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A FEMINIST
TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY

GOVERNING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

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INTRODUCTION:

THE GEOPOLITICS OF TECHNOLOGY AND THE NEED FOR A FEMINIST TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY

Technological change no longer operates at the margins of geopolitics and global affairs; it is now one of the primary forces reshaping the global order itself. Frontier technologies, and artificial intelligence (AI) in particular, are altering power dynamics, influencing the protection and exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, and redefining the conditions for societal prosperity and planetary sustainability[1].

As innovation accelerates, technology has become both an object and an instrument of geopolitical competition; one that is deeply entangled with questions of sovereignty, security, competitiveness, and global influence.

Four interrelated dimensions are particularly decisive in this evolving landscape.

- First, regulatory capacity and norm-setting power—the ability to define, enforce, and project values-based digital norms domestically and internationally—with the United States, China and the European Union leading competing models of digital governance, each embodying fundamentally different visions of how technology should serve society[2].
- Second, control over the digital building blocks of the modern economy – including compute power, semiconductors, cloud infrastructures, data, and applications – is increasingly leveraged as a geopolitical instrument of influence and coercion, raising questions of strategic autonomy between states and regions[3].
- Third, the capacity to capture economic value from digital ecosystems, rather than allowing data, rents, and innovation benefits to be extracted externally, has emerged as a core concern for economic security and competitiveness[4].
- Fourth, the resilience and adaptability of critical digital infrastructures, from energy and communications to financial systems, has become inseparable from national security, as illustrated by growing attention to digital payments and central bank digital currencies in the European Union and beyond[5].

As these dynamics unfold, classical centres of authority are shifting along an uncertain trajectory toward multipolarity—at times fragmented, at times regionally bipolar—while power is also diffusing rapidly toward non-state actors. Large technology companies, with economic clout rivalling or exceeding that of many states and operating across jurisdictions, have become de facto global diplomatic actors. Their growing influence in shaping regulatory debates and governance outcomes—visible, for example, in ongoing tensions between the European Union and US tech giants over the bloc's digital rules[6]—raises fundamental questions about accountability, democratic oversight, and the public interest.

At the same time, intensifying geopolitical rivalry is accelerating the militarisation of technological innovation. Frontier technologies are reshaping conflict in hybrid and grey-zone contexts, where coercion blends military and non-military means below traditional thresholds of armed conflict[7]. Cyber operations have become more pervasive and sophisticated, with AI and quantum technologies dramatically redefining the speed and scale with which digital defenders and their adversaries can operate[8]. Going further still, technologies such as generative AI, neurotechnologies, and immersive environments are beginning to enable forms of cognitive warfare that directly target the perception and decision-making to destabilize nations from within[9].

All these geopolitical dynamics condition the prospects for societal prosperity and have direct consequences for fundamental rights and freedoms. Decisions taken in the name of security or competitiveness can, without adequate oversight, entrench asymmetries of power between states, corporations, and individuals—often at the expense of already marginalised groups. Who benefits from technological innovation and competition, and who bears the social costs, is ultimately a political choice embedded in governance frameworks.

Against this backdrop, technology governance has become a core domain of foreign policy. Technology diplomacy— the strategic use of diplomatic efforts to foster international cooperation, governance, and regulation regarding frontier technologies—has grown in importance as governments seek to manage risks, secure economic development, and uphold ethical standards. Yet this growing reliance on diplomacy coincides with a weakening multilateral system. Frontier technologies, despite their global impact, remain largely ungoverned by coherent international architectures, as existing mechanisms for cooperation, peace, and dispute resolution erode.

Of all emerging technologies, AI stands out for the breadth and depth of its impact—cutting across economic, security, social, and political domains. It has already shown to both perpetuate *and* reduce gender inequalities. It is

one of the most significant areas requiring multilateral cooperation and governance relevant not just for current, but also future generations. Global governance of AI is not simply a technical task, but a political and ethical imperative. Within the burgeoning attention to AI governance, feminist technology diplomacy[10] has emerged as a galvanising tool for the international community to collaborate with the aim of achieving *gender responsive or feminist AI* as best practice in AI development, deployment and use. A feminist perspective is crucial for technology diplomacy, especially within the multilateral system, ensuring that governance of AI is ethical, inclusive, and aligned with principles of justice and equality. A specifically feminist approach is needed due to pervasive, longstanding and global gender inequalities that tend to see women disadvantaged, exploited, or with fewer rights and opportunities than men. A feminist approach also reveals and helps shift norms and structures that negatively impact on all genders, including men.

Yet, progress towards reducing disparities, improving experiences, and safeguarding fundamental human rights is not guaranteed nor linear. Backsliding sexual health and reproductive rights, norms and burdens around care, and rights and responsibilities around technology, digitalisation, decision-making and ownership have been exacerbated in recent years including by instances of inter- and intra-state violence, COVID-19, and geopolitical events. A 2022 progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[11] found that it would take close to 300 years to remove discriminatory laws and close prevailing gaps in legal protections for women and girls. AI can either help expedite or exacerbate such trajectories and is a critical factor in fulfilling the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[12] that all humans are "born free and equal in dignity and rights". A feminist approach is beneficial to whole societies, by providing avenues to reduce inequality among genders. This has broader positive impacts on state security and peace, and social and economic prosperity. A feminist or gender responsive approach therefore proactively seeks to recognise and respond to inequality, for the betterment of all humans, as well as our social, environmental and political systems.

In this policy brief, "gender responsive AI" and "feminist AI" are concepts used interchangeably. Whilst an intersectional feminist approach seeks solutions that address the full, complex picture of gender inequalities in AI, it is recognised that the use of terms like "gender responsive AI" may be preferred in some contexts. Both concepts should recognise the myriad dynamics that intersect with gender (like race, class, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic status) to impact on the development, deployment and use of AI.

What is AI?

The term artificial intelligence (AI) refers to machine systems capable of simulating human learning, comprehension, problem-solving and 'intelligence', able performing tasks that require cognitive skills and a degree of autonomy. Whilst AI has been in development since the 1950s, the past few years have seen a rapid acceleration of AI capabilities and use. One form of AI that has gained widespread adoption is generative AI (GenAI) based on language learning models (LLMs) – computer models which analyse massive data sets of language to learn statistical relationships between words and phrases to understand and generate human-like responses (with examples including OpenAI's ChatGPT, Amazon's Alexa, and Microsoft's CoPilot and associated technologies). Other forms of GenAI technology include image generators, music composers, and video creators. Such examples of AI only represent a fraction of AI's technological capabilities and uses, with three systems of AI commonly deployed: 1) artificial narrow intelligence (ANI) - systems that can only perform specific tasks autonomously; 2) artificial general intelligence (AGI)- the ability of AI agents to learn, perceive, understand, and function like a human being, enabling connections, competencies, and generalisations across domains; and 3) artificial superintelligence (ASI) - replicating the multifaceted intelligence of human beings and exceeding it.

PART I:

AN OVERVIEW OF THE AND GLOBAL AI LANDSCAPE GOVERNANCE MODELS

A "move fast and break things" approach is pervasive in AI technology development.[13] This "race to the bottom" approach has a significant impact on AI regulation and governance. Private companies and nations alike seek to be the first movers in developing and deploying new technologies. To varying degrees, both the public and private sector alike are wary of the

ramifications of over-regulation in strategic competitive terms and are concerned about under-regulation in terms of its broader impacts on humanity, sustainability, equality and the environment. Regardless of the need to balance strategic and comparative advantages against the long-term ramifications of AI technologies, regulation lags AI development in significant and meaningful ways that impact gender inequality acutely.

The UN is no exception. The UN variably sees AI as a "force for good" and as a critical technology that could exacerbate inequalities, digital divides, and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable.[14] Since 2017, the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and related entities started examining risks and opportunities for sustainable development, specifically considering AI among other frontier technologies. Subsequently, the High-level Committee on Programmes (HCLP) created a timebound inter-agency working group on AI (IAWG-AI) co-led by UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) from 2020-2025 to:

> *a) facilitate exchange of information internally within the UN system, b) strengthen internal system-wide capacity, c) complement and contribute to existing efforts, and d) facilitate interagency cooperation in capacity building activities to support Member States.*[15]

A core output was a UN AI Resource Hub[16] which centralizes all UN AI activities across 55 entities, over 700 initiatives and 193 countries. As of January 2026, over 160 of these initiatives related in some way to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality, ranging from AI education policy to training on AI and networks for women in AI.

Despite this wide range of activities underway, in 2023 the Secretary-General also established a twelve-month High-Level Advisory Body on AI whose report, *Governing AI for Humanity*[17], found that whilst hundreds of guides, frameworks and principles on AI governance exist globally, none have a truly global reach and comprehensiveness. The report identifies significant problems regarding representation, coordination and implementation. In terms of representation, the report notes that "many communities . . . [are] entirely excluded from AI governance conversations that impact them," with diversity within and across nations being a key issue given the "borderless" nature of the technology and the reality that one state or group of states cannot (and should not) control AI governance. Coordination is lacking within the UN system: AI is so cross cutting that many entities are involved in AI governance, yet they lack the specific mandate and mechanisms to do so in a comprehensive manner. Accountability in implementation remains a concern, with best-practice principles, policies and legislative mechanisms requiring sufficient resourcing and support to ensure governance

translates tangibly across states and to enterprises of all sizes involved in the development and deployment of AI. This is increasingly difficult to achieve in a resource-constrained and geopolitically fraught context, yet remains a critical imperative of global cooperation considering the **significance** of AI (particularly, its potential significant positives and negative impacts on humanity and the environment), **persistence** (AI's likelihood to alter human ways of doing for an indefinite future time), and **contingency** (that humanity's future path may be highly contingent on present-day choices regarding AI development).[18]

The development of a Global Digital Compact, a framework adopted by the UN from the September 2024 Summit of the Future, provides significant opportunities to help coordinate future AI policy development. A position paper from UN Women published in 2024 recognizes the Compact's pre-eminent role as a framework for digital cooperation and AI governance, yet advocates for substantive improvements, placing gender equality at the heart of the framework. This is akin to a "gender mainstreaming" approach to AI policy – an approach which has been used extensively since the Beijing Platform for Action to ensure that decision-making accounts for the different interests and need of people of all genders. UN Women advocates for a stand-alone goal on gender equality in the Compact, including the aims that women and girls can:

> a) lead lives free from technology-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination;
>
> b) realize the educational and economic opportunities and equitable access to the range of resources offered by digital technologies on the same basis as men and boys and;
>
> c) have a presence and voice in the full range of institutional decisions on digital transformation that are shaping lives and the functioning of families and society as a whole.

They also advocate for robust mainstreaming of gender considerations across all parts of the framework – encouraging a shift from a simple focus on gender parity in access to digital tools and jobs or limiting gender perspectives to safety issues alone, to a more comprehensive approach that encompasses a broader range of gender-related issues. As of January 2026, whilst gaps remain and the tangible implementation of the Compact by states (or private sector actors) has not been well measured, the adopted text has strengthened gender mainstreaming throughout to a certain degree, and added a new commitment (by 2030) relevant to this policy brief to:

> *mainstream a gender perspective in digital connectivity strategies to address structural and systematic barriers to meaningful, safe and*

> *affordable digital connectivity for all women and girls (SDG 5).*[19]

This is also in alignment with the UN General Assembly's resolution 'Seizing the Opportunities for Safe, Secure and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence Systems for Sustainable Development' which advocates for:

> *Member States to adopt specific measures to close the gender digital divide and to ensure that particular attention is paid to access, affordability, digital literacy, privacy and online safety, to enhance the use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence systems, and to mainstream a disability, gender and racial equality perspective in policy decisions and the frameworks that guide them.*[20]

Moves at the UN-level therefore reinforce a generalized support for gender responsive AI, however, lack a level of specificity and depth that may be most useful to developers and states alike. Such frameworks demonstrate limited implementation, accountability and enforcement actions as found elsewhere across multilateral and state systems.

In 2024, 85% of UN members states had yet to implement regulations or policies around AI at the state level[21]. In the remaining cases, regulation and policies on AI tend to adopt a generic ethical lens that emphasises fairness, transparency, and accountability for instance. Gaps remain in adequately addressing such principles' intersection with gender, power and inequalities. Furthermore, references to gender or equality are often superficial, lacking adequate resourcing, actionable mechanisms and enforceable mandates. At a national level, even nations leading on gender equality (like Sweden[22]) lag in applying gender mainstreaming to AI – highlighting a major gap in ensuring commensurate resources are dedicated to *how* an industry develops alongside encouraging its development.

The OECD's AI Principles[23] adopted in 2019 by 42 countries (including members of the G20) represent one of the first forays into AI governance, promoting inclusive growth, but without explicitly addressing gender equality or providing mechanisms to measure gendered impacts of AI. UNESCO's 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence[24] goes a step further as the first global standard-setting instrument on AI ethics. It emphasises human dignity, non-discrimination, gender equality and environmental sustainability. The EU's Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act)[25] goes beyond UNESCO's normative declarations to present some of the first legally binding attempts to regulate AI applications. Taking a risk-based approach, high risk AI systems (e.g. those used in education, law enforcement, employment, etc.) must meet strong requirements regarding data quality, transparency and human oversight. In contrast, non-high-risk systems are

not mandated to adhere to the same standards, though they are encouraged to do so voluntarily. As at the UN level, there is a lack of ongoing monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of AI developed that leaves substantive gaps between the Act's ambition around mitigating risks and ensuring fairness, and their achievement of the same in practice.[26]

As such, approaches to AI governance often fall short of being explicitly feminist or incorporating the full range of mechanisms for achieving gender equality at individual, organizational and structural levels. Where AI strategies exist, they often demonstrate an awareness of gender inequalities and bias through incorporation of rhetoric. Yet they frequently lack detail, tangible guidance and expertise, adequate authority or funding to ensure rhetorical ambitions are underpinned by implementation and action. They may reinforce gender binaries and fail to fully consider intersectionality. Finally, they often fail to incorporate enforcement mechanisms or ongoing monitoring and evaluation of technology development. This phenomenon may be considered a form of "gender washing", with experts noting that "without soft and hard regulations, all "Tech for Good" initiatives and products risk to fail, despite their altruistic intentions."[27] Concerningly, there is a high proportion of states yet to develop strategies on AI, and major AI players including the US, China and Europe demonstrate starkly divergent approaches to regulation. This is a risk for humanity, gender equality, and the future development of AI given the range of identified gendered AI issues and opportunities to date.

AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST APPROACH TO AI

In contrast to the AI race to the bottom approach often favored by some states and companies, the UN and other leaders advocate for a fairer, slower, more consensual and collaborative approach that aligns strongly with a feminist approach to AI development.[28] Best-practice feminist principles applicable to AI help to go beyond identifying issues to supporting ethical, fair and sustainable solutions. They include:

- Acknowledging that whilst AI technologies and technologists are often depicted as 'objective' and 'neutral', technology is fundamentally cultural and shaped by the context in which it is developed, as well as by whom it is developed and for what primary purposes. AI is not neutral and impacts people of different genders (as well as races/ethnicity, people with disability, and so on) differently. This recognition necessitates targeted interventions.

- **Proactively correcting bias and inequality,** given "bias is not always or even often an accidental by-product or technical error, but rather, a reinforcement of existing power relationships"[29].
- **Recognizing that *improved* technology alone is not the solution to *improving* technology.** Techno-solutionism (also known as technochauvinism) advocates that "technology is always the solution", yet compelling evidence demonstrates that technology and social science must work together to address social problems and make improvements in technology and its uses.[30]
- **Viewing AI as a 'dual use' technology that both benefits and hampers the achievement of gender equality** – with some of the same technology used for egregious harms against women also technology used to support women's greater emancipation. Not all uses of AI are endorsed by all feminists, and notwithstanding the varied potential uses of different AI technologies, some technologies were developed specifically for exploitation and subjugation that is inherently problematic for feminist AI governance.
- **Taking a principled but not necessarily labelled approach to feminist AI.** Whilst best practice approaches to AI governance might include explicitly stated feminist goals, it is most important AI policies that are feminist in substance (and not just by name, or by name only).
- **Moving beyond critique to practice.** Whilst growing attention is being paid to gender equality and feminist AI issues, merely identifying issues is insufficient for meeting the grand challenges faced by states, institutions and individuals alike when it comes to AI. There is a greater need for feminists in technology spaces, and technologists in feminist spaces, to cross-pollinate ideas, trial and test new solutions, and think through policies and their ramifications more holistically. There is a need for developing inherently feminist AI technologies, as well as inherently feminist AI governance and regulation.
- **Developing global standards whilst leaving room for local adjustments.** Whilst global coordination is critical in establishing baseline ethical standards and ensuring accountability across states and corporations, diverse local contexts also play a role in shaping governance frameworks that reflect their specific dynamics, issues, opportunities and needs.

PART II:

GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND AI

AI seems fated to take on a dual role; it helps in some areas and harms in others.[31]

This section aims to provide a brief overview of gendered AI issues and opportunities relevant to feminist AI governance – reinforcing why it matters and providing avenues for what to do about it. It is broken into (1) *context and inputs,* (2) *outputs* and (3) *outcomes,* as in Figure 1 and 2. Whilst not exhaustive or indicating direct causation across elements, the key issues and opportunities highlighted in this section can be added to over time and tweaked per context. This information is intended to show an overarching life-cycle view of the high variety of factors that should be considered for feminist AI governance which go well beyond biased AI, a lack of women in leadership and development, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. *Context and inputs* refer largely to the human resources, funding, ownership, decisions, research and data that contributes *into* the gendered AI development and deployment process. *Outputs* refer to what is developed or produced (and even what is *not* developed or produced) as a result of this context and inputs – and can range from specific technology features to how such technologies are used. *Outcomes* refer to the impacts of both on broader gender equality at a structural level, plus on organizations and individuals [see Figure 1].

What's the problem?

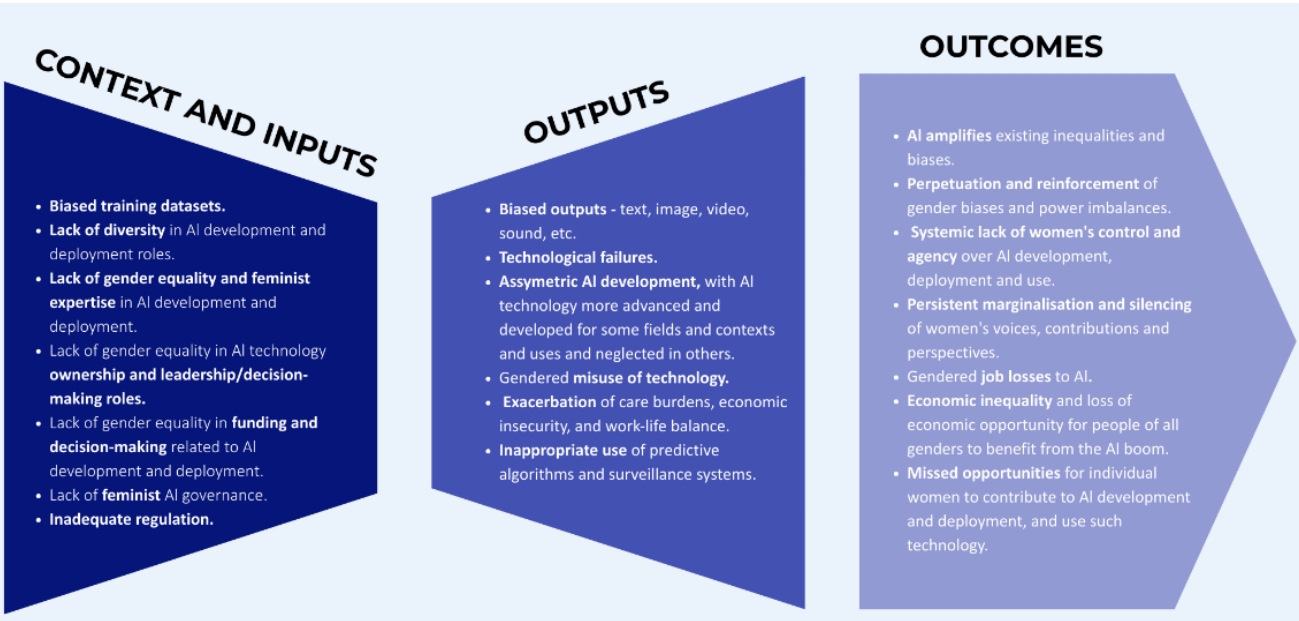

Figure 1: Gender and AI issues

Under *context and inputs*, issues include biases in inputs drawn on to develop and deploy AI, such as unrepresentative authorship (e.g. one study estimates only 26.5% of ChatGPT-3 training data was authored by women[32]) and biased and unrepresentative subject matter (e.g. the UN estimates that roughly 90% of all people have a "deeply ingrained bias" against women[33], biases which play out in art, books, media and language; further, a study of Wikipedia and Common Crawl (open repository of web crawl data that may be relied on by LLMs) found that gender stereotypes are not only pervasive globally but may be stronger in more economically developed countries[34]). Analysis by the Berkeley Haas Center for Equity, Gender and Leadership[35] found that approximately 44 per cent of AI systems from 1988-2021 exhibited gender bias, and a further quarter exhibited both gender and racial bias. More recent studies on generative AI illustrate this bias: DALL-E2 tended to generate more images of men than women, Wordplay.ai portrayed women as more likely to be bad leaders, and GPT-2 and Llama2 generated occupations for women that were less varied and more stereotypical, including portraying women as models or prostitutes in 30% of cases.[36] Such issues are exacerbated by the established research and medical evidence base (which is primarily based on men's physiology and experiences[37], leading to incomplete, inappropriate, or inaccurate medical and healthcare AI advice or applications for all genders). Additionally, many AI models rely on user-generated content that risks misinformation, lacks authority or verifiability, and perpetuates biases, with a study conducted in June 2025 by Semrush[38] finding that the top three web domains cited by Google Search, Google AI Mode, ChatGPT and Perplexity were Reddit followed by Wikipedia and YouTube.

Beyond the commonly identified issues of bias in LLMs, a lack of diversity across roles relevant to AI development and deployment is a key concern. This includes women's under-representation in AI development and technical roles (although statistics vary depending on context, women represent roughly 22% of AI talent globally[39]), as well as an over-reliance on "ghost" workforces (often women in developing nations) performing data labelling, code cleaning, training machine learning models, and moderating and transcribing content.[40] This lack of diversity is also evident in use, with women adopting AI tools at a 25 percent lower rate than men on average.[41] A lack of gender equality or feminist expertise in AI development and deployment is evident. Even if representational issues in the workforce and decision-making for a relating to AI are addressed, gender parity in representation does not equate to inherently more feminist or gender equal AI. As such, issues remain around the lack of feminist and gender expertise in development, coding and training processes, requiring people of all genders to

produce solutions for a more gender responsive AI future.

Representational issues are duplicated in ownership, leadership and decision making. These issues are not unique to AI, with women globally owning roughly one third of all businesses but receiving roughly 1 percent of total global procurement.[42] Specific to AI, in the Forbes 2025 AI 50 list showcasing the world's leading private sector AI companies, only seven had a female founder.[43] Funding for women-owned startups remains chronically low at roughly 2-3% of all funding in many states[44], with this funding backsliding in countries like the US and Australia. Who owns and leads AI companies and regulatory bodies also impacts on decisions made around development and deployment – who leads, matters. Given a lack of online safety, chronic under-representation and under-funding, deepfake abuse, and algorithmic bias and discrimination disproportionately affect women, more women policymakers are urgently needed to bring lived experience to the forefront of policymaking and ensure such issues gain the attention they require. A lack of gender responsive or feminist principles guiding current AI governance – beyond rhetorical commitments and generic statements – and a lack of adequate regulation, as prior explored in this policy brief, further exacerbate such representational and decision-making issues.

This overarching *context* and specific *inputs* has a variety of impacts on AI *outputs*. Top-level issues include biased generative AI outputs across text, image, video and sound, as well as technological failures – such as AI tools more responsive to men's voices[45], hiring tools that perpetuate past hiring practices (e.g. predominantly of men of a certain education and background)[46], or medical diagnostic and treatment tools that do not account for sex and gender differences[47]. Relatedly, as a result of many of the issues at the *inputs* stage, AI technology outputs are likely to be more advanced in some fields, contexts and for some uses, than in others – a form of asymmetric AI development. For instance, power asymmetries between countries and companies that develop and own AI, and those who use AI[48], contribute to what kinds of AI systems and applications are invested in (and what is ignored). This has major ramifications: 1) for nations and sectors unable to develop their own AI applications (e.g. AI's heavy use in achieving economic imperatives and slower uptake in producing humanitarian, social justice outcomes) and 2) for those who are dependent on AI tech developed by other nations (exacerbating Global North/Global South divides).

Additionally, partly due to governance and regulatory gaps as well as a lack of feminist input to governance and regulation, gendered misuse of AI is rife. For instance, pornography makes up 98% of deepfakes (realistic looking, but fake videos) online, and 99% of that imagery is of women and girls[49]. Additionally, AI may be used as a consultative tool to 'stand in'

for women's voices or contributions, resulting in a form of exploitation or extraction without seeking the input of real women (a particular concern for integrity in policymaking). This may also include use of women's voice, ideas and perspectives without proper attribution, recognition and reward/payment, as in widespread IP theft to train AI systems.[50]

A look at AI outputs also shows that whilst AI systems can alleviate care burdens disproportionately shouldered by women (e.g. through virtual assistants, smart home devices, etc.), AI risks reinforcing traditional gender roles. For instance, if tools are primarily targeted to women for domestic tasks this could perpetuate expectations that such labor is the responsibility of women. Job displacement due to AI and automation in female-dominated sectors like retail, customer service and administrative roles could disproportionately impact women, further impacting their economic security and work/life balance.[51] Concerns have also arisen around the appropriate use of predictive algorithms and surveillance systems, including the weaponization of home devices (e.g. smart cars, vacuums) that can be hacked or controlled to lock women out, film them without consent, used in coercive control or domestic violence settings, or otherwise breach their rights.

These factors all contribute to significant gender inequality *outcomes* related to AI. This includes: a perpetuation and reinforcement of gender biases and stereotypes; a systemic lack of women's agency and control over AI development, deployment and use; the persistent marginalization and silencing of women's voices, contributions and perspectives; gendered job losses; economic inequality and loss of economic opportunity, and; missed opportunities for individual women to contribute to AI development and deployment, and use the full range of technology available. Additionally, access to skills development and a reduction of the digital gender divide are critical factors determining who will benefit from the opportunities AI creates and who will be left behind, with AI recognised overall to amplify existing inequalities and biases.

What can we do about it?

Reflecting the dual-use nature of AI as an enabler and hindrance to gender equality, a robust variety of opportunity exist as a key galvanizing force for feminist AI policymakers, developers and community leaders alike. Many of the opportunities identified can be categorised as changing norms, practices, beliefs, policies and processes, or resources, as in Table 1. What we need to change. This table reinforces that both *formal* mechanisms (e.g. laws, policies, etc.) and *informal* mechanisms (e.g. beliefs, behaviours) are relevant to generating feminist AI *inputs, outputs* and *outcomes* [see Figure 2]. This categorisation is drawn from the evidence base which advocates for the "design, adoption and implementation

of policies at different levels to ensure artificial intelligence benefits everyone".[52]

Mechanism for change	Issues and what we need to change	Primary level of intervention and impact
Informal mechanisms (e.g. often unwritten, unquestioned rules, attitudes and behaviours)	**Norms**: around gender and AI development, deployment and use	Structural level
	Practices: practices and behaviours that reinforce gender inequalities and power imbalances in AI development, deployment and use	Individual and organisational level
	Beliefs: attitudes and beliefs that reinforce gender inequalities and power imbalances in AI development, deployment and use	Individual level
Formal mechanisms (e.g. often explicit, visible, documented rules, systems, and processes)	**Policies and processes:** formal policies, laws, rules, procedures, and mechanisms guiding gender responsive or feminist AI, as well as the representativeness (or not) of the AI sector and policymaking processes	Structural and organisational level
	Resources: access to and availability of opportunities, resources, networks and institutions for all genders around AI development, deployment and use	All levels

Table 1: What we need to change

Opportunities for gender responsive AI include technical, social, and regulatory 'fixes'. When it comes to mitigating bias in AI decision-making for instance, solutions include technology-related approaches (e.g. the idea that fair representation in data sets will lead to fair AI outcomes), management approaches (testing and auditing decision-making algorithms to avoid pernicious feedback from AI self-learning, misreporting of data, unethical data practices, and other misconduct), governance and regulatory approaches (e.g. dealing with human decision-making responsibility on AI, as well as user "responsible AI conduct"), and societal and community-focused approaches (e.g. professional education and training, policies protecting personal data use, etc)[53].

Options include intervening at the AI training stage to correct biases and build awareness within models (and users) of bias. Drawing on a diverse range of users and use-cases is an important part of ensuring technology does not fail to work for any one group, whilst ongoing monitoring and feedback loops can ensure inequality-producing features (whether unintentional or by design) are addressed. Relatedly, systems can expand the range of inputs drawn on to develop and deploy AI, with any key gaps identified forming the basis for new research, writing and development (e.g.

more medical and health research that accounts for sex and gender differences, more support for women authors, etc.). Similarly, AI development should more substantively draw from ethicists, feminist and gender equality experts to ensure products are fit-for-purpose and that companies get the expertise they need to 'get it right'.

In terms of an AI workforce, increasing women's education, training and employment in skills areas relevant to AI development, deployment and use is critical. However, it should also be met with improvements to workplaces – such as addressing gendered pay, conditions, harassment, and experience that impact not only on *recruitment* but also *retention.* The ILO[54] finds that women currently face a median gender pay gap of 21% in information, communication and technology sectors, whilst researchers[55] find that women are less likely to apply for jobs requiring expertise with emerging technologies, like AI. It should also be recognized that other fields can and should provide expertise into AI development (e.g. health experts supporting AI developers to produce health-specific AI tools) and as such, female-dominated fields (e.g. health, education, retail, etc.) should have adequate pathways and opportunities to collaborate and provide input into new technologies.

Regulating the development, deployment and use of AI technologies with the aim of removing its misuse for gender-based violence and discrimination, and resourcing feminist AI, is also critical. This includes ensuring regulatory bodies (a) exist (e.g. see the world-leading example of the eSafety Commissioner in Australia) and (b) have adequate funding and authority to enforce compliance. Global cooperation and linked-up enforcement is particularly important given the power asymmetries of major tech companies. For instance, Google and Facebook (Meta) threatened to withdraw services in Australia in 2021 over the introduction of regulation that would require them to pay Australian publishers for content[56], whilst the online safety regulator Julie Inman Grant faced substantive online abuse, doxing and death threats (including from major technologists) following efforts to regulate social media[57]. It is essential to ensure that no single country or individual is left to fight for gender responsive AI or left with the consequences of taking on major tech companies to ensure compliance.

Much more can be done to encourage and provide support for gender equality transformations in power and decision-making, in existing AI technology ownership and in entrepreneurship (including ensuring more women in AI leadership to correct chronic under-representation of women, at roughly 10-11% of CEO, CIO and CTO roles in companies analysed in 2024)[58]. This also includes the need for substantive resourcing and mechanisms to ensure gender equality in funding and decision-making related to AI development and deployment.

There are several fundamental ways in which such changes can contribute to more feminist AI *outputs*. This includes technology that is better able to detect biases and patterns invisible to humans.[59] Technology may also be more fit for purpose when it accounts for different sectors', nations', and genders' different needs and interests. Outputs may be better tailored, appropriate and available, whilst technology that has been developed sensitive to not reinforcing inequalities may also be better able to reduce care burdens (e.g. the burgeoning development of home-use AI robotic technologies for instance) without reinforcing such work as "women's work". With substantive resourcing and mechanisms available to support women leaders, technology owners and entrepreneurs to access capital, networks and opportunities, we have a more substantial opportunity to develop more feminist AI technology and remove gender gaps in ownership and decision-making. Additionally, a more feminist AI governance approach may also help with "just transitions". A "just transition" is a term commonly used in climate adaptation referring to ensuring no one is left behind in a transition to a climate neutral economy, however, it is a concept also relevant for AI to ensure gendered job patterns in AI automation are transparent, understood, and can be adequately addressed through policy and action.

By taking up such opportunities and interventions, AI may not be able to produce a feminist utopia, however it is possible to contribute to a disruption of gender biases and existing power imbalances. It may better support people of all genders to have control and agency over AI development, deployment and use, and ensure AI reflects all voices and perspectives. Economic and social inequalities through job losses or inequitable ownership of AI can be mitigated. Individuals can have the knowledge, skills and awareness of biases in AI systems to navigate or counter them, as well as the skills to help themselves access relevant information and self-help. Organizations will also be in a position to effectively use AI tools to reduce inequalities in workplace policies and practices, whilst nations will be in a better place to navigate their own needs against power asymmetries that would otherwise leave them at the mercy of state and company decisions in other jurisdictions.

Figure 2: Gender and AI opportunities

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GLOBAL COLLABORATION: ACCELERATING FEMINIST TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMACY

Actors working in gender equality or AI may come from multiple standpoints. For some governments and private sector actors, gender equality may be central to their policies and actions, and AI may be viewed as an instrument which helps advance gender equality. For others, gender equality may remain a side consideration. Regardless of the approach to gender and AI, gender responsive AI is integral to human flourishing, the protection of human rights and dignity, and the galvanizing of the full spectrum of human ingenuity and innovation. Feminist AI can benefit entire societies – economically and socially. Everyone has a role to play.

As such, feminist technology diplomacy advocates for "directly incorporat[ing] feminist civil society, academics, bureaucrats and

technologists to advance regulation, policy development and tangible supports for nations and industry alike to develop feminist AI tech."[60] Several opportunities for global collaboration are needed, including:

#1 Breaking down gender and AI policy siloes:

The public sector should mainstream gender considerations throughout AI policies and consider AI impacts throughout gender policies, rather than treating each as separate concerns.

Practical steps for leaders:

- ❑ Mandate Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) for national AI strategies and major public sector deployments of AI, with GIAs required for funding or approvals;
- ❑ Embed gender expertise in AI governance bodies (e.g. national taskforces or UN AI advisory bodies);
- ❑ Create joint working groups across ministries/departments relating to 1) digital affairs and technology, and 2) gender equality and women's issues.

#2 Aligning AI innovation with gender regulation:

Rather than setting gender-responsive or feminist AI governance in opposition with AI development, states and the multilateral system should develop proactive regulatory approaches that drive feminist AI innovation and safeguards AI development, deployment and use against gendered harms.

Practical steps for leaders:

- ❑ Require risk-proportionate gender safety standards before high-risk AI systems are deployed, aligning and learning off existing frameworks (e.g. EU AI Act);
- ❑ Provide targeted innovation funding for gender-responsive AI tools (e.g. through grants, procurement tools, hackathon challenges);
- ❑ Develop a regulatory sandbox specifically to enable innovators to co-design with regulators and affected community groups around "AI for gender equality".

Accountability can be met through public transparency reports on gender-related harms, alongside independent audits and gender responsive budgeting with dedicated funding for gender equality applications.

#3 Proactive use of AI to reduce discrimination and eliminate inequality and bias should be leveraged:

This includes allocating substantive funding for tech-for-good applications beneficial to gender equality.

Practical steps for leaders:

- ❑ Require transparency in training datasets used for AI development (with

attention to authorship, content, sex- and gender-disaggregated data);

- ❑ Fund AI tools for gender equality, such as around gender-based violence, safety systems, financial services, and so on.

Accountability can be met through gender responsive budgeting and tracking of AI spending, as well as public dashboards tracking AI investments and their use.

#4 Developing enforceable and complementary global, national and local approaches, rather than unenforceable, generic statements of concern around gender and AI:

Global cooperation across the public, private and community sectors is needed to mitigate gendered harms. This includes ensuring generic ethical concerns and rhetorical commitments around AI are gender-responsive and specific enough to develop actionable solutions, with adequate authority, resourcing and abilities to monitor developments and enforce standards.

Practical steps for leaders:

- ❑ Adopt gender-responsive clauses in multilateral agreements on AI (like climate agreements include gender action plans);
- ❑ Track gender and AI compliance across states through development of a public index or platform, evaluating whether states meet minimum standards around gender-responsive AI.

#5 Fix systems, not women:

A range of interventions should look to address the full range of AI gender inequalities. Interventions should target issues and opportunities at all levels of intervention – from an individual level (e.g. increasing women's participation in AI development and deployment, funding women in AI startups, supporting women's safety etc.), to an organisational level (e.g. providing workplaces with guidelines on how AI can be used to mitigate gendered harms; focusing on improving AI workplaces for women, etc.) and structural levels (e.g. reinforcing gender equal normative behaviours around appropriate AI use that is not exploitative and does not infringe on individual human dignity or rights, establishing policies and legislation with adequate funding and enforcement abilities, etc.).

Practical steps for leaders:

- ❑ Invest in research that seeks to understand specific, localized gendered issues surrounding AI, in order to develop a suite of targeted options for policy and practical interventions;
- ❑ Invest in a range of solutions/interventions, that focus not only on upskilling or protecting individuals, but also work with organisations who use AI and those who develop AI.

#6 Creating, supporting and promoting global feminist AI champions:

Global feminist and gender equality leaders need to engage with AI developers and funders, policymakers and legislators, and AI users in the community. Through engagement, such cooperatives of champions can help co-develop solutions that fulfil AI's promise as a "force for good" (including for gender equality), advocate for standards, and educate the public around AI uses and norms that respect individual human dignity and rights.

Practical steps for leaders:

- ❑ Provide fellowships or secondments for feminist leaders to be embedded in technology companies, standards bodies and national AI governance institutions; create a global mentorship or accelerator program for women and gender-diverse people in AI;
- ❑ Bring together feminist leaders to help inform multilateral AI governance, for instance through the establishment of a Feminist AI Advisory Body.

#7 Investing in interoperable gender equality or feminist principles for AI:

Recognising the fast pace of change for AI technologies and the burgeoning field of different actors developing new technologies, best practice principles for AI should be interoperable (across applications, uses, jurisdictions, etc.) and developed with consistency, ease of use, and longevity (including updatability) in mind. Adequate support must be provided to the public and private sector alike.

Practical steps for leaders:

- ❑ Develop a shared global definition and minimum standards around gender responsive or feminist AI (similar to OECD AI Principles, but with an explicit focus on gender);
- ❑ Create adaptable, reuseable regulatory templates for AI governance – for technologists and the public sector – including gender impact assessments, auditing tools and best practice principles; create mechanisms for civil society to submit complaints or report issues surrounding AI systems that produce gendered harms or are non-compliant.

To turn gender responsive or feminist AI principles and their corresponding actions into tangible positive impacts for society, reasonable timelines should be adopted, with progress tracked and measured. Through collaboration, today's global leaders – from civil society to technologists and policymakers – can create sustainable, equal and just AI for the betterment of all, now and in the future.

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