

IT for Change's Input at the Global Digital Compact Consultation – Internet Governance

The recent release of the esteemed Secretary General's Policy Brief served as a welcome elaboration of the underlying vision and thinking behind different facets of the Global Digital Compact. And we feel that there is a great deal that is laudable in terms of the diagnostic analysis contained therein. However, when it comes to concrete prescriptions, unfortunately, it does not always sustain the same degree of ambition and decisiveness.

The proposed plans around mobilizing digital technologies towards the SDGs are a case in point. At one level, the recognition of existing inequalities and asymmetries of power, and the call for global cooperation around the development of new digital infrastructures, digital public goods and data and AI commons are all well taken. However, when it comes to financing and governing of these projects, listed measures do not seem fit for purpose. So, for instance, relying solely on public-private and multi-stakeholder partnerships for generating funds may not only fall short of bringing about the amount of investment required for building such infrastructures, it may also create new dependencies that fortify today's digital corporations and their dominance over emerging market digital ecosystems. Instead, we recommend that Official Development Assistance be increased and allocated to these purposes

Similarly, in multistakeholder partnership arrangements for the provisioning of digital public goods, including data commons, in sectors such as food and health as being explored at the Committee on Food Security and the World Health Organization, we need strong guard rails to

protect against elite capture of data value and conflict of interest issues stemming from the participation of multinational corporations.

We think, particularly from a developing countries perspective, such dangers need to be urgently mitigated in any long-term effort towards integrating digital technologies into the attainment of the Sustainable Development goals.