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PRESS RELEASE

Why We Need Gender Diversity in the Tech Industry

This International Women's Day, 8 March 2023, the Business Coalition for Women and its 85 member organizations are joining thousands across the country to celebrate under the theme DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality.

Although women make up almost half the workforce population, studies show that the digital gender gap continues expanding in many developing countries like PNG, creating a specific need to support digital gender equality. Globally, in 2022, it was found that 62% of men are using the Internet, compared with 57% of women.

The business value of gender equality in workforces have been well documented, but despite this, lack of gender equality and inclusiveness remain a paramount issue in the IT world. Female underrepresentation affects not only the well-being of individual organizations but also leads to the shortage of professionals in the entire tech sector.

“Lack of female participation in the IT or technology fields deprives this industry of the crucial human resources it needs to grow. If Papua New Guinean women are unable to access the internet and do not feel safe online because of online/cyber violence, they are unable to develop the necessary digital skills to engage in digital spaces. Applying the same principles of gender diversity in leadership levels, lack of women’s participation in IT fields comes with massive costs to businesses” said Evonne Kennedy, Executive Director of PNG Business Coalition for Women.

The existing lack of gender diversity compounded with other factors hinder women either from venturing into IT-related fields or using the internet. They include:

1. Cyber/online or IT facilitated violence
2. Lack of role models
3. Prejudice based on gender; and
4. Sexual Harassment

Since 2014, the Coalition has been working with likeminded organizations across multiple sectors, including the IT sector, to help businesses understand the value that their female staff bring to the company.

Mindful of how the business landscape has been digitalized, the Coalition also tries to adapt and keep up with these changes. Our Family & Sexual Violence (FSV) Forum in 2022 focused on what the corporate sector can do to address online/cyber violence. The consequent online webinar conducted last month in partnership with e-Safety Commissioner of Australia and



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attended by the corporate sector highlighted the importance of safer internet, all of which are aimed at making the digital space safe for women to participate fully and equally. Moreover, the corporate sector, through the Coalition's Anti-Sexual Harassment (ASH) Policy, work towards addressing inappropriate behaviour. IT-facilitated harassment or violence is prohibited under this policy.

Bringing women into technology results in more creative solutions and has greater potential for innovations that meet women's needs and promote gender equality. Women bring fresh approach and offer unique perspectives to meet challenges, solve problems, and design new products. They can also bring more women into the tech fold, and since technology often offers high salary opportunity, their presence in the industry can help reduce the overall gender pay gap.

It is challenging for women to venture into a male-dominated industry, however change is promising. Women can drive real progress in any given tech organization, and companies that embrace diversity and inclusion are always the employers of choice.

Photo caption: Through the Coalition, PNG's business sector advocates for and drives gender equity by implementing good practices relating to recruiting, retaining and promoting women across different industries because gender equity is good for business.