



Why Girls Must Be at **the Heart of Botswana's Tech Evolution**

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There is something deeply powerful about a girl who is given permission to imagine.

Not the polite, performative kind of permission. But the real, resounding kind, the kind that hands her a device, a challenge, a stage, and says: You belong here. Not later, not when you are older, but now.

In Botswana, where digital transformation is reshaping how we live, learn, and grow, there is an urgent truth we must confront. Inclusion is not a passive hope. It is a choice. And that choice must begin with our girls.

Technology is often described in abstract terms: networks, platforms, systems. But at its core, it is human. It is shaped by the values we prioritise, the access we permit, and the people we empower. If girls are missing from the conversation, they will be missing from the solutions. That absence will cost us economically, socially and creatively.

Girls in tech are not a novelty. They are a necessity.

Botswana's young population is a tremendous asset, brimming with energy and potential. But potential is not self-activating. It requires investment, mentorship and infrastructure that doesn't just connect, but includes. When we speak of innovation, we must also speak of access: access to devices, to the internet, to quality digital education. And access that reaches beyond urban centres to the dusty classrooms of remote villages, where brilliance too often goes unnoticed.

At Access Bank Botswana, our commitment to digital inclusion goes beyond platforms and applications. It is rooted in a belief that the future must be designed with everyone in mind. Girls are not just the end-users of technology. They must be its architects. They must be taught not just how to consume digital content, but how to create it. Not just how to navigate systems, but how to build them.

When we place girls at the centre of digital progress, we build more than equity. We build excellence.

In our own ICT department, we've seen the results of inclusive thinking. Teams become more dynamic. Ideas stretch further. Assumptions are challenged. Innovation becomes a product not of repetition, but of reflection. Inclusion is not a soft ideal. It is a powerful driver of success.

And inclusion must start early. By the time a young woman enters the workforce, the seeds of confidence or self-doubt have already taken root. This is why our focus must begin in childhood. In the way we speak to girls about science and mathematics. In the mentors we provide. In the opportunities we extend without hesitation or exception.

Botswana has the potential to be a leader in Africa's digital rise. But leadership is not simply about speed or scale. It is about who we bring along. If girls are not part of that story, then our evolution will be incomplete.

Let us build spaces where curiosity is encouraged. Let us shape policies that prioritise equity. Let us create workplaces that reward inclusion, not just performance. And most importantly, let us raise girls who do not wait for permission to lead, but understand that they already have everything they need to do so. Because the next great solution to a local problem may not come from a tech giant abroad, but from a 14-year-old girl in Sebina with a curious mind.

The future of tech in Botswana is not just digital. It is female. And it is already knocking.

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