



## **World Assembly for Women: WAW!2022 Concept Note**

### **(Reference) Current Status and Challenges Concerning Women and Digital/STEM Education**

The use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and big data, is advancing, and digital transformation is underway to transform people's lives<sup>(Note1)</sup>. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the digital divide between men and women. In low- and middle-income countries, women are less likely to possess mobile phones than men and have more limited access to the Internet, resulting in gender disparity in access to information about the COVID-19 pandemic and even the risk of infection. The digital divide between men and women also affected access to education, as classes are widely held online<sup>(Note2)</sup>. Digital divide also exist between urban and rural areas, with reports indicating that many of the 3.7 billion people without Internet access are poor, have limited access to education, or are women and girls from rural areas<sup>(Note3)</sup>.

On the employment side, there is a growing demand for digital talents<sup>(Note4)</sup>. However, according to the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation's (OECD) 2021 Global Gender Report, the percentage of women in the cloud computing sector is 14.2%, up only 0.2 percentage points from February 2018 before the pandemic. Similarly and the percentage of women in the data and AI sector is 32.4%, down by 0.1 points<sup>(Note5)</sup>.

Female students in primary and secondary education in Japan scored the highest among the G7 in mathematics in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)<sup>(Note6)</sup>, conducted by the OECD, but the percentage of women completing higher education in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields was the lowest among the G7 at 16.7%. According to UN Women, even in Central and South Asia, where the percentage of female students majoring in STEM fields is 40.6%, higher than in Japan, there are

barriers to women's employment in these fields. Thus, improving women's digital skills and supporting their employment in STEM fields is one of the challenges to overcome globally.

Against this backdrop, at this year's G7 Summit, leaders recognized the importance of women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in the digital transformation. In April of this year, the Government of Japan also adopted the "Women's Digital Human Resource Development Plan <sup>(Note7)</sup>". Over the next three years, it will carry out the plan nationwide horizontally through public-private collaboration, from supporting women in acquiring basic digital literacy skills to fostering professional human resources with high-level skills. Even in the digital technology field, working conditions and wages vary widely, and some jobs require long working hours, making it difficult for women to participate in <sup>(Note8)</sup>. A future initiative is to ensure flexibility of work and stable income as the number of women who can become digital professionals increases <sup>(Note9)</sup>.

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(Note1) [塩満 典子, “科学技術・イノベーション分野における男女共同参画・ダイバーシティ推進政策の歴史と多様性向上の意義\(STI ホライズン 2022 年第8巻1号\)”](#) (Japanese)

(Note2) [UNICEF, “Advancing Girls' Education and Gender Equality through Digital Learning”](#)

(Note3) [UN Women, “Learn the facts: Rural women and girls”](#)

(Note4) [男女共同参画会議, “女性デジタル人材育成プラン”](#) (Japanese)

(Note5) [World Economic Forum, “Global Gender Gap Report 2021”](#)

(Note6) [OECD, “G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps 2022”](#)

(Note7) [男女共同参画会議, “女性デジタル人材育成プラン”](#) (Japanese)

(Note8) [内閣府男女共同参画局, “計画実行・監視専門調査会\(第11回\)議事録”](#) p.14 (Japanese)

(Note9) [ibid.](#) p.23 (Japanese)