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**Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau**

Information document on the BDT work on youth initiatives and projects

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## Information document on the BDT work on youth initiatives and projects

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BDT significantly advanced youth engagement in the digital development agenda by empowering 184 [Generation Connect Youth Envoys](#) (GCYE) from 64 countries and amplifying global youth voices through major platforms such as the ITU Global Youth Summit 2025. GCYEs are strategically involved in ITU-led activities, events, and decision-making processes—enabling them to evolve into impactful digital changemakers. To strengthen their technical and leadership capacities, GCYEs engage in tailored mentoring programs and self-paced learning on key thematic areas, including the work of ITU and its three sectors, the Kigali Action Plan, digital inclusion, ICT and web accessibility, youth and cybersecurity, equitable access to ICTs for marginalized groups—especially in rural and remote communities—and digital communication in emergencies. This holistic capacity-building approach equipped youth to drive inclusive digital transformation within their communities.

Youth empowerment is also advanced through the active engagement of Generation Connect Youth Envoys (GCYE) in global and regional digital development dialogues. As part of the preparatory process for the [ITU Global Youth Summit 2025](#), ITU facilitated consultations with GCYE representatives to gather their perspectives on key ICT-related challenges and opportunities. These [consultations](#), as part of the [TDAG Informal Coordination Group on the Youth Summit and the Global Celebration](#), captured youth voices on education, socio-economic development, and digital transformation—ensuring that the priorities of young people in all six ITU regions were reflected in both regional strategies and global decision-making processes. This inclusive approach further anchored youth as vital contributors to shaping the future of the digital landscape.

A flagship milestone in ITU's youth engagement was the Global Youth Summit 2025 (GYS-25), held in Varadero, Cuba under the theme “Youth voices amplified for the creation of a more inclusive and interconnected digital world.” The summit convened over 400 participants from 31 countries and all six global regions. Across 12 dynamic sessions over three days, youth showcased initiatives, exchanged best practices, engaged in intergenerational dialogue, and built networks for future collaboration.

GYS-25 served as a powerful platform for co-creating solutions on key issues including digital inclusion, connectivity, online safety, ethical AI and emerging technologies, and the future of work. Youth identified their digital development priorities and proposed actionable solutions, reinforcing their role in shaping global ICT strategies.

[Key outcomes of GYS-25 include:](#) Elevating youth voices in policymaking for affordable and inclusive access to ICTs; strengthening digital skills to empower youth to safely and effectively participate in the digital economy; reinforcing ITU's role as a platform for youth-driven digital education and employment opportunities and promoting youth-led innovation and entrepreneurship as catalysts for social and economic development.

Key activities undertaken **by region** during the reporting period to TDAG-25 include:

- **In the Africa region**, youth inclusion remained central to BDT's work in Africa. The African Regional Office facilitated a symbolic handover ceremony in which Generation Connect Youth Envoy (GCYE) alumni mentored incoming youth envoys, sharing practical insights and reinforcing a culture of leadership continuity. This mentorship-driven event energized the new cohort and underscored their vital role in shaping digital development on the continent. Throughout 2024, [African youth envoys](#) engaged in research and consultations, generating

comprehensive recommendations on youth-centred digital development, further anchoring their voices in regional digital policymaking processes.

- **In the Americas region**, youth engagement was spotlighted during the Sub-regional Seminar “Priorities for Youth in the Digital World: Jobs and Education”, held in Chile in May 2024. In the context of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, representatives from Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile joined forces with telecom industry leaders—Entel, WOM, and Claro—to explore this year’s theme, “Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development.” The event amplified the voices of youth, with Generation Connect Youth Envoys actively contributing to discussions on national digital strategies, reinforcing their role in shaping an inclusive digital future.

Girls in ICT workshops in Americas reached 1,448 girls and young women across 14 countries in the region, contributing to the global movement that inspired over 40,000 participants in 84 countries.

- **In the Arab region**, GC Youth Envoys were engaged participated in regional fora and platforms enabling mentorship opportunities and knowledge exchange. The Arab Regional office organized the Arab Region Passing the Torch Event, held online on 1 July 2024. The event focused on celebrating the achievements of outgoing GC ARAB Youth Alumni, welcoming the new cohort of GC ARAB Youth Envoys, and facilitating knowledge transfer and mentorship. With 20 Arab youth envoys participating, alongside ITU regional office staff and colleagues from Generation Connect, the event underscored the importance of youth involvement in digital innovation. Key takeaways included the need for active participation in ITU events, the value of mentorship from GC Alumni, and the potential for strengthened partnerships to drive impactful ICT initiatives in the region. The insights gathered will contribute to the ongoing implementation of the ITU youth strategy.

Girls in ICT 2024 celebrations were held in Lebanon, Egypt, and Palestine. Events inspired hundreds of girls, promoted digital citizenship, and launched national campaigns to equip girls and young women with the skills and confidence to thrive in the digital economy.

- **In Asia-Pacific**, targeted efforts to empower youth in 2024 included the recruitment of 21 new Youth Envoys from seven countries, significantly expanding the programme’s reach and impact. Through regional onboarding, tailored training sessions, and active participation in major international forums—such as WTSA-24 in India, the Global Innovation Forum in Malta, and the ITU-MIIT Seminar in China—youth participants gained valuable skills and platforms to contribute meaningfully to global digital dialogues. The “Passing the Torch” ceremony, held on July 11, was a vibrant moment of intergenerational exchange, uniting 41 Youth Envoys to celebrate achievements and reinforce leadership continuity. In partnership with Huawei, 10 Youth Envoys also joined the “Seeds for the Future 2024” programme in China, where they received hands-on exposure to advanced technologies including AI, 5G, and green tech.

Girls in ICT celebrations in Asia-Pacific were held across 11 countries—including India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vanuatu—with over 3,000 participants engaged in coding sessions, digital literacy trainings, and leadership programmes. These activities, delivered in collaboration with governments, UN agencies, the private sector, and civil society, not only strengthened community networks but also empowered girls and

young women to become active advocates for gender inclusion in the digital space, boosting their confidence and digital skills for a more inclusive digital future.

- **In the Europe Region**, 2024 saw increased empowerment of young women and girls in the digital sphere, with targeted initiatives fostering leadership, inclusion, and intergenerational collaboration. The Girls in ICT Day Europe 2024 event, held virtually under the theme “Leadership,” inspired girls across the region to pursue STEM careers by connecting them with role models and practical tools for success. Developed in consultation with youth, the event amplified the voices of the Generation Connect Europe Youth Group and showcased how young women are shaping digital transformation, while addressing the barriers they continue to face.

To deepen youth engagement, the Generation Connect Europe Intergenerational Dialogue reinforced collaboration between national administrations and youth envoys, encouraging youth involvement in local digital initiatives. This momentum was further strengthened through a Generation Connect Europe Youth Group side event, hosted by the ITU Europe Office during the Com-ITU plenary of CEPT. The session introduced the newly appointed Youth Envoy cohort to European country representatives, enhancing recognition of youth voices and facilitating sustained dialogue on regional digital priorities. A notable example of this collaboration was the DART project in Albania, where Youth Envoys played a key role in shaping the country’s Digital Agriculture Strategy, ensuring youth perspectives are embedded in national digital transformation efforts. These initiatives reflect Europe’s growing commitment to inclusive, youth-driven digital innovation.

### Global Projects related to Youth:

#### 1. AI Skills Accelerator for Girls *(a partnership with Ernst and Young)*

The AI Skills Accelerator for Girls program was born out of a need to address the underrepresentation of women in AI and leadership roles in tech. The ITU Development Bureau and EY teamed up on this, with the goal to empower at least 1000 young women from underserved communities with the skills they need to succeed in AI and digital fields.

The program aims to give young women, especially those between 18 and 25, the practical, ethical, and leadership skills to thrive in the AI space.

The program is hands-on and will have two cohorts of young women benefiting of the activities. The first cohort started in October 2024 with in-person workshops running across 6 countries (one per each ITU region: Paraguay, Malta, Kenya, India, Kazakhstan, Jordan) and in August 2025 other 6 countries would benefit under the second cohort.

#### 2. Generation Connect Youth Leadership Program (GCYLP) *(a partnership with Huawei)*

The first global cohort of 30 GCYLP fellows, selected from 5000 applicants, strengthen their leadership, innovation, and project management skills through the GCYLP Development Week in June 2024. Each fellow received a 5,000 USD grant to implement digital projects in their communities and continues to benefit from monthly virtual mentoring and reporting sessions and exercises. Five fellows secured additional funding totalling 750,000 USD from other organisations, enhancing project sustainability.

Thanks to the project support, they have expanded their influence and networks by participating as speakers at major global events in 2024, including ITU Digital Skills Forum in Bahrain, ITU Global Innovation Forum in Malta, the ITU-D Study Groups 1 meeting, COP29 in Azerbaijan and the World Internet Conference (WIC) in China. The launch for applications for the second cohort of GCYLP fellows took place at the Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona, Spain.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2025, the BDT Director launched applications for the second cohort of GCYLP fellows at the Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona, Spain.

### **3. Her Digital Skills for Life (*a partnership with Qualcomm*)**

The “Her Digital Skills for Life” project contributes to the [EQUALS Her Digital Skills](#) initiative that equip girls and young women around the world with digital skills to increase their opportunities to access formal employment and entrepreneurship. The project offer participants access, free of charge, to a high-quality, universally recognized digital skills training and certification program, through online training and offline hands-on STEM workshops to reach girls and women in underserved areas, with a dual objective: (1) to encourage girls’ and women’s further pursuit of tech studies and careers and (2) facilitate girls’ and women’ access to formal employment and entrepreneurship, including in tech sectors. The contribution from Qualcomm supports the implementation of the Her Digital Skills in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria and has supported more than 400 young women.