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Written inputs for Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future: Recommendations for Chapter III with focus on human capital development in STEM for Africa.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

Summary: If we need to focus on human capital development to achieve and build sustainable communities, especially in Africa; we have to invest in our populations and especially in closing the access gap to technology and science for women and girls. The future is 50% female and this indicates a potential opportunity area even in our response to women related issues. Advancing technology for girls in Africa is a multifaceted challenge that requires a holistic approach. Here are key points to consider in order to promote and support the involvement of girls in technology in Africa

1. Gender-Inclusive Curriculum:

- Integrate technology and STEM subjects into the curriculum with a focus on gender equality. This will inadvertently position girls to see STEM as a means to solving issues related to them and within their immediate communities. Women and girls will become direct contributors to data driven initiatives and why not policies that close the access gap even for roles in STEM.
- Promote learning materials and resources that are gender-inclusive and challenge stereotypes and encourage more girls to access quality education in STEM.
- Promote and encourage children to pursue education in technology from an early age.

2. Community Engagement:

- Engage communities to break cultural barriers and stereotypes that discourage girls from pursuing careers in technology.
- Collaborate with local leaders, parents, and communities to create a supportive environment for girls in STEM. This can be done through awareness raising initiatives that show the communities the “advantages” and positive uses of technology to help clarify naysayers and reticence.

3. Skill Development Programs:

Implement skill development programs that provide practical, hands-on experience in technology.

Offer coding workshops, robotics clubs, and other extracurricular activities to foster interest and skills especially at pedagogical levels in schools.

4. Partnerships with Industry:

- Forge partnerships with technology companies to provide internships, apprenticeships, and exposure to real-world applications of technology.
- Facilitate industry-sponsored training programs for girls in collaboration with tech companies
- Set quotas and targets especially for service provider agencies to develop Corporate social responsibility programs (CSR) that help close access gaps, as well as them being held accountable for improving internet penetration rates in rural communities.

5. Inclusive Policies and Initiatives:

- Advocate for and implement policies at regional levels that are broken down into national implementation roll out plans, that promote gender inclusivity in the technology sector.
- Establish initiatives that specifically address the unique challenges faced by girls in pursuing tech careers.

6. Infrastructure Development:

Invest in the development of technology infrastructure, including reliable internet connectivity and access to devices, especially in rural areas. This can be backed by regional conventions that are reviewed bi-annually to track progress on infrastructure investments and incentives between these regional blocs that directly encourage infrastructural development.

7. Cross functional mentorship programs and role models:

- Encourage the visibility of successful female role models in the technology sector to inspire and mentor young girls.
- Establish mentorship programs connecting girls with women who have successful careers in technology but equally while we encourage gender sensitive mentorships, we can challenge the status quo by being more inclusive. This way we also encourage cross functional mentors that will challenge mindsets that are already gender biased in nature. Hence cultivate mindsets that women are just as human as their peers and they can achieve careers and growth in STEM related fields supported by everyone.

8. Public Awareness Campaigns:

- Conduct awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes and showcase the contributions of women in technology.
- Highlight the importance of diversity in driving innovation and problem-solving.

9. Global Collaboration:

- Foster international collaboration to share best practices, resources, and knowledge for advancing technology for girls