

Girls in ICT 2026: Inspiring Confident Girls to Shape Digital Futures

In partnership with the TelOne Centre for Learning (TCFL), Stanbic Bank Zimbabwe proudly participated in the Girls in ICT 2026 programme held on 21 August 2026 under the theme "*Confident Girls, Digital Futures.*" The initiative sought to empower girls to innovate, lead, and shape the digital future by exposing them to role models and career opportunities within Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

The morning was filled with inspiration, practical career guidance, and actionable insights, featuring presentations from accomplished Stanbic Bank women in technology:- Sheila Muchedzi, Yvonne Chitima, Esther Mataranyika, Rutendo Chidewu, and Rutendo Zhakata. These ladies each shared valuable insights on confidence, leadership, resilience, technical excellence, and the opportunities available for young women pursuing careers in ICT. Additional speakers included Rachael Chikoore, the Dean: School of Information Science and Technology at the Harare Institute of Technology.

Below are key highlights from the presentations:

Empowering Girls Through Knowledge and Confidence

The programme opened with a powerful presentation titled "*Know Your Worth: Your Journey is Your Superpower,*" delivered by Sheila Muchedzi, a Site Reliability Engineer. Drawing from her personal career journey, Sheila demonstrated how confidence is built through continuous learning, resilience, and a willingness to embrace new challenges. Having started her career in banking operations before transitioning into technology, she reminded participants that every expert was once a beginner and that growth comes one step at a time.

Her message centred on a simple but profound truth: confidence is not about knowing all the answers, but about trusting yourself to learn, adapt, and persevere. She encouraged the girls to remain curious, ask questions, seek mentors, and celebrate every achievement, no matter how small.

Rutendo Chidewu, a technical support consultant, encouraged women to celebrate even the small wins, reminding attendees that every achievement contributes to building confidence and personal growth. She emphasized the importance of resilience and professionalism when navigating career challenges and encouraged women to remain hopeful, even when faced with setbacks. Rutendo urged participants to raise their hands for opportunities, continue learning, stay curious, and never be afraid to start something new. Her message reinforced the idea that career growth is a journey built through courage, persistence, and a willingness to keep moving forward despite obstacles.

The session on **Empowered Voices and Resilience in Innovation** was led by Yvonne Chitima, Manager Electronic Banking at Stanbic Bank Zimbabwe. With more than 18 years of experience in digital banking and payments, Yvonne shared insights on the importance of self-belief, visibility, and speaking up in professional spaces. She highlighted that while women continue to make remarkable contributions in technology, innovation, cybersecurity, engineering, and digital banking, many talented women still underestimate their value or wait until they feel fully prepared before pursuing leadership opportunities.

“Do not wait for someone to tell you you are ready, speak up even if your voice shakes”

Yvonne emphasised that confidence must also go with competence, encouraging women to master ICT skills and deliver with excellence. Competence leads to credibility which in turn leads to influence. Simple activities, like positive affirmations and daily ‘pep talks’ in the mirror can lead to long term conviction and boldness. Yvonne’s message was simple: combine competence with confidence to make a lasting impact.

Women Shaping the Future of Technology

Data Scientist Esther Mataranyika challenged participants to see themselves as future innovators and leaders in technology. Her presentation explored how women are shaping the future of ICT through technical excellence, innovation, ethical leadership, and resilience. She emphasized the importance of mastering technical skills while also understanding the broader impact of technology on society. Esther’s message was clear – the future of ICT is in Artificial Intelligence (AI). With that in mind, she encouraged women to become proficient in AI systems and related processes, including AI integrity, ethics and security. We must aim to develop real technological solutions for real people and avoid AI slop and other work which is not human centred and may not be sustainable in the long term. Esther encouraged the ladies to also view technology from a Zimbabwean perspective and consider, for example, how we can we start building Shona AI models.

Leading with Impact and Purpose

The final presentation was delivered by Rutendo Zhakata, a Software Engineer specializing in enterprise systems and digital transformation. Rutendo spoke passionately about leadership, mentorship, and creating opportunities for other women to thrive in technology. Women should not shy away from their femininity when pursuing

careers in technology. Rather, we should harness our feminine power including emotional intelligence, multitasking, resilience and strong work ethic, to achieve greater success.

She encouraged participants to continuously raise their standards, embrace their unique strengths, and own their space in professional environments. Her message reinforced the importance of intentional mentorship and supporting other women, reminding attendees that individual success becomes most meaningful when it creates pathways for others to succeed.

More Than Just a Career Conversation

The Girls in ICT programme was designed not only to showcase career opportunities but also to inspire meaningful conversations about personal growth, leadership, and resilience. The event featured an interactive question-and-answer session, networking opportunities, and engagement with experienced professionals from the technology and financial services sectors. Participants were encouraged to gain practical insights, build networks, and explore the vast possibilities available in ICT.

A Shared Commitment to the Future

Stanbic Bank is proud to celebrate initiatives such as Girls in ICT that encourage young women to pursue careers in technology and innovation. The programme reaffirmed the importance of creating environments where girls are empowered to lead, challenge stereotypes, and confidently pursue opportunities in STEM fields.

The collective message from the day's speakers was both simple and powerful: you belong in technology. Success does not require perfection. It requires courage, continuous learning, and the confidence to take the first step. By investing in young women today, we are helping to build a more inclusive, innovative, and digitally empowered future for tomorrow.