Enabel

Executive summary

End term evaluation of the project

DIGITAL FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN (D4GW)

BFA22005

Belgium, Burkina Faso, Uganda

Technopolis Africa

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1 Presentation of the evaluation

With a total budget of 2,25 million euros managed by Enabel for the Belgian State, the Digital for Girls and Women (D4GW) project strives to directly affect the lives of women and girls by increasing awareness of the challenges, risks, security concerns, and rights related to digital spaces, including privacy and data protection. It also aims to show all the advantages related to digitalisation and offers training on how to best take advantage of it. The project underscores that human rights principles that apply offline should also be upheld in the digital world. Promoting freedom of expression and inclusivity in digital spaces benefits not only men, women, and girls but also marginalized communities, ensuring that the opportunities presented by digitalization are accessible to everyone.

Digital rights and skills empower women and girls to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools for their socio-economic advancement. With these skills, women can transition their businesses to online platforms, allowing them to reach a broader market and generate income that can significantly improve their lives. Digital safety and security knowledge also equips women and girls to navigate online abuse and harassment, helping to create a safer, more secure online environment for them. Digital safety and security are not the sole responsibility of women, who are often disproportionately affected by digital rights abuses. That is why the project also actively engages men and focuses on creating an environment where women have access to appropriate support services and protection mechanisms.

This end term evaluation (ETE) of the Digital for Girls and Women (D4GW) project is both summative and formative with a general purpose to assess overall project performance. It aims at identifying all project outcomes and generating learning for scaling, sustainability, and policy integration within broader D4D initiatives.

The end-term evaluation was conducted between April and July 2025. It included two field visits (Burkina Faso and Uganda), multiple interviews with the project team, international and national counterparts and beneficiaries, as well as an in-depth review of documentation to triangulate feedback and consolidate the evaluation findings.

2 Findings and conclusions

The purpose of the project was to gain proof of concept of the approach that Digital for Development can and must go beyond the use of digital technologies to accelerate sustainable development (and should also tackle the digital divide and human rights violations in the digital spere as important socioeconomic effects of the digital transition). This can now be considered obtained and further lessons can be drawn from the implementation. The pilot character of the project also meant that different levels of intervention and different stakeholders were combined in a relatively small project. Not only was the project a pioneer in focusing entirely on the digital gender divide, it was also instrumental in fostering cooperation between an anglophone and a francophone, a Western African and an Eastern African country.

Some immediate outcomes can already be observed with direct beneficiaries of trainings. Wider impact on the population is going to be difficult to measure, though, as the impact of the project and organic changes in the society due to increased exposure to digitalisation are impossible to differentiate. In case beneficiaries of the awareness raising campaign could be identified, a counter-factual methodology (difference in differences or DiD) could be explored, but its costs would be proportionally too high for a small project like D4GW. Most probably, the impact will

concentrate on the level of direct training beneficiaries and will be marginal at the level of the population, which was however one of the most expensive components of the projects, reaching a limited number of beneficiaries. No activity has been carried out in collaboration with the authorities, which might be a missed opportunity to achieve systemic impact. The results and outputs of the project have a good chance of being sustainable if follow-up actions are taken, such as wider dissemination and future projects that build on them.

The lack of baseline values and the inconsistency of outcome, impact and performance indicators make the project difficult to evaluate. The monitoring and evaluation framework has not been prepared by M&E professionals, although these are available internally at Enabel.

The implementation of the new internal policy on multi-country project governance appears to have been directly applied to the D4GW project without prior adaptation of operational processes, tools, or the provision of sufficient guidance to teams. Such an unaccompanied change has resulted in improvisation and loss of data.

Globally, the D4GW project has been designed to meet the needs and priorities of all stakeholders. The slow set-up of the global D4D Hub Secretariat MPCA, to which the current project provided parallel co-financing, aggravated the de delay in implementation of the project caused by staffing difficulties (notably of the experts) and dysfunctionalities in the coordination. The delay was, however, successfully absorbed, the majority of planned activities having been carried out. Intentionally some of the activities planned for the latest stages will not be implemented so to realise some savings, as requested by the donor.

Relevance	A	The Digital for Girls and Women project was designed to meet the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries in Uganda and Burkina Faso, but also global needs. Preceded by thorough needs assessment in Burkina Faso and Uganda, based on expertise gained and connections built through previous projects in both countries, its orientation was significantly guided by local stakeholders, mainly civil society organisations. The Belgian component serving the expansion layer of the project meant to directly use expertise and experience gained on the field for influencing European and international D4D policies and initiatives. In this, it served a global need of empowering girls and women in the digital space worldwide, reflected by the EU Gender Action Plan III or the Sustainable Development Goal 5.
Coherence	B	Although formal coordination with national policies did not take place, the D4GW project was in line with national and global policies on digitalisation, human rights and gender policies. No duplication of similar donor initiatives was noted in the implementing countries, which confirms Belgium's pioneer role on the topic. The Brussels component was directly formulated to integrate the considerations on digital skills, digital rights and the gender divide into the D4D Hub's activities, thus increasing their internal coherence along these lines. The coherence between the three components of the project has shown some gaps, however.
Effectiveness and impact	B	A very important delay in the set-up phase hindered significantly the implementation of the project and most probably limited the impact the project will be able to achieve. Nevertheless, most outputs were achieved. The trainings already show some measurable impact realised by the direct beneficiaries. Due to a deficient MEL framework, the project's outcomes and impacts are difficult to measure. Hence, much of the evaluation of these

		criteria appears to rely on qualitative input, particularly interviews with beneficiaries, rather than on systematically documented evidence or measurable indicators.
Efficiency	C	The D4GW project was considered a pilot, therefore the budget was limited compared to the ambitions. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework shows some serious flaws that hindered the monitoring throughout the project and makes ex-post evaluations difficult. The fact that the decentralised coordination of a multi-country project was put into place before the decentralisation policy was fully elaborated, also left a huge imprint on the project's efficiency.
Sustainability	B	No sustainability strategy has been explicitly elaborated for the D4GW project. However, in Burkina Faso and Uganda, a rigorous identification of needs and a participatory approach involving the beneficiaries from the design stage ensures a certain sustainability of the results. The fact that the Belgian component further disseminates outputs created by the two other components also contribute to their survival beyond the project's lifetime.
Gender	A	Reducing the digital gender divide was the very focus of the project gender issues were integrated in a systematic and informed manner. Gender considerations were embedded in both planning and execution, ensuring that women and girls were prioritised in access to digital skills, tools, and opportunities.

3 Recommendations

N°	Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actors	Level	Priority	Type
1	The training of direct beneficiaries produced visible impact, but they are very resource-intensive and the number of those that can be trained is limited. More significant impact could be attained through the training of trainers (ToT), which allows to multiply the benefit.	C5, C7	Enabel, D4D Hub	2	Long-term	Strategic
2	Increase the efficiency of the trainings by forming homogenous groups and providing the necessary conditions (wi-fi).	C5	Enabel, D4D Hub	1	Medium-term	Operational
3	The awareness raising campaigns are necessary, but more systemic impact	C5, C7	Enabel, D4D Hub	2	Long-term	Strategic

	could be achieved through direct engagement with the government that would help influencing the policies and regulatory frameworks.					
4	The monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework should be elaborated by M&E professionals at the beginning of the project. It is particularly important for a pilot project to be able to produce quantitative evidence of what works and what does not.	C8	Enabel	2	Mediu m-term	Strategic
5	New corporate policies shouldn't be rushed into implementation without a proper plan and HR conditions, including change management at the level of the teams.	C6	Enabel	3	Mediu m-term	Operational