

Over 60 women's rights organizations, labor unions and civil society organizations oppose the pinkwashing through the IPEF's Gender "Upskilling Initiative"

The undersigned women's rights organisations, labour unions, and allies oppose the use of Big Tech "upskilling" initiatives for women to encourage countries to sign on to the [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#) (IPEF).

We acknowledge that the Biden Administration and others have recognised that trade rules can have negative human rights impacts on women, workers, and Indigenous Peoples. We recognise steps taken to develop new approaches to economic cooperation that incorporate the rights of labour and Indigenous Peoples, gender equality, and a fairer economy. However, inviting US Big Tech firms to expand their reach in the Global South, promoting their products to women under the guise of "upskilling", and adopting the digital trade rules Big Tech wrote to deepen their power, will undermine, not advance, women's human rights.

The [Upskilling Initiative for Women and Girls](#) promises training by fourteen US Big Tech companies to women in IPEF countries. However, it appears that much of the promise is simply re-packaged training that is already available, and primarily designed as a tool to increase market presence and profits. The initiative is designed to encourage developing countries to agree to "high-standard commitments" on the "promotion of cross-border data flows" which translates to the adoption of rules that have been included in other trade agreements at the behest of Big Tech. Rules that a) restrict governments being able to effectively regulate Big Tech, b) inhibit governments from implementing rights-enhancing data policies for political sovereignty and economic self-determination, c) enable algorithms to be kept secret, d) constrain governments from requiring tech companies to have a local presence, and e) stop governments from pro-actively developing digital industrial policies, including autonomous digital public infrastructure. All of these can be extremely harmful to women's human rights.

The initiative involves companies that have undermined labour rights, refused to recognise workers as employees, have used tax havens to avoid making tax contributions to public services essential for gender equality. Previous trade agreements have included commitments to gender equality, but those agreements have instead harmed women's human rights by liberalising services, promoting the privatisation of public services essential in addressing discrimination and exclusion, deregulating the labour market, and promoting a race to the

bottom in wages and conditions, and denying governments the policy space required for people to progressively realise their economic rights.

To set new standards in global trade and economic cooperation that advance gender equality, member states could instead commit to implementing their obligations under international human rights law and guaranteeing all state parties the policy space necessary to advance the sustainable development agenda, including gender equality. Such cooperation could commit each country to implement laws recognising platform workers – especially the increasing numbers of women joining invisible segments of platform work – as employees entitled to living wages, decent work, data rights, and social protection. Commitment to comply with relevant international labour laws can be a part of the cooperation. Member states could establish real commitments to ending the use of tax havens, commit to public country-by-country reporting of corporation tax, set a better minimum corporate tax rate, and allow for unitary taxation to be applied in a way that guarantees funds for low- and middle-income countries and their social and care infrastructure.

We call on governments to put aside the paternalism of the corporate upskilling initiative, and make the IPEF negotiations open and transparent, so that all proposals can be considered on their merit. This requires negotiators to engage meaningfully with women's human rights organisations, unions, Indigenous Peoples, farmers, and other social movements. Moreover, the IPEF should not attempt to establish substantive rules that erode policy space of developing countries, especially to design their own digital industrialisation policy and maintain their data sovereignty.

Institutional endorsements:

1. **Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Thailand**
2. **Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era(DAWN), Fiji**
3. **Gender and Trade Coalition, Global**
4. **IT for Change, India**
5. **Public Services International (Asia and Pacific)**
6. **Third World Network**
7. **All Sindh Lady Health Workers and Employees Union (ASLHWEU), Pakistan**
8. **Action Aid International, South Africa**
9. **Association For Promotion of Sustainable Development, India**
10. **Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network, Australia**
11. **Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Bangladesh**
12. **Beyond Beijing Committee, Nepal**

13. Bretton Woods Project, United Kingdom
14. Centre for Financial Accountability, India
15. Centre for Internet and Society, India
16. Citizens Trade Campaign, USA
17. Clean Clothes Campaign International Office, Netherlands
18. Citizen News Service (CNS), India
19. Community Initiatives for Development in Pakistan, Pakistan
20. Computer Professionals' Union, Philippines
21. Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, United States of America
22. Consumers' Association of Penang, Malaysia
23. Confederation of Public Service Independent Trade Unions (COPSITU), Sri Lanka
24. Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, United States of America
25. Empower India, India
26. ETC Group, Philippines
27. Equidad de Género: Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia, Mexico
28. FIAN Indonesia, Indonesia
29. Flower Aceh, Indonesia
30. Focus on the Global South, Thailand
31. GABRIELA Alliance of Filipino Women, Philippines
32. Gestos, Brazil
33. Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers, India
34. Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ), Indonesia
35. Initiative for Right View, Bangladesh
36. Institute for Strategic and Development Studies (ISDS), Indonesia
37. Maldives Health Professionals Union, Maldives
38. Nakor Alam Youth Association, Republic of Vanuatu
39. National Campaign for Sustainable Development Nepal, Nepal
40. Nexus Research Coop, Ireland
41. NGO Federation of Nepal, Nepal
42. North-East Affected Area Development Society (NEADS), India
43. Open Knowledge Foundation, United Kingdom
44. Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG), Pacific region
45. Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, Pakistan
46. Paropakar Primary Health Care Centre (PPUK), Nepal
47. PolicyLab Africa, Nigeria
48. Public Citizen, United States of America
49. Progress, Indonesia
50. Regions Refocus, United States of America

51. RITES Forum India, India
52. Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth), Malaysia
53. SCODE, Vietnam
54. SERUNI, Indonesia
55. Sisters of Charity Federation, United States of America
56. Social Watch, Uruguay
57. Socialist Party (India), India
58. Society of the Sacred Heart, India
59. Solidaritas Perempuan (Women's Solidarity for Human Rights), Indonesia
60. Trade Justice Education Fund, United States of America
61. UBINIG, Bangladesh
62. Workers Education and Research Organisation, Pakistan
63. Youth Association for Development (YAD), Pakistan

Individual endorsements:

1. Albertina Almeida, Advocate, India
2. Akash Bhattacharya, Member, All India People's Forum, India
3. Maria Fatima Guterres, Fokupers (Forum Komunikasaun ba Feto Timor Lorosa'e), Timor-Leste
4. Laura Mann, Assistant Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom
5. Rama Kant Rai, Convener from National Coalition For Education (NCE), India
6. Sofia Scasserra, Director of OISIA, Argentina
7. Pam Rajput, India
8. Jane Kelsey, Professor Emeritus, New Zealand
9. Shaeera Kalla, Co-founder at The Mbegu Platform, South Africa
10. Michael Kwet, Researcher at University of Johannesburg, United States of America
11. Lisa McLaughlin, Associate Professor from Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Miami University, United States of America

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