

WOMEN AT THE TABLE 2015 - 2025 A decade of transformation



In 2015, Women at the Table emerged with a clear mission: to drive systems change by placing gender equality *permanently* at decision-making tables that shape our world.

We're redesigning those tables entirely – transforming not just who sits at them, but how they function and whose interests they serve. This is what systems change demands.

We founded w@tt at a decisive moment, seeing structural connections where others saw isolated issues, positioning ourselves at the intersection of gender equality, systems and global governance. This perspective forged new pathways from international trade to technical standards to human rights in artificial intelligence.

We targeted the most powerful levers for

transformation: economy, governance, and technology—recognizing these as an interconnected ecosystem that Al would soon bind even more tightly.

We launched because waiting wasn't an option.

Technology organizations weren't addressing gender bias, while women's rights groups weren't engaging with emerging technologies. We bridged this gap when no one else would.

Our conviction: **gender equality must be the beating heart of any new ecosystem—not an à la carte option**. By uniting diverse expertise across disciplines, we create collaboration models that transcend boundaries.

As coalition builders focused on impact, we've inspired the first-ever work on women and economic empowerment at the World Trade Organization, gained commitments from standards bodies to address a world currently built for the "reference male," and created frameworks for inclusive algorithms.

We've built our foundation on evidence, not hope: when half of humanity is sidelined, systems fail everyone. This is why we began. And this is why we continue.



International **Gender Champions** *Transforming Representation*



Pioneering Panel Parity

In 2015, we conceived and co-founded the International Gender Champions (IGC) in our first month of operation, establishing its panel parity pledge with the US Ambassador and the Director General of the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG). Our catalyst: an 11 male Minister panel on "The Future of Women in Technology", and another on "Solutions to a Global Crisis" featuring five **older white male leaders** including the UNOG Director General. Where were diverse voices and influence in these critical conversations?

Strategic Impact Groups



We then built beyond pledges and personalized commitments by creating specialized Impact Groups: Notably the Representation Impact Group co-chaired with the Interparliamentary Union and Swedish Ambassador, creating the Gender Responsive Assemblies Toolkit, and the Trade Impact Group with the Ambassadors of Iceland and Sierra Leone and the International Trade Centre Executive Director, who drove the Buenos Aires Declaration.

Global Growth

From 2015-2019, we transformed IGC from a small initiative into a global force, growing to include heads of every head International Organization, including the UN Secretary General, with hubs in Geneva, New York, Vienna, Nairobi, The Hague and Paris.

Culture Shift

We helped fundamentally change international discourse norms. In Geneva today, homogeneous panels are professionally unacceptable. This embodies our core belief: diverse voices create better outcomes.

Continuing Leadership

Now celebrating its 10th anniversary with 328 Champions and 481 Alumni, the International Gender Champions thrives as a global change agent. We maintain our leadership through the IGC Global Board and co-chair a new and exciting Digital and Emerging Technologies Impact Group with the International Telecommunication Union ITU Secretary-General and Ambassadors of the UK and Mexico.



The Buenos Aires Declaration

Shifting the global trade agenda

From Invisibility to Imperative

The 2017 Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment marked a watershed moment in global trade policy, fundamentally reshaping how international institutions approach gender.

Breaking New Ground

Before 2017, the word "woman" had never appeared in any official GATT or WTO documents—a striking omission in institutions governing global commerce. Trade was considered officially "gender-neutral," and therefore an off limits topic for discussion or research, despite evidence that this neutrality masked substantial inequalities.

W@TT convened the IGC Trade Impact Group, uniting the visionary Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, Arancha González, with Ambassadors from Sierra Leone and Iceland. This coalition challenged decades of institutional blindness.

Initially aiming for perhaps 12 nations to acknowledge the connection between trade and women's economic empowerment, we targeted the WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11).



A Moment of Transformation

What transpired exceeded all expectations. Through the relentless advocacy of Arancha González, 123 trade ministers rushed to endorse the Declaration, scrambling to join the historic launch photo. This unprecedented support represented a profound institutional shift: for the first time, the global trade community formally recognized that effective policies must explicitly consider women's economic realities and focus on removing barriers to women's participation in world trade.



Systemic Change in Motion

The Declaration's impact was immediate and far-reaching:

- By 2020, a dedicated WTO Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender was established.
- Formal initiatives from the OECD and World Bank examine trade and women's economic empowerment.
- 75 trade agreements now contain explicit gender references, beginning to transform inclusivity from rarity to routine



A Transformed Landscape

Once dismissed as a "non-issue," women's economic participation is now recognized as indispensable to inclusive growth. The conversation has become standard practice, and trade measures addressing women's barriers have multiplied globally.



The Gender-responsive Standards Initiative:

Redesigning invisible infrastructure

Exposing the Myth of Neutrality

For ten years, we've worked on transforming how standards are created worldwide, challenging the fundamental assumption that technical specifications are gender-neutral.



The Life-or-Death Consequences of Male Default Design

Standards built on male assumptions create a world that endangers women:

- Vehicle Safety: Women are 73% more likely to suffer serious injuries in frontal crashes because crash test dummies reflect male bodies.
- Workplace Protection: Ill-fitting safety equipment compromises 51% of female workers' safety.
- **Digital Exclusion:** Facial recognition error rates run 34% higher for women of color.
- **Medical Diagnosis:** Heart disease symptoms in women go unrecognized 50% more often due to male-calibrated protocols, (amongst many examples based on lack of research and date).

A Canadian study confirmed: safety standards reduced injuries for men but not women. These aren't intentional exclusions they reflect the unquestioned assumption of the male body as universal default.



Strategic Transformation

Building on our trade work, we targeted standards—the "invisible infrastructure" shaping our daily lives:

- Challenging False Neutrality: We exposed how "genderneutral" standards privilege male bodies and experiences
- Building Powerful Coalitions: We co-drafted the 2018 UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Declaration on Gender-Responsive Standards
- Securing Global Commitment: By 2019, all major international standards bodies endorsed our approach with nearly 90 signatories including ISO, IEC, ITU and national standards bodies.
- Driving Implementation: As longstanding members of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Gender Responsive Standards, we continue shaping policies and ensuring accountability

Measurable Global Impact

- Major organizations implementing concrete action plans.
- Technical specifications now accounting for physiological differences.
- Gender-impact assessments integrated into standards development.
- Cultural shift from one-size-fits-all to inclusive design principles.



The <A+> Alliance

Affirmative action for algorithms

From a lunch to a movement

A modest working lunch in 2017 convened in collaboration with the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) Women's Rights Division became a watershed moment for AI equality. Twenty-one OHCHR officers and lawyers gathered in our offices, signaling urgent interest in technology's human rights implications.

After hearing EPFL Professor Elisa Celis' research on algorithmic bias, another Mathematics Professor declared: "Thank God there are none of these issues in our math! Our math is neutral!" Celis' response crystallized our purpose: "Professor, who picks the x and who picks the y in an equation? Anytime there is an equation there is a human hand in the question. And that hand has a point of view."

This exchange revealed a fundamental truth: even seemingly objective systems carry embedded values. Algorithms aren't neutral arbiters—they reflect their creators' choices, priorities, and blind spots.



We shape our tools, thereafter our tools shape us

Our subsequent 2018 position paper argued: "Bias is inherent in human life, and therefore in the human data that informs machine learning... We can either seize this moment to correct bias in the digital realm, as we tackle bias in the analog world, or condemn ourselves to old bias hardwired into the future century of Al."



From Concept to Global Alliance

Via Professor Celis, we delivered a keynote at Women in Data Science Zürich 2019, catalyzing our transition from dialogue to declaration. Our landmark Call to Action became the foundation of the <A+> Alliance—a coalition advocating for laws, regulations, and norms that embed gender equality and strengthen democracy in emerging technological systems.



The <A+> Framework

We advocated for an Affirmative Action for Algorithms structured around:

- Accountability: Frameworks for algorithmic transparency.
- Inclusion: Women's participation in all stages of Al development from decisions, development to deployment.
- **Cooperation:** International collaboration grounded in human rights.



Global recognition

In 2020, the <A+> Alliance was recognized as a **Fast Company** 2020 World Changing Idea in Data and AI, was a runner up for the WSIS World Summit on the Information Society Awards for International and Regional Cooperation, and chosen as a civil society leader of the Generation Equality Action **Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality.** In 2021, the <A+> Alliance was selected as an official project of the Paris Peace Forum.



F<A+i>r:

The Feminist Al Research Network

From Critique to Creation

In 2020, via the A+ Alliance, we established the Feminist Al Research Network (f<A+i>r) to **move beyond identifying problems to building solutions.** We defined Feminist Al as "artificial intelligence harnessed to deliver equality outcomes, designed with inclusion at the core, creating proactive correction of inequities."

Our **Paper** → **Prototype** → **Pilot methodology** translated research into tangible solutions across Latin America, Middle East North Africa, and Southeast Asia, with an emerging network in Africa from 2021 to 2024.

Real-World Impact

- AymurAl Argentina: Developed software that anonymizes
 judicial documents on gender violence, making critical data
 accessible. From a Data Genéro collaboration with Buenos
 Aires Criminal Court 10 to document femicide, AymurAl is now
 included as a UNESCO case study and is expanding to courts
 in Mexico and beyond.
- SafeHER Philippines: An AI transit safety app for Manila,
 where 80% of women commuters report harassment. Begun
 as an initiative from a female philosophy professor, then
 published in the Journal of Transportation Security, and now
 adopted by De La Salle University for female students in
 collaboration with Manila municipalities.

- E.D.I.A Argentina: A bias detection tool for natural language processing from Via Libre and two female computer science professors seeks to democratize debiasing techniques. It has now been taught to 500 Argentine high school teachers and sits on Hugging Face. Recently received Mozilla's Data Futures Lab 2024 Infrastructure Fund Award.
- SOF+IA Chile: Built with feminist research and design principles this GenAl chatbot from researchers at University of Chile addresses digital violence against women on social media.
- Al-Based Tutoring Egypt: Designed for underserved
 Upper Egypt Community Schools, conceived by an Egyptian
 Responsible Al Phd candidate, this system was recognized as best research paper at the 2023 HCAI Education and Practice Conference.

Building a Global Community



The A+ f<a+i>r Global Directory connects 100+ feminist Al leaders across the majority world, creating unprecedented collaboration opportunities at the intersection of gender equality and technology.



The Gender Gap App:

Measuring voice and influence



Beyond Numbers to Impact

In crisis-ridden times, we cannot afford to silence half of humanity. Yet traditional diversity metrics only count bodies in rooms—not who shapes conversations. This disconnect between presence and influence undermines our collective problemsolving capacity.



Making the Invisible Visible

The Gender Gap App (g-app), ideated with international organizations in Geneva, and architected by Thoughtworks, is our groundbreaking open-source tool that transforms how organizations understand participation dynamics. Unlike conventional analytics, g-app reveals the critical gaps between attendance and actual influence through explainable Al visualizations:

- Representation: Demographics by region, gender, age, and sector.
- Participation: Speaking time distribution across diverse groups.
- **Influence:** Authority patterns based on roles and positions.
- **Topics:** Analysis of who speaks on which subjects.



The Reality Gap

The data exposes a stark truth: events may register as 60% male/40% female, while speaking time has shown to skew 80% male/20% female. These hidden disparities limit perspective diversity precisely when complex global challenges demand our fullest collective intelligence.

Strategic Insights

- Geographic Power Mapping: Prevents domination by single regions
- Authority Analysis: Reveals structural barriers (Example: WHO Executive Board had 9% female representation as Heads of Delegation despite women comprising 70% of the global health workforce)
- Generational Inclusion: Tracks meaningful youth participation beyond token "youth-only" discussions



AI & Equality:

A Human Rights Toolbox

From theory to practice

The AI & Equality Toolbox has evolved from the 2017 luncheon to workshops throughout 2019 + 2020, an EPFL Masters Thesis in 2021, a global series of validation workshops from 2021 to 2024, and an online course. The Toolbox is no longer just a workshop—it's a movement changing how the next generation of technologists and policy makers understand their responsibility to build inclusive systems from the ground up



Global impact and growth

The demand has been overwhelming. We've conducted workshops at École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), University College Dublin, Cambridge University Tu/Eindhoven, Technical University Munich, African Centre for Technology Studies, the EU AI Doctoral Academy, and the Sorbonne Center for AI Center (SCAI) amongst others.

Most significantly, in 2023 the Al & Equality Toolbox became an official course on the Sorbonne Center for Al Learning **Portal,** making our solid, technical yet evidently revolutionary approach freely available to students worldwide. This isn't just education—it's creating a global network of technologists and policy makers committed to building Al systems that enhance **human dignity.** Through real-world datasets, (and jupyter notebooks for those willing and able), participants don't just learn about bias, they learn to recognize and mitigate it in real systems. They are able to discuss ethics à la carte and implement human rights principles directly in code.

Educational Initiatives

- Development of a 5-module online course in collaboration with SCAL
- Global workshop series presented at universities across five continents including EPFL, Cambridge, Makerere University, University of Lagos, American University Cairo, and Chulalongkorn University
- Launched the AI & Equality Human Rights Toolbox J-Term course in 2024, a free 4-week program in 2024 & 2025 with 182 registrants from 52 countries
- Validation by the European Society for Engineering **Education** (SEFI), bringing human rights frameworks into technical education contexts



The Al & Equality Toolbox doesn't just identify problems—it creates solutions. When a student writes code that checks for gender bias in a hiring algorithm, when a researcher builds a data collection practice that includes marginalized communities, when a professor restructures their computer science curriculum around human rights principles—these are concrete steps toward a more just technological future.

The systems we build today will determine whether technology amplifies these crises or helps solve them. By embedding human rights principles directly into the DNA of Al development, we're creating leverage points for systemic change at a crucial moment in history.



Al & Equality Community:

Fostering a global network for inclusive Al

Purpose and Vision

The AI & Equality Community represents W@TT's commitment to building a vibrant global network that bridges disciplinary divides to ensure Al advances human rights and gender equality. This multidisciplinary community connects technical experts, policymakers, social scientists, and advocates who share a vision of an inclusive Al future.

Following the workshop series we understood that a continuing conversation was needed, and so the Community was created to:

- Catalyze collaboration across disciplines, regions, and sectors for sharing best practices.
- Co-create Al policy, projects, and pilots using a human rightsbased approach.
- Challenge the myth that data and Al systems are neutral, demonstrating how they can carry and transfer biases and inequalities.
- Provide practitioners with the tools and common vocabulary to develop technology that respects human dignity and equality.

Remarkable Growth

The community consists of more than 600 members representing 57 countries across five continents. This geographic diversity is only matched by its disciplinary breadth, members bring expertise from technology, social sciences, law, business, and policy domains, reflecting growing thirst for and recognition of the need for multidisciplinary approaches to Al governance.



Knowledge Production and Exchange

- Open Studios, PubTalks and panel discussions addressing topics from climate change and AI to feminist approaches to technology governance
- Community Commentaries in response to calls for inputs by international organizations such as UNESCO, UNDP, and the Council of Europe. We published 5 community commentaries, and our input comment for the U.S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is cited 5 times throughout their policy report.
- Community publications 'Re-Visions of Now and Future I, II & IIII' featuring essays exploring topics from far-right exploitation of AI to trauma-informed digital connections for trafficking survivors
- Research project examining bias in Large Language Models, demonstrating how collective expertise can address emerging challenges



Methodological Framework

- **Publication of the "Integrating Human Rights Considerations Along the Al Lifecycle" white paper** providing practical guidance and questions for Human Rights Impact Assessment at every stage of AI development
- **Regional adaptations with context-specific applications** of the Al & Equality Human Rights Toolbox, in **Latin America** in collaboration with CENIA, Chile's National Center for Artificial Intelligence, and **Africa** in collaboration with the African Centre for Technology Studies
- Public Sector Toolbox with a focus on Al Procurement in 2025.



Multilateral Leadership in Al and Gender Equality

Strategic Multilateral Engagement

W@TT has established itself as a pivotal voice in the global governance of AI, championing a gender-transformative approach across multilateral frameworks, and strategically positioning gender equality at the heart of emerging Al governance structures through:

- Co-chairing the Expert Group for the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) in 2023, which marked the firstever CSW thematic focus on Technology and Innovation.
- Securing a standalone paragraph on gender in the Global **Digital Compact** adopted at the UN General Assembly Summit of the Future in September 2024.
- Leading the Civil Society portion of the World Benchmarking Alliance's Collective Impact Coalition on Digital Inclusion (now Ethical AI).
- Co-Chairing the Gender Advisory Board to the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).
- Contributing significantly to CEDAW's General **Recommendation 40** on equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems.
- Founding the International Gender Champions Digital and New Emerging Technologies Impact Group with ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin.

Innovative Frameworks and Tools

- Al & Equality Human Rights Toolbox: A comprehensive framework integrating human rights impact assessment with the Al lifecycle.
- Gender-Gap App: Measures representation, participation, and influence of women in decision-making spaces, featured at the Inter-Parliamentary Union's UN Parliamentary Day.



Global Community Building

- Formed "Gender At The Heart of the Global Digital Compact" alliance with organizations including APC, Equality Now, Pollicy, UNFPA, UN Women.
- Lead Civil Society community of UN Women Generation **Equality Action Coalition on Technology & Innovation for Gender Equality.**
- Co-lead the civil society portion of the World **Benchmarking Alliance Collective Impact Coalition for Ethical AI** with Paradigm Initiative and with an investor coalition.
- Sit on Working Party on the Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) Team of Specialists on **Gender-Responsive Standards.**
- Member of the Global Network Initiative and its Al Working Group.
- Co-lead A+ Alliance for Inclusive Algorithms with Code for Africa and Feminist Al Research Network with pilots and prototypes through regional hubs across Latin America, MENA, and Southeast Asia.
- Continue to expand the AI & Equality Community to 600 members across 57 countries to date.

Why this work matters

The urgency of W@TT's mission cannot be overstated. All systems are rapidly transforming every aspect of society, yet they risk embedding and amplifying existing biases:

Preventing digital discrimination

Without intervention, AI systems built on biased historical data will perpetuate and potentially amplify gender, racial, and intersectional discrimination, creating "automated inequality" that becomes increasingly difficult to dismantle.

Bridging disciplinary divides

W@TT uniquely connects policymakers, technical experts, and affected communities, overcoming the false divide between "technical" and "social" aspects of Al development to ensure human rights considerations are integrated throughout the Al lifecycle.

Transformative potential

Beyond preventing harm, properly designed AI can actively advance gender equality by identifying inequities in resource allocation, correcting exclusionary patterns, and creating more responsive systems across healthcare, education, finance, and governance.

Global South

leadership

Through regional hubs and partnerships, W@TT ensures that feminist perspectives from the Global South actively shape Al governance, rather than having frameworks imposed from a narrow set of countries or perspectives.

Critical window

for governance

We are in a pivotal moment where foundational governance frameworks are being established. The technical architecture and regulatory structures created now will shape Al development for generations, making gender-responsive approaches essential from the outset.

Stronger community

Our global community continues to grow as a catalyst for systemic change in how Al is developed and deployed. By creating multiple pathways for engagement, from social media to in-depth courses, the community ensures that diverse stakeholders can meaningfully participate in shaping Al governance.

As one community member reflected, "What's most powerful about this approach is that it doesn't treat human rights as a constraint on innovation—it shows how centering human dignity can actually lead to better, more sustainable technologies."

Through this thriving community, W@TT is addressing the persistent challenge of bridging abstract principles with practical implementation, ensuring that human rights and gender equality are not merely afterthoughts but foundational elements in the development of artificial intelligence worldwide.

Building bridges between principles and practice

In a field often characterized by either abstract principles or narrow technical solutions, Women at the Table's integrated approach offers a vital middle path—one that connects universal human rights principles with contextual realities and practical implementations.

This bridge-building function represents perhaps the organization's most significant contribution to the emerging field of Al governance. By simultaneously developing methodologies, building communities of practice, and influencing policy frameworks, W@TT addresses a persistent challenge in technology governance: **the gap between high-level principles and on-the-ground implementation.**

As expressed in W@TT's statement to the Global Digital Compact facilitators: "This work could re-situate women & girls and historically marginalized populations from the dark edges to the bright center of technology creation and control, to create more inclusive frameworks that benefit all - going further than the goal to leave no one behind - to one that lifts everyone up - in human dignity."



The path forward

As we mark our tenth anniversary, we remain committed to building practical applications that center community needs. Our work has proven that Al can work for all—not just the privileged few.

Ten years in, our work confirms what we've always known: transformation isn't achieved by adding chairs to broken tables. It comes from designing new tables altogether – ones built for our collective intelligence and shared humanity.

We're accelerating efforts to:

- Engineer technology that addresses communities' most urgent needs.
- **Scale proven pilots** while preserving local ownership and cultural relevance.
- Cultivate **transformative collaborations** between technologists, social scientists, and affected communities.
- Develop accessible tools that create meaningful user agency and control.

Our journey demonstrates that community-centered technology isn't just possible—it's essential. Through Women at the Table, the A+ Alliance, and the Feminist Al Research Network, we're not imposing technology from above, we're building systems designed with and for the communities they serve.

Join us in *creating*new tools to *transform*old systems.

"Building from the margins to the center unlocks our most powerful innovations. By centering gender, race, and class, we don't merely transform what's broken we forge technologies that honor our full humanity and make democracies resilient enough to face our uncertain future."

