



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Minister for Information and Communications Technology

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SPEECH

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2023 INTERNATIONAL GIRLS IN ICT

THEME : " DIGITAL SKILLS FOR LIFE "

Good Morning to all and thank you for your presence as we, together with the global community, celebrate the International Girls in ICT Day with the theme " Digital Skills for Life."

The government of Prime Minister James Marape through my Ministry of Information and Communication Technology call on all our stakeholders, industry players and development partners to join in the celebrations by appreciating the roles of women and girls in the ICT.

This year's theme "**Digital Skills for Life**" is fitting, given the rapid changes in technology in recent years and the demand for digital literacy for survival in this changing world. Papua New Guinea like all developing nations has to adapt and keep abreast with these changes.

Let us commemorate this day, aimed at encouraging girls and young women to pursue careers in the dynamic field of ICT. For us in Papua New Guinea, it is also about bridging the digital divide by addressing the disparity in human capacity in technology.

Today I am proud to say that there have been girls and young women who were sponsored by *NICTA Girls in ICT Tertiary Scholarship Scheme* that are now working in the industry, and many more pursuing graduate studies in the ICT field.

With the program starting in 2012, 11 Female scholars have graduated since 2016. Four (4) were recent graduates on the 19 th April this year from the PNG University of Technology. Twelve (12) scholars are currently undergoing studies. Eleven (11) at the University of Technology and one (1) at the Waigani UPNG Campus.

I commend these girls and others who are pursuing ICT studies and who are in the ICT sector for pursuing the ICT profession and I urge them to work hard to make ICT a safe sector for Girls and women.

At this juncture I must take time to acknowledge and commend the National Information Communication Technology Authority (NICTA) for making this a yearly event for Papua New Guinean girls and women to be recognized for their capabilities, skills, and knowledge in the ICT industry.

If I am correct, NICTA is the only organization that has this program in recognizing Girls in ICT. It is commendable and noble to respect our female counterparts in the workplace.

The 2023 global theme stands to achieve three goals for Girls in ICT;

- ✓ Encourage girls and young women to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).
- ✓ Inspire girls and young women to work in STEM careers.
- ✓ Encourage the community and promote collaboration through partnership.
- ✓ Having said this, the Government of Papua New Guinea is continuing to assess and set policies to ensure a safe online environment for all citizens, and in particular, for our girls and young women to be granted equal access to the usage of internet and digital tools in a safe and secure cyber environment.

The Digital Transformation Policy 2020 (DTP) and the Digital Government Act 2022 are two important government policies that call for:

- Cyber Safety and cyber resilience, with the focus on increasing awareness on cyber security and cybercrime; and
- Data protection and privacy legislations to be put in place and the creation of cyber standards and guidelines be established and published.

As the Internet becomes more accessible and affordable, issues pertaining to cyber safety, cyber security, and cybercrime have also increased. The DTP and the Digital Government Act now provides a direction and are pathways towards strengthening collaboration and coordination among all stakeholders in pursuing the digital government and digital economy agenda and ensuring no one is left behind.

The Digital Government Act 2022 now gives the Department of ICT under my ministry, the legal mandate to coordinate the digital transformation within the public sector. Digital Safety is an area of priority for the department to coordinate.

Therefore, the Department of ICT and NICTA are tasked to ensure the broader goals for 'Girls in ICT' are translated into action strategies and are implemented to provide our females with equal opportunities and access to new and innovative digital technologies and services.

Progressively, NICTA has been actively overseeing and promoting the Girls in ICT program in Papua New Guinea with the primary goal of promoting gender balance in the ICT

sector through targeted support and assistance for young girls in tertiary education.

I stand here representing the Government and the ICT sector to ensure all Girls in ICT are granted safe and accessible internet. To ensure gender equality prevails and promote balance in our society.

I wish all the Girls in ICT a successful journey in their career paths. I would like to also encourage NICTA in collaboration with the DICT and other key stakeholders to continue the Girls in ICT initiative as we look forward to building human capacity that is critical to our digital PNG aspirations.

I want to also remind all parents that a safer Internet is also our responsibility and to ensure there is guidance to all our children and in particular our young girls.

While we embrace the Internet, it is also a serious concern that this is being abused at the detriment of our girls and women. My department of Information and Communication Technology is working with stakeholders such as Police and international partners to urgently address this.

Our country still faces significant challenges in expanding access to digital services and improving the quality of ICT infrastructure and many citizens still lack access to reliable and affordable digital infrastructure and services and this is a major area we all must work on together.

It is critical to assisting our citizens and especially our girls and women to access services and business instead of risking their lives and living their children to come to the urban center's to look for ICT services and I therefore urge you girls and women in ICT to place this as your urgent priority to work on improving our ICT services.

Before I conclude, I take time to also recognize and respect those who went before us as we pay homage to their lives in the 108 th ANZAC Day celebrated on the 25th April every year for Australian and New Zealand Soldiers. PNG citizens have played a role in the fighting that took place on our soil.

Women played a role in this war's as Radio Operators and Communication workers and I want to pay homage to them for their part in the overall objective of maintaining peace and freedom.

Thank you.

I wish you all a Happy International Girls in ICT Day! ..May God continue to bless you all.

HON. TIMOTHY MASIU, MP

Minister for Information and Communications Technology and Member for South Bougainville