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Applying gender lens to STI policies to deliver SDG 5

Statement submitted by

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THE CASE FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE STI POLICIES

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- A pervasive assumption in STI is that these are gender-blind fields, often guided by a 'build/avail it and they will come'.
- However, we've seen that gendered divides continue to persist even as we advance STI interventions towards achieving the sustainable development goals.
- SDG 5 that anchors gender equality, should thus be mainstreamed across all the other SDGs. While it's rightfully held up as a standalone goal, it often risks being incorporated as an afterthought, rather than a guiding principle. We need gender-mainstreaming, over and above a gender lens to STI -- from policymaking circles to market-led innovation and industry.
- Mainstreaming SDG 5 is also critical to unearthing and resolving unconscious bias at societal and policymaking level that typically associates STI fields with men as the primary producers and creators, even as consumers are expected to be society at large.
- The case for gender-responsive policies then, is about incorporating gender considerations right from conceptualisation, to deployment and measuring of impact for policies across public and private domains.
- Gender-responsive ICT policies must therefore do the following:
 - Ensure all analysis conducted for developing plans and policies integrate gender and gender considerations. For instance, in developing a national STI policy, this entails assessing gendered differences in access to education, which in itself can be a factor of adverse sociocultural norms that disadvantage women.
 - Involve gender advocates and experts in policy and planning processes from the start to ensure that the consequent policy development incorporates the nuanced divides that compound to exclude women and girls from accessing opportunities.
 - Establish time-bound targets to achieve gender equality across all areas of policies and plans, from skills building to adoption and use of STI instruments. This will also help in ensuring that success metrics incorporate gendered considerations.
 - Allocate resources to support women-centred activities. This includes resources to promote and support women entrepreneurs and practitioners in STI, as well as targeted public access interventions to support women's access and use of STI instruments.
 - Ensure that skills building, capacity and training programs are developed keeping in mind the needs of women and girls across all education levels.
 - Establish quotas to ensure the equal participation of women and other marginalised groups in all programs supported by national plans and policies.
- In sum, gender-responsive STI policies must have:
 - Clearly articulated targets
 - Gender-disaggregated data and research to inform assessments
 - Budgetary allocations to support interventions to close gendered divides.
- These must be taken up by public, private, development and philanthropic endeavours alike. These top-down approaches must be responsive to the bottom-up developments to ensure coherence and closing of gendered divides in STI fields.