



Overcoming digital divides: ensuring inclusive and safe access to technologies

Expert Group Consultation
10/30/2025

UNFPA Programme Division

Digital Divide

- Only 25% of people in lowest-income countries are online, despite 76% being covered by a mobile broadband signal; men are 52% more likely than women to use the internet.
- While an estimated 69 per cent of 18 to 24 year olds globally are online using mobile or broadband Internet, however, only 38 per cent of them are online in the least developed countries. Two thirds of young people (2.2 billion) do not have Internet access at home.
- Gaps are exacerbated for older women with disabilities, gender and sexually diverse older adults, and older adults residing in the Global South, who statistically have less access to technologies
- Women and girls are 25% less likely than men to have the digital knowledge and skills needed to access and benefit from digital services.
- Limited data on digital inclusion mask deep inequalities, with the widest gaps affecting older women, women in rural areas, and women with disabilities.

Harms

- **Individual**

Over 40 forms of TFGBV and 85% of women globally having witnessed online violence against other women, and 38% personally affected.

- **Community**

Removal of women and youth voices from community discussion and decisions; lack of trust in tech which provides access to business, social opportunities and basic services

- **Structural**

Disinformation campaigns; engagement driven and content agnostic platforms and AI models embedding harmful norms

Future-proofing the ICPD – PoA

Design

- creating technology and defining functional and physical features

Deployment

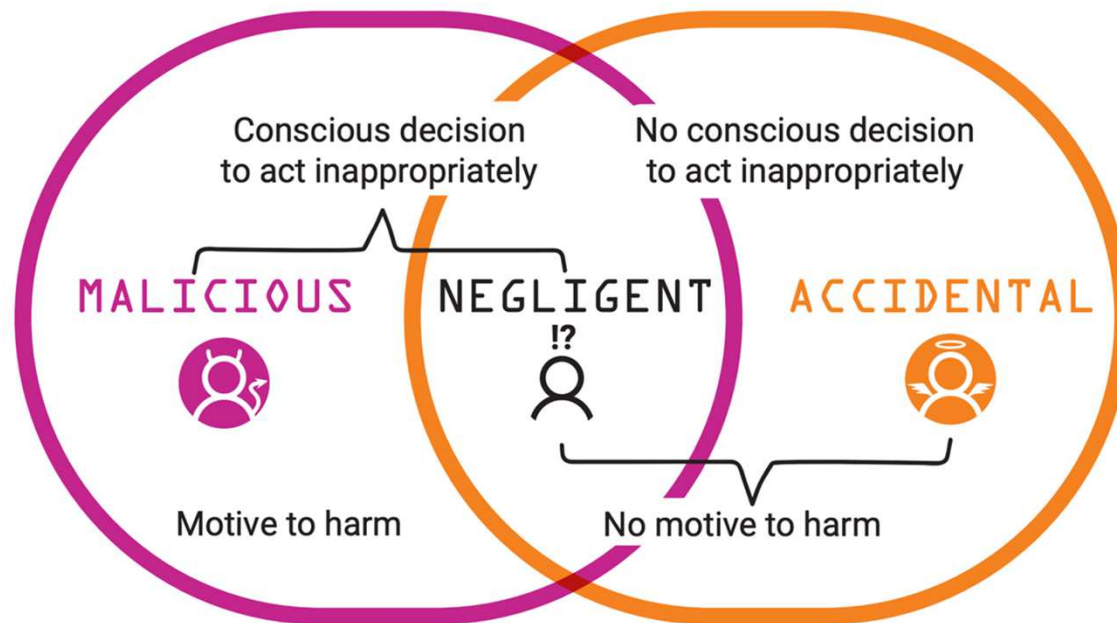
- process of uptake and use of technology across heterogeneous groups

Business Models

- for profit business models vs rights-based approaches

Design

- The design of technology is the foundation for digital safety and inclusion



Deployment

- Digital inclusion and closing the digital divide is not possible without digital safety.
- Need to consider the heterogeneity of user group and factors affected access to and use of technology

Business Models

- Data intelligence informs and enables ideal interaction with users/customers thereby increasing profitability (including data generated through technology itself)
- Harms related to AdTech

Way forward

- Ensure Safety, Security and Privacy by Design
- Address the barriers of access to support equitable deployment of technology
- Investment in digital literacy to ensure that populations understand their interactions with technology
- Investment in alternative models of financing including ensuring transparency across systems of data brokerage
- Investment in effective and rights-based regulation and industry standards
- Investment in addressing harmful gender and social norms to ensure equitable access to technology and ensure safety of all populations online and offline.