

Resilient voices lead safely online

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December 4, 2025



Young women confront digital abuse in politics

Mamsey Musweu

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) last week hosted a seminar on the ethical use of social media for young women in politics in Windhoek, bringing together young political leaders to address rising online abuse, misinformation and digital violence. The event formed part of the national Ethical Use of Social Media Campaign, supported by Club de Madrid and Junior Chamber International (JCI) Namibia.

According to the concept note, the government organised the seminar because “the urgent need to promote the ethical use of social media” has become critical, as women and youth are “among the most affected by the risks of cyberbullying, online exploitation and manipulative content.”

Delivering the keynote address, ICT minister Emma Theofelus, said: “The ethical use of social media is one important and timely conversation that we must have as a nation.” She warned that “the online world can be brutal, unforgiving and sometimes deliberately cruel”, adding that “digital violence equates to physical violence and abuse.”

Theofelus stressed that the misuse of digital platforms harms democracy, noting that “when women retreat from online spaces because of abuse, democracy itself suffers.” She urged participants to reflect on their online conduct: “Ask yourself: Does

my content build or break? Does it empower or embarrass? Does it heal or harm?"

In her opening remarks, Linda Aipinge, acting executive director of MICT, stated: "Women and young people remain the most active users of social media and, simultaneously, the most vulnerable to abuse and manipulation." She reaffirmed the Government's commitment to creating safe digital spaces, noting that misuse includes "cyberbullying, misinformation, hate speech, invasion of privacy and online harassment."

The seminar aimed to empower women with tools for safe digital engagement through dialogue, peer learning and pledge-making. The theme, Resilient Voices: Women Leading Safely in the Digital Age, guided discussions on strengthening ethical leadership and digital resilience.