



GOBIERNO DE
MÉXICO



In partnership
with civil society
and youth

REALIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS FOR AN EQUAL FUTURE

COVID-19 catalyst –A gender-diverse digital reset

At the intersection of the digital evolution and gender equality, let's commit to engage the diversity of girls and young women in their strength, our strength. If we fail at seizing this lens, a generation of girls will miss out on the catalytic opportunity that COVID-19 has brought us.

Imagine for a few minutes a handful of girls and young women who bring meaning to your life. Now turn to a family member, friend, or work colleague in your next virtual call and ask for the same. As you snowball this request across a few degrees of separation, the tapestry of diversity that emerges- across race, ethnicity, disabilities, geographies, age- demands our closer attention.

As the leaders of the **Generation Equality Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality**, we are also united as public and private partners toward bold, collective solutions that spark a world lean towards a gender-diverse digital evolution.

The World Economic Forum and Generation Equality should build on each other in 2021, share a common narrative for all forms of social justice, including gender equality. We must be united because moving past this pandemic will require extraordinary collaboration and solidarity – among people, organizations and countries.

Crises are often extreme stimulators towards change and innovation. COVID-19 has brought painful casualties, but we must make sure that is not a double burden for women and girls as we have a massive acceleration towards digitalization of work, school and social life. Gender digital gaps in meaningful access, skills, and safety to use and create digital technologies cut across generations and across economies. It is truly a moment of gender justice to see COVID-19 as a catalyst in closing these divisions.

For the past decade, the global Internet user gender gap has grown from 11% in 2013 to 17% in 2019 and remains largest in the world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs) at 43%.ⁱ There is also very slow progress in the percentage of women employees in the workforce of major tech companies (around 20% for technical jobs), little progress in the hiring and retention of under-representation of minorities, and numbers of women computer science graduates are still far from what they were in the 1980s.ⁱⁱ

Globally, the percentage of women among Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) graduates is below 15 per cent in over two-thirds of countries.ⁱⁱⁱ And even in middle and higher-income countries, only 14 per cent of girls who were top performers in science or mathematics expected to work in science and engineering compared to 26 per cent of top-performing boys.^{iv}

We have spent the past months experimenting on how best to design transformative ideas that will drive a more equal and inclusive digital transformation. We share a few specific tactics below that allow us to reimagine education for today's youth generation and collectively build the future specifically toward this change:

Innovative finance mechanisms for a gender-diverse digital evolution: To be advantageous in a 4th Industrial Revolution shaped by technology, girls and women in all their diversity need equitable access to STEM education, digital and transferable skills.

Building on [foundational research](#) we are exploring blended financing instruments to mobilize private, public and philanthropic capital specifically to promising education models that address the combination of 21st century skills and gender gaps. This tactic builds on promising mechanisms such as the [Women's Livelihood Bond](#) and [2X Challenge](#), but shifts the focus to closing gender gaps among today's youth as they explore the education and skills match to the digital evolution of opportunity.

Making digital spaces safer: We need to reset how we develop technology so that everyone equally benefits from platforms, services and data while maintaining control over their digital lives. Women and girls are more likely to be targets of online violence, such as physical threats, sexual harassment, bullying, stalking, [sex trolling](#) and exploitation.

Countries and businesses must take responsibility and provide greater transparency and accountability in tackling technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination. This will require new regulations but also innovative user care services, and data analysis of safety and privacy issues faced by women and girls or persons in vulnerable situations. In parallel we need solutions that shape technology as a force for good to prevent GBV- online and offline- such as apps like [Safetipin](#), AI-powered chatbots like [Caretas](#), and creative approaches such as [virtual safe spaces](#) in humanitarian contexts.

Fast tracking feminist access and leadership: We need to dramatically boost women and girls' ability to access and use digital technologies as well as being creators and influencers of innovation. We need countries and businesses to build intentional pathways for women and girls' advancement in technology, lead in changing behaviors and addressing workplace stereotypes, increase access to affordable devices and data, engage with families and enlisting communities to change harmful gender norms, attitudes and mindsets.

Our priority should be to provide opportunities for women and girls, especially those in vulnerable situations, who are facing the most barriers to access the Internet or digital training and prevented to take full advantage of technology. This will require to focus on the human side of the digital transformation and create safe environments where girls can access information and communication technology like [IT Labs](#) and to unleash the talent of low-income women through re-skilling bootcamps like [Laboratoria](#).



The leaders of the Action Coalition on Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality: [A+ Alliance](#), [the Government of Armenia](#), [the Government of Chile](#), [Digital Grassroots](#), [the Government of Finland](#), [the Global Fund for Women](#), [ITU](#), [Koc Holding](#), [Microsoft](#), [The Rockefeller Foundation](#), [the Government of Rwanda](#), [Social Builder](#), [the Government of Tunisia](#), [UNICEF](#)

ⁱ <https://itu.foleon.com/itu/measuring-digital-development/gender-gap/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.wired.com/story/five-years-tech-diversity-reports-little-progress/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/2020genderreport>

^{iv} <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/2020genderreport>. And middle and higher-income countries= OECD countries.