



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALIVE
Acumen LatAm Impact Ventures

 VALUE
FOR
WOMEN

Dutch Good Growth Fund

THE POTENTIAL OF HRTECHS & EDTECHS FOR
**PROMOTING WOMEN'S
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION
AND EMPLOYMENT**

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Today, only 58% of women participate in the labor force, compared to 82% of men¹. And occupations continue to be sex-segregated, with women particularly under-represented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM): women account for only 28% of higher graduates in engineering and 40% in computer science worldwide. In most Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) countries, women's representation among graduates in fields of engineering and information technology and communication (ITC) rarely exceeds 40%².

If the current gender gaps continue in the midst of the technological revolution that is currently underway, **women are at risk of losing out on tomorrow's best job opportunities and companies will face a restricted applicant pool and a reduced diversity dividend³.**

Multiple barriers underpin these gender gaps in women's access to professional education and employment in Latin America, including cultural norms, shortage of time (due to disproportionate care work), limited professional networks, gender-based violence, and the greater economic and digital exclusion women experience.

In the face of these immense challenges, technology-based companies working in education

(EdTech) and human resources (HRTech) are supporting a successful transition to the future of work by helping learners develop a range of skills and credentials and access employment opportunities. **By nature of being largely digital and flexible, many of the solutions may contribute to reducing some gender inequalities. But to do this well, they must consider gender throughout their business models.**

This report looks at how EdTech and HRTech firms can better contribute to increasing women's ability to access professional training and formal employment. It also provides these firms with actionable recommendations to improve gender outcomes across their solutions and market approach.

The potential payoffs to businesses and investors for doing so are immense; just closing the gender gap in access to online learning platforms in emerging economies would mean 8 million women joining the paid online learning market each year⁴.

To answer this question of "how," the report draws from conversations with over 30 tech companies, regional specialists, intermediary organizations, consultations with more than 100 women, and an extensive literature review.

1 IDB, 2019
2 IUS, 2021
3 WEF, 2016
4 IFC & Coursera, 2022

It finds that **some EdTechs and HRTechs are already catalyzing gender inclusion in professional development and employment, offering solutions that address key gender-related barriers.** Among EdTechs, powerful solutions existing today include challenging gender norms at younger ages, helping mothers reenter the labor market, and providing connections with employers and professional networks. Among HRTechs, they include making it easier to implement affirmative actions, mitigating biases in recruitment processes, facilitating the formalization of women workers, and helping mothers reenter the labor market.

With gender inclusion generally being a new focus area for EdTechs and HRTechs, besides a few notable examples (i.e., solutions at the vanguard), **there is much opportunity for these companies to do more to support gender equality.** But where to start? We share the following five recommendations for EdTechs and HRTechs:

1

Collect and analyze

sex-disaggregated data. By using tech companies' existing wealth of user data to compare how women's platform

access and use differs from that of men, tech companies can identify how to better serve women.

2

Use inclusive algorithms.

Ensure artificial intelligence does not replicate gender stereotypes, and that teams can both prevent bias and act

when bias is identified.

3

Create diverse product development

teams. Formalizing practices and policies that promote diversity in the company and delivering anti-bias training

to product development teams will help de-bias technologies.

4

Develop a value proposition tailored to women customers and users.

Design and adjust products and services based on evidence about market niches,

preferences, pains, and wishes of women in all their diversity.

5

Be intentional about gender in marketing & outreach.

Make concerted efforts to reach women audiences through audiovisuals,

language, and channels.

By implementing these recommendations, and with the support of investors, accelerators, and business hubs and networks, the HRTech and EdTech sectors could increase the odds that women benefit from the technology transformation occurring in Latin America's economy, and that businesses flourish.

