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UN launches web portal to help young women pursue technology careers



Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union Hamadoun Touré. Photo: ITU/P.M. Virot

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The United Nations [launched](#) a new web portal today focusing on helping girls and women access job opportunities, training and career advice in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector.

The website – girlsiniict.org – was designed to inspire and help young women between the ages of 11 and 25 prepare for and pursue careers in technology by providing them with useful

resources such as links to scholarships, internships, ICT contests and awards, tech camps and online networks where they can interact with other women working in an industry that is largely male-dominated.

“It’s a little-known fact that women were the original programmers of ENIAC, the US Government’s first ever computer. But while teenage girls now use computers and the Internet at rates similar to boys, they are five times less likely to consider a technology-related career,” the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU) said in a news release.

“Research consistently shows that girls tend to choose careers where they feel they can ‘make a difference’ – healthcare, education, medicine. With this new portal, we’re trying to show them that there’s much more to ICTs than writing computer code,” said ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré.

“As we move towards an ICT-based knowledge society, the rise of apps and the explosion in telemedicine, remote learning systems and research and development make the ICT industry the most exciting choice any young person can make,” Mr. Touré said.

“I hope our new portal will serve as a showcase to attract the many talented girls and young women in countries worldwide to this booming sector,” he added.

ITU stressed the need for a change in attitudes towards ICT jobs, which according to experts, girls usually see as unfeminine, too challenging or just plain boring. However, the demand for these jobs worldwide is steadily increasing with not enough qualified individuals to fill the gap in the job market.

The European Union, for example, calculates that in 10 years there will be 700,000 more ICT jobs than there are professionals to fill them. Globally, that shortfall is estimated to be closer to two million.

The website seeks to inspire women to consider ICT as a career option by offering them information on the range of options available in the sector as well as provide them with real life examples of how women are already changing the industry.

“We hope our new Girls in ICT portal with its profiles and videos of women in ICTs will be a major catalyst in creating exciting and rewarding new choices for women worldwide,” said Brahima Sanou, Director of ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau. “Encouraging girls into the technology industry will create a positive feedback loop, in turn creating inspiring role models for the next generation.”

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