



Un-hiding “Hidden Figures” – experiences and contributions of women in tech today

13 May 2019, 4 pm to 6 pm

United Nations Headquarters, New York, CR#12

The film *Hidden Figures* tells the story of Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson, three members of the West Computer Room of NASA’s Langley Research Centre in the 1960s and their vital role in the success of a ground-breaking space mission. In the 50 years that have passed since women were the first human computers, a lot has changed in the tech sector, but the lack of visibility of women’s experiences and contributions remains a challenge and a gender digital divide persists, and in some areas is even growing.¹

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that the spread of information and communication technology (ICTs) and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies. However, to achieve this potential, women must have equal opportunities to access ICT, to acquire digital skills and to apply them in tech jobs and leadership roles, including as entrepreneurs, all around the world. Increasing the visibility of women’s experiences and contributions in tech is a critical element to making more progress in all these areas.

Thus, ahead of the Fourth Annual UN Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI Forum), the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN, the EQUALS Global Partnership, ITU and UN Women are hosting a multi-stakeholder session to explore the experiences and contributions of women in tech today. Women at various stages and levels in their tech careers from a variety of organizations will participate in a dialogue that will support the 2019 STI Forum theme of “STI for ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called for concerted, concrete efforts to overcome the stereotypes and biases that dissuade women and girls from pursuing and remaining in STEM careers and also for greater access to learning opportunities, particularly in rural and remote areas.

The good news is that across the globe, there are thousands of initiatives working to close gender digital gaps² in access, skills, leadership and research, and there are multitudes of women, as well as men, making important contributions at all levels and in all areas of tech. How can we increase the numbers and visibility of these role models and their work and connect the dots for greater reach and impact at the global and local levels, addressing common barriers and further leveraging the power and potential of women in tech?

¹ See ITU, *Measuring the Information Society Report 2018*: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/misr2018/MISR-2018-Vol-1-E.pdf>

and EQUALS Global Partnership/UNU Computer Science, *Taking Stock: Data and Evidence on Gender Equality in Digital Access, Skills and Leadership*: <https://www.itu.int/en/action/gender-equality/Documents/EQUALS%20Research%20Report%202019.pdf>

² See hundreds of these reflected at www.equals.org/actionmap

Programme

Opening remarks:

H.E. Ambassador, Mr. Juan Sandoval Mendiola, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN

Discussion moderated by:

- Ursula Wynhoven, ITU Representative to the UN, NY
- Anna Falth, WE EMPOWER, Senior Programme Manager, UN Women

Dialogue participants include:

- Holly Smithson, CEO, Athena
- Radia Funna, Founder and Chief Blazer, Build n Blaze
- Mei-Lin Fung, Co-founder, People Centered Internet
- Melissa Sassi, IBM Z Influencer Ecosystem: Start Up Program Manager, IBM
- Anusha Dandapani, Vice President, Data Science lead (Digital Communication Surveillance), Barclays
- Shobana Dawson, Azure Data Platform – Technical Specialist, Microsoft
- Iana Aranda, President, Engineering for Change
- Lisa Autz, Development Officer, Pro Mujer
- Crystal Pugh, Devops Engineer, Devtempo / Core Team Technical Lead, Black Girls Code New York Chapter

EQUALS is a committed partnership of corporate leaders, governments, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions, NGOs and community groups around the world dedicated to promoting gender balance in the technology sector by championing equality of access, skills development and career opportunities for women and men alike. How does EQUALS work? By promoting awareness, building political commitment, leveraging resources and knowledge, harnessing the capacities of partners, and supporting real action – EQUALS seeks to achieve digital gender equality and through this, to improve the livelihoods of millions around the world. EQUALS was founded in 2016 by five partners: the International Telecommunication Union, UN Women, the International Trade Centre, GSMA and the United Nations University. www.equals.org #EQUALSInTech