Action Coalition 5: Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality

The key priorities and actions outlined in this document are based on extensive discussions within the Action Coalition 5: Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality Working Group of the B+25 Network. For the Beijing +25 review, there are six Action Coalitions centring on critical areas for women's rights and gender equality: Gender-Based Violence, Economic Justice and Rights, Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Feminist Action for Climate Justice, Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality, and Feminist Movements and Leadership, plus the GEF Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Actions.

Overview of the Issue in Canada

- The representation of women in management or decision-making roles in technology, digital and media corporate sectors stalled in 2017 at 27.7%.[1]
- One in five young people experience cyberstalking and cyberbullying. The rate of victimization is higher for young women and LGBTQI2S folks. Girls and teens often face online sexist or misogynist abuse and harassment.[2]
- Gender stereotypes deter women's desire to participate and thrive in STEM training and careers. The rate of retention of young women in STEM is lower than it is for young men.[3]

Increased access to technology for women and girls in all their diversity – including those living in poverty, in rural areas, seniors, immigrant women, women with disabilities, and Indigenous people – is essential. Accessible, easy to use, effective, and affordable technology and education, with supports for research, development, and implementation of diverse technical solutions, is necessary to increase access.

In order to increase their representation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) sectors, women must not only be encouraged to pursue STEM careers, but STEM environments must support women in all their diversity to ensure their

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[1] Women in Communications and Technology (2018), as cited in: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2019). *Unfinished Business: A Parallel Report on Canada's Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. https://www.criaw-icref.ca/updates/unfinished-business/
[2] YWCA Canada (2015), as cited in *Unfinished Business* (2019)
[3] Wall (2019), as cited in *Unfinished Business* (2019)

retention. No form of bullying, harassment, and discrimination in the workplace should be tolerated—it is crucial that cases are taken seriously and thoroughly investigated to ensure the safety of women in the workplace.

STEM contributions by women workers and entrepreneurs should be encouraged and recognized. Women looking to become entrepreneurs in advanced technology fields, as well as women in STEM and Trades, face significant barriers to training, employment and career advancement. Inequality deepens as the result of lack of access to funding, mentorship, sponsorship, and alliances for women. Support networks and mentorship opportunities for women working in STEM allow women and girls to learn and apply relevant knowledge for employee and management best practices from leaders that came before them. It is particularly important to rural and remote communities that services for STEM businesses led by women be established and maintained.

Funding is needed to increase representation of women and girls in all their diversity as STEM entrepreneurs—particularly for 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks, women with disabilities, and other marginalized and underrepresented groups of women. Women in STEM also require resources and support to be able to raise concerns without repercussion, being undermined or silenced. The inequalities experienced by all working women – in care work and unpaid labour, access to childcare, and the gender wage gap – are also experienced by women in STEM and must be addressed. Finally, it is essential to engage meaningfully with feminist organizations that advocate for the creation of funding that strengthens professional networks for women in STEM.

Key Commitments per Action Coalition Blueprint

As part of the 25-year review process of the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Action Coalition leaders have defined the following concrete set of key actions to be realized by 2026:

Action 1: By 2026, reduce by half the gender digital divide across generations by accelerating **meaningful access to digital technologies and universal digital literacy**.

Action 2: By 2026, increase investments towards **feminist technology and innovation** by 50% to support women's leadership as innovators and better **respond to women and girls' most pressing needs**.

Action 3: By 2026, **double the proportion of women working in technology and innovation** by setting up new networks and benchmarks to transform innovation ecosystems.

Action 4: By 2026, a majority of countries and tech companies demonstrate **accountability by implementing policies and solutions against online and tech facilitated GBV and discrimination**.

Realizing Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality

Key Priorities

Funding:

- Fund international research collaborations led by women in STEM
- Invest in women entrepreneurs in STEM
- Fund women's organizations for diverse participation of women in STEM, technology, and innovation, and engage meaningfully to devise new funding streams that expand and strengthen professional networks for women in STEM
- Finance research, marketing, promotion, and distribution of technology and innovations by women
- Subsidize phone and internet plans for low-income people
- Invest in free public WIFI and cybersecurity
- Finance educational programs and organizations that improve digital literacy and cybersecurity, particularly for senior women more vulnerable to cyberviolence and cybersecurity breaches
- Invest in feminist-led technology and innovation by supporting initiatives that may be 'outside' the boundaries of traditional technology and innovation (such as technology and innovation related to healthcare, SRHR, the environment/climate change, etc.)

Accessibility:

- Improve access to technology, WIFI and basic services, especially in rural and remote regions
- Support the development of more user friendly and accessible technology options, particularly for women and other marginalized people, seniors, women with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples
- Combat cyberviolence experienced by women and girls with legislation, regulation, and penalties for abusers
- Create more employment opportunities for skilled immigrant women by encouraging collaboration between Immigration Canada and STEM sectors

Education:

- Invest in improving K-12 technology and STEM education
- Support opportunities for collaboration and networking to strengthen professional relationships
- Encourage girls and women to pursue and remain in STEM careers
- Provide scholarships, grants, and mentoring to women with diverse identities and perspectives
- Increase women's representation in STEM by addressing stereotypes and limited access to resources
- Provide unconscious bias training to combat sexism, bullying, harassment, abuse, gender discrimination, and stereotypes prevalent in STEM workplaces
- Mandate GBA+ training, unconscious bias training, healthy workplace culture and enforce unbiased hiring practices
- Support and facilitate workshops, webinars, forums, conferences, and innovation hubs that emphasize the importance of women to technology and innovation

Employment Rights:

- Provide workers with decent work, including a safe work environment, equal and equitable opportunity and treatment, a fair and sustainable income, and work stability and security
- Support collaborative partnerships between STEM and employment organizations for pilot programs that allow women to create STEM start-ups and employment opportunities
- Tackle pay inequality with enforcement of pay equity legislation, and develop pay equity action plans
- Address and combat bullying and harassment in STEM workplaces
- Ensure meaningful and adequate policies for women on leave for caretaking to remain connected to the workplace and facilitate their reintegration, including increased access to training and retraining programs on their return
- Create increased access for women to STEM employment by covering the costs of childcare, care work, transportation, and food incurred for any skills training or upgrading programs
- Encourage established STEM executive teams to provide hands-on training and learning opportunities for diverse women

Take Action

Government Actions *Holding the government to account*	Grassroots Actions *Feminist Work*
• Provide disaggregated gender data • Develop government policies to support tech innovations through a GBA+ lens • Consult with feminists in STEM to create new streams of funding for diverse workplaces, networks and knowledge sharing • Implement and enforce legislation and measures for accountability in large social media companies, such as the [Federal Bill to Regulate Social Media, Streaming](#) – passed in June 2021 (Bill C-10) • Update and maintain the Information and Communication Technology equipment inventory (hardware and software details) • Mandate diversity representation in educational and promotional technology literature • Mandate GBA+ training, unconscious bias training, workplace culture and enforce unbiased hiring practices • Follow the example of Québec's [Bill 151: An Act to prevent and fight sexual violence in higher education institutions](#) to develop interventions for addressing harassment in universities, colleges, other educational institutions, and their workplaces	• Continue to raise awareness on cybersecurity and cyberviolence • Promote the participation of women and girls in STEM • Advocate for federal budget funding that supports and promotes innovation and STEM-based start-ups led by women • Create networking opportunities and mentoring programs for upcoming leaders in STEM • Promote use of the DiversifySTEM app to educate around microaggressions, inclusion, and belonging for women in STEM • Advocate for investment in K-12 education campaigns that work to eliminate social and psychological barriers preventing girls and young women from choosing careers in STEM • Advocate for increased access to technology, WIFI services, and basic services for women in all their diversity, especially for seniors and women in rural and remote regions

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The key priorities and actions outlined in this document are based on extensive discussions within the Action Coalition 5: Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality Working Group of the B+25 Network. These discussions were held between March and October 2021 with the following feminist and women's organizations: Global Women in STEM (Anja Lanz, Damineh Akhavan), and the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology (Anju Bajaj, Besire Culhaoglu, Christine Blair, Nasira Aziz).

The findings were compiled and presented by Elizabeth Nguyen and Kenya Thompson.

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