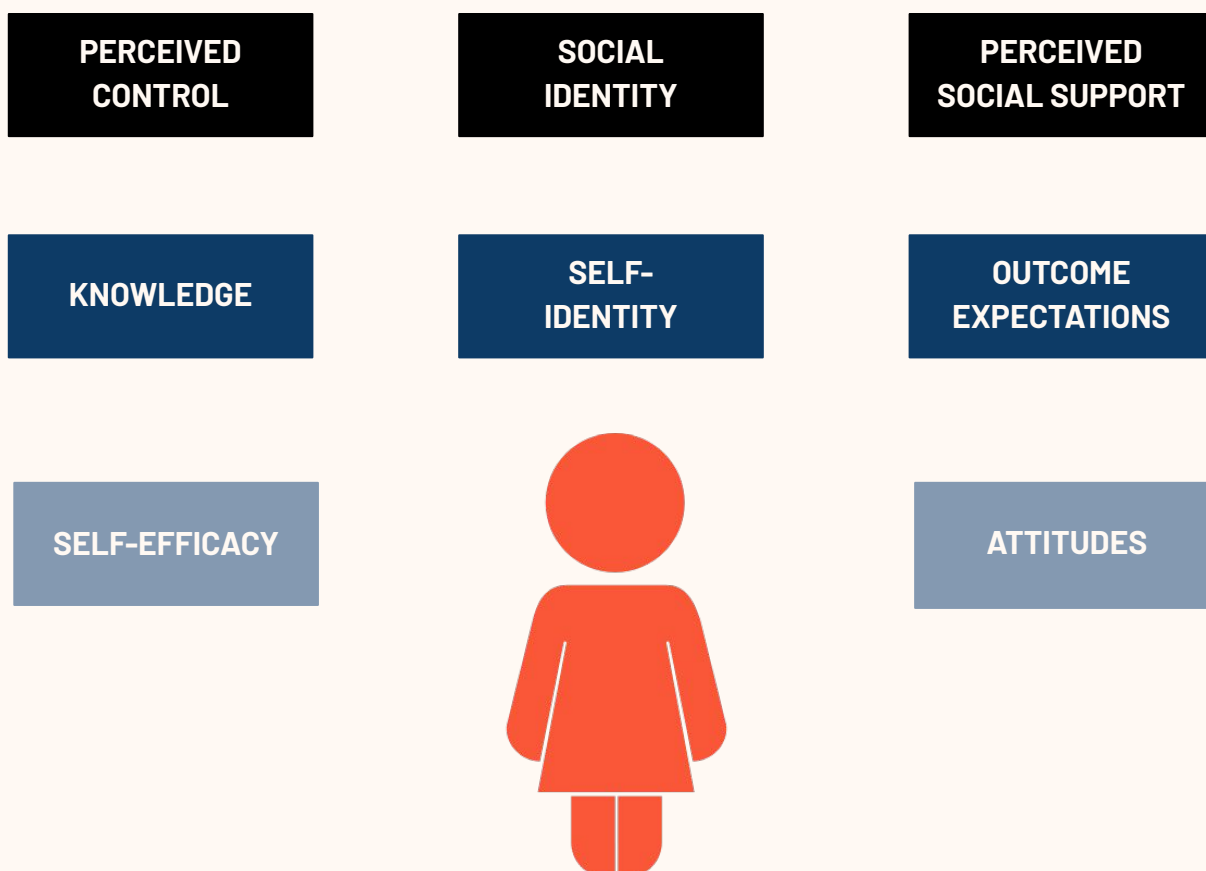
# Psychological drivers & their impact on girls' digital access

The qualitative data we collected provided new insight into the importance and relevance of these drivers as barriers to digital access for girls. The below drivers were found to have an **extremely significant impact** on girls (score: 5/5).

**SOCIAL IDENTITY**

Girls are being constantly reminded that they belong to the category of 'female' and as a result adhere to the very powerful social norms prescribed to this group. This includes the notion that girls are 'vulnerable' and need 'protection'; a notion that directly shapes her identity as a girl and an online user.

**PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT**

Many young girls are entirely dependent on others for mobile access. Even when girls do get online they are often monitored and limited by their parents or peers. There is a sense from girls that the gatekeepers in their lives (parents, siblings) don't want them to be online, and many wish that their parents could better understand the opportunities and safety parameters they can use to support their usage.

**PERCEIVED CONTROL**

Girls don't often have control over how and when they are able to access the Internet. They rely on borrowing phones, asking permissions, and sharing access with their parents and siblings. This leaves girls with very little freedom, privacy, and control over how she can use mobile phones to access information and participate in typical activities, like listening to music or consuming entertainment.

*"Some people are very backward, and they think their daughters should not have a phone. They think if she has a phone, she will do something wrong."* – **Girl, Jordan, age 14–17**

*"I also want to have my own mobile phone, but nobody allows me. I am afraid of using social media and uploading photos on it because if my brother comes to know about this, he will kill me."*
– **Girl, India, age 18–21**

# Psychological drivers & their impact on girls' digital access

The below drivers were found to have **significant impact** on girls (score: 4/5).

**SELF-IDENTITY**

As girls have limited exposure to mobile and Internet they do not see themselves as tech savvy, meaning that they do not see mobile phones and the Internet as something that is 'for them'. This creates a vicious cycle whereby girls avoid tech because they don't think it's for them, and then tech is seen as 'not for them' because they have been avoiding it.

**OUTCOME EXPECTATION**

There is a strong narrative that the Internet can result in harm for young girls as a result of predatory behavior, scams, and misinformation. For many girls, this rhetoric is top-of-mind and the fear of negative consequences acts as a significant barrier to their usage.

**KNOWLEDGE**

Girls feel overwhelmed when it comes to navigating mobile and Internet, especially since many girls are only allowed access for the first time when they are 18 or deemed 'mature enough'. They are also being told that they are 'not as competent' as boys and are internalizing these attitudes into self-doubt and lower confidence when using mobile devices. With greater knowledge about how to protect themselves, and with more awareness that they can successfully participate online, girls will behave as more empowered users.

*"The Internet is a crime channel through which people commit big crimes. They can blackmail girls by creating fake profiles and making their videos on the Internet."* - **Girl, India, age 18–21**

*"We are teenagers. We are not mature enough. We could believe anything. We might not be able to tell right from wrong."* - **Girl, Jordan, age 14–17**

*"Because the Internet can disturb a person who is under 18 years. It can lead us to temptations. That is why I can advise people under that age not to use the Internet."* - **Girl, Rwanda, age 14–17**

*"I also think lack of knowledge is among the top 3 barriers [to using a mobile phone]."* - **Girl, Rwanda, age 14–17**

# Psychological drivers & their impact on girls' digital access

The below drivers were found to have **some** or **very little impact** on girls (score: 3/5 or 2/5, respectively).

| SELF-EFFICACY | Young girls worry that they do not have the skills and adeptness to navigate online spaces effectively and safely. They are being bombarded with horror stories from parents on all the things that could go wrong for them, and they internalize these fears. This results in girls limiting their own usage and sometimes feeling that they cannot, and will never be able to, learn the skills that will enable them to navigate the digital world. |
|---|---|

| ATTITUDES | Despite being told that they are 'less competent' online, girls – like their male peers – feel relatively positive about digital technologies. They want to be more digitally connected; they want to learn more and they want to realize the benefits of the Internet. |
|---|---|

*"Mobile is right to use for girls in the age group of 18 or 20 years. I think it's because in that time, girls will become sensible and they should know what is wrong or what is good for them."* **– Girl, India, age 18–21**

*"Many topics of interest to young people at this age are available to us online, whether learning, skill, job opportunities or marketing, all of which are available and we can learn them."* **- Girl, Jordan, age 18–21**

# Recommendations

Both girls and boys are susceptible to online scams and harassment, yet girls are the only ones being told – and consequently believing – that they are 'vulnerable'. This is impacting both girls' behaviors and beliefs, leading them to set up more parameters to protect themselves while also self-censoring and limiting their own access and usage. These attitudes are creating a crisis of confidence within girls that is not only shaping girls' digital experiences; it is influencing how she perceives herself in an increasingly digital and mobile world.

- **Girls feel that they could be capable online, but the social pressures, conditions, and biases towards them are causing them to second guess themselves.** With greater transparency, girls may be able to see that they are just as competent (or as our research demonstrates, even more competent) as boys and should have equal access to these devices.

- **We will never achieve equal access unless girls break down any internal barriers and inhibitions they have about themselves**. Their attitudes must shift to believe that they are equally capable and deserving of the resources and opportunities the Internet has to offer.

- **We need to change how people define 'online vulnerability' to show that this is not a term dependent on one gender; it's something all people are susceptible to**. By sharing data and showing girls that they are not alone in this, we can help build their confidence and equip them with the skills they need to feel safe online.

# 6 WE CAN'T FORGET THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE

"SOMETIMES A PARENT DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF USING A PHONE SO HE/SHE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND YOUR IDEA OF USING THE PHONE."

Girl, Rwanda, age 18–21

# Parents as gatekeepers to the Internet

Across all of the groups we interviewed, there seems to be a significant generational divide: youth are hungry for more access and parents are concerned about the implications of their children being online.

We also learned that many youth are not accessing the Internet at school; that school Wifi is often restricted only to staff and that IT classrooms with desktops are closed to students outside of designated lesson times. This places even more emphasis on parents and their ability to grant permissions and introduce the Internet within the home. It is therefore imperative to understand parents' attitudes and behaviors, and their concerns when it comes to their children coming online.

From our qualitative research, our conversations with parents indicate three core themes:

1. **Many parents do see a need for change**; they believe their children can complete education and do what they need to offline
2. **Many parents are overwhelmed by the Internet and view it as a monolithic entity**; they don't understand or are fearful of what the Internet provides
3. **Many parents feel that they don't have the knowledge, ability, or support to monitor their children online**



> "You can't just sort of go and hand out phones to those young women without having some engagements and consent from their parents. They will want you to fully understand what those phones will be used for and how they can monitor and access them, you know, and monitor what they're being used for and what the risks are."
>
> **– Eunice Muthengi, Senior Evidence, Measurement & Evaluation Manager, CIFF**

# Parental attitudes toward youth being online

**Many parents do see a need for change**

In most contexts, parents have dated and traditional views around what is and isn't appropriate for their children. Many parents we explained that they themselves grew up without mobile phones and that they don't see the need for them. We also learned that many parents, especially mothers, do not use mobile phones to access the Internet (53% of parents). As a result, parents tend to have a more conservative view about allowing their children to own or access mobile phones and the Internet.

> *"My family always tell me that using the mobile is not necessary. They don't believe there is any knowledge acquired from the mobile."*
> **- Boy, Ethiopia, age 14–17**

> *"[It's important to create] awareness amongst families about the benefits of using a phone for young people; even if using a phone has its own disadvantages, explaining and giving awareness to the family about the advantages of a mobile phone and the necessity of a phone for various purposes, such as education."*
> **– Girl, Ethiopia, age 18–21**

**Many parents are overwhelmed by the Internet and view it as a monolithic entity**

Often when parents speak about the Internet they talk about it as a single entity, which feels untameable and overwhelming. They are also extremely worried about their children being exposed to the 'ills' of the internet. For many parents, these fears override any perception that the Internet might be beneficial for their children; they do not associate the Internet with different networks, channels, and content designed for youth.

When asked about the acceptability of their children using the Internet, many parents were reluctant and avoidant.

When asked about the acceptability of their children using the Internet to make money, watch entertaining age-appropriate content, or learn new skills, parents were very open to these ideas.

# Parental attitudes toward youth being online

**Many parents feel that they don't have the knowledge or ability to monitor their children online**

Many parents, like their children, are coming online for the first time. Some of their hesitation may therefore be due to the fact that they themselves are still learning and understanding the benefits of the Internet; they may feel ill-equipped to support or monitor their children's access, or unable to protect them from any risks associated with online spaces. Parents' lack of digital literacy may be contributing to their hesitancy and mistrust of mobile devices. Many youth recognize this and reported that they wish their parents knew more about using a mobile phone.

There are some parents who are more supportive of their children using mobile phones and who realize the importance of digital connectivity, and perceive the Internet to be the future. These are typically parents who own a smartphone and have the skills and confidence to support their children online.

*"The reason we want her to use more technology is that everything is being modernized. In the future, to create the opportunity to invent technologies by ourselves and for her to be able to compete, she has to know the technology very well. She is a student, and a lot is expected from her in the future."* - **Father, Ethiopia**

*"I think as parents we should know what our child does or whom she contacts on the phone, but I don't know anything other than the red & green button."* - **Mother, India**

*"When you don't have understanding parents, they think that the Internet is only going to make you rebellious and are against it. Having parents who don't understand is also a challenge."* - **Boy, Rwanda, age 18-21**

*"The Internet should be used by someone who has basic knowledge about it, so that they can differentiate between right and wrong content. What would be the usage of the Internet for an illiterate person like me."* - **Mother, India**

# 85% Girls  82% Boys

Wish their parents are more positive about using mobile phones.

# The pandemic shifted parents' attitudes

The pandemic brought new opportunities for youth to access mobile devices and helped shift parental attitudes towards phones. In fact, **nearly half of the youth we spoke to said that their parents are "more positive" about mobile phones coming out of the pandemic than they were pre-pandemic**.

> *Regarding the attitude of the family, of course they do not understand its benefit. What they know is only its negative side since they have low awareness about it. We must make them aware that it is possible to get good things from the Internet. If we show them how to use mobile, including the use of applications, they could permit us to use."*
> **- Girl, Ethiopia, age 14–17**

**47%**
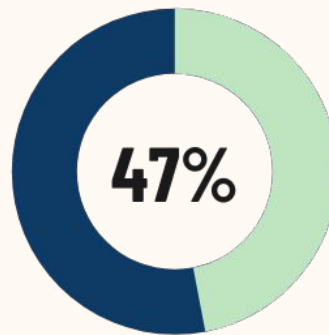
of youth said their parents were more positive about mobile phones after the pandemic versus before the pandemic

**We need to involve parents as both gatekeepers and ambassadors for digital access.**

# Recommendations

Many parents, like their children, are coming online for the first time. They too need education, skills, and experience to navigate applications and understand the risks and benefits of the Internet.

Many parents are aware of the opportunities the Internet can bring; they just lack the experience and confidence to support their children in safely using these devices. Parents are therefore not only gatekeepers of mobile devices; they can also be champions helping to bring this technology into their homes for all of their children to use. We need to invite parents along on this journey and view them not just as gatekeepers, but as potential digital ambassadors who can introduce this technology to their children.

- **Educational programs can be a gateway for parents to give their children, especially girls, more access to the Internet.** Parents reported being more open to having their children, especially girls, access the Internet for schoolwork. Educational programs may be a good way to encourage parents to share their phones and experience online programs with their kids.

- **We need to educate parents about the content that exists specifically for youth and the different protections that can be set up to help youth safely use the Internet.**

- **We need to address gender discrimination in the home.** Parents need to better understand the opportunities the Internet brings for their daughters – not just the risks. We need to help parents realize that their daughters can be trusted to use the Internet in a smart and safe way, and in a way that benefits their entire household.

# 7 | BUILDING A DIGITAL WORLD WHERE GIRLS ARE NOT LEFT BEHIND

"NOWADAYS THE WHOLE WORLD IS DEPENDENT ON INTERNET AND MOBILE – WE CAN DO ALL OUR WORK EASILY."

Girl, india, age 18–21

# A safer Internet for youth

Both youth and parents recognize that the future is digital. They see new opportunities for employment and education, but also share fears about the risks of scams, privacy issues, addiction, and harassment.

We asked youth to describe their ideal app – something that would appeal to them and their friends – and they came back with specific qualities and features we believe can be applied to encourage them to come online:

## CLEARLY SIGN-POSTED

Many young people (and parents) feel overwhelmed by the volume of information on the Internet and want to make sure they can find exactly what they are looking for. This could also benefit digitally anxious parents to see that their children are accessing age-appropriate and beneficial content.

## BUILD WITH CLOSED NETWORKS

Many young people reported having unpleasant experiences of negative or hurtful comments online or fear that this will happen to them. Adolescent girls are particularly scared of unsolicited advances made on social media or messaging services. They prefer networks that are closed, where only young people could make comments or posts or where content is only shared by an administrator or vetted expert.

## TRUSTWORTHY

Youth shared that it's often hard to trust what they find online, and many are not skilled at separating fake news from credible information. They would like to see more applications that only reliable sources to post information.

## MADE WITH MULTIPLE LEVELS OF AUTHENTICATION

Young people, especially girls, seemed worried about the security of their identity. They proposed more apps requiring dual authentication, face ID, age verification, restriction on sharing certain types of information, and other safety mechanisms built-in to the user experience.

## FREE TO DOWNLOAD OR EASILY ACCESSIBLE

Data costs and connectivity issues are real barriers for digitally dark as well as digitally connected young people. Free apps to access and/or download is a key factor determining their ability to access. Youth also want apps to be available offline so they can maximize use, even when their connectivity is interrupted.

## INCLUDES SOME LEVEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Young people believe that the government or other authority can help create safer online places for youth. They also believe that organizations could create more awareness around the risks and safety features available to them, especially on social networks or instances where youth might share personal data and information.

# Creating products with – and for – girls

The gender digital divide in favor of men exists globally and persists across life stages; girls, young women, and older women are being digitally excluded. In an increasingly more digital and connected world, it's critical that we involve girls in co-creating products that resonate with them and that fit their evolving needs.

Unfortunately, it is rare that girls are consulted during the inception and design process, especially girls from no- and low-fi neighborhoods or more rural communities. These are often the girls who benefit most from these products, yet we are wasting billions of dollars on tech innovations they can't or don't know how to access.

In addition, involving girls in the design process can help them build critical skills to enter the tech workforce. According to the _2023 Women In Tech Report_, 45% of females working in the tech industry say they are outnumbered by a 4-to-1 ratio or more to men in their industry. This is a jump from just 25% who said the same in 2021 (15). **We need to start involving and encouraging more young women to pursue tech careers to ensure that future digital products reflect their experiences and send a clear message to girls that they belong.**

## Putting girls at the center of the design cycle

Girl Effect provides a strong case study to show the benefits of putting girls at the center of the design cycle. For example, Girl Effect's chatbots in South Africa and India (Big Sis and Bol Behen) were both co-created with girls, who informed the personas, language used, services provided, and other features included in the product. This approach ensured that we were creating a mobile application that resonated with girls and that we knew they could use.

# Building online spaces with young people's interests in mind

**Don't exclude boys and parents**

The gender digital divide is in favor of boys and men, but this doesn't mean that they have complete and equal access to mobile and mobile Internet. In fact, there is still a long way to go before everyone has equal access globally. Boys and men must not be disadvantaged in the process. The design of online tools and spaces should aim to normalize gender equity and parity, and not draw attention to any notion that girls and boys are different; they both have the fundamental needs for safety, clarity, and gatekeeper approvals while online.

**Design for shared or monitor devices**

Youth, and especially girls, are sharing devices and SIM cards in order to maximize their access to mobile phones and the Internet. This, however, is preventing them from using the Internet as freely as they might do if they exclusively owned a device.

In light of this, online products and spaces should be designed assuming that a young person might be borrowing a phone and be conscious of other people seeing what they have used a phone for. This means designing spaces with easy log-in/log-out mechanisms, that require frequent re-authentication, or that share content that can be enjoyed by multiple users at one time.

# Engaging influencers as role models

**84% of digitally connected youth say that they follow online influencers**. These include global and local influencers, many of whom are focused on lifestyle, beauty and wellness, motivation, business, singing, cooking, health, relationships, religion, gaming, and more.

When asked to define an online influencer, respondents described them as a leader who is "charismatic", "respected," and who has a "reputation." Influencers are seen as popular individuals with many followers and who share interesting content and have a right to speak on public forums. They are also perceived to be experienced and confident in their work, representing certain groups or advocating for others. Young people also recognize influencers as marketers for various products and services, with their lifestyles being copied by their followers.

77% of the young people we surveyed said that influencers motivate them to work harder in their life. However, there is an element of naivety: 35% of youth believe that influencers show an accurate portrayal of their lives and 40% believe all of the things that influencers show or tell them (*for the most popular influencers mentioned by digitally connected youth by country, see Appendix D: Influencers by Country*).
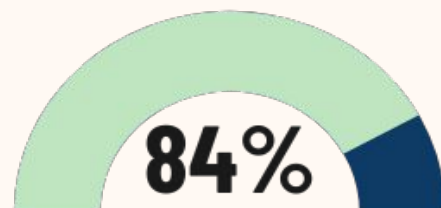


**84%**

of digitally connected youth say that they follow online influencers.

**77%**
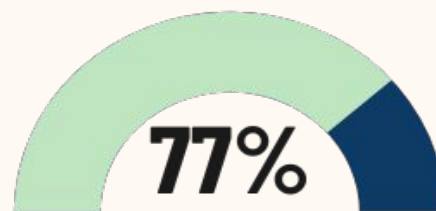
of the young people we surveyed said that influencers motivate them to work harder in their life.

# Final recommendations

Girls and boys are both equally hungry to come online. The interest is there. The ability is not.

This is in large part due to existing sexism and the social norms that shape girls' offline experiences translating into online spaces.



Acknowledging the gender digital divide is important, but it's not enough. We need to look beyond the numbers to understand and articulate the social norms preventing women and girls from equally participating online.

We also need to look beyond adults, especially as more and more young people come online. With youth data and insights, we can implement early interventions that equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to safely navigate the Internet and use it to achieve their goals, no matter their gender. This includes understanding the dynamics between children and their parents and how to welcome households with multiple generations coming online for the first time.

We are at a critical moment in history where we have the ability to use this technology to promote equity and to break down traditional offline biases towards girls. We can close the gender digital divide, but we need to demystify the Internet and address the root causes and social norms preventing girls from equal access. By working with youth on the solutions, we can transform how we create products and ensure a more equal and inclusive digital future for all.

# 8 | APPENDICES AND FURTHER READING

# Appendix A: Our methodology

## Our sample

To ensure that a broad range of young people's online experiences were considered for this research project, participants were recruited according to their current connectivity status using the following criteria:

- **Digitally dark:** a young person who use a mobile phone or the internet once or less in a typical week

- **Digitally connected**: a young person who use a mobile phone or the internet more than 3 times in a typical week

- **General population:** a young person selected semi-randomly from the location/region being studied. Connectivity status to fall-out naturally.

- **Parents**: mothers, fathers or guardians of a daughter aged 14-21, and any other children. The connectivity status of the daughter to fall-out naturally.

All respondents in the **Explore Phase** were recruited from the C2DE social category, meaning that they were generally from lower-to-middle income households. The criteria for whether someone belonged to a C2DE household was tailored for each specific geographical region, and income was classified as relative to those living within this country context. There were also efforts to include young people with physical and mental disabilities, those from minority religious groups and both in and out-of-school young people. In addition, five experts were interviewed to corroborate and interrogate the Explore Phase insights. These were people working in the field of tech, gender, and adolescent issues across the seven focus countries.

Respondents in the **Validate Phase** were recruited randomly to give a more cross-sectional societal lens on access and usage of mobile and Internet.

# Appendix A: Our methodology

*Breakdown of our sample for the Explore and Validate Phases of our research.*

| | | Explore | Validate | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ethiopia** | Girls (14-21) | 178 | 224 | |
| | Boys (14-21) | 180 | 400 | **1,125** |
| | Parents | 131 | 12 | |
| **India** | Girls (14-21) | 171 | 624 | |
| | Boys (14-21) | 178 | 624 | **1,739** |
| | Parents | 130 | 12 | |
| **Jordan** | Girls (14-21) | 107 | 174 | |
| | Boys (14-21) | 107 | 200 | **660** |
| | Parents | 60 | 12 | |
| **Kenya** | Girls (14-21) | 124 | 624 | |
| | Boys (14-21) | 124 | 624 | **1,588** |
| | Parents | 80 | 12 | |
| **Nigeria** | Girls (14-21) | 119 | 624 | |
| | Boys (14-21) | 115 | 624 | **1,554** |
| | Parents | 60 | 12 | |
| **Rwanda** | Girls (14-21) | 166 | 174 | |
| | Boys (14-21) | 163 | 200 | **835** |
| | Parents | 120 | 12 | |
| **Tanzania** | Girls (14-21) | 159 | 174 | |
| | Boys (14-21) | 159 | 200 | **821** |
| | Parents | 117 | 12 | |
| **UK** | Girls (14-21) | 0 | 500 | |
| | Boys (14-21) | 0 | 500 | **1,000** |
| | Parents | 0 | 0 | |
| **USA** | Girls (14-21) | 0 | 500 | |
| | Boys (14-21) | 0 | 500 | **1,000** |
| | Parents | 0 | 0 | |
| **Total** | | **2,748** | **7,574** | **10,322** |

| Country | Face-to-face CAPI | | Focus Group Discussions | | | | | | | | TEGA-led Research | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | State/district/county | Sampling Areas | State/district/county | Sampling Areas | GIRLS 14-17 | BOYS 14-17 | GIRLS 18-21 | BOYS 18-21 | MOTHERS | FATHERS | State/district/county | Sampling Areas |
| Nigeria | Ikorodu (City in Lagos State) | Majoda, Ibere, Oke Oko, Abule Poro | Ikorodu, Ibeju, Lekki | Lakowe, Eputu, Sangotedo, Abijo, Awoyaya (Lagos Island, Ibeju-Lekki), Ebute, Imota, Erunwen, Alake (Lagos Mainland-Ikorodu) | 160 | 181 | 585 | 561 | 30 | 30 | - | - |
| Rwanda | Kicukiro District located within Kigali City | Kicukiro, Nyarugunga, Gatenga, Gahanga | Kigali city, Southern province | Masaka, Gahanga Sector (Kicukiro District, Kigali City), Ndora, Save Sector (Gisagara District, Southern Province) | 129 | 134 | 188 | 228 | 62 | 58 | Southern Province, Western Province, Northern Province, Eastern Province, Kigali City | Huye and Ruhango (Southern Province), Rubavu and Karongi (Western Province), Musanze (Northern Province), Bugesera and Nyagatare (Eastern Province), Nyarugenge and Gasabo (Kigali city) |
| India | Banaras, Uttar Pradesh | West, Jai Nagar Colony, North, DLW, West, Orderly Bazar, East, Pandeypur | Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh | Chhindwara (Madhya Pradesh ), Nawada (Bihar), Mewat (Haryana), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) | 194 | 225 | 611 | 621 | 106 | 36 | Rajasthan | Jaipur North block, Jaipur South Block, Jaipur East Block, Jhalana (Jaipur, Rajasthan) |
| Kenya | Kiambu County | Githunguri, Komothai, Thika Town, Township, Ruiru, Githothua, Kabete, Uthiru | Kiambu, Nakuru, Kilifi | Kijabe, Githunguri, Ndeiya (Kiambu ), Elburgon, Njoro, Bahati (Nakuru), Kaloleni, Dungicha, Bamba (Kilifi) | 110 | 119 | 637 | 596 | 40 | 40 | - | - |
| Jordan | Amman City | Al-Nasr, Al-Abdali, Oweismeh, Wadi Al-Seer | Amman, Irbid, Al Mafraq | Governorate 1: Amman, Governorate 2: Al Mafraq, Governorate 3: Irbid | 91 | 100 | 129 | 168 | - | - | - | - |
| Ethiopia | Gerji (Neighborhood of Addis Ababa) | Gerji (Neighborhood of Addis Ababa) | Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia, Sidama, Somali | Addis Ababa, Woreta (Amhara region), Assella (Oromia region), Shebedino (Sidama region), Jigjiga (Somali region) | 163 | 170 | 242 | 385 | 72 | 71 | Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia | Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia |
| Tanzania | Pwani Region | Kibaha TC, Kongowe, Kibaha TC, Sofu, Kibaha DC, Kilangalanga, Mkuranga DC, Mipeko | Manyara, Pwani | Babati, Hanang (Manyara), Kibaha, Mkuranga (Pwani) | 151 | 142 | 218 | 285 | 56 | 49 | Dar-es-Salaam, Iringa | - Temeke (Dar-es-Salaam) - Iringa DC (Iringa) |

# Appendix A: Our methodology

**Fieldwork locations**

Data collection locations in each geography were selected so that a mix of urban, peri-urban, and rural areas would be reflected. Within each location, research units were selected based on where it would be most likely to find young people falling into either the digitally dark or digitally connected segments. These respondents were recruited via snowballing and opportunity sampling through existing networks on the ground. For approaches that required a more general population, sampling was conducted semi/randomly based on household visits. For a more detailed breakdown of the locations visited for data collection please refer to the previous page.

| | TEGA-led research | Focus Group Discussions |
|---|---|---|
| **ETHIOPIA** | - Addis Ababa<br>- Amhara<br>- Oromia | - Addis Ababa<br>- Amhara<br>- Oromia<br>- Sidama<br>- Somali |
| **INDIA** | Rajasthan | - Madhya Pradesh<br>- Bihar<br>- Haryana<br>- Uttar Pradesh<br>- Rajasthan (Jaipur) |
| **RWANDA** | - Kigali city<br>- Southern province<br>- Northern province<br>- Eastern province<br>- Western province | - Kigali city<br>- Southern province |
| **TANZANIA** | Dar-es-Salaam -Iringa | - Manyara<br>- Babati<br>- Hanang<br>- Pwani<br>- Kibaha<br>- Mkuranga |
| **JORDAN** | - | - Amman<br>- Irbid<br>- Al Mafraq |
| **KENYA** | - | - Nakuru<br>- Kiambu |
| **NIGERIA** | - | - Ikorodu<br>- Ibeju-Lekki |

# Appendix A: Our methodology

## Analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data across Explore Phase methodologies adopted an inductive approach, whereby research teams did not bring hypotheses to be tested, but instead were looking to uncover novel hypotheses for testing during the Validate Phase.

While all qualitative data was transcribed and translated into English, partner agencies and research teams based in each of the geographies conducted their analysis from local language transcripts. This was to ensure that analysis was being based on the nuanced and idiosyncratic interpretation of the thoughts and feelings of the young people and parents being interviewed. A consistent analysis framework and approach were employed across all geographies. The peer-to-peer qualitative interview data were further coded using the software MAXQDA, again using consistent coding frameworks across countries.

## Ethics and safeguarding

Before data collection, Girl Effect worked with local partner organizations to obtain ethical clearance with the local ethics committees in all geographies where this is required.

All partner organizations received Girl Effect's comprehensive safeguarding onboarding sessions and completed a thorough risk assessment to ensure that all risk to young people was mitigated, and that any incidents would follow a comprehensive reporting process. Girl Effect is pleased to report that no safeguarding issues occurred during the course of the 2023 Girls & Mobile research. Please see below for a copy of Girl Effect's Safeguarding Code of Conduct, which was signed by all participating team members across each partner agency.

# Appendix B: Youth Advisory Panel members

We are especially grateful for the advice, ideas, and input from our Youth Advisory Panel members.

### Alice

Alice is a 24-year-old Congolese woman who migrated to Kenya as a refugee during the civil war. She has been living in a refugee camp for 9 years. She is has two older brothers and one sister and she loves to learn new things and meet new people, especially from different nationalities.
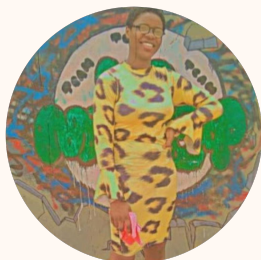
### Daniyan

Daniyan is an artist, an SDG-5 advocate, and loves meeting new people and learning about their lives and backgrounds. Daniyan is 19 years old and living in Lagos Alimosho, Nigeria. She is preparing for her Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination and currently volunteers at the Community Innovation Hub.

### Edlawit

Edlawit is 21 years old and lives in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She is studying Biomedical Engineering. She is very outgoing and friendly and she would like to work in a research lab, have several pets, have a house with a library, invest, travel, and financially help women-led/found businesses and women-focused NGOs.

### Faith

Faith is a self-motivated individual currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Computer Applications. She was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya but is currently in Bhubaneswar, India for her studies. She is an Aquarius. She enjoys bowling, watching crime TV shows, and listening to music. Faith has two older brothers.

### Faiza

Faiza is 21 years old and is from Tanzania. She was a student at the University of Dodoma studying project planning, management, and community development. She is the founder of Fayza's Spices and advocates for the SDGs (#5) by working with organizations like PDS Zanzibar, UNICEF, Zanzibar Environmental Clubs, Roots & Shoots Tanzania, and more.

### Nidhi

Nidhi is from Bihar, India, which is in the region of Saharsa. She is a law student currently pursuing B. B. A., LL. B, (Hons.) from Chanakya National Law University, Patna. She is 21 years old. She comes from a family of four (her mother, older brother, and grandfather) and has a dog named Happy. She likes to read, watch movies and web series, play badminton, throw ball, table tennis, draw, learn, and follow South Korean culture.

### Peninah

Peninah is 20 years old and from Rwanda. She lives with her family and is the eldest of four children. She recently completed her secondary studies is preparing to start at college studying economics. In her spare time, she likes listening to motivational speeches and having conversations with new people.

### Rania

Rania is 19 years old and was raised in the suburb of Irbid, in a village called Huwarra, which is located at the north of Jordan. She is currently an undergraduate student studying business administration at Yarmouk University. She is also the project coordinator for the Erasmus+ youth exchange project at the Jordan Youth Innovation Forum, and she is a playmaker at Game Jordan. She is the youngest of seven, with six brothers and one sister.

# Appendix B: Youth Advisory Panel members

We are especially grateful for the advice, ideas, and input from our Youth Advisory Panel members.



**Rehka**
Rekha is from Patna, Bihar, India. She is a law student pursuing B.B.A., LL.B. (Hons.) Course from Chanakya National Law University. She is 21 years old and the youngest of 3 children in her family. In her free time, she likes to paint, dance, volunteer, and learn random information about the things around her!

**Sandra**
Sandra is a first-year Accountancy student at the College of Business Education in Tanzania. She is from a family of two girls and is the founder and director of Kijana Factory, which aims to prevent post-harvest loss. She is also the founder of Binti Yangu Girl Up, which focuses on economic empowerment for women and young girls.

**Sheila**
Sheila is a 17-year-old undergraduate student studying Information Technology or Computer Science. She is from Lagos, Nigeria. Sheila loves to read, especially heard copies of books, and to create different artworks, like rings, bracelets, or anything that keeps her hands busy. She also loves to draw, write, learn new skills, code, and cook in her free time.

**Umi**
Alice is a 24-year-old Congolese woman who migrated to Kenya as a refugee during the civil war. She has been living in a refugee camp for 9 years. She is has two older brothers and one sister and she loves to learn new things and meet new people, especially from different nationalities.

**Yvonne**
Yvonne is a 22-year-old Rwandan lady born in the Nyanza district of the southern province of Rwanda. She is the fifth child in a family of six children. She is starting her third year of an A1 General Nursing program at the University of Rwanda. She loves serving in the community and in youth organizations where she can use the skills she has acquired to work with different teams.

**Zelalem**
Zelalem is from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He is 21 years old and a second-year social work student at Addis Ababa University. He lives with his mom and little brother and sister. He is has a disability in his left leg and he likes listening to music in his free time. He is passionate about inspiring others from his life experience.

# Appendix C: Steering Committee members

We are also grateful for the advice, ideas, and input from our Steering Committee members.

**Gaya Butler**
*Director, Programmes, Malala Fund*

Gaya Butler is the Director of Programmes at Malala Fund. Malala Fund's mission to ensure every girl's right to 12 years of education. Their programmes support education activists and advocates (including girl activists) to tackle the barriers that hold girls back from accessing and benefiting from education and exercising their agency. (Their work spans feminist grant-making, advocacy, network-building and creating content and platforms to centre girls in decision-making). Digital inclusion is a priority area for them, recognised as a critical pathway to achieving gender-transformative change for girls but one that cannot be capitalised without tackling the social norms barriers to digital inclusion for girls.They work with local partners and advocates (their 'Education Champions') who are continually seeking to incubate and innovate new solutions for girls in very marginalised and complex settings, they are excited about how this research can build collective learning and transformative action in this space for digital inclusion.

Before Malala Fund, she was Country Director for Girl Effect in Ethiopia, conceptualising and creating programming for adolescent girls using media and digital products for behaviour change, with a strong focus on research and evidence to drive and iterate the strategy. She lived and worked in Ethiopia for 7 years (and have worked in countries in the Global South for 15 years). She has also worked with UNICEF and DFID. She has a degree in Economics (University of Edinburgh), an MA in Development Studies (LSE) and an MA in Children's Rights (Institute of Education).
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**Isabelle Carboni**
*Director, Research and Insights, GSMA*

Isabelle Carboni is the Insights Director for the GSMA Mobile for Development (Connected Women and Connected Society), where she leads the research and reporting outputs on digital inclusion of underserved populations in low- and middle-income countries, with a special focus on gender. In 2021 she authored the GSMA Gender Gap Report. Prior to GSMA, she led research for a South African based think tank, on (gender disaggregated) financial inclusion and digital skills in Africa. This included a major data for policy project for the Government of Rwanda on mobile money (pre and during COVID) to track behaviour changes by gender and location. Her core background is in international development where she spent 20 years working in monitoring and evaluation, spanning 25 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This included a long stint as Global Technical Director for Evaluation at World Vision International where she developed an evaluation system and compendium of indicators to measure dimensions of child wellbeing more accurately and consistently across 63 countries, which is still used today. This included subjective well-being and a survey specifically for adolescents, which may be very relevant for this project. She holds an MSc in Development Management from LSE and a BA in International Relations from Sussex University. After 12 years living in Sub-Saharan Africa, with extensive global travel, she moved back to London in 2020 to take up the position with GSMA. She lives with my FinTech entrepreneur husband and two children.

# Appendix C: Steering Committee members

We are also grateful for the advice, ideas, and input from our Steering Committee members.

**Lekha Davé**
*Senior Officer, Strategy, Planning, Management, Gender Equality, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

Lekha Davé is a Senior Strategy Officer in the Gender Equality division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Her focus is on 1) women's economic empowerment through increased income generation, and 2) social norms to improve health and livelihood outcomes for adolescent girls and young women. Lekha joined the foundation after 8+ years of experience as a strategic consultant to philanthropic, government, and multilateral clients, including the World Bank, UNHCR, IFC, and a variety of US Government agencies.
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**Nayana Dhavan**
*Doctoral candidate, King's College London*

Jamie is a PhD candidate in Digital Humanities at King's College London where her doctoral work focuses on how young people engage with digital spaces to develop their aspirations and how this engagement affects their sense of self and well-being. She started her work in a lab science field when she did her Bachelor's degree in General Biology and Linguistics at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Subsequently, she became more interested in how social and cultural factors affect our health status and well-being which led to getting a Master's degree in Global Health with a concentration in Women, Gender and Health from the Harvard School of Public Health. Since then she has worked for over a decade in the US and India at the intersection of gender and health with a focus on young people. Her programme planning and implementation work with diverse communities in both places grounds and informs the research and policy work she has done more recently, at the Population Foundation of India and the Population Council. While previously trained on qualitative and quantitative methods, her PhD has been a chance to delve into the complex field of digital methods.

**Sulakshana Gupta**
*Regional Director - Southern Africa, Viamo*

Sulakshana Gupta is Viamo's Regional Director for Southern Africa. At Viamo, they believe that information is power. They envision a world where all people have access to the information they need to make decisions for healthy, prosperous lives, and have meaningful relationships with governments, civil society, and businesses. They do this by overcoming information gaps and implementation challenges on large scale, high impact projects with a focus on the devices people have, the languages they understand, and the digital channels best suited to their needs. She have over 12 years' experience in the media as a journalist and Social and Behaviour Change Communications expert at a senior project management level. She has designed and delivered high value multi-year media for development projects in East and West Africa. Working across thematic sectors such as health, governance, peace building, she has helped conceptualize innovative multi-media programming and outreach strategies.
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# Appendix C: Steering Committee members

We are also grateful for the advice, ideas, and input from our Steering Committee members.

**Soledad Magnone**
*Founder, JAAKLAC*

Soledad is a Uruguayan sociologist focused on the intersections between education, digital technologies and human rights. She holds an M.A. in Education Policies for Global Development and MSc in Science and Technology in Society. For more than 10 years she has collaborated with representatives of government, tech, civil society, educational and youth organisation at local and regional level in South America and Europe. She's coordinated studies on children's digital risks and rights online, and elaborated digital education frameworks, resources and practices for universities and NGO. Currently, she support Mozilla Festival 2022 with a fresh approach to its Youth & Futures Space.

Since 2020 she has directed JAAKLAC initiative to broaden the participation of Latin America and the Caribbean, especially its younger generations, in the creation of a fairer digital future. To this end, JAAKLAC promotes projects in critical digital education, research and activism for digital policies to be aligned with human rights. Projects so far have covered issues such as privacy, security, wellbeing, misinformation, comprehensive sexual education and youth activism in relation to digital technologies. These have been supported by LACNIC, Tactical Tech and Derechos Digitales.

**Eunice Muthengi**
*Manager - Evidence, Measurement and Evaluation, CIFF*

Euince Muthengi leads on evaluation and evidence generation for CIFF's Africa girl capital and SRHR portfolios. Prior to joining CIFF, she led the East Africa Research and Innovation Hub at the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FDCO, previously DFID). She previously worked for 7 years at the Population Council office in Nairobi, as the Deputy Team Leader for the Poverty, Gender and Youth program, managing RCTs and large-scale research studies focusing on designing and testing interventions for marginalised adolescent girls.
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**Ambika Samarthya-Howard**
*Director of Communications, Solutions Journalism*

Ambika Samarthya-Howard has been creating, teaching and writing at the intersection of storytelling and social good for two decades. She believes in working with local teams, developing work collaboratively, and taking risks in telling authentic, powerful stories. She has produced content for Current TV, UNICEF, Havas, Praekelt.org, UNICEF, UNFPA, and Save the Children and trained for BBC Media Action, Columbia University, and the New York Film Academy. At WITNESS, she oversaw the first brand refresh in the organization's 25 year history. While Head of Communications at the South African technology organization, Praekelt.org, she led the content curation and writing for the Medium Publication, Mobile For Good, and spoke at over 20 conferences globally, including co-partnering to launch the MERL Tech Joburg.

Since 2020 she has directed JAAKLAC initiative to broaden the participation of Latin America and the Caribbean, especially its younger generations, in the creation of a fairer digital future. To this end, JAAKLAC promotes projects in critical digital education, research and activism for digital policies to be aligned with human rights. Projects so far have covered issues such as privacy, security, wellbeing, misinformation, comprehensive sexual education and youth activism in relation to digital technologies. These have been supported by LACNIC, Tactical Tech and Derechos Digitales.

# Appendix C: Steering Committee members

We are also grateful for the advice, ideas, and input from our Steering Committee members.

**Confidence Staveley**
*Founder & Executive Director, CyberSafe Foundation*

Confidence Staveley is a Cybersecurity Professional, Cybersecurity Awareness Advocate, World Economic Forum Global  Shaper alumni, Author and Entrepreneur with over a decade's worth of experience in technology .Confidence has achieved  numerous professional certifications and industry recognitions. She is a Cybersecurity Woman of the Year 2021 Award winner, IFSEC Global Top Influencer in Security & Fire 2021, Top 50 women in Cybersecurity Africa 2020, Young CISO of the Year Award 2021  Winner, etc, this is an acknowledgment  of  her  professionalism  and expertise globally. She was also recently named a 2021 African Obama Leader. She is the Founder and Executive Director of CyberSafe Foundation, a leading non-Governmental organization dedicated to improving inclusive and safe digital access in Africa.
.

**June Sugiyama**
*Director, Vodafone Americas Foundation*

June Sugiyama has been in corporate philanthropy sector for 20 years specializing in harnessing the power of technology for social good. Currently she leads the Foundation's transition towards Empowering Women and Girls through Technology. This new strategy aligns our programs with Vodafone's expertise in technology &amp; innovation.  She also developed the Foundation's Wireless Innovation Project, a competition designed to seek the best wireless technology to address critical global issues; it has identified several winners who are already impacting over 60 Million addressing poverty, health, environment, disaster relief and technology access.

June served on boards and as advisory capacities for several foundation and nonprofit organizations, most notably on the advisory committee of the Vodafone Group Foundation & United Nations Foundation Technology Partnership's M Health Alliance, Foundation Center and the Frugal Innovation Lab at Santa Clara University. June's background hails from education, specifically elementary, bilingual and special education. She received her teaching credential & liberal studies degree from San Francisco State University, and specialist credential at University of San Francisco.

# Appendix C: Steering Committee members

We are also grateful for the advice, ideas, and input from our Steering Committee members.

**Alex Tyers**

*Gender and Technology Specialist, Product and Partnership Lead for Oky, UNICEF*

Alex Tyers is a digital inclusion specialist, with a particular focus on gender, research and insights. Her speciality is the gender digital divide - she's been working in this space both as a researcher and a practitioner for 10+ years, starting in Bangladesh. She has also spent 10+ years building digital solutions for women and girls across Africa, Asia and Central America; this includes many years in Bangladesh working on digital solutions for rural adolescent girls. She used to specialise in IVR and SMS platforms (for BBC Media Action, BRAC, British Council and a few MNOs) but now she works across several higher-tech platforms, including Oky, UNICEF's period tracker app for girls. She also work on digital skils and digital literacy for adolescent girls, often using peer network models - previously in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, and now working in Tajikistan and Jordan.

Research-wise, she worked with GSMA Connected Women on their first mobile gender gap study in 2015, and since then has worked on many gender and digital research studies and projects - including the USAID Gender and ICT Survey Toolkit and the recent UNICEF papers on adolescent girls and the gender digital divide. She is really keen to contribute to plugging the evidence gap around the gender digital divide and adolescent girls, and is very excited to be part of this group!

**Jamie Zimmerman**

*Senior Program Officer, Gender Lead, Financial Services for the Poor, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

Jamie M. Zimmerman leads the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's work to increase low-income women's economic empowerment through access to and usage of digital financial services.
Jamie joined the foundation in 2017 after several years as an independent global advisor to several partners, including the World Bank, CGAP, IFC, USAID, UNCDF, BFA Global, World Food Program and the International Rescue Committee.

# Appendix D: Influencers by country

## Jordan

Lorans Almansi, Muhamad Abu Shakra, Muhammad Amour, Maherko, Moataz Meshaal, Shashtari Twins, Joe Hattab, Abood Omari, Anas Marwah, Asala Maleh, Ghaith Marwan, Abu Fulla, Ahmed AlHenawi

## India

CarryMinati, Nora Fatehi, Khan Sir, Puneet Superstar, Prince Narula,Kritika Khurana , Meenakshi Dutt, Virat Kohli, Triggered Insaan, Rohit Jhunjrekar, Ayushmann Khurrana, Karishma, bharatzkitchen, Cristiano Ronaldo, Ratan Tata, Kapil Sharma, Kylie Jenner, Shirley Setia, Alia Bhatt, Nisha Lamba, Priyanka Chopra, Bhuvan Bam, Nisha Madhulika, Rannvijay Singha, Darshan Raval, Sahil Khattar, Charli D'Amelio, Technical Guruji, Sandeep Maheshwari, Akansha Sharma, Ranveer Singh, Riyaz Aly, Joshua Chhabra

## Nigeria

Bishop TV, purplespeedy, ABHISHEK | INFLUENCER🇮🇳, Mersea, Olamide, Frank Edwards, Tiwa Savage, Wizkid, Dr. Chinonso Egemba, Davido, Samuel L. Jackson, Odunlade Adekola, Ariana Grande, Teju Babyface, Linda Ikeji, Cristiano Ronaldo, Plan B TV, Bimbo Ademoye, Aniekeme Finbarr, MC MBAKARA, Oga Sabinus, Dunsin Oyekan, Broda Shaggi, Licorose

## Ethiopia

Abiy Ahmed, Eshetu Melese, Dr Tewodros Adhanom, Dr. Rodas Tadese, Abiy Yilma, Adanech Abebe, Meskerem Abera, Andrew Tate, Donald Trump, Mr. Bean, Semere Bariaw, Loza Abera, Elon Musk, Ermyas Amelga, Lidiyana Solomon, Eskinder Nega, Mensur Abdulkeni, MrBeast, Sayat Demissie, Selam Tesfaye, Hermela Aregawi, Mensur Jemal, Lionel Messi, Kim Kardashian, Cristiano Ronaldo, Steve Harvey, Billy Graham, Tupac, Ed Sheeran, Arnold Schwarznegger, Jack Ma, Kylie Jenner, Snoop Dog, Mother Teresa, Chris Brown, Robert Lewandowski, Paul Pogba

## Rwanda

Chris Brown, Nickie lifestyle Umunyarwandakazi, President Paul Kagame, Cristiano Ronaldo, Bill Gates, Shaddyboo, Gateka Brianne

## Tanzania

Diamond Platinumz, Dj Khaled, Ali Kiba, Salim Kikeke, Christina shusho, Shaffih Dauda, Edo Kumwembe, Lulu Diva, PIMBI TV, Rayvanny, Samia Suluhu Hassan, Barack Obama, Kajala Masanja, shishi_babyy, Wema Sepetu, Salim Ahmedy Issa, Mwamposa, Mc Gara B, Goodluck Gozbert, millardayo, Hamisa Mobetto, Baba Levo, Cristiano Ronaldo, Jokate Mwegelo, Shaffih Dauda

## Kenya

Diamond Platinumz, Dj Khaled, Ali Kiba, Salim Kikeke, Christina shusho, Shaffih Dauda, Edo Kumwembe, Lulu Diva, PIMBI TV, Rayvanny, Samia Suluhu Hassan, Barack Obama, Kajala Masanja, shishi_babyy, Wema Sepetu, Salim Ahmedy Issa, Mwamposa, Mc Gara B, Goodluck Gozbert, millardayo, Hamisa Mobetto, Baba Levo, Cristiano Ronaldo, Jokate Mwegelo, Shaffih Dauda

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# Key terms

- **Adolescent(s) or youth**: young people aged 14–21

- **Benchmark countries**: the USA and UK are referred to as benchmark countries, as they provide the perspective from digitally saturated markets

- **Digitally connected**: youth who access the internet on 3 or more days in a typical week

- **Digitally deprived**: youth who access the internet on 1 day or less in a typical week

- **Focal countries**: Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania are the focal countries of this study

- **LMICs**: Low- to middle-income countries

- **Low-income households**: households falling into the socio-economic grade of C or D2

- **Online communities**: online platforms allowing for individual and group qualitative response to polls, discussion questions, and media sharing

- **Steering Committee**: committee of 12 experts in the fields of gender, tech and development, who volunteered to support Girl Effect with the design and implementation of the research

- **TEGA (Technology Enabled Girl Ambassadors)**: women recruited and trained as digital researchers

- **Youth Advisory Panel (YAP)**: committee of 14 youth advisors recruited and paid by Girl Effect to support with the design and implementation of the research

# Acknowledgements

This study involved participation, input, and engagement from a range of stakeholders.  In particular, Girl Effect would like to thank Vodafone Americas Foundation, UNICEF, and Malala Fund for providing us with funding support and guidance throughout this process. In addition, we would like to thank the Steering Committee for their expert opinions, valuable comments, and suggestions at all stages of our research. We also could not have completed this work without the support and participation of our Youth Advisory Panel members, whose voices and ideas are at the heart of this research.

Girl Effect would also like to extend gratitude to all of the teams involved in data collection for this project, including our TEGA researchers, the Grameen Foundation in India, SART in Ethiopia, Damax in Tanzania, Fate in Rwanda, Digitrend in Nigeria, Qualiquant services in Kenya, and IPSOS in Jordan.

We also want to thank the global organizations who conducted fieldwork across all 7 locations, including IPSOS for running online communities and Geopoll for running face-to-face surveys. In addition, we'd like to recognize Savanta for conducting online surveys in 9 locations, including the USA and UK.

On the Girl Effect team, this research, analysis, and reporting was led by Amy Jones and Aparna Raj. Pamela A. Mallinga (MPH) was the principal investigator. Aishwarya Sahay and Sakshi Nigam supported activities in India, Adela Naali and Jacques Kaihura in Tanzania, Betelihem Demise and Suhair Remzi in Ethiopia, Ilaria Buscaglia and Marlene Mporanyi in Rwanda. Rudrani Dasgupta was the global safeguarding lead on this project.

Above all, we thank the 10,000+ girls, boys, mothers, and fathers who participated in the research and shared their experiences with us. It is with you and for you that we do this work.

# THANK YOU

**Girl Effect**

**Vodafone Americas Foundation**

**unicef** for every child

**www.girleffect.org**