



**HARNESSING THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION
FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER
EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**



STOCKTAKING PAPER

HARNESSING THE
DIGITAL REVOLUTION
FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT
OF GENDER EQUALITY
AND WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agenda 2030 highlights the potential of ICTs to accelerate human progress. Recognizing this potential, UN-Women has included ICTs as a “driver of change” in its Strategic Plan 2018-2021. The Entity has implemented a change strategy across its programmatic portfolio in all thematic areas and operational contexts in order to harness the digital revolution to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.

This paper seeks to inform consultations on UN-Women’s Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and complements its ICT and Innovation Strategies. It provides an overview of how digital revolutions have transformed human development, with a focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment, outlining the interlinkages between innovation, technology and gender. Acknowledging the benefits of digital solutions to scale up and accelerate development initiatives, the paper also underscores the challenges for women and girls caused by the digital gender gap, including the risk of being disproportionately affected by the transformation of work by digital technologies.

It describes UN-Women’s efforts to leverage its composite mandate to close this digital gender gap. In the normative front, UN-Women assists Member States in implementing and monitoring ICT-related gender equality commitments. Acting upon normative advances, it promotes improved programme planning and implementation across the UN system through a gender responsive big data revolution.

In connection to this, UN-Women is establishing partnerships with key ICT players, such as ITU and GSMA to: (i) create awareness and coalitions to close the digital gender divide; (ii) engender ICT and broadband plans, policies and legal frameworks through analyses; (iii) ensure that women and girls have equal affordable access to digital technologies through inclusive policies and investment; (iv) adopt gender sensitive norms to end discrimination against women and girls around the use of ICTs; and (v) disseminate and develop web-based and mobile services with added value, leveraging digital solutions for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In addition, UN-Women aims to use digital solutions to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its key functions. To this end, the organization is investing in the

development of digital platforms to: (1) Inform and engage Member States, the wider public, UN agencies, companies and civil society in action towards gender equality; (2) Provide gender advocates and women and girls with capacity development and learning opportunities; and (3) Facilitate access to decent work and entrepreneurship. These areas are consolidated in three categories: Engage, Learn and Create.

Acknowledging that digital technologies in isolation are not a silver bullet to drive development, the paper further presents how UN-Women’s digital solutions are embedded into its Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs) to facilitate implementation and scale up.

These efforts are coupled with a drive to strengthen the efficiency and accountability of UN-Women’s internal operations using digital technologies, understanding that information is the lifeblood of any organization. Notably, the linking of result-management and financial systems allows UN-Women to continuously measure and enhance value for money.

UN-Women has set in place ICT and innovation governance structures and processes to ensure its digital solutions are secure, sustainable and aligned with the organization’s goals. This governance system guides and oversees the digital transformation of the organization, ensuring cybersecurity, risk and innovation management and technical and financial sustainability.

UN-Women’s earlier investments in ICTs and innovation provide a solid foundation to expand digital solutions for development and operational efficiency. This is as a decisive factor for UN-Women to increase its impact and value for money in support of Planet 50/50 by 2030, leaving no one behind.

Introduction

Recognizing the unprecedented opportunities as well as the challenges of rapid technological development for gender equality and women's empowerment, UN-Women has included technology and innovation as one of the "drivers of change" in the outline of its Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (see Annex 1). As part of the consultation process for the preparation of the Strategic Plan, the objective of this paper is to consult internally on UN-Women's ongoing and proposed efforts to reduce the digital divide and leverage digital solutions to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations to achieve gender equality and women empowerment. In addition, this paper will be presented to the Executive Board in an informal briefing as part of a series of consultations on the development of the new Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

This paper complements UN-Women's ICT Strategy, which shapes the core digital capability of the organization, by describing how this capable core will be used to develop innovative digital solutions and deliver development results and efficiency gains. The paper also complements UN-Women's **Brief on Innovation for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** that was presented to its Executive Board in September 2015, highlighting how UN-Women is to apply a rigorous funnel methodology to develop and manage digital innovations.

This paper is structured in five parts. Part I recalls the key opportunities and challenges associated with the digital revolution for gender equality and women's empowerment. Part II summarizes UN-Women's normative and programmatic efforts to close the gender divide. Part III describes the digital platforms that UN-Women is developing to support the implementation of its programmatic initiatives and deliver transformational change in the lives of women and girls around the world, with a specific emphasis on "leaving no one behind".

Part IV shifts the discussion on digital technologies from development results to internal operations and introduces the Programme Information Management Systems (PIMs) developed by UN-Women to enhance quality data and information flows to inform its corporate planning and decision-making, financial allocations, results management, knowledge management and part-

nership development processes. Part V further zooms in and presents UN-Women's multi-layered digital architecture to develop and operate these digital solutions. A set of conclusions are offered at the end of the paper.

I. Opportunities and Challenges of the Digital Revolution for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

There is growing recognition of the potential of digital technologies for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. They provide unprecedented opportunities to reach those who are the most likely to be left behind by breaking isolation and creating economies of scale. According to Deloitte (2014), access to digital technologies can help boost GDP through job creation and greater productivity: developing countries could benefit from an increase in their GDP of up to 2 trillion euros.¹

The digital revolution is also disrupting international development. There are about 5 billion mobile subscribers and it is forecasted that an additional 1.6 billion will be added by 2020, including 3 billion with access to a smartphone. Increased connectivity brings huge opportunity in terms of access to health, education, political representation, financial and other services that can transform people's lives.²

Around 500 million patients were using mobile health applications in 2015. In Rwanda, drones are delivering vaccines, medicine and blood.³ Drones are also increasingly used in disaster risk management. Mapping generated by drones can, for example, improve logistics and damage assessments during crisis, as was the case with Haiti's Hurricane Sandy in 2012. New education models with a blended design that combines online courses with classroom instruction are increasingly adopted to accelerate equal access to quality education in developing

¹ Deloitte (2014): Value of Connectivity: Economic and social benefits of expanding internet access.

² World Economic Forum:
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/03/why-mobile-banking-is-the-key-to-financial-inclusion/>

³ Zipline <http://flyzipline.com/product>

countries. Various educational tools and e-learning activities have also been created to address the needs of students with different learning styles, including those with special needs⁴.

Mobile banking is dramatically improving financial inclusion prospects for the 2 billion people (40% of the world's adult population) that are unbanked. According to the Report of the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment (2017)⁵, Kenya's M-PESA programme, which provides financial services through a mobile phone platform, has helped 186,000 women move from a subsistence to trading lifestyle. Mobile phone applications and digital platforms for agriculture are also increasing poor farmers' yields and revenue by linking them to information, and global supply chains, and creating online local market places.

Similarly, mobile phones and digital enterprise platforms are enabling small and medium enterprises registered anywhere in the world to connect with large international organizations and integrate global supply chains. This can particularly benefit women entrepreneurs by reducing upfront capita cost requirements to start up a business and facilitate access to both customers and suppliers. For example, nearly 90% of merchants on Alibaba's Taobao shopping site are small and medium enterprises, and slightly more than half of which are female owned.⁶ Digital technologies also enable to provide direct training services to entrepreneurs. #SheMeansBusiness, an initiative of Facebook with support from UN-Women, provides women-owned enterprises with news, articles and other resources to use Facebook and other social media sites to expand their business.

Digital technologies have also given voice to marginalized people, as the increasing access to mobile phones and widening internet access significantly expand the availability of information and the ability to express

⁴ UNDP/UNRISD (2017): Global Trends-Challenges and Opportunities in the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

⁵ <http://www.womenseconomicempowerment.org/assets/reports/UNWomen%2017-01%200313h.pdf>

⁶ UN (2016): Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment.

opinion. It also provides unprecedented opportunities for data collection, analysis and dissemination to enhance the capacity of development actors to leave no one behind, and notably no woman, no girl.

Despite the positive impacts of the digital revolution, its gains have yet to be widely shared. The largest beneficiaries of the digital revolution tend to be the well-educated, middle to high income, technologically literate, urban population. According to ITU (2015), 89% of the world's urban population had 3G mobile broadband coverage, compared with just 29% of its rural population. In addition, it is feared that the rapid digitalization of the economy could destroy jobs faster than it creates them. For example, 3D printing alone can affect the jobs of 320 million manufacturing workers in the world today -12 percent of the global workforce- by displacing people in favor of automated production.⁷

These challenges are compounded for women and girls by the existing digital gender divide. ITU reports that, on average, 12% less women than men have access to the internet and that the gender divide has increased over the last years.⁸ Only 18% of undergraduate computer science degree-holders and 26% of computing jobs are held by women. Less than 25% of the tech workforce is made up of women and even fewer are in senior management positions. This has resulted in a critical global talent shortage, 10 of the hardest jobs to fill are in STEM professions, and exacerbates the risk that women and girls could be disproportionality affected by the transformation of the world of work fostered by digital technologies. Women and girls are also particularly exposed to cyber-bullying and cybercrime, including cyber trafficking.

For women, the digital revolution and the 21st century labour market present both new opportunities and challenges. More than 150 countries have national broadband plans establishing broadband as a national priority but only 29% of them included gender-specific actions, such as increasing women's digital literacy; providing equal access to ICTs for women; or promoting women's

⁷ UNDP (2015): Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development, New York.

⁸ ITU (2016): ICT facts and figures

roles in decision making through digital solutions. Without immediate action, women will not seize the new opportunities offered by the digital revolution and are at risks to fall behind in the changing world of work. Employers in countries suffering from a wide digital gender divide will have a gradually smaller workforce to draw on and will find it increasingly challenging to remain competitive. These consequences will ultimately undermine the digital revolution itself, and all that it can offer to leave no one behind.

II. Closing the Digital Gender Divide

The interrelationship between gender, ICT and innovation has gained attention on the international agenda (see Annex I visualizing the importance of the interlinkages to promote gender responsive innovation and technologies). Over the past few years, UN-Women has provided support and technical inputs to Member States at their request in a number of normative processes to strengthen the commitment for ICTs to deliver results for women and girls. For example, UN-Women engaged with Member States during the 10-year review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10). These inputs focused on the improved implementation and monitoring of gender equality commitments, actions against cyber-related violence towards women, strengthening the quality of women's engagement in the information society, including their full participation in decision-making processes related to ICT, and increased access to the development and use of technologies. Most critically, provisions were included for reporting and monitoring on cross-cutting gender equality commitments providing greater accountability measures. In the WSIS+10 outcome, UN-Women was given a facilitation role in implementing and monitoring those commitments. UN-Women also co-chairs, with the United Nations Development Programme, the Working Group on Broadband and Gender of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development. Through this engagement, UN-Women has brought attention to the issue of gender and ICT to key players inside and outside of the UN system.

These efforts from the international community have contributed to unprecedented normative advancements that highlight the importance of leveraging ICTs for the

achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has emphasized the enormous potential of ICTs to accelerate human progress overall and specifically for women. SDG target 5.b. specifically focuses on enhancing *"the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women"*. Similarly, in the Political Declaration adopted on the 20-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States pledged to enhance *"access to and use of information and communications technologies"* in support of the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action (para 6). The Financing for Development outcome document also contains many references to technology and innovation, and established a UN Technology Facility and transfer mechanism, which will require a gender lens.

Acting upon these normative advances, UN-Women is leveraging its UN Coordination mandate to foster system-wide initiatives to support Member States in closing the digital gender divide. For example, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly calls for the use of big data (mobility, social interaction, social sentiments and attitudes and economic identity) for improved programme planning and implementation based on real-time monitoring. UN-Women is contributing to the UN-wide response to this call by promoting a gender responsive big data revolution. Such a revolution could enable policy makers to address the existing multiple gaps in gender data, and makes visible women's activities, needs, interests, opportunities and challenges, which too often remain invisible in many sectors. As co-chair of both the UNDG Programme Working Group and the UNDG Communications and Advocacy Working Group, UN-Women also contributed significantly to the focus of the new UNDAF guidance on digital technologies as a means to deliver development results.

UN-Women is also exploring with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and mobile phone industry associations a multi-stakeholder initiative to support Member States in bridging the gender digital divide. The objectives of this initiative are:

AWARENESS – Create global awareness and build multi-stakeholder coalitions to commit to concrete action to close the gender digital divide, and ensure women’s equal participation and leadership in the digital revolution. EQUALS, the campaign designed to foster this global movement and commitment, was launched in September 2016. More information can be found at <http://equals.org>.

ANALYSIS - Conduct gender analyses to engender ICT and broadband plans, policies and legal frameworks; and identify appropriate financing mechanisms for implementation.

AFFORDABLE ACCESS – Ensure that women and girls have equal affordable access to digital technologies, devices and services through the development and implementation of inclusive policies and investment for universal service coverage.

ADOPTION – Remove discriminatory social norms around the use of digital technologies by women and girls and empower women and girls to acquire skills to become both ICT users and creators in the digital world.

ADDED VALUE – disseminate/co-develop value added web-based and mobile services to leverage digital solutions to break trends and accelerate efforts towards gender equality and women empowerment.

UN-Women will explore innovative partnerships to finance these initiatives. This could include public private partnerships, such as the partnership between the government of Rwanda and Korea Telecom Operations to deliver universal broadband access through 4G LTE technology, on top of the national fiber optic infrastructure. The partnership has a 4-year goal of covering 95 % of the population. It could also include leveraging the 69 Universal Service Funds, which have a cumulative capitalization of US\$23.2bn and are mandated to foster digital inclusion, including poor rural women and girls (ITU, 2013).

III. Leveraging Digital Solutions to Deliver Development Results for Women and Girls

In addition to closing the digital gender divide, UN-Women aims to harness digital solutions to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its key functions: (i) Inter-governmental normative support; (ii) Advocacy and partnership building; (iii) UN coordination; (iv) Capacity development; (v) Integrated policy support; and (vi) Technical assistance for essential services. Since its inception, the organization has been investing in the development of digital platforms to: (1) Inform and engage Member States, the wider public, including individual women and girls, men and boys, UN partners, companies and civil society organizations in action towards gender equality; (2) Provide gender advocates and women and girls with capacity development and learning opportunities; and (3) Facilitate access to decent work and entrepreneurship to provide women with opportunities to earn an income, be more independent and improve their quality of life. These areas have been consolidated into the following 3 categories: “Engage”; “Learn” and “Create”. (See Figure 1).

ENGAGE: New digital media have brought about dramatic changes in the ways people consume information and interact. Current ICT platforms can be powerful contributors to deliver results for women and girls, as they serve not only to access and share information, but to engage on issues, impact attitudes and behavior and eventually affect change. Online platforms provide spaces for engagement, providing for an environment in which the boundaries between communication and advocacy as well as programmes are fluid. This opens opportunities to impact and lead change through public advocacy, whether in the policy arena or by effecting social and behavior change related to programmatic priorities of the organization.

Since its launch in 2010, UN-Women has thus invested in the digital space and established a strong online presence through its official website, unwomen.org, and its [social media channels](#). UN-Women’s global website and social media channels engage the public and provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on UN-Women’s work. Unwomen.org also provides the *cha-peau* for UN-Women’s Regional, Country and Liaison

Office websites, as well as related thematic sites, such as Beijing+20. Establishment of such sites is governed by UN-Women's web policy. In addition, UN-Women has developed a number of stand-alone engagement platforms, including [Empower Women \(empowerwomen.org\)](http://empowerwomen.org), to share good practices and knowledge on women's economic empowerment; [HeForShe \(heforshe.org\)](http://heforshe.org), to promote the greater engagement of men and boys for gender equality; and the [Women's Empowerment Principles \(weprinciples.org\)](http://weprinciples.org), to promote business practices that support gender equality. UN-Women's website and these platforms have mobilized millions of people and thousands of organizations to take action in their respective fields for gender equality and women's empowerment.

unwomen.org: As UN-Women's official website, unwomen.org provides detailed information about UN-Women, its areas of work, locations, approaches and partnerships, including government contributors, civil society, businesses and foundations; it also provides information to the media, featuring press releases, speeches, and op-eds; as well as a digital library of UN-Women's publications, annual reports and videos. unwomen.org provides the link to all UN-Women engagement platforms to maximize outreach and visibility. The site has by far the largest reach of UN-Women's web presence, with over 3.5 million unique visitors per year.

Social Media: UN-Women has a total social media audience of 5.4 million followers across 77 different social media accounts worldwide, and communicates in 14 languages. Social media channels have been critical to engage a new audience. UN-Women was ranked third "most effective UN agency" on Twitter (average retweets per tweet) in the Twiplomacy report, behind UNICEF and WHO, and second on Instagram followers, behind UNICEF. Largely through social media, UN-Women has engaged vast audiences on priority areas for programmatic intervention. The UN-Women-led UNiTE campaign, for instance, reached far over 300 million people during the 16 Days of Activism on Gender-Based Violence in 2016 alone.

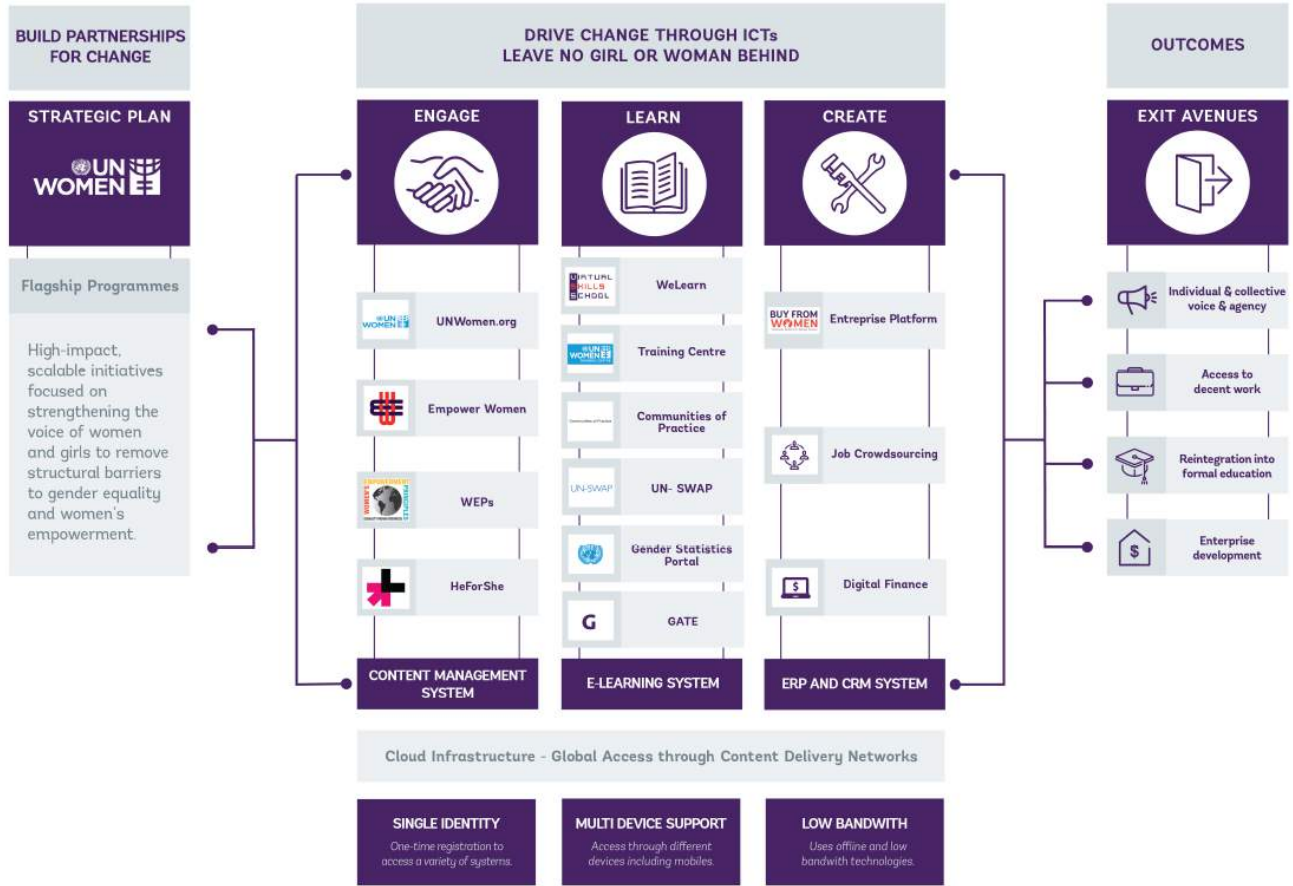
Empower Women: Funded by the Government of Canada, this engagement platform has successfully inspired women and men to become advocates, change makers and leaders for women's economic empowerment in

their communities since its launch in September 2013. Empower Women facilitates crowdsourcing of knowledge products, information about global events and opportunities, as well as sharing of good practices, lessons learned and stories from women and men, girls and boys from all regions of the world. The platform's over one million users, 20,000 members and almost 500 Champions for Change have been equipped with resources, opportunities and the online space to facilitate networking, learning and sharing of experiences. The Champions for Change works with the Empower Women team in developing projects for women's economic empowerment in their local communities.

Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs): the WEPs are a set of 7 principles offering guidance to private sector partners on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Launched by UN-Women and the United Nations Global Compact in 2010, the WEPs have over 1,400 companies as signatories, corporations that have committed to supporting gender equality in their respective businesses in alignment with the seven principles.

HeForShe: Initiated by UN-Women in September 2014, HeForShe is a solidarity movement for the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Its goal is to engage men and boys as agents of change by encouraging them to take action against the inequalities faced by women and girls. Men and boys are encouraged to act in six main areas: education, health, identity, work, the elimination of violence against women and politics. Since its launch, some 1.3 billion actions for gender equality have been reported globally by engaged "HeforShes".

Figure 1. UN-Women’s Digital Platform Ecosystem



LEARN: In addition to its well-established Training Center, which provides substantive training and tools on gender equality and women’s empowerment to the general public, UN-Women is developing Communities of Practice (CoPs) as part of its Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs), a Virtual Skills School (WeLearn), and is laying the foundation for a comprehensive gender statistic portal. Over the past 5 years, the Independent Evaluation Office has built many online platforms that are critical for supporting staff to manage evaluations and evaluation information, and facilitate use of evaluation in the organization. UN-Women also continues expanding the UN-SWAP community.

These platforms include:

Training Center: UN-Women’s Training Center offers a global online platform for gender equality training that is open to any person interested in accessing resources on the advancement of gender equality, women’s empow-

erment and women’s rights. Learning, teaching and knowledge sharing is supported among learners, facilitators, and wider institutional stakeholders through the use of diverse e-learning modalities and innovative pedagogical techniques.

Virtual Skills School (WeLearn): Building on the work spearheaded by the Commonwealth of Learning, UN-Women is piloting the use of innovative technological solutions to create virtual schools and training centers for women and girls as part of its existing programmes. The Virtual Skills School combines online and mobile applications with low cost and low maintenance hardware devices and offers: (i) in partnership with education practitioners, foundational skills for a second chance education; (ii) modern delivery systems for vocational training and entrepreneurship development; and (iii) 21st century life skills. The Virtual Skills School can also be used in offline environments at low cost so that areas

that do not have mobile phone coverage can benefit from the initiative. More information on the Virtual Skills School can be found in UN-Women's Digital Library. A clickable demonstration of the current prototype is available at <http://welearn.unwomen.org>.

Communities of Practice (CoPs): CoPs are characterized by mutual learning, shared practice and joint exploration of ideas by groups who share a concern in a particular area. CoPs are a component of UN-Women's broader knowledge management approach, which aim to contribute to UN-Women's efforts to better disseminate knowledge, ensure the collection of good practices and the generation of innovative approaches and methodologies. For example, UN-Women manages several online databases with key data and information on critical gender equality issues. The Global Gender Equality Constitutional Database, a repository of gender equality related provisions extracted from 195 constitutions, is the first searchable database that presents constitutional provisions through a gender lens. The Global Database on Ending Violence Against Women provides access to updated information on measures undertaken by Governments in addressing violence against women. In addition, UN-Women is developing a standard digital platform for CoPs across its Flagship Programmes, which will serve as a repository that provides access to existing tools, resources and information; and which will enable interactive exchange and discussions amongst its members.

UN-SWAP: UN-Women has developed the UN System Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-SWAP), the first unified accountability framework for gender equality which over the past four years has led to the coalescing of over 90% of all UN entities and is now used beyond the UN system. It constitutes an innovative method to better embed and mainstream gender equality into all functions of an institution in a new and different way. It has yielded consistent results in terms of an unprecedented level of uptake, systematic monitoring and uniform reporting over several years. In 2015, almost 75 per cent of UN entities reported having gender policies, up from 40 per cent in 2012. The implementation of the UN-SWAP has been catalyzed by a community of over 300 focal points,

double the strength of its 150 members in 2012, spread across the UN System.

The Global Evaluation Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE): The Independent Evaluation Office has built many online platforms that are critical for supporting staff to learn from past initiatives and guide new efforts. Notably, it developed the Global Evaluation Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use Platform (GATE). It was launched in 2013 to enable the dissemination of evaluations and tracking of the use of evaluation, ensuring that knowledge gained from evaluations becomes an integral part of the UN-Women accountability, transparency and organizational learning process. The GATE system is aimed at facilitating accountability and learning at UN-Women by enabling staff and external stakeholders to access evaluative information about UN-Women's work and track the status of the evaluation plan and management response and action plans. The platform also houses all UN-Women evaluation reports, including TORs. A number of improvements on the GATE has been made to increase its usefulness. The system now integrates the quality review function of the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis system and has been linked to the gender equality evaluation portal. To enhance cost-effectiveness, the system was also migrated to the UN-Women information technology infrastructure.

Gender Statistic Portal: As part of UN-Women's role as the custodian agency for a number of gender-related SDG targets and indicators, UN-Women will develop an online monitoring platform to facilitate access to up-to-date data and information on all gender-related SDGs indicators for use in policy-making, programming, research and advocacy. The platform will be a one-stop-shop for monitoring and communication around all the gender-related indicators of the 2030 Agenda, including data visualization tools, factsheets and infographics to interpret, track and reveal new findings around the SDGs for a broader audience. It will also serve as an information-hub to showcase the activities under UN-Women's Flagship Programme "Making Every Woman and Girl Count", monitor the implementation of the programme and promote the various products that will be produced under this initiative.

CREATE: To ensure continuity and to create opportunities for women to apply the skills and training offered by the learning platforms, UN-Women is developing platforms with a specific focus on women's action in the areas of employment and entrepreneurship.

Buy from Women: UN-Women is designing a set of mobile-enabled enterprise platforms for women-owned enterprises in the agriculture, utilities and retail sectors to be used as part of its existing programmes. These platforms combine low-tech hardware with sophisticated open-source supply chain software to connect women to information, finance, suppliers, and markets. Data capture is built into the system, facilitating real-time monitoring and evidence-based evaluation, which in turn allow women to build a financial track record and credit history. To date, UN-Women has developed a minimum viable product for its agricultural business platform and is currently piloting the system with up to 5,000 farmers in Rwanda. It is to pilot its retailing business platform in Haiti. More information on the Buy From Women Platform can be found at [UN-Women's Digital Library](#). A voice over demonstration of the platform is also available at <https://youtu.be/WBTPwBA5o1M>.

Job crowd sourcing: As part of the initiative to close the gender digital divide, UN-Women is to partner and build on with existing e-market places to connect women seeking a career in the ICT sector with skill providers and potential employers in support of its existing programmes on women's economic empowerment.

Digital Financing Platforms: UN-Women is exploring digital fundraising, mobile banking and block chain technologies to facilitate access to affordable finance to entrepreneurs from individuals, social impact investors and commercial financial intermediaries, as part of its existing programmes.

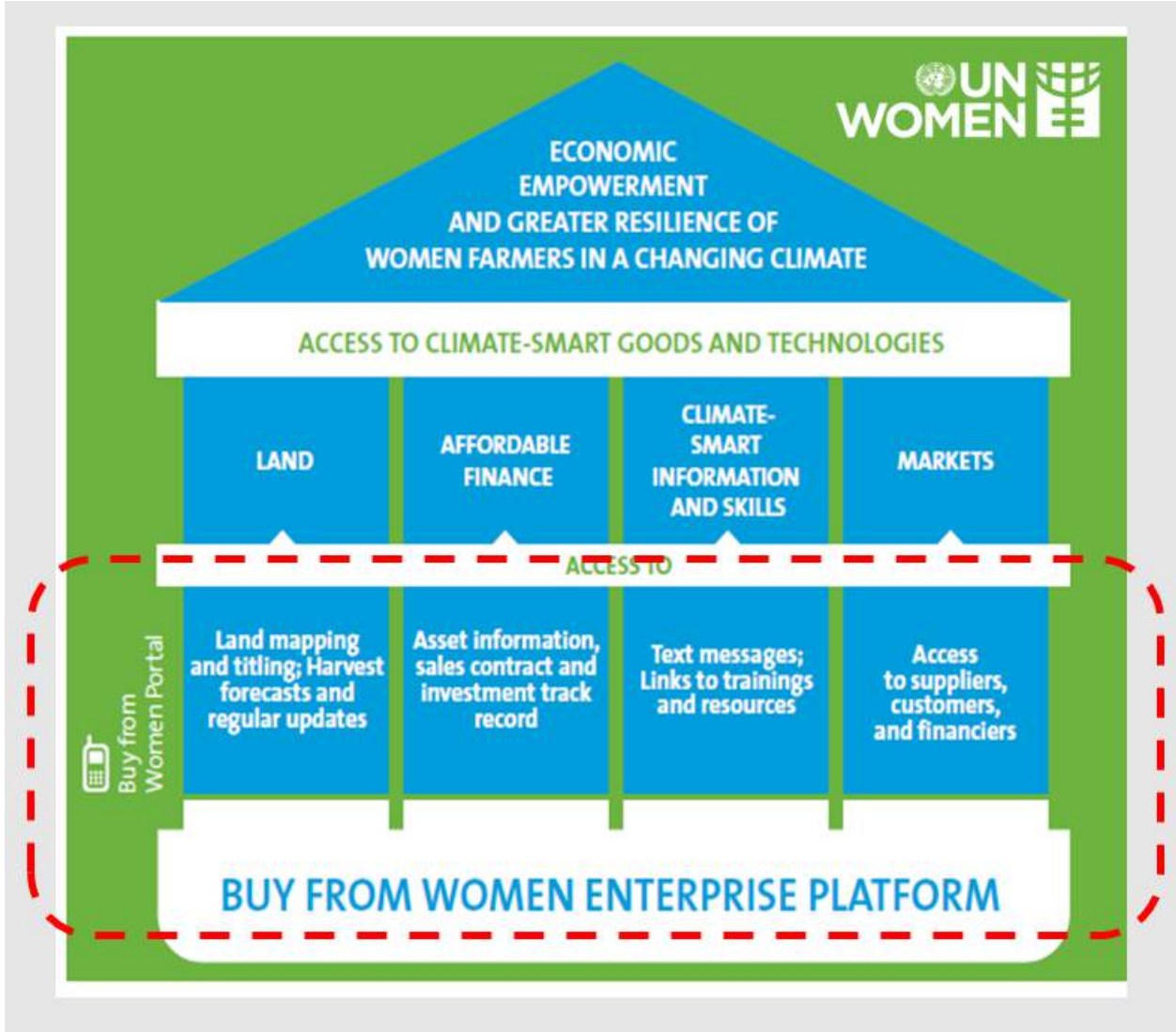
In isolation, digital technologies are not a silver bullet. To drive economic and social change, they must be embedded into broader transformative initiatives. Accordingly, UN-Women's platforms are systematically incorporated within its Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs) to facilitate and accelerate their implementation and scale up.

For example, one of UN-Women's FPIs focuses on closing the gender gap in climate-smart agriculture⁹, which is critical in terms of the 2030 Agenda's emphasis on "leaving no one behind". To close this gender gap, UN-Women's FPI focuses on increasing women's access to: (i) land; (ii) affordable finance; (iii) climate-smart agricultural information and skills; and (iv) markets. Designed with the women farmer at its center, UN-Women's mobile-based Buy From Women Platform supports the implementation of all four programmatic pillars (Figure 2). The Buy From Women Platform, which is being piloted in Rwanda, is expected to be scaled up to 15 countries.

Ultimately, through the use of the "Engage, Learn and Create" platforms, UN-Women and its partners will enhance the individual and collective voice and agency of women and girls and provide customized vocational, entrepreneurial and leadership skills to women at risk of being left behind in countries where UN-Women works. Thereby, they will create a pipeline of confident and empowered women with 21st century skills who are strongly positioned to participate in public life, access decent jobs in work places and markets or launch their own businesses.

⁹ A 2 page brief on UN-Women's FPI on closing the gender gap in climate smart agriculture is available [here](#).

Figure 2. Incorporating digital solutions into UN-Women’s FPIs: Example of the Buy from Women Platform within the FPI on closing the gender gap in climate smart agriculture



IV. ICTs for Operational Management

Information is the life blood of any organization. Given that UN-Women has embraced a decentralized model and structure, access to data becomes especially critical. To operate efficiently, the Entity relies on the ability of staff members, regardless of their geographic location, thematic specialization or seniority, to have

ready access to the most up-to-date statistics and information in order to improve day-to-day management. Accordingly, UN-Women is developing a group of dynamically linked Programme Information Management Systems (PIMs) that will enhance its planning, pipeline management, financial management, results management; human resources management and donor man-

agement functions.¹⁰ UN-Women's Programme Management Information architecture comprises four core systems that coupled, lead to seamless data exchange between them.

ATLAS is the organization's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, and is the system of record for all financial transactions, including procurement, projects, budgets, general ledger, accounts receivable and payable, etc. All financial management is fully IPSAS compliant and the system has a number of automated controls to ensure compliance with the organization's internal control framework. To achieve cost effectiveness and economies of scale, the system is one that is used by a number of partner agencies.

Results Management System (RMS) constitutes UN-Women's corporate system for planning, monitoring and reporting against results. At the unit level, each unit or office (both at HQ and in the field) uses RMS to establish its annual work plan with outputs, activities and budgets, which in turn form part of the organization's overall strategic plan results chain. A tight integration between RMS and Atlas ensures full visibility within RMS of all expenditures. In addition, each unit or office is subsequently responsible for monitoring and reporting on results through the RMS, thereby providing aggregated data on results that inform various corporate processes, including: annual reporting, the structured dialogue on financing, etc.

Donor Agreements Management System (DAMS) is a comprehensive system for managing donor agreements. It serves as a repository of all UN-Women agreements and drives UN-Women reporting to donors (both narrative results reporting and financial donor reporting). It is envisioned that DAMS will be enhanced with features

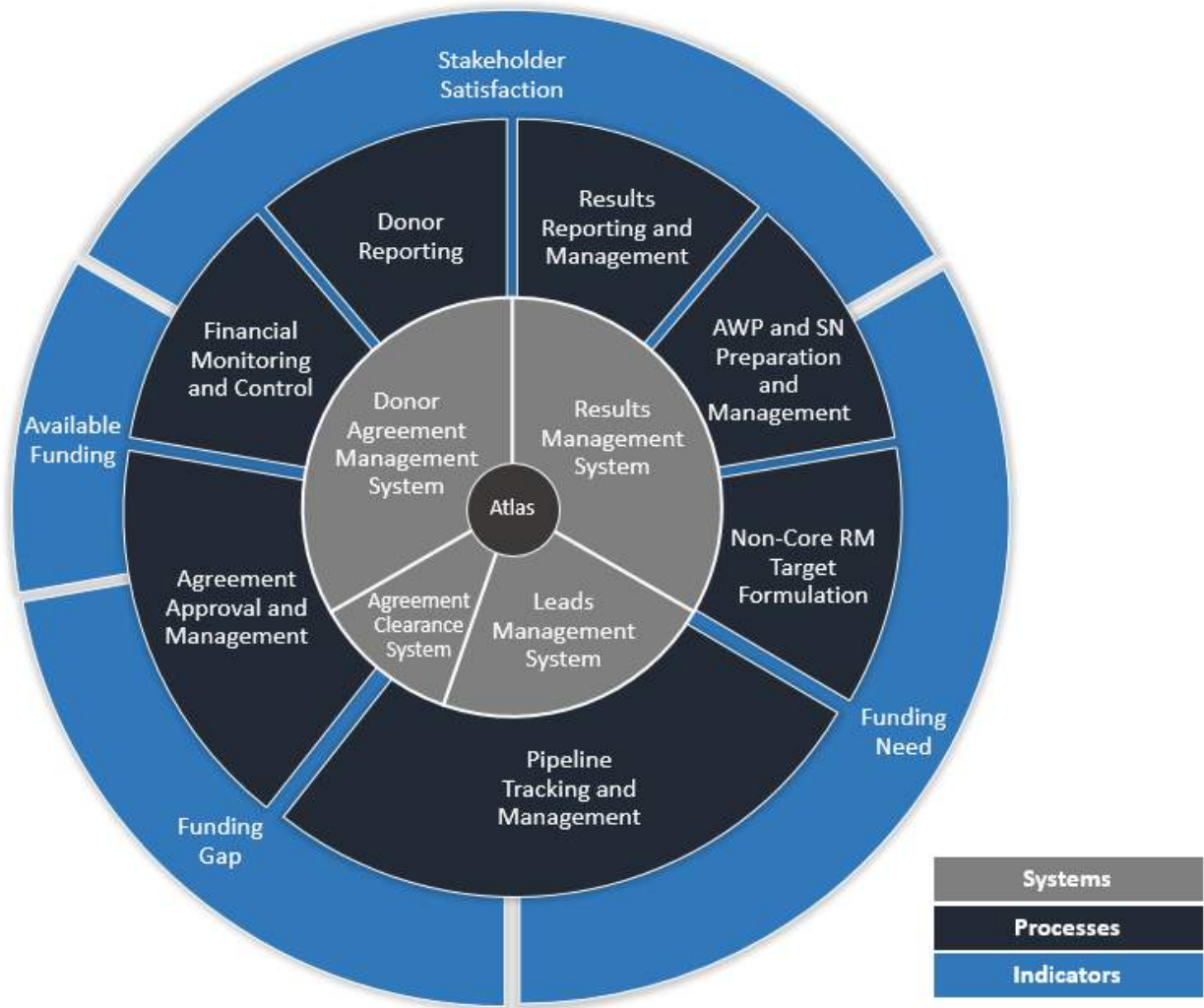
that will allow donors to directly access reports and provide feedback on donor reports. The system will also be fully linked to both LEADS (see below) and the non-standard clearance system allowing for a seamless process in the shepherding of a donor agreement from clearance to signing and ensuring subsequent compliance with mandated reporting requirements.

LEADS is an engagement and pipeline management system for the development of project proposals. The LEADS system ensures coordination and quality control between all actors in the programme/project development process from the drafting stage, to peer reviews and other internal approvals as needed throughout the process.

The PIMs described above will capture an extraordinary amount of development and management data on UN-Women's work and impact for the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Figure 3 provides an overview of how this data will enable UN-Women to deliver more efficiently and effectively a number of internal operations and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization:

¹⁰ A second option would have been to develop one integrated system, but this approach would have required a significantly larger investment in terms of cost, human resources and time, an approach which was not deemed strategic by the organization, given its sustainable development priorities and financial context at the time. It was agreed that the selected approach would be the fastest, as each system could be developed in parallel and roadblocks, if any, in one system would not affect the development of the other moving parts.

Figure 3. UN Women's Programme Management Information Systems (PMISs)



Notably, it will empower UN-Women and individual staff members to strengthen:

- **Strategic and Annual Planning:** The information captured through these PMISs provides UN-Women's management at all levels with accurate data for decision-making, reporting and analysis that is key to identify and fine-tune the strategic priorities of the organization. Already, existing PIMSs play a key role in the development of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, by

providing accurate data on achievements of results, funding opportunities and gaps, programmatic trends, and absorption capacity. Annual Work Plans are also directly entered into RMS. The coupling of RMS and Atlas will enable staff at all levels to automatically connect individual activities to corporate strategic results and link these results to resources to assess expected value-for-money;

- Financing:** As UN-Women units enter their project and programme plans into the RMS, they will also indicate the core funding that has been received, and the non-core funding that is anticipated as both hard and soft pipeline. This data will change in real time throughout the year and the entire programme cycle. This provides the necessary data for UN-Women to track budgets and expenditures against its Strategic Plan. The RMS (and ATLAS) will allow UN-Women and its partners to understand funding needs and gaps in a dynamic and transparent manner. It will provide a clear and accurate picture of funding actuals, namely (i) how UN-Women’s funding has been allocated according to the objectives outlined in the strategic plan and (ii) what the existing funding gaps are once that allocation has been made. More importantly, this analysis will constitute a critical input for UN-Women in informing budget adjustments, if needed, to ensure that the intentions of the strategic plan are realized.
- Portfolio Management:** The customized project and portfolio module within RMS will allow staff members to group activities and results from approved Annual Work Plans in the best way to meet their needs – whether at a project, regional or thematic level. For example, project managers in the field will be able to group results and activities from their country office AWP; regional and global Policy Specialists will be able to group projects into thematic portfolios (i.e. for a portfolio on EAW which will include all regional / global EAW related projects).
- Monitoring at the project and office level:** PIMS will enable real-time monitoring of results and empower staff at all levels to track the operational efficiency of UN-Women’s initiatives and take timely remedial measures as required. As of 2017, UN-Women’s Country Office Assessment Tool (COAT)¹¹ will also be largely automated and pulls information directly from Atlas, RMS, DAMS and Leads.
- Learning:** UN-Women’s PIMS will decentralize access to key corporate information at all levels. It will enable staff to identify and benchmark proposed activities against good practices; assess the comparative effectiveness of different input configurations; and engage in evidence-based dialogue with key stakeholders;
- Reporting:** Leveraging the strong evidence base in its RMS-Atlas will allow UN-Women to capture measurable progress, analyze it, draw lessons and make decisions that help to further improve its performance and delivery as a development partner. These findings will provide the qualitative and quantitative data that will inform the narrative for UN-Women’s Annual Report, helping to communicate the value-added of the organization, along with a clear picture of the challenges UN-Women faces across the diverse and complex settings where it works. This information will also inform the Structured Dialogue on Financing with the Executive Board. In addition, these systems and their integration will allow UN-Women to fully meet its commitments under the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

¹¹ The COAT is an oversight tool for managers that supports both programmatic planning and monitoring and contributes to corporate accountability and transparency. The COAT aggregates indicators from wide variety of sources to give managers (including Country Representatives and Regional Directors) a complete and holistic overview of each UN-Women office performance. The COAT includes a set of monthly performance / management indicators including data on: resource mobilization, delivery, unapplied deposits, human resources, management ratios, etc., which support data-driven management of UN-Women’s country and regional offices.

V. Management and Governance of Digital Solutions

As part of its organizational maturation, UN-Women has recognized the need to consolidate individual digital solutions to minimize the duplication of efforts across the organization, as well as the cyber security risks and costs associated with the requirements necessary to maintain the security, content and hardware of a multiplicity of sites, platforms and systems. Thus, UN-Women is establishing a multi-layered ICT architecture to guide and coordinate efforts. Both the digital platforms and the Programme management Information Systems build on a common information technology infrastructure.

Information Technology Infrastructure

UN-Women was the first UN agency to fully embrace cloud computing and have all corporate systems and databases hosted in public or community cloud services. This gives UN-Women a common foundation of cost effective capabilities with unparalleled agility and scalability.

In order to ensure that UN-Women is prepared for future changes in the ICT market, we have adopted a flexible approach to ICT, prioritizing best of breed solutions with low cost and concrete deliverables. UN-Women's architecture establishes a layered approach to its technology architecture that recognizes that different technology areas have different characteristics and rates of change. For UN-Women, this includes foundational applications that manage core transaction processing (systems with long lifecycles of 5-10 years) ; unique systems for data storage and use (medium lifecycle - 1 to 3 years); and innovative applications to address changing business requirements (ad hoc, agile, fast change rate - months to 2 years). Since the rates of change vary so distinctly, UN-Women must be ready to support these various change management lifecycles with appropriate technologies and management approaches. Essential in the architecture strategy is further a focus on standardizing on a limited number of platforms and skillsets, with standardized and open Application Program Interfaces (APIs) ensuring integration between systems as needed.

Digital Platform Management

UN-Women is developing a common, integrated digital architecture to host the existing 30 websites (including unwomen.org, EmpowerWomen.org, HeForShe.org, and a number of regional and country office websites) and streamline their development and joint maintenance.

The Common Digital Architecture consists of two core elements:

Shared gender data and content – in order to reduce operational costs, avoid content overlap and strengthen the UN-Women brand, the different websites and platforms are to be progressively consolidated into a comprehensive portal. The content managers and editors of individual digital platform teams will retain their editorial independence in line with their very different contents and audiences. They will be composed of dedicated and/or part-time contributors drawn from UN-Women divisions. They will be linked through a community of practice. By pooling these competencies in a digital platform community UN-Women can, in some instances, leverage the same policy advice in a website in the “Engage” phase as in a training module in the “Learn” phase. Similarly, web editing or content review skills can be leveraged across several websites.

These digital platform teams will be supported by UN-Women's Communications Unit to design and implement develop their communication, social media and branding strategy, and by Information, Systems and Telecommunication (IST) Unit to draft technical specifications for system development and support system maintenance.

Shared hardware and software infrastructure – i.e. shared tools to ensure security, sustainability and economies of scale on the technology side that offer the following functionality:

- **Content management** – providing key content management functions that support editing and approval workflows. This functionality will also support data visualization and analytics – providing services to analyze, slice and dice large datasets as well as tools to visualize, pre-

sent and interact with data (i.e. gender country profiles).

- **Customer relationship management** – providing core features to manage contacts and interactions with them (e.g. recording HeForShe commitments per country or managing **women-owned enterprises in the agriculture, utilities and retail sectors**).
- **E-learning management** – providing advanced features to store, manage and deliver online trainings to facilitate course participation through progress tracking, student interaction and different learning modalities.
- **Search functionality** – ensuring multi-faceted search capabilities across sites and platforms, depending on audience, subjects and user access rights.
- **Digital financing** – enabling direct fundraising, particularly via the Engage platforms that received the highest numbers of visitors.

Governance Arrangements and Risk Management

While digital platform offer enormous opportunities to increase efficiency and transparency, break internal silos, and multiply scale, they also come with risks that need to be managed. Two critical risks include cyber security and the creation of long-term financial liabilities.

In terms of cyber security, as UN-Women increases its emphasis on ICTs and innovation, we recognize that this also carries new concerns and challenges related to the confidentiality, integrity and availability of important information.¹² UN-Women is committed to ensuring cybersecurity, combatting cybercrime and addressing risks to privacy across all areas of work, whether it is in or programmatic work, our Digital Solutions to Deliver Development Results for Women and Girls or our ICTs for Operational Management. UN-Women is further committed to the principle that all measures carried out in the context of combating cyber-crime and providing

¹² In line with the “UN System Internal Coordination Plan on Cybersecurity and Cybercrime” as presented to the CEB, November 2014

cyber-security are undertaken in full conformity with international human rights standards and we are committed to ensuring the right to privacy as well protection of personal data in our systems.¹³ In this context, UN-Women must proportionally invest in cyber security related processes and tools as the portfolio of ICT tools grows and as the dependency on ICTs grows. We will likewise work with partners and stakeholders to ensure they take adequate and appropriate measures in the area of cybersecurity.

Similarly, it is important to consider the technical and financial sustainability of a platform from the very outset. If not, inappropriate technical solutions might be developed that fail to meet the need of end-users or valuable content and large numbers of users might be lost when over-sized platforms run out of funds and need to be closed.

To manage these two risks, it is important to have a rigorous process to determine the objectives, technical specifications, and business plan for each platform. As discussed in UN-Women’s [Innovation Brief](#) to its Executive Board, UN-Women uses a funnel approach to allow management to evaluate risk and select potentially high impact opportunities. The funnel enables management to eliminate weak ideas before they consume excessive resources while allowing strong ideas to filter through the process and be scaled up (figure 4).

The first decision point in the funnel is moving from solution identification to prototyping and testing. This decision is made by the Head of Division based on a business concept prepared jointly by the concerned division with the IST Unit and other units required to ensure compliance with UN-Women’s rules and procedures. The second decision point is whether to invest in scaling up the platform. This decision is made by UN-Women’s ICT Board based on a full business plan, which includes feedback on performance of the prototype.

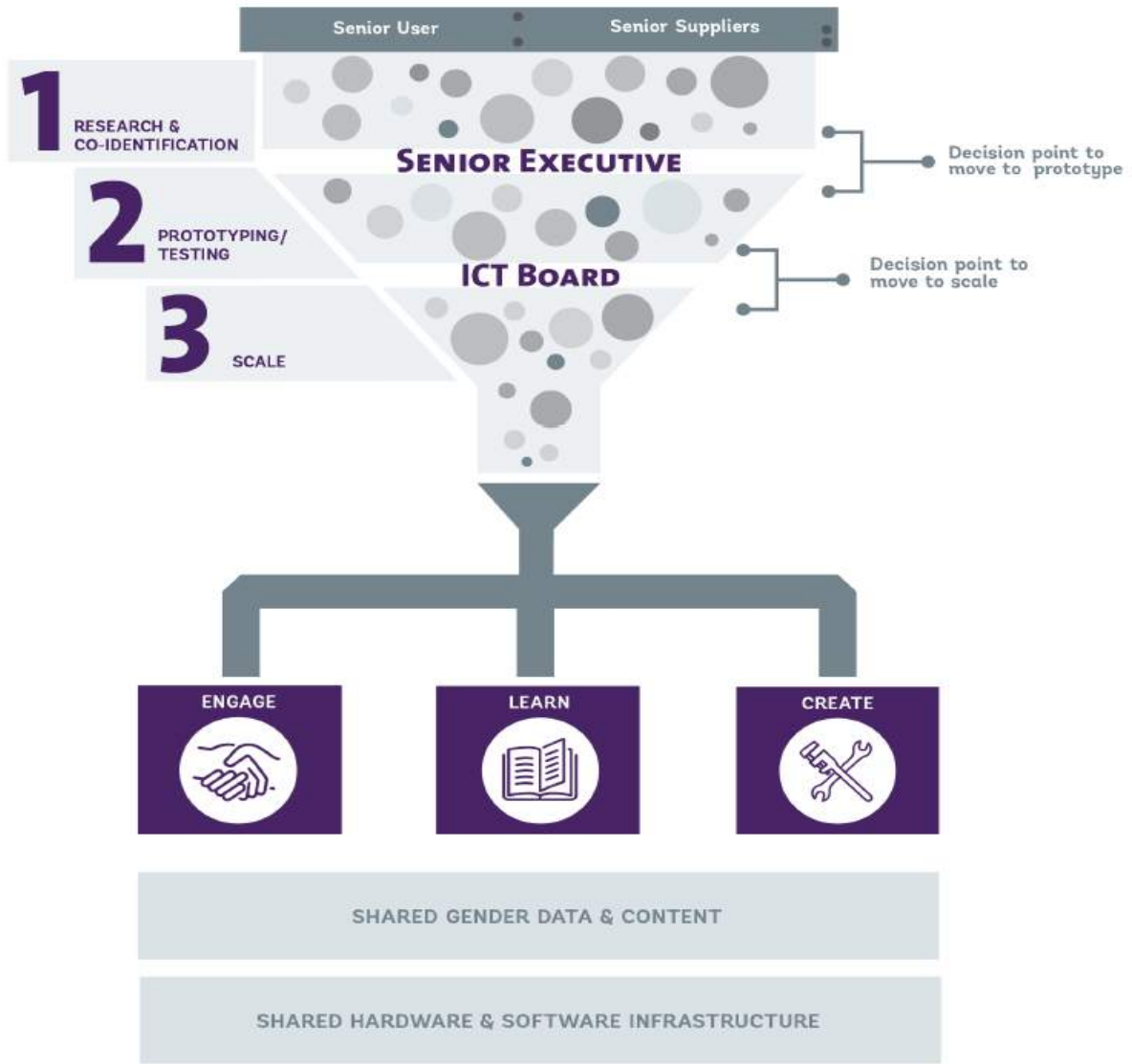
This governance mechanism follows a standard Prince 2 methodology in terms of a “Project Board”, with the following members (note, that the specific member

¹³ In line with General Assembly resolution A/RES/45/95 and A/RES/68/167

composition will depend on the nature of the proposed platform):

- **Senior User(s):** Unit(s) that have recognized the need for the platform and will be its main users.
- **Senior Suppliers:** Units that provide technical advice and quality assurance to development of the platform, and that ensure compliance with UN-Women's rules and policies. The *IST Unit* will form part of the Senior Suppliers for all proposed platforms. "Engage" platforms must include the *Communication Unit*; "Learn" platforms must include the *Policy Division*; and "Create" platforms must include the *Programme Division*. Other units may also be called upon (e.g. Legal) to form part of the senior suppliers.
- **Senior Executive:** Is the Director of the Senior User's Division.

Figure 4. UN -Women’s Common Digital Architecture & Governance Arrangements



- The Senior User and Senior Suppliers will work together to research, co-identify, and assess the most appropriate solutions for the new platform. The recommended solution will be brought to the Senior Executive for approval. If approved, the Senior User and Senior Suppliers will begin to prototype, test, pilot and assess the financial sustainability the new solution. If the solution is found to (i) add value, (ii) be

technical sound, and (iii) potentially financially sustainable, the Project Board may recommend to UN-Women’s ICT Board its formal adoption and scale-up. Capacity strengthening of staff will be required to enable teams to play these roles.

CONCLUSION

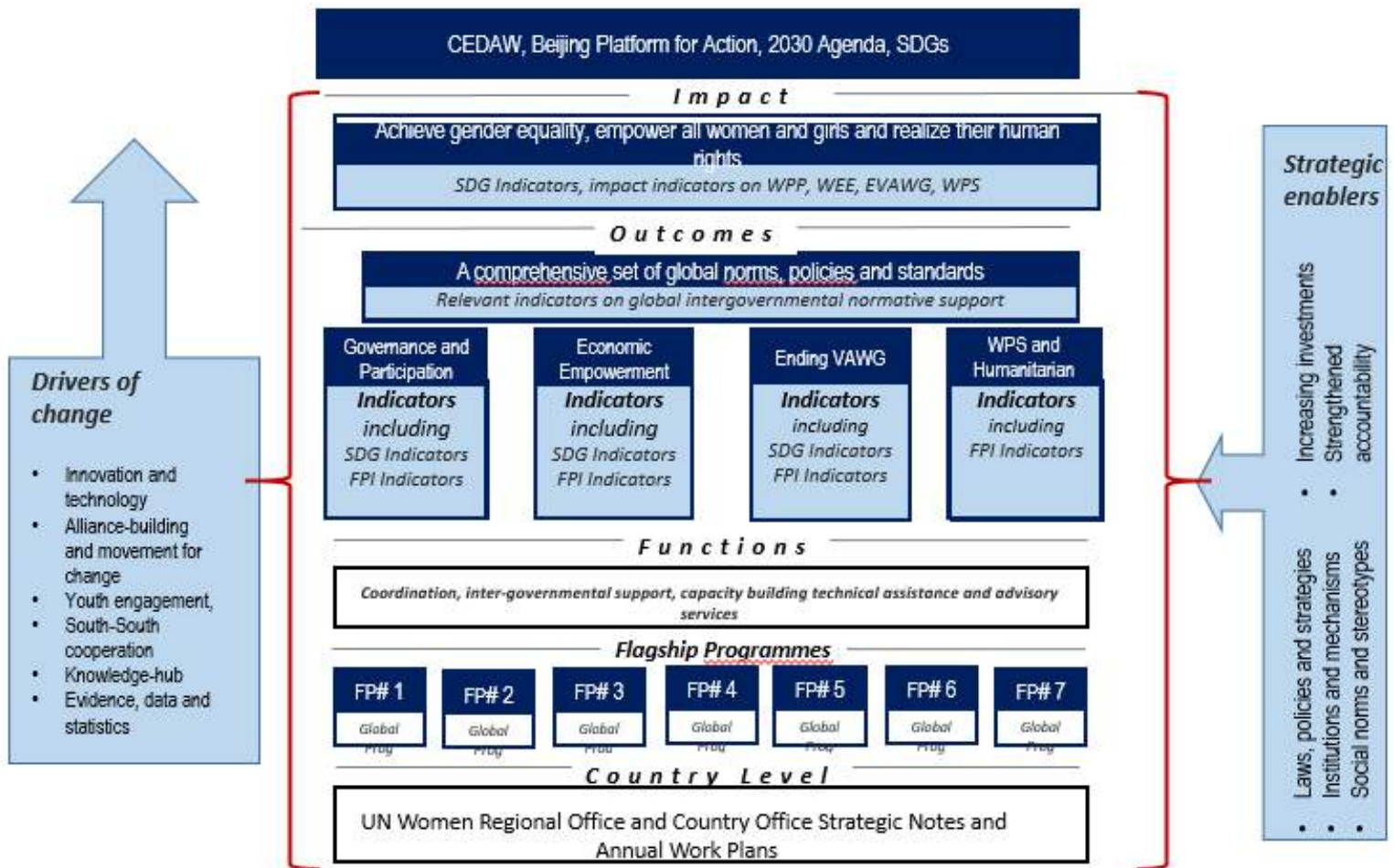
The digital revolution is one of the most transformative forces that the international development sector has seen in decades. It brings huge opportunities to accelerate efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment and leave no woman or girl behind. In terms of organizational management, the digital revolution can also dramatically increase efficiency and transparency, and bridge internal silos. Development organizations that do not develop digital capabilities to enhance development services and internal operations are at risk of failing to achieve their mandates.

Therefore, harnessing the power of ICTs in support of gender equality and women's empowerment will constitute a key strategy of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021. It will be reflected in the plan as a "driver of change", i.e. a change strategy prioritized by UN-Women to catalyze change across the entire programmatic portfolio and all thematic areas and operational contexts. A set of key performance indicators will be developed to measure the effectiveness of the strategy.

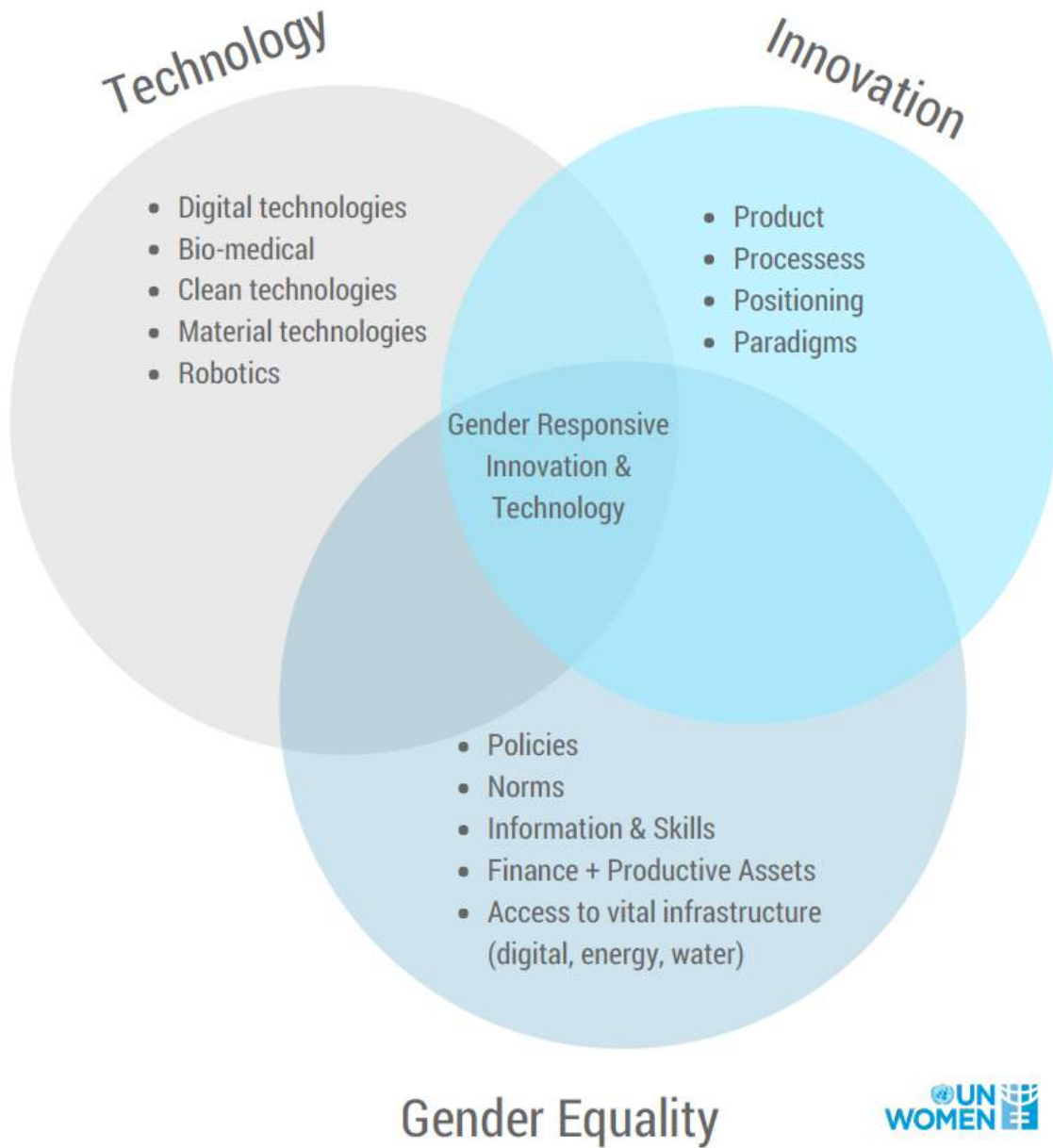
UN-Women's earlier investments in ICTs and innovation gives it a robust foundation to expand digital solutions for development impact and operational efficiency in a more strategic and systematic manner. However, UN-Women will also need to enhance its capacity to support relevant normative processes, provide advisory support to respond to Member States' requests and development partners on solutions to close the gender digital divide, and further leverage this area of work in support of results for women and girls. Furthermore, UN-Women will need to systematically embed digital solutions in its Flagship Programming Initiatives and business processes.

This will require a sustained investment in staff capacity to be able to: (i) use proficiently digital solutions in day-to-day operations; (ii) establish public-private partnerships to address the gender digital divide; (iii) monitor the digital development frontline and identify emerging opportunities to leverage digital solutions to achieve development impacts; (iv) appraise and manage digital investment to ensure their financial sustainability; and (v) contribute to UN-Women's cybersecurity policies. The integrated result and resource framework of the forthcoming 2018-2021 Strategic Plan will aim to reflect these opportunities and requirements.

ANNEX I: VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF UN-WOMEN STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2021 RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND DRIVERS OF CHANGE ANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF DIGITAL SOLUTIONS



ANNEX II: VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF INTERSECTION BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND GENDER



**UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION
DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN.
A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND
GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED
TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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