



SDG Special Report

Governing The Artificial Intelligence Revolution to Advance the SDG's

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The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in 2015

before Artificial Intelligence (AI) reached today's scale, accessibility, generative capability, or societal reach. Today, AI is embedded across multiple SDGs from health, education, and gender equality to decent work, innovation, climate action, strong institutions, and global partnerships. It is a cross-cutting force that can accelerate—or undermine—the achievement of every Goal. It can expand healthcare and education, accelerate discovery, strengthen climate resilience and create opportunity. Without inclusive, rights-based governance, it can also magnify discrimination, inequality, exclusion, misinformation, and environmental pressures. The critical question is whether the global community will govern AI deliberately enough to make it the greatest accelerator of the 2030 Agenda. ***The future is not being written by technology. It is being written by the decisions we make today.*** **The governance challenge is this: who holds power, opportunity, responsibility, and agency?**

What is AI?

Artificial intelligence is a set of technologies that enables machines to perform tasks associated with human intelligence, including recognizing patterns, learning from data, generating content, making predictions, and supporting decisions. AI is no longer confined to laboratories or technology companies; it is becoming part of how people learn, work, receive services and participate in society.

AI as Critical Infrastructure

AI increasingly depends on computing capacity, semiconductors, cloud infrastructure, data, telecommunications and energy, strategic assets shaping competitiveness, scientific capability, and digital participation. This creates an AI divide. Countries lacking infrastructure, investment, skills, data and institutional capacity risk becoming consumers of technologies designed elsewhere rather than participants in governing them. The UN's Global Digital Compact recognizes the need for international cooperation and AI capacity-building, particularly for developing countries (United Nations 2024). AI's expanding computing and energy demands also make sustainability an essential part of responsible governance (International Energy Agency 2025).

AI as an Accelerator for the SDG's

AI is advancing sustainable development across health, education, science, agriculture, climate, disaster response and public services. Its impact is relevant to SDG 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16, and 17. However, technological capability does not guarantee social benefit. AI systems can reproduce bias, threaten privacy, facilitate surveillance, spread misinformation and deepen inequalities in access to opportunity. ***The policy choice is not AI versus regulation. It is innovation with responsible governance.***

Generative AI

reached 53% adoption globally in three years, faster than the personal computer or the internet.

Stanford University 2026

Almost 40%

of global employment is exposed to AI. In advanced economies, 60% is exposed to AI disruption.

IMF 2024

25% less likely

Women and girls are 25% less likely than men to know how to leverage digital technology and four times less likely to know how to program computers.

UNESCO 2026

THE DEFINING QUESTION OF OUR TIME

The choices made now will shape how future generations learn, work, receive healthcare, and participate in society. AI will not determine humanity's future by itself. Humanity's governance of AI will. ***Women need to do more than participate, but seize the opportunity for leadership now when the rules of a new technological era are being written.***

AI and the Future of Work

AI can increase productivity and create new industries; however, its benefits will not automatically be shared equitably. AI may augment many occupations while reducing demand for human labor or changing required skills. The gender implications are significant. The ILO finds that **female-dominated occupations such as business administration and clerical support are almost twice as likely to be exposed to generative AI as male-dominated occupations—29% compared with 16%** (ILO 2026). Women therefore face greater exposure to workplace transformation while remaining underrepresented among those developing and governing AI. The equity gap is increasing, all-round.

29% vs. 16%

Female-dominated occupations are twice as likely to be exposed to generative AI as male-dominated occupations.

ILO 2026

Women Must Help Design the Architecture

Women's participation in AI governance cannot be treated as a symbolic diversity objective. It is a governance imperative. Women remain underrepresented in fields shaping AI while concentrated in occupations more exposed to generative AI. **Women represent only 12% of AI researchers and 20% of employees in technical roles in major machine-learning companies** (UNESCO 2026). *If women are absent when the rules governing AI are established, existing inequalities can become further embedded and exacerbated in the architecture of future societies.* Women must therefore be present not only as users but as researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs, regulators, scientists, and policymakers shaping AI. AI decisions will increasingly influence women's health, education, employment, security, safety, justice, and political participation.

Just 12% of AI researchers

and 16% of AI tenured faculty are women.

WomenTech Network 2026

Large Language Models (LLM) produce gender bias as well as racial stereotyping, a UNESCO study found. Women were described in domestic roles four times as often as men, associated with words like home, family, and children, while men were associated with words like business, executive, salary, and career. Open-source LLMs were most likely to assign high-status jobs to men such as engineer, teacher, and doctor, while women were assigned undervalued or stigmatized roles such as domestic servant, cook, and prostitute (UNESCO 2024).

Gender bias

is produced by Large Language Models describing women in domestic roles far more than men.

UNESCO 2024

US Women's Caucus Recommendations

GOVERNANCE

Ensure women's representation at the table in AI governance bodies, scientific panels, standards-setting organizations, and international negotiations.

INVEST IN WOMEN AND GIRLS

Close the AI divide through investment in infrastructure, computing, quality data, AI skills and workforce transition for women, girls, and developing countries.

PARTNERSHIPS

Build the architecture together, strengthening UN-led cooperation, the science-to-policy pipeline, and strategic partnerships so AI advances SDG progress.

References

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