



WSIS | 19-23
FORUM | **MARCH 2018**
Geneva | Switzerland

WSIS Forum 2018 OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Thematic Workshop

Youth, Access to Knowledge and SDGs: Strategy for Building Youth Skills in Digital Technologies

1) Title of your session

Youth, Access to Knowledge and SDGs: Strategy for Building Youth Skills in Digital Technologies

2) Name of Organization/s organizing the session

UNESCO

3) Relevance with the WSIS Action Lines – please specify the Action lines C1 to C11

C3 (Access to information and knowledge) and C7 (ICT Applications: E-environment and E-science)

4) Key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and commitments:

1) Reinforced the role that **UNESCO YouthMobile Initiative** can play in improving access to knowledge. The YouthMobile Initiative builds on the experience of many worldwide initiatives and introduces young people to computer science programming (learning-to-code) and problem solving (coding-to-learn). It targets young women who are vastly underrepresented.

2) The **Smart Campus Cloud Network** was highlighted during the session. The Network is a joint initiative of *Terre Policy Center* and *UNESCO* that connects educational campus communities through a cloud



platform powered by big data, IOT and AI to enhance access to scientific knowledge for students. The key aim of the initiative is to make campuses and its graduates SDG-ready and enhance their employability.

3) The role of Youth as torchbearers in the promotion of Science and Technology was underlined and the need to make science open and inclusive highlighted.

5) Main outcomes highlighting the following:

I. Debated Issues

- The 3 hour session debated issues related to the Access to information (C3) and e-science (C7) action lines. As the processes toward SDGs have placed a special demand on young people as the knowledge torchbearers, this session examined how Youth's need for Access to Knowledge (A2K) and Access to Scientific Knowledge (A2SK) is changing. The session provided an opportunity to examine how ICT usage in terms of tools, content, and processes is changing for youth. In this regard, the session examined a few key technological breakthroughs in A2K and A2Sk, such as Smart Campus Cloud Network (SCCN) and the UNESCO YouthMobile Initiative. The session also discussed inclusive digital policy for the youth and the need for advocacy, capacity building, research and innovative technology development. Lastly, the session also discussed strategies to develop Youth-sensitive content and youth-focused learning tools to prevent radicalization and violent extremism.

II. Quotes

- “ The prevention of radicalization leading to violent extremism on social media is a major challenge that will persist in the years to come. It requires long-term mobilization and greater consistency in the application of the described remedies. Only a firm commitment to meet this challenge can guarantee the success of our collective effort



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for a safer cyberspace that our youth and the future generations certainly deserve. In that sense, the empowerment of young people remains a crucial priority. This is why we cannot invest just in technology - we must invest in public policies fostering quality education and upholding universal ethical and moral value systems that give women and men the ability to own their destinies, to face the reality in which they live with no groundless fears. This is precisely what UNESCO stands up for with conviction and determination." **Mr. Boyan Radoykov**, Chief of Section for Universal Access and Preservation, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO.

- "E-waste is killing a score of people every year and is considered as one of the biggest invisible human health risks. Youth involvement and maximum use of ICTs can help to reduce pollution exposure and also help in planning of this risk." **Mr. Rolph Payet**, *Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention, UNEP, Geneva*
- "Campuses are breeding grounds for tomorrow's policy makers and entrepreneurs. SCCN connects these campus communities by using smart technologies like IoT and Cloud Networking to contribute to SDGs. Project-based learning in the campuses, by doing and by sharing, sets into motion positive competition among youth and builds ecosystem for innovation for sustainable development." **Mr. Rajendra Shende**, Chairman TERRE Policy Centre, Senior Expert UNEP TEAP, Advisor IIM Rohtak Bizdome, Advisor MediaIndia Group, Former Director UNEP.
- "Software is a vehicle for information. The UNESCO YouthMobile Initiative holds all key ingredients that can foster the understanding of technology among youth by learning how to make Apps." **Mr. Davide Storti**, Coordinator of YouthMobile Programme, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO.
- "Most young people don't possess the skills needed to work in the digital economy." **Mr. Md. Afzal Hossain Sarwar**, Policy Specialist (Educational Innovation), Access to Information (a2i) Programme, Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Bangladesh.



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III. Overall outcomes of the session

- The panel observed that the global vision of universal Knowledge Societies is increasingly relying upon free, open and trusted use of new technology that can enable people to access information and knowledge from around the world, as well as contribute to local and global communities. The panel noted that access to information and knowledge has emerged as a game changer in the sustainable development discourse as it encompasses the vision of universal access, not only to the Internet, but also to people's ability to seek and receive open scientific, indigenous, and traditional knowledge online, and also produce content in all forms. The panel agreed that this requires building initiatives for freedom of information and the building of open and preserved knowledge resources.
- The panel noted a high rate of penetration of ICTs and mobile communication devices in contemporary society. The Internet and the digital revolution is impacting all spheres of public and private life, including crucial issues related to access to information and knowledge. As the ICT revolution is changing lives and livelihood, it has also generated a meaningful way forward as a tested tool to accelerate the pace for the achievement of the SDGs.
- The workshop emphatically noted that a significant majority of the current users are young people and thus focus on youth as well as youth led initiatives are important to achieve SDGs. The workshop reflected that access to digital technologies is not only transforming the way young people are communicating, learning and interacting with each other, but is also providing them with new possibilities to gather and share information. Therefore, youth's access to knowledge needs to be examined differently as the process to achieve at least ten sustainable development goals depends on their active role to provide continuous information. As Youth are now taken as one of the driving forces behind achieving the SDGs, there is a need to re-examine the entire ecosystem of Access to Knowledge. The session categorically



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- mentioned the need to enhance employability of young people and noted an alarming demand-supply gap in soft and digital skills.
- The workshop noted that from the context of achieving climate resilience to creating a condition for food and water security or managing hazardous e-waste, much will depend on how information and processed knowledge will be exchanged between and among young people. This shift will have to be realized in terms of how young people as the knowledge torchbearers will get involved in development processes. This will also have to be examined within the changing context of the use of ICTs – defined in terms of tools, contents and processes.
 - The session noted that groundbreaking initiatives such as Smart Campus Cloud Network (SCCN), and UNESCO's YouthMobile Initiative need to be further strengthened and reinforced to reap the benefit of new and smart technologies to make young men and women SDG ready.
 - The session also discussed inclusive digital policy for the youth through advocacy, capacity building, research and innovative technology. The session equally touched upon strategies to develop Youth-sensitive content and youth-focused learning tools, especially strategies to reduce radicalization and extremism while ensuring access to information. The session noted how access to information over the Internet has been associated with rising challenges with young people, including through the emergence of gated communication and virtual communities, which can lead to isolation and marginalization, and, in their most extreme form, may present a security issue.

IV. Main linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all



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- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies
- Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

V. Emerging Trends related to WSIS Action Lines identified during the meeting

- Youth's need for A2K and A2SK are increasing and therefore there is a need to develop special campus based programs.

VI. Suggestions for Thematic Aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2019

High Level Panel on Youth and A2K: How can New and Smart Technologies assist in bridging the digital and soft skills gap.