

## **The role of governments and businesses in driving innovation that tackles gender inequality and narrows the gender digital divide**

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### **Summary of text:**

Digital innovation ecosystems are situated in a corporate-led institutional framework and thereby reinforce socio-structural hierarchies, cement patriarchal gender power and perpetuate global injustice. To change the social gender order, it is necessary to approach digital technologies through a 'public innovation ecosystem' framework.

To support a public innovation ecosystem, the State should invest in connectivity infrastructure, as well as the platform, data and AI public goods necessary for social equity and inclusion. Technical protocols which enable the participation of less powerful actors in the economy should also receive investment, including public digital payments interface and public data exchange protocols.

To prevent capture of value propositions in digital innovation ecosystems, access-and-use conditions for innovation pools must be in place, as well as public oversight and scrutiny. Similarly, digital rights must be the basis for meaningful participation in digital society and its innovations. These rights needs to be contextualized in gendered terms, in full consideration of the unique socio-political factors which render women less powerful in the digital society.

### **Key recommendations:**

- The Global Digital Compact should unequivocally embrace a human rights-, gender equality- and development justice-oriented approach. It must envision clear commitments through the Official Development Assistance route for the financing of digital innovation ecosystems and institution development in the Global South to strengthen gender equality outcomes.
- The UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism should be channeled effectively to enable synergistic resource support and agile institutional coordination between UN agencies and national governments for a gender strategy development on digital public goods. The creation of a new global work programme similar to 'STI for the SDGs' will be productive in this regard.
- Protocols for gender aspirational design must guide the development of all digital public goods and infrastructure such as high-speed connectivity, public data pools and machine-readable data sets, public cloud infrastructure and public platform marketplaces.
- The digitalization and datafication of public systems and public services infrastructure in sectors such as education and health must be developed through public consultation and rule-of-law based systems.
- Local innovation hubs should be incentivized to stimulate women's participation in the technology sector.
- Quotas and hiring targets in the private sector should be set and enforced by state agencies as part of the governance of market innovation systems.