

the **Code**  
to **Change**  
Program Your Future

**Digital inclusion for gender equality  
and economic empowerment of women**

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**An overview**

2016

“We aim to bring together high-potential employees and great employers.”

## Overview

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*The Code to Change programme's* objective is to contribute to the achievement of gender equality (*UN Sustainable Development Goal 5*) and economic empowerment of women through digital inclusion.

Furthermore, we aim to address the existing skills gap in the ICT sector and the associated digital gender divide.

To achieve this aim we have designed and launched a training programme to teach women the key e-skills required to pursue a career in the Information and Communications Technology sector (ICT).

This programme was developed out of a successful earlier initiative, *Work to Equality*, which was also founded by Iffat Gill and which shares the same vision of the betterment of social economic participation, empowerment and emancipation of women.

[www.chunrichoupaal.org](http://www.chunrichoupaal.org)

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## The challenge

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The Digital Revolution has changed the way we think, live and work irrevocably.  
*The world has reached a point where digital literacy is fundamental for finding a job.*

- In the future, **90% of jobs will demand digital skills.**
- The ICT sector is growing.
- It is estimated that by 2020 there will be a skills deficit that equates almost **one million unfilled jobs\***.

Despite high unemployment across Europe, the huge e-skills gap is a barrier to existing roles in the sector. In order to boost competitiveness, productivity and employability of the workforce, **we need to bridge the e-skills gap** to ensure innovation and growth by updating the skills of the existing talent pool.

- **20% of the 2.7 million people working in the ICT sector are women\*\*.**  
(The percentage is even lower in the IT sector)
- Women also disproportionately leave the ICT sector as they progress in their careers.
- The lack of female participation in technology related studies exacerbates a pre-existing problem with labour supply shortages.
- Multiple studies have shown that more gender-balanced and diverse teams actually perform better and more efficiently.

**Given these disparities, urgent measures need to be taken to ensure economic empowerment of women and consequently, an inclusive, diversified and welcoming work environment.**

\* *The Digital Agenda for Europe*

\*\* *Council of European Professional Informatics Society*

## Our objectives

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To bring together ICT and IT professionals with those who are looking for ways to join the sector and update their digital skills.

*The Code to Change programme* aims to provide training in new skills that will enable participants to explore careers in the technology sector, to facilitate diversity and equality in the workplace.

A defining aspect of our programme is that we aim to establish long-term mentoring and training, focussed on the individual, to provide the necessary skills to have a well paid job in the digital age:

- 1** To train up to 30 women (one batch per project country) in the requisite e-skills for jobs, through training and mentoring. Our current two year target is 180.
- 2** To introduce the selected participants to the real life opportunities of learning on the job, under the supervision of selected mentors, where applicable.
- 3** To identify and promote women leaders in the technology sector who are passionate about teaching other women the relevant digital skills to be successful in the workplace and to act as the catalyst for change throughout the industry.
- 4** To highlight the profiles of those emerging talented and women leaders in technology via the *Code to Change* leadership platform, for both their personal and career development – and to highlight the exceptional work of our programme leaders, to ensure that they remain involved in its ongoing development.

**“Truly life changing. A whole new world full of opportunities opened up. I’m currently learning to code in *Python* and as more I learn, the more I am intrigued. Without *The Code to Change* boot camp I would have never found out about *Python*. Additionally I met such inspiring ladies, presenters and attendees and we are a group of friends, pursuing our shared goal to get professional coding experience.”**

## Our approach

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*The Code To Change* programme aims to bridge the skills gap by making available effective education and mentoring through our dedicated community of IT professionals who are passionate about passing on their expertise.

It is a one of a kind, five months mentoring programme to introduce women to those career fields and skills which are vital for finding employment opportunities in the information and communications sector.

### **e-skills boot camp and conference**

The programme kicks off with a three day, in person, e-skills boot camp and conference, which gives participants hands-on experience working with basic digital skills. The conference introduces them to a number of career development and technical workshops – including leadership skills, an introduction to the IT industry, digital marketing, Big Data, etc.

The events consist of highly interactive workshops, sessions and lightning talks, plus keynote addresses and presentations.

### **Mentoring phase**

The second part of the programme focuses on mentoring; here the participants learn from experienced professionals about how to continue their learning journey and obtain strategic advice on pursuing new directions in life.

### **Work experience/apprenticeship phase**

In this two month phase we work with selected partners and successful participants from the programme to secure a unique opportunity to work at one of our partner companies. During this work experience the participants practice the skills they have learned in their previous three months of *The Code to Change*.

“*The Code to Change* event was inspiring – it gave me strength from within. After the workshop, I had a feeling of ‘I can take on the world’.”

“Those three days were so motivating. Learned a lot about ICT. Interesting things seen with the 3D printer. Didn't know can do such beautiful things with writing code. [The Code to Change event] really opened the world for me. A world that I had discovered before but never done anything with and that means so much now that it is clear to me.”

### Activities for 2016

In 2015, we launched the programme in Amsterdam during *European Code Week*. We had an amazing response from our corporate and non-profit partners, women groups, applicants and potential mentors. We also received expressions of interest from many countries, including Poland, Germany, Nepal, Pakistan, Lebanon, Rwanda, Luxemborg, Argentina, Albania, Canada, Indonesia, UK and Ireland.

- In March 2016, we plan to celebrate *International Women's Day* to highlight our leaders (mentors) and emerging leaders (highly promising candidates) of *The Code to Change* Netherlands
- Due to the demand and interest, we aim to launch the *The Code to Change* programme in Germany and Italy next year

### Target audience

- **Women out of work** (e.g. after maternity leave, in between jobs)  
Women who have either left the workforce for personal reasons – such as care responsibilities – or those who have lost their job because of lack of opportunities to update their digital skills.
- **Women looking for better career opportunities**  
Women who are already working – including those who want to change their career in the ICT sector – but don't know where to start.

“...the amount of energy, enthusiasm and inspiration we all got from the event – but mostly from the organisers. To be able to come as an individual and to leave the event with a group of people to whom you can turn – and who are discovering the same things as you, is a very powerful thing to have access to. To me, *The Code to Change* event set things in motion and was a coming together of individuals who were all ready to take on a new fun and challenging perspective in their lives and who have started to form a community around that idea.”

# 1

## The Code to Change events

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Following the successful launch event in Amsterdam in October 2015, we will organise several The Code to Change events throughout Europe each year. In doing so we will build on our successful pilot curriculum consisting of:

- e-skills boot camp
- keynote speeches
- lightning talks
- workshops



Day one: e-skills boot camp,  
*The Code to Change*

“I've got a job! It's quite incredible. I've landed a really nice (tech focussed) technical writer role. This was entirely on the back of *The Code to Change*. I am quite amazed the difference three days can make, and I really do feel my career has turned a corner since the event. One of the speakers mentioned that the rate technology develops everyone has to keep learning or they are left behind.”



# 2

## Meetups

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We will continue to host our meetup group, *Amsterdam Women in Technology*, where we bring together those already working in the ICT sector and those wishing to enter. In 2015 we hosted six meetups.



“This group is intended to be a hangout for people in tech who wish to contribute to bringing more women and girls into technology fields. Iffat Gill started this group in 2015 to network, brainstorm and crowdsource solutions and support from like-minded women. They are all passionate about bringing change and lasting impact to the lives of those girls and women who don't have equal opportunities or access to technology and technology related skills and education.”

# 3

## Promotion

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### **Participating and speaking at conferences and events**

We will continue to run workshops and speak at conferences and events to raise awareness for our campaign, with the objective of recruiting more potential partners, volunteers, and sponsors.

In 2015 we spoke at the following events:

- **The World Summit on the Information Society, ITU, Geneva (WSIS Forum 2015)**

Topic of workshop: *Digital inclusion of women for gender equality, diversity and inclusion in tech*; leveraging ICTs for equality in the workplace and economic empowerment. [Please click here for link](#)

- **European Parliament, Brussels**

Breakfast debate: *European Year for Development/ICT and developing countries*

- **The 3rd World Conference of Women's Shelters, The Hague**

Iffat Gill opening the plenary *Economic Empowerment of Women Survivors* with a speech about her personal story. [Please click here for link](#)

At the same conference, Iffat Gill also led this workshop:

- **Digital highway to independence for social and economic empowerment**

Synopsis: *How digital technology is transforming hopes and dreams into reality*  
"After a traumatic experience, there's an opportunity for positive personal growth. The mission of the NGO is to empower women through the power of digital media for social and economic progress, by providing a platform where they can share their experiences, learn and develop new ICT skill sets which can turn into earning income. This allows women to break free from the cycle of helplessness."

## Communicating with and through networks

Partnerships with:

- Academia
- NGOs
- Corporates
- Entrepreneurs
- Governments
- Personal – friends and family
- Social media

## Ongoing key activities around events

- Publication of newsletters
- Outcome reports and results sharing
- Feedback loop and retrospectives to improve after each event
- Invitation for partners to be active participants in reducing the digital divide

**“ I would previously have seen this as a negative thing, but they pointed out this means whenever you start learning you can be as up to date as the next person. That was a big ‘Aha!’ moment for me. ”**

## Project implementation and management

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Our core team consists of three members:

### CEO

#### Iffat Rose Gill

A much experienced international NGO leader-activist, digital strategist, and social entrepreneur with more than 10 years of experience in the non-profit sector. She is the founder of ChunriChoupaal, an organization that empowers women leaders through modern information and communication technology (ICT) and digital literacy.

Iffat specialises in initiatives focussing on women's economic empowerment both in Pakistan and internationally. She has been at the forefront of shaping the policy debate for close to a decade with her campaigns, both in Pakistan and on international platforms. She aims to provide social and economic empowerment training to women, via online learning platforms for digital inclusion and the retention of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields (STEM). She has advocated for the issue at the UN's World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10 and WSIS 2015), UN's Internet Governance Forum and European Parliament.

A highly effective manager and strategic planner, her strengths include analytical and creative thinking, in addition to strong interpersonal and communications skills.

“Since *The Code to Change* I have taken a *Python* course (at zb45, the lady who came to show the 3D printer) and I am also participating in one of the nano degrees of *Udacity* (full stack web developer). I have also proposed to build a beta Reviewer Reputation System for our graduate school peer reviewed journal. This could be a test case. Together with some other ladies who I have met at *The Code to Change* we talk regularly about our progress and decisions and thoughts, which is really inspiring. Thank you for bringing us together. :) They have really become friends! I got to know many great people who inspired me to continue this path. I am currently still in touch with some of them.”

Her project *Community Technology Center for Women* won the Syster's Award from the Anita Borg Institute. (This serves as a training and capacity building initiative for the social and economic empowerment of women in remote areas of the world.)

## **CIO**

### **Mine Ogura**

Mine Ogura is a collaborative software engineering leader and process architect who flows between engineering, process management, organisational strategy and vision and in technology companies. She has spent her career in technology hubs: Boston 128, Bay Area/Silicon Valley, Los Angeles/Silica Beach and Amsterdam, where she has worked in startups and Fortune 500 companies such as Oracle, Sony and her current employer, eBay Classifieds Group NL (Marktplaats.nl).

As a young immigrant in Mexico, she began tutoring kids in the Mexican pop-up communities. When she moved to the United States for university, she continued her pursuit of human rights through education and openness. After moving to the Netherlands, she joined forces with Iffat Rose Gill to work on the *Work to Equality* campaign to focus on women in technology and to bring women into technology.

Mine currently works as Head of Delivery in eBay Classifieds Group NL/Marktplaats.nl, is the co-owner and CTO of Media/Noche, the main techie in ChunriChoupaal's *Work to Equality* campaign and the primary trainer and author of the curriculum for *The Code to Change* programme.

## **Programme Manager**

### **Diana Eggleston**

A well-connected international project manager for corporate and non-profits, Diana is an experienced management consultant with a background in strategy consulting and a strong focus on implementation. After 15 years of advising business clients, she now applies her skills increasingly in the public sector, supporting NGOs and government departments on a number of initiatives.

Since moving to The Hague in 2012, Diana has built on her extensive network of industry contacts, establishing valuable connections within UN organizations, civil societies, and Dutch and EU government departments.

Diana has a keen interest in gender equality, sustainable economic development, environmental issues and ICT4D. She is convinced that only through a multi-stakeholder approach of governments, civil societies, and industry can real progress be achieved.

## Acknowledgements

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The inaugural *Code to Change* programme 2015 in the Netherlands would not have been possible without the generous support of the following event sponsors:

- Casting International
- GitHub
- Marktplaats/eBay
- Meet Berlage
- Microsoft
- RIPE NCC

“The *Code to Change* event was very inspiring and I felt very honored and privileged to be part of it. I felt part of a small community of very enthusiastic women, and I felt taken seriously in my ambitions to move towards the tech industry for the first time. That made me feel empowered to actually start and take the first steps towards this goal. The event was a great mix in coding, speeches and talks and other get togethers.”

## Connect

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