Empower, Protect, Innovate:
Bootcamps for Bridging the Gender Digital Divide

Impact Report

June 2025

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Cover photo: Two women participate in a digital skills training session led by The Lotus
Flower in Iraq, empowering displaced communities through coding and technology.
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Executive summary

Kenya. Saadia studying outside her shelter. She is currently pursuing a degree in Sustainable Development. © UNHCR/Pauline Omagwa

This report presents the outcomes and strategic insights from **UNHCR's Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamps** conducted in 2023 and 2024. These initiatives were designed to **address the persistent gender digital divide affecting forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls,** who often face compounded barriers to digital access.

The Bootcamps have proven to be transformative platforms for **advancing gender equality, protection, and empowerment.** By equipping grassroots, women-led, and refugee-led organizations with critical digital skills, tools, and leadership capacities, the Bootcamps have enabled these actors to lead inclusive digital transformation efforts within their communities. These organizations – often on the frontlines of the humanitarian response – play a vital role in delivering gender-responsive services across sectors including education, health, protection, livelihoods, and climate resilience.

For forcibly displaced women and girls, digital inclusion is a pathway to safety, dignity, and self-reliance. It enables access to life-saving information, strengthens protection mechanisms, and amplifies their voices in decision-making spaces. Through these Bootcamps, **participants have not only gained technical competencies but have also emerged as digital champions challenging gender norms, fostering community resilience, and driving systemic change.**

By showcasing the impact of these initiatives and the leadership of forcibly displaced women, this report also offers forward-looking recommendations to inform future programming, partnerships, and investments. It calls for sustained action to ensure that forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls are not left behind in the digital age but are empowered to shape it.

Impact
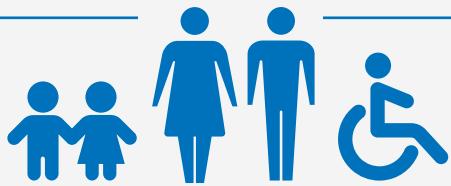
Direct beneficiaries: Across its two editions, the Bootcamp trained 44 grassroots organizations in 26 countries, directly benefiting **1,620 individuals** – including refugees, internally displaced persons, and host community members – through pilot projects focused on advancing the digital inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls.

Capacity building: Participants received hands-on training **in digital inclusion, project management, and human-centered design**, a problem-solving approach that centers the lived experiences and needs of users. The Bootcamp also facilitated the **development of innovative digital projects**, with eight pilot initiatives that collectively enhanced the protection and empowerment of more than 1,300 women and girls through digital skills, leadership development, and community engagement.

Networking and partnerships: Participants had the opportunity to showcase their work, interact directly with donors, and exchange information about their projects for peer learning. These networking opportunities were instrumental in unlocking new funding pathways, particularly for refugee- and women-led organizations, which often face barriers to accessing traditional funding streams despite their critical role in community-based humanitarian response.

Success stories: Notable successes include the "Coding Sisters" project in Iraq, which trained more than 340 women and girls in web design, coding, and cybersecurity awareness, and the "Digital Empowerment for Refugee Women-Led Businesses" project in Uganda, which provided essential digital skills to 90 women. Local replications of the Bootcamp in Yemen, Morocco, and South Sudan demonstrated strong community ownership and sustainability.

Satisfaction and feedback: Participant satisfaction was high, with 100% of 2024 participants rating their experience positively. They reported increased confidence, digital skills, and capacity to lead inclusive, community-driven initiatives. The Bootcamp also catalyzed new partnerships, funding opportunities, and organizational growth as a direct result of their participation.

Recommendations

Scale and adapt the Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp at regional and national levels: Expand the reach and impact of the Bootcamp by adapting its design and delivery to regional and national contexts. Ensure that grassroots organizations receive sustained, context-specific support to lead digital inclusion efforts. This approach reinforces women's leadership, strengthens their agency, and promotes their meaningful participation in shaping digital futures.

Strengthen digital infrastructure and expand access in refugee-hosting areas: Invest in inclusive digital ecosystems by improving internet connectivity and establishing connected community centers that serve as safe, accessible digital access points. Collaborate with relevant actors to increase the availability of laptops, smart devices, and affordable connectivity solutions. These investments are essential to uphold the rights of forcibly displaced women and girls to access information, services, and opportunities.

Empower women-led and refugee-led organizations to lead digital innovation efforts: Enhance access to flexible, gender-responsive funding and streamline grant processes to support women-led and refugee-led organizations in designing and sustaining digital inclusion initiatives. Prioritize community-driven models that leverage local knowledge, leadership, and resources. Supporting these organizations is critical to advancing gender equality, strengthening protection outcomes, and fostering inclusive innovation.

Expand inclusive and accessible training opportunities: Co-create training programmes with forcibly displaced women and girls to ensure relevance, ownership, and empowerment. Tailor content to diverse educational backgrounds and ensure accessibility for women and girls of all ages and abilities, including those with disabilities. This inclusive approach promotes equitable access to digital skills and reinforces the principle of leaving no one behind.

Foster safe and supportive learning environments for women and girls: Establish secure, inclusive spaces where women and girls can learn, connect, and support one another. Integrate digital safety and resilience into all training activities, addressing online harassment, misinformation, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TF GBV). Use peer-led approaches and relatable examples to build confidence and promote safe, informed digital engagement.

Strengthen strategic partnerships and elevate the visibility of refugee-led initiatives: Collaborate with governments, international organizations, private sector partners, and local stakeholders to scale digital inclusion efforts and amplify the leadership of forcibly displaced and stateless women. Facilitate their access to strategic networks, advocacy platforms, and global dialogues to ensure their voices are heard and contributions recognized. Elevating their visibility is essential to advancing gender-transformative change and inclusive digital development.

Call to Action

UNHCR calls on donors, policymakers, and partners to **prioritize and invest in digital gender inclusion as a strategic pathway to the protection, empowerment, self-reliance, and leadership of forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls and their communities.** By advancing equitable access to technology, strengthening digital capacities, ensuring online safety, and fostering inclusive innovation, we can enable forcibly displaced women and girls to transition from digital exclusion to becoming agents of change, leaders, and innovators.

Introduction

Jordan. Syrian refugee working from home as a translator. © UNHCR

This report **assesses the impact of two consecutive years of UNHCR's Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamps, designed to empower women-led organizations and address digital gender gaps among forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls.** It highlights how these initiatives have contributed to bridging digital divides in participating communities through targeted, inclusive interventions.

Through this report, UNHCR encourages its regional and country offices, as well as its partners, to replicate and tailor similar models in close collaboration with local stakeholders. Emphasizing the importance of partnerships with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless women, it underscores the need to extend digital inclusion to remote and underserved communities. By demonstrating the effectiveness of these initiatives, the report seeks to mobilize support from donors and stakeholders to scale and sustain digital gender inclusion efforts globally.

Gender Digital Divide

The digital age has unlocked vast opportunities and benefits worldwide, contributing significantly to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Digital technologies hold transformative potential to advance gender equality (SDG 5) and empower women and girls, particularly when they are designed to be inclusive and governed to promote equitable outcomes (SDG 5.8). However, persistent gender disparities in digital access, literacy, STEM education, and algorithmic bias continue to reinforce harmful stereotypes. These gaps not only limit women's participation in the development and use of emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), but also contribute to their underrepresentation in digital and technology-related sectors.

The digital gender gap is even more pronounced in contexts of forced displacement, affecting more than 60 million forcibly displaced women and girls globally. In many of these communities, women and girls face multiple, intersecting barriers to digital inclusion and are often excluded from both accessing and meaningfully using technology. These challenges are compounded by displacement-related factors such as **limited financial resources, lack of valid identification documents, inadequate digital infrastructure** in areas hosting refugees and internally displaced people, and **restrictive regulatory environments** – particularly for non-nationals. For instance, in Tripoli, Lebanon, Syrian women are five times less likely to own a smartphone than Syrian men, and less than one-quarter as likely as Lebanese women. Additional

challenges arise from **limited access to digital devices**, **high costs**, **low levels of digital literacy and skills**, **harmful sociocultural norms**, **entrenched gender stereotypes and biases**, and the **growing threat of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TF GBV)**.

Globally, women and girls are disproportionately exposed to digital risks, online harm, and violence compared to their male counterparts, a vulnerability that is further intensified for those who are forcibly displaced. Numerous reports have documented incidents of TF GBV, online exploitation, and abuse, including human trafficking, specifically targeting displaced women and girls. These threats often silence and marginalize the voices of women and girls, erode their rights, and limit their participation in digital spaces, thereby deepening the gender digital divide and restricting access to critical online opportunities.

Without tailored GBV prevention, response, and risk mitigation measures, such violations further isolate women and girls from the digital world and reinforce existing gender inequalities. The **consequences are severe**: forcibly displaced women and girls are left unable to fully participate in a connected society or access life-saving information and resources essential for their protection and well-being. Moreover, they face significant barriers to the educational, economic, protective, and recreational opportunities that digital technology can offer, further exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and heightening their vulnerability.

UNHCR's Approach to Digital Gender Inclusion

The UN Secretary General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation underscores the challenges forcibly displaced persons face in achieving digital inclusion and calls for an intersectional, gender-responsive approach to understanding digital vulnerabilities and identifying effective risk mitigation strategies. In alignment with this UN-wide strategic direction, UNHCR's Digital Transformation Strategy 2022–2026 places digital inclusion at its core. Guided by the UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, UNHCR is committed to advancing digital inclusion and closing the digital gender gap by equipping forcibly displaced persons with the skills, resources, and training needed to harness technology as a driver of gender equality and empowerment.

UNHCR recognizes that bridging the gender digital divide requires a **twin-track approach:** mainstreaming gender equality across all digital inclusion efforts, while also implementing targeted interventions specifically designed for displaced women and girls. To this end, UNHCR prioritizes a localization approach that centers the expertise and leadership of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless women in all their diversity. Partnering with these organizations enables the development of inclusive, innovative, and sustainable solutions that address the gender digital divide and generate lasting impact within communities.

It is within this framework that UNHCR launched its Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp in 2023 and expanded the initiative in 2024 through strengthened collaboration with Regional Bureaux and Country Operations.

UNHCR's Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp

In 2023, UNHCR launched its first-ever Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp in partnership with Here I Am Studio, advancing the Digital Inclusion pillar of the UNHCR Digital Transformation Strategy 2022–2026. This initiative aimed to promote digital gender inclusion through the participation and empowerment of forcibly displaced women, with a strong emphasis on localization. It channeled resources and support toward community-based, women-led, and refugee-led organizations committed to advancing gender equality and digital inclusion within their communities.

The 2023 Bootcamp successfully convened a diverse group of stakeholders in the digital inclusion space, including the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), GSMA, Equals Global Partnership, Humans in the Loop, and Education for Employment. Through this collaboration, the Bootcamp built the capacity of 12 grassroots organizations — selected from more than 300 applicants through a competitive open call — to address the gender digital divide and promote digital gender equality.

Participant organizations received hands-on training in key areas such as identifying digital gender gaps, designing digital skills training curricula for displaced women and girls, enhancing digital livelihoods for women's economic empowerment, promoting digital protection and online safety, and applying project management tools grounded in human-centered design, a problem-solving approach that centers the needs and experiences of users throughout the design process.

An added value of the Bootcamp was the opportunity for participants to explore innovative solutions under expert guidance and support. Through collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, participants learned to validate assumptions, refine ideas, and design digital inclusion solutions that respond to the diverse needs of women and girls—from digital safety to digital entrepreneurship. The Bootcamp also fostered a vibrant peer-learning environment by connecting participants with like-minded women-led organizations from other countries and regions, all committed to advancing gender equality through digital innovation.

In addition to targeted learning and networking opportunities, the Bootcamp offered a small seed funding window to support the development and testing of promising ideas. As a result, [eight pilot projects](#) were selected to address the complex challenges faced by displaced women and girls, including poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. These initiatives reached more than 1,300 displaced women and girls across seven countries, enabling access to education, employment, and leisure opportunities through digital technologies.

Scale-up in 2024

Building on the success of its inaugural edition, UNHCR significantly expanded the [Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp,](#) in 2024. The number of participating organizations – each led by forcibly displaced or stateless women – tripled, with 32 organizations from across seven regions completing the programme and receiving certificates of completion.

To enhance accessibility and inclusivity, the 2024 Bootcamp introduced multilingual support in Arabic, French, Spanish, and English, enabling broader global participation. This edition also deepened collaboration with key digital inclusion partners, including [GSMA](#), the [Global Digital Inclusion Partnership](#), [Internews](#), [Concat](#), and [Kolaborate](#), offering participants a comprehensive and holistic capacity-building experience.

Recognizing the pivotal role of community-based, women-led organizations in humanitarian response, UNHCR worked closely with its Country Operations and Regional Bureaux to nominate and endorse participants. These organizations were selected based on their demonstrated leadership and commitment to advancing digital gender inclusion within their communities. This strategic selection process also aimed to strengthen post-Bootcamp engagement and ensure sustained, localized impact.

Comprehensive Learning Approach

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The Bootcamp delivered a robust and practical learning experience, equipping participants with strategic tools, peer learning opportunities, and actionable insights to address the gender digital divide in displacement contexts. Key components of the curriculum included:

- **UNHCR's strategic approach to digital inclusion and innovation**, with a focus on collaboration with refugee-led and women-led organizations operating in humanitarian settings.

- **Assessment and training design tools,** including the use of GSMA's Connectivity, Needs and Usage Assessment (CONUA) Toolkit to identify digital barriers, and the Mobile Internet Skills Training Toolkit (MISTT) framework to develop tailored digital skills training.

- **Digital safety and risk awareness**, with a focus on the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls in online spaces, alongside strategies for community engagement and accountability in digital environments.

- **Empathy mapping and inclusive design,** enabling participants to better understand community needs and develop inclusive digital products and services, combined with tailored training on enhancing organizational visibility through social media.

- **Digital livelihoods and freelancing models,** with best practices shared by UNHCR, refugee-led organizations, and women-led social enterprises such as ConCat and Kolaborate.

- **Project management and funding readiness,** including sessions on proposal development, showcasing success stories, and identifying funding opportunities to support digital gender equality initiatives.

Bootcamp toolkits and materials used for organizational programming | 2024
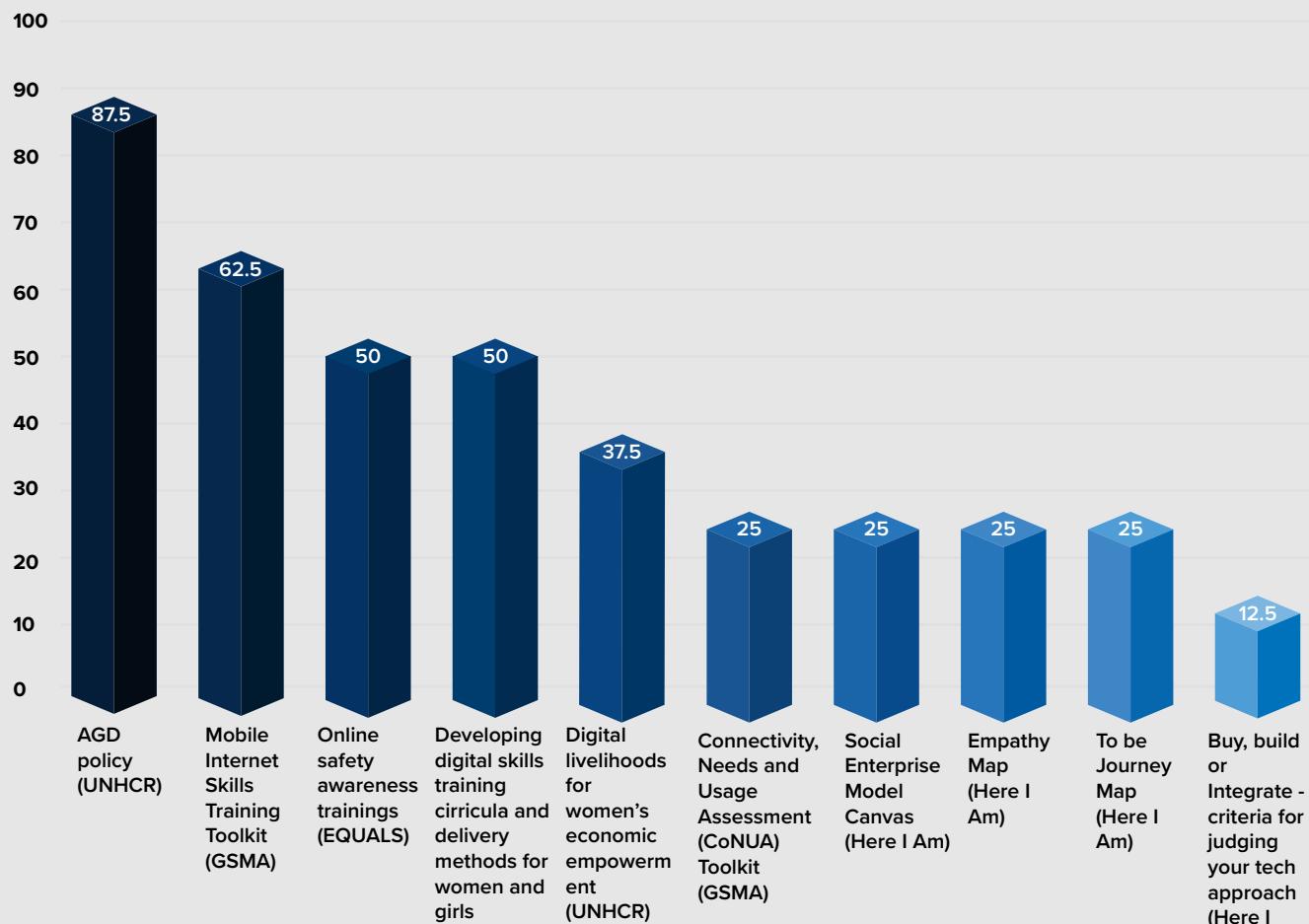
Figure 4: Use of toolkits and materials increased organizational efficiency.

Donor Engagement and Strategic Partnerships

A defining feature of the 2024 Bootcamp, distinguishing it from its 2023 iteration, was the introduction of an interactive Donor Engagement Session with Bootcamp participants and pledging entities from the Global Refugee Forum. This session aimed to enhance collaboration in closing the gender digital divide within contexts of forced displacement and promote localization through strengthening partnerships with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless women.

Participants had the opportunity to showcase their digital inclusion initiatives, engage directly with donors, participate in focused breakout discussions, and exchange insights on their respective projects. This engagement proved to be a highly valuable component of the Bootcamp, unlocking potentially transformative funding opportunities. It addressed a critical gap faced by grassroots organizations, which often struggle to access larger funding streams typically directed toward national and international actors, despite their vital contributions at the community level.

26 countries were represented at the Bootcamp:

26	**4**	**59**	**3**
Countries	**Languages**	**Participants**	**Cohorts**
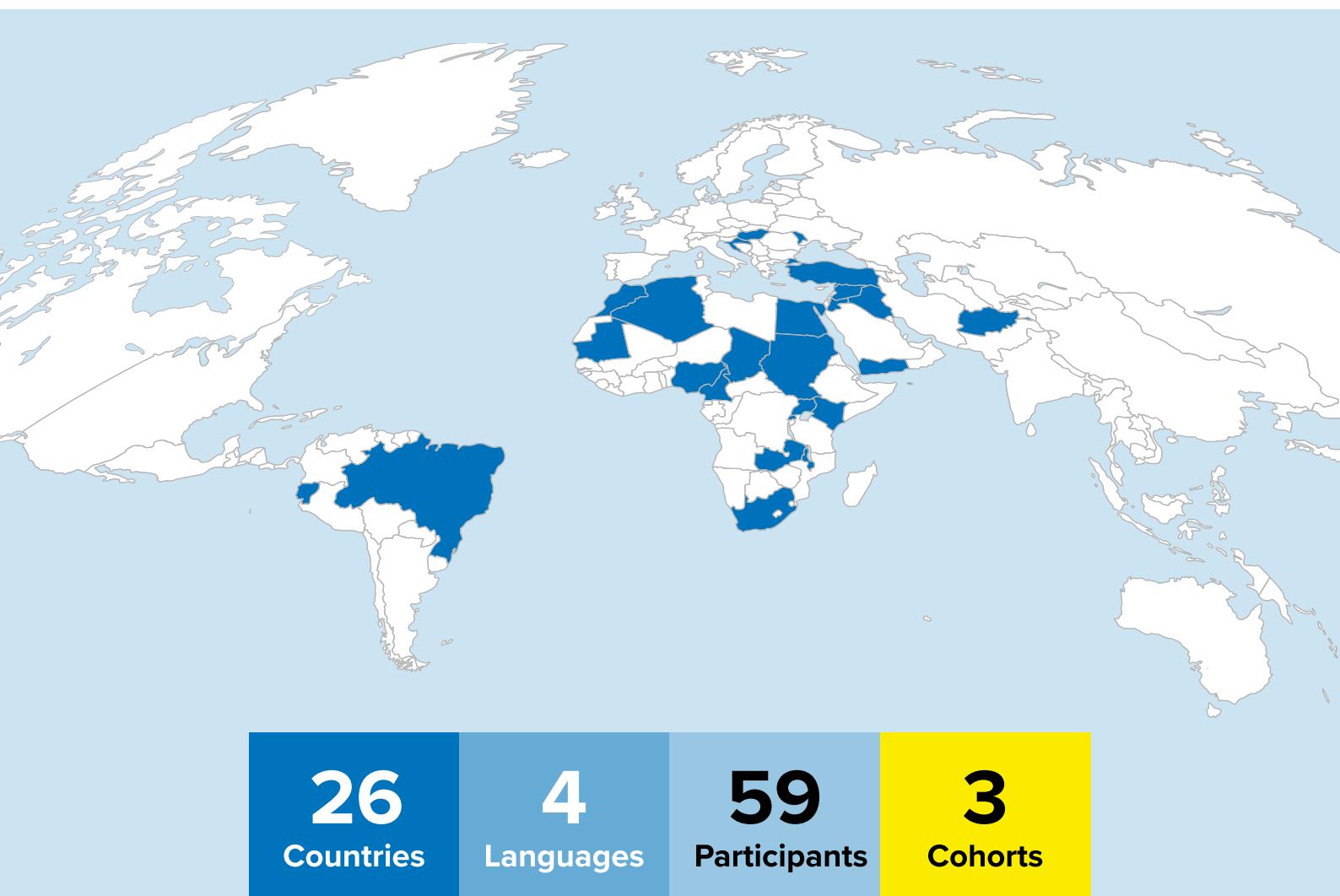
Afghanistan, Algeria, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, Croatia, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Moldova, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Slovakia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Türkiye, Uganda, Yemen, and Zambia.

*Further information about the participant organizations can be found in the Annex.

Impact Assessment

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamps, UNHCR employed a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Post-training surveys were conducted immediately following the 2023 and 2024 Bootcamps to assess training quality, inclusivity, and participant satisfaction. For the 2023 cohort, a follow-up survey was administered one year later to measure long-term outcomes.

The assessment captured key indicators, such as the types of digital inclusion initiatives implemented by participants, the number and demographics of direct beneficiaries reached, and the tools and methodologies adopted in their community-based work. In addition, focus group discussions with participants, sharing best practices, analysis of pilot project reports, and interviews with the Bootcamp delivery partner provided deeper qualitative insights into the programme's impact. These findings highlighted the Bootcamp's effectiveness in strengthening the capacity of women refugee-led organizations (WRLOs) to lead initiatives that promote digital gender equality in displacement contexts.

Direct Beneficiaries

Across its 2023 and 2024 cohorts, the Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp trained a total of 44 grassroots organizations. The scale and reach of the initiative expanded significantly in 2024, supported by enhanced accessibility through multilingual and time zone-sensitive delivery. In 2023, 22 participants representing 12 grassroots organizations took part in the Bootcamp. These included seven refugee-led organizations (RLOs) – three of which were led by forcibly displaced women – alongside four women-led organizations (WLOs) and one community-based organization (CBO). In 2024, participation grew to 32 organizations, all led by forcibly displaced or stateless women.

A key strength of the Bootcamp lies in its ability to engage and amplify the capacities of grassroots organizations deeply embedded in their communities. Participants from the 2023 cohort reported cascading their knowledge through a range of community-based initiatives, including digital inclusion pilot projects supported by UNHCR seed funding. These efforts reached a total of 1,620 individuals, made up of 936 refugees, 378 internally displaced persons, and 306 members of host communities. Notably, organizations that did not receive seed funding also leveraged their learnings from the Bootcamp to secure alternative funding from international

donors, enabling them to launch additional digital inclusion projects targeting women and girls. For example, the Dadaab Collective Freelancing Agency (DCFA) established partnerships with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) following their participation in the Bootcamp. These collaborations enabled DCFA to expand its services in monitoring and evaluation, and to scale up coaching for refugee freelancers – particularly women – supporting them to secure employment after completing freelancing courses.

While it is still early to assess the long-term impact of the 2024 Bootcamp, early indications suggest a similar trajectory. Many participating organizations have already begun translating their learnings into tangible outcomes within their communities. Further details on these initiatives are presented in the section, below, on Medium and long-term impact.

Population reached by Gender and Country

|	Country	
280	Yemen	100
340	Iraq	0
169	Kenya	154
144	Rwanda	0
60	South Sudan	36
90	Uganda	0
48	Syria	0
45	Jordan	0
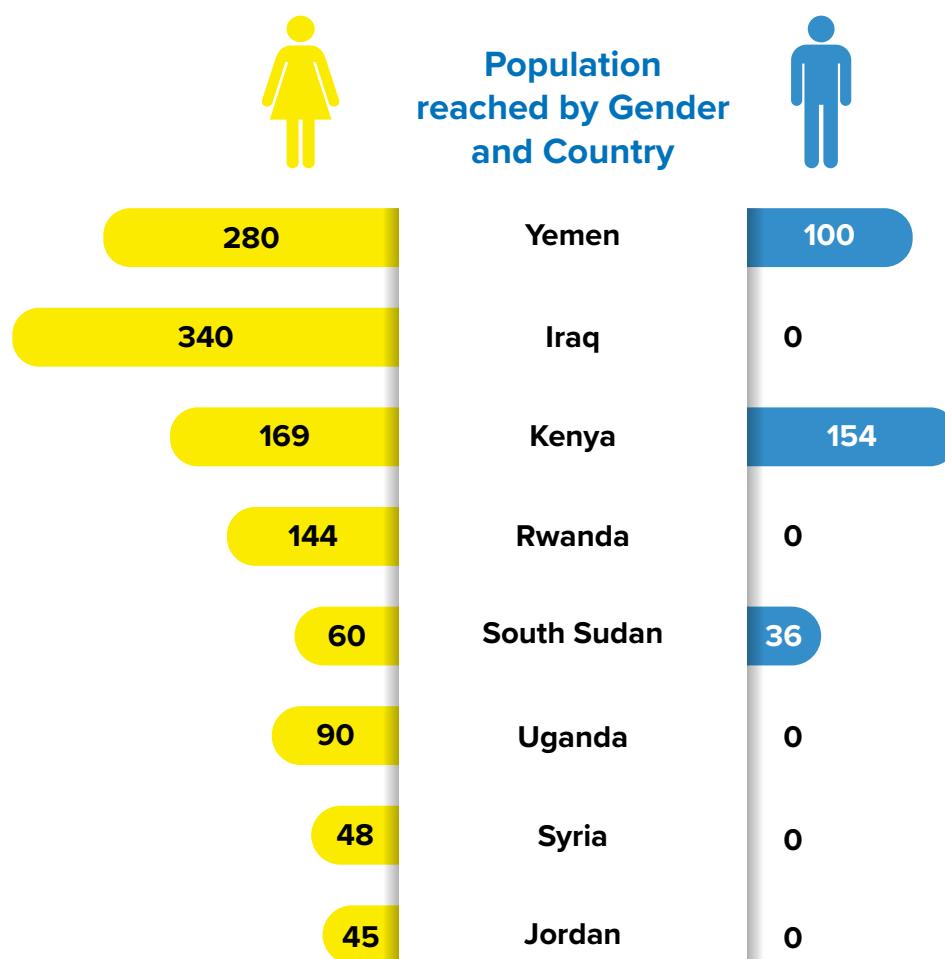
Figure 1: Population reached as reported by 2023 Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp participants, disaggregated by sex and country (Source: UNHCR 2024 KoboTool Reflection Survey)

Population reached by UNHCR population group

Host Community
306 (19%)

IDPs
378 (23%)

Refugees
936 (58%)

Figure 2: Population reached as reported by 2023 Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp participants, disaggregated by UNHCR population categories (Source: UNHCR 2024 KoboTool Reflection Survey)

Population reached by AGD Groups

| Group	Value
Adult women 25-59 years	661
Youth women 15-24 years	472
Adult men 25-59 years	145
Youth men 15-24 years	135
Persons with Disabilities	78
Minorities + Indigenous groups	76
Girls (10-14 years)	32
Older women (60+ years)	11
Older Men (60+ years)	10
Boys (10-14 years)	0
LGBTIQ+ Persons	0
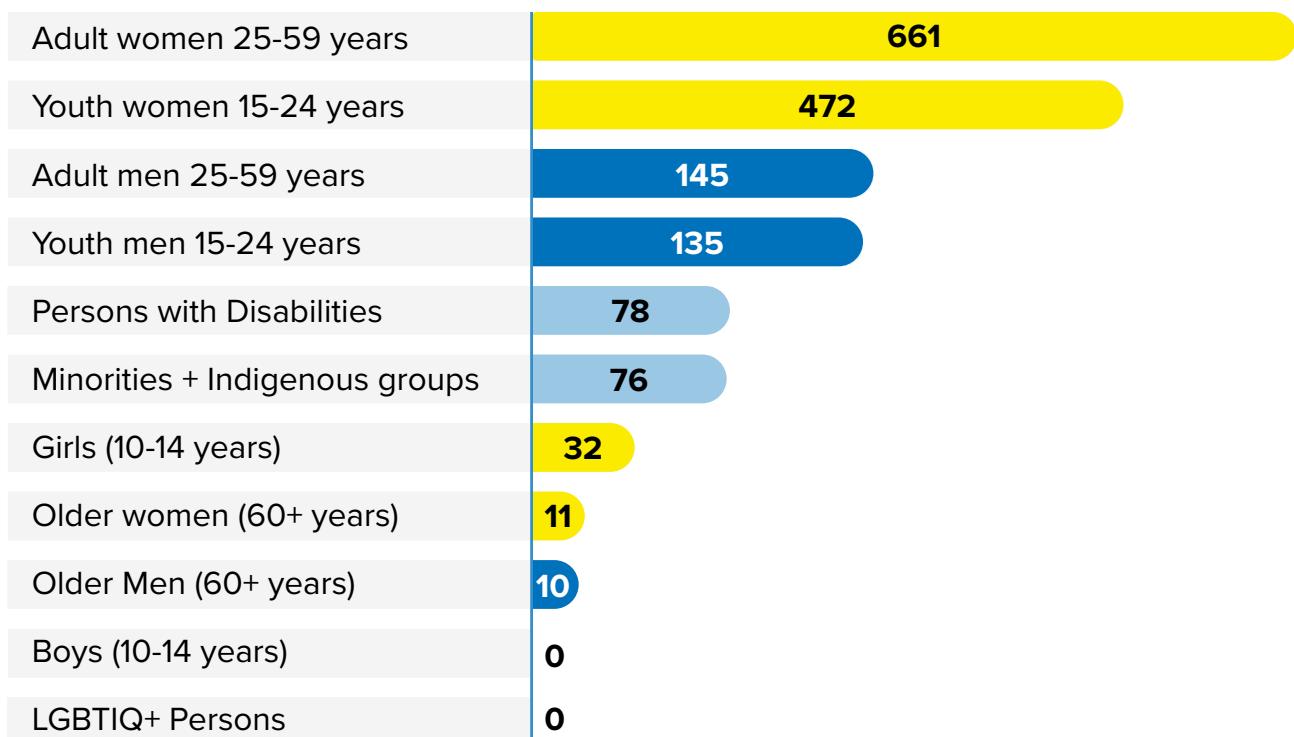
Figure 3: Bootcamp population reached, according to Age, Gender, and Diversity groups

Immediate Results

The Bootcamps delivered in 2023 and 2024 yielded highly positive outcomes, as evidenced by participant satisfaction rates. In 2024, 100% of participants rated their overall experience as 4 out of 5, while in 2023, 94% provided the same rating. These figures reflect a consistently high level of satisfaction and perceived value across both cohorts.

Participants reported significant enhancements in their digital competencies, which they intend to apply within their respective communities. Key areas of learning included:

- A deeper understanding of the gender digital divide and the socio-cultural barriers that hinder digital inclusion.
- The critical importance of integrating forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls – and the organizations that represent them – into digital Innovation initiatives.
- Practical skills in designing and delivering digital training curricula aimed at improving digital literacy and reducing inequalities.

Moreover, participants strengthened their capacity to promote digital safety and protect their communities from cyber threats. They also gained exposure to innovative digital livelihood strategies and the use of social media and digital marketing to foster self-reliance.

The Bootcamps also emphasized capacity sharing through the introduction of accessible online tools and services. Participants were trained in the use of free and open-access digital platforms such as Project Canvas, Coursera and Fatima, as well as toolkits including Empathy Mapping, the GSMA Moblie Internet Skills Training Toolkit, Design Kit, and To-Be User Journey Map. These resources are expected to support the design and implementation of more inclusive digital inclusion projects.

Finally, a notable outcome was the development of participants' skills in building compelling investment cases for digital gender inclusion and innovation initiatives. This included crafting persuasive funding proposals and identifying opportunities for innovative partnerships. As a result, many participants reported increased engagement with potential donors and partners, thereby expanding their networks and enhancing the sustainability of their initiatives.

Feedback

Participant feedback was systematically collected during Bootcamp sessions and through a post-Bootcamp survey. This feedback has played a critical role in assessing the effectiveness of the Bootcamps and in identifying key areas of impact and opportunities for continuous improvement. The following selected quotes from participants in the 2023 and 2024 Bootcamps provide valuable insights into their experiences and the tangible benefits they derived from this experience. These testimonials highlight the Bootcamps' success in equipping participants with the knowledge, practical tools, and confidence required to advance digital inclusion and foster gender equality within their communities:

The main learning from the Bootcamp was understanding the critical nature of identifying and addressing gaps in digital gender inclusion. The Bootcamp highlighted how these gaps significantly affect women's participation in digital use and can perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. Understanding these gaps is crucial because they directly impact women's ability to participate in the digital world, access educational resources, seek employment opportunities, and engage in social networks. If left unaddressed, these gaps can further widen the digital divide and exacerbate existing inequalities. - Anonymous participant

We are grateful for the opportunity to expand our knowledge and expertise in technology and innovation. We will work hard to apply what we learned in this programme to our future projects and activities, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to achieve positive change in the lives of women and promote gender equality in disadvantaged communities. Thanks again for your support and encouragement. - Anonymous participant

The Bootcamp has been an incredibly valuable experience. From the very first day, we learned a lot, but the second week has been especially impactful as we've gained practical tools to apply what we've learned to real projects. - Halime Mahamat, Cameroon

Six-Month Post-Bootcamp Impact:
Local Replication and Community-led Innovation

Six months following the conclusion of the 2024 Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp, participating organizations have demonstrated significant progress in applying their learnings to local contexts. Despite varying levels of resources, many organizations independently launched digital inclusion initiatives – ranging from awareness campaigns on digital safety to targeted training sessions aimed at empowering women and girls through improved digital access and skills.

Empowered with enhanced digital competencies, collaborative learning methodologies, and project management tools, participants have emerged as catalysts for community-driven change. Their initiatives are increasingly attracting the attention of donors and partners, underscoring the Bootcamp's role in fostering sustainable, locally led innovation.

1. **Strengthened digital skills and role models driving community impact:** The Bootcamp has empowered women participants to become ongoing sources of support and leadership within their communities. Their efforts underscore the importance of continuous capacity building and knowledge sharing, not only for individual empowerment but also for broader community resilience. The following examples illustrate how participants are translating their skills into meaningful, lasting impact:

   - **Yemen:** The Social Researcher Foundation for Development (SRFD), in collaboration with the Madala Foundation and UNHCR, launched the "Empowering Her Digital Skills" initiative, training 50 forcibly displaced women in digital literacy, marketing, and e-entrepreneurship. Another participant from DAFI Student Union expanded her role to deliver digital training and personalized support for girls, with backing from ADRA Yemen.

   - **Morocco:** The Association des Femmes Réfugiées et Migrantes au Maroc (AFRMM) initiated digital skills workshops for refugee women and youth, focusing on word processing and digital literacy.

   - **Afghanistan:** Nagin Asia Goldozi delivered e-entrepreneurship training via smartphones, enabling young women to explore income-generating opportunities.

   - **Cameroon:** The Comité des Réfugiés dans les Communes au Cameroun (CRCC) led awareness campaigns on mobile financial tools to promote digital inclusion among displaced women and girls.

- **Kenya:** [Refugee Women in Nairobi (RWN)](#) launched digital literacy and e-commerce training for refugee women artisans, enabling them to market their products through platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram.

2. **Enhanced Group Learning and Peer Collaboration:** Participants have effectively leveraged collaborative digital tools to support group learning and teamwork, demonstrating the power of technology to strengthen peer-to-peer learning and streamline coordination:

- **Sudan:** The [Women Advocacy and Development Initiative (WADI)](#) organized digital workshops with women-led groups in conflict-affected areas, promoting virtual collaboration, cybersecurity awareness, and girls' digital empowerment.

- **Ecuador:** The [Asociación Integral de Mujeres Migrantes en Ecuador (AIMME),](#) a UNHCR grant partner, adopted Google Workspace tools to enhance internal operations, shared Bootcamp knowledge with its community, and established new donor connections to support future initiatives. This organization is also featured in [UNHCR promising practices: Harnessing the power of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless women](#).

3. **Enhancing Organizational Readiness for Donor Engagement:** The Bootcamp strengthened participants' capacity in proposal writing, strategic communication, and storytelling – key competencies for engaging with donors and securing funding:

- **Nigeria:** [Endam Home of Hope](#), in partnership with the [African Refugee Women Network](#), produced a [video](#) to showcase the impact of its digital inclusion work and support future donor engagement. Their work includes ensuring digital access for displaced women through the provision of airtime and phone repairs and training refugee women in digital marketing and online safety.

- **Zambia:** The Great Lakes Refugee Women's Association (GRWAZ) extended Bootcamp knowledge to its members via mobile outreach and began applying for grants to expand digital training and improve access to essential tools, leveraging opportunities shared through UNHCR channels.

One-Year Post-Bootcamp Impact: Leveraging Digital Innovation to Strengthen Protection, Inclusion, and Efficiency

One year after the 2023 Bootcamp, participating organizations demonstrated significant progress in leveraging digital innovation to foster women's leadership, economic empowerment, and organizational sustainability. These efforts have translated into more inclusive and effective digital inclusion programming, tangible livelihood opportunities, strengthened digital protection, and enhanced institutional credibility. Collectively, these initiatives highlight the transformative potential of digital innovation when grounded in inclusive, community-led approaches, as illustrated below:

1. **Advancing Age, Gender, and Diversity-Responsive Programming:** Organizations significantly enhanced their capacity to design and implement inclusive and transformative digital inclusion initiatives embedding age, gender, and diversity (AGD) principles. This improvement has allowed organizations to adapt digital training content to the specific needs and socioeconomic levels of diverse participants, ensuring no one is left behind.

   - **South Sudan:** Rescue and Relief Mission (RRM) supported adolescent girls and women with disabilities through tailored digital and financial literacy training and mentorship.

     › By adopting the Bootcamp's User Journey Map, RRM tailored content delivery ensuring accessibility for adolescent girls and women with disabilities.

     › Seven out of nine refugee girls mentored by RRM successfully secured scholarships to the African Leadership University through an online application process despite facing significant digital barriers such as limited connectivity and lack of devices. This achievement underscores the transformative power of targeted digital inclusion efforts in expanding educational access and empowering displaced young women to pursue leadership opportunities.

     › RRM also embedded AGD principles into the I4GET Project that promotes equitable access to digital financial tools and economic opportunities for marginalized women and girls, strengthening community resilience.

2. **Advancing Women's Leadership and Employment through Digital Livelihoods:** Organizations increasingly prioritized structured digital entrepreneurship training and sustained mentorship for women in displacement contexts, enabling financial independence and long-term self-reliance.

- **Kenya:** Solidarity Initiative for Refugees (SIR) launched the "Digital Skills Graduation Model" in Kakuma Refugee Camp, training 51 adolescent girls and young women in digital livelihoods, social media management, and AI tools.

  › 70% began earning income via online microwork platforms (e.g., Remotasks, Timebucks, SproutGigs, etc.).
  › 95% now use LinkedIn to expand professional networks.
  › All participants received financial literacy training via the Learning Upgrade platform. Many have become community mentors, amplifying the programme's reach.

© Solidarity initiatives for Refugees (SIR)

- **Syria:** Al Nada Organization launched "Silk Hands" project, equipping 50 displaced and host community women with digital entrepreneurship skills.

  › Participants gained access to smart devices, internet, and training in online marketing and e-commerce.
  › More than 10% of the participants launched social media marketplaces to promote their products. One woman launched a small business and trained others in handmade crafts, forming a digital artisan collective with an online shop.

We took lots of useful ideas, visual and audio feeding, usage of e-mail, the best way to use social media to display and market my products. - Woman participant from the Silk Hands project

- **Uganda:** Let's Help International (LHI) developed the "Digital Empowerment for Refugee Women-Led Businesses" initiative, where it established a computer training center for refugee women entrepreneurs, equipped with 10 computers, training materials, childcare services, and daily transport refunds.
  - › 90 refugee women were trained in essential digital skills, enabling them to expand their networks, increase business visibility on social media, and manage resources more effectively.
  - › Each participant shared her knowledge with 20–30 peers, creating a ripple effect that significantly boosted community-wide digital literacy.

© Let's Help International (LHI)

As women, we are often marginalized, but now we are visible and have regained our dignity, even on social media. - Woman participant, LHI project

3. **Strengthening Digital Safety and Protection:** Organizations reported being better equipped to integrate digital skills into broader protection and empowerment programming, enhancing digital safety and access to essential services.

- **Yemen:** The Reef Foundation launched the "Digital Literacy among Women and Girls" initiative in Taiz governorate, emphasizing digital safety, protection, and foundational digital skills using the MISTT toolkit acquired through the Bootcamp.
    › 40 women from host and displaced communities were trained on digital literacy and protection. These women cascaded the training to an additional 400 individuals within their communities, promoting digital safety practices, strengthening social cohesion, and improving access to critical information.

© The Reef Foundation

- **Jordan:** Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWO) implemented its "Digital Literacy Ambassadors" project across Amman, Mafraq, and Irbid to enhance Syrian refugee women's digital literacy and ensure digital safety awareness.

    › 15 women were trained as digital safety mentors who supported additional 30 women in their communities. Participants achieved a 43.6% improvement in digital literacy.
    › Their development of Tareeq digital platform enabled ongoing peer learning and resource sharing, reaching over 100 indirect beneficiaries.

4. **Strategic Partnerships and Organizational Growth:** Organizations reported increased collaboration with international partners, driven by enhanced digital competencies and demonstrated impact.

- **Kenya:** [Dadaab Collective Freelancing Agency (DCFA)](#) gained further credibility post-Bootcamp, leading to partnerships with UN agencies and INGOs.

  › DCFA's digital training for refugee women in freelancing enabled many to achieve financial independence and advocate for the organization's impact, reinforcing donor trust and DCFA's reputation and appeal to global partners such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

- **Iraq:** [The Lotus Flower](#) reached more than 500 displaced women and girls through its "Coding Sisters" project. The organization secured additional funding to scale its successful pilot project.

  › 28 participants received training in coding and web design, boosting their employability and prospects.
  › 535 women and girls participated in the Cyber Abuse Awareness activity including prevention from technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

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Joining the 'Coding Sisters' initiative reignited my dream of working in tech. Completing the training and building a website was a powerful milestone. - Midya, 37-year-old Syrian refugee

Most organizations indicated improved efficiency and expanded programme reach through the integration of newly acquired digital tools and platforms. This shift enabled more structured programming, while also generating measurable cost and time savings — largely attributed to the effective use of various Bootcamp-introduced tools.

- **Rwanda:** Prison Fellowship Rwanda (PFR) conducted 28 training sessions for 144 Burundian and Congolese refugee women. The organization used the learning materials from the Bootcamp to design and deliver their learning programmes, which:
  › Used bilingual, video-based content, and real-time feedback to adapt delivery.
  › Achieved a 94% improvement in digital literacy.
  › Reached more than 4,000 individuals through a cost-effective, community-centered model.


© Prison Fellowship Rwanda
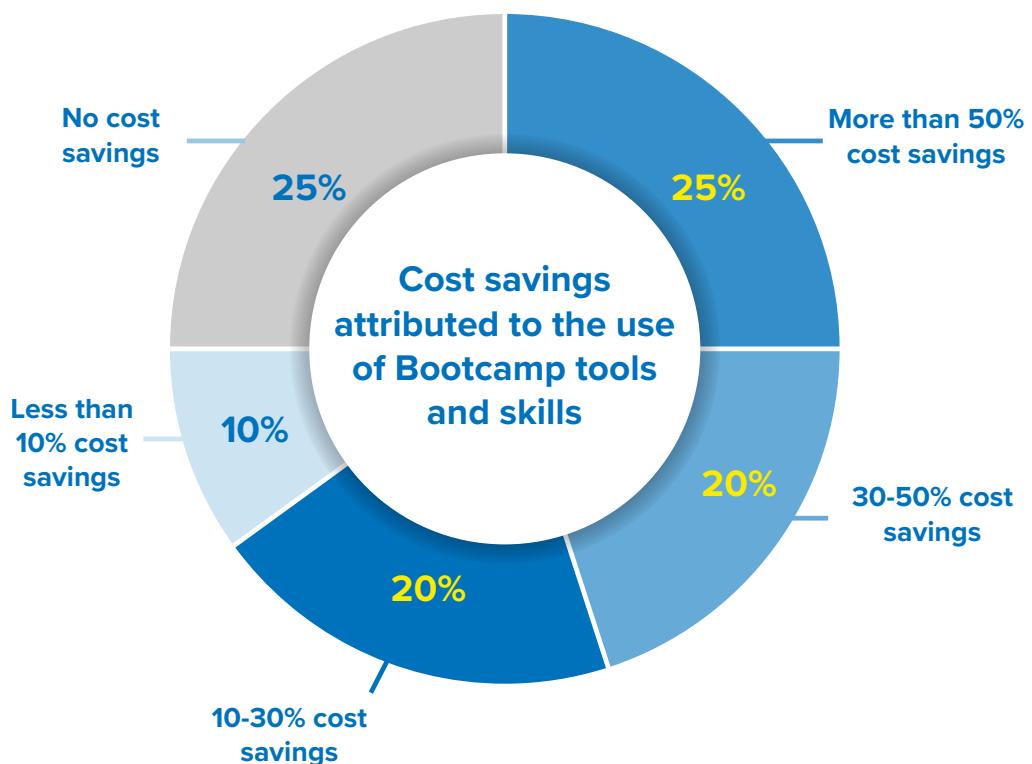
Figure 5: Reduction in costs due to Bootcamp tools and skills adoption (Source: UNHCR 2024 KoboTool Reflection Survey).
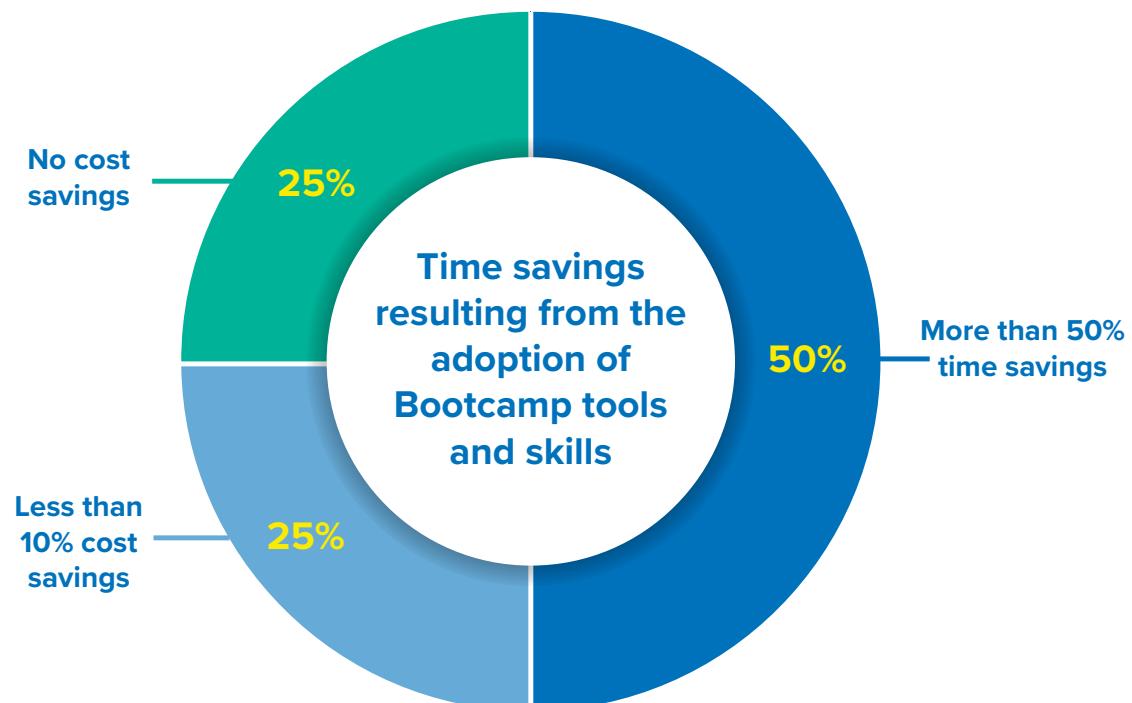

Figure 6: Time savings resulting from Bootcamp-related tool adoption (Source: UNHCR 2024 KoboTool Reflection Survey).

Lessons Learned

Leverage Community Resources for Sustainability

Initiatives that generate local economic value – particularly those promoting digital entrepreneurship – have proven effective in sustaining impact beyond initial seed funding. Initiatives that center forcibly displaced women as economic actors and digital innovators further reinforce their agency and leadership. Embedding sustainability mechanisms into project design from the outset ensures that benefits endure over time. This underscores the importance of building on existing community capacities, leadership, and knowledge to foster self-reliance and protection.

Ensure Ongoing Capacity Building Beyond the Bootcamp

While the Bootcamp equipped participants with foundational skills and tools, it also underscored the need for continuous capacity building. Ongoing training, mentorship, and peer learning opportunities are essential to empower participants – especially those facing intersectional barriers such as illiteracy, disability, or age-related exclusion. Sustained capacity strengthening is critical to ensuring forcibly displaced women and girls can fully exercise their rights, access opportunities, and lead change within their communities. Adapting digital training to diverse educational backgrounds and integrating it into broader programming enhances inclusivity and strengthens long-term impact. This approach reinforces women and girls' capacities and ensures that digital inclusion efforts are both equitable and sustainable.

Anticipate and Address Digital Access and Connectivity Gaps

Despite support measures such as access to community centers with internet, participants still faced significant barriers due to limited availability of laptops, smart devices, and stable connectivity. To ensure equitable access and long-term impact, future programmes must proactively invest in inclusive digital infrastructure. This includes expanding connectivity in underserved areas, providing essential digital tools, and exploring hybrid or offline delivery models that accommodate low-connectivity environments. Equipping women-led and refugee-led organizations with the resources to support continuous learning and engagement is essential.

[The challenge was] the internet problems, because I was using my phone sometimes, I was unable to get the interpretation well. - Anonymous participant

Camp participants were not set up for communication and exchange of experience. - Anonymous participant

The only challenge we faced was occasional internet connectivity issues. An in-person Bootcamp might be even better than online sessions in this regard. - Participant from Cameroon

Streamline Seed Funding Processes for Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Organizations

Disbursing seed funding to organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons required more intensive support than anticipated. This experience highlights the need to simplify grant agreements and provide clearer, more accessible guidance. Adopting agile, inclusive, and supportive funding models not only improves efficiency but also strengthens the autonomy, leadership, and institutional capacity of women-led and refugee-led organizations.

Expand Reach and Foster Inclusion in Digital Skills Training

While demand for digital skills is high, limited resources often restrict access, making it essential to embed digital literacy into existing protection, education, and livelihoods services to enhance both reach and sustainability. Co-designing programmes with women and girls ensures relevance, accessibility, and community ownership, while building capacity in online safety and digital resilience empowers participants to navigate digital spaces confidently, securely, and with a clear understanding of their rights and opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Improve Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity
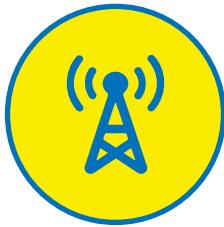
- Strengthen advocacy with national governments and strategic partners – such as through the [Connectivity for Refugees](#) initiative – to enhance internet infrastructure in refugee-hosting areas to close the gender digital divide.
- Facilitate access to safe, connected spaces in refugee camps and rural settings to mitigate persistent connectivity challenges.
- Explore hybrid and offline training models to ensure continuity of learning in low-connectivity environments.

2. Expand Access to Devices and Digital Tools

- Develop partnerships with the private sector and digital foundations to provide laptops, smart devices, and connectivity solutions.
- Enable participants and their communities to remain connected and continue building digital skills beyond the Bootcamp.

3. Broaden Reach and Inclusion

- Scale digital skills training to reach more forcibly displaced and stateless persons, with a focus on women, girls, and marginalized groups.
- Ensure accessibility for participants of all ages and abilities, including women with disabilities and older women.
- Include host communities in Bootcamp-related initiatives and localize delivery through partnerships with grassroots organizations and UNHCR country operations.
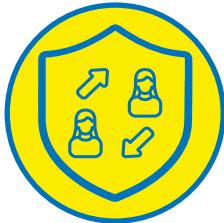
4. Foster Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

- Provide safe, collective spaces for women and girls to learn, connect, and support one another.
- Build capacity in online safety and digital resilience to ensure participants can navigate digital spaces securely and confidently.

5. Empower Women-Led, Refugee-Led, and Community-Based Organizations

- Simplify grant agreement processes to reduce administrative burdens and enable quicker, more efficient access to seed funding.
- Expand funding opportunities for refugee-led and women-led organizations to implement small-scale, community-driven digital inclusion initiatives.
- Promote sustainability by supporting models that leverage local resources, networks, and leadership.

6. Enhance Visibility and Strategic Support

- Increase global visibility for initiatives led by forcibly displaced and stateless women to amplify their leadership and impact.
- Advocate for flexible and inclusive funding mechanisms from donors and the private sector to ensure refugee-led organizations are fully integrated into the broader funding ecosystem.
- Facilitate access to capacity-building, peer learning, and strategic networking through platforms for knowledge exchange and visibility at national and global levels.

Future Plans

UNHCR remains firmly committed to advancing digital gender equality in contexts of forced displacement. Our vision is to empower forcibly displaced women and girls to become digital innovators and leaders, capable of driving transformative change within their communities and beyond. To realize this vision, UNHCR will continue to focus its efforts across the following dimensions:

1. Ensuring Access to Technology

Promoting gender-responsive digital inclusion is foundational to bridging the digital divide. UNHCR will:

- Advocate with national governments and strategic partners, for instance, through the Connectivity for Refugees initiative, to expand internet infrastructure in refugee-hosting areas.
- Facilitate access to safe, connected, and women-friendly digital spaces in refugee camps and rural areas, ensuring displaced women and girls can safely engage in digital learning and innovation.
- Explore hybrid and offline training models to ensure continuity of learning in low-connectivity environments.

2. Strengthening Capacity

Closing the digital gender gap requires sustained investment in capacity-building for both forcibly displaced communities and humanitarian practitioners. UNHCR will:

- Continue supporting initiatives like the Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamp at country level to strengthen the capacity of women-led and refugee-led organizations.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange, mentorship, and access to innovation ecosystems for forcibly displaced women and girls.
- Replicate and scale targeted digital gender inclusion initiatives to ensure broader and more sustainable impact.
- Equip humanitarian and development actors with the latest tools, research, and methodologies to design inclusive digital programmes tailored to the needs of displaced women and girls.

3. Promoting Safety and Protection

Digital inclusion must be accompanied by robust safeguards to ensure the protection and wellbeing of participants. UNHCR will:

- Identify and address gendered digital risks, including TF GBV.
- Provide guidance, resources, and pilot support to help women and girls protect themselves online.
- Leverage emerging digital tools to enhance protection outcomes in areas such as menstrual health management (MHM), education, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and leisure, among others.

4. Innovating With and For Women

UNHCR is committed to fostering innovation by and for forcibly displaced women. To this end, UNHCR will:

- Provide financial and technical support to women-led initiatives that develop and scale creative, community-driven digital solutions.
- Promote the participation of displaced women in the STEM sector through the DAFI scholarship programme, mentorship, training, and networking opportunities.
- Ensure forcibly displaced women and girls are not only beneficiaries of digital innovation but active contributors and leaders in shaping the digital future.

5. Strategic Partnerships and Global Engagement

UNHCR will continue to strengthen partnerships with governments, UN agencies, international organizations, private sector actors, mobile network operators (MNOs), and forcibly displaced communities. In alignment with the multi-stakeholder pledges on Gender Equality and Protection from Gender-Based Violence and Avec Elles, UNHCR is dedicated to contributing meaningfully to global efforts to achieve digital gender equality for forcibly displaced women and girls.

Conclusion

Participants in a digital skills training session led by The Lotus Flower in Iraq, empowering displaced communities through coding and technology. © The Lotus Flower

The Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamps have clearly demonstrated that when forcibly displaced women are equipped with the right digital skills, tools, and networks, they emerge as powerful agents of change within their communities. This initiative laid a strong foundation for inclusive digital transformation by promoting women's leadership, enhancing digital protection, and enabling community-led innovation.

Despite facing significant infrastructure challenges—such as limited internet access and unreliable electricity—participants showed remarkable resilience and creativity in expanding digital outreach, raising awareness, and fostering inclusive participation. These barriers, while real, are not insurmountable. With targeted partnerships and strategic support, they can be addressed to unlock even greater impact.

The outcomes of this initiative underscore the critical importance of sustained investment in digital inclusion efforts that prioritize gender equality, protection, and the full and meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls.

UNHCR calls on donors, policymakers, and partners to recognize digital gender inclusion as a strategic pathway to protection, empowerment, self-reliance, and leadership. By investing in equitable access to technology, strengthening digital capacities, ensuring online safety, and fostering inclusive innovation, we can support forcibly displaced women and girls in transitioning from digital exclusion to becoming leaders, innovators, and advocates for their rights.

Appendices

List of participating organizations

Year	Country	Organization Name
2024	Afghanistan	Nagin Asia Goldozi
	Afghanistan	Opportunity for Youth Development Organization (OYDO)
	Afghanistan	Afghan Women Skill Development Center (AWSDC)
	Algeria	Technical Mechanism for Women Empowerment (MTEM)
	Brazil	Humanidade Mais que Fronteras
	Brazil	Centro de Apoio Para Maes Migrantes Acompanhadas
	Cameroon	Comité des réfugiés dans les communes au Cameroun (CRCC)
	Cameroon	Association des jeunes refugiés dynamiques du Cameroun (AJRDC)
	Chad	Organisation des femmes réfugiés qui vivent au Tchad
	Chile	Organización Transformando Vidas (OTV)
	Croatia	Association SVOJA
	Ecuador	Asociación Integral de Mujeres Migrantes del Ecuador (AIMME)
	Ecuador	Fundación María Amor
	Egypt	Diwan Al-Yemen
	Hungary	Ukrainian Refugee Education Center at AISB (UREC)
	Kenya	Refugee women in Nairobi (RWN)
	Malawi	Solidarity of Refugee Women for the Social Welfare (SOFERES)
	Mauritania	Comite des Femmes Ressources
	Moldova	Female Support Force
	Morocco	Association des Femmes Réfugiées et Migrantes au Maroc (AFRMM)
	Nigeria	Endam Home of Hope
	Slovakia	SME SPOLU

2024	South Africa	Kwesu
	South Africa	Nyema Foundation
	South Sudan	Women for Peace, Culture and Development
	Sudan	Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA Network)
	Sudan	Women Advocacy and Development Initiative (WADI)
	Switzerland	Wild Flower
	Turkiye	Afghan Refugee Solidarity Association (ARSA)
	Yemen	Social Researcher Foundation for Development (SRFD)
	Yemen	DAFI Student Union
	Zambia	Great Lakes Refugee Women's Association in Zambia (GRWAZ)
2023	Egypt	Somali Association for Women and Children (SAFWAC)
	Egypt	Leanak Insan Foundation
	Iraq	The Lotus Flower
	Jordan	Arab Women Organization of Jordan
	Kenya	Dadaab Collective Freelancing Agency
	Kenya	Solidarity Initiative for Refugees
	Rwanda	Prison Fellowship Rwanda
	South Sudan	Rescue and Relief Mission
	Syria	Al Nada Organization
	Uganda	Let's Help International
	Uganda	Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID)
	Yemen	Reef Foundation

Guidance Note

- UNHCR (2023). Digital Gender Equality Guidance Note

Blog Posts

- Here I Am Studio (2024). Delivering Virtual Digital Gender Inclusion and Innovation Bootcamps
- UNHCR Innovation Service (2023). Bridging the Digital Gender Divide
- UNHCR Innovation Service (2023). Championing Community-Driven Digital Gender Inclusion

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