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FACT SHEET: The U.S. Government, in Collaboration with G20 Countries and Partners, Launches Global Initiative on Women in the Digital Economy, Totaling Over \$515 Million

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Promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls is fundamental for the realization of human rights and sustainable development outcomes. Advancing access to digital technology for all women and girls spurs economic growth, improves development outcomes, and has the power to lift millions out of poverty.

While the rapid development and adoption of digital technology is transforming how people gain access to information, goods, and services, progress to close the gender digital divide has been slow. Globally, approximately 260 million more men than women were using the internet in 2022. The gap is especially acute in Africa, where International Telecommunication Union data show that 66 percent of women do not use the internet. In particular, the digital gender gap undermines women's full participation in the 21st century economy.

In an effort to close the gender digital divide, the Women in the Digital Economy Fund was launched by Vice President Kamala Harris in March 2023, with initial funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Women in the Digital Economy Fund is a pooled partnership that identifies, directly funds, and accelerates evidence-based, proven solutions to close the gender digital divide, thereby improving women's livelihoods, economic security,

and resilience. USAID committed \$50 million and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation committed \$10 million respectively by 2026, with at least half of these resources focused on Africa. To expand the reach of the Women in the Digital Economy Fund, partners have pledged an additional \$11.6 million: \$10 million from Microsoft and \$1.6 million from the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Building on the success of the Fund, and in response to the G20's historic commitment in the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration to halve the digital gender gap by 2030, USAID launched the Women in the Digital Economy Initiative. The Women in the Digital Economy Initiative will bring together governments, private sector companies, foundations, civil society, and multilateral organizations to accelerate progress towards the closure of the gender digital divide, with a focus on five pillars:

1. **Access and Affordability.** Get more internet access and internet-enabled devices into the hands of women and make sure that devices, digitally enabled services, including digital finance and data, are affordable, reliable, secure, and accessible, including for users with disabilities.
2. **Relevant Products and Tools.** Design, develop, and provide access to relevant products and tools (interfaces, voice technologies, applications, digitally enabled services) that meet women's needs and facilitate women's demand for and use of applications and mobile devices, particularly smartphones, internet, and other technologies, especially for income-generation purposes.
3. **Literacy and Skills.** Strengthen women's digital skills and literacy, including media literacy, so that they can fully and safely access digital services, participate and lead in digital spaces, including the digital economy.
4. **Safety and Security.** Address technology-facilitated gender-based violence and online harassment and strengthen safeguards for digital user protection, including on consumer financial protection, data protection, cyber security, fraud, and risk mitigation.
5. **Data and Insights.** Expand collection and responsible use of required sex-disaggregated data (and where possible, disaggregated by age and disability), research, and gender analysis (a) to better understand and address social norms and systems that influence gender disparities in technology adoption; (b) as a precursor to inform gender-equitable design of and activities related to digital policies, protocols, platforms, products, and services; and (c) to track and benchmark change.

Initiative partners have already pledged contributions totaling over \$515 million to further align efforts that will bridge the gender digital divide.

Government-aligned efforts include:

- **Australia** is announcing \$12 million by 2028 to close the gender digital divide, including \$9 million to Women's World Banking to drive the digital financial inclusion and empowerment of 100 million women globally, and \$3 million to the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia to promote women's leadership in the digital economy.

- **Canada** addresses the gender digital divide under its Feminist International Assistance Policy through several initiatives, such as \$3.6 million by 2027 to Desjardins International Development to build the economic resilience of women entrepreneurs in Bolivia, including Indigenous women, by increasing their management, financial, and digital skills and their digital financial inclusion.
- **Finland** will allocate approximately \$87 million between 2021 and 2026 for initiatives that advance policy, advocacy, and programming to promote technology and innovation for gender equality, including by expanding women's and girls' access to digital learning and skills; strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate technology-facilitated gender-based violence; and improving the representativeness of digital data.
- **Germany** will allocate approximately \$60 million through 2026 for several initiatives that contribute to closing the gender digital divide, including by incubating women-led tech enterprises; expanding women's and girls' access to digital learning opportunities that address critical employment and educational skill gaps; and supporting digital economic transformation, with a focus on women entrepreneurs.
- **Japan** will allocate approximately \$6.2 million by 2026 for initiatives to advance women's economic opportunities in the tech sector in Bangladesh; increase women home-based workers' digital literacy and digital financial inclusion in Pakistan; and leverage technology to strengthen primary school mathematics and science education in Rwanda, targeting women and girls.
- **Republic of Korea** is announcing \$450,000 by 2026, subject to availability, for capacity building to advance digital gender equality.
- **Sweden** is, among other similar initiatives, providing \$8 million by 2023 to support the Association for Progressive Communications to advance women's meaningful access to information and communications technology, including by advocating for women's digital rights and to end technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- The **United Kingdom** will allocate \$9 million by 2025 for the GSMA Connected Women Program to reduce the gender gap in mobile internet and mobile money services in low- and middle-income countries and to support research, advocacy, and market engagement to improve women's full and safe access to digital services.
- The **United States** is, among other similar initiatives, providing up to \$6 million through 2025, subject to availability, for the Transform Digital Spaces Initiative, with pilot projects across Guatemala, Georgia, and Kenya aimed to prevent and address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, especially violence perpetrated against women in politics and public life.

Aligned efforts by private sector, philanthropies, multilateral organizations, and civil society organizations include:

- **Amazon Web Services, Inc.** is providing up to \$4.5 million of resources through its startup programs—including technical resources and promotional credits—to support early-stage artificial intelligence startups, with a focus on women-led startups, across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.
- The **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** is providing, in addition to its commitment to the Women in the Digital Economy Fund, \$40 million toward closing the digital gender divide in Africa and South Asia.
- **CARE** committed to mobilize \$5 million to advance digital gender equality across Sub-Saharan Africa, impacting 1 million people by 2028. CARE will support local partners and expand the reach of the Digital CARE Package to unlock equitable access to the internet and all its benefits, and will increase women members of village savings and loans associations access to digital platforms that enable them to build digital identities and access digital financial services.
- **Citi** is mobilizing more than \$175 million of local currency financing in emerging markets for a range of initiatives to specifically reach an estimated 1 million low-income women to, for example, expand their access to smartphones; to affordable electricity to power smartphones and digital devices; and to digital finance, literacy training, and connectivity.
- **G20 EMPOWER** India Chapter launched the TechEquity platform, under the guidance of and in collaboration with the Government of India's Ministry of Women and Child Development, as a further step during India's G-20 Presidency to empower women from all walks of life. It aims to advance women's economic opportunities through a learning platform that expands their digital and financial literacy and their business and technology skills.
- **Global Digital Inclusion Partnership** is announcing \$2.5 million, scaling a previous \$2.5 million commitment, to improve digital connectivity and opportunity for women in Southern Africa, Asia Pacific, and Central America by producing research on the costs of women's exclusion from meaningful connectivity and by informing policy makers and practitioners on how to design, develop, and implement gender responsive digital policy and investments that are based on good practice experiences and evidence of impact.
- **GSMA** is providing data and insights on the mobile gender gap, advocating for the prioritization of the digital gender divide, and supporting partners to reach millions of women with mobile services by 2025. Through the GSMA Connected Women Commitment Initiative, over 40 mobile operators across LMICs have made formal commitments to reduce the gender gap in the customer base of their mobile internet or mobile money services, collectively reaching over 65 million additional women with these services since 2016.
- **Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth** is providing \$4.3 million to support over 140,000 women entrepreneurs and workers to succeed and thrive in the digital economy by 2025 by

helping women workers in supply chains take advantage of digital financial services through Reimagining Industry to Support Equality (RISE) and by helping rural women entrepreneurs leverage new digital platforms and marketplaces through She Leads Bharat: Udyam, a program in partnership with Airtel Payments Bank and Frontier Markets.

- **Microsoft Corporation** committed to integrate gender equality programming across its Airband partnerships globally, including in Africa, with the aim of training and empowering women entrepreneurs and increasing women's opportunities for employment and trade using connectivity and access to affordable devices—part of Microsoft's larger work to provide internet coverage to 250 million people globally, including 100 million people in Africa.
- **myAgro**, a mobile layaway platform for agriculture, is announcing \$4 million by 2025 to support 500,000 West African women farmers in using mobile phones to access its digital financial tool in order to purchase seeds, fertilizers, and climate-smart agricultural training. Through use of its platform, myAgro expects women farmers to double their food production and increase their agricultural income by 35 percent.
- **Reliance Foundation** is providing \$1.85 million by 2024 through WomenConnect Challenge India to support 17 not-for-profit organizations to increase the digital inclusion of 600,000 women and community members across India to advance their and their families' health, education, and livelihood outcomes.
- **Viasat** is announcing up to \$1 million by 2025 to promote digital equity and inclusion in Mexico through its Ambassador Program, which provides women within rural Mexican communities with economic opportunities, connectivity, and digital literacy training to improve the lives of 50,000 women and their communities.
- **Visa Foundation** is providing \$5 million in grants and impact investments to increase access to financial solutions and other services for women entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa, in order to drive equitable digital financial access as countries continue to digitize.
- **Visa Inc.** committed to support women and women-owned small businesses to participate in the global economy, including through its pledge to digitally enable 50 million small and medium sized businesses, many of which are women-owned, and by training women entrepreneurs, through Visa She's Next, on how to develop a business plan, manage their business, digitize operations, and apply for loans.

Partners of the Women in the Digital Economy Initiative intend to join a community of practice and commit to collecting and sharing sex-disaggregated data, wherever possible, as well as their progress towards achieving the key results of the Initiative, with the goal of accelerating the closure of the gender digital divide.