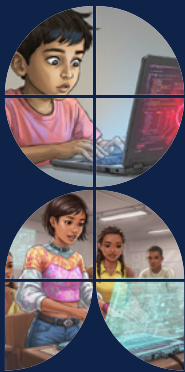# CHILDREN'S VISIONS OF DIGITAL FUTURES

Discussions about the future of human interaction with digital technologies are more prevalent than ever, but there is an urgent need for deeper conversations with young people, for whom technology plays a crucial role in their lives.

This project by the Digital Futures for Children (DFC) centre highlights the importance of involving children, through co-design and participatory methodology, in identifying the priorities and action needed for a more sustainable and rights-respecting digital future for all children around the world.

THIS PROJECT ENGAGED WITH GYAS FROM 13 COUNTRIES

Greece
Ireland
India
Kenya
Lesotho
Malta
Mozambique
Nigeria
Pakistan
Portugal
South Africa
USA
Uzbekistan

THE 5RIGHTS FOUNDATION'S GLOBAL YOUTH AMBASSADORS (GYAS) INCLUDE 200+ YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 13 TO 21 FROM 52 COUNTRIES.

DFC engaged children aged 13 to 17 in a futures consultation, asking:

How might we reimagine the digital world over the next 25 years to ensure it is a safe, empowering, and equitable space for all children, regardless of their background or location?

WHAT IS FUTURES THINKING?

Futures thinking is a methodological approach to explore future scenarios. The process involves three key stages:

1 Identifying emerging trends and concerns

2 Exploring potential future scenarios

3 Making action plans to get there

DFC's work is framed by the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child's general comment no. 25, which recognises that children's rights apply equally in the digital environment.

2050

SCAN TO HEAR MORE FROM KIM SYLWANDER AND GYA AISLING ABOUT THE PROJECT

IDENTIFYING EMERGING TRENDS

EXPLORING POTENTIAL FUTURE SCENARIOS
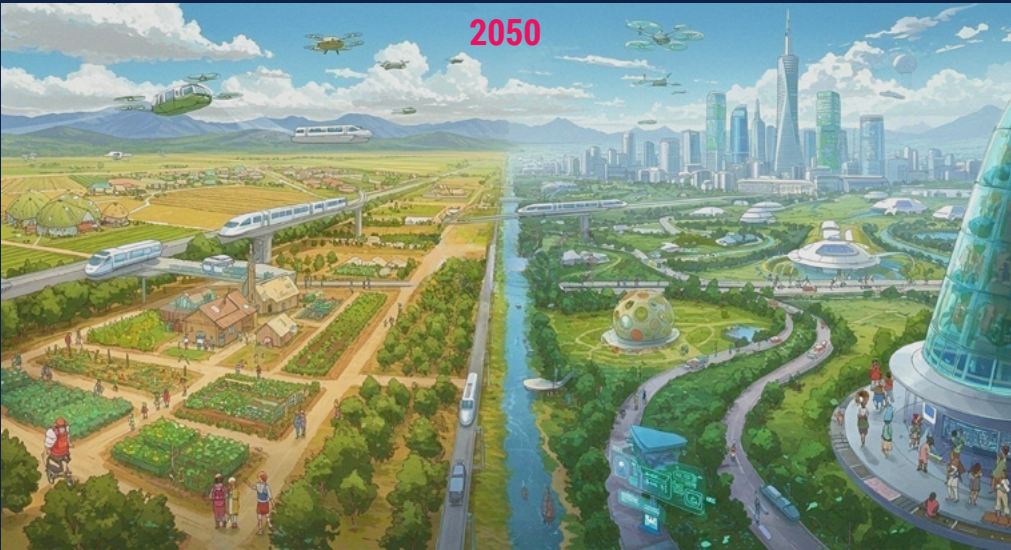
What did the children think the rapidly changing digital world means for their digital futures?

AI OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Artificial Intelligence is seen as both helpful for progress and potentially harmful to privacy and fairness.

DIGITAL DIVIDE AND INEQUALITY

The ideal vision for 2050 included everyone having equal access to technology, no matter their background.

2.2 billion CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T HAVE INTERNET ACCESS AT HOME

DIGITAL LITERACY AND CHILD RIGHTS

The importance of finding the right balance between safety rules and freedom of expression, ensuring children's rights are properly protected in digital spaces.

TECHNOLOGY DEPENDENCE AND WELLBEING

Relying too much on technology might prevent children from developing important skills on their own, but the internet has also allowed children to take part in a global community.

"AI IS GETTING MORE POWERFUL THESE DAYS. SO, IN THE FUTURE IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL, THINGS MIGHT GET WORSE."

Girl, 17, Kenya

"TO ACHIEVE CHILD RIGHTS-RESPECTING DIGITAL FUTURES, ACTION NEEDS TO BE TAKEN TODAY!"

Global Youth Ambassadors

MAKING ACTION PLANS TO GET THERE

This workshop focused on empowering participants to take action and shape their desired digital futures.

Having imagined their ideal future, the children were asked to consider what would need to happen, and who would need to be involved, to make it a reality.

What did the children think we need to ensure their digital futures are rights-respecting?

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Companies and governments should ensure that children's rights are protected in digital spaces.

ENHANCING REGULATION

There should be clear rules about how technology can be used, agreed in meetings that involve both adults and children, on a global scale.

LEARNING DIGITAL SKILLS

Better digital literacy for children, and adults too.

CREATING SAFE ONLINE SPACES

E.g. social media platforms designed for young people that prioritise safety without being childish.

HAVING CHILDREN'S VOICES HEARD

Employ "digital child liaisons" whose job is to listen to children and communicate their needs directly to company leaders.

"IF SOMEONE FROM THE YEAR 2050 VISITED TODAY, [WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR] CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE DIGITAL SPACE …ARE MORE RESPECTED ONLINE THAN THEY ARE TODAY."

Girl, 14, USA

2025

2050

"ENTREPRENEURS AND BUSINESS LEADERS CAN CHANGE THINGS AS THEY INTRODUCE NEW BUSINESS MODELS AND INDUSTRIES THAT CAN CHANGE OR SHAPE [OUR FUTURE]."

Boy, 17, Pakistan

GETTING PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS INVOLVED

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

E.g. creating a special global meeting – similar to climate conferences.

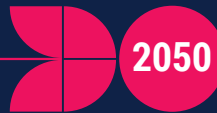**BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE**

E.g. through free internet in schools and community centres, or subsidised devices for families who need them.

EVALUATING REGULATION

Rules must be monitored and evaluated regularly to make any improvements needed.

ENSURING FAIR INNOVATION

Entrepreneurs and business leaders should play a key role in making digital spaces better and safer for children, rather than prioritising profit.

DIGITAL FUTURES FOR CHILDREN Research at LSE and 5Rights Foundation

5RIGHTS FOUNDATION