

## Digital Impact Alliance at the United Nations Foundation

***DIAL appreciates the opportunity to submit our comments, via the [Virtual Consultation with Civil Society Representatives](#), for consideration by the Preparatory Committee on the LDC 5 program agenda.***

Digital technology and data are -- as noted in Theme 2 on science, technology, and innovation - a critical component of the LDC5 program agenda. They are cross-cutting elements of a sustainable development agenda, specifically the themes highlighted for discussion in building human capacity to leave no one behind (Theme 1), promoting regional integration (Theme 4), and building resilient societies (Theme 5). Given the cross-cutting nature of digital, DIAL believes investments, support, and strategies for digital should therefore be coordinated with and aligned to LDC targets and priorities. This will be essential to enable efficient resource allocation and help safeguard the post-COVID development agenda.

### Key takeaways for using digital to achieve the SDGs

***Recommendation:*** *The LDC5 programme agenda should explicitly reference the foundational and cross-cutting nature of digital technologies and data in sustainable development.*

[Recent research](#) from UNDP suggests that across many indicators, the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to set countries behind for a generation unless there is a corresponding investment or "SDG push". Given the cross-cutting nature of digital and its role in reaching all of the SDG targets, we believe that the current moment in time is ideally suited for such a "push" in LDCs supported by the international community. Additionally, aligning to the needs and priorities of LDC governments is critical to incorporating digital into development and marshalling the necessary resources to fund and achieve national and global targets. In this regard, we would note that the use of digital technologies to enhance poverty reduction through increased productive capacity in agriculture, manufacturing, and services is a well-established [trend](#) that should be reproduced in LDCs in partnership with global development actors.

The following four points are key approaches that the international community should take as it invests in the national digital transformation of LDCs. These points are further detailed in this [leadership brief](#) but elaborated upon here in the context of the LDC5 agenda:

1. **Harness the centralizing power of governments.** Enable and allow LDCs to be the stewards of their national digital agendas, which will help governments to better fund, procure, and mobilize resources for key initiatives using digital. Global development actors supporting LDCs, and especially donors, should make digital transformation investments aligned with national and regional strategies, as well as national development priorities tied to the SDG targets and indicators.
2. **Create mechanisms for, and prioritize investment in, cross-sectoral digital public goods and architecture.** These elements will help governments to promote coordination among different aspects of their sectoral development agenda. LDCs governments, supported by global actors, can use cross cutting, [whole-of-government](#) initiatives to build government capacity and achieve national development targets.
3. **Invest in and promote whole-of-society approaches.** Such approaches will help to build out digital government services and use digital for development more sustainably and inclusively. This will help build ownership among affected communities in the short-term and support inclusive design in the long-term.

4. **Support collaboration among the LDCs.** Specifically at the regional level, it is important to promote harmonization around policies, platforms, and learning to allow more countries to benefit from the lessons learned by peer countries deploying new technologies and initiatives.

### **DIAL's strategy to support the LDC5 Programme**

We believe that national digital transformation is a critical aspect for enabling countries to move beyond aid and meet the criteria for graduation. It is because of COVID-19 that now, more than ever, governments see the urgency of digital transformation as a development priority. Digital transformation efforts and responsible data use policies have become not only national but *global* priorities. But, despite the growing recognition that data and digital tools are critical and the high-level commitment to global cooperation, governments and global development actors still lack shared agreement on what to invest in and how best to align efforts.

Without a shared, evidence-based view analyzing which pathways enable digital to accelerate the transformation of LDC societies, we believe we are unlikely to effectively align LDC and global efforts to achieve the SDGs. Additionally, based on our consultations across the ecosystem detailed in our strategic plan, we believe the international community will specifically need to support the following priorities:

- **Accelerating national digital transformation:** The global community should provide financing and technical assistance to support a whole-of-society integration effort led by digital. Working with the government, partners can pool resources, efforts, and investments across sectors to help governments leverage digital technology, as well as stimulate local innovation and build digital skills and capital. Global partners can also invest in inclusive approaches to governing digital transformation process alongside other priorities.
- **Building political will and mechanisms to align global support:** Global partners should explore or leverage pooled financing and procurement mechanisms for digital solutions in LDCs, contributing existing evidence to better align global development policy and financing resources. They can also help LDCs compare different digital transformation and responsible data use pathways to identify which investments matter most and produce a new evidence base for the benefits of digital transformation. Importantly, the global community should also use principles like the [Principles for Digital Development](#), when designing, investing in, and supporting the use of digital technologies.)
- **Connecting and expanding the availability of proven solutions:** Governments need flexible and cross-sectoral investment and support in whole-of-government approaches to developing digital platforms to reduce fragmentation, enable sustainability, and improve service delivery to citizens. This will allow for faster uptake and adoption in national implementations by supporting efforts to improve discoverability and interoperable approaches. [GovStack](#) and similar efforts provide frameworks and reference models to accelerate the process of establishing national infrastructure to support digital service delivery across key LDC targets and indicators.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts for consideration of the LDC5 programme agenda.