National Gender Fellowship 2024

Gender Inclusion in the Digital Economy

Call for Proposals

1. Introduction

IT for Change is pleased to announce the second edition of its National Gender Fellowship under the project, **'Re-wiring India's Digitalising Economy for Women's Rights and Well-being,'** supported by the European Commission and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

We invite early-career scholars, researchers, and practitioners from India to submit proposals for original, in-depth research projects based on fieldwork conducted during the fellowship period. Proposed research should examine the intricate relationship between digital infrastructures, inclusion, and women's economic and social citizenship, with a particular emphasis on considerations of intersectional justice.

India's rapid digital transformation presents both opportunities as well as challenges for women. While the digital economy holds the potential to economically empower women, existing gender disparities and structural barriers significantly hinder their full participation. Women face limited access to digital technologies, precarious working conditions in the platform economy, and persistent wage gaps. Moreover, the idealized image of flexible platform work often belies the realities of intensified workloads, workplace surveillance, and algorithmic biases that disproportionately affect women.

Historically, women have been disadvantaged within financial and social protection systems. As digitalization progresses, this disadvantage will exacerbate unless there is a deliberate effort to integrate women fully into these systems, ensuring they benefit equitably from techno-social advancements. These factors, combined with existing gender inequalities and care burdens, further marginalize women in the digital economy. To address these challenges, we aim to generate evidence-based research that can inform policies and practices promoting gender equality in the digital age.

2. About the Fellowship

The fellowship intends to support the development of research studies that explore the multifaceted relationship between digital economy, gender, and inclusion in India, focusing on women's experiences. We encourage qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches that investigate the nexus between digital inclusion infrastructures, economic precarity, and gendered citizenship.

The expected deliverable is a long-form written output (5,000–6,000 words, excluding graphs, tables, and references) produced through a seven-month-long research effort. Detailed timeline can be found in Section 3 below.

Themes to address include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Gender and Social Welfare in the Digital Age:
Analyze the impact of digital welfare schemes on women's lives. Explore how these schemes address or exacerbate gender inequalities in access and utilization.

2. Women, Work, and the Platform Economy
Investigate the working conditions and experiences of women platform workers in India. Combine ethnography with quantitative data analysis to comprehensively understand their realities, including issues of wages, hours, etc.

3. Digital Financial Inclusion: Women Entrepreneurs and Financial Technologies
Examine how digital financial inclusion initiatives empower women entrepreneurs (MSMEs, street vendors, etc.). Analyze existing financial infrastructure and identify gaps affecting women's participation.

4. Women in E-commerce
Explore opportunities and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and consumers in the e-commerce sector. Utilize ethnographic research to understand their experiences and perspectives.

5. Gender and Policy Landscape
Analyze the impact of national- and state-level digital policies on women's experiences in the digital economy. Conduct case studies of specific schemes to illustrate their effects on women.

6. The Digital Ecosystem and Gendered Financial Inclusion
Analyze the interconnectivity of digital technologies like UPI within the broader ecosystem. Investigate how connections between government schemes, startups, established enterprises, and social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, WhatsApp Business, etc.) impact financial inclusion for urban poor and rural populations in India, with a particular focus on gender dynamics.

We are open to other innovative research proposals that combine fieldwork and primary data collection with current developments in the digital economy, gender, and inclusion discourse.

3. Timeline

Call for Proposals	29 July 2024
Applications Due	**26 August 2024**
Communication of Decision	20 September 2024
Fellowships Commence	1 October 2024
First Draft Due	28 February 2025
Final Draft Due	**30 April 2025** (Strict deadline; extensions not possible)

4. Eligibility

- Early-career scholars, researchers, and practitioners holding Indian citizenship.

- Applicants must be women aged between 21 and 34 years old as of October 1, 2024.

- Prior experience working on digital economy and gender issues is preferred.

- PhD candidates are eligible but must propose an original research product for the fellowship.

- Ability to conclude fieldwork and finalize written outputs within the fellowship period.

Remuneration: The fellowship offers financial support of INR 2,26,200. A portion of this amount will be provided in advance, with the remaining balance released upon the successful completion and submission of the final output. This sum is intended to cover field travel and all fieldwork-related expenses for the research.

5. Application Process

Please submit a single PDF file to **nationalgenderfellowships2024@itforchange.net** by **26 August 2024**. The application package should include:

1. ## Proposal (under 1000 words)

   Briefly describe your research question, objectives, research location, and clearly state how your research employs quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches. If using an existing dataset, indicate how you plan to access it.

   Applicants are encouraged to include a concise literature review to demonstrate the research framework they intend to use.

2. ## Author Biography (under 500 words)

   Briefly highlight your expertise and experience related to the digital economy, gender, and inclusion, including any previous engagement with your current fieldwork area. Provide a clear statement on why you are choosing this particular fieldwork.

3. ## Budget Allocation (300-500 words)

   Provide a brief breakdown of how the funds will facilitate the achievement of your fieldwork goals. This should include an outline of expenses such as travel, accommodation, research materials, and personnel costs, explaining how each component contributes to the successful execution and completion of the fieldwork.

6. Further Details and Information

Applicants should keep the following points in mind while applying:

- All grantees are required to attend **a mandatory two-day training workshop** in Bengaluru towards the end of the year. IT for Change will cover travel and accommodation expenses pertaining to workshop participation.

- The selected research will be published on the IT for Change website and will be covered under the CC BY-SA 4.0 license. Cross-posting in other publications may also be explored.

7. FAQs

1. I am currently a postgraduate student. Can I apply for the National Gender Fellowship?
Yes, you are eligible to apply.

2. I am currently an undergraduate student. Can I apply for the National Gender Fellowship?
No, you are not eligible to apply. A completed undergraduate or bachelor's degree is necessary to apply.

3. Can I submit my graduate thesis or an existing research output?
No, previous research undertaken for a different purpose may not be used for the National Gender Fellowship. Proposals that build on pre-existing work may be considered only if they establish a new direction of inquiry. You must also include this previous work in the application form so that the originality of your proposal can be evaluated. Additionally, the research you undertake as part of the Fellowship may be developed into an MA dissertation or postgraduate research project after submission.

4. I am not an Indian citizen. Can I still apply for the National Gender Fellowship?
No, only Indian citizens may apply.

5. On what criteria will my application be evaluated?
- All proposals will be evaluated based on:
- Strength of the application (including research/writing credentials of the applicant and clarity of the research question)
- Originality of the proposal idea
- Methodological rigor
- Potential contribution to field building

6. Can I apply for the National Gender Fellowship on behalf of my organization?
No, the Fellowship is for individuals only. However, if you are affiliated with an organization or academic institution, you may need to obtain consent from your employer or supervisor to receive the Fellowship in your name.

7. Can I submit the final draft in any language?
No, all documents—including the application form, any supplementary documents, and the final draft—must be submitted in English.

8. Will the National Gender Fellowship amount be a one-time payment or a monthly stipend?

The Fellowship amount will be awarded in two installments. A portion will be provided in advance, with the remaining balance given upon the successful completion and submission of the final output.

9. Can more than one person apply for the National Gender Fellowship?

No, the Fellowship will only be awarded to individuals.

10. I was a grantee for the National Gender Fellowship 2021-22, can I apply again?

Yes, you are eligible to apply.