

A Technological Future for Everyone



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I have spoken previously on how the dawn of new technologies is revolutionizing the workplace and will become a net producer of jobs. There are however certain professions that will become obsolete as a result, with the idea of Universal Basic Income (UBI) gaining prominence in recent years to mitigate such effects, fueled by concerns about job displacement due to technological advancements. As machines take over tasks previously performed by humans, the need for a safety net becomes crucial. Advancements in AI and automation have revolutionized industries, leading to increased productivity and economic growth; however, they have also raised concerns about the impact on jobs.

UBI is a government program that provides every adult citizen with a regular, unconditional payment, regardless of their income or employment status. The primary goals of UBI are to alleviate poverty, simplify social welfare systems, and ensure a basic standard of living for all. It emerges as a potential solution to address this challenge. Rather than viewing it as a tax on technology as it has been seen in the past, I propose that we should shift our perspective and see it as an initial strategic investment that plays an essential part of any digital transformation from the get-go.

By providing a financial cushion, it allows sectors to build the necessary capacity for technological integration. This includes investing in infrastructure, training, and research. As jobs evolve or disappear, workers need to adapt. UBI can fund proactive reskilling programs, ensuring that individuals remain competitive in the changing job landscape, as well as serve as a safety net for those unable to reskill due to technological shifts,

preventing poverty and fostering social stability.

It should be an integral part of our digital world and should seamlessly integrate into any new technology era. It should not be an afterthought but a fundamental component from the outset. This will ensure that technology thrives sustainably, by supporting workers during transitions, encouraging innovation and adaptation. In all this, governments clearly play a pivotal role. They must champion UBI as a means to bridge the gap between job displacement and new opportunities. I see that UBI is not just about financial assistance; it's about shaping a future where technology and humanity coexist harmoniously.

Governments must recognize UBI as a bridge between job displacement and new opportunities, to ensure a smoother transition for affected workers and reduce the fear associated with technological automation. Workers need assurance that they will not be left behind, being a fundamental part of technology adoption and economic progress.

UBI can act as a catalyst for change and help to reduce the fear that comes with technological automation. We have seen many people suffer in the past because technology has taken over their jobs, such as the coal miners of the past, who through no fault of their own, found themselves jobless with a bleak future because there was no social safeguard in place when technology took over. UBI aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined by the UN to foster a safer and more inclusive world, particularly Goal 1 - No Poverty, and Goal 10 - Reduced Inequalities. Achieving these goals formed an important part of the work I led during my time as Chair of the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development (UN-GAID), where ICTs played a fundamental role in promoting sustainable global development.

We have reached a stage in the digital revolution where we need to be creating a society where people are protected, where a resilient workforce is built that is not afraid of technological change with a secure place within the technological revolution. We must build a world where everyone benefits from progress and no one is left behind.