



Unlocking Public and Private
Finance for the Poor

INCLUSIVE DIGITAL ECONOMIES AND GENDER EQUALITY PLAYBOOK



The Inclusive Digital Economies & Gender Playbook was developed by Nandini Harihareswara, Senior Advisor on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment, UN Capital Development Fund, with assistance from Anushree Deb and Rose Payne. This tool was produced through the Women As Builders of Inclusive Digital Economies approach within UNCDF.

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Women's World Banking



STRATEGIC
IMPACT
ADVISORS

CENTER for
FINANCIAL
INCLUSION | **ACCION**

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SECTION 1

HOW TO USE THE PLAYBOOK



The playbook **brings together research and practice** by many of the **leading organizations** working to achieve financial inclusion and gender equality.

WHAT IS THE PLAYBOOK?

The Playbook highlights decades of expertise and learning shared by development organizations, and draws on UNCDF's experience using a market development approach to identify market constraints to gender equality, with a focus on women's digital and financial inclusion.

The aim of this version of the playbook is to serve as a handy reference that lays out the market constraints for women and the potential interventions to address them. The playbook highlights interventions, or plays, that can be used individually or together to address constraints. It combines innovative new approaches with tried-and-tested methods that can be replicated in new markets. It is intended to be a living document that evolves with experience. It should serve as a starting point for dialogues, programme design and planning at the country and programme levels. This should be regarded as a working draft and further feedback is welcome.



HOW TO USE THE PLAYBOOK

Who is the playbook for?

Development partners trying to understand the field of potential interventions in the market development approach

Development Practitioners working on women's economic empowerment and digital and financial inclusion

UNCDF



The cheat sheets give a good background on key topics that are useful to understand in the context of women's economic empowerment, especially if you are new to the space



If you want to understand the common market constraints facing women in your country



Go to [Section 5](#) on research and diagnostics to find primary and secondary research and tools



If you understand the market constraints in your country



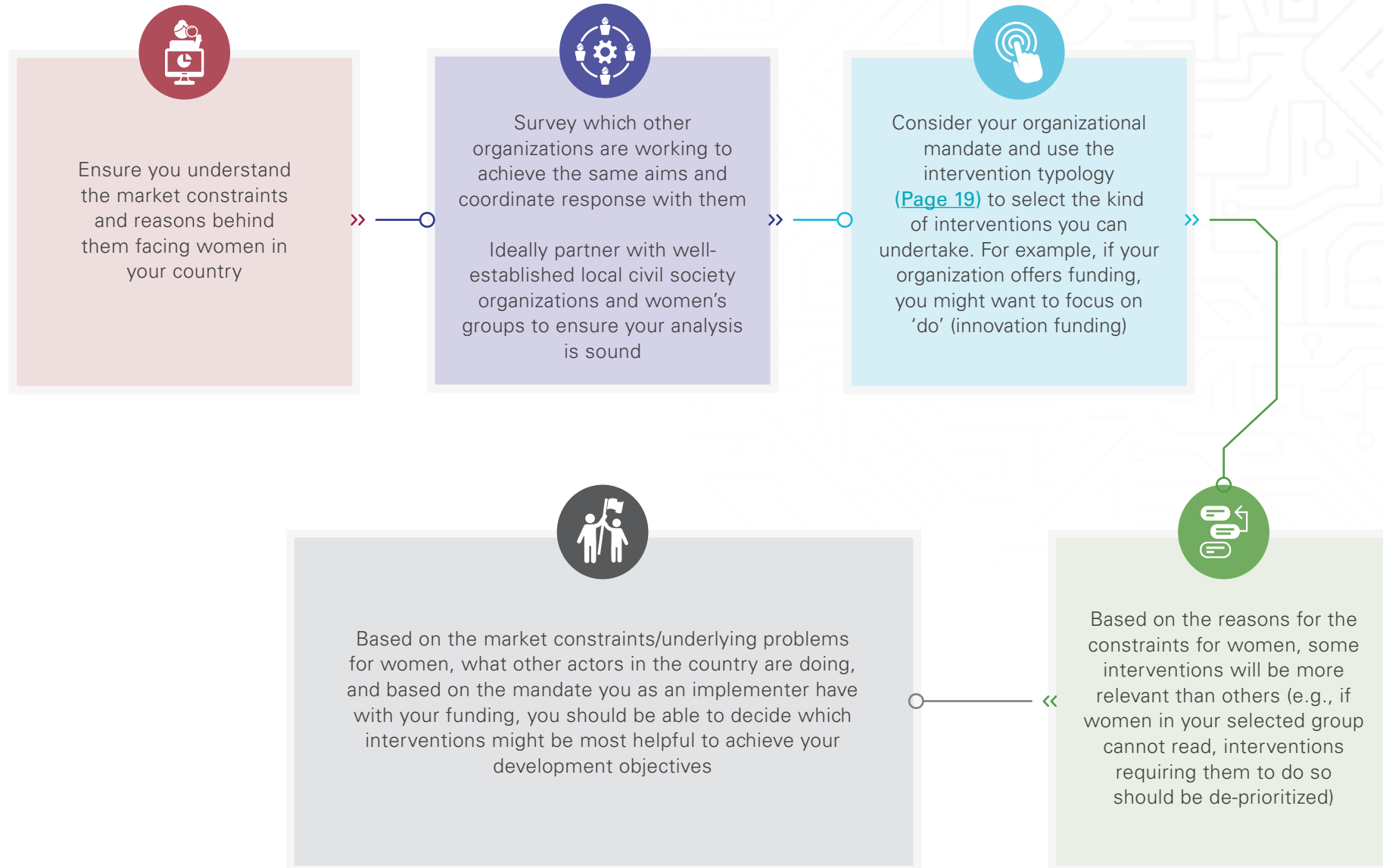
Go to the relevant section, check if the constraint facing women in your market is there

If the constraint is reflected, check the potential interventions laid out on the following pages and use the links to find examples of when the interventions have been deployed successfully



If the constraint is not reflected there, you may still find the reference guides and interventions a good starting point to consider possible approaches. Get in touch – this is a living document and we want to update it to reflect experience

HOW TO CHOOSE AND PRIORITIZE INTERVENTIONS





SECTION 2

BACKGROUND



*Money is the domain of men.
Society doesn't view it as her
role to earn money or her right to
make financial decisions.*



IDEO.org Women & Money Report, 2019

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

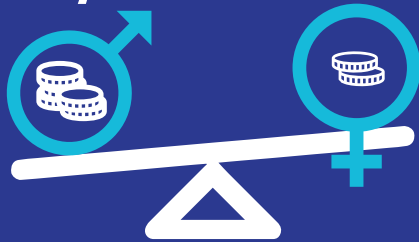
It will take 136 years to close the global gender gap unless things change drastically according to the World Economic Forum.¹ Since the COVID-19 pandemic, progress on gender equality has been reversing. Economic equality will take even longer: it is estimated that it will now take 286 years to reach gender parity.

Women's cultural and/or socio-economic context can restrict their economic empowerment.

UNCDF has ambitious goals to change this. Leveraging our market development approach, we are helping to make women builders of inclusive digital economies.

THE GENDER DIVIDE

WOMEN ARE **9%**
LESS LIKELY
to be financially
included
in the least
developed
countries²

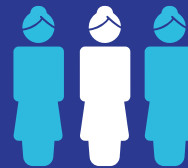


WOMEN ARE **7%**
LESS LIKELY
to own a phone
than men³

70% OF
WOMEN-LED
micro and small
enterprises
are financially
underserved⁴



1 IN 3 MARRIED
WOMEN
from low-income
countries has no
control over
household expenses
or major purchases⁵



THE GENDER DIVIDE CONTINUED

1 BILLION WOMEN are still financially excluded⁶



167 COUNTRIES have at least one law that restricts women's economic opportunities⁷



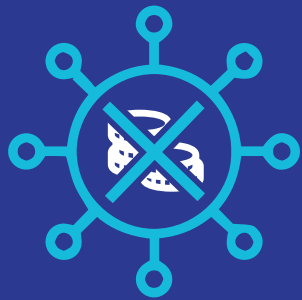
Globally, the **GENDER WAGE GAP**⁸ is around **20%**



1 IN 5 UNBANKED WOMEN say lack of ID is a key barrier to opening an account⁹

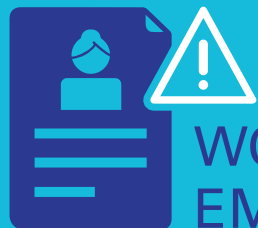
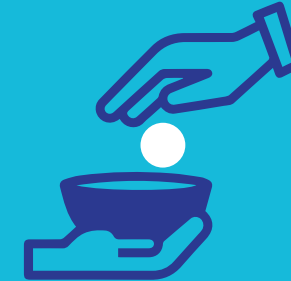


HOW COVID-19 HAS IMPACTED WOMEN AND GIRLS



The pandemic will push **47 MILLION** women and girls into **extreme poverty**¹⁰

121 WOMEN FOR EVERY 100 MEN aged 25 to 34 years **will experience poverty**¹¹



WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IS **19% more at risk** than men's¹²



740 MILLION WOMEN work in informal economic sectors.¹³ The pandemic has caused their **income to drop by 60%**

GOAL: INCLUSIVE DIGITAL ECONOMY AND GENDER EQUALITY

UNCDF envisions inclusive digital economies that reduce poverty, increase resilience and improve economic opportunities for women and girls. Through a holistic market development approach, we work to decrease the digital divide for women and girls, we use technology to improve women's economic opportunity and we help to transform women into the builders of emerging digital economies.



SECTION 3

CHEAT SHEETS

Cheat sheets are quick overviews of key topics that should be considered when creating projects or programmes that address women's financial and digital inclusion. [These cover:](#)

1

How we can understand and measure women's and girl's agency and autonomy

2

How women's needs change over their life cycles

3

Drivers of women's and girls' digital and financial inclusion

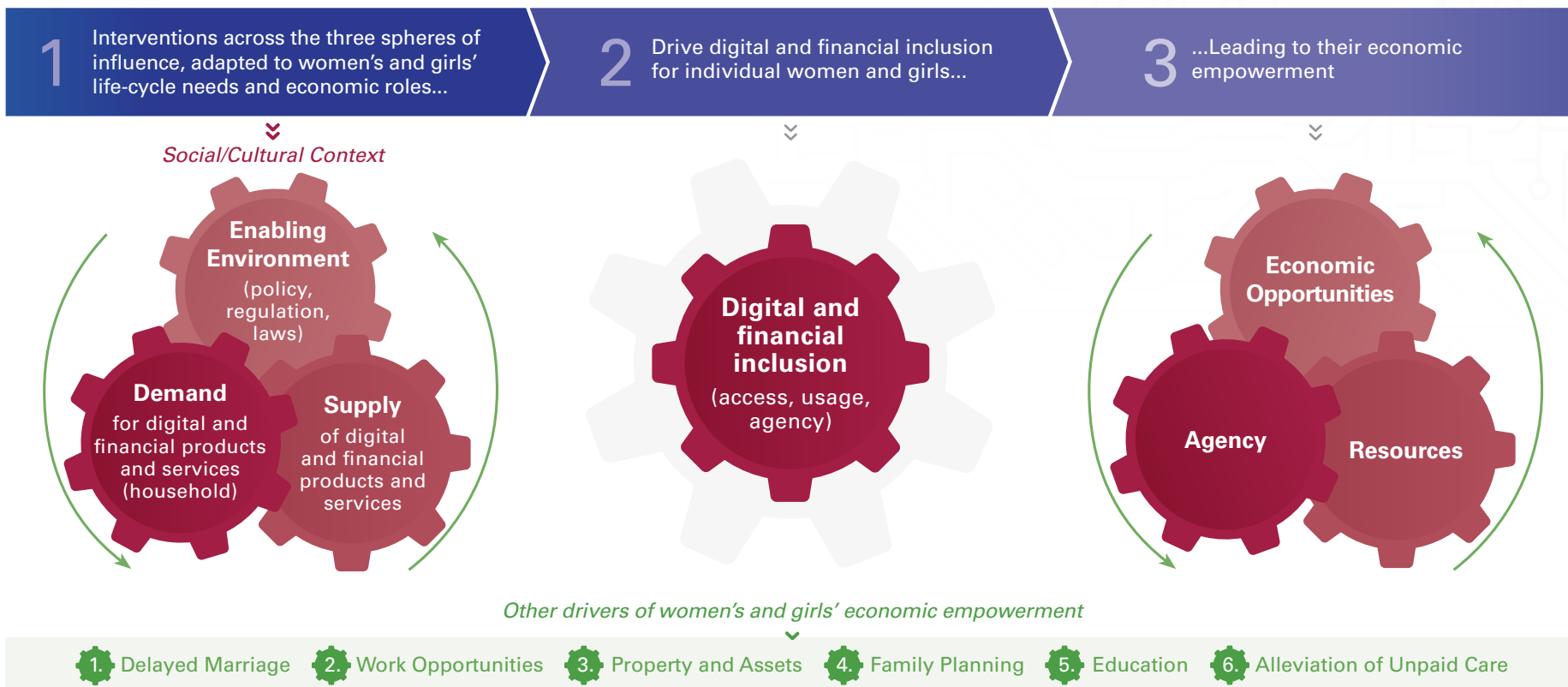


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CHEAT SHEET 1

DRIVERS OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' DIGITAL AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION

The UNCDF PoWER diagnostic, from which this graphic is taken, presents financial inclusion as one of the key drivers of women's economic empowerment, and considers three spheres in which change needs to happen for financial equality to be achieved: demand, supply and enabling environment.



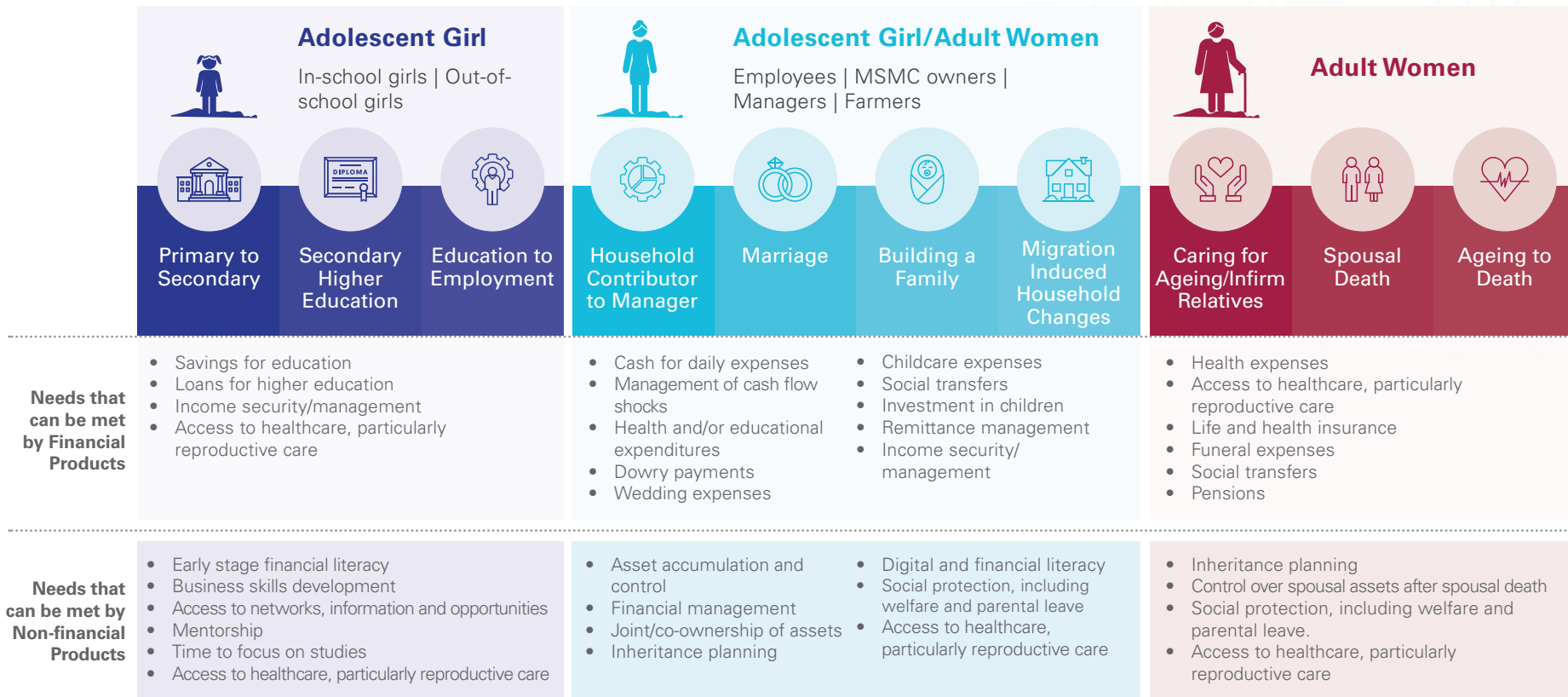


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CHEAT SHEET 2

WOMEN'S AND GIRL'S LIFE-CYCLE NEEDS

Financial and Non-financial: Women and girls have different needs at various stages in their life cycles that can be addressed by different financial and non-financial services. At the same time, women experience distinct challenges when it comes to the access to, and usage of, these services, including challenges with basic, financial and digital literacies. Digital products can address these life-cycle challenges using sustainable business models.





© 2020 UNCDF

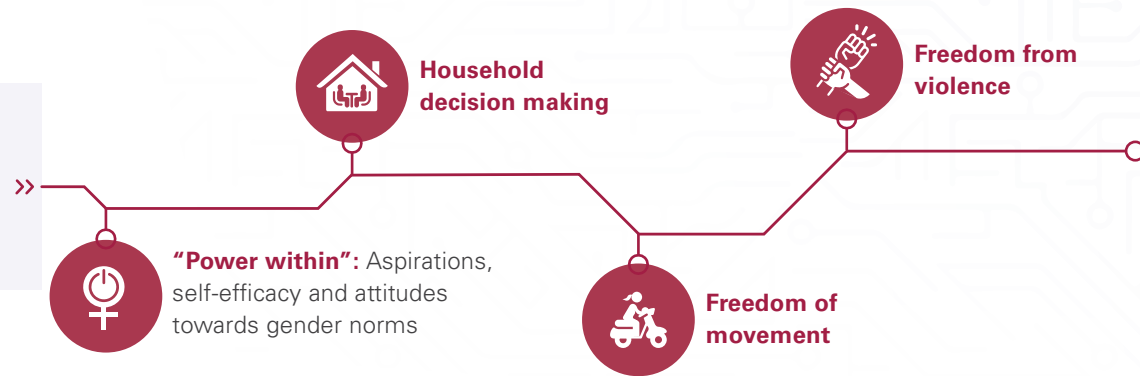
CHEAT SHEET 3

AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

Even when women have access to digital and financial tools, they may not have the agency or autonomy to decide how they are used. Agency is harder to quantify and measure than access or usage as it concerns not just the choices that people make, but which choices they were free to make. It is, therefore, necessary to look to a wide variety of indicators to understand the level of agency women have.

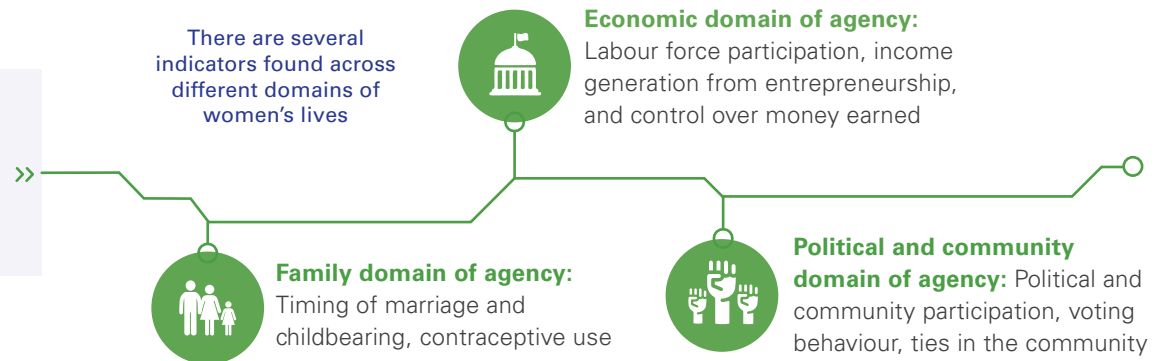
Direct Indicators of Agency

Aspects that are fundamental to a women’s ability to make meaningful decisions and act upon them



Indirect Indicators of Agency

Downstream outcomes that may reflect agency; these are domain-specific





SECTION 4

INTERVENTION TYPOLOGY






This typology is **intended to help development practitioners to understand the different kinds of intervention** discussed in the playbook. Your organization might have a specific mandate that will inform what kinds of intervention you focus on

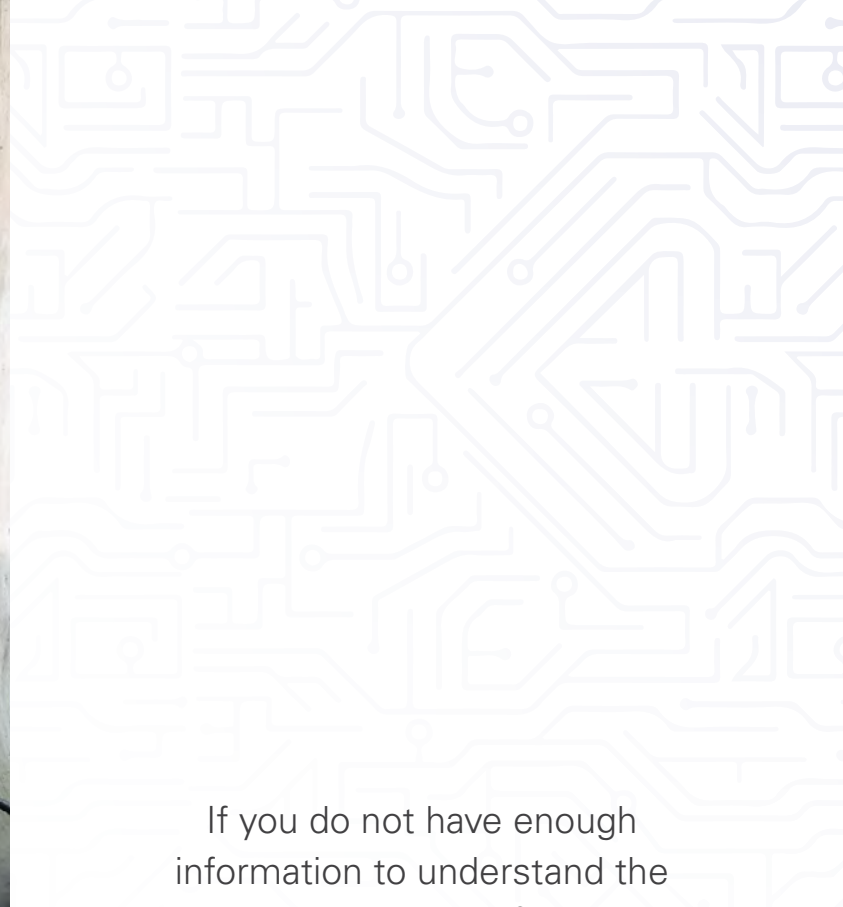


for instance, if you offer funding, you might want to focus on Do (innovation funding).

You can also use this typology to help you to navigate between different types of intervention. If perhaps a specific example is not suitable for your market, there may be a similar type of intervention suggested for another market constraint that could be adapted.

KINDS OF INTERVENTION

Function	Intervention Typology (non exhaustive)
Diagnose (Diagnostics and Research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary research that requires you collect and analyse data yourself (e.g. surveys, interviews, transaction data) • Secondary data that can be used to understand the market and the lived reality of women and girls in your country or region • Learning agenda • Private-sector business case • Country assessments
Do (Technical Assistance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance to financial service providers and other private-sector players • Technical assistance to government and civil society • Internal capacity-building
Do (Innovation Funding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funding for expanding access and agency for financial inclusion • Blended finance to develop and scale up innovative approaches to strengthen participation
Do (Convening) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer learning and dialogue in financial-inclusion spaces • Dialogue, agenda-setting and peer learning in financial inclusion • Facilitating national-level financial and non-financial service provider partnerships
Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to policy and regulatory reform • Business case to financial service providers • Internal and joint advocacy campaigns



SECTION 5

DIAGNOSTICS AND RESEARCH CONSTRAINTS

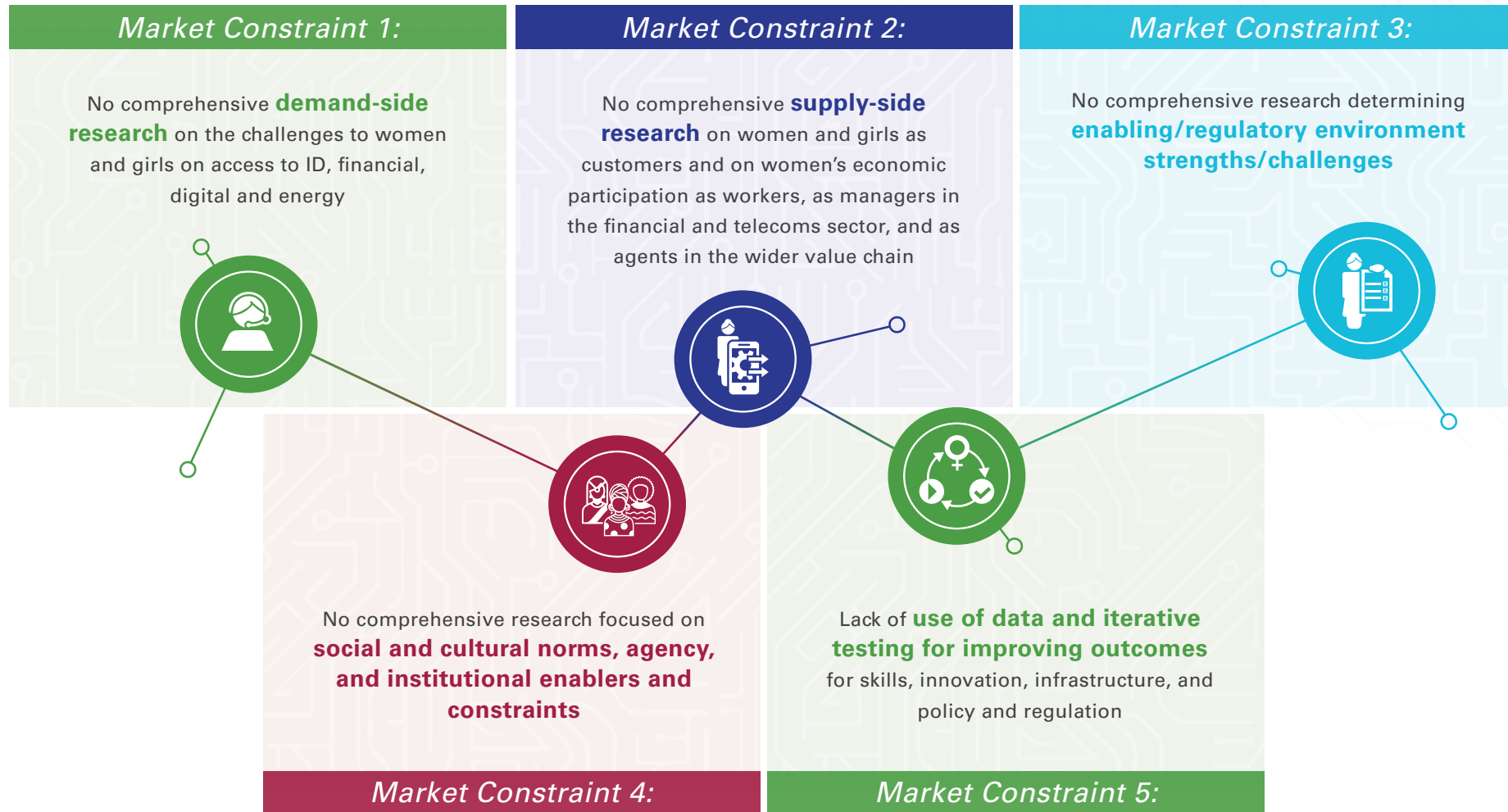
If you do not have enough information to understand the market constraints faced by women and girls in your country or region, this section brings together **examples of diagnostic and research tools** that can be used **to gain better knowledge**. Some tools require primary research and others provide secondary research; both can be used to identify potential market constraints.



ECOSYSTEM CONSTRAINTS:

MARKET DATA AND RESEARCH CONSTRAINTS

If you are facing market constraints due to lack of research and data in the following areas:



Market constraints and interventions for diagnostic and research constraints

Market Constraint 1:



No comprehensive demand-side research on the challenges to women and girls on access to ID, financial, digital and energy

1. [*Digital gender gap audit scorecard toolkit from the Web foundation*](#) (secondary).
2. Gender and information and communications technology toolkit surveys (primary). [*See example from USAID MSTAR.*](#)
3. Gender-responsive market systems analysis (primary). [*See example from UNCDF Participation of Women in the Economy Realized \(PoWER\) diagnosis.*](#)
4. FinScope (primary or secondary). [*See Full data set from FinMark Trust.*](#)
5. [*Financial diaries*](#) (primary or secondary). [*See example from Portfolios of the Poor.*](#)
6. Customer journey mapping (primary or secondary). [*See example and guide from the Center for Financial Inclusion.*](#)
7. Lean data collection (primary). [*See guide from Acumen & Omidyar Network.*](#)

Market Constraint 1: Continued

No comprehensive demand-side research on the challenges to women and girls on access to ID, financial, digital and energy

8. Financial inclusion insight surveys (secondary). See [full data sets for selected countries from Kantar \(funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation\)](#).
9. World Bank: [Findex](#), [ID4D Database](#), [World Bank Open Data](#) (secondary).
10. [GSMA global mobile gender gap survey](#) (secondary).

Market Constraint 2A



No comprehensive supply-side research on women and girls as customers

1. Customer sex-disaggregated data: [IMF financial access surveys](#) (secondary).
2. Customer and business ownership, sex-disaggregated data: [Financial Alliance for Women](#) (secondary).
3. Gender responsive market systems analysis. [See UNCDF PoWER diagnostic](#).

Market Constraint 2A: Continued

No comprehensive supply-side research on women and girls as customers

4. Customer sex-disaggregated data: Adjusted UNCDF annual provider survey (primary). See Resulting [DFS State of the Industry Report from Zambia](#).
5. Customer and transaction (big) data analytics (secondary). See [Impact Pathways](#) research in Fiji, both the methodology and a blog [showing links to SDG5](#).
6. Customer household data (primary). See example from [CGAP smallholder families data hub](#) for six countries: Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania.

Market Constraint 2B:



Lack of comprehensive supply-side and country-level research on women's economic participation as workers, as managers in the financial and telecoms sector, and as agents in the wider value chain

1. Women in the labour force of a company: [UNCDF gender self-assessment toolkit \(GSAT\)](#) (primary).
2. Women in the labour force of a company: [Women's World Banking gender assessment methodology](#) (primary).

Market Constraint 2B: Continued

Lack of comprehensive supply-side and country-level research on women's economic participation as workers, as managers in the financial and telecoms sector, and as agents in the wider value chain

3. Women as mobile money agents: [MSC agent network analysis](#) (primary or secondary).
4. Agent journey mapping (primary). [See example from UNCDF Zambia](#).
5. Gender-lens investment criteria for investments into public and private entities: [UNCDF IELD WEE Index](#) (primary).
6. Business ownership and access to finance (sex-diaggregated): [MSME finance gap survey](#).
7. Business ownership and access to finance (sex-disaggregated) [FinScope MSME surveys](#).

Market Constraint 3:



No comprehensive research determining enabling/regulatory environment strengths/challenges

1. Gender-related enabling environment constraints: [See UNCDF PoWER country assessment tool](#) (primary).

Market Constraint 3: Continued

No comprehensive research determining enabling/regulatory environment strengths/challenges

2. Improve design and planning of policies to reduce gender inequalities: [Conduct a gender impact assessment from European Institute for Gender Equality](#) (primary).
3. Country performance against a benchmark on enabling laws for gender equality. [Women, business and the law report \(World Bank\)](#) (secondary).
4. Case studies demonstrating policy/regulatory success in addressing enabling environment constraints. [See report: KYC innovations, financial inclusion and integrity in selected afi member countries](#) (secondary).

Market Constraint 4:



No comprehensive research focused on social and cultural norms, agency and institutional enablers and constraints

1. [UNCDF PoWER country assessment tool](#) (primary).
2. Financial diaries (primary or secondary). See example on [garment workers in India by MFO](#) and [guide on financial diaries](#).

Market Constraint 4: Continued

No comprehensive research focused on social and cultural norms, agency and institutional enablers and constraints

3. Customer and or agent journey maps. See example from [UNCDF Malawi](#) (primary or secondary) and [CGAP's guide on employee and agent ideabook](#).
4. Social norms diagnostic: [Upcoming CGAP social norms diagnostic guidelines](#) (not yet released – primary)
5. Women customer's life cycles: [IDEO.org and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation women and money report](#)

Market Constraint 5:



Lack of use of data and iterative testing for improving outcomes for skills, innovation, infrastructure, and policy and regulation

1. Skills: data to improve user experience of apps for improving women's digital and financial capability. [See example from UNCDF Tanzania](#).
2. Infrastructure: data to measure and improve women's access to digital financial services. See example from [Vodacom Tanzania](#) and other commitments from [GSMA Connected Women](#).

Lack of use of data and iterative testing for improving outcomes for skills, innovation, infrastructure, and policy and regulation

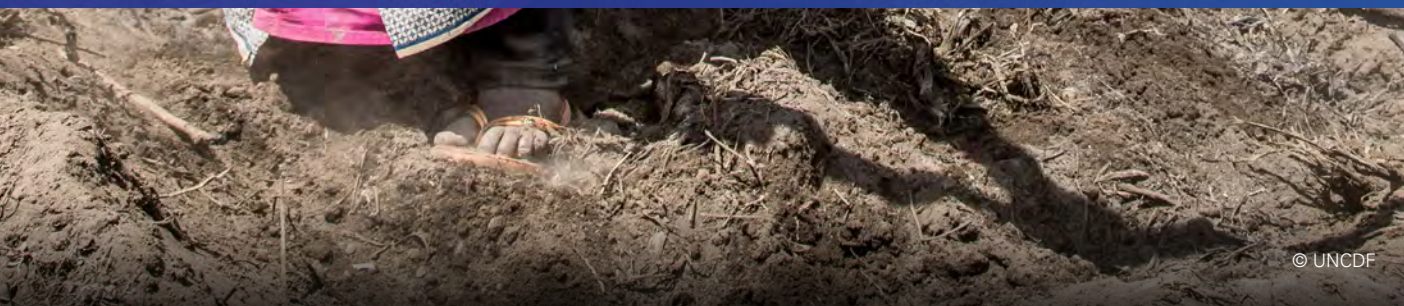
3. Innovation: collecting and using sex-disaggregated data and iterative testing models to create digital and financial products that meet the needs of women. [*UNCDF Zambia Sprint4Women RFA*](#).

4. Policy and regulation: collecting and using sex-disaggregated data to improve women's digital and financial inclusion. See examples from [*UN Secretary General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance*](#) and [*OECD Financial Literacy Survey*](#).



SECTION 6

WOMEN'S SKILLS



Often underlying sociocultural norms is the lower level of education for women and girls in many countries.



This leads to:

lower levels of digital and financial literacy and, in turn, a persistent gap in account and mobile phone ownership between men and women.

This guide by FinEquity gives a comprehensive overview of the reasons behind the digital and financial literacy gap and suggested recommendations.



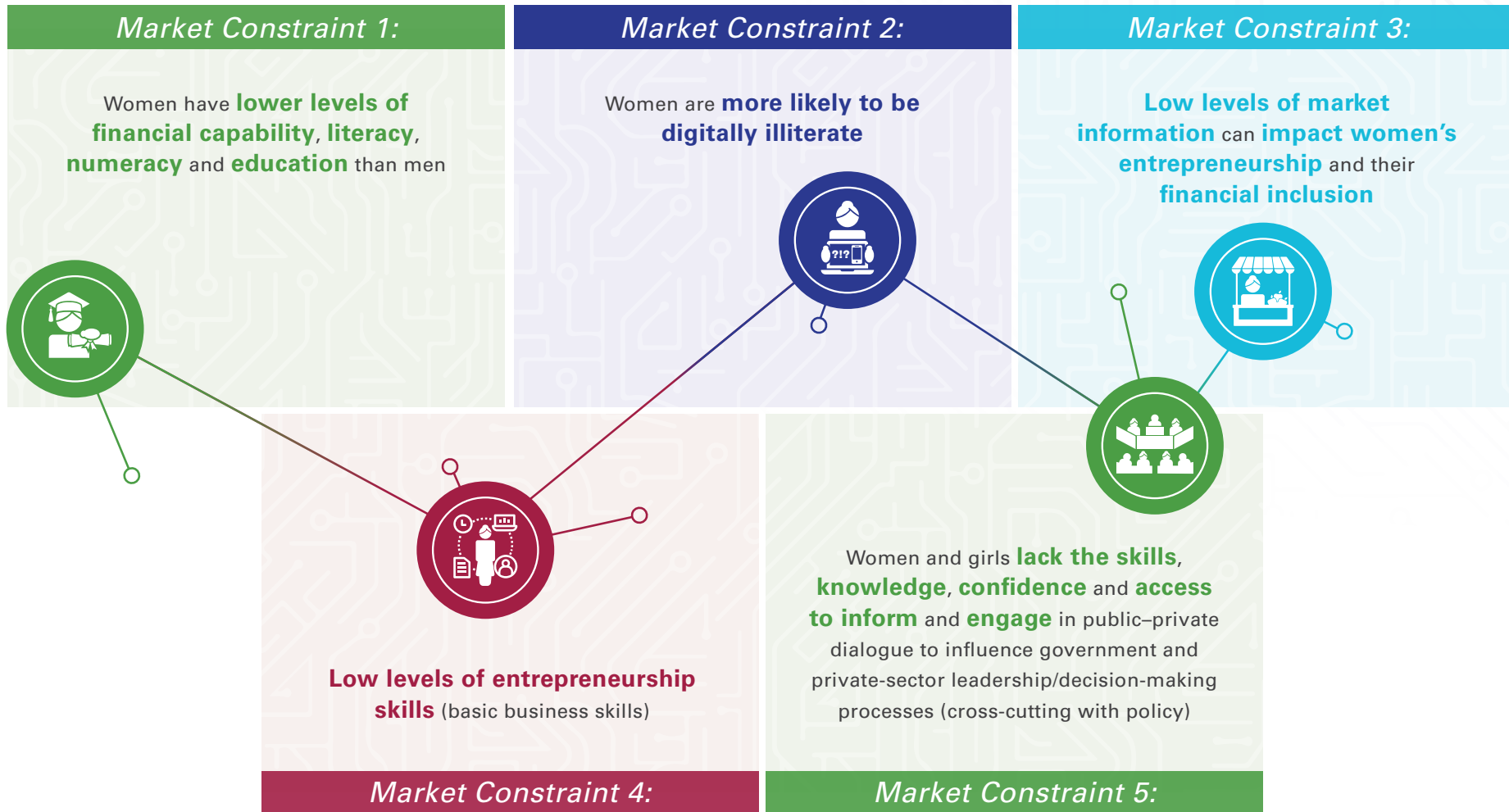
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This section offers potential interventions to address the following issues:

- 1 Lower educational levels and social expectations around money mean that women lack financial capability
- 2 Lower literacy levels and the idea that the internet is the domain of men makes it harder for women to use digital tools
- 3 Even when women are financially and digitally literate, they may not be able to access the market information they need to make sound business and financial judgements, due to social norms
- 4 Women-owned businesses are central to most economies, but women consistently have lower levels of the entrepreneurship skills needed to run and grow businesses
- 5 To be able to advocate for themselves women need the skills to engage with private-sector leaders and policymakers

WOMEN'S SKILLS:

MARKET CONSTRAINTS



Market constraints and interventions for the skills work stream

Market Constraint 1:



Women have lower levels of financial capability, literacy, numeracy and education than men

1. DO: Partner with financial service providers to develop financial literacy coupled with product development/sales/marketing. See examples from [Dimagi](#) and [GIZ Myanmar](#) (page 135).
2. DO: Use interactive voice response (IVR). See example and "[Getting Started with IVR](#)" from Strategic Impact Advisors.
3. DO: Address numeracy challenges. [See recommendations from My Oral Village Report.](#)
4. DO: Link financial capability efforts to government-to-people and social-service touchpoints. [See the Mexico Prospera example.](#)
5. DO: Partner with schools to include financial literacy in primary and secondary education. [See example from UNCDF Fiji programme.](#)

Women have lower levels of financial capability, literacy, numeracy and education than men

6. DO/ADVOCATE:

Use different media (accounting for different learning styles) - mass media, radio, posters, drop-in clinics, social media and entertainment - as channels for awareness. [See World Bank Soap Opera for Social Change example from South Africa.](#)

7. DO/ADVOCATE:

Roadshows and community advocates. [See examples from Malala Fund](#), which supports 57 advocates in 8 countries.

8. DO:

Provide counselling and coaching. See example from [Black Girls Can Leadership Academy](#) and [Ministry of Population from Madagascar, Women's World Banking and Fundacion Capital.](#)

9. DO:

Encourage peer learning: leveraging social relationships and developing peer-based financial capability training. [See CAMFED Example from Zambia.](#)

10. DO/ADVOCATE:

Include gatekeepers: include men and boys in engaging and in building the curriculum on why it is important and useful to the household for women and girls to be financially literate. [See overview from CGAP on the challenges and some solutions.](#) And see examples and tools from the [CARE learning series on engaging men and boys.](#)



Women are more likely to be digitally illiterate

Good training guides relevant to this constraint are the [GSMA Connected Women Mobile Skills Toolkit](#) and the EQUALS Skills Coalition "[I'd blush If I could](#)".

1. DO/ADVOCATE: Set targets with government and measure baselines. See examples from the Government of [Bangladesh](#) in partnership with Huawei and the [Government of India](#).

2. DO/ADVOCATE: Include gatekeepers. See the [CARE learning series on engaging men and boys](#) and an example from [India Uninor and Connected Women on a "Paired SIM Card"](#).

3. DO: Provide mentors to help to increase digital literacy, either as a new programme or integrated into existing social groups. [See Aspirations in Computing initiative](#) from the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT).

4. DO: Encourage peer learning as it feels more organic and easier to scale up. [See Internet Saathi example](#) from Google and the Tata Trust.

5. DO: Work with digital service providers on help them to understand the business case in improving women's digital literacy. See examples from Google's [Helping Women Get Online](#). A good reference guide is the GSMA report [Accelerating digital literacy: empowering women to use the mobile internet](#) and Women's World Banking report on [Digital Financial Capability](#).

Market Constraint 2: Continued

Women are more likely to be digitally illiterate

6. DO/ADVOCATE: Making digital spaces safe for women and girls (advocating to both public and private sector). See the [Take Back the Tech](#) initiative and a [DIY guide to feminist cybersecurity](#) from HACK*BLOSSOM and [several examples from GSMA on mobile-related safety concerns](#).
7. DO: Use interactive voice response (IVR) tools. See an example and [Getting started with IVR](#) from Strategic Impact Advisors.
8. DO/ADVOCATE: Support women and girls to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics through scholarships and guided targets. See an example from the [African Development Bank's Coding for Employment initiative, highlighting a case study in Rwanda](#).

Market Constraint 3:



Low levels of market information can impact women's entrepreneurship and their financial inclusion

1. DO: Improve access to market information through apps and social networks. See examples from [Agrifin in Kenya and Zambia](#) and [Herventure](#).

Low levels of market information can impact women's entrepreneurship and their financial inclusion

2. DO: Leverage relationships with agents, traders and brokers to act as trusted sources of market information. See an example from [UNCDF in Uganda](#).
3. DO: Ensure that time and labour-saving information and services are marketed in a way that's accessible and appealing to women. See an example from Mercy Corps Agrifin, [Hello Tractor](#) from Nigeria.
4. DO: Invest in digital agriculture platforms to improve access to services, information and learning at the same time as bundled services. [See Mercy Corps Agrifin DigiFarm Kenya case study](#).
5. DO: Increase women's access to information through mentorship. See the [Jamaica Youth Can Do IT \(YCDI\) Women in Tech](#) mentorship programme and the [Kenya BOMA Project](#) example.
6. DO: Create peer networks of women entrepreneurs to share information. See the [India SEWA network](#) and the [E-Trade for Women initiative](#).

Market Constraint 4:



Low levels of entrepreneurship skills (basic business skills)

1. DO: Leverage incubators, innovation hubs and enterprise development centres to improve soft and hard skills. See the [GIZ and Government of India's Her&Now example](#).
2. DO: Leverage existing mobile apps. See examples from [HerVenture](#).
3. DO: Improve hard business skills. See the report from the ILO on the [gender divide in skills development](#). See examples from the ILO on [training for rural economic empowerment](#) and the [ILO FOIL project](#) in Central America (in Spanish).
4. DO/ADVOCATE: Facilitate the portability of skills and ratings – see the [UPSHIFT](#) example from UNICEF.
5. DO/ADVOCATE: Engage with the relevant government entity to inform the development of gender-responsive MSME policies. See the Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women project (GREAT Women) [example from the Philippines](#) – [summary from Government of Canada](#) and [details](#).
6. DO/ADVOCATE: Include gatekeepers, including if needed a separate curriculum for men on why women's entrepreneurship is critical for the household and community. See report from ILO-WED on [engaging men in women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship development interventions](#) and from SSIR on [how business can engage men as allies for gender equality](#) and examples from [CARE on family business management training](#).



Women and girls lack the skills, knowledge, confidence and access to inform and engage in public–private dialogue to influence government and private-sector leadership/decision-making processes (cross-cutting with Policy)

1. DO/ADVOCATE:

Support the formation and/or capacity-building of women’s organizations, civil society groups and legal networks to connect to digital service providers and platforms, increasing their voice and pressure testing products, and to engage with policymakers to address their constraints to financial access. See the GIZ Laos example in the [financial inclusion toolkit](#) (page 105) and the UNICEF guide on [how to include girls in digital product user testing](#).

2. DO/ADVOCATE:

Create standing agenda items related to women’s specific issues, in policymaking committees. See the World Bank growth and employment [programme](#) in Nigeria.

3. DO/ADVOCATE:

Including gatekeepers – catalyse a cohort of men to be champions for increasing women’s voices within public–private dialogues. See the United Nations [HeForShe](#) campaign.



SECTION 7

INFRASTRUCTURE

The infrastructures that underpin critical digital services were created in patriarchal sociocultural contexts.



Women, therefore, have less ownership of key assets and lower access to the services that allow participation in the digital economy.

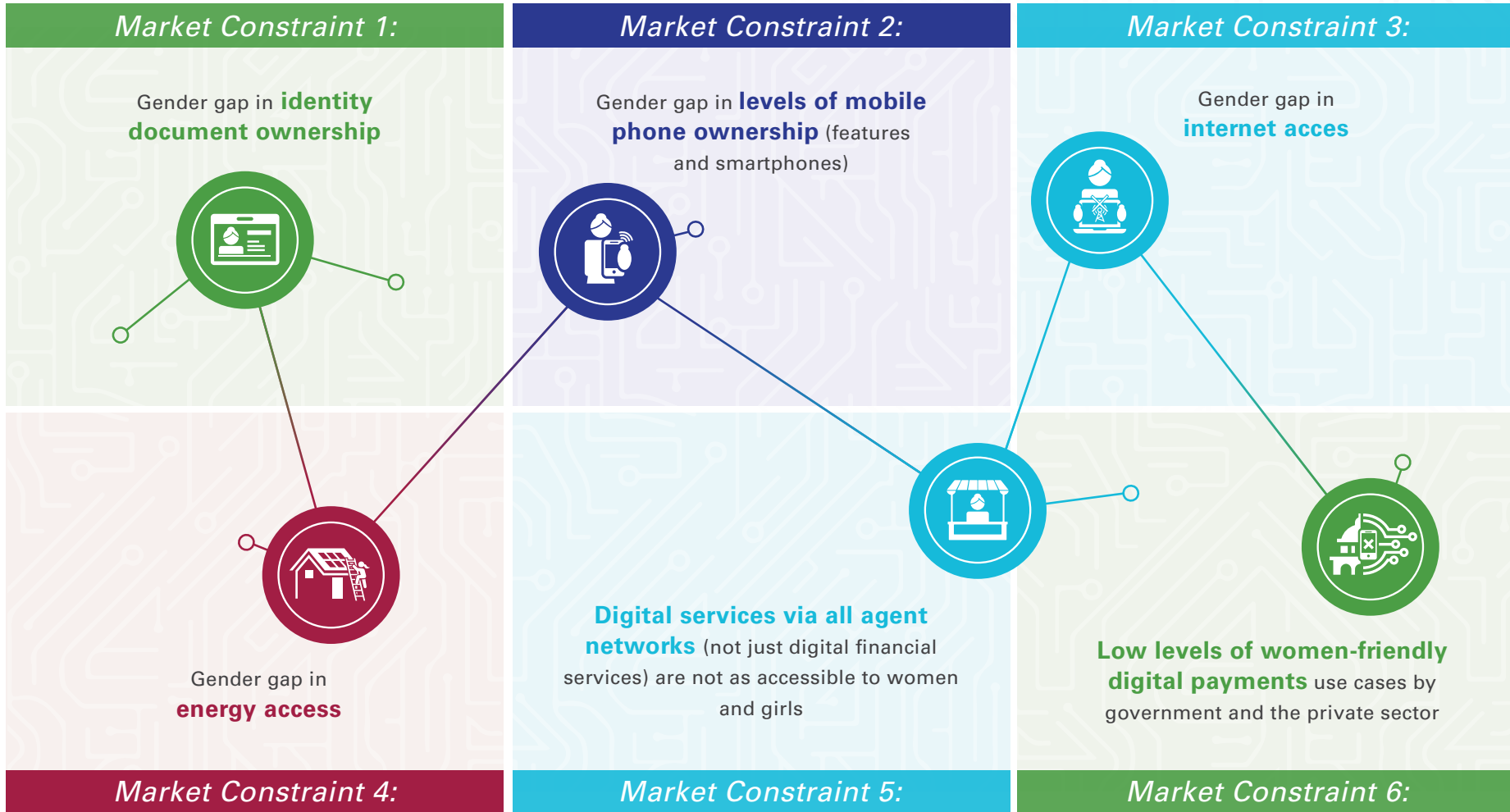


The interventions in this section aim to increase women's access to physical, agent and government infrastructures, by:

- 1 Addressing the gender gap in ID ownership, which can prevent women from accessing the services they need
- 2 Increasing women's ownership of mobile phones, giving them a primary tool to participate in the digital economy
- 3 Working with private- and public-sector partners to break down the sociocultural and economic barriers that lead to a gender gap in digital access
- 4 Working with partners to create innovative new financing and technology models that address the gender digital divide
- 5 Transforming agent networks so that they are women-friendly, for both customers and employees
- 6 Noting that digital payments from employers and governments are a proven path to financial inclusion but unless they are designed and implemented in a gender-sensitive way, women may be left behind

INFRASTRUCTURE:

MARKET CONSTRAINTS



Market constraints and interventions for infrastructure work stream

Market Constraint 1:



Gender gap in identity document ownership

A useful guide from ID4D: [ID Enrolment Strategies: Practical Lessons from Around the Globe](#), which includes the following interventions.

- 1. DO/ADVOCATE:** Support government and donor efforts to digitize IDs and e-government services focused on women (bundled services approach). See the Bangladesh example in the GSMA's [report on exploring the gender gap in identification](#) (page 52) and [an example from Senegal](#) from ID4D and the World Bank (page 17).
- 2. DO/ADVOCATE:** Work with the existing government agency issuing IDs to increase accessibility to women and girls. [See the mobile vital records example in Uganda from UNICEF.](#)
- 3. DO/ADVOCATE:** Support payment digitization with government/donors, with links to identity needs. [See the Government of India's enabled payment system example.](#)
- 4. DO/ADVOCATE:** Leverage agent networks to create women-friendly, trusted sources of information about ID registration. See the Pakistan and Telenor collaboration example in this [GSMA report](#) (page 11).

Gender gap in identity document ownership

5. DO: Create female-friendly registration sites. [See the Government of Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority example.](#)

6. DO/ADVOCATE: DO/ADVOCATE: Work with organizations to facilitate IDs for refugees and migrants. See examples from Kenya (page 16) and Iraq (page 20) on mobiles and refugees from a [GSMA report on refugees and identity.](#)

7. DO/ADVOCATE: Involve gatekeepers: include men, boys and other community leaders in the education efforts on why women/girls should own IDs. See a [Malawi example](#) (pages 25 and 26 of the ID4D report), where women were also part of registration staff (as gatekeepers).

8. DO/ADVOCATE: Catalyse partnership with donors and the private sector to scale up successful interventions. See the Government of India's [collaboration on the Aadhar example](#) (page 16 of the ID4D report).



Gender gap in levels of mobile phone ownership (features and smartphones)

One of the best guiding documents is from GSMA: Accelerating [affordable smartphone ownership in emerging markets](#), which includes the following interventions.

1. DO: Increase handset availability, leveraging agent networks when relevant. See the Copia and Kilimall examples from Kenya in the above GSMA report (pages 62 and 98).

2. DO: Increase asset financing options for handsets. See FNB and Cell C example from South Africa in the above GSMA Report (page 54).

3. DO: Increase the availability of pay-as-you-go phone payment plan schemes. [See Strategic Impact Advisors Malawi example](#).

4. DO/ADVOCATE: Work with mobile network operators, financial services providers and/or other development partners to subsidize, to lower interest rates for pay-as-you-go phone payment plans. [See MTN Ghana and Huawei's partnership on launching affordable smartphones](#).

5. DO/ADVOCATE: Increase third-party payment options for handsets. [See the Government of Malaysia's Youth Communication Package example](#).

6. DO/ADVOCATE: Work with private companies, manufacturers or non-governmental organizations to subsidize the cost of phones to women and girls. See [Vodafone India's Smart Snehidi example](#) (page 13).

Gender gap in levels of mobile phone ownership (features and smartphones)

One of the best guiding documents is from GSMA: Accelerating [affordable smartphone ownership in emerging markets](#), which includes the following interventions.

7. DO: Test new business models to address the lack of affordability of handsets. See the Techno Mobile example from Africa in the above GSMA report (page 51) and [Rwanda's example on waiving charges on digital payments](#).

8. DO: Create bundled products that include the handset, tailored for women and girls. [See Google and Orange Pamoja Project example in Africa](#).

9. DO/ADVOCATE: Address the affordability constraint in terms of mobile credit, taxes and other means depending on the market. See the M-Shwari example from Kenya in the above GSMA report (page 53).

10. DO: Create or enable smartphone operating systems that allow easy multiple logins to create a safe space while sharing phones. [See DAI's Center for Digital Acceleration research on User Perceptions of Trust & Privacy on the Internet](#).

11. DO/ADVOCATE: Include gatekeepers: engage boys and men in showing the business case for women and girls to own mobile devices. See the [report](#) from Nike.

12. DO: Scale up successful business models through blended finance, loans/guarantees. [See Alibaba & China Telecom partnership to sell low-cost smartphones here](#).



Gender gap in internet access

- 1. DO/ADVOCATE:** Increase targeted use of universal service funds by government/ICT ministries. See [recommendations](#) on how to do so, from the Alliance for Affordable Internet, and the Government of Nigeria's [national broadband plan](#).
- 2. DO/ADVOCATE:** Invest at least 50% of universal service access funds in projects targeting women's internet access or use. See Safaricom's [Maisha Ni Digital](#) from Kenya.
- 3. DO/ADVOCATE:** Increase the transparency of financing, disbursements and operations in universal service funds. See the example from the Governments of Malaysia and Ghana in the [A4AI report](#) (pages 14 and 15).
- 4. DO:** Partner with anchor partners (schools, hospitals, etc.) to create a business case for providing connectivity in low-connectivity areas, and focus on projects where the majority of women and girls are receiving payments. See the [Pro Mujer Nicaragua example](#).
- 5. DO:** Include affordable internet access to women and girls in product business models. See the [Tanzania rural coverage pilot example from GSMA](#) and [increasing mobile internet use](#) in South Asia from GSMA.

Gender gap in internet access

6. DO:

Leverage an increase in mobile transactions to increase connectivity in a rural areas. See Vodafone India's Sakhi Pack example in the GSMA Report (page 25) and the AfChix project on a [gender-sensitive approach to connect the unconnected using community network models](#) in Rural Kenya, Senegal, Morocco and Namibia.

7. DO/ADVOCATE:

Increase awareness of gender issues and improve diversity within universal service access funds. See Rwanda's digital ambassador programme example in the [EQUALS report](#) (page 6).

8. DO/ADVOCATE:

Include gatekeepers. Ensure community leaders, including men and boys, are engaged in and trained on the link between women and girls having access to the internet and the betterment of the family and community. See Nigeria's Tech4Families example on [lessening the gender digital divide at the family level](#).



Gender gap in energy access

1. DO:

Design new business models and scale up successful business models that increase women's access with grants, loans and guarantees

A) Use sex-disaggregated data about product purchasing, product use and payments to inform business strategies. See an example from [Fenix in Uganda and Zambia](#).

B) Design products, services and distribution channels that are targeted to women's needs and preferences. See work from [Solar Sister in Africa](#), and [Frontier Markets Sahelis](#).

2. DO:

Offer flexible payment schemes and consider moveable assets and other alternatives as collateral. See how [pay-as-you-go energy models do this](#) in a report by CGAP.

3. DO/ADVOCATE:

Promote access and build the capacity of women (especially women farmers and entrepreneurs) to use time-saving energy products (e.g. pay-as-you-go solar water pumps, solar refrigeration) that reduce drudgery or support productive activities. See [Energy for Impact, Senegal](#) and [MercyCrops' AgriFin SunCulture](#).

4. DO/ADVOCATE:

Work with pay-as-you-go energy providers to reduce their market constraints. See the example, [USAID's Power Africa](#).

5. DO/ADVOCATE:

Work with on-grid providers to increase their accessibility and affordability, especially for women. See the World Bank, Climate Investment Funds and ESMAP [guide on mini-grids and gender equality](#).

Market Constraint 4: Continued

Gender gap in energy access

6. DO/ADVOCATE: Work with pay-as-you-go providers to ensure women sign up for services under their own names, thereby creating positive credit histories for themselves. [See CGAP's research on increasing women's access to finance through PAYGo.](#)

7. DO: Project designers and funders can use outcome-oriented financing mechanisms to incentivize companies to reach women customers and/or the labor force. See this [commitment to gender equality in energy investments.](#)

Market Constraint 5:



Digital services via all agent networks (not just digital financial services) are not as accessible to women and girls

1. DO: New business models and scale up successful pilots to make agent networks accessible to women and girls with grants, loans and guarantees. See [CGAP recommendations for agent networks at the last mile](#) and the report from the [Cherie Blair Foundation on women entrepreneurs in mobile retail channels](#) and [MTN MoMo's example on expanding mobile payments for women in Ghana.](#)

2. DO: Lower costs of capital for women to become agents. See Tigo Rwanda's women entrepreneurship [example from GSMA.](#)

Digital services via all agent networks (not just digital financial services) are not as accessible to women and girls

3. DO: Short-term lending to agents to help them get started. See, from Zambia, the [Zoona cash example](#).

4. DO: Non-collateral short-term lending facilities to help manage liquidity. See the [UNCDF Senegal MFI Pamecas example](#) (in English and French).

5. DO: Increase the number of women agents, demonstrating the business case for women agents. See the [GIZ Jordan closing the gap](#) example and the [field note from the IFC](#) on DRC FINCA in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

6. DO/ADVOCATE: Work with providers to increase outreach/marketing to women and girls. See the [Telesom Somaliland example from GSMA](#) and [Vodafone Qatar's Al Johara](#) example.

7. DO/ADVOCATE: Address safety and security concerns when tick marks or similar are used in place of signatures to overcome illiteracy. See the [UNCDF PNG Mama Bank](#) example.

8. DO: Create and communicate a transparent application and qualification process for becoming an agent. Read [a newspaper article about an example](#) from India.

Market Constraint 5: Continued

Digital services via all agent networks (not just digital financial services) are not as accessible to women and girls

9. DO: Create a career pathway that shows how tellers can become agents, and how agents can grow within the business. See an example from [UNCDF Malawi and Zoono](#).

Market Constraint 6:



Low levels of women-friendly digital payments use cases by government and the private sector

1. DO: Design and pilot new business models and support the scaling of successful models. See the [Mexico Prospera example](#) from Women's World Banking.
2. DO: Provide technical assistance, grants or other support to donors and government implementers of government-to-person programmes focused on women and girls and partners to digitize payments. See good practices as suggested by [Digitize/direct/design: the d3 criteria by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#).
3. DO: Work with relevant agent networks to assist them in managing liquidity and being women-friendly. See guidance from [GSMA Connected Women](#).

Low levels of women-friendly digital payments use cases by government and the private sector

4. DO:

Create use cases (government-to-person payments) for girl-youth accounts. See a [CGAP](#) business case for youth accounts, and case studies from the [UNCDF YouthStart programme](#).

5. DO:

Incorporate digital and financial literacy, as well as mobile phone access diagnostics within programme design and implementation to solve the basic challenges women and girls are likely to have when payments are digitized. See [Women's World Banking](#) guide on capacity-building for government-to-person payments.

6. DO/ADVOCATE:

Allow women to choose the payment platform or service for receiving social benefits. See an [overview from CGAP](#) for examples.



SECTION 8

INNOVATION

Innovative new products and services can change society, but **innovation is not gender-neutral.**



Development practitioners can **work together** with the private sector to ensure that innovation leads to more **inclusive digital economies** in which **women play a central role.**

IDEO's Women and Money project is a great place to start to understand the ways in which innovation can lead to greater financial inclusion for women.

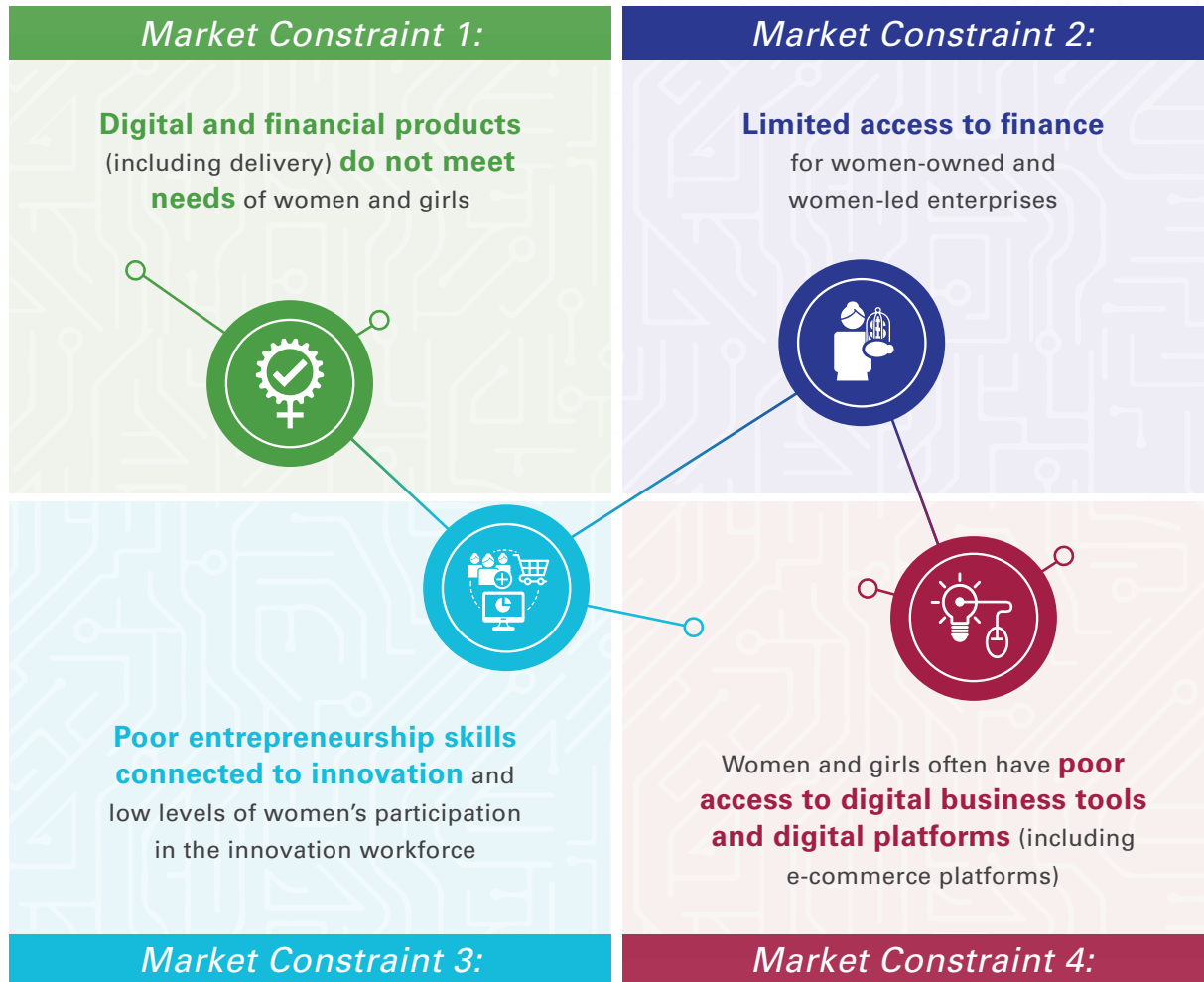


This section offers potential interventions directed at:

- 1 Working with the private sector to improve the design of digital products and services so that they address the needs of women
- 2 Increasing women entrepreneurs' access to financial instruments (including non-collateral-based lending), which can help them to grow and to develop their businesses
- 3 Increasing women's access to digital platforms, and increasing financing to women entrepreneurs
- 4 Increasing women's innovation skills and their participation in the innovation workforce, allowing them to improve their businesses and to play an active role in shaping digital economies

INNOVATION:

MARKET CONSTRAINTS



Market constraints and interventions for innovation work stream

Market Constraint 1:



Digital and financial products (including delivery) do not meet needs of women and girls

- 1. DO/ADVOCATE:** Develop inclusive business models that apply behavioural science and human-centred design to develop solutions and business models fitted to needs of women and girls. See several examples from the [IFC report](#) on making a business case for investing in women and The Asian Development Bank's [report on innovative financial products and services for women](#) and [CGAP's guide on designing products for low-income customers](#).
- 2. DO:** Establish an accelerator programme and/or competition with a grant-based or grant-matched challenge. See [UNCDF Zambia Sprint4Women](#) and other Fintech fund challenges by [Women's World Banking](#) and [DFS Lab](#).
- 3. DO:** Skills building on e-commerce, both as a platform to deliver services or to sell/offer them. See the [example of a women entrepreneur's finance initiative](#) from the Government of Lebanon and World Bank.
- 4. DO:** Technical assistance and grants to support the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data by the private sector to inform gender-smart product development and market strategies. See [UNCDF Myanmar smart product development](#).

Market Constraint 1: Continued

Digital and financial products (including delivery) do not meet needs of women and girls

5. DO:

Support financial service providers to join peer-learning platforms. See the [Financial Alliance for Women All Stars Academy](#) and [Women's World Banking network partners](#).

6. DO/ADVOCATE:

Conduct awareness-raising workshop on the business case for serving women clients, and provide technical assistance to support financial service providers to serve the women's market. [See MTN Ghana's MoMo Pay example on expanding merchant payment services to serve more women clients](#).

7. DO/ADVOCATE:

Encourage financial service providers to engage gatekeepers when trying to increase women's uptake and use as customers. See an example from [Uninor in India by GSMA](#).

Market Constraint 2:



Limited access to finance for women-owned and women-led enterprises

1. DO:

Connect Women-owned/led SMEs to grants, loans and loan-guarantees programmes at the macro level through innovation hubs, fund managers, venture capital and others. See examples from Peru and Tanzania in the [GPII and IFC report on strengthening access to finance for women-owned SMEs](#) (page 53), the [World Bank We-Fi initiative](#) and the [OECD guide on new approaches to SME and entrepreneurship financing](#).

Limited access to finance for women-owned and women-led enterprises

2. DO: Work with financial service providers and financial institutions to drive a focus on women-owned and women-led enterprises in their SME portfolio through technical assistance or other incentives. See the [UNCDF Fintech4U](#) example and [NorFund's DFCU](#).
3. DO: Connect SMEs to alternative financing models that do not require collateral or use movable collateral. See the [World Bank's Women Entrepreneurship Development project in Ethiopia](#) and Uganda Flow (page 134) in [GIZ's Financial Inclusion Toolkit](#).
4. DO: Apply algorithm audits to mitigate the risks of perpetuating gender bias in credit scoring. See Women's World Banking [report on understanding algorithmic bias against women in credit markets](#).
5. DO: Connect SMEs to women-focused Islamic financing tools (may address collateral issues and social and cultural norms). See an [IFC example from Indonesia in collaboration with BTPN Syariah Bank](#).
6. DO: Connect SMEs to secondary markets to raise capital, or through models like equity financing. See the [EcoCash Pathfinder Initiative from the Digital Financing Taskforce](#).
7. DO: Provide equity support to incentivize commercial players or venture capital funds to step in. See [Women's World Banking Equity Fund example](#).

Market Constraint 2: Continued

Limited access to finance for women-owned and women-led enterprises

8. DO: Connect with syndication or venture capital funds to support early-to-late-stage investments. See [Australian Aid's Investing in Women Initiative](#).
9. DO: Increase the number of women decision makers in lending and investment institutions. See [impact analysis by DAI](#) and [Gender Intelligence for Banks report from IFC on HBL in Pakistan](#).

Market Constraint 3:



Poor entrepreneurship skills connected to innovation and low levels of women's participation in the innovation workforce

1. DO: Provide technical assistance and/or offer capacity-building tailored specifically for women and girls to build innovation skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. See examples from [Girls in Tech](#), [Technovation Girls](#) and [Microsoft4Afrika](#) (and more on [partnership with the United States Millennium Challenge Corporation](#)).
2. DO: Link grants and technical assistance to both women and men entrepreneurs but apply gender criteria in the assessment of which businesses can access the support. See [UNCDF Zambia FinTech4U BongoHive](#) and the [2X challenge](#).

Market Constraint 3: Continued

Limited access to finance for women-owned and women-led enterprises

3. DO/ADVOCATE: Provide support to help women network in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and innovation industries. See the [National Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia](#).
4. DO: Build skills/access to services around data collection and analysis for women entrepreneurs. See [AllWomen Academy Data Science courses](#) or marketplaces like [Econolytics](#).
5. DO/ADVOCATE: Build skills around connection with agent networks for women entrepreneurs. See [Cherie Blair Foundation on Women Entrepreneurs in Mobile Retail Channels](#).
6. DO/ADVOCATE: Skills building on artificial intelligence, the internet of things and next-generation technologies for women entrepreneurs. See an [example](#) from UNESCO and Women in Africa.

Market Constraint 4:



Women and girls often have poor access to digital business tools and digital platforms (including informal and online commerce and formal e-commerce platforms)

See [CGAP's research on the impacts of Informal Online Commerce for Women in Bangladesh](#).

Women and girls often have poor access to digital business tools and digital platforms (including informal and online commerce and formal e-commerce platforms)

1. DO:

Provide technical assistance and/or subsidize women entrepreneurs' access to data analytics services, website and cloud hosting services, SMS/USSD platforms, and e-commerce platforms. See examples from [World Bank's Women Entrepreneurship Development Project in Ethiopia](#), [ITC's Women and Trade Programme](#) and [UNESCAP e-commerce capacity building for women](#).

2. DO:

Publish e-commerce platform details, including contact details, and share with SMEs. [See similar example here from The Saheli Store](#).

3. DO:

Conduct match-making sessions between e-commerce platforms and women-owned SMEs. See [Agrilinks' enhancing opportunities for women's enterprises in Viet Nam](#).

4. DO/ADVOCATE:

Support e-commerce platforms to connect with as many women SMEs as relevant. See [SheTrades](#) from the ITC and UN Women's [Buy From Women Enterprise Platform](#).



SECTION 9

POLICY AND REGULATION

An **enabling policy environment** can promote women's **financial inclusion** and increase women's representation in the digital economy



Governments have a critical role to play in women's economic empowerment, and development practitioners need to **understand their priorities and perspectives** when supporting them to achieve this aim through good policymaking and regulatory practices.



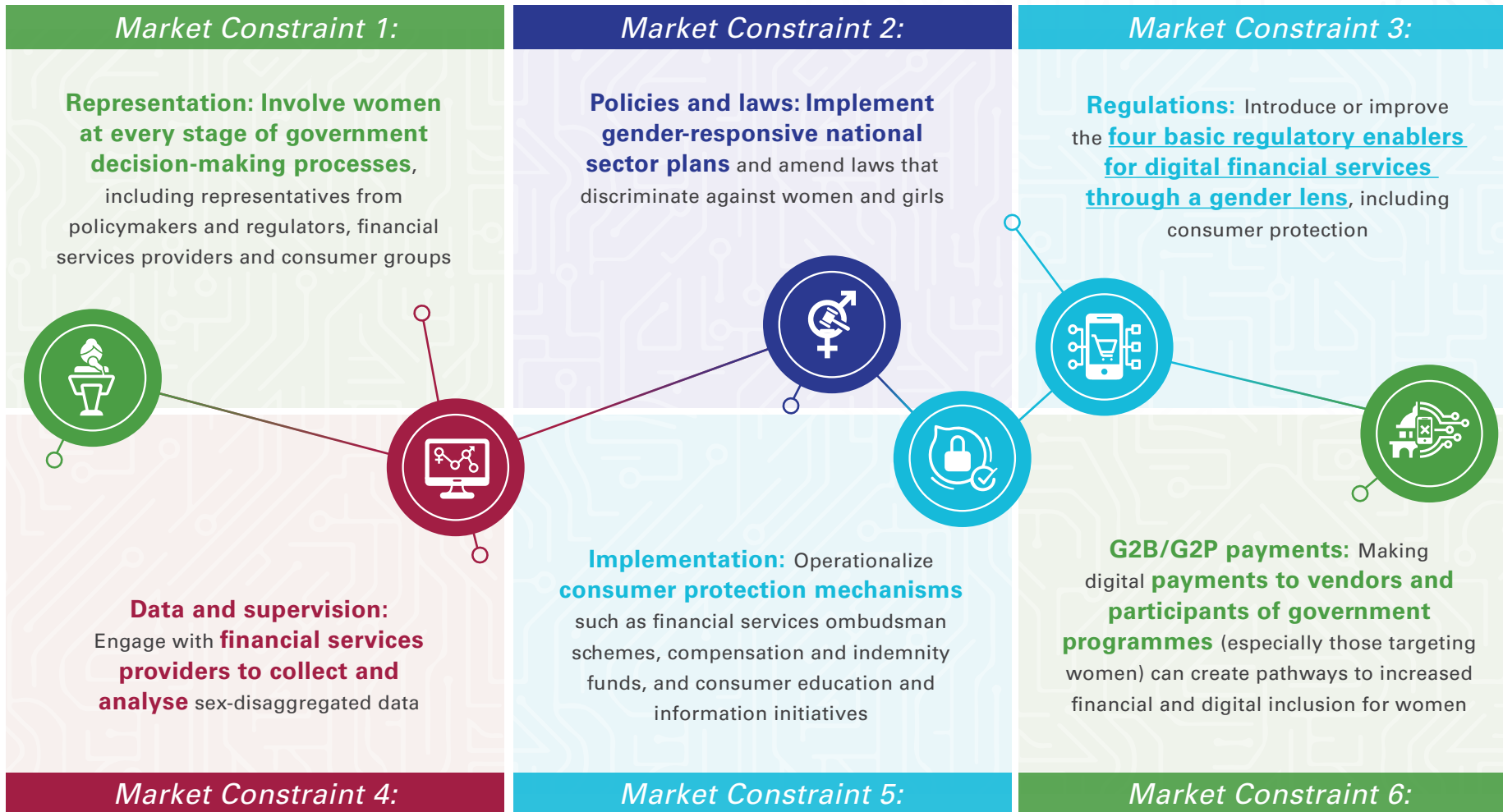
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- 1 **Representation** is key to addressing gender biases in policies, laws and regulations
- 2 Effective **policies** ensure that digital financial services benefit everyone in society, including women
- 3 Many financial products are **regulated**, and those regulations can either help or hinder women's financial inclusion
- 4 By **implementing** gender-intentional consumer protection mechanisms, policymakers can ensure they build women's trust in financial products
- 5 **Data and supervision** are key to ensuring compliance with gender-intentional reforms, to directing interventions and to measuring policy impact
- 6 As many people use formal financial services for the first time as a result of **government-to-people (G2P) payments**, it's essential that these payments create pathways for women's financial inclusion

POLICY AND REGULATION:

MARKET CONSTRAINTS

Across the world, successful governments do the following:



Market constraints and interventions for policy and regulation work stream

Market Constraint 1:



Representation – Involve women at every stage of government decision-making processes, including representatives from policymakers and regulators, financial services providers and consumer groups

1. DO: Undertake a gender assessment on internal institutional policies and practices. See [Women's World Banking gender assessment tool](#) and [UNCDF WEE financing tool](#).
2. ADVOCATE: Urge governments to establish internal targets for increased representation of women in leadership positions. See [OMFIF gender balance index for central banks, sovereign funds and public pension funds](#) and [India's constitutional amendment to reserve one-third of parliamentary seats for women](#).
3. DO/ADVOCATE: Ensure a pipeline of female talent is built and sustained. See [Women's World Banking leadership and diversity programme](#).
4. DO/ADVOCATE: Support female representatives from financial services providers and women's organizations to directly participate in public consultation processes. See an example from [UNCDF Sierra Leone](#).
5. DO/ADVOCATE: Require a minimum level of women's participation in all meetings, including speaking opportunities. See [the Government of India's requirement for financial institutions to appoint female board members](#).



Policies and laws – Implement gender-responsive national sector plans and amend laws that discriminate against women and girls

1. DIAGNOSE/ ADVOCATE:

Identify current policy constraints (including legal barriers) to women's financial inclusion in collaboration with local stakeholders. See an example from [UNCDF Myanmar](#) and the Women, Business and the Law's [report and data sets](#) and [policy initiatives from Bangladesh Bank for easing access to finance for women entrepreneurs](#).

2. DO/ADVOCATE:

Co-draft policy road maps to address gaps, assign roles and responsibilities, set targets, and establish regular dialogue between key stakeholders. See [AFI's guideline note on integrating gender and women's financial inclusion into national strategies](#), [Central Bank Of Egypt's framework](#) and [Nepal's gender equality and social inclusion framework](#).

3. DO/ADVOCATE:

Work with relevant government agencies to address legal barriers and/or bias. See the Chad and Sierra Leone examples from [Women, Business and Law](#) (page 24).

4. DO/ADVOCATE:

Support women's organizations, civil society groups, academia, and so on to advocate change and to directly participate in public consultation on draft bills. See [UNCDF's advisory panel on women and digital financial services in Central Africa](#).



Regulations – Introduce or improve the four basic regulatory enablers for digital financial services through a gender lens, including consumer protection. This is further supported by the recent GSMA report “Are the effects of mobile money regulation gender neutral?”

1. DO/ADVOCATE: **E-money:** Create a specialized licensing window for non-banks to issue e-money accounts (women are more likely to own a mobile phone than a traditional bank account). See [CGAP's Côte d'Ivoire's mobile network operator example](#).
2. DO/ADVOCATE: **Agents:** Permit both banks and non-banks to use third-party agents (to increase opportunities for women to become agents). See [GIZ's India's Bank Sakhi example](#).
3. DO/ADVOCATE: **Customer Due Diligence (CDD):** Allow simplified CDD for lower-risk accounts and transactions (women often lack access to official identification documents). See [AFI's report on KYC innovations, financial inclusion and integrity](#) and [AFI's case studies on Nigeria and Peru](#).
4. DO/ADVOCATE: **Consumer protection:** tailor consumer protection rules to the full range of banks and non-banks – for example, disclosure and transparency, complaints management, data protection and privacy (women tend to have lower rates of digital and financial literacy, and are less likely to submit complaints, etc.). See [CGAP's example on Peru's Consumer Protection Code for Banks](#).



Data and supervision – Engage with policy makers, regulators and financial services providers to collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data

1. DO/ADVOCATE: **Regulator workshops:** Make the case for collecting and analysing granular and disaggregated data (by sex, location, age, education, etc.) to track progress towards policy and supervisory objectives. See [*UN Secretary General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance example*](#) and [*CGAP's FinEquity Gender Data in Financial Inclusion Brief*](#) and [*USAID & Toronto Centre's report on using sex-disaggregated data to enhance inclusion*](#).
2. DO: **Private sector engagement:** In coordination with the regulator, provide technical assistance and/or grants for financial service providers to collect and use sex-disaggregated data. See [*Data2X's example on Chile's Commitment to Women's Data*](#) and [*UNCDF Zambia's data automation system*](#).
3. DO: **Regtech/suptech:** Co-finance data systems with regulators to improve the completeness, accuracy and timeliness of regulatory reporting data, especially sex-disaggregated data. See [*UNCDF's Nepal example*](#).
4. DO: **Peer exchange:** Connect policymakers with counterparts in other countries to share experiences on collecting and using sex-disaggregated data. See [*Data2X Women's Financial Inclusion Data Partnership*](#) and [*AFI's Thematic Area on Gender Inclusive Finance*](#).

Market Constraint 5:



Implementation – Operationalize consumer protection mechanisms such as financial services ombudsman schemes, compensation and indemnity funds, and consumer education and information initiatives

1. DO: Increase the accessibility of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for consumers, particularly those with lower levels of literacy. See [African Development Bank's Africa Digital Financial Inclusion Facility](#).
2. DO: Create test products and platforms that women and girls can use to build their familiarity. See [Grameen Foundation's WomenLink Philippines programme](#) and [CGAP's guide on Principles of Smart Phone and Mobile Money Design](#).
3. DO/ADVOCATE: Operate price comparison websites or apps. See the [World Bank's guidance](#).

Market Constraint 6:



G2B/G2P payments – Making digital payments to vendors and participants of government programmes (especially those targeting women) can create pathways to increased financial and digital inclusion for women

1. DIAGNOSE: Identify opportunities to digitize existing government payment streams, including adjustments to procurement processes, to allow for partnerships with non-traditional financial actors such as mobile network operators and fintechs. See [World Bank's Colombia case study](#) and [UNCDF's partnership with the Government of Fiji](#).

Market Constraint 6:

G2B/G2P payments – Making digital payments to vendors and participants of government programmes (especially those targeting women) can create pathways to increased financial and digital inclusion for women

2. DO/ADVOCATE: Allow women to choose payment platforms/services to receive social benefits. See [*CGAP's examples from Zambia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Uganda and elsewhere.*](#)

3. ADVOCATE: Advocate partnerships between governments and women's groups and a minimum level of women's participation in the steering committees of government payment schemes. See the [*G2Px initiative.*](#)

4. ADVOCATE: Encourage government participation in alliances such as the [*Better than Cash Alliance*](#) and the [*Alliance for Financial Inclusion*](#) to share experiences with counterparts around the world.



SECTION 10

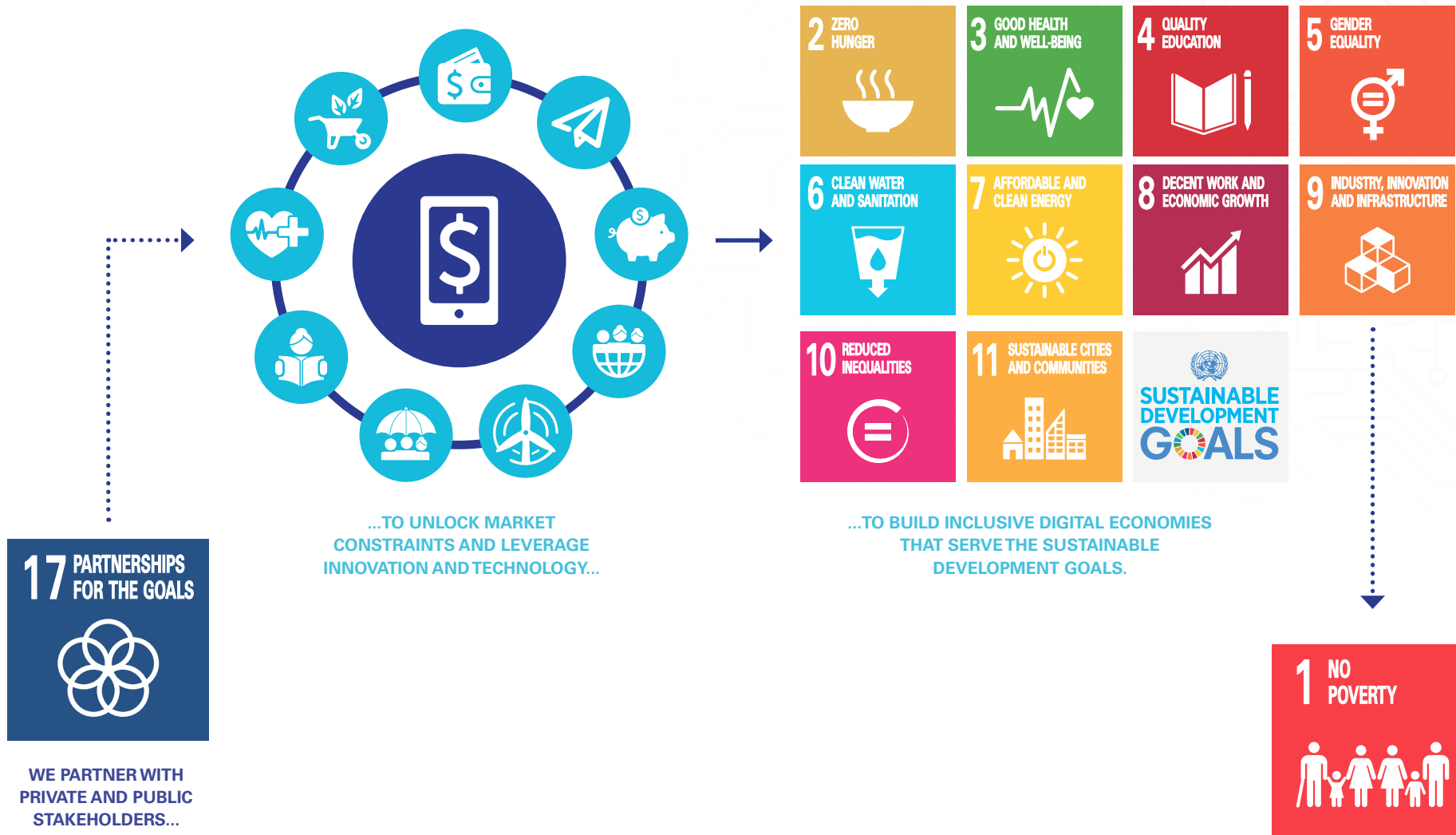
ABOUT UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND



Unlocking Public and Private
Finance for the Poor

ABOUT UNCDF

With its capital mandate and instruments, UNCDF offers 'last mile' finance models that unlock public and private resources, especially at the domestic level, to reduce poverty and support local economic development.





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OUR WORK STREAMS

INCLUSIVE DIGITAL ECONOMIES STRATEGY

UNCDF's Inclusive Digital Economies strategy has four key components, which structure this playbook. By addressing these four key components we can create an environment where digital services can empower people in the world's toughest geographies to lead productive and healthy lives.



1

SKILLS

Recognizing from the start how users acquire the necessary skills (digital and financial) to adopt new digital services, and leveraging digital services to increase their soft and hard skills.



2

INNOVATION

Supporting local entrepreneurs and MSMEs to build inclusive services for the local digital economy, making sure that the value offered by digital services improves the livelihoods of people living within the market and is not spirited away to global platform providers.



3

INFRASTRUCTURE

Understanding the importance of digital payments as the basis for sustainable, economically impactful digital services.



4

POLICY AND REGULATION

Working with governments via our existing in-country contacts and relationships to develop policies that support and provide the necessary incubation for an inclusive digital economy.

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