ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT 2023:

G7 Partnership for Women's Digital Financial Inclusion in Africa

SEPTEMBER 2023

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK
A GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation

MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉCONOMIE, DES FINANCES ET DE LA SOUVERAINETÉ INDUSTRIELLE ET NUMÉRIQUE
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, with nearly 250 million Sub-Saharan African women facing financial exclusion, the G7 recognized the potential of digital financial services (DFS) for promoting social equality and narrowing the digital gender divide. Under the French presidency, the G7 Partnership for Women's Digital Financial Inclusion in Africa (G7P) was created to bring together existing institutions working in Africa on complementary issues of research, investment and regulation around digital finance and its potential benefits for women. These core institutions included:

- The **World Bank's Identification for Development Initiative (ID4D)** to improve access to services through inclusive and trusted ID and civil registration systems

- The **African Development Bank's Africa Digital Financial Inclusion Facility (ADFI)** to catalyse inclusive digital financial services through the gender-intentional development of infrastructure, policies, regulations and product innovation

- The **Africa Policy Accelerator (APA) of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)** to accelerate inclusive policy for digital financial services

- The **Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)** to research and test the impact of digital identification and e-payment systems

- The **Digital Pathways Programme at Oxford Blavatnik School of Government** to assess national government policies and programmes to facilitate a "whole of government" digital strategy for inclusive economic growth

The G7P is innovative in two primary ways. First, its principal objective is to promote collaboration and generate synergies between the core partners to foster greater country-level impact. Second, it achieves its objectives without a formal governance arrangement that allows for quick adaptation to changing circumstances and facilitates decision-making.

This year's report focuses on the theme of digital safety and offers reflections on the progress of the collaborative in its fourth year of implementation and provides recommendations for improving its collective impact.

Implementation partners continue to recognize each other beyond acquaintances in the digital financial space and are comfortable discussing risks and opportunities during continuous (monthly) meetings. The partners have progressed from a collection of institutions not fully aware of each other's roles to one where knowledge exchange is welcomed and mutual trust, acquaintanceship, understanding and respect are evident. However, the willingness to partner, based on a clear sense of each organization's comparative advantage has stalled and a deeper culture of cooperation has not been realized.

As the G7P enters its fifth and final year of implementation, partners need to reflect on its future. The report recommends dedicating the fifth year of the partnership to launching a robust and comprehensive assessment. The primary objective should be to establish a more precise and dynamic framework that elucidates the partnership's purpose, principles, accountability and evaluation and long-term evolution. By doing so, the G7P can better manage the inherent contradictions and compromises of inter-organizational collaboration for future iterations of the G7P or influence other multilateral initiatives being developed within the digital development space. This proactive approach to defining its trajectory will be instrumental in ensuring the partnership's continued relevance and effectiveness, ultimately leading to more meaningful forms of collaboration between participating organizations and advancing its mission to empower women in the digital financial landscape across the African continent.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Dedicate the fifth year of the partnership to launching a robust and comprehensive assessment. The primary objective should be to establish a dynamic framework that elucidates the partnership's purpose, principles, accountability and evaluation, and long-term evolution.

- By doing so, the G7P can better manage the inherent contradictions and compromises of inter-organizational collaboration for future iterations of the G7P or influence other multilateral initiatives being developed within the digital development space.

2. BACKGROUND

In 2019, under French leadership, the G7 pledged to close the digital gender gap in Africa through the expansion of DFS. Following this commitment, the group launched the G7 Partnership for Women's Digital Financial Inclusion in Africa (G7P), with the goal of supporting African governments, regulators, banks and financial institutions to build more gender-inclusive, sustainable and responsible digital financial systems. Specifically, the Partnership helps to put in place key infrastructure and policies that support digital financial inclusion (DFI) and identifies five critical pillars for expanding digital financial services to women in Africa: (1) interoperable payments; (2) digital identification; (3) regulation; (4) investments and policies; and (5) gender-specific research.

The Partnership brings five institutions together to implement the pillars over five years. Four of the original five participating institutions remain involved. Together, these partners are addressing complementary aspects of financial inclusion for women throughout Africa. The participating institutions and areas of engagement are as follows:

- The **African Development Bank's Africa Digital Financial Inclusion Facility (ADFI)** is working to catalyse gender-intentional development of infrastructure, policies, regulations and product innovation

- The **World Bank's Identification for Development Initiative (ID4D)** is working to help countries build inclusive and trusted ID and civil registration ecosystems that increase access to—and the quality of—services and economic opportunities, promote the realization of rights, and empower people with more control over their personal data

- The **United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) Africa Policy Accelerator (APA)** is accelerating inclusive policy for digital financial services

- The **Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)** is funding and generating policy-relevant evidence on the effects of digital identification and e-payment systems

The partnership also benefits from awareness-raising and advocacy from global leaders. Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, in her capacity as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA), along with French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, and Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), have worked to help promote women's digital financial inclusion in Africa. Their efforts include advocating key reforms with African leaders from the public and private sectors and raising awareness of the G7P objectives and activities and the importance of women's DFI in Africa in public forums and among global leaders.

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) plays an independent role in the partnership, acting as a convener to foster increased knowledge exchange, coordination and collaboration and to evaluate the pillars' work to ensure the efficacy of the partnership.

At this current juncture four years into the G7P's five-year mandate, we see an opportunity for assessing the progress of the partnership during the last phase of implementation. Last year's 2022 Accountability Report highlighted the importance of building trust in financial institutions for successful DFS take-up, especially for women and girls. This year's report reflects on the related theme of digital safety to advance women's DFI, provides a progress update on the effectiveness of the partnership, and shares practical steps to improve the G7P's performance in the final year of implementation.
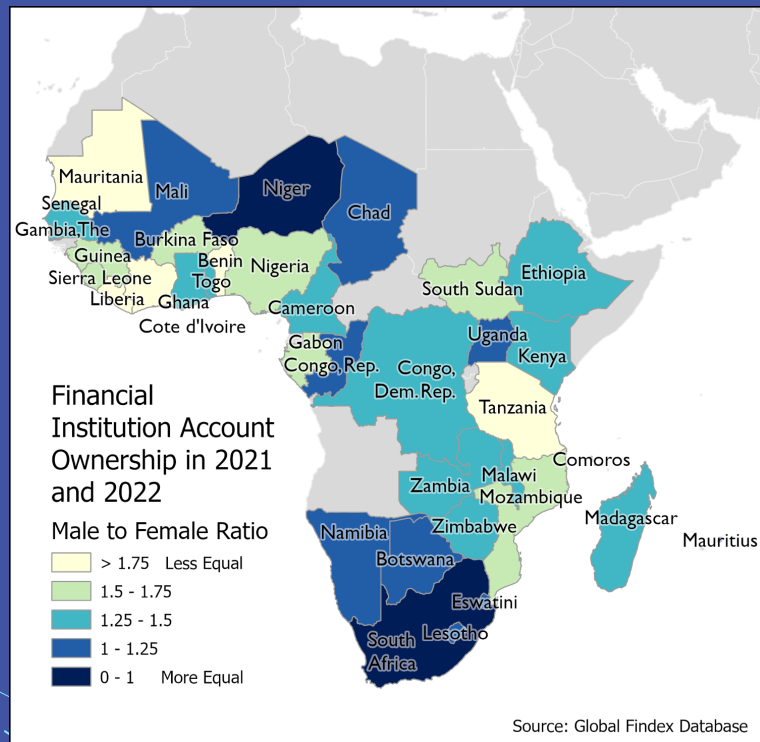
3. FUNCTION OF THIS REPORT

This report offers an assessment of G7P progress as of mid-2023 by providing a high-level snapshot of progress and setbacks, as well as considering the impact of global macroeconomic and social changes. This report addresses the request from the French G7 presidency to support greater transparency and accountability across G7 initiatives and was prepared by the SDSN, an independent organization operating under the auspices of the Secretary-General that mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development.
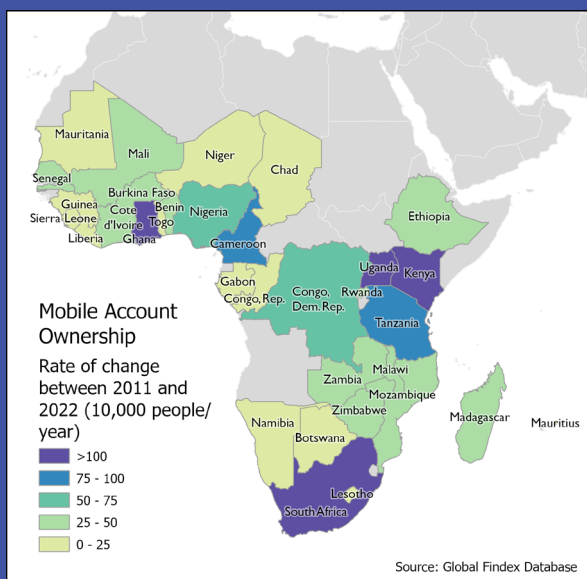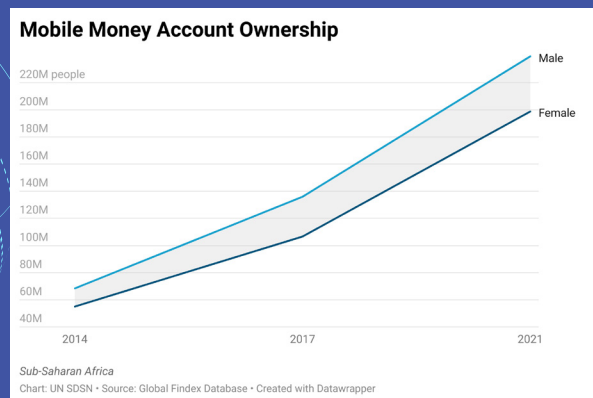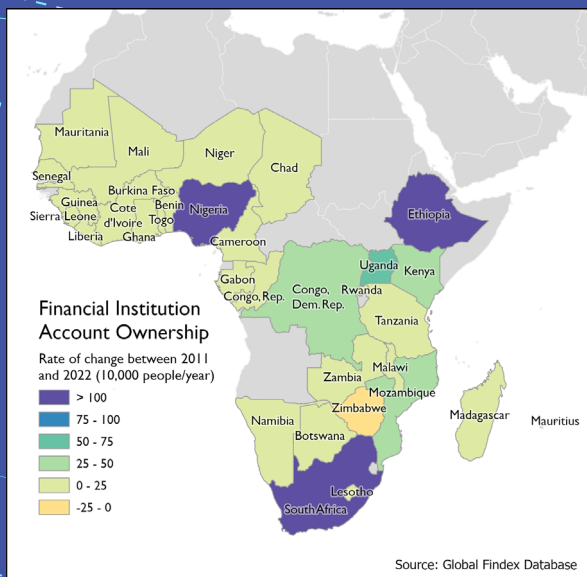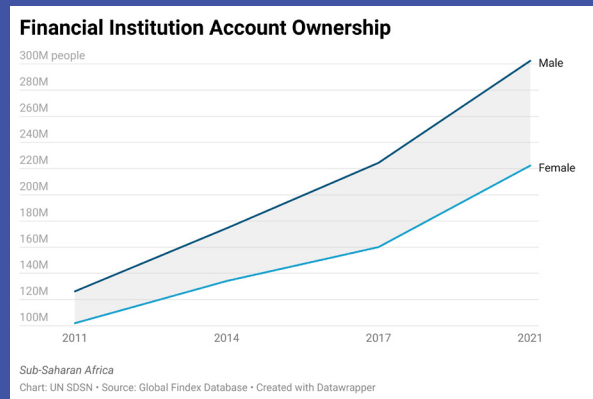
This progress report conducts its analysis at two levels: the partnership level and the implementation level. On the former, the report assesses how the G7P donors and implementation partners work together and with other entities supporting DFI improvements to support the development of gender-intentional policies and programmes that address barriers to digital safety. At the implementation level, we assess how implementation partners have adjusted their operational modalities and strategies to deliver support to their clients during the recovery period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report draws its findings from the following sources:

- A literature review to inform the report's assessment framework and identify best practice capabilities for steering a partnership with which implementing institutions have separate governance arrangements.
- Documents and database review provided by implementation partners. These provide targets and goals for each programme, as well as qualitative impacts of specific country-focused interventions.
- Semi-structured interviews with each of the principal donors and pillar partners to gain insights into what staff perceive as partnership enablers and constraints for harnessing opportunities and mitigating implementation risks.

BOX 1:
DOCUMENTING THE GENDER DIVIDE FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Source: Global Findex Database

Mobile Account Ownership in 2021 and 2022

Male to Female Ratio

- > 1.75   Less Equal
- 1.5 - 1.75
- 1.25 - 1.5
- 1 - 1.25
- 0 - 1   More Equal

Source: Global Findex Database

Account Ownership

Male
Female

Sub-Saharan Africa
Chart: UN SDSN • Source: Global Findex Database • Created with Datawrapper

Financial Institution Account Ownership

Rate of change between 2011 and 2022 (10,000 people/year)

- > 100
- 75 - 100
- 50 - 75
- 25 - 50
- 0 - 25
- -25 - 0

Source: Global Findex Database

Financial Institution Account Ownership

Male
Female

Sub-Saharan Africa
Chart: UN SDSN • Source: Global Findex Database • Created with Datawrapper

Mobile Money Account Ownership

Male
Female

Sub-Saharan Africa
Chart: UN SDSN • Source: Global Findex Database • Created with Datawrapper

Mobile Account Ownership

Rate of change between 2011 and 2022 (10,000 people/year)

- > 100
- 75 - 100
- 50 - 75
- 25 - 50
- 0 - 25

Source: Global Findex Database

Financial Institution Account Ownership

Year	Female	Male
2011	101,976,472	126,286,135
2014	134,167,334	174,483,985
2017	160,068,700	224,431,547
2021	222,324,450	302,361,095

Sub-Saharan Africa
Table: UN SDSN • Source: Global Findex Database • Created with Datawrapper

Mobile Money Account Ownership

Year	Female	Male
2014	55,024,722	68,422,181
2017	106,634,838	135,957,275
2021	198,758,460	239,379,610

Sub-Saharan Africa
Table: UN SDSN • Source: Global Findex Database • Created with Datawrapper

Financial Institution Account Ownership

0.45% of population age 15+

0.40

0.35

0.30

0.25

0.20

Male

Female

2011   2014   2017   2021

Sub-Saharan Africa
Chart: UN SDSN • Source: Global Findex Database • Created with Datawrapper

Mobile Money Account Ownership

0.35% of population age 15+

0.30

0.25

0.20

0.15

0.10

Male

Female

2014   2017   2021

Sub-Saharan Africa
Chart: UN SDSN • Source: Global Findex Database • Created with Datawrapper
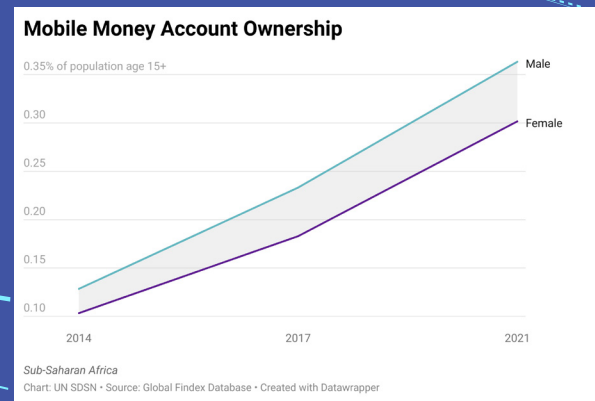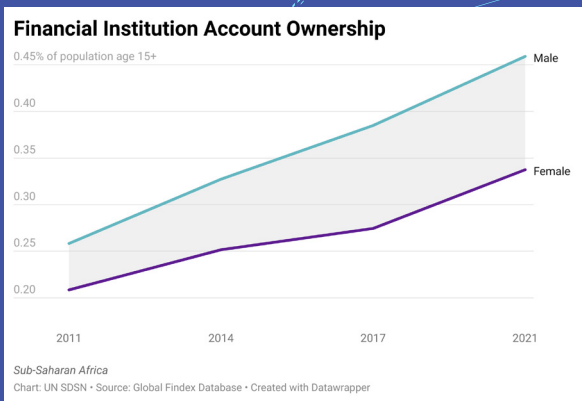
4. THE ROLE OF DIGITAL SAFETY IN ADVANCING WOMEN'S FINANCIAL INCLUSION

In recent years, Africa has witnessed a notable surge in the adoption of digital financial services. Despite the persistent gender gap in mobile and financial account ownership, we have seen progress in absolute terms with more women across Sub-Saharan Africa accessing DFS over time. The accessibility and convenience offered by mobile banking platforms in particular have played a pivotal role in accelerating progress, but there remain formidable challenges that hinder women's access to and use of DFS. One such challenge is digital safety and security, which disproportionately affects women.

According to recent research, mobile-related safety concerns, notably concerns over privacy breaches, identity theft, and direct personal bullying (including harassment or stalking), reduce cellular phone usage for women and deter them from fully exploiting digitally-enabled services (GSMA, 2018a). In fact, research has consistently shown that safety concerns are an important barrier to cellular phone ownership and usage in low- and middle-income countries, with women perceiving safety as an issue more commonly than men (GSMA, 2018b; LaMont, 2018; Web Foundation, 2015). Concerns over privacy breaches, identity theft and harassment have created a sense of vulnerability among female users, deterring them from fully embracing the range of digital financial services that are available to them. Addressing these concerns and ensuring robust security and consumer protection measures are in place will be essential to sustaining the momentum of women's participation in the digital financial sector and unlock the transformative impact it promises to deliver.

Last year's 2022 Accountability Report highlighted the trust deficit among women due to these perceived risks, a subject that remains salient in the fourth year of the G7P's implementation. Women often feel sidelined and discriminated against by formal financial institutions, which – when coupled with lower financial literacy – creates mistrust that can prevent them from accessing and using different services. In addition, recent research has found that gendered differences in risk perceptions explain women's preferences for different types of financial products and that a key determinant of adoption of certain services is trust in financial institutions, which is often lower among women compared to men (Keck et al., 2021). Effective consumer protection regulation and data protection policies can mitigate these factors and provide protections for vulnerable groups, including women and girls. Consumer protection policies reduce information asymmetries between financial service providers and consumers and address other barriers to optimal consumer choice.

Financial consumer protection and digital security are increasing in priority for policymakers around the world (World Bank, 2017), as its own policy objective and as a contributing factor to the work of the G7P. In the next section, we document G7P partner progress to advance research, investment, or regulation around digital financial inclusion for African women and highlight key areas of engagement to make deliberate strides towards improving safety for women and girls across the continent.

5. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

5.1 AFRICA DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION FACILITY (ADFI)

The Africa Digital Financial Inclusion Facility (ADFI) was launched in June 2019 with the mission of expanding investments into digital financial services to include and empower all Africans. As a leading pan-African multi-donor fund, hosted and managed by the African Development Bank, ADFI catalyses financial inclusion by investing in the expansion of digital financial services across Africa, specifically supporting interventions to improve digital infrastructure, policy regulation and innovative product development. Capacity-building and gender are mainstreamed across all interventions.

At its launch, ADFI set the goal of extending financial inclusion to an additional 332 million Africans by 2029, with women comprising 60 percent of this target population. This population represents the number of adults in Africa with access to a cellular phone but who are excluded from mobile money, bank or non-bank accounts. Specifically, ADFI aims to catalyse financial inclusion by investing in DFS across the continent, with funding recipients including regional bodies and economic communities; government ministries, central banks and other regulators; mobile money operators; remittance and payments companies; bank and non-bank institutions; and fintech companies. ADFI plans to achieve this objective by investing in the piloting and testing of scalable DFS solutions and blending its interventions with other operations both internally at the African Development Bank or with external partners, with 15 percent of its investments earmarked for gender transformative projects.

Following an initial call for proposals in 2019 which generated over 300 proposals, 10 projects selected in 2020, 2021 and 2023 are currently under implementation. In addition to these 10 projects, ADFI is working with multi-sector teams within the African Development Bank and externally to expand its project pipeline. In 2022, ADFI conducted a thorough review and refresh of its Theory of Change and mission to focus on usage as well as access to digital financial services. This exercise and the development of a prioritized workplan was informed by deep dive market research studies at country and regional levels and led to an update of the total addressable market from 332 to 204 million people in Africa who, despite access to mobile phones, are excluded from the formal financial sector. This level of demand was clearly demonstrated by the 126 proposal submissions to ADFI's 2023 Call for Proposals for scalable initiatives aimed at fostering access, quality and usage of digital financial services, especially among the most vulnerable including women, youth and small businesses.

In April 2022, on the back of COVID-19 and the need to build resilience for businesses, the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) awarded $15 million to ADFI to support access to finance to women Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Mozambique and Nigeria, leveraging data and technology, and mobilizing over $100 million in financing. ADFI also recently announced the support of the Government of India through a $2 million commitment, joining ADFI's current partners including the African Development Bank, Agence française de développement, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ministry for the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty, France, the Ministry of Finance, Luxembourg and the Women Entrepreneurs Finance.

MAP 1:

ADFI CURRENT PROJECT PORTFOLIO

Portfolio pipeline of 10-12 projects by 2024.

PROMOTING GENDER-SENSITIVE DIGITAL FINANCIAL SERVICES, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS ACROSS ECOWAS
15 ECOWAS countries I USD 0.52 million I WAMA

ENHANCING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO DFS IN NIGERIA THROUGH WOMEN AGENTS
Nigeria I USD 0.5 million I MTN Nigeria

EMPOWERING WOMEN SMALLHOLDER FARMERS THROUGH DIGITAL MICROINSURANCE
Kenya, Nigeria & Zambia I USD 1 million I Pula

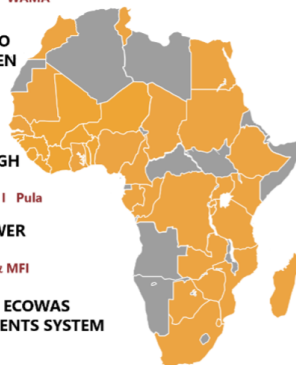CHAD MICROFINANCE TO EMPOWER WOMEN & YOUTH
Chad I USD 0.65 million I Gov. of Chad & MFI

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE ECOWAS SINGLE PAYMENTS AND SETTLEMENTS SYSTEM
ECOWAS I USD 1 million I WAMA

ADDRESS CYBERCRIME ACROSS AFRICA
East & West Africa I USD 2 million I ACRC

ENHANCE NATIONAL SWITCH IN ETHIOPIA
Ethiopia I USD 2.3 million I EthSwitch

ARTIFICAL INTELLIGENCE-ENABLED FINANCIAL COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT FOR CENTRAL BANKS IN AFRICA
Ghana, Rwanda & Zambia I USD 1.04 million million I Sinitic/BFA + 3 central banks

HCD RESEARCH INTO SMARTPHONE-ENABLED DFS SERVICES FOR WOMEN
Kenya I USD 0.3 million I M-KOPA

AFRICAN FINTECH HUB
34 countries USD 0.525 million I AFN

DEVELOP & EXTEND DIGITAL FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS TO WSMES IN 5 COUNTRIES
Egypt, Cameroon, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria
We-Fi: USD 15 million I ADFI USD 2.5 million Unlock UDF 122.5 million

Highlights of the Facility's current investment portfolio showcase the breadth of digital safety and gender transformative solutions that they have funded:

- Improving Customer Protection by deploying an Artificial Intelligence based Customer complaint handling system in Ghana, Rwanda and Zambia (Sinitic/BFA). A grant of USD 1,024,000 supports a project that established a complaints-handling system for financial regulators, using multilingual chatbots that interfaces with key financial service providers in Ghana, Rwanda and Zambia. This solution promotes greater consumer protection, trust and inclusion and contributes to improved ease of use of financial services, recording customer complaints and tracking their resolution across all regulated financial institutions. The AI-powered chatbot has been developed in English and nine local languages in Ghana, Rwanda and Zambia. And in the past year, it has been deployed on the website of the National Bank of Rwanda and Bank of Ghana with ongoing deployment on additional channels (WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter).

- Developing Regional Cybersecurity Capacity to Support Africa Financial Institutions (ACRC). A USD 2 million grant supports a project to stimulate higher levels of awareness and skills around cybersecurity among digital financial service stakeholders – for regulators and supervisory organizations to develop requisite policy and regulatory frameworks to reduce fraud and improve personal data protection and for financial service providers to improve their effectiveness and efficiency in managing cyber risks and information-sharing. This project aims to empower DFS stakeholders to be more resilient to cybercrime, developing a pool of trained specialists who will use their expertise to improve consumer protection at a wider scale and at a reduced cost.

- Chad MFI Development Project. A grant of USD 650,000 supported a project to facilitate access of vulnerable groups, including low-income women and youth in rural areas, to existing financial and non-financial services, including access and use of digital financial services. The funding seeks to bolster women's economic empowerment and youth entrepreneurship. The project will achieve this goal through four specific objectives: (i) building the capacities of stakeholders both at the supply and demand sides of financial services; (ii) increasing the access of vulnerable populations to sustainable socioeconomic and financial services; (iii) developing the managerial and productive capacities of women and youths through the development of income-generating activities (IGAs) and small enterprises; and (iv) contributing to strengthening the microfinance ecosystem.

- AFN – mainstreaming gender in the fintech sector. ADFI is providing $525,000 funding and technical assistance to the Africa Fintech Network to host and manage the African Fintech Hub. The hub is a digital platform that will enable fintech associations across Africa to pool resources and knowledge, strengthen relationships and partnerships, as well as showcase.

FINANCING DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Within the current portfolio, ADFI is directing 46 percent of funds towards digital infrastructure projects across the continent, providing the critical foundation upon which innovative and responsive products are built. They invest in equally critical digital financial infrastructure, such as enhancing the national switch of Ethiopia, to facilitate efficient, affordable, and secure transactions, and enable the development of robust security platforms and e-commerce platforms across the region. In particular, ADFI finances DFS infrastructure projects which span diverse areas of intervention and aim to establish inclusive and interoperable digital payments, to contribute to regional economic and financial sector development including strengthening the payment and settlements system across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region, and to strengthen digital security systems across the continent.

POLICY AND REGULATION

ADFI is dedicating 14 percent of its resources across its portfolio to invest in financial regulation and policies that keep pace with digital infrastructure improvements and technology innovations across Africa. Some of the biggest bottlenecks to digital financial service expansion in Africa are due to stringent and unsupportive regulatory frameworks. ADFI works with key regulatory bodies, such as central banks, competition authorities, regional economic integration bodies and government ministries to create an enabling environment for financial inclusion. This enables ADFI to advocate for changes in policies and regulations that strengthen partnerships among DFS actors and address policy barriers that hinder women from accessing DFS and other services such as agency banking, microloans, savings and insurance through investments that promote gender-sensitive DFS policies across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

DIGITAL PRODUCTS & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Across the portfolio, ADFI is investing 40 percent of its resources in sustainable digital products and innovations that demonstrate a positive impact on the livelihoods of low-income consumers, including women and vulnerable communities. It works with stakeholders to ideate, develop and scale innovations that address community development priorities at the country and regional level.

ADFI is supporting initiatives that apply human centered design research to close the gender gap in access and use of digital financial services. Current work includes the development and deployment of digital microinsurance to improve crop production, which has reached 1.2 million farmers in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia, of whom 50 percent are women ; using Human Centered Design (HCD) research to inform solutions to improve access to digital financial services for women in Northern Nigeria using women mobile money agent networks and using research insights to develop digital microcredit solutions to help empower women small traders in Kenya.

ADFI also promotes capacity-building initiatives, including projects like the Africa Cybersecurity Resource Centre (ACRC) project , the initiative in Chad to boost women and youth entrepreneurship and the pan-African initiative to strengthen the fintech sector.

REFLECTIONS ON ADFI'S PROGRESS

ADFI has leveraged the strength of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and institutional partners to finance DFS projects across Africa, with a principal focus on DFS-related infrastructure projects to address systemic barriers to the growth and uptake of digital financial services. The addition of the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) supported programme to ADFI's portfolio builds on their work to bridge the gender gap in financial inclusion and increase women's engagement in the formal economy by using technology and data to accelerate their access to finance.

The next year of G7P implementation provides an opportunity for ADFI to leverage the partnership to strengthen investments across its portfolio. Future analysis and sharing of learning and expertise from investments in digital financial solutions aims to support greater digital financial inclusion across the continent and could also greatly inform other G7P partner initiatives. As ADFI-funded projects continue to mature, their capacity to assess gaps and opportunities within the digital financial sector will continue to expand.

5.2 ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB (J-PAL) AFRICA DIGITAL ID AND FINANCE INITIATIVE

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a global research network based out of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) that works to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. The network has been recognized for its pioneering use of randomized control trials and evaluations to rigorously evaluate the impact of policy options. J-PAL Africa, J-PAL's regional office based at the University of Cape Town, leads the organization's work in Sub-Saharan Africa. One of its core programmes is the Digital Identification Finance Initiative (DigiFI), which aims to generate rigorous evidence on how African governments, private companies and NGOs can leverage digital payments and identification systems to improve lives through better public service delivery, governance and financial inclusion. The initiative funds impact evaluations on the effects of digital identification and payment systems, including welfare programmes linked to or provided through digital technology, as well as funds African Scholars to ensure the evidence is driven by people who understand and are invested in the policy and local context.

SUPPORTING AND GENERATING GENDER-SPECIFIC RESEARCH

All of DigiFI's randomized evaluations collect data on the gender of beneficiaries and examine the gendered effects on observed outcomes. Notably, projects are encouraged to look at women-specific outcomes, such as bargaining power and control of finance. Additionally, after assessing each country's digital policy priorities, DigiFI identifies researchers to conduct relevant studies.

As of 2022, DigiFI has funded 41 projects in 13 countries, including six randomized evaluations, 15 pilots and 20 proposal development grants. The six (6) randomized evaluation grants support research projects at a mature level of development. Not only must the research question be clear, but applicants must demonstrate clear first stage results, commitment from implementing partners, a method of randomization, as well as well-defined instruments, and sample size estimates. The 15 pilot studies grants support studies with a clear research question, but for which the design and implementation requires further testing and pilot data. And lastly, the twenty (20) proposal development grants cover exploratory work related to preliminary research ideas, such as conducting background research, developing partnerships, visiting field sites and collecting preliminary data.

This year, the DigiFI team has funded numerous projects aligned with the G7P mission, including the following pilots and proposal development grants:

- **Biometric Identification in Digital Financial Services Markets: Evidence from Liberia:** DigiFI is working closely with Integrated Biometrics, a private sector partner who develops FBI-Certified fingerprint scanners to conduct a randomized control trial (RCT) to measure the impact of introducing biometrics to help improve service delivery and reduce fraud across two telecommunication companies, two banks and the Liberian police service. The pre-proposal for this research project has been approved, with the full proposal submitted in April 2023.

- **Building Inclusive State Capacity from the Ground Up: Evidence from the Construction of a Social Registry in Liberia:** DigiFI has developed a strong partnership with the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection of Liberia and have buy-in to conduct an RCT and a monitoring system to help them understand how to successfully improve take-up of their new digital functional biometric ID in urban areas. The pre-proposal for this project has been approved, with the full proposal submitted in March 2023.

Additionally, DigiFI launched its African Scholars program, which to date has funded 20 African Scholar projects over the lifetime of the initiative (56 percent of our total funded projects). Through this programme, DigiFI supports African researchers to conduct rigorous impact evaluations on digital financial services, governance and other related topics. To encourage African Scholars' projects and to provide capacity-building support, DigiFI hosted a number of information and training events, including a Summer School programme with J-PAL Europe on the role of evaluations in development which was attended by 40 African Scholars.

FUNDING NEW RESEARCH AND STRENGTHENING EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

Moving forward, DigiFI strives to identify, create and fund more research projects on digital ID and payment systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, they are interested in exploring issues of governance and trust in ID systems and the connected social welfare programmes, and examining questions about how women are affected by digital technology and how digital technology can be provided to ensure women equitably benefit. Given the long timelines required to build relationships and secure government support for evidence-based research, DigiFI's project generation efforts have begun to bear fruit after years of preliminary work. Given the existing pipeline of research projects, DigiFI is well positioned to achieve its mandate of helping fill the evidence gap on digital ID systems in Africa and using this evidence to inform policy.

REFLECTIONS ON J-PAL'S PROGRESS

The DigiFI team has advanced a number of studies related to the G7P mission. DigiFI has funded timely research to respond to demands from policymakers and researchers on digital IDs and digital payment systems across Sub-Saharan Africa, and the team has deliberately engaged local researchers in the process. The DigiFI team has also engaged G7P partners, including the World Bank's Identification for Development Initiative (ID4D), to build relationships with country and local governments to bring bespoke research to meet government needs. They have proven to be

incredibly adept at partnering and leveraging other organizations' strengths to identify research needs. The long-term benefit of this work to the G7P will depend on how the research findings are used to inform other G7P partner initiatives and to help advance the need for women's DFI across the African region.

5.3 UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND AFRICA POLICY ACCELERATOR (UNCDF APA)

The United Nations Capital Development Fund operates the Africa Policy Accelerator (APA as a pillar of its 'Inclusive Digital Economies and Financial Inclusion' practice area. The APA supports governments to achieve their DFS-related policy and regulatory goals by providing expert-guided advice on inclusive policy for DFS, supporting multi-stakeholder dialogue on regulatory issues, and introducing countries to global best practices to strengthen their regulatory environments around DFS.

This year, the APA has focused on accelerating the adoption or improvement of basic DFS regulations through technical assistance and evidence-based diagnostics to accelerate gender-intentional policy change. Since 2021, they have successfully accelerated progress towards 14 policy and regulatory changes across the continent (UNCDF, 2023). The countries where the APA is now engaged, as well as the wide range of policy challenges it is helping to address, demonstrates the impressive scope of its impact.

This report highlights the specific impact achieved in the areas of country engagement, Francophone-focused capacity-building, targeted advocacy and collaboration and gender- intentional research.

COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT

The APA continues to provide technical assistance and support to accelerate policy change within the African region. The team's locally-driven country engagement approach first begins with speaking with policymakers and regulators in the country to understand on-the-ground dynamics to determine and prioritize activities to accelerate policy change. Rather than prescribing stringent recommendations, the APA presents partners with options that they might consider, and if requested, they provide direct technical support to implement the recommendations. Direct regulatory changes have been adopted in certain countries, while in others, discussions remain ongoing. Some notable achievements from the past year include:

- **Cameroon - Supporting the National Economic and Financial Committee (CNEF)** in the implementation of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) through capacity-building and direct technical support. In the past, the APA contributed to the development of the NFIS of Cameroon and championed the protection and education of consumers as a fundamental pillar to increase the use of financial services. The team is now working closely with the CNEF to support their efforts to protect consumers of digital financial services by adopting best practices and new tools, and leveraging the Committees' strategic position among regional regulators, such as the Commission bancaire de l'Afrique centrale (COBAC), and national stakeholders who interact with consumers.

- **Sierra Leone - Continued technical assistance for financial consumer protection**, building on the support given to the Bank of Sierra Leone to review their guidelines through a public consultation process which prioritized feedback from women's groups. In April 2022, the Financial Consumer Protection Guidelines were submitted to parliament for approval. Future engagement may focus on monitoring the implementation of the guidelines with a gender lens.

- **Uganda - Provided technical support for the review of the new National Financial Inclusion Strategy**. This support was at the request of the Bank of Uganda and given as part of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy in April 2023. Among the various recommendations provided included the collection of sex-disaggregated data, as well as measures to identify policies that prevent women from accessing credit due to the lack of collateral.

Over the past 12 months, the APA has also strengthened its approach to advance policies and regulations focused on financial consumer protection, which are an essential part of improving safety and financial resilience. The APA's Financial Consumer Protection Guidelines and how these guidelines have been used in a country context (Sierra Leone) to advance consumer protection regulation have been endorsed by the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion in its "Implementation Guide for the G20 High-Level Principles for Digital Financial Inclusion." The APA has also identified pathways for regulators to create, implement, and supervise policies and regulations that include and protect underserved groups, and developed a briefing note on the role of consumer protection in the digital economy, highlighting how these challenges can disproportionately affect women.

FRANCOPHONE-FOCUSED CAPACITY-BUILDING

This year, the APA has also expanded its capacity-building initiatives by creating a broader set of training solutions for francophone stakeholders. During the reporting period, they have translated and localized content related to digital finance business models, how to supervise fintech's to ensure they safely service marginalized groups, along with capacity development content for senior government officials to deliver the policy change process. To service regulators and policymakers better, the APA has maintained partnerships with five learning institutions and disbursed scholarships to 242 participants from 47 institutions in 22 countries, of which 63 percent were women (UNCDF, 2023). Consumer and data protection were common themes addressed across many of the courses for which scholarships were provided. For instance, the Consumer Protection course from the Digital Frontiers Institute (one of the courses APA supported with French translation) has been widely disseminated across priority markets, with over 30 regulators trained since 2021.

TARGETED ADVOCACY AND COLLABORATION

Following the vision of the G7 Partnership to foster collaboration, the APA has engaged on a regular basis with like-minded organizations, such as Women's World Banking, the GSMA (Groupe Speciale Mobile Association) and CGAP (Consultative Group to Assist the Poor) to share lessons learned, provide feedback on ongoing activities and test the ground for possible joint projects. For example, the APA is partnering with Women's World Banking, to establish the WDFI Advocacy Hub, a platform to mobilize, coordinate and amplify advocacy efforts around women's digital and financial inclusion. The Women's Digital Financial Inclusion (WDFI) Advocacy Hub builds on the APA's model to enable inclusive participation by spurring constructive dialogue with decision makers and bringing new voices such as civil society organizations and the private sector to the fore. This model was first developed and tested in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) region and, through the Hub, it is being refined and scaled to bring attention to country priorities and translate global commitments into implementable initiatives on the ground.

GENDER-INTENTIONAL RESEARCH

Through its wide range of tools and partnerships, the APA has successfully positioned itself as a thought leader in the field of financial inclusion and a credible partner to proactively raise and address research questions that focus on women's experiences around DFS. The following examples showcase examples of research collaborations that have been leveraged to drive evidence-based change in various markets by improving our understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities that women face in accessing financial services.

- **Bringing together evidence-based research for gender-intentional policy change in Tanzania.** The APA conducted an analysis of the rate of financial inclusion in Tanzania, looking at access, usage and control of financial services and products with a gender lens. The report Insights for Tanzania: What global data reveals about financial inclusion for women brings together qualitative and quantitative data to provide an overview of the major trends when it comes to access to finance.

- **Collaborating with the GSMA on the Digital Financial Literacy Toolkit.** The APA has successfully engaged with the GSMA, an industry association that represents mobile network operators worldwide to develop the newly published The digital financial literacy toolkit Addressing the gap in low- and middle-income countries. The toolkit is directed towards a wide range of stakeholders and offers guidelines on how each can contribute to advance financial literacy in low- and middle-income countries. It provides concrete steps to develop a financial literacy programme for business owners and mobile money agents and highlights the key role that regulators and policymakers play in supporting and driving national digital financial literacy initiatives.

This toolkit has a strong gender lens as it makes sure that all stakeholders consider women's needs when developing programmes and leveraging tools.

- **Assessment toolkit on sex-disaggregated data.** The APA has also put together an assessment tool for policymakers and regulators to assess their level of readiness and effectiveness when gathering, collecting and using sex-disaggregated data. The preliminary assessment with the Bank of Ghana served to develop the new tool that will be shared with other stakeholders for feedback. This assessment proves very useful to all stakeholders who aim to strengthen their analysis and understanding of major gender gaps within their operations as well as to recognize opportunities for growth when it comes to mainstreaming gender across their institutions. Going forward, the APA will collaborate with regulatory bodies in other markets to apply and further improve the tool.

REFLECTIONS ON UNCDF'S PROGRESS

The APA team continues to support governments and regulators to shape policies to advance DFS. Through its francophone capacity-building initiatives, direct engagement with civil society organizations and gender-intentional research, the APA continues to advance a wide range of policy issues related to DFS. The APA's significant expertise in DFS and collaboration with thought leaders in the ecosystem have been essential to leverage data and insights to accelerate gender-intentional policy change.

5.4 WORLD BANK'S IDENTIFICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (ID4D)

A reliable ID is integral to providing and obtaining financial services because it is needed at various stages in an individual's interaction with the formal financial sector. The ID4D Initiative (ID4D) within the World Bank works to accelerate inclusive growth and the achievement of a wide range of development outcomes by enabling all people to access inclusive and trusted ID and civil registration systems. The ID4D partnership platform and multi-donor trust fund was launched in 2016. Its aim is for improved ID systems to lead to expanded access to services, resources, and opportunities for individuals and for governments and businesses to be able to deliver services more effectively and inclusively. ID4D employs a cross-sectoral team within the World Bank, working across 10 different units spanning from digital development, financial and private sector development, to gender issues and covering all regions of the globe. In addition to providing technical and financial assistance to over 50 countries, ID4D also serves as a knowledge hub on identification and serves as a global convener around the digital identification agenda. ID4D's effort relates directly to target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which commits to providing legal identity for all including free birth registrations, and the Initiative also recognizes that trusted and inclusive ID systems can play a critical and foundational role across several areas of development, including financial inclusion and integrity, social protection, health, women's empowerment and more.

ID4D structures its work around three mutually reinforcing pillars: (1) thought leadership and analytics; (2) global platforms and convening; and (3) country and regional action for the implementation of robust, inclusive and trusted digital ID.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND ANALYTICS

This year, ID4D implemented a variety of primary research and data-collection activities to advance public understanding of good practices related to identification for development. They have, for example, released a new edition of the ID4D Global Dataset in partnership with the Global Findex survey, including updated global figures on the number of people without proof of their legal identity—which now stands at an estimated 850 million people (ID4D, 2022). In 2022, ID4D also expanded its portfolio of impact evaluations to rigorously measure the effect of ID ownership and ID system design. Working in partnership with the World Bank's Development Impact and Evaluation (DIME) Department, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) and the Jamal Abdel-Latif Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), ID4D will conduct impact evaluations in Nigeria, Morocco, Uganda and Togo.

As more country engagements move into implementation stages, ID4D has adopted a bottom-up approach to ensure that World Bank client countries have the data and research infrastructure needed to measure impact. This includes the design of monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) strategies that facilitate effective ID management processes and enable course correction, with a view to improving user experience and systems performance. During the reporting period, ID4D's work extended beyond improving coverage of ID and civil registration systems. Additional work has also focused on understanding and measuring people's preferences, attitudes, and knowledge related to data protection and data privacy within ID systems (ID4D, 2022).

CASE STUDY:
DIGITAL ID AND DATA PROTECTION

Digital ID systems provide proof of legal identity for vulnerable populations and support multiple sustainable development goals—such as financial and economic inclusion, social protection and gender equality, but it also creates risks to data privacy and digital safety. Digital ID systems raise data privacy concerns because they collect personal data. Any activity that collects, stores, or processes personal data raises a number of risks, including, but not limited to security breaches, exposure of personal identifiable information (e.g., biometrics, religion, ethnicity, gender, medical histories) for unauthorized purposes, identity theft, among other risks (ID4D, 2019). At the same time the digitalization of ID systems augments certain risks, it also presents new opportunities and technological means for greater protection. Specifically, digital ID systems can offer more accurate identification and authentication, improved data integrity, better and more nuanced data privacy guarantees, and increased agency and control for consumers, including access to portals that allow users to verify the accuracy of their data and monitor data usage. With ID4D's support, countries are accelerating the development of data protection laws and regulations that will enhance trust in their ID ecosystem and contribute to broader positive impacts across the economy. These regulations are also required prior to deployment of World Bank lending for ID system implementation. ID4D is also supporting countries to adopt and integrate privacy-protecting features as part of a privacy-by-design approach that puts people at the centre and in greater control of their data while guarding against data leaks and cyberattacks.

GLOBAL PLATFORMS AND CONVENING

Recognizing the power of a collective, ID4D also plays a global convening role on identification for development by facilitating regular knowledge-sharing across countries and contributing to a shared vision and coordinated efforts across development partners, UN agencies, non-profit and research organizations and other stakeholders. In 2022, ID4D's main priority was to shape the digital public infrastructure (DPI) agenda, by developing tools, organizing capacity-building activities and targeted knowledge exchanges, and expanding opportunities for engagement between ID practitioners and civil society to design inclusive and trusted ID systems in line with the Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development. The Principles on Identification have now been endorsed by over 30 global organizations, including the World Bank.

ID4D and partner initiative G2Px (Digitizing Government-to-Person Payments) have been working together to support the DPI agenda at the country and global levels. ID4D and G2Px welcome the increased attention to DPI and the growing opportunities for collaboration on this important agenda. In 2022, ID4D, along with its partners, has been working to generate momentum for countries to accelerate the development and deployment of DPI to better navigate and harness the power of the digital economy for recovery, resilience and inclusion. At the 2022 World Bank Annual Meetings, an event on digital transformation in Western and Central Africa featured DPI prominently. The World Bank also co-hosted an event on the future of digital cooperation at the seventy-seventh session of the UN General Assembly. In 2023, ID4D and G2Px will work with other partners on the DPI agenda as part of the G20 presidency working groups of India to develop normative frameworks and to scale up financing.

COUNTRY AND REGIONAL ACTION

During 2022, 57 countries received various degrees and types of support to build inclusive and trusted ID and civil registration systems. This includes 47 countries where $2 billion of World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)/International Development Association (IDA)) co-financing for implementation is active or in the pipeline. This technical and financial assistance is expected to help 500 million people to have greater ability to exercise their rights and to access services and economic opportunities (ID4D, 2022). Collaboration with the African Union is also helping to advance interoperability of IDs across those regions to advance economic and social integration.

REFLECTIONS ON ID4D'S PROGRESS

ID4D has an established record of supporting countries in establishing and modernizing foundational ID systems, which underpin much of DFS. ID4D's work programme in 2022 has contributed to the design, assessment and deployment of new models and technologies for digital ID, while also strengthening evidence, knowledge, tools, and implementation support on good ID fundamentals for maintaining user privacy and the safety of systems that process personal data. ID4D has also leveraged the G7P's resources to advance their work through policy and research partnerships with UNCDF and J-PAL, encouraging a shared working model and shared results framework and engaging with the partnership on their pilot programmes.

6. HOW IS THE G7P WORKING AS A PARTNERSHIP?

## 6.1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR G7P ASSESSMENT

The G7P was established to build a collaborative advantage to attain goals that were unattainable if implementation partners worked in their individual capacities. The collaborative advantage is achieved through the synthesis of differences, requiring working arrangements that simultaneously protect and integrate partners' uniquely different resources for the furtherance of joint collaborative goals (Vangen 2017). In this context, the G7P's governance, leadership, and management are important to ensuring effectiveness in goal-directed collaborations (Vangen et al (2015) .

Collaborations have been shown to yield benefits irrespective of their scope, forms, and intensity (Vangen and Huxham, 2010, pp. 181-182) . We evaluate the G7P's performance as a collaborative partnership after its third full year of implementation, focusing on two assessment questions:

1. In its third year of implementation, did the core G7P partner institutions – both donors and implementation partners – improve how they worked together?

2. Have changes in the external environment presented a risk to the G7P's effectiveness?

This report will use the Capability Assessment Framework introduced in the 2022 Accountability Report to address the first assessment question. The Framework comprises five key capabilities, or dimensions, across which the effectiveness of the partnership can be assessed. The maturation of the partnership requires time and intentional efforts to develop a collective sense of belonging, shared goals and a common purpose.

The five assessment dimensions are:
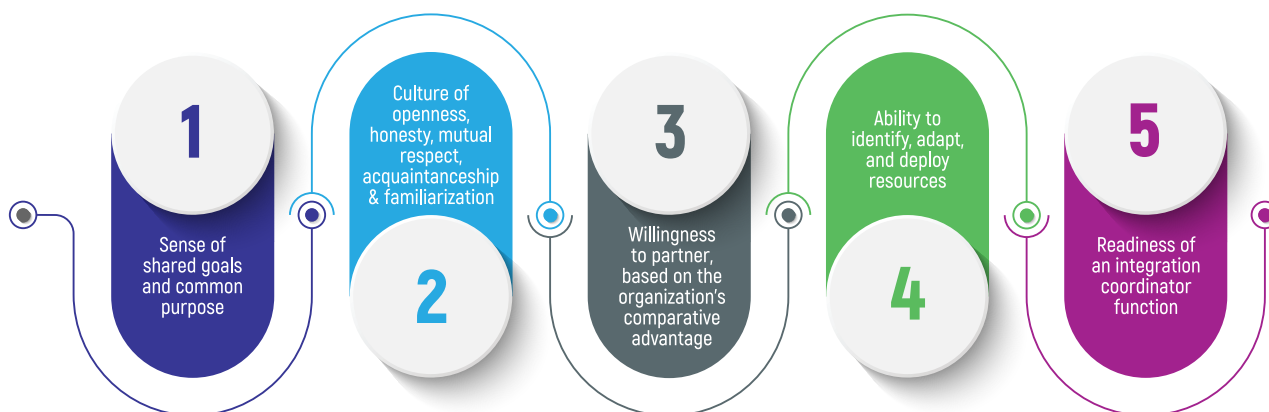
Although maturation rates of effective inter-organizational partnerships depend on a range of factors , four years into the implementation experience is a sufficient duration to exhibit genuine collaboration. At this stage of the partnership, we should begin to notice evidence of mutual reliance and indications of interdependence – considering that the G7P has benefited from continuous (monthly) cultivation.

6.2 G7P COLLABORATIONS IN THE PENULTIMATE YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION

For the first dimension, **Shared Goals and Common Purpose**, progress has reached its peak. Implementation partners continue to recognize each other beyond acquaintances in the digital financial space and are comfortable discussing risks and opportunities candidly and openly during monthly meetings. This progress is commendable as it was made without the benefit of in-person meetings or a designated shared space or common platform to communicate the G7P's mission and objectives to external audiences (e.g. a designated website) – one of the recommendations put forth in the 2022 Accountability Report.

Instead, steps were taken to develop a common communications narrative for the G7P, outlining the main messages for each implementation partner that could be shared and used across the G7P. And a communications Working Group was established across the partners to promote cross-collaboration on initiatives and information-sharing. These are both positive steps to forge a deeper sense of common purpose and mutual awareness.

Nonetheless, the staff designated to represent their respective institutions in the G7P can struggle to influence, or participate in, operational teams conceiving projects and engaging with country counterparts within their organizations. This is due to the differences in organizational size and reporting arrangements in each of the G7P institutions. Thus, the ability of each G7P institution to impact shared goals varies in regard to setting operational priorities.

Regarding dimension 2, **mutual acquaintanceship and familiarization** were firmly established in the second year of implementation and there is no evidence of backsliding. Last year, it was reported that partners frequently demonstrated how they could leverage each other's strengths to advance their common cause. For example, there were many instances where the operational travel of one partner was identified as an opportunity by others – to develop a common front to identify change leaders and local groups that could assist in implementation or to strategize on the co-development of national and regional plans necessary to advance G7P objectives.

3

Willingness to partner, based on the organization's comparative advantage

Ability to identify, adapt, and deploy resources

4

5

Readiness of an integration coordinator function

Unfortunately, the **willingness to partner, based on a clear sense of each organization's comparative advantage** (dimension 3) has stalled. At this stage of the G7P's evolution, there is a solid understanding of each organization's comparative advantage. Although there were many instances where monthly exchanges triggered follow-up one-on-one discussions to improve cross-understanding of particular themes (e.g. data privacy), the willingness to partner on country-facing projects varied partner by partner.

The G7P's ability to **identify, adapt, and deploy resources** (dimension 4) – both financial and human capital – remains mixed. The group continues to identify and share information on high-profile funding initiatives in development, such as the evolving digital public infrastructure and digital public goods. And these initiatives could potentially provide new sources of funding for select members of the partnership.

However, adapting existing resources to foster collective institutional actions has still not materialized, which limited the implementation partners' ability to develop projects cross-organizationally and formalize cross-partner programmatic outcomes. As stated in previous reports, we argued that the creation of a small fund to finance joint operational activities is necessary to deepen inter-organizational collaborations in the field. However, this has not yet been achieved. We believe that implementing such a fund in the last year of the Partnership's implementation limits its capacity to have an impact. Our experience indicates that establishing a fund at the programme level to complement existing resources was more difficult than expected.

In addition, there was minimal progress in coordinating resources – human, technical and financial – to maximize synergies in country-level operations. While the effort was made to strengthen relationships between implementation partners in the formative stages of project development, the G7P never created a Principles of Engagement Document that defines collaborative engagement modalities that could raise the visibility of partnership activities in country settings and accelerate the replication of successful operational collaborations in other countries. The continued absence of such a document and a common platform as noted earlier signals the G7P's commitment to hold each other accountable for performance never materialized.

Finally, we note the continued importance of an **integration coordinator function** (dimension 5) that actively invites dialogue and mitigates the risk of partners perceiving the collaboration as an additional oversight layer that adds little to improve the effectiveness and impact of their operational work. We find that the effectiveness of the coordination function has dropped as participation in monthly meetings has been less robust than in previous years. The monthly meetings continue to provide essential regular opportunities for each organization to share experiences, aspirations and work programme specifics. The Gates Foundation's collaboration approach – acting more as a partner and facilitator rather than merely a funder – has been lauded by multiple implementing partners. In addition, the SDSN has established itself as a credible neutral convener that facilitates communication across groups, organizes meetings, and is familiar with inter-organizational programmes and their clients, leading to more candid exchanges that have helped to strengthen the collaboration.

In summary, the G7P progressed from knowledge exchange to coordinating and collaboration has not materialized.

6.3 EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT COULD LIMIT THE G7P'S EFFECTIVENESS

The state of collaboration can be influenced by changes in the external environment in which the partnership operates or as the mandate of implementing partners evolves. We combine two observations from last year and the primary hindrance to improved G7P cooperation and effectiveness: The continuing quest to re-capture high-level political support in the context of a rapidly changing constellation of global initiatives in the digital space. These actions and announcements confirm the political momentum building behind the digital development agenda. This momentum provides context for identifying strategic action in the G7P's last full year of implementation.

Capturing High-level Political Support

- The last two accountability reports published in 2021 and 2022 highlighted the need for the renewed attention of high-level support to boost operational momentum

- G7 and G20 agendas remain crowded with the continuing global "polycrisis"

- The French government has made efforts to increase the visibility of the G7P in G20 forums

The Rapidly Changing Constellation of Global Initiatives in the Digital Space

- The 2022 Accountability Report highlighted key initiatives that indicate global attention to deliver on the promise of digital development. These included the paper published by the World Bank's Development Committee, Digitization and Development, which outlined a four-pillar conceptual framework for policy action, and in May 2022, the World Economic Forum in Davos discussed how digital cooperation across institutional sectors provides a development leap-frogging opportunity for the Global South . The G7 Digital Ministers recognized that digital technologies could help tackle global challenges only when enabled by a breadth of institutions - governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and other stakeholders – working together.

- Over the past year, these initiatives continued to gain momentum and expand their visibility in key global governance processes.

- The French government has made efforts to increase the visibility of the G7P in G20 forums

7. REFLECTIONS ON THE G7P'S WAY FORWARD: THREE SCENARIOS

There are many ways inter-institutional partnerships can be constructed to foster improved knowledge exchange, identify opportunities to coordinate to minimize duplication, and coordinate engagements to find synergies. As the G7P enters its fifth and final year of implementation, partners need to reflect on its future. This section describes three scenarios to support these reflections: i) Conclude the G7P, ii) Extend the G7P, and iii) integrate or combine the G7P into (or with) a similar initiative.

7.1 CONCLUDE THE G7P

Over the past few years, the G7P has succeeded in establishing a sense of common purpose and mutual awareness across the implementing partners and creating a space for knowledge exchange. The partners accomplished their goals and sustained progress in spite of the termination of the Digital Pathways Initiative by Oxford University's Blavatnik School of Government in 2022. However, in the absence of a common branding strategy, shared principles of engagement, joint country engagement, and other collaborative efforts, previous recommendations to improve G7P effectiveness were not implemented.

Additionally, the lack of joint funding for the partnership was a key barrier to G7P effectiveness. The formation of funding modalities and organizational structures that allow for cross-institutional funding could support more collaborative efforts to implement and scale up efforts. Assuming that a shift to this approach is not prioritized in the final year, the continuation of the partnership will culminate in a knowledge exchange platform that could be fostered by other initiatives that engage some of the same G7P implementing institutions.

7.2 EXTEND THE G7P

Granted that there is interest in extending the G7P, considerable time and effort to better clarify expectations for inter-institutional interactions is essential. "Partnership" can be interpreted in various ways and is often ambiguously defined. The imprecise use of the term to describe different relationships and activities signifies the lack of clarity regarding the intent of the partnership and adversely affects the design, research, monitoring and evaluation of inter-institutional interactions.

As a first step, it is essential to identify the type of partnership the G7P would evolve into. If knowledge exchange is the main objective of the partnership, the G7P should be discontinued (see previous subsection). However, should the G7P aim for cooperation, the partnership would be responsible for maintaining informal efforts by one or more actors to assist other actors to accomplish primarily separate goals. Moreover, an aspiration for a deeper collaborative venture would result in one or more actors working together with shared goals that could not be achieved independently.

A framework for accountability and evaluation would need to be integrated into the parameters of the partnership. The framework would be customized to clarify the objectives of what the G7P is striving to achieve. Traditional evaluation approaches can be static and are not well suited for collaborative relationships that are often dynamic, which involves reciprocity, flexibility and adjustment to rapidly changing circumstances. The evaluation approach adopted through previous Accountability Reports reflected this dynamism by first assessing the readiness of partners to work in concert and eventually move towards deeper forms of collaboration as the partnership matured. The centrality of dynamism in evaluation approaches has been confirmed by recent research where the standards and norms of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) that focus on traditional metrics may in fact become sclerotic, creating more problems than solutions (Raimondo and Dahler-Larsen, 2022).

Therefore, the extension of the partnership should only happen if outcomes of interest are clarified and the purpose of the evaluation (i.e. showcase results, incentivize greater collaboration and cooperation, and define decision rules on abandoning the partnership) drive the metrics.

7.3 INTEGRATE THE G7P INTO A NEW INITIATIVE

Alternatively, much of the G7P activities could continue under the umbrella of a new initiative. This would ensure that the outcomes of the 5-year partnership continue as part of the sprawling digital public infrastructure agenda, yet, weakly understood by donors and governments alike. For example, the G7P effort could be an area of focus for the Co-Develop Fund as they seek to support initiatives that leverage technologies in improving development outcomes across different countries.

8. CONCLUSION

This report profiles the G7P as it concludes the fourth year in its five-year operational cycle. It has documented the efforts of the pillar partners to extend digital financial inclusion to African women and underscored the importance of digital safety through nearly all facets of the partnership.

The G7P is operating in an inter-organizational context of collaboration, one that is characterized by contradictions and compromises and defined by multiple viewpoints and unintended outcomes. Therefore, the last year of the partnership should focus on clearly defining the partnership and its evolution through a more dynamic framework.

The report recommends dedicating the fifth year of the partnership to launching a robust and comprehensive assessment. The primary objective should be to establish a more precise and dynamic framework that elucidates the partnership's purpose, principles, accountability and evaluation and long-term evolution. By doing so, the G7P can better manage the inherent contradictions and compromises of inter-organizational collaboration for future iterations of the G7P or influence other multilateral initiatives being developed within the digital development space. This proactive approach to defining its trajectory will be instrumental in ensuring the partnership's continued relevance and effectiveness, ultimately leading to more meaningful forms of collaboration between participating organizations and advancing its mission to empower women in the digital financial landscape across the African continent.

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