Gender Equality and Empowering Women in the Digital Age
September 15 2015

Madam Chair and Esteemed Parliamentarians on behalf of Cisco, I thank you for the invitation to speak with you today on such a pivotal topic that touches us all personally and professionally. It is in this backdrop of the greatest human migration since World War II that I humbly speak today; and cannot help to think what ramifications this migration will have to women and to youth.

I am not going to commence with facts and figures, because you have these already. As a company, we have our own challenges and yes opportunities having published our own statistics in November of 2014: A full 85% of the company’s technical roles are filled by men. When it comes to managers, just 19% are female.


I will frame up the discussion with sets of recommendations that we can all consider moving forward.

Women as the “missing” sex
For many years, as a result of complicated social structures around the world, women have been outside the show. This can vary from culture to culture, town to city, rural to urban community, etc. As shocking as this might sound, or maybe expected, facts have not changed that much since the World Bank published its report on “missing women” in 2011.

The report found that women represent 40% percent of the world’s labor force but hold just 1% of the world’s wealth. Salaried women workers earn 62 cents for every $1 that men earn in Germany, 64 cents in India and about 80 cents in Mexico and Egypt. Women entrepreneurs fare far worse, earning 34 cents for every $1 men earn in Ethiopia and just 12 cents in Bangladesh relative to every $1 for men.

These numbers reflect the inequality in income for women and this ultimately means that they are not being appreciated. When a woman, fully dedicated to her work, gets much less recognition from the other sex, this can negatively influence her productivity level and interrupt the progress of her business. She will feel unjust and can have other negative emotions, shying her away from what she is doing.
The World Bank 2011 report emphasizes this idea and argues that “countries that create better opportunities and conditions for women and girls can raise productivity, improve outcomes for children, make institutions more representative, and advance development prospects for all.”

Another factor that impedes the presence of women as effective decision-makers in society is mortality. Women and girls are more likely to die relative to men and boys in low and middle-income countries, with 3.9 million “missing” women and girls each year under the age of 60, the report says. At least 40% of those are never born, one-sixth die in infancy and a third in their reproductive years. The problem is worst in sub-Saharan Africa and countries hit by HIV/AIDS.

**Gender Security and Youth**

Not only have we been suffering from the missing women, but also a complete level seems to be out casted from making the possible change. Globalization has made our world significantly smaller over the last few decades, but the size and range of our problems has barely changed. Despite all of our previous efforts to affect the status quo through the Millennium Development Goals, the same complex structural issues persist and affect billions worldwide. These are our results as institutions, but young people, 15-24, have been hard at work identifying and developing solutions to global problems, and this trend is not to be underestimated.

The creative strategies of youth tackling varying elements of these widespread problems, from education access and infrastructure development to sexual harassment and gender equality, have demonstrated the necessity of leveraging technology in ways we had never imagined. Young people have spurred a newfound literacy in our approach to economic development and cooperative problem solving. Therefore, the priority must be supporting driven young people striving to improve their communities.

Government and industry support is vital to achieving these goals at scale. We have seen disparate examples of such public-private partnerships steadily emerging around the world. Yet while there is much conversation about supporting young people, a lack of action persists. Still, an international focus that prioritizes capturing and applying lessons from narratives of youth innovation will engender limitless possibilities for sustainable transformation.

Today, the world’s population numbers 7.3 billion and counting, with massive growth in the age 12-24 category. This demographic category is maturing in increasingly urbanized environments, where challenges of consumption are exacerbated by a lack of available or accessible resources. Instead of elevating their voices and involving them in solutions, we often vilify them and remove them from the policy making or from contributing to policy or real solutions. Youth, government, and industry must work to surpass all previous landmarks of progress and in doing so, create an entirely new cooperative process of problem-solving in uncharted territory. The opportunities are nearly limitless when we connect the right talent, resources, and support. We must emphasize a strong focus on girls and gender equality, an immediate focus on bringing the Internet to
everyone, and utilizing the low cost and accessibility of wireless technology to disseminate information and practical education. As Marian Wright Edelman, once stated, “If you don’t like the way the world is, you change it. You have an obligation to change it. You just do it one step at a time.” Working together, will not only resolve these challenges, but also make the results of our combined efforts exponentially more impactful. We have borrowed the Earth from our children. It is past time that we empower them to re-define their reality and create a world that surpasses what we have dreamt for them, far past the boundaries of our imaginations, and far into the future.

Aspiring for A Super Critical Elevated Economy [SHE] integrating human values is an opportunity to innovate for jobs. This will mean more flow of ideas, more flow of innovation, and much more possibilities of expansion. Technology, for us, is the bull. What is needed is to train more women to hold the bull by its horns and create a new generation of tech-females. Imagine disrupting unemployment via a Global Supercritical Elevated Economy platform powered by women using open source software and where the consumption is via a smart device. Imagine disrupting the cultural barriers via the SHE Platform.

The Technology of the SHE platform
The Open Source will be a key modality for this platform, while a block chain technology can retain a trust ledger for the SHE platform. SHE API governance will be via an auction mechanism to determine the value of a proposed API. Open Source is one of the more successful concepts that catalyzes innovation and leads to opportunities. Open Source utilizes the power of the crowd to develop, modify, share and improve, available to anyone in the world. Mozilla Firefox and the Arduino board for robotics are both example of Open Source software platforms that are used and improved by people around the world for free. GitHub will provide the foundation for the platform, enabling Open Source collaboration and development. Women from all over the world can work together, learn from one another, and empower one another to succeed, all via access to the Internet and through smart phone and tablets.

There are many startup companies working on disrupting education in general, propelled by increased access through the Internet. Companies like XPRIZE are helping to catalyze innovation in the education space through multi-million dollar incentivized prizes to software developers who successfully develop self teaching software that a child can figure out with no human intervention. Imagine dropping a charged tablet into a remote village that had never seen a smartphone or tablet, and within hours not only would the children have figured out how to turn it on, but they self taught opening and playing with applications. In order to financially democratize the platform, block chain technology, also known as digital currency, can be employed. This is where multiple encryption techniques can be used to regulate, record and verify money transfer between
parties, and operates completely independently of a traditional bank without concern for geographical, cultural, religious or political borders. My image is really the **Internet of Women**.

We are now entering the **Internet of Everything** (IoE) age, which promises the biggest wave of innovation and transformation yet. Women represent a growth market more than twice as big as China and India combined. They control $20 trillion in global consumer spending, own or operate between 25-33% of all private businesses, and earn an estimated $13 trillion. This “power of the purse” is growing rapidly; the market was $18 trillion in 2014. For companies that figure out what women want, the future looks bright.

IoE is not just about data and things — it’s also about people and process. Several of our industry luminaries identified culture and leadership, as the most critical components of the Fast IT transformation, saying that IT’s transformation will be a journey

Tech companies and non-tech companies alike need women. Women are already leading in the adoption of technology across nearly all Internet-enabled devices. They have driven the explosive popularity of texting, e-shopping, and social networking, while buying more e-readers and connected healthcare devices.

As technology continues to impact our lives, workers need to **acquire new skills and approaches** to succeed. Job opportunities in technology are growing up to three times faster than other career fields in the Europe.

The pace of change and innovation is accelerating faster than ever before; creating a new approach to the way we work, live, play and learn. Today, WE must BE FEARLESS - taking risks, overcoming obstacles, blazing new trails and fighting through adversity.

Today the world population is over 7.3 billion people and counting with an anticipation to be 8 billion people in the spring of 2024:

[http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/](http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/)

Women comprise over **51% of the world economy** - yet they are often overlooked in times of crisis - amazingly when it comes to gender equality as a basis for a 21st century digital society, the failure to include this category of our world population as catalysts for change is great, even more so tragic.
Gender-Equality often takes a second seat to “other economic issues of importance “ yet Gender Equality is foundational for those other issues.

Do not under-estimate the impact culture, media and education have as a catalyst for change, simply put, “If you cannot see it, you cannot be it.”

Whilst it would be easy for me to talk about our technology; I am going to focus on organizational change as technology can be an enabler.

Cisco knows that exponential change must be institutional; hence we have the Cisco Men for Inclusion program.

Men have an opportunity and obligation to seek women as allies and women seeking out reciprocity with men, to boldly go together where no one at Cisco has gone before!

We expect CISCO MEN FOR INCLUSION to spark stronger collaboration among men and women across Cisco, advancing the Gender Initiative, to fuel innovation, more opportunities for women, and company growth.

Specifically, we expect CISCO MEN FOR INCLUSION to measurably contribute to strong progress with the following Success Factors – this is the ‘Real Change’ the company seeks through CISCO MEN FOR INCLUSION:

- Opportunity with women, in terms of recruitment, development, and advancement
- Stronger reciprocity with men, to strengthen their performance and career choices
- Results for Cisco, in terms of female talent retained, improved gender savvy among men, revenue grown, costs contained, and processes improved

It’s a journey no doubt.

As Catherine Ashcroft, research scientist at National Center for Women and Information Technology in the US noted:

“Technical Women Aren’t Broken
Technical Men Aren’t The Enemy
Culprit = Societal Biases We All Share
**We Can Take Action Together**

We have all experienced the subtle tiny jabs that erode a woman’s sense of belonging, confidence, her sense that she fits in.

Some further recommendations besides structural e.g. maternity-paternity leave; nursery care; bias training; and so on include:

- Implement a media campaign showing men advocating for women and highlighting women leaders;
- Also produce a film as a call to action like: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcGGrUx666s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcGGrUx666s)
- Showcase women leaders historically in education, schools;
- Think of an equivalent of a Nobel Prize for the company-country that embraces women as equal partners;
- Emphasize Mentorship and networking opportunities at EU and private industry levels – show case these examples engaging men and women together;
- Support hackathons for girls and women by women with men as coaches; e.g [iotchallenge-cisco.younoodle.com](https://iotchallenge-cisco.younoodle.com)
- Encourage skills training for women mid-latter careers, “It’s Never Too Late “ Campaign;
- Encourage mixed gender panels for conferences;
- Support female entrepreneur “pitches” with coaching sessions before mixed gender judges;

Simply put, once women connect, they engage; once they engage, they embrace; once they embrace, they drive.

And that’s the future.

It is the **Internet of Women**.

The opportunities are nearly limitless when we connect the unconnected with the right talent

Can we think of any nobler reason as to appealing to our male colleagues in becoming allies to women?

Could we not imagine achieving a planet of 50-50 gainfully employed human beings via the SHE platform? Could we not imagine restoring the missing element to double productivity? We can if we dare!
Europe has every opportunity to lead the world in this space – let’s act together now!

Thank you!

Monique Jeanne Morrow