



# UNLOCKING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

## IMPACT OF THE GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY ACTION (GEEA) FUND

### 2024 PROGRESS REPORT

Photo credit: Engendering Industries



**USAID**  
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U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE





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## INTRODUCTION

The Gender Equity and Equality Action (GEEA) Fund invests in women's economic security as a critical tool for advancing the United States Government's development and diplomatic goals by stimulating economic growth, fostering trade, and increasing women's economic participation. From urban cities to rural villages, GEEA Fund programs have fostered hope, resilience, and well-being across Africa, Asia, Europe, and South and Central America. Women are securing land rights, managing sustainable businesses, driving innovation in emerging economies, and breaking barriers in traditionally male-dominated

sectors. To support this work, the GEEA Fund partners with national governments, civil society organizations, companies, local communities, and traditional leaders.

This report highlights the GEEA Fund's achievements in fiscal year 2023<sup>1</sup>—during its second year of implementation—and showcases how GEEA Fund activities have catalyzed resources that are vital in shaping a future where women can economically compete, thrive, and lead.

1. From October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023

## NOTABLE OUTCOMES INCLUDE:

### ■ People Reached:

By scaling existing programming and launching new efforts, the GEEA Fund reached more than 686,000 individuals across 87 countries with programs to advance women's economic security.

### ■ Women's Entrepreneurship:

Supported more than 18,000 women to expand their entrepreneurial and digital skills, labor rights, and employment opportunities, and assisted more than 1,900 women-owned microenterprises to access loans, bank accounts, and other services.

### ■ Women in Agri-Food Systems:

Nearly 23,000 women participated in GEEA Fund-supported food security programs that promoted and increased women's production, processing, sales, and income in the agri-food sector.

### ■ Women's Right to Own Property:

Assisted more than 26,000 women to receive legally recognized and documented land or marine tenure rights.

### ■ Women's Leadership:

Provided leadership training to more than 5,000 women working across the public and private sectors, advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across the workforce.



# ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE SECOND YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION

## ADVANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION THROUGH ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

For women to participate and thrive in the economy, they need equitable opportunities for job placement, advancement, quality of life, and leadership. To advance these goals, the GEEA Fund activities have increased women's and girls' access to resources, services, and leadership opportunities and addressed barriers that limit their full participation in the economy. For example, through a range of activities, the GEEA Fund provided economic capacity strengthening to more than 18,000 women, including increasing their entrepreneurial and digital skills, labor rights, and employment opportunities. To further support women's entrepreneurship, GEEA Fund activities provided more than 1,900 women-owned micro, small, and medium enterprises with training and access to capital, and improved workplace safety.

GEEA Fund activities also strengthen women's participation and leadership in the formal labor force, which both improves women's economic security and increases organizational resilience, competitiveness, and business effectiveness. For example, the GEEA Fund's [Engendering Industries](#)

initiative increases women's workforce participation in lucrative, higher-paying, technical and leadership jobs within male-dominated sectors worldwide—including water, agriculture, mining, and information and communication technology, among others. In fiscal year 2023, Engendering Industries' partners trained more than 3,400 people—including more than 1,500 women—on advancing gender equality in the workplace; hired 1,700 women into full-time positions; and promoted 1,400 women. In 2023, on average, 31 percent of all new hires across partners were women. These activities provide women with access to better-paying, quality jobs and helped to build a more equitable and innovative global workforce.

GEEA Fund activities also improved women's and girls' access to education and training opportunities, which are fundamental to women's economic security. For example, a GEEA Fund activity in Yemen provided educational assistance to 195,020 primary school students, including the enrollment and retention of more than 93,000 girls in school. This effort contributed to reducing early marriage



among girls—particularly in economically vulnerable families—and to reducing the recruitment of boys into armed groups. At the higher-education level, one GEEA Fund activity supported young Afghan women to attend pre-undergraduate and undergraduate school at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh, where they also learned leadership skills, accessed psychosocial services, and received post-degree placement support. To support broader professional development for young women, a GEEA Fund activity in Guatemala trained more than 4,400 young women in life skills such as communications, interpersonal skills, leadership, and adaptability, resulting in nearly 1,600 young women drawing on these skills to secure new employment or new entrepreneurial ventures.



## Forging Public-Private Partnerships to Close the Gender Digital Divide Globally

USAID and Microsoft launched the USAID/Microsoft Airband Digital Inclusion Initiative in 2020 to bring internet access to more women around the world, thereby expanding their economic opportunities and enabling them to access digital development services. This public-private partnership reached nearly 300,000 women living in Colombia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, and Kenya, and by partnering with local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in these countries to provide last-mile internet connectivity. In Colombia, the Initiative partnered with Anditel, a telecommunications company that worked directly with over 3,000 women through women-led cocoa and beekeeping associations to expand a connectivity network that reached over 150,000 individuals in agricultural communities. Drawing on these cross-country lessons learned, the partnership produced the [How-To: Bring More Women Online](#) toolkit, which highlights best practices and outlines how to scale progress in achieving digital gender equality globally.

In 2023, inspired by the success of this partnership, Microsoft committed \$10 million in direct and aligned funding to the USAID and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-launched [Women in the Digital Economy Fund](#), which aims to accelerate investment in proven digital technology solutions to close the gender digital divide and

improve women's livelihoods, economic security, and resilience. In addition, Microsoft committed to [integrate gender equality programming across its Airband partnerships globally](#), including in Africa, with the goal of training and empowering

women entrepreneurs and increasing women's opportunities for employment and trade through improved connectivity and access to affordable devices.



## PROMOTING WOMEN IN AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS AND IN THE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Supporting women in agriculture is key to reducing global food insecurity and represents a key source of economic opportunity for women. According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), increasing women farmers' productivity and closing wage gaps would add \$1 trillion to global GDP and reduce the number of food-insecure people by 45 million. To advance these goals, nearly 23,000 women participated in GEEA Fund food security programs that promoted and increased women's production, processing, sales, and income in the agri-food sector.

In addition, GEEA Fund activities expanded access to employment, training, leadership roles, and financial resources in the industries critical to our future and the future of our planet. As women face increased economic insecurity from environmental shocks, due to their reliance on natural resources for livelihoods, GEEA Fund activities also increased women's training in and access to quality green jobs; supported their entrepreneurship solutions for natural resource management; and promoted their leadership in adaptation, mitigation, and finance.



Photo credit: LEE-AWF



## Liafuile Tchimbanba's Journey: Farmers Embracing their Superpower in Angola

In the heart of a rural community in Angola, 39-year-old Liafuile Tchimbanba has faced her share of challenges. For a decade, she toiled on her farm, raising her family, but without birth certificates or national IDs, Liafuile and her family were invisible to the government and did not have access to essential services and opportunities like banking, formal employment, and other benefits.

Their lives changed when the Legal Equity and Equality for Angolan Women Farmers (LEE-AWF) project came to Liafuile's community. In collaboration with partners, this USAID initiative supported women farmers by providing them with essential tools and resources to enhance their livelihoods and secure their rights.

In fiscal year 2023, the project supported 4,800 women to improve their production and increase their sales, including by providing farmers with monthly training to increase their skills and agricultural productivity, through sustainable farming practices, soil conservation, pest control, storage, marketing techniques, and food processing. The project helped over 5,000 women to become literate and facilitated the issuance of birth certificates to over 9,000 women, enabling them access to essential services for the first time.

Liafuile vividly recalls the moment of change:

**“Since the activity started in my community, I now have a birth certificate, as do my children and husband. I have managed to get my national ID processed and will soon open a bank account with the assistance of the activity. With a bank account, I can deposit my farming savings. I never thought I would have an ID at the age of 39, but now I consider myself a national citizen.”**

The LEE-AWF project also impacted the life of Liafuile's oldest daughter, who received her birth certificate and ID card after years of studying without formal registration. With newfound confidence and literacy skills, she secured her first job as a literacy teacher, bringing immense pride to Liafuile.

Liafuile Tchimbanba's journey is a powerful reminder of the change that can occur when communities are given the tools and support they need. Through the LEE-AWF project, Liafuile and many like her are building a brighter future for themselves and their families.



Photo credit: LEE-AWF



Photo credit: Self-Empowerment and Equity for Change (SEE Change) Initiative, Johns Hopkins University

## Lighting Up Kenya: The Rise of Women Engineers in Renewable Energy through the Accelerating Women’s Empowerment in Energy Project

Persistent stereotypes and misconceptions about the renewable energy sector make it difficult for young women in Kenya to see themselves working in such a field. The U.S. Department of State’s Accelerating Women’s Empowerment in Energy (AWEE) project supports local efforts that address these barriers. The [Women in Sustainable Energy and Entrepreneurship \(WISEe\) worker cooperative](#) exemplifies such an effort. Formed by women engineers, technicians, and trainers,

the WISEe worker cooperative provides members with solar photovoltaic system installation and entrepreneurship training across the East African market. WISEe’s founders recognize that technical engineering skills are often not enough to increase participation and empower women as leaders in countries’ efforts to electrify and transition to renewable energy systems, and they are doing something about it.

WISEe is one of over 20 organizations supported by AWEE through the U.S. Department of State Power Sector Program, with funding from the GEEA Fund. AWEE works to address the barriers to women’s entry, promotion, and retention in the clean energy sectors in Kenya and South Africa through dialogue and small organizational grants.



## WOMEN'S RIGHT TO OWN PROPERTY

Achieving inclusive economic growth requires shifting discriminatory laws, policies, and social norms. This includes providing women and girls with equal access to and control over land, property, and natural resources to enable their full participation in the economy. To this end, in fiscal year 2023, more than 26,000 women received legally recognized and documented land or marine tenure rights. Additionally, GEEA Fund activities supported the tracking, drafting, proposal, and adoption of 74 legal instruments that promote women's land rights and prevent discrimination against women and girls, including the establishment of 32 new community association statutes to protect women's land rights in Mozambique. The GEEA Fund programming also supported local authorities, mediators, contractors, or courts to resolve 400 disputed land and property rights cases. These interventions contributed to nearly 90,000 people, including over 42,000 women, stating that they feel more secure about their land and marine rights.

## SUPPORTING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

GEEA Fund activities also provided leadership training to more than 5,000 women working across the public and private sectors, advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across the global workforce. This includes efforts in STEM sectors, the care workforce, and agri-food systems.



Photo credit: LEE-AWF

## ENHANCING CARE INFRASTRUCTURE

### Expanding Access to Childcare: USAID and the World Bank Group's Invest in Childcare Initiative

Persistent gaps in care infrastructure significantly limit women's economic participation and earning potential. To address this, USAID, through the GEEA Fund, committed up to \$50 million over five years (subject to availability of funding) to help launch the World Bank's Invest in Childcare Initiative. This effort focuses on expanding access to affordable, quality childcare in low- and middle-income countries, aiming to boost women's economic empowerment and improve child development outcomes.

The Invest in Childcare initiative is making significant strides through strategic investments that address childcare needs and increase women's economic opportunities. In Senegal, a \$3.8 million investment is building a skilled childcare workforce by including a childcare training track in technical and vocational education programs. In Tanzania, a \$9 million investment is expanding access to economic opportunities for women and childcare through the establishment of 200 community-based childcare centers. The development of a national practitioner framework and digital quality assurance system will support the workforce and centers.

In Jordan, efforts to enhance women's economic opportunities include expanding access to affordable quality childcare services through: providing grants and in-kind support to establish center-based nurseries and home-based nurseries; subsidizing the cost of childcare for children ages 0 to 5 years among social safety net recipients who demonstrate an interest in participating in the labor force; and establishing a government-owned and -operated online platform that brings together providers and families. The Invest in Childcare Initiative has invested \$5 million, matched by \$4 million for piloting childcare grants and subsidies and \$92.5 million from the World Bank's Program-for-Results Financing. The Invest in Childcare Initiative is not only increasing childcare availability—it is empowering women, enhancing child development, and strengthening families, all while contributing to economic growth. By investing in childcare, USAID, the World Bank, and other public and private sector partners are fostering long-term gender equality and sustainable development, creating a foundation for broader societal progress.



Photo credit: LEE-AWF





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