# Helping Gen Beta meet the future

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The new year welcomed babies belonging to Generation Beta who will live in a world where technology such as artificial intelligence and automation will be fully embedded in daily life. The members of the newest generation will be born between 2025 and 2039 and will likely live into the 22nd century, inheriting problems that the world faces today such as climate change.

Older generations, particularly the millennials and older Gen Zs who will raise Gen Beta, are responsible for helping the newest members of the world population prepare for the issues that they must eventually find solutions for. This also means that these older generations should implement reforms that could help mitigate the impact of ecological and developmental challenges—and that this should be done now.

“Generation Beta will … inherit a world grappling with major societal challenges. With climate change, global population shifts, and rapid urbanization at the forefront, sustainability will not just be a preference but an expectation,” social research firm McCrindle said.

It said that Gen Beta will be more globally minded, community-focused, and collaborative than ever before as a result of being raised by millennial and older Gen Z parents who prioritize adaptability, equality, and eco-consciousness in their parenting. “Their upbringing will emphasize the importance of innovation not just for convenience, but for solving the pressing challenges of their time,” it said.

## Digital gap

That is just as well because aside from existing in a future seen as a hyperconnected high-tech world, their generation will be forced to be sustainable not as a choice—like how it is largely practiced today—but more as a necessity to survive.

For Gen Beta Filipinos, a future where today’s imagined innovations are a reality sounds inconceivable given the pressing problems that the Philippines face. Smart cities, autonomous vehicles, and next-generation virtual realities? The government must first address the basic issue of technology and bridge the digital gap that will keep the Philippines from advancing further and being part of the world that Gen Beta is envisioned to live in.

The Philippines, per the 2023 edition of most technologically advanced countries by the international magazine Global Finance, ranked 63rd out of 65 countries and had a composite score of -5.77, the lowest among East and Southeast Asian countries. The ranking was based on four metrics: internet users as a percentage of a country’s population, LTE users as a percentage of the population, IMD World Competitiveness Center’s Digital Competitiveness Score, and share of a country’s research and development spending to its economic output.

## Top challenges

Low broadband penetration and the cost of mobile data remain among the top challenges that keep the country from closing the digital gap—and these are consequential because more jobs in the future will require digital skills. Those who do not have these skills will find it increasingly difficult to get better-paying jobs. Basic skills such as computer literacy and using applications might sound basic to many, but they could spell a huge difference for poor Filipinos who want to break generational poverty by getting an education and landing higher-paying jobs that could lift their quality of life. A skilled workforce, in turn, will tremendously boost the country’s economic prospects and make it competitive on the global stage.

In a meeting in October last year, United Nations officials said “The international community must urgently address the critical and widening digital gap between developed and developing countries.” Officials have acknowledged that information and communications technology has been the driving force in expanding learning and skills but it has been on a limited scale in developing countries due to a lack of required infrastructure, human resources, and expertise.

## Digital meets physical

To be fair, the government, per the state think tank Philippine Institute for Development Studies, has accelerated digitalization as part of the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. But, it also pointed out, “While significant reforms have been introduced in recent years and additional measures are planned, the implementation of government programs has been less than satisfactory.”

This is unacceptable.

Aside from being a significant part of the future, technology is crucial in helping future generations provide health and education services, and address contemporary problems such as climate change and the effects of rapid urbanization including traffic. The government must pour resources into technology, from the infrastructure to research and development, if it wants to give young Filipinos, particularly Gen Beta, an edge in that world in the future where the digital and physical aspects of life will be seamless.