

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY AND CYBERSECURITY PARTNERSHIP (DCCP)

SARDI Activities

TO ADVANCE A SHARED VISION for a free and open Indo-Pacific, USAID/India, through the Indo-Pacific Office, is implementing Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership (DCCP) activities through the "South Asia Regional Digital Initiative (SARDI)." SARDI supports DCCP objectives to:



Advance an open internet



Grow global markets for U.S. ICT goods and services



Enhance cybersecurity in partner countries

SARDI is working to improve digital connectivity in the South Asia region, strengthen the private sector and civil society's digital capacity, and improve their ability to engage on ICT policy issues. SARDI does this by increasing public awareness of digital safety issues, providing digital and cybersecurity upskilling support, and facilitating opportunities to engage on digital policy issues in ways that are meaningful to our target audiences.

SARDI also works closely with the private sector to leverage their catalytic role in bridging the gender digital divide, a significant barrier that prevents women from accessing life-enhancing services for education, health, and financial inclusion. These efforts work to enhance the enabling environment for the digital economy and support economic development in the region while improving the socio-economic status of women.

SARDI is part of the larger DCCP whole-of-government initiative that was launched in July 2018 and works to build partners' cybersecurity capacity to address shared threats through engagement with the private sector, government, and civil society. It is a priority of the U.S. Government to promote an open, interoperable, inclusive, reliable, and secure internet. Through DCCP, USAID is implementing activities in 20 countries across South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America to expand opportunities for U.S. technology exports through public-private partnerships and to make citizens and small businesses more digitally savvy and safe from cyber threats.

SARDI ACTIVITY FRAMEWORK

SARDI works across three different levels of activities to address digital gaps in the South Asia region: digital connectivity, digital upskilling, and policy engagement. The below graphic describes SARDI activities:

Cybersecurity capacity building, advocacy, and awareness to increase safe access to digital tools for SMEs and CSOs

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

– SME & CSO CAPACITY BUILDING –

Advocacy-skill development for SMEs and CSOs on: Cybersecurity; 5G; data localization and data protection laws; Data governance; Implications of digital policies for SMEs

– PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION –

To expand the reach of digital governance initiatives and to leverage their catalytic role in bridging the digital gender divide

– ADVISORY PLATFORM –

To enable policy dialogue between the Governments, industry associations, SMEs, and CSOs

DIGITAL UPSKILLING

– WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS (WE) –

Enabling WEs to connect online and earn their livelihoods through digital/e-commerce platforms, market their products and expand their clientele

Helping women-led CDOs conduct effective outreach through online platforms

– DIGITAL ECONOMY –

Creating and expanding sustainable empowerment models

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

– LAST MILE CONNECTIVITY –

Strengthen last mile delivery of broadband services to help the WEs, CDOs and local communities access internet and digital services

– DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURS –

Creating a sustainable model of women/youth entrepreneurs delivering internet and digital services to local communities

Country-level digital policies, data governance and increased last mile connectivity backed by a digital ecosystem supporting economic growth of CSOs, MSMEs and local communities

The **digital upskilling track** will work to strengthen and build the resilience of women entrepreneurs (MSMEs) and women-led Community Development Organizations (CDOs) through digital upskilling activities. Digital upskilling topics include media and information literacy; digital and financial literacy; cybersecurity; digital marketing; citizen and financial services; online job and livelihood opportunities; smartphone for business; social media for commerce, business, and networking; and safe use of digital tools.

Through the **policy engagement track**, SARDI will work with youth- and women-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) and help them translate “digital policies into action.” The focus of the policy engagement track will be to help these SMEs/CSOs better understand, comply with, take advantage of, and think critically about the technology policy environment governing their business’ or organization’s actions. It will also assist entrepreneurs and CSO leaders in developing their advocacy skills and articulating opinions about key ICT policy issues. Awareness-raising and advocacy-skill development activities will help the target SMEs/CSOs operate more efficiently and effectively and take advantage of beneficial public incentives and programs, while complying with digital policy guidelines.

The **digital connectivity track** will focus on enabling digital access and last-mile connectivity to propel inclusive social and economic well-being across society. SARDI’s activities will capitalize on recent digital developments, such as the PM Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM WANI) initiative in India. SARDI will train women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups (SHGs) on how to take advantage of the PM WANI scheme and become Public Data Offices, which provide Wi-Fi services to their businesses and communities at large. This will increase the beneficiaries’ digital capacities and improve connectivity and access for women and their communities. Women who own, manage, and operate internet services for communities greatly benefit from increased long-term livelihood skills and market opportunities, which in turn increase their standing in their communities.

In each of these areas, SARDI seeks constant feedback and builds connection points between activities, ensuring that the work is mutually reinforcing across different tracks. In addition, SARDI is facilitating cross-regional connections between India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka to collectively address and mitigate obstacles that women-led SMEs may typically face on their digital journeys.



Photos: Digital Empowerment Foundation

SARDI welcomes inputs, engagement, and reflection on opportunities and barriers in South Asia’s evolving digital ecosystem. Contact SARDI’s leadership team:

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