"Women's Economic Empowerment through Digital Literacy: Resilience and Everyday Activism of SMEs in Myanmar's Post-2021 Coup"

Presenter: ▮▮▮▮▮▮ **(IMSRS064)**

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CONTENT

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Post-coup Myanmar landscape

RESEARCH AIM & CONCEPTS

Digital tools for economic empowerment

KEY FINDINGS & INSIGHTS

Women's digital strategies

DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSION

Implications and recommendations

Myanmar's Economic & Digital Landscape

SMEs dominate >80%

(Myanmar Digital News, 2019).

18.4% GDP decline & worsened access to digital infrastructure

(ADB, 2022).

Women are 28% less likely than men to own a mobile phone.

(World Wide Web Foundation, 2018)

Employment >90%

(ASEAN Secretariat, 2023)

Excl. women, est. $1 trillion GDP loss globally; projected $1.5 trillion by 2025.

(UN Women, 2022)

Myanmar ranks lowest in global indexes

(EDGI, 2020).

Economic collapse and inflation

	Before the coup	After the coup
Exchange rate per USD	1,350 MMK	4,500 MMK
Gold price per bar	1,315,500 MMK	6,400,000 MMK
Octane 95 per liter	770 MMK	3,200 MMK
A bag of top quality rice	54,000 MMK	210,000 MMK

The Shifting Landscape: Post-Coup Myanmar

Fractured Environment
Economic and political disruption since Feb 2021

Escalating Constraints
Disproportionate impact on women

SMEs Crucial
Women-led enterprises particularly important

Digital Literacy
Lifeline AND struggle site for women entrepreneurs

@easypay

@myanwen
ASEAN Inclusive Business Awa

Exploring Digital Empowerment & Resilience

Research Aim:
To understand how digital tools are utilized by women in SMEs for economic empowerment amidst constraints.

Key Question:
How does women's engagement with digital tools reflect everyday activism and contribute to social resilience?

Methodology:
Qualitative study, semi-structured interviews, averaging one hour each, with 10 key stakeholders from 5 organizations deeply involved in Myanmar's SME and WEE initiatives.

Conceptual Framework

Preconditions   Process   Outcomes of Empowerment

Digital Literacy   Economic Empowerment   Women's Empowerment

Source: Modified from Visualisation of the Conceptual Framework by Peters (2016) and Women's Empowerment as process: a schematic by O'Neil et al. (2014); Chen (2004) and Yue et al. (2019); Bandura, A., 1986, Sen. A. K., 1999, and Haraway, 1985

Theoretical Lens

Guided by Sen's Capability Approach (*capabilities*), **Social Cognitive Theory** (*Social Learning/Support*), and **Techno-Feminism** (*Tech reflects/gendered impacts*).

The Digital Gender Divide: Barriers in the Preconditions & Process

Unequal Access
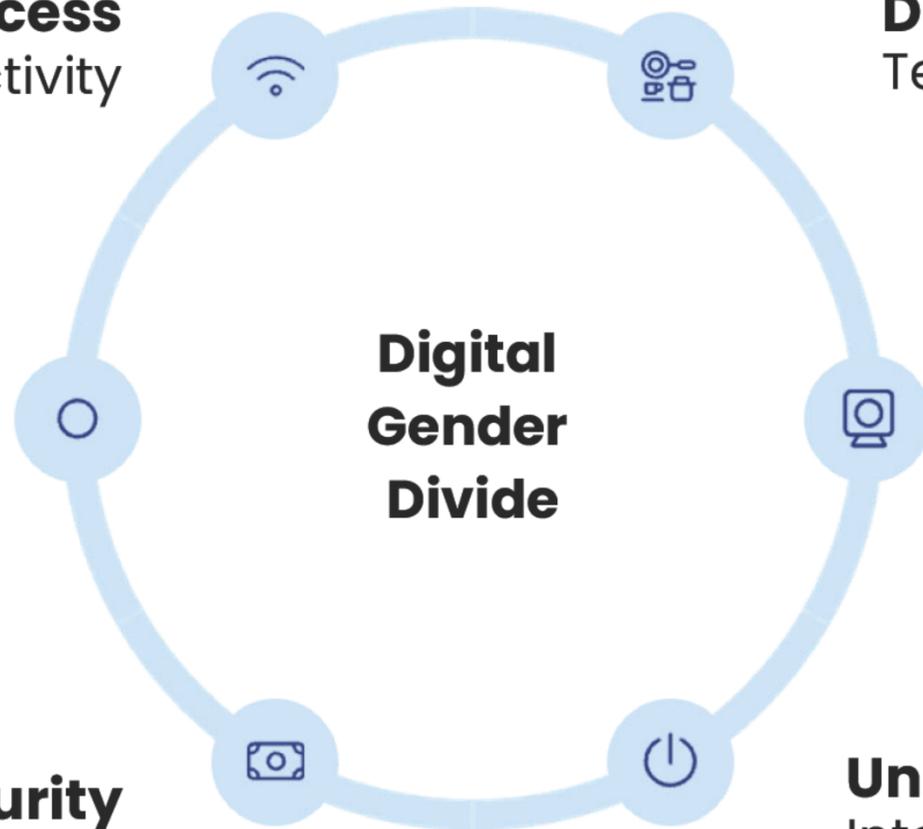Limited devices, internet connectivity

Digital Skills Gap
Technical knowledge barriers

Social Norms
Gender stereotypes restrict participation

Safety Concerns
Online harassment, surveillance

Economic Insecurity
Financial constraints limit digital access

Unreliable Infrastructure
Internet outages, power cuts

Digital Gender Divide

Everyday Activism: Navigating the 'Process of Empowerment'

Repurposing Platforms
Creative use of social media for business and community

Adopting Encrypted Tools
VPNs, secure messaging for safer transactions

Adapting Business Models
Shifting online, developing new digital services

Skill Sharing Networks
Informal support for learning digital skills

This is: *"Not just coping, but innovating and resisting limitations".*

Supporting the 'Process': Development Actors' Role

Adapting Approaches

Development practitioners recalibrating methods

Digital Resilience
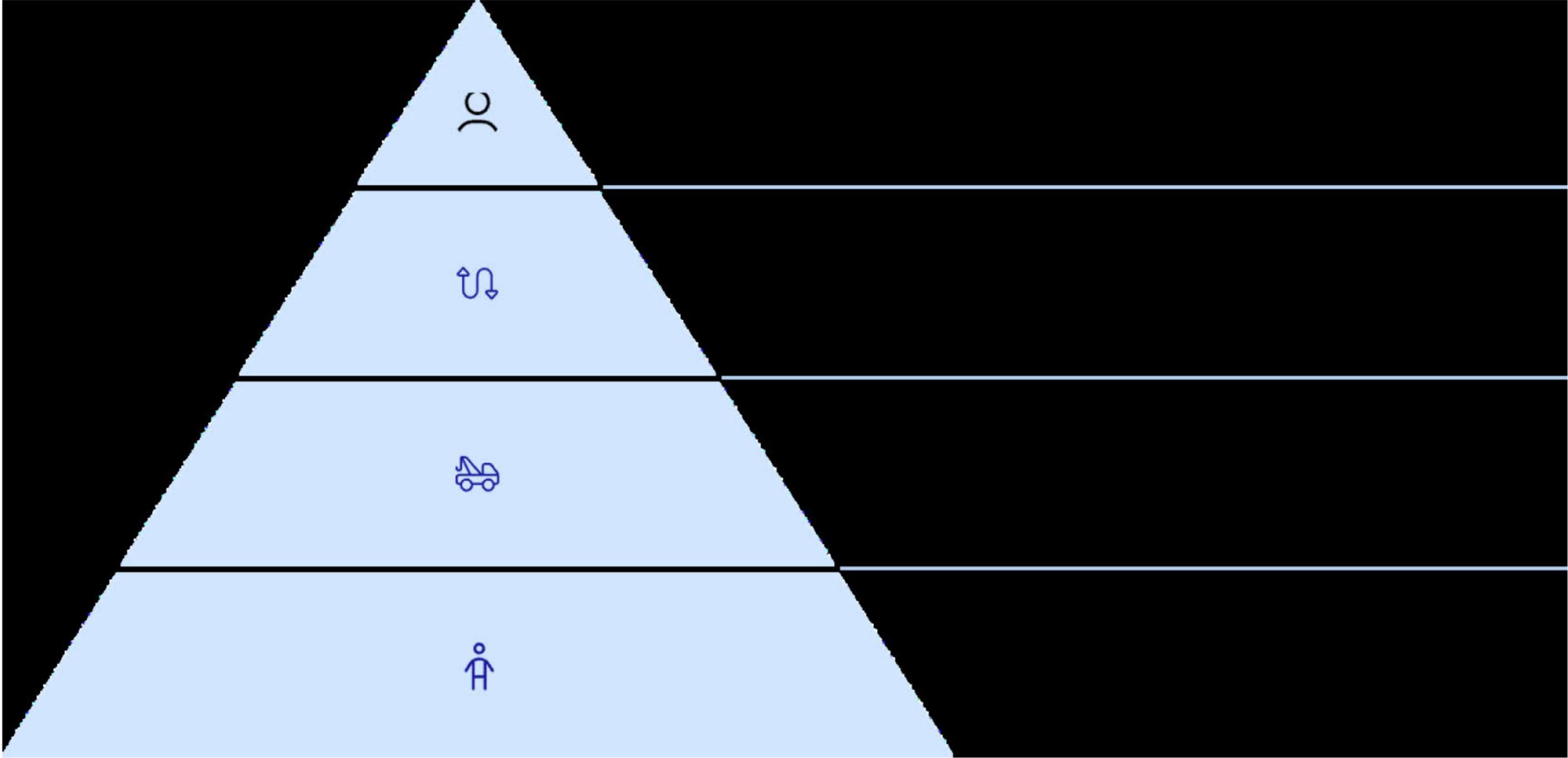
Integrating into remote programming
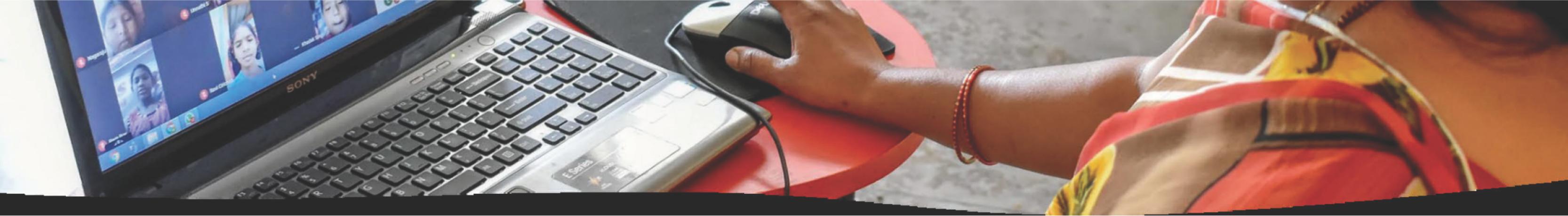
Context-Sensitive Support

Practical, locally-relevant assistance

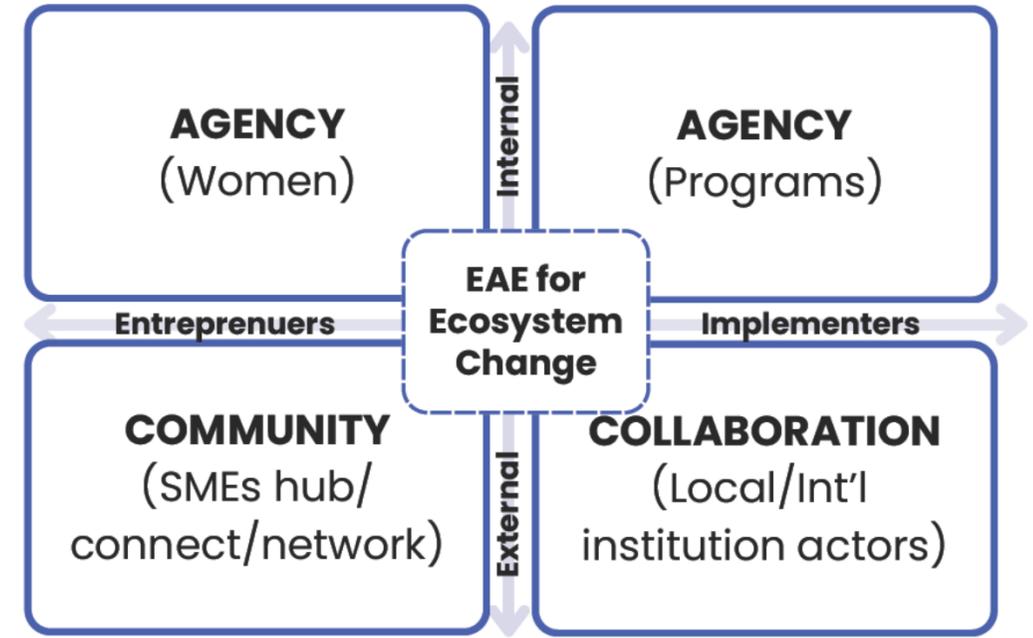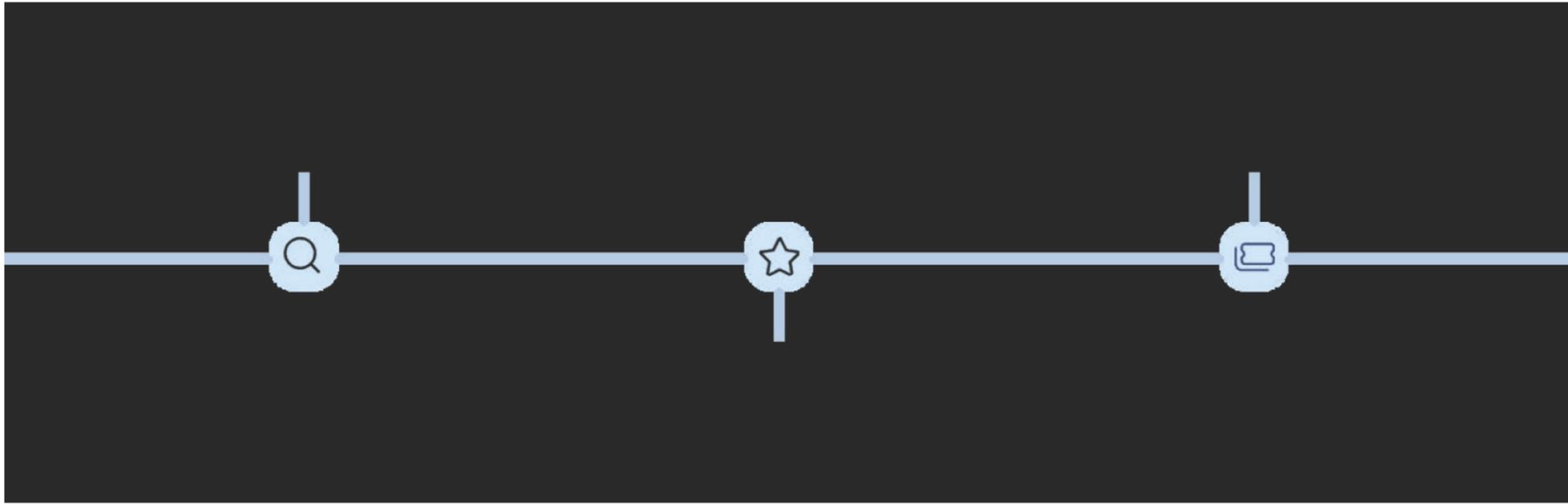**Accessibility Challenges**

Gaps persist in rural and conflict areas

# Outcomes of Empowerment: Towards Social Transformation

Fostering Inclusive Digital Empowerment: Addressing the Full Spectrum

AGENCY
(Women)

Internal

AGENCY
(Programs)

Entreprenuers

EAE for Ecosystem Change

Implementers

COMMUNITY
(SMEs hub/
connect/network)

External

COLLABORATION
(Local/Int'l
institution actors)

"We need programs that can contribute to ecosystem change rather than a single 'Golden Program.'" –Participant A

"Sustainable digital transformation requires collaborative efforts between government, private sector, and civil society." –Participant F
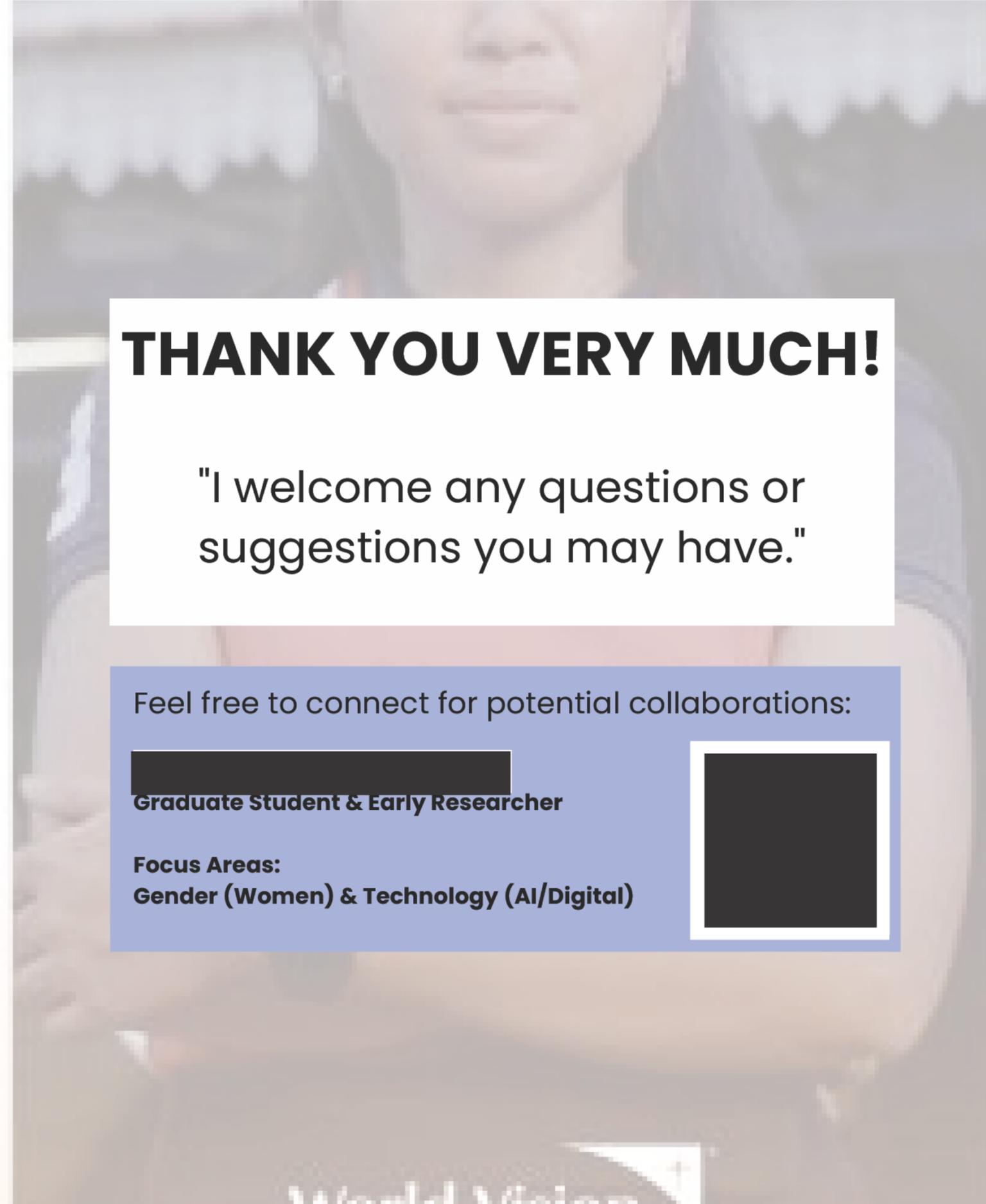
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

"I welcome any questions or suggestions you may have."

Feel free to connect for potential collaborations:

Graduate Student & Early Researcher

Focus Areas:
Gender (Women) & Technology (AI/Digital)