



PHOTO CREDIT: BOBBY NEPTUNE FOR USAID

FACT SHEET: USAID Announces New Support for Women in the Digital Economy Fund and New Partner Commitments to the Women in the Digital Economy Initiative, Reaching Over \$1 Billion to Close the Gender Digital Divide

May 24, 2024

To advance gender equality and digital development around the world, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is working to close the gender digital divide that hinders women's economic participation and limits their access to critical online services, undermining economic growth and sustainable development.

Vice President Kamala Harris launched the Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF) last year, with an initial \$60 million from USAID and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with at least half of these resources focused on Africa. Since its launch, partners have pledged an additional \$11.6 million: \$10

million from Microsoft and \$1.6 million from the Government of the Republic of Korea. Today, we are proud to announce that USAID has pledged an additional \$500,000 to WiDEF, to further advance its efforts to strengthen the digital inclusion of women and girls with disabilities.

Building on the success of the WiDEF, and in response to an historic commitment from the G20 Leaders to halve the digital gender gap by 2030, USAID, along with our partners, launched the Women in the Digital Economy Initiative in September 2023 to do even more to mobilize commitments to advance a gender-equitable digital economy.

Today, new partners from government, multilateral development banks, the private sector, philanthropic, and civil society organizations, have pledged more than \$190 million to further align efforts to close the gender digital divide. To date, including through WiDEF and the Women in the Digital Economy Initiative, partners have pledged more than \$1 billion to accelerate gender digital equality.

Collective action is focused on five key pillars: increasing women's access to and the affordability of the internet and internet-enabled devices; designing, developing, and providing access to relevant products and tools that meet women's digital needs; strengthening women's digital literacy and skills; addressing online safety and security; and collecting and disseminating data and insights.

Aligned partner efforts include:

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** is providing \$110 million to close the digital gender gap and invest in women's digital and financial inclusion across Asia, including a \$40 million grant to Tajikistan and a \$70 million loan to Cambodia to strengthen science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education for girls. This is complemented by other ADB investments to train women on digital, financial and business capabilities; digitize financial services and supply chains targeting women microenterprises; address the barriers to women's entrepreneurship, particularly the lack of sex-disaggregated data; and address technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- The **Inter-American Development Bank Group** is providing \$15 million by 2026 to reach 30,000 women across Latin America and the Caribbean in three key areas: empowering women with digital skills and literacy to enable them to assume leadership roles in the digital economy; facilitating access to gender-responsive, digital e-governance services; and promoting women's digital skills.
- The **African Development Bank Group** and **Mastercard Community Pass** are collaborating as part of the new Mobilizing Access to the Digital Economy (MADE) Alliance: Africa, which aims to enable digital access for 100 million individuals and businesses in Africa over the next decade. One element of the Alliance's work is a \$15 million program to increase smallholder farmers' productivity and incomes through digital access to credit and markets. This initiative will support the deployment of interoperable digital infrastructure and work with local financial institutions to improve access and affordability of agricultural inputs for 3 million farmers, with an aim to reach 40 percent women, across Kenya, Tanzania, and Nigeria by the end of 2025.

- **Mozilla Foundation** is providing over \$7.5 million through 2027 to initiatives that focus on closing the gender digital divide by advancing trustworthy artificial intelligence. These initiatives seek to empower all consumers, particularly women, to secure better online privacy and safe online experiences; to support activists and thought leaders happening the future of our online lives through funding, mentorship, and networking—including with a focus on women’s digital and human rights across Africa through the Africa Mradi program and with a focus on technology through the Responsible Computing Challenge; and to research threats to a healthy internet and provide solutions, such as how artificial intelligence can support greater inclusion and gender equity.
- **Jersey** is providing \$5 million by 2027 to support the digital financial inclusion of over 72,000 women and girls, especially those in rural areas, in Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, Nepal, and Zambia. Programs seek to facilitate enterprise development, improve livelihoods, and build resilience among marginalized and previously excluded groups through access to affordable, appropriate digital financial products and services.
- **Shell Foundation** and the **United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office** have committed \$3.6 million toward a partnership with **Mastercard Community Pass** and **Co-operative Bank of Kenya** that seeks to provide 100,000 smallholder farmers—including 40,000 women farmers—access to affordable credit to purchase clean energy tools that support farmers’ incomes, such as solar-powered irrigation pumps. The program will also provide farmers with gender-sensitive financial literacy training. The program will create additional economic opportunities for women by aiming for at least 70 percent women digital field agents.
- **Pfizer** has invested \$300,000 by 2024 to develop and launch the ‘Living With’ app in Africa to help reduce the stigma of a cancer diagnosis and increase women’s ability to learn about the disease, treatments, and how they can navigate the emotional, physical and practical challenges of living with cancer. The app has launched in Kenya and will soon be available in Nigeria and Tanzania, with the ability to reach the nearly 125,000 reported women living with cancer across these three countries.
- **Haqdarshak**, a technology company, is committed to connect 100 million customers in India to social benefits, disbursements, and offline digital banking through the Haqdarshak Yojana Card, a partnership with **Mastercard Community Pass** and **Obopay**. Haqdarshak aims to reach 100 million customers by 2030 and increase women’s economic opportunities through its network of more than 22,000 women agents across India.
- **HP**, in partnership with Girl Rising, has committed to support 5.2 million students, teachers, and caregivers—including 2.7 million women and girls—in Nigeria, India, and the United States with a new inclusive curriculum and wide dissemination of online content to develop their voice, agency, and life skills—an investment toward HP’s target of accelerating digital equity for 150

million people by 2030. In Nigeria, HP and Girl Rising are collaborating with I Million Teachers to deliver a gender-focused online course as part of the Black Belt Program, designed to empower teachers—82,500 of which are female—to provide students with skills, resources, and mentors through an online platform, and to network the teachers through an online community platform.

- **Unilever PLC** is reaching 2.5 million small and medium enterprises by 2026, with a significant focus on women, working to raise the living standards of women in their value chain through digital technology programs in India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Pakistan, Ethiopia, the Philippines and Thailand. Programs include a mobile platform through which micro-retailers and small and medium enterprises can purchase Unilever stock, access promotions, and better manage their inventory; and the Shakti program, which offers 200,000+ female micro-entrepreneurs in rural India the opportunity to generate an independent income, empowering them financially as well as through skills and technology programs.
- **Cherie Blair Foundation for Women** is aiming to reach 200,000 more women globally by 2026 to start and grow successful micro and small businesses as well as digitize their enterprises by delivering business skills training through the Foundation's award winning HerVenture mobile app. HerVenture has already supported 100,000 women in South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Guyana, Indonesia, and Vietnam and is looking to scale its impact across Africa and Asia.
- **Cisco**, through its Cisco Networking Academy, aims to provide digital and cybersecurity skills training to 25 million people, including 3 million people in Africa, through 2032 to help deliver on its purpose to power an inclusive future for all with a significant focus on enabling women and underserved communities to acquire market relevant digital skills and participate and thrive in the digital economy. Cisco Networking Academy in-kind contributions in support of its goal to train 3 million people in Africa over the next 10 years is estimated at \$200 million, and includes curriculum, tools, resources, and support to students, schools, and instructors. In addition, building upon its recent launches in Kenya and the Cybersecurity Technology Experience Centre, dubbed The Edge Center, in Nairobi, Cisco will pursue collaborations to increase female participation in cybersecurity skills training.

U.S. Government Initiatives to Advance Women in the Digital Economy

- **USAID** is announcing a \$1.8 million partnership in Kenya—with USAID providing \$1 million and **Girls First Kenya, Ltd.** providing \$800,000 by 2024—to support young women using Girls First Finance, a digital financing platform, to access student loans, mentorship, job placement support, safeguarding support, and budgeting tools.
- The **Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)** is providing an estimated \$40 million through 2029 for activities that aim to support women to acquire digital and financial literacy skills in Indonesia, Lesotho, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo. Country initiatives include supporting access to finance for women-owned MSMEs in Indonesia, which will include digital and financial

literacy training; a digital innovation partnership in Lesotho to work, together with the World Bank, with local financial institutions to pilot digital finance products for women entrepreneurs and subsequently roll out new digital product to women entrepreneurs; the Digifemmes MCC partnership with USAID, Microsoft, and the Government of Cote d'Ivoire to empower women-led SMEs with data, digital knowledge, and skills needed to grow their business activities and access opportunities in the digital economy; and the soon to be launched Nana Tech program to provide digital and data skills to women owned SMEs in MCC's Togo Threshold program.

- **U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)** has provided \$5 million in debt financing through 2029 to support Milk Mantra, an India-based dairy product company integrating digital technology to address norms in India's rural communities that have historically marginalized women dairy farmers. The company's initiatives helped to revolutionize the difficult-to-breach tradition of integrating women farmers into mainstream business operations by offering training sessions to improve milk yields, access to financial products like cattle insurance and credit facilities to purchase additional cattle, and support women in contributing financially towards their families. Through these efforts, Milk Mantra has offered over 300 training sessions on digital literacy and financial management and facilitated over \$60 million in direct payments and over \$2 million in farmer loans – not only uplifting the roles of women within the Indian dairy industry but also increasing their contribution to household income by nearly 50 percent.
- The **U.S. Department of State** has awarded a \$300,000 grant through 2025 to the **International Telecommunication Union** under the EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age to help reduce the many barriers faced by women and girls in harnessing the benefits of digital access and transformation. This funding will support Burundi, Libya and the Dominican Republic in developing or furthering national strategies to mainstream gender into national digital policies through increased expertise and knowledge for up to 200 policymakers. Additionally, it will support capacity building activities to empower over 600 women and girls with digital and leadership skills to become the entrepreneurs and leaders of the future.