USAID DIGITAL STRATEGY 2020-2024
DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM FUND
2021 ACTIVITIES

USAID'S DIGITAL STRATEGY CHARTS AN AGENCY-WIDE APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT in a rapidly evolving digital age and seeks to achieve and sustain open, secure, and inclusive digital ecosystems that contribute to broad-based, measurable development and humanitarian assistance outcomes.

The Digital Ecosystem Fund (DEF), one of 17 initiatives under the Digital Strategy, equips the Agency's operating units with catalytic resources to design and implement activities that harness emerging opportunities or support strategic initiatives to strengthen or improve digital ecosystems.

The Digital Ecosystem Fund is flexible by design, enabling it to support Mission-proposed activities that reflect local circumstances and needs regardless of sector. Through two funding rounds to date, the DEF has supported 15 activities across a total of 14 Missions in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe and Eurasia.

In September 2021, USAID selected nine Missions to receive funding. This round focused on Missions that have a Digital Development Advisor or have completed (or are completing) a Digital Ecosystem Country Assessment. Activities supported by the DEF are as follows.

USAID/BENIN

▶ **Challenge:** Adequate tracking and supply of essential medicines to rural and urban areas is critical in light of endemic malaria and the COVID-19 pandemic, but local stakeholders need support to fully use digital supply chain information systems in Benin.

▶ **Desired Outcomes:**

- Help ensure the ready supply of medicines and track disbursal to rural and urban areas alike by integrating and institutionalizing digital supply chain information systems at the national, regional, and sub-national levels, and expanding health professionals' capacities in using the Government of Benin's Electronic Logistics Management System (eSIGL).

▶ **Activities May Include:**

- Expand roll out of the eSIGL system (with hardware and training) to all 34 national health zones plus additional health zones to enable health officials and local stakeholders to track the supply and distribution of medicines;
- Facilitate access to hardware and training for the Beninese Agency for Pharmaceutical Regulation (*Agence Beninoise de Regulation Pharmaceutique*); *Société Béninoise d'Achat de Produits de Santé*; and priority health facilities to link these facilities to the national-level e-SIGL system.

USAID/HONDURAS

▸ **Challenge:** In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricanes Eta and Iota, the adoption of digital technologies is especially important. Yet, Honduras lacks a vibrant local Information and communication technology (ICT) sector and the reach of the digital economy is limited, particularly for women and rural communities.

▸ **Desired Outcomes:**

• Expanded adoption of digital technologies and improved digital literacy, particularly among women and youth.

• Strengthened collaboration with the public and private sectors to maintain an open digital society that is built on an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet, including partnerships between U.S. firms and the Honduran public sector.

▸ **Activities May Include:**

• Expand existing youth and workforce development activities, with the aim of improving digital literacy and ensuring that Honduran women, youth, entrepreneurs, and businesses have the knowledge and tools they need to compete in the digital economy;

• Provide technical assistance to key municipalities to digitize municipal services;

• Partner with U.S.-based firms and the public sector to facilitate the development of a new North-South digital corridor from Puerto Cortes to the Palmerola International Airport;

• Develop e-commerce capabilities, particularly through catalytic support to small businesses.

USAID/MOZAMBIQUE

▸ **Challenge:** In Mozambique, community health workers or *agentes polivalentes elementares* (APEs) play a critical role in providing basic health and counseling services to vulnerable populations in remote areas. However, there is currently no countrywide digital platform where APEs can record and upload health data used for guidance and supervision of community health work.

▸ **Desired Outcomes:**

• Extended and improved delivery of quality community health services in Mozambique and increased use of real-time data for decision-making through the use of UpScale, the mHealth system that directly transmits data to the electronic district health information platform (DHIS 2).

• Improved sustainability of digital platform use by APEs to improve the delivery of health services in communities, allow for monitoring and evaluation of interventions, and improve supervision.

▸ **Activities May Include:**

• Expand UpScale to Nampula province to reach more community health workers, including training APEs and supervisors on the system;

• Link UpScale to the Government of Mozambique health information system and provide support to facilitate integration and interoperability between UpScale and DHIS 2;

• Expand access to phones, solar charging stations, and local repair and maintenance services to ensure community health workers can utilize the UpScale app;

• Provide technical assistance to districts and provinces to promote the use of data to make decisions about resource allocation and other health policy, and increase data visualization to improve evidence-based decision-making.

USAID/NEPAL

▸ **Challenge:** The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital services across Nepal, making communication, e-commerce, digital payments, online work, and remote learning more essential than ever. This growing demand for digital services in Nepal has also highlighted a serious shortage in the ICT workforce. The shortage of a digitally skilled labor force threatens to stifle growth of the country's digital ecosystem and overall economic growth.

- **Desired Outcomes:**
  - To accelerate investments in a digitally skilled workforce, address existing barriers, and ensure students are equipped with skills that enable them to immediately and successfully enter the ICT workforce.
  - Strengthened partnerships between the private sector and higher-education institutions.
  - Growth in the local ICT sector fueled by a young digital talent pool that matches job market demands.

- **Activities May Include:**
  - Partner with higher-education and vocational training institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, to upgrade and implement updated ICT curricula;
  - Catalyze relationships between Nepali and U.S. universities and technology firms to upgrade the quality of higher education in the digital space through learning hubs housed at Nepali universities;
  - Foster investment in developing skills in emerging technologies, such as the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, and/or robotics.

USAID/RWANDA

- **Challenge:** Although Rwanda has invested in digitally-enabled health interventions through a number of health information systems and tools and has a digital health policy, the health system lacks comprehensive policies, standards, and legislation to leverage the potential of integrated health information systems. It also lacks comprehensive digital capabilities, which constrains the collection, processing, and sharing of health data. As a result, there is no formal digital continuum of care model.

- **Desired Outcomes:**
  - Improved digital communication within facilities and across the referral chain to increase quality of care and patient management systems (e.g., billing, laboratory, radiology, inpatient, or outpatient systems);
  - Improved efficiency of the Community Based Health Insurance system, contributing to the financial stability of facilities;
  - Improved disease surveillance capabilities to trigger contingency measures and avert health catastrophes.

- **Activities May Include:**
  - Improve the data quality and interoperability of health information systems, including minimizing data discrepancies on the quantities and types of the health commodities used in health information systems;
  - Implement standard treatment protocols, facilitate prescription audits, and institute electronic medical records that provide credible patient history throughout the levels of referrals across a continuum of care.

USAID/SERBIA

- **Challenge:** Opening a dialogue related to internet governance concerns such as public accessibility, security, and ethical standards in using advanced digital and telecommunication technologies requires cross-sectoral partnerships among citizens, government, corporate, and civil society actors. However, the public needs heightened awareness and capacity-building on key digital literacy, cyber hygiene, and online safety issues, particularly given the abrupt shift of essential services, school, and work to online channels due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Desired Outcomes:**
  - Enhanced public-private dialogue related to Internet governance.
  - Safeguards promoted for the ethical and safe use of digital technologies, protection of minors and vulnerable groups in the digital sphere, including safe use of online educational tools.
  - Improved digital literacy and cyber hygiene across the board.

- **Activities May Include:**
  - Increase public awareness of key digital literacy, cybersecurity, and online safety issues;
  - Initiate public dialogue among citizens, government, corporate, and civil society actors on how to identify and address key cybersecurity challenges.

USAID/SOUTH AFRICA

▸ **Challenge:** Demand for skilled labor in the digital economy far outstrips supply while traditional pathways are fragmented and do not address the market demand. Young South Africans face challenges related to cost, information, networks, resources, and skills, and for young people with disabilities, these challenges are exacerbated due to more limited education opportunities, lack of suitable transportation options, and exclusionary selection criteria that discriminate against persons with disabilities.

▸ **Desired Outcomes:**
  • Development and scaling of a program that facilitates the employment of youth with disabilities in digital and digitally enabled jobs, including addressing specific barriers and leveraging assistive technologies.
  • Engagement with key local stakeholders, such as youth with disabilities, employers, industry leaders, policy makers and organizations of persons with disabilities, to create sustainable pathways to employment at the systems level for youth with disabilities.

▸ **Activities May Include:**
  • Deepen understanding of the barriers that youth with disabilities face to obtain and succeed in jobs in the digital sector, including: (1) scope and focus of digital and/or digitally enabled jobs for youth with disabilities; (2) requirements for creating inclusive and enabling work environments; (3) skills and work readiness gaps; and (4) infrastructural, social, and policy challenges.
  • Develop interventions, such as: (1) demand-led training programs to close skills and work readiness gaps; (2) onsite and remote work opportunities; (3) access to assistive technologies and reasonable accommodations; and (4) creation of inclusive and enabling work environments, recruitment schemes, placement and career counseling support.

USAID/UKRAINE

▸ **Challenge:** The Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine (MDT), established in 2019, has spearheaded efforts to reduce corruption in the public sector through a rapid nation-wide digital transformation. However, MDT often relies on international technical assistance and lacks a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to assess progress made by the roughly 100 interconnected projects in the implementation plan.

▸ **Desired Outcomes:**
  • Design and develop a comprehensive M&E mechanism to improve and secure Ukraine's digital ecosystem for the Government of Ukraine (GOU) and MDT to implement, using recommendations from USAID/Ukraine's Digital Ecosystem Country Assessment (DECA).

▸ **Activities May Include:**
  • Provide technical consultations on how such an M&E mechanism can be designed, implemented, and used systemically as a decision-making tool;
  • Design a theory of change or roadmap for the GOU/MDT, as well as indicators that might align with the USAID Digital Strategy MEL framework;
  • Support dialogue and awareness-raising among local stakeholders regarding DECA findings.

USAID/VIETNAM

▸ **Challenge:** Vietnam seeks to become a digital economy by 2030 yet faces a significant shortage of digital skills in its workforce. The formal education system is not providing the quantity or quality of talent needed by employers, particularly among the youth population.

▸ **Desired Outcomes:**
  • To expand the availability of quality and affordable training to improve digital literacy among the youth population and ensure that graduates are equipped with relevant skills to participate productively and effectively in the digital economy.

- To develop viable career pathways for young people seeking to enter, advance, and thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) labor market, including by narrowing the gender digital divide and increasing digital inclusion.

▶ **Activities May Include:**
- Explore sustainable digital skills-financing opportunities that increase affordability of training programs to improve digital literacy beyond key urban centers and reduce the gender and urban-rural digital divides;
- Support expanded online platforms to build digital skills across a broad range of needs and explore expansion of existing local online platforms through licensing agreements with global content providers on targeted topics;
- Strengthen partnerships between industry, academia, and private sector training institutions to increase the number of digital skills programs based on internationally recognized digital standards, encourage development of innovative blended learning programs, and expand STEM and 4IR career opportunities through certification programs.

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CONTACT US/LEARN MORE ▶ To learn more, please visit the Digital Ecosystem Fund page or reach out to the Digital Ecosystem Fund Team (digitalfund@usaid.gov).

PREVIOUSLY SUPPORTED MISSIONS

In March 2020, USAID held its first call for proposals and received 21 submissions from 16 Missions. The DEF review committee, made up of sectoral and digital experts drawn from across USAID, evaluated proposals on technical merit, feasibility, relevance to the Digital Strategy, and Mission priorities, and funded the following six activities:

USAID/African Union - With co-funding from the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership (DCCP), the Mission sought to deploy a long-term technical advisor to work with the African Union (AU) Commission and African stakeholders to build the capacity of AU Member States in digital trade and e-Commerce.

USAID/Bangladesh - To help bridge the information gap between decision-makers and the public, USAID/Bangladesh sought to disseminate COVID-19 information in a manner that promoted digital inclusion of vulnerable, underserved, and at-risk groups.

USAID/Ethiopia - USAID/Ethiopia sought to engage with local stakeholders to develop an eHealth Architecture (eHA) road map. The roadmap was expected to be the foundation for interoperable health systems that would efficiently share data and support improved patient outcomes. USAID/Ethiopia would provide technical expertise to inform the design and implementation of the eHA roadmap.

USAID/Kenya and East Africa - USAID/Kenya sought to leverage private sector IT training opportunities to advance, scale, and sustain digital skills and connect youth to economic opportunities in Kenya's emerging IT sector.

USAID/Rwanda - In collaboration with the Rwandan Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs (RCWE) and their female members, USAID/Rwanda sought to build the capacity of the RCWE members to use digital tools to enable business expansion.

USAID/Sahel Regional Office - The USAID/Sahel Regional Office sought to establish a digital working group to coordinate USAID digital activities in the region. The working group was expected to help harmonize existing digital efforts and foster coherence of future digital interventions such that the risks of hate speech are minimized.

USAID DIGITAL STRATEGY 2020-2024

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.

The Strategy centers around two core, mutually reinforcing objectives:

— RESPONSIBLY USE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY —   — STRENGTHEN DIGITAL ECOSYSTEMS —

OBJECTIVE 1

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

USAID   Partners

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:

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

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

SHIFT TO "DIGITAL BY DEFAULT" ▶ **Support implementing partners** in adoption of digital technologies

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

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT USAID'S DIGITAL STRATEGY

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