Reports of the Secretary-General on Programmes & Resource Flows for Population, Technology and Research in the Context of Sustainable Development

Realizing the ICPD PoA in the Digital Era

Navigating the Digital, Technological & Research Divides

The Promise:

Technology and research are central to addressing the complex challenges of sustainable development and supporting the ICPD Programme of Action.

The Reality: A Stark Divide

Internet Access:

93% in high-income countries

vs.

39% in least developed countries

Gender Gap:

Only **29%** of women in LDCs are online (compared with 41% of men).

Research Concentration:

G20 countries account for approximately 90% of global research expenditure and patents.

Demographic Interplay:

Ageing: 20% of the population over 65 by 2050 in many nations – Surge in demand for assistive technology.

Migration: Climate and conflict displacement – Reliance on digital trace data for humanitarian response.

Accelerating Health, SRH & Well-being

Innovations driving Universal Health Coverage

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Digital Health Revolutions:

- **Telemedicine:** Closing the rural-urban gap (e.g., India's *eSanjeevani* with 150M+ consultations; Pacific Island HIV mentoring).
- **AI Diagnostics:** Deep Learning detects breast cancer and chromosomal anomalies with >99% accuracy.

SRH Innovations:

- **Self-care:** HPV self-sampling and self-injectable contraception (DMPA-SC) increase patient autonomy and privacy.
- **Fertility:** Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) demand is growing but remains unaffordable for millions.

Ageing with Dignity:

- **Robotics** (Japan, China) and "welfare technology" (Denmark) support caregivers to help older persons "age in place"
- **Intelligent care systems:** Enabling people to sustain independence at advanced ages (Chile)

Inclusion & Equity: Leaving No One Behind

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Technology must bridge divides in gender, ability, age and crisis

Gender & Work

The Gap: Women hold <30% of jobs in high-growth tech (AI, Cloud).

The Fix: STEM quotas (Rwanda) and early reskilling (Mongolia, Singapore) to prevent automation displacement.

Disability Rights

The Gap: Girls with disabilities are the least likely demographic to own a smartphone.

The Fix: Mandate digital accessibility (e.g., screen readers) in all public services.

Ageing in Place

The Need: 2 in 3 older adults require Assistive Technology (AT) to maintain independence.

The Fix: Subsidize robotics and "welfare tech" to support caregivers (e.g., Japan, Denmark).

Humanitarian

The Tool: Satellite imagery and digital trace data track climate displacement.

The Fix: Connectivity in displacement settings with strict biometric privacy protections.

The "Safety" Imperative

There is no digital inclusion without digital safety

The Governance Gap: Technology deployment remains profit-driven while regulation lags.

Emerging Threats to Human Rights:

TFGBV: Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence is rising. 98% of deepfake videos are pornography, overwhelmingly targeting women and girls.

Algorithmic Bias: AI systems trained on biased data perpetuate discrimination in health and employment.

Data Privacy: Risks of "digital colonialism" and misuse of biometric data in humanitarian settings.

Recommendations:

Adopt **"Safety -by-Design"** principles.

Establish rights-based regulatory bodies (inspired by EU's GDPR).

Enforce accountability for digital platforms regarding misinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV).

Insights from the Expert Group Meetings

Key Messages from the CPD 59 Preparatory Consultation

Redefining "Technology": It is not limited to digital apps. It includes medical devices, assistive products and frugal innovations for low-resource settings.

The "Double -Edged Sword":

- **Consensus:** Technology can extend healthy life expectancy and address emerging challenges, such as infertility.

- **Risk:** Without equity, innovation widens the gap between the "connected rich" and "unconnected poor".

The Data vs. Privacy Tension:

- Experts highlighted the conflict between the need for disaggregated population data (to see the invisible) and the right to privacy (to protect the vulnerable).

Call to Action: We must move from "technological optimism" to "technological governance".

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Financial Resources: a Structural Shift

The impact of ODA decline on development

The 2024 Turning Point:
- After a peak in 2023 ($291.6B), total Official Development Assistance (ODA) **declined by 12.6%** in 2024.
- **2025 Outlook:** Further cuts of **9% to 17%** are expected.

Displacement of Funds:
- Approximately **15%** of aid disbursements are now spent *within* donor countries (e.g., refugee costs), diverting funds from development programmes abroad.

Global Impact:
- Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Sub-Saharan Africa face the steepest cuts.
- **Debt Distress:** 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are currently at high risk.

Population Assistance & Research: Sectors at Risk

Funding Per Capita Declining:

Official aid for Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) dropped from **$7.71 per woman** (2022) to **$5.97** (2023).

Private donors (e.g., Gates Foundation) are increasing support but cannot fill the public sector gap.

The "Research" Blind Spot:

Aid for "Research & Technology" remains small (~2.5% of total aid) and is skewed heavily toward Energy/Environment.

Critical Gap: Statistical Capacity:

Funding for statistical capacity building (Census/Data) has **declined from $297 million to $195 million** .

Implication: This threatens the completion of the 2030 Census round and SDG tracking capabilities.

Summary: the Dual Imperative – Access & Safety

Realizing the ICPD PoA requires simultaneous action on two fronts.

Expand Digital and Technological Access:

The Goal: A digital ecosystem grounded in human rights and accountability.

The Urgency: Combating the surge of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) and algorithmic bias.

The Focus: Moving from voluntary guidelines to binding "Safety-by-Design" regulations and robust governance to end impunity for digital abuse.

Sustainable Protections:

The Goal: Universal, meaningful, and affordable connectivity and access to technology.

The Urgency: Bridging the chasm between High-income Countries (93% connected) and LDCs (39%).

The Focus: Prioritize closing the gender gap and building digital literacy to ensure technology acts as an equalizer, not a divider.