

## **BIF Celebrates WTISD 2025 with Focus on Gender Equality and Launch of White Paper on Responsible AI**

**New Delhi, May 16, 2025** – On the eve of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) 2025, Broadband India Forum (BIF) hosted a special celebration event on May 14 at New Delhi, centered around this year's theme marking 160 years of establishment of International Telecommunication Union (ITU): *"Gender Equality in Digital Transformation."* This event, held in advance of the global observance on May 17, brought together policymakers, industry leaders, technologists, and experts to spotlight the critical need for bridging the digital gender divide and more so in an increasingly AI-driven world.

The evening marked the launch of BIF's *White Paper on Responsible AI Innovation*, highlighting the role of safe, transparent and inclusive AI development in shaping India's digital future. Prepared by BIF's special task force on AI, the paper offers crucial recommendations for India's evolving AI governance framework.

The event also featured remarks by **Mr. Shivnath Thukral**, Vice President BIF and **Dr. Pranita Upadhyaya**, Head of ITU- Delhi Area Office & Innovation Centre, and **Mr. Rahul Vatts**, Chief Regulatory Officer, Bharti Airtel, who showcased ongoing efforts to drive digital access, safety, and empowerment for women.

**Smt. Aruna Sundararajan, Chairperson, BIF**, emphasized the evolving nature of digital inclusion in the age of AI: *"As AI becomes pervasive, we must be vigilant about the new risks it poses, especially against women who are especially disadvantaged in terms of safety concerns online. It is imperative that gender equity is built into the digital transformation process from the start. We need to make a renewed effort to make sure that in addition to addressing the existing gender divides, new kinds or new manifestations of gender divides also do not come up."*

**Shri Atul Kumar Chaudhary, Secretary, TRAI**, delivered the keynote address, stating: *"Gender equality is a fundamental human right and an economic imperative. While India's digital journey is inspiring, significant gaps persist in internet access and digital literacy, especially among women. According to the industry report in India 85% men and 75% women own mobile phone while internet adoption among men is 53%, among women the rate of internet adoption is a mere 37%. Thus, estimated gender gap in ownership of phone and internet adoption is 12% and 30% respectively. Closing this divide is not just about inclusion—it is a matter of justice and national progress."*

Another highlight of the event was a summary presentation on BIF's Working White Paper on *Responsible AI Innovation* by **Ms. Mira Swaminathan**, Director, Policy Advocacy & Communications, BIF, wherein she highlighted the policy recommendations made in the paper and how they were aligned with India's AI Mission and international best practices.

BIF has always been at the forefront of working towards technology-neutral, service-neutral, and affordable universal connectivity, advocating for the use of all available technologies in a manner that is proportionate and calibrated to bridge the digital divide in India.

The evening reaffirmed a shared commitment to ensuring digital technologies empower—not exclude and concluded with a call for multistakeholder collaboration to bridge gender gaps through

investment in an inclusive infrastructure, digital skills, gender-responsive policies, and support for women as tech leaders. A digital future must be a shared future, where no one is left behind!

**About Broadband India Forum:** Broadband India Forum (BIF) functions as an independent policy forum and knowledge-based think-tank that works for the development and enhancement of the entire broadband ecosystem in a holistic, technology- neutral and service-neutral manner. BIF has established itself as a thought leader and a credible and effective voice, to help propel the nation to achieve the country's ambitious vision of creating a Digital India. To achieve this, BIF works to promote the rapid development of policies, to facilitate affordable and high-speed ubiquitous broadband throughout the country.