

WOMEN AND LIVELIHOODS FUND



DID YOU KNOW

Failure to promote equal participation of women and girls in STEM creates obstacles that hinder sustainable development in the region.

THE ISSUE

The gender pay gap in Asia is a complex issue influenced by various factors such as culture, job markets, and economic conditions. Due to traditional gendered norms and expectations, women face limited access to high-paying jobs and leadership opportunities, and are often discouraged from pursuing their career goals. In many emerging economies, this gap is exacerbated by insufficient enforcement of labour laws, leaving women vulnerable and underrepresented in the workforce.

Education, skills, and job opportunities play a significant role in perpetuating this disparity. As such, women frequently find themselves in lower-paying or informal sectors, while men are more likely to secure technical or managerial roles.



Photo credits: Getty Images

THE ISSUE

Skill-building is essential for closing the gender pay gap and empowering women in the workforce. By acquiring new skills, women can unlock higher-paying job opportunities and advance into leadership roles, boosting both their earning potential and confidence. Continuous learning also helps women to stay relevant in a rapidly changing job market and equips them to be able to pivot into emerging fields. Furthermore, skill-building programmes often foster networking and mentorship, connecting women with supportive communities that can guide them through career challenges.

This Impact Fund offers the opportunity to support seven carefully curated Social Impact Partners across Vietnam, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Indonesia. These partners are dedicated to **empowering marginalised young women** by providing them with the tools to build and develop a wide range of knowledge-based, technical, practical, and social skills.

Crucially, the fund aims to give these women primary decision-making power over their economic resources.

Statistics reveal deep-rooted gender disparities impacting women across the region from various countries:

HONG KONG

75%

of young men **hold conservative gender views**, highlighting the need for cultural change to help women pursue careers free from societal pressures.



INDONESIA

Indonesian women earn

23% less

than men, despite having more women workers with college degrees.

PHILIPPINES

75% 
80% 

Agree that **a man's job is to earn money** while a woman's is to take care of the family.

VIETNAM

Women spend **twice** as many hours as men on unpaid domestic and care work, impacting their earning potential

References:

1. Briefing, V. (2022, September 14). Gender equality and prevailing challenges in the workplace in Vietnam. Vietnam Briefing News. <https://www.vietnam-briefing.com/news/vietnam-gender-equality-and-prevailing-challenges-in-the-workplace-in-vietnam.html/>
2. Buchhave, H., & Belghith, N. B. H. (2024, March 16). Overcoming barriers to women's work in the Philippines. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/eastasiapacific/overcoming-barriers-womens-work-philippines>
3. InfoGRAPhic: Gender pay gaps in Indonesia. (n.d.). UN Women – Asia-Pacific. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/infographic-gender-pay-gaps-in-indonesia#view>

ABOUT THE FUND

OVERVIEW

NAME

Women and Livelihoods Fund

COUNTRIES OF OPERATIONS

Hong Kong, Indonesia, Phillipines, and Vietnam

LAUNCH DATE

October 2024

MINIMUM CONTRIBUTION

SGD20,000

Multi-year contributions encouraged

FUND TARGET AND DURATION

SGD2,000,000

over three years

This Impact Fund aligns with and contributes to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:



TO GIVE:

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10% of the total funds raised will cover ACF's fundraising and administrative costs.

Individuals with 'Accredited Investor' status, their associated private wealth entities, or corporate entities that pass ACF's Know-Your-Donor process may give through ACF's various funds.



KEY PRIORITIES



Photo credits: EMpower

1

Supporting Women to Build Skills and Access Non-Traditional Livelihoods:

This area is dedicated to providing diverse learning opportunities that blend formal and non-formal education to address critical aspects such as physical and mental health, employability skills, and financial education.

Pathways to employment empower individuals, especially young women, to succeed in today's economy. Dignified employment and financial literacy are crucial for them to navigate financial challenges and break stereotypes related to livelihood opportunities.

The vocational training options offered are also aligned with market readiness, allowing an increasing number of young women to pursue non-traditional livelihoods and thrive in these trades.

2

Creating a Supportive Workplace for Women:

This Impact Fund focuses on creating a gender-equitable workplace through active community engagement. It is committed to changing norms and attitudes towards women in the workplace, fostering a supportive environment where all women can thrive.

By breaking down barriers and reshaping perceptions, the fund aims to cultivate a culture that values equality and empowers women to reach their full potential.

3

Capacity Strengthening for Social Impact Partners:

This area focuses on enhancing the partners' abilities to effectively deliver programmes and services, leading to greater impact in the community.

By improving their skills, resources, and organisational structures, these partners can better address the needs of their recipients, sustain their initiatives, and adapt to changing circumstances. The investment in capacity building fosters long-term resilience and empowers organisations to drive meaningful change.

LOOKING BACK

In 2023, the programmes included in this Impact Fund supported 2,890 young people aged 14 to 30, with 70% being women.

The key outcomes were as follows:

- 1 1,772 participants accessed formal and informal learning opportunities, improving their educational prospects.
- 2 1,584 strengthened their employability skills.
- 3 1,546 developed more gender-equitable attitudes.
- 4 894 enhanced their knowledge and/or access to mental health and social well-being resources.
- 5 750 secured paid work or launched their own income-generating ventures.





WHO BENEFITS FROM THE FUND?

The Impact Fund will primarily benefit young women from underserved communities who otherwise lack the opportunity to gain education or relevant skill sets needed for fair employment and better-paying jobs. In many of the areas targeted for funding, formal paid work in itself is often considered a 'non-traditional livelihood,' as young women face societal and cultural challenges that limit their ability to secure employment.

The fund aims to challenge these norms and provide young women with the opportunity to learn skills in traditionally male-dominated fields, like STEM industries. Apart from vocational training, leadership development and the management of soft skills will be a crucial aspect for this target group, equipping young women with essential tools to sustain them throughout their life journey and preparing them to become leaders in new fields.

HOW ARE OUR SOCIAL IMPACT PARTNERS CHOSEN?

All partners of the Impact Fund are selected through a rigorous due diligence process to ensure alignment with EMpower's mission, the Fund's objectives, and the communities they serve. This Fund prioritises organisations that demonstrate a strong commitment to empowering young people, particularly young women, and that have established credibility within their local contexts, along with a proven track record of strong livelihood and employment outcomes.

Key evaluation criteria include:

- **Impact Potential:** The organisation's ability to deliver measurable outcomes for young people, with a focus on young women.
- **Sustainability:** A commitment to long-term growth and capacity strengthening.
- **Community Engagement:** Active involvement and support from local stakeholders.
- **Alignment with Market Needs:** Vocational training options must be relevant and responsive to the current job market.

Participating Donors can expect:

- 1 Annual closed-door sharing sessions with nonprofit partners to share updates and impact
- 2 An annual impact report, sharing progress on the Impact Fund's achievements
- 3 Priority invitations to learning journey trips to visit partners

OUR KEY PARTNER

Asia Community Foundation is proud to partner with **EMpower**, a social impact organisation dedicated to enhancing the lives of youth, especially marginalised women and girls, by providing them with essential skills and opportunities for empowerment since 2000.

Through targeted funding and support for local organisations, EMpower implements programmes that focus on education, vocational training, and economic empowerment. By equipping women with sector-specific skills, such as those in hospitality and digital marketing, EMpower helps them gain access to formal employment, enabling financial independence and improved living conditions. The organisation also emphasises life skills training, fostering confidence and resilience among participants, which are crucial for navigating both personal and professional challenges.

With the funding raised through the Impact Funds, seven partners identified by EMpower across Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Hong Kong will receive support, along with capacity strengthening from EMpower.



Photo credits: TWF



Photo credits: EMpower

The impact of EMpower's work with women is profound and far-reaching. By investing in the potential of young women, EMpower not only transforms individual lives but also contributes to broader societal change. Empowered women often become advocates for their communities, promoting gender equality and inspiring others to pursue education and employment opportunities.

Furthermore, as women gain financial independence, they are better positioned to invest in their families' health and education, creating a positive ripple effect that benefits entire communities. Through its initiatives, EMpower plays a vital role in breaking the cycle of poverty and fostering a more equitable future for women and girls around the globe.

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Women's economic empowerment has profound impacts on their wellbeing, security and opportunities with far-reaching ripple effects as women invest in their children's health and education. EMpower has 25 years' experience creating new pathways to livelihoods for young people and women. We are thrilled to channel our passion and know-how in the Women and Livelihoods Impact Fund in partnership with the Asia Community Foundation and other champions. Together we can unlock the tremendous economic potential of women in Southeast Asia, enabling transformational change for them and the next generation.

CYNTHIA STEELE

President and CEO, EMpower





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I am excited to champion the Women and Livelihoods Fund in partnership with both EMpower and the Asia Community Foundation. EMpower has a deep understanding of the needs of the communities they serve and possesses the ability and network to collaborate with top-tier NGOs, ensuring a high degree of transparency. Together with ACF, I hope to engage more like-minded partners, enabling us to support more outstanding organisations in helping young women break the cycle of poverty.

ALEEM JIVRAJ

COO, Global Markets at Nomura
Co-Chair of Asia Board, EMpower

PASSERELLES NUMÉRIQUES

www.passerellesnumeriques.org/en/

PHILIPPINES

OPERATING LOCATIONS

Cebu City,
Visaya Region

**YEAR
FOUNDED**
2009

VIETNAM

OPERATING LOCATIONS

Da Nang

**YEAR
FOUNDED**
2010

Passerelles Numériques (PN) is a nonprofit organisation dedicated to empowering underprivileged youth, with a focus on young women, in Southeast Asia through digital education and training. PN aims for at least 90% of the students enrolled in its programme to escape poverty. The organisation provides access to high-quality technical courses and professional development opportunities, equipping young individuals with the skills needed for careers in the digital economy. Notably, over 90% of PN alumni remain in the IT sector.

PN is committed to gender parity, with at least half of its students being women. In Vietnam, as of 2020, only 6.87% of employees in the technology industry were women. In the Philippines, 24.1% of young women are neither employed nor in training, compared to 13.8% of young men.

PN also fosters partnerships with local and international businesses, ensuring that students gain practical experience and enhance their employability. Through its programmes, PN seeks to break the cycle of poverty and create sustainable opportunities for marginalised communities.

Through this Impact Fund, over 550 marginalised youths across the Philippines and Vietnam will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to succeed in future tech work environments. In Vietnam, PN will pilot a mentorship programme specifically for female students, aiming to leverage professional connections and enhance career progression for women in the IT sector.





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For 16 years, Passerelles Numériques Philippines (PNPH) has been steadfast in its mission to empower underprivileged Filipino youth through IT training. This journey continues to uplift young people by equipping them with the skills to escape poverty and build a brighter future. Today, we are proud to see our alumni thriving in the IT and digital sectors, serving as role models for the next generation. Together with partners like EMpower, we've been able to ensure that our students remain competitive in the job market and resilient in the face of adversity.

LUCHI FLORES
Country Director, PNPH

BAGOSPHERE

www.bagosphere.com

OPERATING LOCATIONS

Philippines

YEAR FOUNDED

2013

BagoSphere is a social enterprise focused on transforming the lives of marginalised rural youth in the Philippines by providing them with training and job placement in the digital economy. Through its comprehensive training programs, BagoSphere equips participants with a unique combination of communication, critical thinking, and life skills training. With those tools, rural youth become skilled communicators, and they become highly desired by the call center industry in the Philippines.

The organisation emphasises hands-on learning and real-world application, partnering with local businesses to ensure that graduates have access to meaningful employment opportunities. By fostering a supportive community and empowering young individuals, BagoSphere aims to break the cycle of poverty and drive socio-economic development in the region.

Through this Impact Fund, over 70 marginalized youth will receive professional, digital, and life skills training aimed at securing decent employment in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector. This four-month training programme is certified by the Ateneo Center for Educational Development, a unit within Ateneo de Manila University, one of the top universities in the Philippines.



RESEARCH FOR EDUCATION AND CAREER HELP INSTITUTE

www.reach-vietnam.org

OPERATING LOCATIONS

Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hai
Duong, Hue, and Da Nang,
Vietnam

YEAR FOUNDED

2008

REACH is a Vietnamese nonprofit organisation specialising in research, vocational training, career advice, and job placement services for disadvantaged Vietnamese youth.

REACH targets to benefit youth who are suffering from poverty or discrimination, such as human trafficking survivors, victims of domestic violence, those living with HIV/AIDS or disabilities, street children, migrant youth, school dropouts, and ethnic minorities.

Over the last 15 years, REACH has educated over 21,000 youths between the ages of 16 and 30, with more than 80% of them are now in decent employment.

Through this Impact Fund, over 1,700 young people will receive vocational skills training, employment opportunities and placements.



THE WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

www.twfhk.org

OPERATING LOCATION

Hong Kong

YEAR FOUNDED

2004

The Women's Foundation (TWF) is a leading NGO in Hong Kong focused on improving the lives of women and girls, with a commitment to gender equality. Its core mission includes increasing female representation in leadership roles, challenging gender stereotypes, and empowering women in poverty.

TWF runs several initiatives, such as the Girls Go Tech Programme, which encourages young women to pursue careers in STEM, and promote gender diversity on corporate boards. Through partnerships with businesses, NGOs, and the government, TWF is driving change for a more gender-equal society.

Through this Impact Fund, over 2,500 girls in the Girls Go Tech Programme will receive support to encourage female secondary school students from underprivileged backgrounds to pursue traditionally male-dominated STEM subjects, thereby expanding their future career opportunities. The programme equips participants with critical skills such as self-confidence, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration, empowering them to achieve their academic and career goals.



VIRTUALAHAN

www.virtualahan.com

OPERATING LOCATION

Davao City, Philippines

YEAR FOUNDED

2015

Virtualahan is a transformative organisation dedicated to empowering marginalised communities, including persons with disabilities and solo parents, by providing comprehensive digital skills training, employment support, and well-being sessions. Their holistic approach equips participants with essential skills for competitive online employment, enhancing self-confidence and overall well-being.

With a commitment to inclusivity, Virtualahan aims to create a society where no one is left behind. Their programmes have seen significant success, with a 67% employment rate and a remarkable 264% increase in graduates' income.

Through this Impact Fund, 75 youth will gain digital skills via a 5-week intensive training program, complemented by internships and job coaching. This initiative will enable them to transition into decent work. Additionally, Virtualahan will prepare for scaling this programme to other municipalities in the Philippines.



YAYASAN ROLE BALI (INDONESIA)

www.rolefoundation.org

OPERATING LOCATION

Nusa Dua, Indonesia

YEAR FOUNDED

2017

Yayasan ROLE Bali is a nonprofit organisation committed to empowering women and marginalised communities in Bali through education and sustainable livelihoods. Its flagship program, Bali Wise, offers vocational training in hospitality, culinary arts, and eco-friendly practices, equipping participants with the skills necessary for gainful employment in the growing tourism industry.

The initiative focuses on enhancing the economic independence of women while promoting environmental sustainability through responsible tourism practices. By providing access to education and support, Yayasan ROLE Bali aims to create lasting social change and improve the quality of life for individuals and families in the region.

Through this Impact Fund, 200 marginalised young women aged 19-25 will participate in a six-month residential training program in either hospitality or digital marketing. Both courses will provide sector-specific skills and include life skills training, along with an internship or on-the-job training phase, creating a pathway to formal and skilled employment.





Photo credits: Getty Images

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