Girls praised for 'incredibly' innovative skills at ICT boot camp
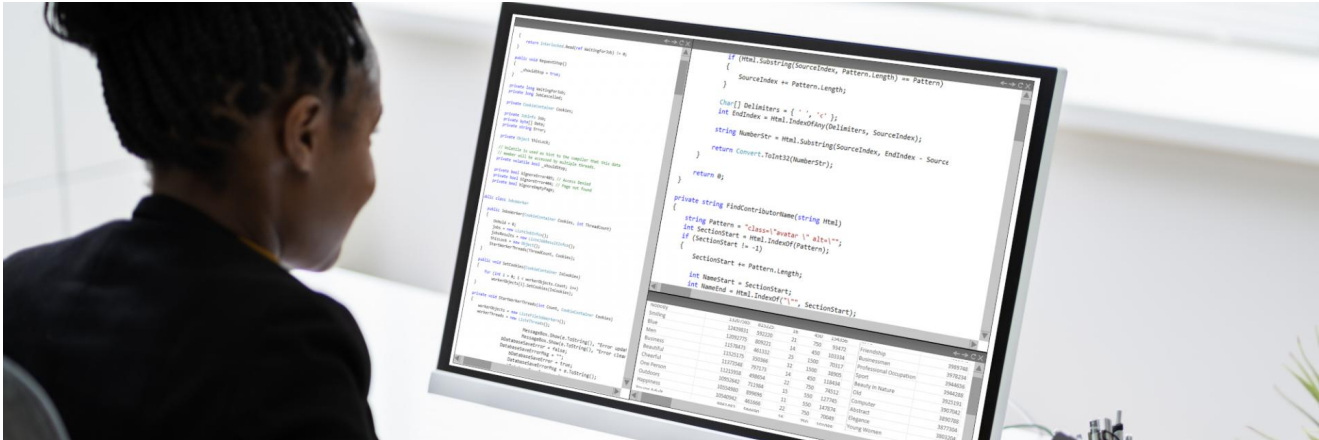
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Addis Ababa, 14 December 2020 (ECA) - "We are extremely proud of the incredibly innovative capacity demonstrated by the young girls over the past two weeks," said Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), on Friday 11 December 2020.

She was speaking at the end of a coding boot camp jointly organized by ECA and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) as part of activities to mark the UN's 75th anniversary. The camp brought together over 2000 young girls online and in person at the UN Conference Centre in Addis Ababa from 30 November to 11 December 2020.

The event aimed at promoting ICTs as important tools for women's empowerment. It featured sessions on gender equality, human rights, confidence-building, publish speaking, coding with Scratch, robotics and Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, design thinking, gaming, fashion, and animation. It culminated with an innovation fair and a competition to test participants' skills in the areas mentioned.

Among the winners was a group of five young girls called Wonder Women. They developed an application called the 'Maternal Death Surveillance and Response System,' which can detect the heartbeats and blood pressures of a pregnant woman and the fetus, and then notify the health practitioner accordingly. It also has features for basic first aid and safe delivery.

Another group called Hope (six girls) worked on a project titled 'Women's Empowerment,' focusing on educating African women, skills building and confidence-boosting. The platform provides a safe place for women to showcase their skills.

The third group was made up of four girls under the name 'Together'. They showcased an animation storytelling platform by girls, for girls and about women and girls.

Meanwhile, another group called Online Rehab Africa presented what they called a "pioneer web-enabled addiction and Gender-Based violence therapy" system. The first of its kind in Africa, this system hopes to play a vital role in supporting victims of gender-based violence through sessions with volunteer therapists. The Online Rehab Africa group developed the system to counter the impact of lockdowns on girls and women.

All projects were assessed for innovativeness, accessibility, commercial potential and the overall impact on Africans. The group called Hope won five HP Laptops as prize, while each of the other three winning teams went home with five Samsung Tablets.

Ms Songwe congratulated "all the winners of the Girls Can Code camp for your dedication commitment and innovative ideas." Fifty-one African countries were represented at the event. Representatives from the African Girls Can Code movement, ITU and the African Union participated in the 10-Day bootcamp.

Guest Blog - When schools become inaccessible, a glimmer of hope in a coding boot-camp

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