

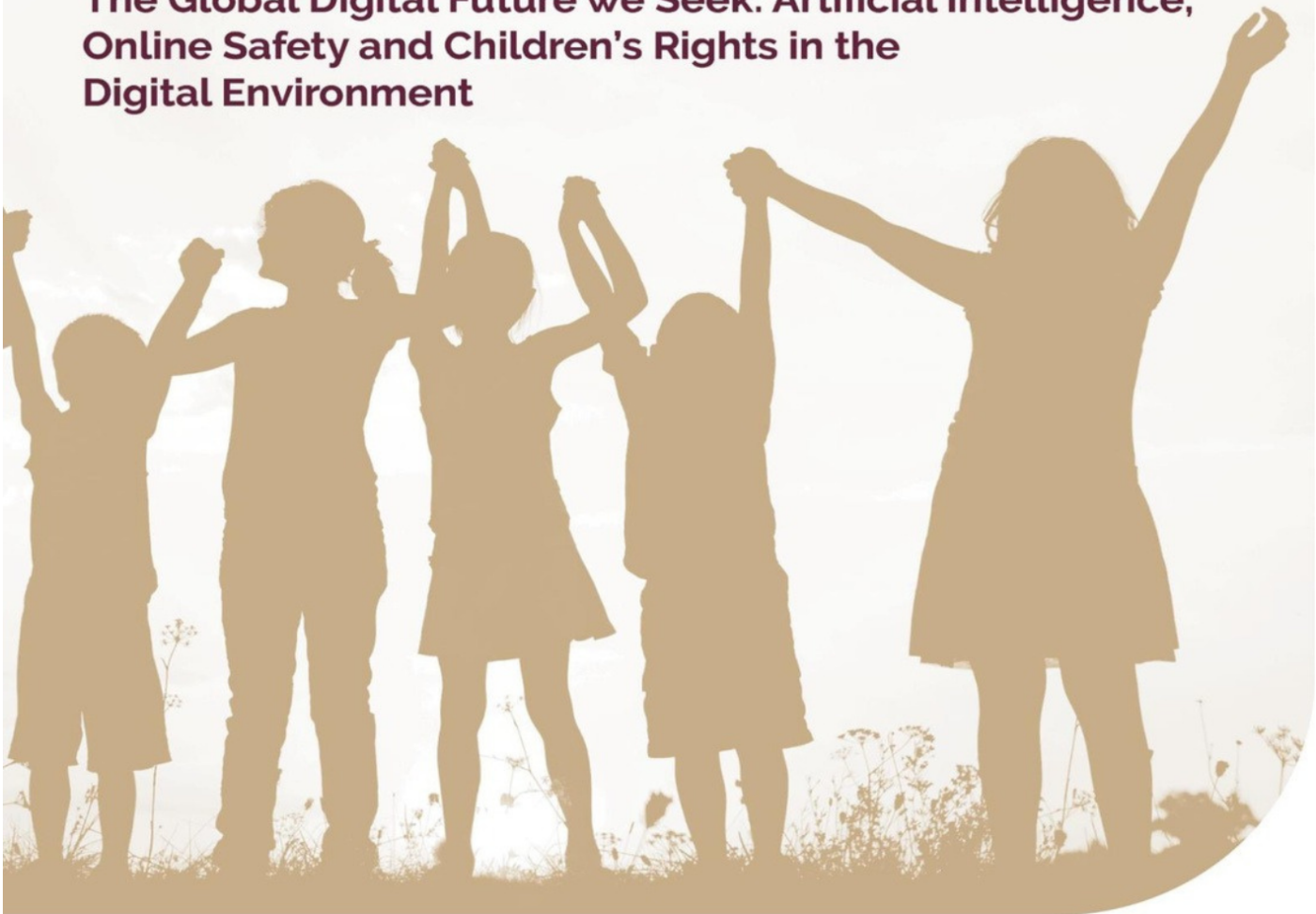


Stellenbosch
UNIVERSITY
IYUNIVESITHI
UNIVERSITEIT

Law
eyoMthetho
Regsgeleerdheid

2nd International Conference on Children's Rights

The Global Digital Future we Seek: Artificial Intelligence,
Online Safety and Children's Rights in the
Digital Environment



In partnership with



1 Background

The fourth industrial revolution (4IR), internet connectivity and artificial intelligence have extended and, in some instances, changed the scope and meaning of the rights protected in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)¹ and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).² The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child therefore published its General Comment No. 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, asserting that the full scope of children's rights apply equally to the digital environment. Similarly, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child has also emphasized that the rights of children enshrined in the ACRWC also apply in the online context.³ Over the past few years, internet usage has grown globally and the internet has become a key public infrastructure that connects people, companies and businesses while also facilitating service delivery and economic growth.⁴ As of February 2025, there were 5.56 billion active internet users worldwide representing 63.9 percent of the global population.⁵ In Africa, about 590 million people were reported to be internet users as of March 2021. These figures include children, who represent a third of all internet users in the world,⁶ and are increasingly exposed to the digital environment. The increase in access and usage of technology presents important opportunities for the realisation of children's rights, such as the right to education through online learning, the right to participate, the enjoyment their fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression through expressing their views and receiving information on issues that concern them.⁷ However, while increased access to technologies and the internet have created opportunities for children, it also presents emerging risks for children on- and offline.⁸ These developments raise important questions about the best ways to ensure children leverage technology-facilitated opportunities while remaining protected in the digital sphere.

The last few years have witnessed unparalleled growth of AI-based technologies. Yet, legal instruments protecting children's rights and other vulnerable groups inadequately address the challenges and issues raised by the use of AI.⁹ The design and deployment of algorithms and other high-risk AI systems raises questions about the role of governments, tech companies and internet service providers (ISPs) in keeping children safe online, including by assessing AI systems before they are put on the market and throughout their lifecycle.¹⁰

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, GA Res 44/25, annex, 44 UN GAOR Supp (No 49) 167, UN Doc A/44/49 (1989) entered into force 2 September 1990.

² African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, OAU Doc CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (1990) entered into force 29 November 1999.

³ https://www.acerwc.africa/sites/default/files/2023-02/DAC%20CONCEPT%20NOTE%202023_EN.pdf

⁴ J Bryne & P Burton P "Children as Internet users: how can evidence better inform policy debate?" (2017) 2 *Journal of Cyber Policy* 39.

⁵ Statista "Worldwide digital population 2025" <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>> (accessed 31 March 2025).

⁶ S Livingstone; J Byrne & J Carr "One in three: Internet Governance and children's rights" UNICEF-Office of Research Innocenti Discussion Paper (2016-01) 7. <<https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/papers/25211110/14>>

⁷ Livingstone S & O'Neill B "Children's rights online: challenges, dilemmas and emerging directions" in van der Hof et al (ed) *Minding Minors Wandering the Web: Regulating Online Child Safety*. Information technology and law series (2014) 19-38. <https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/62276/>

⁸ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights "Protecting children's rights in the digital age: An ever growing challenge" <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/protecting-children-s-rights-in-the-digital-world-an-ever-growing-challen-1>> (accessed 22 March 2022).

⁹ UNICEF, *Artificial intelligence and children's rights*, at 5

¹⁰ See IE Nwafor 'Artificial intelligence facial recognition surveillance and the breach of privacy rights: the 'clearview AI' and 'rite aid' case studies' (2023) *IPLJ* 88; see also

Worse, still, existing AI technologies and ethical models are rarely crafted with vulnerable populations in mind. Evidence suggests these groups, including children, will be subjected to violation of their human rights notably through AI discrimination and representational biases; privacy and data protection risks and harms and manipulation.¹¹

Access to internet and mobile devices in schools also raise questions about children's academic performance, cyberbullying and online safety.¹² Without nuanced national and school-level policies regulating mobile phone/device access and use at schools, there is often a high risk that a toxic cyberculture may develop which may and expose innocent children to cyberbullying, revenge porn and other digital harms. Anecdotal evidence suggests that children of all ages are potentially victims of cyberbullying, but the risk increases as they grow older.¹³ Advancements in generative AI and deepfake technology can be used to create and spread harmful content about children and youth.¹⁴ The malicious potential of these technologies is often used to perpetrate multiple forms of cyberbullying. Toxic school environments and cybercultures adversely impact children's rights to the highest attainable standard of health; privacy; access to good quality education; freedom of expression; the right to be heard; leisure and play; equality and non-discrimination; freedom from multiple forms of exploitation and many more.

The digital world runs on exchange—often not in cash, but in time, attention, and personal data. Children's participation in the platform economy has blurred the distinction between the child's right to play and participate and the child's right to be protected from economic exploitation, and child labour, thereby creating new forms of exploitation that are not effectively regulated by existing laws and policies.¹⁵ This risk is prevalent among online games with loot boxes to manipulative design tricks and the rise of child influencers or 'kidfluencers.'¹⁶

Businesses operate on a commercial basis, and this can include a commercial relationship with children and profit from children's time, attention, and personal data—often without their awareness or meaningful consent.

<https://5rightsfoundation.com/children-and-ai-code-of-conduct/#:-:text=Overview,children%20by%20design%20and%20default.>

¹¹ See generally DO Eke, K Wakunuma & S Akintoye 'Introducing responsible AI in Africa' in DO Eke, K Wakunuma & S Akintoye (eds) *Responsible AI in Africa Challenges and Opportunities* (2023) 6; M Wang, Y Qin & W Li 'Identifying personal physiological data risks to the Internet of Everything: The case of facial data breach risks' (2023) 10(1) *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*.

¹² See M Rahali, B Kidron & S Livingstone, Smartphone policies in schools: What does the evidence say? Available at <https://www.digital-futures-for-children.net/smartphone-policies>.

¹³ Cyberculture Foundation, 'Cyberculture Foundation's roadshow takes a stand against school bullying in South Africa', IOL, 10 February 2025.

¹⁴ Cyberculture Foundation and Vuma, 'Vuma Combats Bullying with Anti-Bullying Awareness Roadshow' 5 February 2025.

¹⁵ See CRC Committee, General comment No. 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment (2021) paras 112-116

¹⁶ Influencers are individuals with extensive followings on social media platforms. See also <https://digitalfuturescommission.org.uk/blog/when-are-commercial-practices-exploitative-ensuring-child-rights-prevail-in-a-digital-world/><https://5rightsfoundation.com/resource/updated-report-disrupted-childhood-the-cost-of-persuasive-design/> in relation to online games, data practices, dark patterns and risky designs.

Children also often share user-generated content,¹⁷ including images and videos, for commercial and non-commercial purposes to eventually generate public interest in a particular subject or topic or event.¹⁸ Kidfluencers often target young audiences who are similar in age.¹⁹ Kidfluencer marketing is a profitable marketing tool used by companies to boost sales of goods and services.²⁰ In a practice popularly known as ‘sharenting,’ parents may also transmit or store private information about children through social media accounts and digital channels, often without the child’s consent.²¹ Through commercial sharenting practices, “parents use their families’ private experiences, with a focus on their children”, to ultimately generate income.²²

International and regional child rights instruments broadly provide for children’s rights to protection, provision and participation. However, the exact scope and implications (in relation to law, policy and practice) of these rights remain unexplored, particularly in relation to the digital environment. Children’s rights also dictate how countries should regulate and respond to the conduct of non-state actors such as businesses and multinational companies operating within and beyond their territories.²³ Currently, international cooperation and the extraterritorial application of children’s rights have become pressing issues due to ongoing developments and challenges with extraterritorial impacts. These include, among others, the digital environment (including artificial intelligence), armed conflict and climate change. It is worth noting that these challenges and developments the interpretation and application of children’s rights and, in some instances, may require new legal and policy frameworks to ensure that children are protected from harm.

2 Rationale for the Conference

Over thirty-five years after the adoption of child rights instruments, and four years since the publication of the UN General comment no. 25 recognizing children’s rights extend to the digital environment, it is fitting for all relevant stakeholders to reflect on the extent to which the proliferation of digital technologies and access to the internet are (re)shaping the exercise of children’s rights. The following key questions highlight the need for this reflection:

- 1 Scope and exercise of children’s rights: How is the development of digital technologies, access to devices (cellphones, laptops, and iPads) and the internet transforming the scope, exercise, interpretation and application of children’s rights?
- 2 Impact on the parent-child-state relationship: How are these technological advancements affecting the dynamic between parents, children and the state, including through the need for effective regulation of children’s experiences online?

¹⁷ See K C Soylemez “4W of User-Generated content: Why Who We Are and Where We Post Influence What We Post” (2021) 15 *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* 386.

¹⁸ House of Commons Committee (Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport Committee), *Report on Influencer Culture Lights, Camera, Inaction?* (2022) para 3.

¹⁹ M Masterson “When Play Becomes Work: Child Labor Laws in the Era of “Kidfluencers” (2021) 169 *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 577 at 583. HCC *Report on Influencer Culture* (2022) para 117.

²⁰ See R Fishbein Growing up Viral: “Kidfluencers” as the New Face of Child Labor and the Need for Protective Legislation in the United Kingdom” (2022) 54 *George Washington International Law Review* 127 13; Van der Hof *The International Journal of Human Rights* 846. See also “Kids Digital Advertising Market” *Transparency Market Research*.

²¹ Plunkett *Sharenthood* xxii.

²² Plunkett *Sharenthood* xx.

²³ See <https://www.unicef.org/childrightsandbusiness/reports/b-tech-contribution>.

- 3 Access to education: How does increased access to digital technologies and the internet influence children's right to education, particularly in the context of online learning and digital resources?
- 4 Exposure to harmful content and risk of harmful contact: What are the risks posed by children's exposure to online content and how does this affect their well-being and safety? How do these developments increase the risk of children encountering harmful contact with strangers in the digital space, and what measures are needed to protect them?
- 5 What are the legal obligations and specific roles of state and non-state actors in building a digital world that mitigates the harms and expands the benefits of artificial intelligence and access to the digital world for children?
- 6 What is the role of governments, multilateral entities such as the United Nations, the African Union and Regional Economic Communities in ensuring a safe digital world for children? How adequate, effective and meaningfully resourced/equipped are existing national and international institutional mechanisms for protecting and empowering children in the digital sphere?

There are also concerns regarding the 'harvesting' and processing of personal data. These data practices are often exploitative and they prioritize profit-driven motives such as targeted advertising. This leads to negative consequences, including increased screen time, addiction, anxiety, and depression among children. In addition to identifying mitigatory measures for these risks, the conference will explore how children, caregivers, states, and non-state actors can leverage the digital environment to promote the enjoyment of children's rights.

3 Aims and objectives

This experience and knowledge sharing conference seeks to create a platform for all stakeholders, including students, researchers, judges, lawyers, and child rights practitioners, to learn from one another and to incorporate good practices in promoting children's rights in the digital environment. Specifically, the Conference seeks to:

- ❖ Explore the meaning and scope of children's rights in the digital space, including the obligations they impose on state and non-state actors;
- ❖ Engage with, listen to and learn from children about their experiences in the digital environment, including their perception of opportunities, risks and effective interventions necessary to create safer and rights respecting online spaces;
- ❖ Generate evidence and build knowledge on artificial intelligence, data protection, online safety and children's rights in the digital environment;
- ❖ Track progress made by governments, non-state actors, businesses and the courts in protecting children online and ensuring accountability for digital harms committed against children, including those in situations of vulnerability;
- ❖ Reflect on the implications of children's rights and data protection standards for domestic laws, policies and programmes affecting children in the digital sphere;
- ❖ Enable the sharing of experiences on opportunities, gaps, challenges and good practices in the implementation of children's rights in the digital environment;
- ❖ Facilitate networking and post-conference collaboration among the academia, industry, practitioners, governments, UN and AU agencies, and civil society organisations carrying out work on children's rights in the digital sphere; and

- ❖ Create effective pathways for disseminating research, knowledge and evidence on children’s rights in the digital sphere, contributing to law, policy and programmatic reform in Africa and beyond.

4 Thematic focus

The conference focuses on the following themes:

- ❖ Artificial intelligence, data protection and children’s rights, privacy and safety online
- ❖ Safer school environments and child rights-based cybercultures
- ❖ Children’s rights, digital parenting and the changing family
- ❖ The digital environment and child participation
- ❖ The platform economy, kidfluencing and children’s rights
- ❖ Non-state actors, business and children’s rights
- ❖ Gender and children’s rights in the digital environment
- ❖ Children with disabilities and other situations of vulnerability
- ❖ Institutional mechanisms for protecting children in the digital sphere
- ❖ Cross-cutting topics

4.1 Artificial Intelligence, Data Protection and Children’s Safety Online

Papers in this stream may analyse the intersection between AI technologies, data protection and children’s rights and safety in the digital world. International and domestic regulation of the digital environment helps ensure safe, secure and trustworthy AI systems that respect and advance human rights, including those of children. The design and development of technologies without consideration for children, combined with the pervasive processing of children’s behavioural data, raises concerns about children’s right to privacy, discrimination,, and the potential for exploitation and manipulation impacting their freedom of thoughts and autonomy.

4.2 Safer School Environments and Child Rights-based Cybercultures

Authors in this stream should unpack the need for safer school environments and mutually respectful, child rights-based cybercultures. Across the world, rising internet connectivity has created opportunities for children to learn and develop. Children’s access to smartphones, tablets, laptops, iPads and other similar gadgets, coupled with the rapid expansion of social media and other attention-demanding products, are giving rise to growing concerns that access to mobile devices in schools generally undermine their academic learning and intellectual/social development, yet evidence is scarce. This potentially adversely impacts the attainment of academic outcomes; children’s mental health, social relationships and personal safety on- or offline.²⁴ While many schools across the globe have been embracing a wide variety of educational technologies (EdTech), existing evidence suggests that one in seven countries ‘has recently introduced policies to limit or prevent pupil access to smartphones at school, and more are debating such policies’.²⁵ Papers in this stream may analyse the manner in which state and non-state actors regulate smart phone/device access and use in and out of school, including placing focus on whether

²⁴ See M Rahali, B Kidron & S Livingstone, Smartphone policies in schools: What does the evidence say? Available at <https://www.digital-futures-for-children.net/smartphone-policies>.

²⁵ As above.

different forms of regulation are consistent with international and domestic children's rights instruments.

4.3 Children Rights, Digital Parenting and the Changing Family

Papers in this stream may analyse the intersection between children's rights, digital parenting and the changing family. The fourth industrial revolution is shaping parenthood and childhood in new and unexpected ways. In terms of article 5 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, parents have the right and duty to guide and direct their children in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities. As children grow in age and maturity, parents are expected to cede some decision-making powers to the child to prepare them for increased autonomy when they reach the age of majority.²⁶ In the digital environment, the meaning and scope of 'parental guidance' is fluid and may in some cases, be used to deny children 'zones of autonomy' to which they are legally entitled in light of their age and maturity. This may lead to egregious violations of children's privacy and other rights, in the name of exercising parental responsibilities. In many cases, the relationship is turned on its head, as children educate their parents on how to operate their devices and navigate the digital landscape. Against this background, some scholars have already demonstrated how AI can be used to ensure that children are safe online by enabling them to have AI guardians that generate prompts to alert children that they are about to access harmful content that is neither age-appropriate nor consistent with their evolving capacities.²⁷ In light of these developments, papers in this stream may focus on good digital parenting practices, including enabling parental mediation,²⁸ and the extent to which legal and policy frameworks are effectively regulating children's rights and parental responsibility in the digital space.

4.4 The Digital Environment and Child Participation

The digital environment has broadened ways in which children can participate in many activities or actions concerning them. Child participation on digital platforms enables them to reach a wide audience, build networks across the world and influence law and policy-making from a distance. As shown by many youth-led climate action initiatives, children across the globe are leveraging the digital sphere to speak out with one voice about the need to respect both their rights and those of future generations.²⁹ Apart from helping children overcome cost-related challenges associated with in-person meetings, it is now possible for children to organise or mobilise online and build a critical mass that speaks with one voice on specific issues affecting children, youth and future generations. In addition, there are questions about the factors to be considered in determining what children do online, with who and for how long. Papers in this stream may analyse the role of social media, the internet, and online platforms in promoting children's participation rights across time and space.

²⁶ See generally See G Lansdown, *Promoting children's participation in democratic decision-making* (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2001) 6 and D Archard and M Skivenes 'Balancing a child's best interests and a child's views' (2009) 17 *International Journal of Children's Rights* 1, 19-20.

²⁷ Ronny Bogani and Burkhard Schafer, 'Artificial Intelligence and Children's Rights' in M Ienca et al (eds) *The Cambridge Handbook of Information Technology, Life Sciences and Human Rights* (2022) 215-230. See also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Articles 5 and 14.; <https://5rightsfoundation.com/resource/impact-of-regulation-on-childrens-lives/>

²⁸ UNICEF, Global kids online report, www.globalkidsonline.net

²⁹ See generally, 'Looking to the future? Including children, young people and future generations in deliberations on climate action: Ireland's Citizens' Assembly 2016-2018', (2021) *The European Journal of Social Science Research* 677-693

4.5 The Commercialisation of Childhood, Platform Economy, Kidfluencing and Children's Rights

Papers in this stream may navigate the overlaps between the children's right to play, to participate on the one hand, and the child's right to be protected from economic exploitation, on the other. The platform economy has raised many questions about the broader business model of the platform economy, which monetizes children's attention, data, and online interactions and in parallel .The business model of the platform economy itself is designed to maximize engagement, often using persuasive design techniques, behavioural profiling, and algorithmic amplification to extend children's screen time, extract their data, and target them with commercial content. These practices raise concerns about privacy violations, the erosion of autonomy, and the prioritization of profit over children's rights and well-being.

Given that kidfluencing is often set in the family home and usually involves the child playing while the parents passively capture the child playing, it usually does not appear to be work, but rather play.³⁰ This conduct may amount to data privacy breaches but often goes unscrutinised and unpunished due to the context in which violations take place. While it may appear to be play, kidfluencing may involve monetary gain, a production process, an advertisement of a product or service and production deadline, which can be indicators that the child's play time is used for work.³¹ This raises questions about whether kidfluencing is work or play. Some authorities have observed that kidfluencing is 'playbour', since play becomes work when it is commercialised.³² It also constitutes digital child labour, where working is disguised as playing through interacting with other people on social media platforms.³³ These experiences call for the enforcement of international and domestic norms governing conditions of work, minimum age requirements and work that is potentially dangerous to children.

4.6 Non-State Actors, Businesses and Children's Rights

Papers in this stream should analyse the role of non-state actors in respecting and preventing violations of children's rights in the digital environment. This analysis should also unpack the duties of state actors in regulating this fluid area of the law and mechanisms for ensuring compliance with existing legislation protecting children from multiple digital harms occasioned by non-state actors. Non-state actors have the duty to foster an open, inclusive, safe and secure digital environment that respects all children's rights. Papers in this category may unpack the intersection between children's rights and business activities, including the conduct of technology companies and internet service providers in creating a safe and rights respecting environment for children online . This analysis should be informed by domestic and international laws, focussing on how best to improve regulation and compliance. Science, technology and innovation create opportunities and risks for the enjoyment of all children's rights. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate a human rights

³⁰ Masterson (2021) *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 581 and 592.

³¹ 592.

³² J Kücklich "Precarious Playbour: Modders and the Digital Games Industry" (2005) 025 *The Fibre Culture Journal* and H Zhouzheng "Digital Child Labor: Kid-influencer and Legal Countermeasure in China" (2021) *International Online Conference on Combating Child Labour in Asean/Southeast Asia* 5. See also J Goggin "Playbour, farming and leisure" (2011) 11 *Ephemera* 357-368.

³³ C Fuchs "What Is Digital Labour? What Is Digital Work? What's their Difference? And Why Do These Questions Matter for Understanding Social Media?" (2013) 11 *Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 237, 237-288.

perspective into regulatory and norm-setting processes for new and emerging technologies.³⁴

4.7 Gender and Children's Rights in the Digital Sphere

Papers in this category may analyse the manner in which sex and gender impact the enjoyment of children's rights in the digital sphere. Across the globe, there are unfortunate cases of girls being forbidden (by family or societal rules) from owning electronic gadgets or going online; or being subjected to cyberbullying or sexual abuse by ex-boyfriends posting their (girls') nude pictures on social media platforms or being forced to perform live-streamed sexual acts by persons or entities that operate child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) websites.³⁵ Although it primarily affects girls and young women, especially due to patriarchy and harmful gender stereotypical beliefs and practices, boys are becoming increasingly exposed to technology-facilitated CSEA as well.³⁶

Conversely, in some countries, SMS-based literacy programmes have been used to reach out to hard-to-reach girls and young women who cannot travel outside their home owing to social restrictions.³⁷ Accordingly, apart from highlighting the gaps and challenges, authors should also reflect on good practices demonstrating how digital technologies, AI and the internet are removing existing barriers to the enjoyment of rights by girls and other vulnerable groups of children. Closing the gender digital divide entails ensuring the empowerment of all women and girls, including through their full, equal and meaningful participation in the digital sphere.³⁸ As such, it is necessary to reflect on strategies for involving girls in addressing digital harms that affect them, including sexual and gender-based violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology.

4.8 Children with Disabilities and other Situations of Vulnerability

Artificial intelligence plays an important role in the field of special education and assists in the educational integration of children with mild intellectual disabilities. For children with neurodevelopmental disorders that hinder learning, communication, and daily functioning, AI-driven interventions may offer opportunities for them to improve their academic performance and achieve learning outcomes.³⁹ AI can tailor instructions to a student's needs and pace. Further, AI-driven voice recognition may help children with disabilities (CWDs) access information and education. Further, the principles of universal design and accessibility require that all products and services be built and developed to be usable by all CWDs without the need for adaptations or special design to fit particular requirements.⁴⁰ States have the duty to provide access to the internet, AI-powered communication technologies and other assistive technologies to ensure CWDs enjoy all their rights and achieve their full potential. Papers in this stream should analyse the way in which the internet, artificial intelligence, and legal or policy frameworks enhance or undermine the

³⁴ United Nations, *The Global Digital Compact* (2024) para 23.

³⁵ UNICEF, *State of the World's Children* (2017) iv.

³⁶ ACERWC, *General Comment on Sexual Exploitation*, para 8-9.

³⁷ Pence, Audrey, 'Mobilizing Literacy: Cell phones help Afghan women learn to read', *Solutions*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2015, pp. 8-9.

³⁸ United Nations, *The Global Digital Compact* (2024) para 8(d).

³⁹ A Alsolami, 'The effectiveness of using artificial intelligence in improving academic skills of school-aged students with mild intellectual disabilities in Saudi Arabia' (2025) 156 *Res Dev Disability* 104884.

⁴⁰ See ACERWC's *Strategy for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Children with Disabilities in Africa*; strategic outcome no.8 of the African Union's *Disability Strategic Framework*, Article 3(f) of the African Union's *Disability Protocol*, and other regional and international disability rights frameworks.

enjoyment of rights by CWDs in specific countries. Finally, such papers may also analyse the intersection between children's rights and other situations of vulnerability in the digital environment.

4.9 Institutional Mechanisms for Protecting Children

Papers in this stream may analyse the roles of different stakeholders in creating a safe digital environment where children can explore and develop free from fear, cyberbullying or harassment. Apart from analysing the (in)effectiveness of general human rights enforcement mechanisms - from the courts to national human rights institutions and government departments - authors may also explore the role of information/data regulators and other similar organs specifically responsible for ensuring children's safety online.

4.10 Cross-Cutting Topics

Topics that cut across two or more thematic areas and analyse overlapping intersections between themes are strongly encouraged. In addition, we anticipate papers on everything 'digital' and 'children' to ensure all emerging issues and challenges are fully dealt with during the conference.

5 Expected Outputs and Outcomes

In general terms, the main expected outcome of the conference relates to participants' improved capacity and understanding to re-imagine the scope of child rights norms and standards in the age of AI, 4IR and the internet. Specifically, the expected outputs and outcomes of the conference include:

- ❖ Increased knowledge generation about and application of child rights norms and standards by governments, internet service providers, technology companies and other players in all sectors that affect children;
- ❖ Improved understanding of existing opportunities, gaps and challenges in the protection of children's rights in the digital sphere and the interventions needed to address these gaps and challenges effectively;
- ❖ Better commitment to research and action to ensure the formulation and implementation of child-friendly and age-appropriate laws, policies and programmes on children's interface with the digital space;
- ❖ Improved networking and post-conference programmatic collaboration and coordination among child rights practitioners operating in different sectors;
- ❖ A conference communiqué calling for child-friendly and age-appropriate child laws, policies and programmes children's rights in the digital sphere; and
- ❖ An edited collection of chapters on children's rights in the digital environment to be published with a reputable publisher.

6. Format, Venue and Timeline

This three-day conference will be held at the Faculty of Law, Stellenbosch University, on 09-11 September 2025. We anticipate having, at most, 100 participants attending the event in person. Online participation will be considered by the organisers. The key dates are as follows:

- Deadline for the submission of an abstract: 20 May 2025.
- Decision for the selection of abstracts: 30 May 2025.

- Deadline for the submission of draft of the paper: 22 August 2025.
- International Conference on Children’s Rights: 09-11 September 2025.
- Deadline for the submission of the revised paper for publication: 15 November 2025.

7. Registration Fee

The registration fee structure for the conference is as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Students and Postdoctoral Fellows | R2000.00 |
| Other participants | R2500.00 |

8. Abstract Guidelines

- Abstracts should be no more than 400 words. Submissions must include the presenter’s name, affiliation, contact information, and a short bio (150 words).
- Abstract submission deadline: 20 May 2025.
- Decision for the selection of abstracts: 30 May 2025.
- Please submit your abstract and the information listed above to ICCR@sun.ac.za