

Advancing gender-responsive science, technology and innovation policies for inclusive digital transformation in ASEAN countries

OBJECTIVE

Strengthen the capacity of selected developing countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to design and implement gender-responsive science, technology and innovation policies that serve to close gender digital divides, foster inclusive digital transformation and advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Digital transformation is reshaping how people learn, work, access services, participate in markets and connect to innovation systems. For women and girls, it can expand access to education, health information, financial services, entrepreneurship and leadership, but these benefits are not automatic.

Across Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines, women and girls still face affordability, connectivity, skills, online safety, care responsibilities and data gaps that affect whether they can use digital technologies meaningfully and safely.

The project responds to this challenge by helping policymakers better understand how science, technology and innovation systems affect women and girls differently from men and boys. It will support countries to identify structural barriers, generate practical evidence and translate findings into more inclusive policy measures.

ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PRIORITIES

The project is demand-driven and anchored in national priorities in Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines. It supports coherence between science, technology and innovation policies, digital transformation strategies and gender equality commitments, while contributing to ASEAN priorities, the Global Digital Compact and the Pact for the Future.

Through UNCTAD's role as secretariat of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and its Gender Advisory Board, project lessons will also inform regional and global policy dialogue on inclusive digital transformation.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Build national ownership.** Preparatory missions will launch the project in each country, confirm focal points, agree on the priority sector for assessment and define an indicative implementation roadmap.
- Map evidence and institutions.** Fact-finding missions will review national and sectoral policies, legal frameworks, data sources, stakeholder landscape and data gaps in the selected priority sector.
- Assess gender digital divides.** National gender assessments will examine how women and girls access, use and benefit from digital technologies, compared with men and boys, and identify structural barriers, enabling factors and policy gaps.
- Validate findings and strengthen capacity.** National workshops will bring together policymakers and stakeholders to validate draft findings, build capacity and agree on priority actions for follow-up.
- Move from evidence to policy action.** Training, advisory services and practical tools will support the translation of assessment findings into policy measures aligned with existing national and regional strategies.
- Share lessons regionally and globally.** A regional workshop, a virtual knowledge-sharing network and dissemination of findings through the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and its Gender Advisory Board will support peer learning and replication.

KEY FACTS

PROJECT CODE
2629G

TIMELINE
2026–2029

BUDGET
USD 625,000

LEAD IMPLEMENTING ENTITY
UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES
Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines

COLLABORATING ENTITIES
ESCAP; United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices and United Nations Country Teams, including UN Women where relevant.

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RELEVANT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Primary focus: SDG 5, with links to SDGs 8, 9, 10 and 17.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- National coordination arrangements established and priority sectors agreed in the target countries.
- Three national gender assessments of digital technologies prepared.
- Priority actions identified to address gender digital divides and policy gaps.
- Training package, e-learning materials and diagnostic tools to support inclusive policymaking developed.
- National advisory services delivered to help align gender-responsive policy measures with existing national and regional strategies, including through action plans or other instruments where appropriate.
- Regional workshop and virtual knowledge-sharing network established.
- Synthesis report prepared and lessons shared through the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and its Gender Advisory Board to raise awareness and support replication.