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USAID DIGITAL STRATEGY

USAID'S FIRST-EVER **DIGITAL STRATEGY** CHARTS AN AGENCY-WIDE VISION for development and humanitarian assistance in the world's rapidly evolving digital landscape.

THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION has given way to the promise of a digital world that spurs economic growth, improves health outcomes, and lifts millions out of poverty using new technologies and services. While digital tools present immense potential to advance freedom and transparency, generate shared prosperity, strengthen inclusion, and inspire innovation, it also presents significant risks to privacy and security through competing models of Internet freedom.

STRATEGY GOAL

To achieve and sustain open, secure, and inclusive digital ecosystems that contribute to broad-based, measurable development and humanitarian-assistance outcomes and increase self-reliance in emerging market countries.

DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM: *stakeholders, systems, and enabling environments that together empower people and communities to use digital technology to gain access to services, engage with each other, or pursue economic opportunities.*

The *Digital Strategy* includes two core, mutually reinforcing objectives:

— RESPONSIBLY USE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY —

OBJECTIVE 1

Improve measurable development and humanitarian-assistance outcomes through the responsible use of digital technology in USAID's programming



USAID



Partners

— STRENGTHEN DIGITAL ECOSYSTEMS —

OBJECTIVE 2

Strengthen openness, inclusiveness, and security of country digital ecosystems.



Civil Society



Partner Governments



Private Sector

To achieve the overall goal of the *Strategy*, these objectives will be executed through four tracks:



TRACK 1: ADOPT AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH ▶ Develop tools and resources necessary to deliver development and humanitarian assistance effectively in a digital age



TRACK 2: HELP PARTNERS NAVIGATE RISK AND REWARDS ▶ Build capacity of our partners to navigate the unique opportunities and risks that digital technology presents across USAID's Program Cycle



TRACK 3: SHIFT TO "DIGITAL BY DEFAULT" ▶ Support implementing partners in adoption of digital operations



TRACK 4: BUILD THE USAID OF TOMORROW ▶ Invest in our human capital to guide the Agency through the digital age

DIGITAL DATA COLLECTION



USAID's first ever [Digital Strategy](#) outlines a path to strengthen open, inclusive, and secure digital ecosystems in all partner countries, and calls on the Agency to “mandate the digital collection of programmatic data.”

DIGITAL DATA COLLECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 AND DEVELOPMENT

Information is critical to fight the spread of COVID-19. Responders and decision makers need detailed and timely data to understand and prevent the spread of the disease. Health workers and communities need access to accurate information to protect themselves and their loved ones. Governments need to understand how their policies to respond to COVID-19 are affecting citizens. USAID Mission staff and Implementing Partners need to continue to monitor their programs remotely and assess how digital data collection tools can be adapted to support continued monitoring of programs and collect data relevant to COVID-19 response efforts.

WHAT IS DIGITAL DATA COLLECTION?

USAID's *Digital Strategy* recommends that Agency staff and partners collect programmatic data [digitally](#) (e.g. by tablet, mobile phone, etc.) rather than paper to the greatest extent possible.¹ Ultimately, the goal is to use the data collected for better decision-making, adaptive programming, and strategic planning.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIGITAL DATA COLLECTION IN COVID-19 RESPONSE

Questions to ask when discussing digital data collection:

- **What information do you need, and who has it?** Knowing the type of information you need and who can provide it will help to narrow the choice of which digital data collection tool to use. For example, if you need information from groups that may have low literacy, interactive voice response or phone surveys may work best.
- **Is someone already collecting this information?** Only collect new data after identifying existing datasets and ongoing data collection to ensure you are not duplicating efforts. Consider identifying a data “czar” to coordinate data analysis and share across agencies, coordination groups, host country governments, etc.
- **What digital data collection tools have been deployed in my area of interest by USAID partners or other groups?** Does your Mission have a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) mechanism that has experience with digital data collection? How are implementing partners collecting their data? Consider adapting and expanding systems that are already in use before developing any new digital data collection efforts.
- **Can you reach your population of interest by SMS, phone or Internet? If not, are there key informants (e.g., field-based project staff, extension workers, community health workers, non-governmental organizations, etc.) that can be reached by SMS, voice calls or mobile apps to support data collection?**

1. USAID will make exceptions to this mandate on a case-by-case basis.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE

DIGITAL DATA COLLECTION

Questions to ask partners - private sector, governments, civil society and other stakeholders:

- **What assets outside of USAID's network can be leveraged?** For example, are there private sector call centers that can be used to conduct computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI)?
- **What data collection systems are already in place by market research firms, civil society and host country governments? What data are these other stakeholders collecting?** Develop data sharing agreements where appropriate.

Similarly, there are risks and opportunities that can arise during a response to a global pandemic and need to be considered. Examples related to digital data collection can include:



RISKS

Nearly all digital data collection tools that can be used remotely require mobile or Internet connectivity. Some populations without access could be omitted, resulting in biased data. Consider using key informants in different communities to collect data to mitigate this issue.

In countries where mobile phone ownership and Internet use is lower among women than men, consider how this gender disparity will affect any digital data collection efforts.

Data collection and data sharing has inherent risks to privacy. See more on data privacy.



OPPORTUNITIES

Using digital tools to continue USAID's data collection efforts to overcome physical distance challenges brought about by COVID-19 for both information gathering and activity monitoring.

Coordinating between different stakeholders to develop a strong data ecosystem can help decision-making by USAID and our partners during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

Resources and contact information

For more information on digital data collection, please contact digitaldevelopment@usaid.gov.