



## **National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria - Input to OHCHR Study on Solutions to Promote Digital Education for Young People and to Ensure their Protection from Online Threats**

### **Introduction**

The National Human Rights Commission extends its gratitude for the opportunity to submit this input to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding Human Rights Council Resolution 51/7 on youth and human rights.

As the apex human rights institution in Nigeria, our commitment is unwavering in promoting, protecting and enforcing the rights of all individuals, both within offline and online environments.

In the light of pervasive issues of global cyber bullying and harassment, the Commission acknowledges the importance of interventions targeted at championing human rights in digital spaces and protecting users from online threats. This input underscores Nigeria's dedication to actively participate in the international human rights framework, with particular emphasis on the promotion of digital education and protection of young persons from online threats. Within this document, the Commission also endeavours to offer a comprehensive overview of Nigeria's current legal and policy landscape in the digital domain, highlighting ongoing initiatives and challenges encountered in the protection of these rights.

### **Questionnaire:**

- 1. What are the main challenges that young people in your country face in accessing digital education? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized young people and those in vulnerable situations in your response.**

**Response:** The Nigerian government is actively striving to enhance the accessibility of digital education for all young persons within the country. However, certain challenges still exist, particularly among youths in marginalized or vulnerable situations. These challenges encompass insecurity, poverty, limited access to essential digital services, socioeconomic disparities leading to unequal access, inadequate technological infrastructure in rural areas, low digital illiteracy, gender-based discrimination, insufficient funding for information technology (ICT) programmes in institutions, lack of political commitment, unstable power supply, poor internet services, shortage of computer literate teachers in rural areas, poor implementation of ICT policies, high cost

associated with ICT facilities, inadequate support for repair and maintenance of ICT facilities, as well as issues of corruption among others.

**2. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that digital education is accessible and promoted among young people? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes directed at ensuring young people's universal access to digital education.**

**Response:** The Nigerian government is working to ensure accessible digital education and use for young people in the country through the implementation of policies and ICT strategies. Key initiatives include:

- a. The Nigerian Communications Commission, a government parastatal in Nigeria, recently launched an initiative adhering to International Telecommunications Union (ITU) guidelines, focusing on educating children and caregivers in indigenous languages. Concurrent efforts aim to incorporate online safety into school curriculums nationwide.
- b. The government has launched the e-learning platform utilized by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and other educational platforms to improve learning opportunities and flexibility for students and young people across Nigeria. Plans are underway to deploy digital learning boards to 253 institutions to ensure easy access to online academic resources and address the capacity limitations for approximately 2.2 million students.
- c. In 2023, the Federal Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF launched the Nigerian Learning Passport, a digital learning platform offering online and offline access to 15,000 curriculum-aligned learning and training materials in local languages. This initiative supports uninterrupted access to schools' learning management systems and homework support, serving over 280,000 users, including teachers, parents and young people since its launch.

**3. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that young people can realize their human rights online in a safe, empowering, and inclusive way?**

**Response:** In addition to government interventions highlighted in the above response, the Nigerian government has implemented further measures discussed below to address existing gaps.

The 2014 National Cybersecurity Strategy, domiciled in the Office of the Nigerian National Security Adviser, serves as the nation's readiness strategy. It outlines cohesive measures and strategic actions towards ensuring the security and protection of the

country's presence in cyberspace, safeguarding critical information infrastructure, and nurturing trusted cyber community.

In 2023, the House of Representatives proposed the "Child Online Access Protection Act, 2023," aiming to shield Nigerian children from online violence and exploitation. Addressing issues of online abuse, the bill proposes a framework for prevention, reporting, and enforcement through fines, imprisonment, and penalties to discourage online aggression. It mandates Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block access to violent content, regulate illegal material, and remove harmful online content affecting children. The bill has passed the second reading in the House of Representatives.

The National Strategy for Child Online Protection approved in 2023 by the federal government, is a policy aligned with Nigeria's ITU commitments, aimed at protecting children from unsolicited content online.

The 2023 Nigeria Data Protection Act emphasizes data protection principles and implementation requirements for enforcing digital rights. It includes specific provisions for the protection of personal information, child data privacy rights, and the establishment of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission.

The Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc) Act enacted in 2015 provides a legal framework for addressing cyber-related offences, including issues such as child pornography and cyber stalking.

- 4. What are the main gaps and challenges to young people's protection from online threats in law, policy, and practice in your country and the impacts on young people's human rights? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized young people and those in vulnerable situations in your response.**

**Response:** In Nigeria, challenges such as poverty, insecurity, limited access, low digital literacy, cyber-bullying, encounters with online predators, exposure to inappropriate content, concerns about privacy and data security, online scams, jurisdiction complexities and lack of strong infrastructure, exacerbated by rapid technological advancements, impede efforts to protect young people from online threats.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) separated from their families and primarily focused on basic survival needs may have interest in ICT, but it is often not be considered essential for survival. Hence, many IDP camps overlook or lack the provision of such services. Similarly, children in rural settings grappling with impoverished conditions encounter similar challenges in accessing essential online protection services.

**5. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that young people are protected from online threats? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes.**

**Response:** The government has been addressing online safety for young people through various measures. The National Policy on Information Technology tackles issues related to technology use, including online safety. Additionally, participation in the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) Child Online Protection Initiative aims to create a safer online environment for children. The Nigerian Communications Act provides a regulatory framework for the communications sector, indirectly impacting online activities while the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) plays a crucial role in formulation and implementation of policies and laws, such as the 2023 Nigeria Data Protection Act, for the development of information technology in Nigeria.

Furthermore, there are effective collaborations with national organisations, CSOs and international bodies to promote digital education and advance solutions on protection of young persons from online threats in Nigeria. It is worthy of note that the country has ratified the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.

**6. Can you provide information on any programs or activities your organization has implemented regarding solutions to protect digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats?**

**Response:** The National Human Rights Commission in Nigeria has implemented institutional measures to advance protection of digital rights. One of such measures is the establishment of a Technical Task Team on digital rights. The team is tasked to analyse and evaluate the human rights implications of proposed bills and policies related to digital rights to ensure the protection and promotion of these rights. Additionally, the team collaborates with CSOs and other national and international entities to develop policies that promote and protect digital rights.

In 2023, the Commission partnered with Spaces for Change and the Centre for Information and Technology and Development (CITAD) to conduct a capacity building workshop on digital rights and related matters for its staff. The training was targeted at enhancing the Commission's capacity to safeguard digital rights and integrate the promotion and protection of digital rights into its statutory mandate.

Other such collaborations with CSOs like CITAD, Paradigm Initiative Nigeria and Avocats Sans Frontières France have resulted in increased awareness of the importance of digital rights and legal protections in Nigeria. These collaborations have also facilitated education for key stakeholders on the protection of digital rights.