

# Digital

Becoming fluent in digital impact



## DIGITAL CAPACITY CAN TRANSFORM EDUCATION

For example, more than **244 million children and young people worldwide** – primarily girls – are out of school.<sup>33</sup> With stronger digital capacity, United Nations entities can support Member States in transforming education. Digital platforms – responsibly designed and tailored to context – can dramatically reduce access barriers for girls. With **interactive live classes powered by meaningful connectivity**, they can enable **affordable, inclusive, high-quality learning irrespective of circumstance**.

### WHAT BUILDING DIGITAL CAPACITY MEANS

Building modern digital capacities means **transforming an organization's technologies, skills and processes towards digitally enabled solutions** that improve connectivity, service delivery, stakeholder collaboration, engagement and decision-making – in ways that are secure, responsible and inclusive.

### WAYS IN WHICH DIGITAL EXPERTISE CAN IMPROVE THE UNITED NATIONS...

- Facilitating **intergovernmental dialogue** through better digital platforms and multilingual tools.
- Strengthening the **transparency and accountability** of United Nations entities via public dashboards.
- Employing **digital tools for simplified, automated drafting and formatting** of documentation.

### AND SUPPORT MEMBER STATES IN...

- Enabling **learning via online platforms** for the 244 million out-of-school children and young people.<sup>34</sup>
- Facilitating **financial inclusion** for the 800 million women without accounts via better **digital public infrastructure**.<sup>35</sup>
- Providing **better services** for refugees through mobile payments and digital registration.



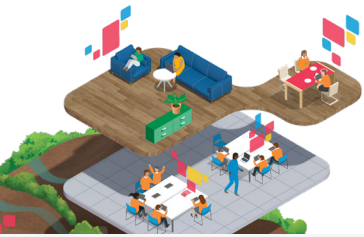
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## WHY WE NEED TO SHIFT

### TACKLING EXCLUSION

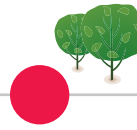
Twenty years ago, hardly any public organization offered digital services. Online platforms, including for email, were still at an early stage. Today, digital **technologies shape our lives, organizations, economies and societies**, creating opportunities that we must take and risks that we must tackle – including disproportionate risks of online abuse and exploitation of women and girls. **More than 5.3 billion people can now access online applications.**<sup>36</sup> Around 2.7 billion remain excluded, and over 250 million women and girls lack equal access.<sup>37</sup> Millions more face disproportionate risks of online abuse and exploitation. By strengthening their digital know-how and partnerships for inclusive and responsible digital services, United Nations entities can help to empower societies, close the digital divide and address risks of harm.



## WHERE WE ARE NOW

### EARLY STAGES

The United Nations system is in the **initial stages of its digital transformation**, and much potential is still untapped. As of 2022, **two thirds of United Nations entities reported having crafted digital strategies or action plans** to cultivate essential digital capabilities. **Only around 40 per cent of United Nations entities assess that they have the capacity to optimally assist Member States** in their digital journeys, and advanced expertise remains scarce. This is partly because global development assistance for digital transformations was **almost non-existent before 2019**, is still not a recognized “purpose code” in most aid sectors and makes up **less than 0.4 per cent of the \$350 billion in official flows.**<sup>38</sup> To accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, embracing digital approaches in our work is no longer a choice but an imperative – if we seek to leave no one behind.



## OUR GOAL

### DIGITAL FLUENCY

Our vision is a **digitally fluent United Nations system with the right talent, as well as human-centred digital systems, processes and tools to improve and reshape our work:** more efficient, agile, trusted, scalable, accessible, ethical, resilient and inclusive – and ready to assist Member States in building their own digital public infrastructure and ecosystems in ways that protect global values, human rights and gender equality.

The digital transformation of the United Nations system centres on a clear principle: **prioritizing action that delivers tangible value.** We adopt a hands-on “whole-of-organization” approach, addressing immediate opportunities with practical use cases. Taking agile approaches, we harness digital solutions to improve service delivery, stakeholder collaboration, user engagement and decision-making, thereby extending our reach and impact – starting with women and girls. We **support change with stronger organizational foundations:** improved training and recruitment, digital leadership and cultures, fit-for-purpose governance, new digital partnerships and user-centric technologies.

### State of play: United Nation system entities with...

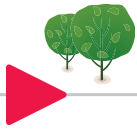


# 0.4%

of \$350 billion in official development assistance is allocated to digital initiatives annually<sup>39</sup>

# 50%

women in the digital community of practice<sup>40</sup>



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## HOW WE AIM TO CHANGE

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### ADAPTING CULTURES AND CAPABILITIES

#### IMPROVE OUR OFFER TO MEMBER STATES

- Develop **scalable digitally enabled solutions** for all United Nations system programmes.
- Provide Member States with **blueprints** for a “whole-of-society” digital transformation approach.
- Support Member States in building **inclusive, sustainable and resilient digital ecosystems** that support underserved regions, close digital divides and protect human rights.
- Help to **bridge digital divides** and ensure that women and girls are not left behind on the journey.
- Support **international digital cooperation** in line with the policy brief on a Global Digital Compact.

#### NURTURE DIGITAL CAPABILITIES

- Prioritize **digital approaches in all programmatic and operational areas**, taking a “whole-of-organization” approach to the digital transformation of our work.
- Pursue a **use-case-driven approach to digital transformation** – focused on real-world scenarios – from needs discovery to prioritization, solution design, testing and scale-up.
- Design **human-centred digital solutions tailored to context and user needs**, prioritizing the needs of women, girls and persons with disabilities.
- Learn to **integrate different digital technologies and platforms** into cohesive cloud and mobile ecosystems that transform service delivery, collaboration, communication and decision-making.
- Identify and safeguard against the **risks associated with digital technologies**, including in areas such as privacy, misinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

- Leverage **automation and the Internet of things** (connected devices that exchange data) to make processes more efficient and free up staff time.

#### SHIFT FOUNDATIONS AND CULTURES

- **Leadership.** Leaders to pursue a “whole-of-organization” vision for a digital rethink of their entities, translated into clear strategies backed by direct leadership engagement.
- **Training and culture.** Cultivate digitally fluent cultures, including with support for digital literacy, skills training and knowledge communities.
- **Job profiles.** Integrate digital expertise into every job and introduce new roles such as app developers, user interface designers and chief digital officers, promoting equitable geographical representation and the participation of women in the roles.
- **Joint centres of excellence.** Establish joint digital labs to accelerate shared digital solutions, platforms and infrastructures across pillars, clusters and entities.
- **Partnerships.** Foster geographically diverse partnerships with universities, businesses and civil society.
- **Governance.** Adopt governance approaches to enable decentralized action while ensuring resilient and secure access to shared digital resources.
- **Technology.** Empower programme and operations teams with scalable digital platforms and tools (software and hardware), guided and supported by information technology teams.
- **Metrics.** Establish indicators to measure progress in digital expertise.



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