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DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR WOMAN ADVANCEMENT

Empowering women in building an inclusive and sustainable digital future

JULY 24, 2025 | NEWS

History of DIWA

A collaboration of women to harness the role of ICTs to advance gender equality and empower women to actively participate in building an inclusive and sustainable digital future.

The Philippines actively creates and develops strategic interventions and programs to ensure the increased participation of Filipino women in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) with the aim of building an inclusive and sustainable digital future for the nation.

Toward this end, a nationwide program called "Digital Innovation for Woman Advancement (DIWA). DIWA, which is a Filipino word for "mind" or "spirit", is a directive pursuant to the Philippines' commitment to the international Telecommunications Union (ITU) as a council member. DIWA constitutes the ITU's plan to become a model organization for gender equality using ICT to empower women.

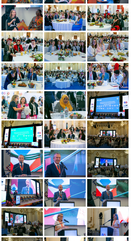
DIWA is inspired by the election of Doreen Bogdan-Martin as the first woman secretary general of ITU since its founding in 1865. The project was proposed by former DICT Undersecretary Jocelle Enrique Sigua as one of her key takeaways from the 2016 Plenipotentiary Conference of ITU at Busan, Korea.

DIWA is anchored on global, regional, and multilateral commitments that advance gender equality and women's digital empowerment, beginning with the **Resolution 70**, adopted at **ITU-PP 14 in Busan**, which calls for strengthened **gender inclusivity in ICT**. It aligns with **Sustainable Development Goal 5**, which mandates the mainstreaming of gender across all SDG targets, and is reinforced by the **NYSC Resolution 2122**, which calls for gender-responsive ICT policies and practices driving balanced, secure, sustainable, and inclusive growth. DIWA also draws from the **APEC La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth**, the **ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025**, and the **UNESCAP Women ICT Frontier Initiative** (WICI), all of which collectively emphasize women's leadership, participation, and capacity-building in the digital economy. Together, these frameworks provide the policy foundations for DIWA's mission to champion gender-inclusive digital development across the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific region.

DIWA is grounded in the urgent need to address the widening digital skills gap, as the world faces a global shortage of digitally skilled workers while millions of new jobs requiring advanced digital competencies continue to emerge. The women remain significantly underrepresented: enrollment of women in ICT courses remains low, only **14%** of ICT-related courses in ASEAN are taken by women, and women comprise just **30% of STEM graduates**. Across the region, women's participation in STEM and ICT fields consistently trails behind men, contributing to persistent gender disparities in digital skills and workforce participation. The smaller share of the ICT workforce, where women make up only **37%**, these gaps are compounded by the low digital competence of many college graduates and the reality that millions of female jobs globally are at high risk of displacement due to automation. Together, these challenges form the basis for DIWA's mission: to accelerate women's digital empowerment, strengthen their participation in the future workforce, and ensure that women are not left behind in the rapidly evolving digital economy.

DIWA aims to accelerate the harnessing of ICTs to achieve gender equality in line with **Sustainable Development Goal 5** of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its mission is to promote **equal access to ICTs for women and men** and ensure **equal participation of all genders**—these policy making and awareness initiatives are crucial for boosting women's digital literacy, fostering their active involvement and retrieval of women and girls in **digital technology, STEM education, ICT certifications, and digital skills training**, recognizing that these pathways are essential for meaningful participation in the digital economy. At its core, DIWA champions ICTs as powerful tools through which **gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls** can be advanced—embedded, and recognized as integral to inclusive, resilient, and future-ready societies.

DIWA's strategic focus on expanding women and girls with the full spectrum of the **demand-digital skills** needed to thrive in the modern economy—from foundational competencies such as basic computer literacy, digital communication, and online safety to advanced digital competencies and professional capabilities including **data analysis and interpretation, digital marketing, coding and software development, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing, mobile app development, UX/UI design, project management tools, and digital content creation**. By strengthening both essential and emerging digital skills, DIWA ensures that women and girls are not only able to participate in the digital world but are also prepared to lead in innovation, industry transformation, and the future of work.



The urgency to act stems from persistent gender gaps in ICT and STEM participation, the growing demand for digital skills, and the need to ensure that women and girls are not left behind in an increasingly technology-driven world. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts across government, social development, regulatory deliberations, coordinated action. DIWA responds by promoting **ICT and STEM education** for women and girls, addressing gender biases that limit their opportunities, and expanding access to **scholarships, mentorship, and industry partnerships** that open pathways into high-growth digital fields. It also advocates for **policy reforms** that strengthen gender-inclusive digital ecosystems and ensure that women and girls can fully participate in technology-driven economies. By aligning these efforts with global frameworks, DIWA draws a future where women's digital empowerment becomes a catalyst for national and regional progress.

DIWA Discussions

DIWA Discussions bring together a diverse community of participants—women and men from the private sector, government agencies, academic institutions, and public and private institutions, educators and trainers of the academe, volunteers and NGOs, digital nomads, freelancers, enthusiasts, and even supportive men and boys—to create an inclusive and empowering learning space. Sessions are enriched by speakers who are **women senior officials from the DICT, women ICT experts from the private sector, all professionals from various digital fields, young women CEOs of tech startups**, and other **successful Filipino women in ICT** who share their journeys, insights, and lessons learned. These discussions cover topics such as the factors affecting women's participation in ICT, the strategies needed to increase their involvement, and how each participant can contribute to advancing DIWA's goals—the dialogue becomes a meaningful exchange of insights, experiences, and commitments. This dynamic flow ensures that every DIWA Discussion is not just an event, but a catalyst for awareness, action, and community-driven empowerment.

The DIWA Post-Event Report captures the overall effectiveness and impact of each discussion by documenting key success indicators that reflect both participation and engagement. These include the **number of women participants and the sectors they represent**, providing insight into the diversity and reach of the discussion; **post-event survey responses** capturing participants' perceptions and learning; the dialogue's depth demonstrates how deeply the participants connected with the theme of digital empowerment and gender inclusivity; and the **identified ways forward or next steps**, which guide organizers and partners in continuous in sustaining momentum beyond the event. Together, these indicators ensure that every DIWA activity contributes meaningfully to long-term empowerment outcomes and continuous program improvement.

SEPTEMBER 8, 2025 | FEATURED, NEWS

Policy Innovators, Developers, and Digital Safety Advocates in PH Lead Push for Safety-by-Design

Metro Manila, September 2025 – Policy innovators, developers, and digital advocates in the Philippines are reshaping the conversation around online safety—placing responsibility, foresight, and inclusivity at the heart of technology design.

This shift was set full display during the **Safety-by-Design (SbD) Workshop** and the launch of the **National Models for Women's Safety Online (NMWSO)**, held September 3-4 at Marco Polo Ortigas, Metro Manila.

The three-day gathering brought together a cross-section of the country's digital ecosystem—from policymakers and lawyers to app developers, content creators, leaders, academia, and private tech companies. The shared goal: **to make safety non-negotiable in digital transformation**.

Supported by the **Philippine ICT Innovation Nation's (PIIN)** and the **Digital Innovation for Women Advancement (DIWA)**, and organized by **Development Gateway**, the event covered key stakeholders from across government, civil society, academia, and the technology sector.

The national and regional gathering of companies, innovators, policymakers, and young technology advocates determined to reimagine the digital landscape so safer, more inclusive, and fundamentally anchored on human dignity.

"Innovation is only meaningful when it is safe, inclusive, and empowering," said **Atty. Jocelle Enrique Sigua**, founder of DIWA and PIIN, who voice out in sessions. "Just as we design for efficiency and user experience, we must design for protection—especially for women, children, and vulnerable groups who are most at

risk online?

The Seven Core Principles of Safety-by-Design

Anne Kilroy, an expert in digital transformation and ethical innovation from Development Gateway, highlighted in her lecture the seven core principles of Safety-by-Design, a framework she developed to guide ethical product development for innovators in the Philippines. She underscored the importance of **Proactive Harm Prevention**, urging designers to anticipate risks before they escalate, while stressing **Service Provider Responsibility**, which places the duty of safeguarding users squarely on digital platforms. Equally vital is **User Empowerment**, giving people meaningful control over their digital lives, and **Transparency and Accountability**, which build trust through openness and measurable responsibility. Kilroy also emphasized **Lifecycle Integration**, embedding safety considerations from the earliest idea to final deployment, and the **Synergy with Privacy and Security**, which ensures these protections work together to form a robust product. Finally, she called for **Inclusivity**, designing systems with diversity, fairness, and accessibility at their core—principles meant to guide innovators toward responsible and human-centered digital transformation.

"These principles," Kilroy told participants, "are the backbone of a movement that requires responsibility, foresight, and inclusivity."

Safety as a Continuous Process

As the main convener for S&D in the Philippines, **Christine Suesa** op reminded participants that S&D is **not a checklist** or one-time requirement—it is **a continuous process** woven into the entire product development lifecycle.

From the initial stages to design, development, testing, deployment, and updates, safety must be present at every stage. This requires **clear accountability**, so specific individuals or teams must be identified as S&D champions to ensure principles are upheld and the rule of innovation.

Christine stressed that accountability must be paired with **organizational culture change**. Decisions in product design, engineering, policy, legal, trust, and safety functions should all be guided by the same commitment to protection and inclusivity.

Her message resounded: **S&D is not an add-on—it is a living commitment that grows alongside the technology itself.** For women and vulnerable communities in the Philippines, she argued, safety cannot be an afterthought—it must be designed in from the very beginning.

Privacy, Security, and Learning from Incidents

During the workshop, **Gerald Mutuba**, a technology strategist from Kenya known for scalable, user-centric solutions, stressed that safety cannot be separated from privacy and security. He described them as the **twin anchors of trust**: security safeguards systems against unauthorized access, while privacy protects people's rights through data minimization, meaningful control, and responsible information use. When aligned, he argued, privacy and security form the **foundation of Safety-by-Design**, ensuring that users are not only protected but also empowered.

But Gerald reminded the audience that **no system is flawless**. Even with strong protections, incidents will happen. What matters, he said, is how organizations respond and learn from them. He walked participants through the value of **structured Safety Incident Reviews**, which go beyond identifying what happened to asking deeper questions:

- Why did controls fail?
- What were the root causes?
- How could harm have been prevented?
- What systemic changes are needed to stop it from recurring?

By treating incidents as opportunities for improvement rather than isolated failures, platforms can evolve and mature.

He then combined these ideas to the **Product Development Lifecycle (PDLC)**. At every stage—from ideation and design through development, testing, deployment, and iteration—Gerald urged innovators to **weave in safety considerations**. He illustrated how risks can be mapped and designed out from the start, how mitigations can be proportionate and tested, and how products must be configured and updated to continuously reduce risks. Importantly, he emphasized the value of running **pre-launch "vulnerability tests"**—exercises that simulate potential misuse before a product reaches users.

Gerald's message was clear: **safety is not a parallel track, but an integrated discipline**. It requires the alignment of privacy and security, continuous learning from incidents, and accountability across every stage of the product lifecycle. In his words:

> "Safety by Design means weaving protection into every stage of innovation—from the spark of an idea, to deployment, and back again through lessons learned."

Prototypes Signal Business Case for Safer Platforms

The culmination of the Safety-by-Design (SbD) workshop showcased how innovators in the Philippines are beginning to translate safety principles into **practical, market-ready solutions**.

A report delivered by **Sheila Galatino** of Plan International Pilipinas mapped the current landscape of online platforms in the country. Her findings revealed **fragmented reporting mechanisms, inconsistent accountability systems,** and **limited user protections**—gaps that not only endanger users but also create **regulatory and reputational risks** for technology companies operating in the market.

The presentation set the stage for **a collaborative prototyping exercise**. Policy innovators, developers, and digital advocates were grouped into **cross-functional teams** tasked with building prototypes for a **unified reporting hub**. Developers worked on coding functional mock-ups, advocates tested accessibility and usability features, while policy leaders focused on ensuring compliance with emerging regulatory standards.

The exercise sees **less a classroom task and more a live demonstration** of how safety considerations can be engineered into competitive, scalable platforms.

These prototypes were then subjected to a **regulator review simulation**—a pressure test designed to stress the scrutiny of both regulators and markets. Teams faced pointed questions about compliance gaps, long-term viability, and alignment with SbD's seven core principles. While the process exposed blind spots, it also validated designs that treated safety as **central to product development** rather than an afterthought.

For business leaders observing the session, the message was clear: **SbD is not simply about ethics—it is about market trust, risk management, and future-proofing digital products**.

NMWWD Grand Challenge

The program closed with the announcement of the **NMWWD Grand Challenge**—an open call for innovators across the Philippines to submit working solutions that embed SbD into real-world systems. Winning prototypes are expected to become **national models** and, potentially, **new industry benchmarks**.

Organizers framed the challenge not only as a call to **social responsibility** but also as a **growth opportunity**, urging innovators to recognize that safety can be a **competitive advantage** in the country's fast-growing digital economy.

FULL TEXT:

Welcome Address by Atty. Jocelle Batapa-Sigue

Safety-by-Design Workshop | September 2, 2025 | Marco Polo Ortigas, Metro Manila

Magandang umaga po sa aking lahat.

On behalf of the **Digital Innovation for Women Advancement (DIWA)** and the **Philippine ICT Innovation Network (PIIN)**, I warmly welcome each of you to this important **Safety-by-Design Workshop** and the launching of the **National Models for Women's Safety Online (NMWWS)**.

We are gathered here because we all believe in one powerful truth: **innovation is only meaningful when it is safe, inclusive, and empowering**.

The Role of DIWA and PIIN

Allow me first to share the vision of the organizations I represent. **DIWA** was founded on the principle that women must not only participate in the digital economy but *shape it*. Our mission is to empower women innovators, leaders, and entrepreneurs by providing opportunities, mentorship, and platforms to co-create solutions. We know that when women are safe online, they can lead, influence, and build digital futures that benefit everyone.

PIIN envisions a strong and sustainable digital innovation ecosystem in the Philippines—one where startups, MSMEs, researchers, government, and communities collaborate to harness technology for inclusive development. Our goal is to ensure that innovation does not remain concentrated in urban centers but reaches the countryside, where digital opportunities can transform lives.

Together, DIWA and PIIN are committed to advancing countryside innovation, startup growth, digital job generation, and ethical technology use—always anchored on inclusivity and empowerment.

Lifelong Learning for a Knowledge Society

How do we sustain innovation in a world that is constantly changing? The answer lies in **lifelong learning**.

The **World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025** identifies the most in-demand skills between 2025 and 2030, grouped into three clusters:

- **Interpersonal skills**: resilience, empathy, leadership, and lifelong learning must
- **Cognitive skills**: analytical thinking, creative problem-solving, and systems thinking
- **Technological skills**: AI and data literacy, programming, cybersecurity, and digital design

These are not simply "work skills"; they are **survival skills** in the digital age. To build a knowledge society, each of us must remain learners. As innovators, we cannot assume we know everything. Ignorance is not only as a representative of my organizations or as an advocate, but also as a student—excited to learn with all of you.

Design Thinking and Embedding Safety

Now, how do we apply these skills to the urgent issue of **online safety**?

The concept of **Safety-by-Design** aligns perfectly with **design thinking**. Design thinking begins with empathy—understanding the real needs of users. It drives us to define problems clearly, ideate boldly, prototype quickly, and test iteratively.

Embedding safety is never about adding security features at the end. It is about designing with people in mind from the start. **Safety-by-Design** means that safety is not a bolt-on, but an integral part of the design process, ensuring that products are free from vulnerabilities for women, children, and vulnerable groups most at risk online.

Safety-by-Design challenges us to ask:

- How will this technology affect its users?
- Who might be excluded or harmed?
- How do we prevent abuse before it happens?

These are not just technical questions—they are **ethical and societal questions** demanding them requires collaboration across government, civil society, industry, and communities—just as we are doing here today.

Building the Future Together

Friends, the Philippines is at a critical moment. Digital transformation is reshaping our economy, our jobs, and our daily lives. Reports show that by 2030, AI alone could add over **$900 billion** to Southeast Asia's GDP—but only if we prepare our people with the right skills and protect them with the right safeguards.

This is why gatherings like this workshop matter. They remind us that **digital progress without safety is fragile progress**. They remind us that **technology without trust is technology without power**.

So, let us use these three days not only to deepen our understanding but also to co-create solutions—solutions that will allow every Filipino to benefit from innovation while being protected from harm.

These are not just technical questions—they are **ethical and societal questions** demanding them requires collaboration across government, civil society, industry, and communities—just as we are doing here today.

Your Role in the Safety-by-Design Movement

As we begin, I invite all of you to wear two hats: **the hat of the innovator** and **the hat of the student**. Innovators—because we must design bold, inclusive, and safe systems. Students—because we must remain open to learning, unlearning, and relearning in this fast-changing digital era.

Together, through **Safety-by-Design**, lifelong learning, and inclusive innovation, we can build a future where the Philippines is not just a digital player, but a **true knowledge society**—one where every citizen has the skills, the confidence, and the safety to thrive.

Maraming salamat, and welcome to the workshop. Mabuhay!

AUGUST 21, 2014 | PROGRAMS

Who We Are

The **PHILIPPINE ICT INNOVATION NETWORK, INC.** (PIIN) established on May 5, 2016 is a coalition of individuals, groups and organizations with long years of proven track record as key actors in the ICT sector, who share the common cause of championing the use of ICT and the uplifting of the ICT sector as growth drivers of the economy of the Philippines by ensuring that the sector is attractive, competently and effectively represented in the Congress, as the highest policy-making body of the country.

Original Logo in 2016

Our Vision

A Filipino citizenry that is fully represented and transformed in their demand for a society that provides them decent jobs and economic opportunities, quality education and knowledge transfer, avenues for innovation, advanced technology and entrepreneurship, and transparent and accountable governance so that the country is transformed into becoming one of the thriving and competitive economies of the world.

Our Mission

To represent the collective and inclusive voice of every Filipino in the highest levels of policy making in advocating the effective, efficient and responsive use of information and communication technology (ICT) in key areas such as:

- **BUSINESS, TRADE AND COMMERCE**
- **ENTREPRENEURSHIP**
- **EDUCATION AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT**
- **CYBERSECURITY AND PRIVACY**
- **INNOVATION**

Our Strategies

To advocate and promote the utilization, development and integration of information and communications technology (ICT) in governance, education and socio-economic development

To undertake and conduct ICT-related programs, projects and activities to promote ICT in business, commerce and trade, education and human resource development, and innovation and technology

To establish partnerships and linkages with individuals and organizations with similar or complementary advocacies and programs

Our OBJECTIVES under our BEC Articles

1. **To provide a venue for individuals, groups, and organizations with proven track record as key movers in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector to undertake projects and activities together for a common vision of improving the economy of the Philippines**
2. **To promote and foster collaboration and camaraderie among ICT stakeholders in the Philippines.**