

**IT for Change
2021**

**Call for Proposals
NATIONAL GENDER
FELLOWSHIPS
on Gender and the
Digital Economy**

Table of Contents

1. Background.....	2
2. Objective of this call	3
3. About the Fellowships	3
4. What we are looking for	3
5. Who can apply.....	4
6. Timeline.....	5
7. Themes for proposals.....	6
8. Application process	7
9. Further details and information	7
10. FAQs	7

Call for Proposals

National Gender Fellowships on Gender and the Digital Economy

Deadline for applications: 31 August 2021

As part of our ongoing projects on gender and the digital economy, IT for Change invites proposals and pitches under two National Gender Fellowship tracks.

1. Research Fellowship, under the European Commission supported project, [Centering Women in India's Digitalizing Economy](#).
2. Fellowship for Longform Essay, as part of [The Feminist Observatory of the Internet](#), our collaboration with the World Wide Web Foundation.

1. Background

IT for Change is a research and advocacy organisation based in Bengaluru, India, working at the intersection of digital technologies, social justice and gender equality. Our work has sought to keep up with changing knowledge needs in a rapidly metamorphosing digital society, spanning various aspects of platformisation and the governance of the digital economy.

Digital technologies have ushered in foundational changes to the way value is produced and distributed. Platformisation is an economy-wide phenomenon, steadily extending to traditional sectors, including manufacturing and agriculture.

The trends so far raise concerns for the future of work and workers, and especially for a majority of women workers who are unable to enjoy the gains of the digital economy. Women's enterprises lack the necessary technological, financial and other prerequisites to make use of emerging opportunities in e-commerce. They face precarity in emerging non-standard work arrangements on digital labour platforms, with potentially adverse consequences for their right to decent work.

The 'opportunity' rhetoric accompanying the digital economy often tends to overvalorise its purported flexibility, claiming benefits for women's work participation. This needs to be unpacked, especially in the case of women from the Global South, where occupational segregation, wage disparities, poor working conditions and unpaid care burdens continue to follow women into the digital economy. Additionally, data-based surveillance and algorithmic management intersect to produce new concerns for women's rights in the labour market.

Digitalisation can be a positive force by enabling alternative models for domestic economic growth and resilience, and opening up opportunities for those excluded from labour markets. Our effort is to explore the gendered context and conditions underpinning the digital economy through pertinent empirical research, in a world indelibly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The overall vision of the National Gender Fellowships is to build a body of informed analysis that can pave the way for gender equality in a digitalising economy. We hope that the Fellowships will take us closer to the ambitious vision of ensuring that no woman is left behind in the march towards a digital society and economy.

2. Objective of this call

Through Fellowships targeted at early-career researchers and writers, we see an opportunity for field-building in a nascent, but cutting-edge, area of scholarship. We seek to contribute rigorous research and analysis on key questions that concern the future of women's work in India, catalysing a body of knowledge that engages with existing scholarship, while exploring new horizons in the domain of digitalisation. The objective is not only to build critique, but also propose ways forward. The evidence generated through the Fellowships, we hope, can support policy makers, worker organisations, cooperative federations, social intermediaries, training institutes, etc. to rethink their strategies and work to promote the rights of women in the digital economy.

The Fellowships are an exciting opportunity for early-career researchers to undertake paid research in an emerging domain and benefit from avenues for peer interaction and mentorship. IT for Change's track record of change-oriented policy research will also provide Fellows access to leading political economy thinking in the space.

3. About the Fellowships

Track 1 is a **Research Fellowship** under the project [Centering Women in India's Digitalizing Economy](#) (supported by the European Commission) that seeks original research papers. The authors of selected research papers will also have the opportunity to present their work at a National Policy Event to be hosted by IT for Change in April 2022.

10 Fellowships of INR 2,29,000 each will be awarded under this track for a total duration of 6 months.

Track 2 is a **Fellowship for Longform Essay** that seeks analytical longform essays under the project [The Feminist Observatory of the Internet](#) (supported by the World Wide Web Foundation).

10 Fellowships of INR 60,000 each will be awarded under this track for a total duration of 3 months.

Both Fellowships will dovetail into a learning institute to be held from **13-14 October 2021**, which will provide an opportunity for the Fellows to engage with current debates and hear from a wider group, including experts in this domain.

4. What we are looking for

Research proposals submitted under Track 1 and pitches submitted under Track 2 should demonstrate relevance to the objectives of this call, identify clearly the problem statement, and elaborate appropriately how the methodology will lead to the analysis. Ideas must display a sound grasp of the intent of the call and its focus on gender in the digital economy. Ideas proposed should consider, but need not be limited to, the themes and sub-themes outlined in Section 7 of this document.

For **Track 1**, we are looking for research papers of up to **10,000 words**.

Quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods research are all welcome. The use of primary data and field research is recommended. Studies can range from in-depth qualitative inquiry to secondary data

analysis based on econometric and statistical methods and a case study approach. Comparative analysis of regions and countries is also welcome if implications for India are clearly delineated.

For **Track 2**, we are looking for essays between **4,000 to 5,000 words**, involving extensive reportage and an original analytical framework, that take the form of investigative pieces, longform reportage or data-based analysis, including use of data visualisation (examples include articles produced by the Caravan, Slate's Future Tense, Rest of World, Logic magazine, OneZero, and Notes From Below). We encourage additions in the form of photos and any other relevant multimedia documentation.

We are seeking original proposals and pitches for both Tracks. However, in exceptional circumstances, applications that build on pre-existing work may be considered, provided the proposal demonstrates a new direction of inquiry.

5. Who can apply

To apply for either Fellowship, you may be an independent researcher, feminist scholar, postgraduate or doctoral student, development professional, legal practitioner, journalist, or civil society activist who meets the following criteria.

Track 1: Research Fellowship

Restricted to women below the age of 35 with an undergraduate degree and a background in research.

Only Indian citizens who are not 35 years of age as of 1 September 2021 can apply for this Fellowship.

Track 2: Fellowship for Longform Essay

Open to people of all genders below the age of 35 with an undergraduate degree and experience in authoring analytical research-based longform essays.

Only Indian citizens who are not 35 years of age as of 1 September 2021 can apply for this Fellowship.

6. Timeline

Timeline for Track 1

Announcement of call for proposals	28 July 2021
Deadline to submit applications	31 August 2021
Selection of candidates	Mid-September 2021
Submission of revised research proposals	Last week of September 2021
Two-day institute with Fellows and other participants	13-14 October 2021
Research process	October-December 2021
Progress updates in peer group meetings	December 2021
Submission of first draft of research paper	January 2022
Review and feedback processes	January-February 2022
Final submission of research paper (up to 10,000 words)	March 2022
Presentation of selected research papers under Track 1 at a National Policy Event Roundtable organised by IT for Change	April 2022

Timeline for Track 2

Announcement of call for proposals	28 July 2021
Deadline to submit applications	31 August 2021
Selection of candidates	Mid-September 2021
Submission of revised pitches	Last week of September 2021
Two-day institute with Fellows and other participants	13-14 October 2021
Field and writing process	October-November 2021
Submission of first draft of essay	December 2021
Review and feedback processes	December 2021
Final submission of essay (up to 5,000 words)	January 2022

7. Themes for proposals

Changing macroeconomic conditions under digitalisation and impact on women's work

- new or changing forms of women's work under digitalisation;
- technology-driven transformation of traditional sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing, and its implications for women's work;
- trends in digitalisation and servicification and its implications for women's labour force participation;
- international division of labour and regional inequalities;
- technological developments (for e.g.: automation), frontier technologies (for e.g.: artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data, etc.) and the potential impact on women's work.

Digital labour market dynamics and working conditions of women workers

- forms of gender inequality in digital value chains (occupational segregation, wage differentials);
- discrimination and bias in techno-design and labour markets;
- working conditions and occupational safety of women in the digital economy;
- access to remedy and redressal for labour and human rights violations;
- new forms of organising, union activity and collective bargaining;
- algorithmic management and data-based surveillance of workers.

Reproductive labour and gender relations in the digital economy

- sexual division of labour under digitalisation of work;
- Digitalisation of work and impact on gender norms;
- affective and immaterial labour in platform ecosystems (for e.g.: content moderation)
- imagining gender-just futures in the digital economy.

Studying the policy environment

- corporate governance and accountability for (women) worker rights;
- designing social security schemes for a feminist future of work;
- skilling, reskilling and digital literacy policies;
- affirmative policies aimed at women's businesses in the digital economy.

Alternative models and gender-responsive governance of data and platforms

- alternative platform models run by women's businesses;
- the role of social intermediaries and their initiatives for women workers;
- social and solidarity economy and a feminist future of work.

Please note that the themes and sub-themes listed above are only indicative, and not exhaustive. We welcome and encourage all proposals relating to the field of gender and the digital economy, provided the proposals are original and methodologically sound.

8. Application process

Track 1: Research Fellowships under the project Centering Women in India's Digitalizing Economy

Proposals for research papers under Track 1 can be submitted through [this application form](#).

Track 2: Fellowships for Longform Essays under the project The Feminist Observatory of the Internet

Pitches for research-based analytical longreads under Track 2 can be submitted through [this application form](#).

9. Further details and information

Applicants should keep the following points in mind while applying:

- Proposals will be evaluated based on the clarity of the research question, methodology, potential contribution to field-building, and overall coherence. Shortlisted Fellows will attend a two-day institute in October 2021 that will bring together a wider group interested in gender and digital economy issues.
- Both the Research and Fellowships for Longform Essays will be administered strictly as individual grants.
- Selected papers under Track 1 will be featured in a National Policy Event, to be hosted in April 2022.
- Selected papers under Track 1 may also be considered to feature in [Bot Populi](#), a media space that brings a Global South perspective to issues of digital justice, based on a reworked version that is more journalistic.
- All submissions under Track 2 will feature in [Bot Populi](#). Cross-posting in other publications may also be explored.
- The application form and final written output should be in English.

10. FAQs

i) Who is eligible to apply for these Fellowships?

Applicants for both Fellowship Tracks must be below 35 years of age (i.e., they must *not* be 35 years of age as of 1 September 2021). Only women are eligible for proposals under Track 1. Track 2 is open to all genders.

Anyone with an undergraduate degree who is able to demonstrate interest in the indicated themes is encouraged to apply.

ii) How do I choose between the two Fellowships?

If you wish to pursue primary research and are able to produce a research report of 10,000 words in a 6-month time period from October 2021 to March 2022, you may apply for Track 1.

If you wish to author a shorter 4,000 to 5,000 word analytical piece that is accessible and journalistic over a 3-month time period from October to December 2021, you may apply for Track 2.

iii) Can I apply for both Fellowships?

Yes, you can. However, Fellowships will be awarded to selected candidates in only one track.

iv) I am currently a postgraduate student. Can I apply for these Fellowships?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for these Fellowships.

v) I am currently an undergraduate student. Can I apply for these Fellowships?

No, you are not eligible to apply for these Fellowships. An undergraduate or bachelor's degree qualification is necessary in order to apply.

vi) Can I submit my graduate thesis or an existing research output?

No. Previous research undertaken for a different purpose may not be used for these Fellowships. Proposals that build on pre-existing work may be considered only if it establishes a new direction of inquiry. You must also share this previous work in the application form so that the originality of your proposal can be evaluated. Furthermore, the research you undertake as part of the Fellowship can be developed into a MA dissertation or postgraduate research project after submitting it to us.

vii) I am not an Indian citizen. Can I still apply for these Fellowships?

Only Indian citizens may apply.

viii) On what criteria will my application be evaluated?

All proposals will be evaluated for:

- Strength of application (including research/writing credentials of applicant and clarity of research question);
- Originality of the proposal idea;
- Methodological rigour;
- Potential contribution to field building.

ix) Are comparative studies or case studies involving countries other than India something I can pursue?

Yes, comparative research, case studies and any other method is welcome, on the condition that your research provides insights that are directly pertinent to the intent of the call, that is, deepening digital economy analysis and action for gender equality in India.

x) Can I apply for this Fellowship on behalf of my organisation?

No. The Fellowships are for individuals only. However, if you are affiliated to an organisation or an academic institution, you may be required to take consent from your employer/supervisor to receive the Fellowship in your name.

xi) Can I submit the final draft in any language?

No, all documents – including the application form, any supplementary documents including previous work, and the final draft – must all be submitted in English only.

xii) Will the Fellowship amount be a one-time payment or a monthly stipend?

The Fellowship amount will be awarded in two lump-sum instalments.

xiii) Can more than one person apply for a Fellowship?

No, the Fellowships will only be awarded to individuals. During the course of a Fellowship, a Fellow may reach out to external contacts as it benefits their work, but applications for the Fellowships themselves and the subsequent grants will be awarded only to one person.