

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL **SEPTEMBER 2019**

**UNSGSA** UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL ADVOCATE  
FOR INCLUSIVE FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT



2009 - 2019



# FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Building on 10 years of progress





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# Message from the UNSGSA

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Ever since I first started my UN role of Special Advocate, I have felt great pride and immense responsibility at the opportunity to champion universal access to affordable, effective and safe financial services for the unbanked.



This year represents an important personal milestone on that journey. It is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary since I accepted the UNSGSA designation in September 2009 when it was offered to me by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. I am really honored to continue with the support of Secretary-General António Guterres.

Looking back, it is clear that much has been accomplished.

A decade ago, in the absence of satisfactory data, one of my first initiatives to promote better measurement of financial inclusion was to stress the importance of appropriately quantifying progress. In addition to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Financial Access Survey, launched in 2009, this resulted in the World Bank's successful launch of the Global Findex in 2011. These became essential tools for policy makers to make evidence-based decisions.

An important step on the global level was to convene financial standard-setting bodies at the Bank of International Settlements in Basel to include financial inclusion in their work. Eventually fintech was brought to the table in 2016 to reflect the increasing role technology plays in financial inclusion. Today, inclusive finance is a subject of regular focus for them, and, notably, one on which they strategically coordinate.

In 2015, financial inclusion also became a critical component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), referenced in seven of the 17 SDGs, with great support from UN representatives from various nations. This received special support from the Group of Friends of Financial Inclusion.

Throughout all these years, the importance of financial access and usage became recognized by large international organizations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Bank Group with its Universal Financial Access 2020 initiative, and the IMF. The G20 also picked up the topic with the Global

Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPII), of which I became Honorary Patron in 2011.

Financial inclusion is now a priority for national governments. The promotion of national financial inclusion strategies (NFIS) has been central to our work. Since 2010, more than 50 countries have launched and started to implement—or are currently developing—a national strategy.

As of last year, an astounding 3.8 billion people had access to formal financial services. That represents nearly 70% of all adults, compared to 51% in 2011.

From mobile money and digital finance to fintech, many exciting and promising innovations effected positive change for the unbanked. Promoting regulations that take advantage of new technologies to expand access and usage to underserved populations while ensuring consumer protection, fair competition, as well as the stability and integrity of the financial sector, has been central to my agenda. My partners and I were pleased to support revisions and new regulations that came into effect through my country visits, for example, in Argentina, Indonesia, Mexico, Myanmar and Nigeria.

Collaboration has been crucial to all these successes. I am deeply grateful for our hardworking partners across governments, multilateral agencies, civil society groups and the private sector, and many others whom I call friends, for their pivotal roles. Finally, my Reference Group of advisors and the organizations they represent have been critical to transform our goals into realities. All this would not have been possible without my partners.

Looking forward, it is clear there is still so much more to accomplish to ensure inclusive finance helps enable the world to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Perpetual advances in technology promise a permanent evolution for the future of financial inclusion—and the economy more broadly—sometimes in ways never imagined. Innovative opportunities will inevitably be accompanied by new risks.

Financial inclusion, particularly through digital technologies, enables low-income families to access many services and utilities that contribute to development. Many people can now access a new range of these with the rapid expansion of digital accounts and digital payments.

For example, 20 million unelectrified households could benefit from pay-as-you-go solar energy by 2022. Pay-as-you-go water ATMs can sustainably expand access to clean water. Digitization also helps clinics and doctors operate more efficiently, enabling them to drive down health-related costs.

Digital financial services also offer new opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow their businesses. Further, they contribute to poverty reduction and help gender equality. In fact, in the last year my partners and I published a compendium outlining how SDG progress can be ignited through digital financial inclusion.

In the search for solutions that appeal to customers and allow us to help hard-to-reach segments, we can seize fintech’s potential, but also prepare ourselves for uncertain challenges. Many issues need to be present to deliver this sustainably. Financial inclusion needs many actors and it is through collaboration and innovative partnerships that we will be able to attain this on scale and in a sustainable way.

Women’s financial inclusion will be a keystone issue for the financial inclusion community the next 10 years as we look to close the gender gap. Serving the women’s market represents an incredible opportunity, certainly from a business perspective—but above all, as a way of including them economically, empowering them and helping them take care of their families better. Heightened attention to rural populations, farmers and the poor will also be a priority for financial inclusion so that we can ensure enduring development progress is attained.



**Entrepreneur Jhorna Islam started her clothing business 10 years ago in Bangladesh. The UNSGSA, who first visited Ms. Islam’s boutique shop during a 2015 country visit, met with her once again, along with her all-female staff, during a July 2019 trip to Dhaka to hear an update on her business, work and life.**

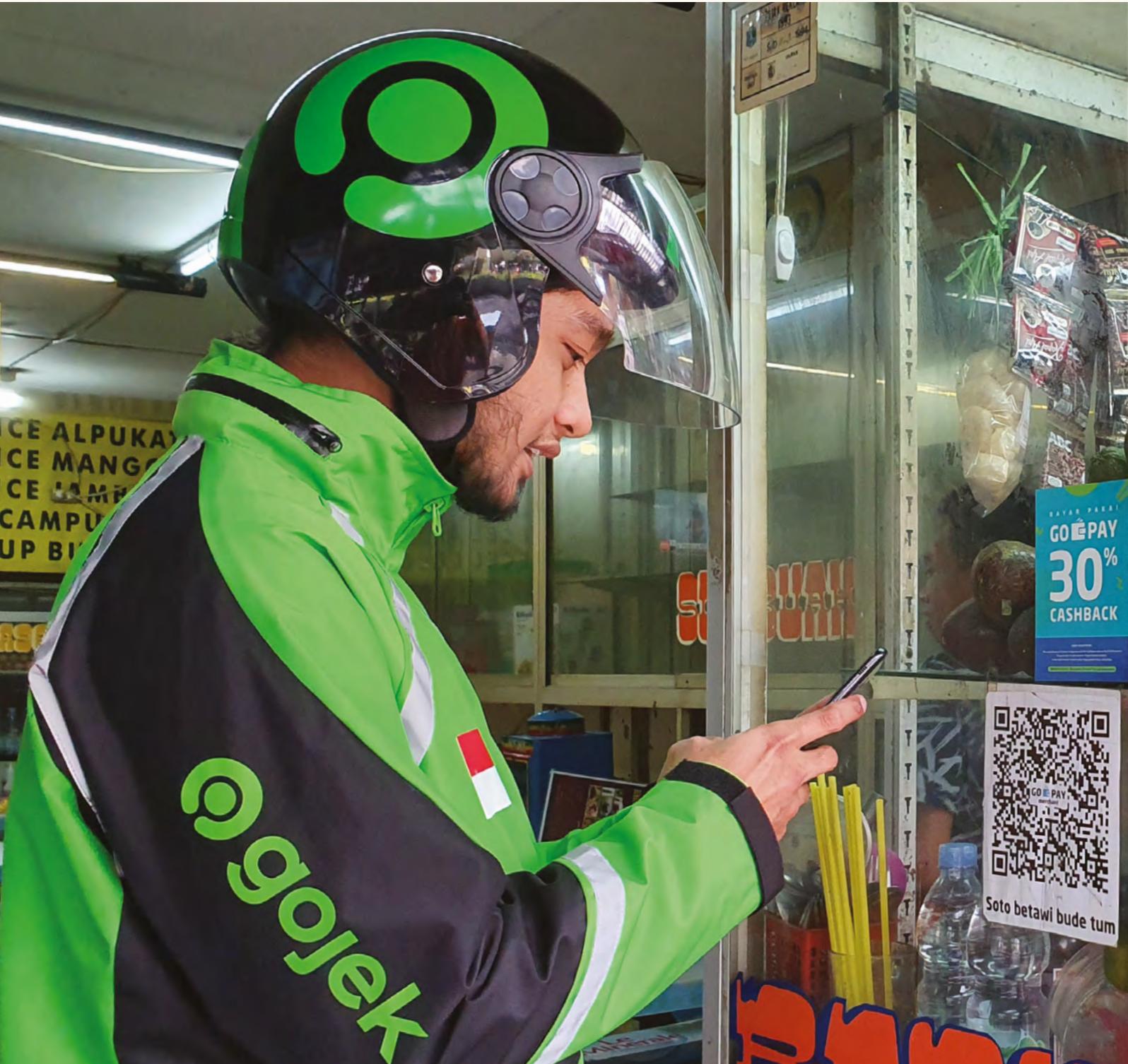
For all of this, we need both public and private sector participation. An innovative example is the CEO Partnership for Economic Inclusion, an initiative we convened featuring 10 multinational companies aiming to accelerate financial inclusion through innovative private-private partnerships.

Because if we come together, we can build a better world—one that is more equitable; one that is more hopeful; and, one in which everybody can shape their own future.

**H.M. Queen Máxima of the Netherlands**  
United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Advocate  
for Inclusive Finance for Development

# The Road Ahead

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The past 10 years have been a revolution in terms of access. We have witnessed tremendous growth, from China's rapid expansion of digital payments usage, to India more than doubling its financial access to 80% of adults due to its technology stack. And it was approximately one decade ago when the first mobile money schemes started to flourish in Africa—where there are now more than 300 million mobile money accounts.

Digital technology has been the constant thread throughout these advances. It emerged as the main opportunity to expand financial inclusion more quickly, affordably and conveniently for people across the globe.

Looking beyond the horizon and toward 2030, together we need to address new challenges. An important one could be to make sure that the use of financial services results in positive outcomes for people's financial well-being.

This well-being refers to much more than access. It is about the safe and convenient use of a broad range of services—not only payments but savings, insurance and credit as well. Reliable usage is a key step to achieve development impact. People need to pay for healthcare and education, as well as guard against uncertainties, for instance.

The full suite of financial services should be provided in a very responsible manner so that access to finance, and its usage, helps people—and never harms them.

This means we should aim to mitigate the growing risk that comes with technology progress, such as fraud or the loss of data. As we have seen with our work on fintech, technology could bring the solution to address the risks created by technology. Regulators could benefit from adopting regtech solutions.

In the coming years, rising inequality will continue to be a concern. In some countries, for example, women already encounter more difficulties than men in access and usage of finance. Bangladesh's gender gap in financial access increased by 20 percentage points between 2014 and 2017 to 29%, which makes it one of the largest gender gaps in the world. Pakistan,

Jordan, Turkey and Nigeria similarly have growing gender gaps according to the latest Global Findex.

This reality could worsen if we are not careful to address it in the short term.

And, while the digital revolution has enabled incredible progress in terms of access and new convenient use cases, it might also result in increased exclusion.

This is particularly relevant for those who are digitally illiterate, or groups such as smallholders who reside in remote and rural areas without access to internet or an agent. It also includes those who might lose their jobs with the rapid growth of artificial intelligence.

However, the fact that developing nations and more developed ones each share many of these common issues could increase opportunities to exchange lessons learned and explore innovative solutions—if we all work together.

With the hard-to-reach at risk of becoming the “harder-to-reach,” it will be essential for governments and the private sector to build a suite of public goods or “pre-requisites.” In other words, the foundational necessities that help enable the harder-to-reach to enter the formal digital economy. These include digital identification, connectivity, digital and financial literacy, data privacy and cybersecurity, among others.

All of these challenges that confront us today could serve as a catalyst for real change tomorrow. The next 10 years represent an immense opportunity to innovate and transform people's lives for the better through inclusive finance. Financial inclusion is a great tool to support broader economic and digital inclusion—and the world will need to learn how all this connects.



2009 - 2019

# A Decade of Progress

The UNSGSA has participated in 34 financial inclusion country visits and 927 bilateral meetings globally during her tenure (as of June 2019). During visits, she meets with leaders from the public sector to discuss policy changes. She also meets with leaders from the private sector and users of financial services to learn what works and what doesn't when it comes to financial inclusion.



In 2016, the UNSGSA traveled to Pakistan and saw how the national foundational ID system NADRA enables people to open bank accounts.



Ibu Susanti, a honey and tea seller in Indonesia, told the UNSGSA in 2016 that her new digital savings account helped her save enough money for her daughter's school fees.



During a 2010 visit to Egypt, the UNSGSA spoke with farmers to learn what kinds of financial services they needed.



In 2017, farmers in Dalat, Vietnam, explained to the UNSGSA how they expanded crops due to financial services combined with technical assistance.



In 2017 Nigeria, the UNSGSA learned how Lagos State is rolling out a health insurance program that aims to cover everyone.



In Peru in 2014, members of community savings and credit groups called UNICAs told the UNSGSA how they make collective decisions about financial planning and management.



In 2014, the UNSGSA learned firsthand about measures China had taken to increase financial inclusion to provide better opportunities for low-income individuals, small-scale farms and businesses.



In Mexico City, in 2017, the UNSGSA learned how OXXO's Saldazo financial account provides customers an opportunity to save money, make purchases, pay bills, and send funds cheaply and easily.



In 2017, the UNSGSA learned how Flora Edojah transformed her catfish stall into a thriving small business with the support of the fintech company Lidya in Nigeria.



During her 2018 visit to India, the UNSGSA met entrepreneurs who make cricket balls and other sports equipment and have benefitted from an innovative credit program from Aye Finance.



On a 2018 visit to Indonesia, the UNSGSA met motorbike drivers who are actively using digital financial services as a result of their partnership with Go-Jek.



The UNSGSA first traveled to Bangladesh in 2015 (pictured) to promote access to financial services. She returned to the country in 2019 to see its financial inclusion progress and offer continued support.



2009 - 2019

# A Decade of Progress

Highlights from the UNSGSA's visits and examples of country-level progress are featured on the map. Key milestones from each year appear on the timeline (below). For more examples of how the UNSGSA works with partners to advance financial inclusion, see the Annexes (pp. 32–39).

### Mexico

Following the 2016 launch of its national strategy, and with support from the UNSGSA and her partners in 2018, Mexico launched its fintech law enabling more competition and more innovation in digital finance.

### Argentina

In 2018, Argentina announced new regulations opening up the banking agent sector—a move the UNSGSA has long advocated to increase financial inclusion in the country.



2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014



UN SG Ban Ki-moon names HRH Princess Máxima (now HM Queen Máxima) the UN Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA).

The UNSGSA Reference Group meets for the first time.

Office of the UNSGSA is established at the UNDP in New York with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

With support from the UNSGSA and the Gates Foundation, the World Bank publishes the first Global Findex, showing that 51% of adults have an account.

The UNSGSA convenes the first meeting on financial inclusion with global financial standard-setting bodies and select regulators.

The UNSGSA becomes Honorary Patron of the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion.



The UNSGSA joins the launch of Nigeria's first National Financial Inclusion Strategy.

At the G20 Leaders' Summit in Mexico, 17 nations commit to develop cross-sector coordination platforms and national financial inclusion strategies as part of the G20 Financial Inclusion Peer Learning Program.

The number of active mobile money users rises to 61 million, up from 37 million in 2012. (GSMA)

Financial inclusion is mentioned in the UN SG's 2013 report on the Millennium Development Goals. The UNSGSA holds meetings to discuss the role of financial inclusion in the post-2015 development agenda.



Financial inclusion rises from 51% to 62%. (Global Findex 2014)

In China, the UNSGSA meets public officials and CEOs of major companies, including Alibaba and Tencent.



2015



Financial inclusion is mentioned in 7 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UNSGSA helps launch the SME Finance Forum's global membership network.

The UNSGSA, World Bank, and others set goals for universal financial access by 2020.

The UNSGSA visits the Philippines for the launch of the national strategy.

2016

Myanmar's government adopts mobile financial services regulations allowing non-banks, including mobile operators, to offer financial services—an innovation encouraged by the UNSGSA and others.

The Women's Financial Inclusion Community of Practice launches, facilitated by CGAP and inspired by the UNSGSA's working group on gender.

The UNSGSA becomes a member of the Stewardship Board of the World Economic Forum System Initiative on Shaping the Future of Financial and Monetary Systems.

2017

Financial inclusion increases from 62% to 69%. (Global Findex 2017)

The UNSGSA and De Nederlandsche Bank (DNB) host a roundtable on fintech for regulators and leaders from the public and private sectors.

In India, the number of adults with an account reaches 80%, up from 35% in 2011. (Global Findex 2017)

2018



The UNSGSA convenes the CEO Partnership for Economic Inclusion (CEOP), the first private-private partnership to accelerate financial inclusion while promoting good business.

With the Better than Cash Alliance and the World Bank, the UNSGSA publishes a compendium illustrating how digital financial services support progress on 13 of the 17 SDGs.

2019

Launch of the report "Early Lessons on Regulatory Innovations to Enable Inclusive Fintech: Innovation Offices, Regulatory Sandboxes, and Regtech," commissioned by the UNSGSA.

At the G20 Summit in Japan, the UNSGSA launches the W20 Acceleration Platform for Women's Economic Empowerment to promote the inclusive economic growth of women.

Queen Máxima celebrates 10 years in the role of the UNSGSA.

# The Path of Financial Inclusion

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Queen Máxima has a longstanding commitment to financial inclusion to help people build better lives for themselves. As a trained economist who has worked in international finance and emerging markets, she has always had a heart for development and economic inclusion. In fact, this is one of the reasons why former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon designated her as the UN Secretary General’s Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development 10 years ago.

As a voice highly respected by global leaders in the finance sphere, as well as in the public and private sectors, the UNSGSA has focused her efforts both on the global and country levels.

This focus has been on advancing three overarching global priorities: to unleash technology and innovation for financial inclusion, to ensure usage and impact on development, and to help identify solutions for hard-to-reach segments such as women, farmers and small businesses.

Queen Máxima works strategically in selected nations, with an aim to accelerate conducive policy adoption, convene different ministries to coordinate efforts, and encourage more private sector participation in these countries.

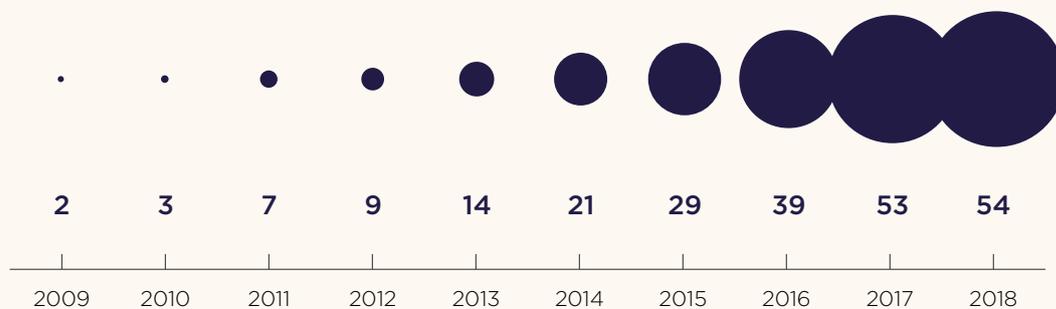
Great progress has been made in the last 10 years. The proportion of unbanked adults worldwide has dropped from 50% to approximately 30%. This represents more than 1.2 billion adults who have gained access to formal financial services during her tenure.

This development is the result of strategic work at the policy level and the implementation of innovative solutions, which the UNSGSA has supported with her

Reference Group, and partners in the UN, the World Bank Group, the IMF and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among others. It was also made possible by convening key decisionmakers, like heads of state, governors of central banks, financial standard-setting bodies, and leading CEOs, to help advance inclusive finance. On her trips, she always looks to meet with low-income families to learn what works and what does not when it comes to financial inclusion.

While the world has experienced incredible progress on financial inclusion over the course of the last 10 years, there is a great challenge ahead to ensure the remaining 30% of the world’s excluded adults, 1.7 billion, gain access to formal savings, payments, credit and insurance. These services are essential for all human beings to seize economic opportunities and protect themselves against adverse situations. Reaching all these people would imply that access to other needs, such as electricity, health and education, is within reach. Further, safe usage and quality will be key to achieve development impact and the SDGs.

## TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WITH A NATIONAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS



(Sources: Alliance for Financial Inclusion; World Bank)

## Usage and Development Impact

One of the highest priorities for the Special Advocate is to ensure that people not only have access to financial services but are able to use them in a manner that can change their lives for the better.

“Financial inclusion is not simply a goal in itself; it is about achieving development outcomes,” wrote the Special Advocate in a compendium called “Igniting SDG Progress through Digital Financial Inclusion,” which the UNSGSA Office co-published in September 2018 along with the Better Than Cash Alliance, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the World Bank (see pg. 14).

Twenty percent of global accounts are inactive or dormant, which means one out of five have not been used in the past year, according to the 2017 Global Findex. Active use of savings and borrowing has also stagnated on a global level. The situation is worse for mobile money, with GSMA data in its “2018 State of Industry” report demonstrating 65% dormancy rates (as defined as dormant accounts for the past 90 days).

To improve usage in a way that creates positive outcomes for people’s well-being, there is a need for more insightful measures. The UNSGSA has therefore voiced support for innovative solutions that meet customer needs, enhance customer-centric regulations, build the key pre-requisites for digital finance to work, and lead to positive usage and development outcomes.

### Innovative solutions that meet customer needs

Technology can lead to more customer-centric solutions. “For example, in China, the option for customers to make payments through digital platforms is increasing (rates of) account use,” said the Special Advocate, during a video speech at the 3rd Annual Arise Conference in Cape Town in February 2019. “Fifty-seven percent of account owners in China were using online tools to make purchases or pay bills in 2017, roughly twice as many as in 2014.”

In Indonesia, Go-Jek began as a start-up that offered a ride-hailing app. Now users can order food, tickets, cleaning services, and more. A key factor behind the company’s traction with its digital wallet, Go-Pay, is its customer-centric value proposition. The convenience of its services and ability to fill many of its users’ needs has encouraged customers to use Go-Pay. It is more convenient than cash, and customers use it for many



**The UNSGSA spoke with development partners during a roundtable meeting on a country visit to Bangladesh in July 2019.**

different purposes in their daily lives. It also builds customers’ digital footprint, which can be used to provide them other financial services such as credit. Finding the right use case is often a challenge for similar products, which results in customers opting to stay with cash instead. These insights are important for regulators and policy makers, as well as the private sector.

It is only when they fit people’s needs that digital financial services can support the SDGs.

At the Financial Times Future of Health Coverage event in May 2019 in Amsterdam, the UNSGSA observed in a speech that modern advances in technology create great opportunities to ensure synergy between financial inclusion and health, contributing to SDG 3: Universal Good Health and Well-Being.

“Financial services—such as savings, payments, credit and health insurance—can play an important role in helping people finance and manage healthcare expenses when they or their family members fall ill,” said the Special Advocate. “They can also support the provision of quality health services... mobile phones are increasingly playing a role to help patients find the right doctor, the right treatment, or the right preventive information.”

### Enhancing customer-centric regulations

Queen Máxima has advocated for the importance of simplifying systems and regulations to expand financial inclusion. For example she has recommended the harmonization of agent and digital finance regulations in Indonesia so that customers have a better financial journey.

For people to use financial services in a digital era, it is important for them to do it safely. Therefore, the UNSGSA has emphasized that solid consumer

protection regulations and financial literacy are more important than ever. During a video message to the GPFI Plenary in June 2019 under the Japanese leadership, Queen Máxima noted regulators could put the right financial consumer protection measures in place. This is important for less digital-savvy consumers at higher risk for financial fraud and abuse, including older populations.

“We need to be mindful of the technology age gap. In Mexico, only 30% of people 50 and over have a smartphone, while in Indonesia it’s 13%, and in India it’s 8%. It is therefore critical to pay attention to digital access and literacy of older people, especially as the digitization of financial services advances across the world,” stated the UNSGSA.

## KEY PRE-REQUISITES FOR TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED FINANCIAL SERVICES

**Connectivity**

**Cybersecurity**

**Data privacy**

**Digital and financial literacy**

**Digital identification**

**Fair competition**

**Interoperability**

**Physical infrastructure (e.g. agent networks)**

### **Building key pre-requisites for digital finance to work**

In addition to customer-centric products and regulations, customers also need basic infrastructure in place to use digital financial services conveniently and safely. Promising technology-enabled financial solutions rely on what the UNSGSA has called public goods or pre-requisites, which have to be in place for everyone—and include connectivity, cyber security, data privacy, digital and financial literacy, digital identification, fair competition, interoperability, and physical infrastructure (e.g. agent networks).

On a country visit to Ethiopia in May 2019, the UNSGSA highlighted how these quality basic public services, particularly connectivity, are important to support safe and sustained financial inclusion. Although Ethiopia has tried to ensure connectivity, access is generally slow. Expanding existing communications networks and securing universal broadband access at an affordable cost to all are essential for social, economic and financial inclusion to occur. Further, these are enablers of financial service provision to lower-income segments of the population, according to the UNSGSA.

Globally, there has been a positive effect of technology innovations such as digital ID and use of big data for building credit histories. “First and foremost, digital ID systems can positively impact KYC compliance for account openings,” the UNSGSA stated during an April speech at an ID4D digital identity event at the 2019 Spring Meetings of the World Bank and IMF in Washington D.C. “Second, digital IDs allow the identification of recipients for government-to-person subsidies and enable beneficiaries to receive digital payments in a much easier way.”

### **Usage and development outcomes: The next step**

Many more changes are shaping the future of financial services, such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and machine learning. For today’s emerging adults, who are the most tech-savvy generation yet, these advances have the potential to make financial services easier and more enticing to use.

Nevertheless, technology by itself is insufficient. In Africa, for example, though mobile money represents one of the best opportunities to expand access, usage remains an issue. According to GSMA, there were 395 million registered mobile money accounts in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2018, but approximately 250 million were considered inactive. Additionally, various technology-enabled financial services can potentially harm customers by offering online products that can damage their financial health, as illustrated by digital consumer credit in Kenya recently.

In the past few years, there has been considerable progress to rapidly scale up financial access. Going forward, it could be key to intensify attention on ensuring not only more customer-centric solutions so people want to use services, but also the safety of financial services for customers so usage leads to positive outcomes.

# IGNITING SDG PROGRESS THROUGH DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Innovative technology is a game-changer in financial inclusion—and it creates long-lasting social and economic impact for millions of people worldwide. To aid decisionmakers in government, business and civil society, along with her partners the Better than Cash Alliance, UN Capital Development Fund and the World Bank, the UNSGSA published the “Igniting SDG Progress Through Digital Financial Inclusion” compendium in September 2018 to provide compelling examples of the transformative power of digital financial inclusion for 13 of the 17 SDGs. The full compendium is available at [www.unsgsa.org](http://www.unsgsa.org).



**Goal 1: No Poverty** Digital financial services (DFS) provide tools to low-income households that help increase their economic opportunities. For very poor families, combining DFS with livelihood promotion and mentoring boosts their long-term standard of living.



**Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth** DFS fuel low-cost business models with the potential to create 95 million new jobs and add 6% to global GDP by 2025.



**Goal 2: Zero Hunger** DFS can help farmers access the funds they need to produce higher yields with lower risks, increasing overall agricultural productivity. DFS deliver faster, safer, more reliable social transfers for the undernourished.



**Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure** Digital finance enables small businesses to grow, innovate, and reach new markets, bringing more people into the digital economy.



**Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being** Digital finance allows households to cope better with health emergencies without being forced into poverty. DFS can also enable better health insurance and administrative tasks so doctors can focus more on treatments.



**Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities** Digital finance can give low-income households new tools to increase their incomes, improve financial resilience and access new economic and social opportunities.



**Goal 4: Quality Education** Digital finance can make education expenses more manageable for lower-income households and help schools and national education systems improve their financial management.



**Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities** Digitizing payments could save 100 major cities \$470 billion every year by addressing the inefficiencies and avoidable costs of using cash to deliver public services.



**Goal 5: Gender Equality** DFS empower women to earn more and build assets. This greater financial power fuels gender equality and economic growth.



**Goal 13: Climate Action** Digital finance can help individuals, communities, businesses, and government combat and prepare for the damaging effects of climate change, particularly by building resilience and driving sustainable investments.



**Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation** Digital finance enables water and sanitation providers to serve low-income households, while also supporting the sustainable expansion of utility networks.



**Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions** Digital finance can help individuals, communities, businesses, and government combat and prepare for the damaging effects of climate change, particularly by building resilience and driving sustainable investments.



**Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy** Digital payments enable solar companies in Africa and Asia to offer pay-as-you-go energy to millions of low-income families—a clear win for people and the environment.

## Reaching the hard-to-reach

Governments, development organizations and the private sector have elevated their efforts in recent years to financially include hard-to-reach populations, including women, farmers, and micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Regardless, these groups continue to be underserved. Significantly increasing financial inclusion to them will also ensure development progress. The UNSGSA has continued to place these vulnerable groups at the heart of her agenda.

### Empowering women

Globally, women are much less likely to have access to finance than men due to restrictive norms, policies and structural barriers, among other reasons. Yet, women's economic empowerment has the potential to make a significant and lasting development impact.

Women are more likely to spend on necessities, such as food and water, as well as child welfare, including school fees and healthcare. A "full-potential" scenario in which women participate in the economy identically to men could add \$28 trillion (26%) to the annual global GDP by 2025, according to a McKinsey Global Institute report. And, according to the Financial Alliance

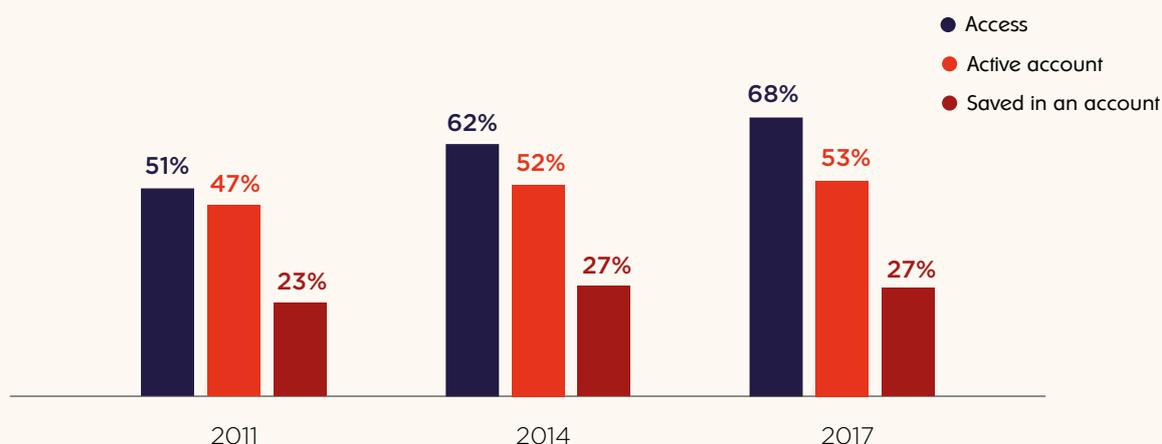
for Women, a 2017 analysis of data from 23 of its member banks revealed that women are strong savers, with lower loan-to-deposit ratios across regions than men (66% vs. 115%), and prudent borrowers, with a 2.9% share of total non-performing loans compared to 4.2% for men.

Digital financial services are one area where inclusive finance can enable women to earn more and build assets, which contributes to SDG 5: Gender Equality. The UNSGSA has encouraged policy makers and service providers to address obstacles for women's economic empowerment and shape gender-inclusive financial systems both domestically and globally.

This theme was also highlighted by the UNSGSA during an interview with the BBC World News in September 2018. She noted that when hard-to-reach groups, such as women, have access to savings, it gives them a cushion "to fall back on in case of unforeseen risks. It's so important to have this resilience and potential to invest in their future."

During a visit to Ethiopia in May 2019, the UNSGSA highlighted to businesses the potential opportunity in designing customer-centric products for women. And at a private sector roundtable in Addis Ababa, she stated how crucial private-private partnerships are to

## THE ADVANCEMENT OF ACCESS AND USAGE



**Access** = Total account ownership at a formal financial institution among adults. **Active account** = Proportion of adults with a currently active account at a formal financial institution. **Saved in an account** = Proportion of adults who have ever saved in a formal account. (Source: World Bank Global Findex 2011, 2014, 2017).

reach more women: “We are trying to address the financial pain points of many with very little disposable income. Expanding partnerships among cross-sector private actors is key to increasing access and usage—for example, between agriculture, consumer goods companies, fintech, MNOs, and banks.”

She also noted it is vital to systematically collect both demand-side and supply-side data to be able to incorporate gender into economic and structural policy making, and better formulate policies that promote women’s financial inclusion. This data is of course essential to measure progress as well. For example, from over 100 countries reporting to the IMF’s Financial Access Survey in 2018, only 35 provided gender-disaggregated data, though it is an increase from 27 in 2017.

### What women need

To improve this, IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde joined forces with the UNSGSA to encourage more nations to report on gender-disaggregated data.

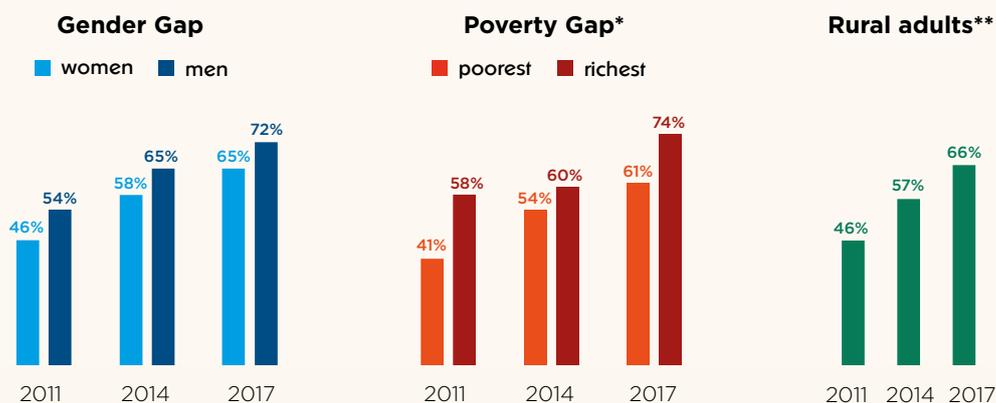
“The first step to solving a problem is identifying and understanding it,” said the Special Advocate during a keynote speech in Argentina at a G20 side event on advancing women’s economic empowerment through financial inclusion, which she hosted together with Argentinian President Mauricio Macri. “Having this data will help us understand needs and measure progress.”

Further, Queen Máxima advocated for substantial structural transformations to level the playing field for women during her G20 speech in Argentina. These included:

- The removal of legal and regulatory barriers that restrict women’s access to financial services.
- Ensuring universal identification so women do not lack the documents required to open formal financial accounts.
- Closing the digital gender divide since the most promising contemporary financial solutions rely on technology and digitization such as mobile phones and internet.

## AS INCLUSION ROSE, GAPS IN ACCOUNT OWNERSHIP PERSISTED

Financial inclusion has advanced steadily over the past decade—but these gains have been uneven. Women, the poor, and adults living in rural areas all lag behind in account ownership, as depicted below.



\*Poorest and richest refer to the poorest 40% and the richest 60% of adults.\*\*Rural adults represent a significantly underserved population. However, data on account ownership among urban dwellers is not available as a point of comparison. (Source: World Bank Global Findex 2011, 2014, 2017).

## Farmers

Adequate and affordable finance for smallholder farmers can be complex. They often live in rural locations and are not always financially or digitally literate. Their cash flows are generally irregular, while many have no credit history. For these reasons, many financial services providers have been reluctant to target them as customers, the UNSGSA said in her speech at The Future of Sustainable Trade, a 10-year anniversary event for the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in November 2018.

In fact, formal financial institutions and agricultural value chain actors meet “less than one-sixth of the \$200 billion in financing” needed by approximately 500 million people in this group worldwide, she stated. However, evidence shows it is precisely this financially underserved group which is the largest producer of agricultural goods in developing countries and makes a significant contribution to agricultural growth.

One of the UNSGSA’s priorities has been to ensure diverse and customer-centric financial services reach farmers. Many in this agriculture space need access to financial solutions beyond access to capital, including insurance and savings products to bolster resilience for their families.

Queen Máxima encouraged financial institutions at the IDH event to “explore novel ways to partner with agribusinesses, mobile network operators, financial technology companies and others,” to better understand and reach these underserved customers.

Also, to support efforts to extend reach to farmers, the UNSGSA convened a working group for agricultural finance, co-led by the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) and IDH. It has brought together experts from agribusinesses, financial institutions, and agricultural finance.

Agriculture financing demand is likely to increase. It is recognized as a critical enabling factor for agriculture development. The agriculture finance gap presents a chance for additional agricultural growth, financial inclusion and poverty reduction. Further it could help meet SDG 2: Zero Hunger.

## MSMEs

Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are the drivers of growth, innovation and job creation.



**During the UNSGSA’s visit to Ethiopia in May 2019, barley farmers from the Oromia Region shared with the Special Advocate how Habesha Brewery’s trainings and pre-financing helped improve their businesses.**

Entrepreneurs are an integral part of developed and developing economies and have been the backbone of local economies for centuries. However, an International Finance Corporation (IFC) study found that the financing gap for MSMEs in emerging markets amounts to over \$8 trillion (USD). “A lack of collateral, credit history, or transaction records can make it difficult for traditional businesses to access affordable credit from lenders,” stated the UNSGSA at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit held in June 2019 in The Hague.

In recent years, the enormous potential of digital financial technology to catalyze financial inclusion has become increasingly evident. Digital financial services may also help break down one of the remaining impediments to full financial inclusion: the informal nature of many businesses worldwide.

“Formality can help firms enter new markets, join global value chains, reach foreign buyers, or access credit,” wrote the Special Advocate in the foreword to a World Bank 2019 report she supported, “Leveraging Digital Financial Solutions to Promote Formal Business Participation.” In other words, formalization enables economic inclusion. And given that many MSMEs are owned by women, informality among small firms also represents a missed opportunity to close the gender gap in access to financial services.”

Digitizing MSMEs’ payments can contribute to reducing informality. The CEO Partnership for Economic Inclusion initiated by the UNSGSA (see pg. 26) includes initiatives that digitize payments for micro and small merchants. This makes transactions safer and easier, and also helps build their credit histories to access business loans.

# JORDAN

In 2017, 33% of adults in Jordan had a formal account, up from 25% in 2014.

While the country's robust digital payments infrastructure, Jordan Mobile Payment (JoMoPay), offers opportunities for the expansion of mobile wallets and other innovative services, many in Jordan have yet to reap the benefits of this progress. Women still lag behind men by 10% in account ownership. In addition, Jordan has a large refugee population that faces challenges entering the formal financial system. Jordan's first National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS), launched in December 2017, provides a comprehensive blueprint for progress. Successful implementation could go a long way to extend financial services to the underserved.

## Way forward

In February 2019, the UNSGSA visited Jordan to extend support as leaders work to implement the national strategy. She met with Their Majesties King Abdullah II and Queen Rania, Prime Minister Omar al-Razzaz, Central Bank of Jordan Governor Ziad Fariz, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Mary Kawar, Finance Minister Ezzeddin Kanakrieh, and Minister of Information and Communications Technology Mothanna Gharaibeh. She also met with private sector leaders and representatives from the UN and international development organizations. In her meetings, the UNSGSA emphasized three priorities for action:

### Expand the agent network and strengthen the business case to increase take-up and usage of digital financial services

Praising Jordan's enabling environment for digital financial services, the UNSGSA noted that these services have not yet been able to reach most Jordanians. To address low uptake and usage of mobile wallets, she made four recommendations:

- Assess and develop agent network models that would work best in Jordan.
- Relax regulations around agent eligibility.
- Expand the number of merchants who accept mobile payments.
- Improve the business case for mobile payments service providers (MPSPs).



**Dinarak, a mobile payment service provider, launched Jordan's first female agent network to recruit female business owners with strong connections in their communities to provide mobile wallet services (see pg. 20).**

### Increase uptake and usage of formal accounts among women and low-income Jordanians to improve their lives

Although Jordan has made progress to increase formal account ownership overall, among low-income Jordanians (19%) and women (27%) it is lower than the national average (33%). Women have a higher rate of informal savings than men, revealing an unmet demand for a safe, affordable, and convenient way for women to save. For low-income individuals, fees and minimum balances have been an obstacle; however, the Central Bank of Jordan launched a basic account initiative to address these barriers.

The UNSGSA recommended several ways to increase inclusion among these populations:



Jordan has made progress to increase formal account ownership overall; however, for low-income Jordanians (19%) and women (27%), it is lower than the national average (33%). Women, for example, have a higher rate of informal savings than men, revealing an unmet demand for a safe, affordable, and convenient way for them to save. Pictured: The UNSGSA met with Hana Khaled to discuss the benefits of mobile wallets, especially for women (see pg. 20).

- Fully digitize government social benefit payments to increase account ownership among low-income Jordanians.
- Focus on usage of basic bank accounts rather than just access.
- Collect data on women’s financial needs, preferences, and behavior around accessing and using accounts.
- Continue to facilitate access for women agents to address cultural norms that might prohibit interactions between unrelated men and women.

**Leverage digital finance to advance financial inclusion for refugees**

The UNSGSA—who met with a low-income family of Syrian refugees to discuss access to financial services while in Jordan—recognized the innovative financial assistance programs that already exist for refugees in Jordan, including the office of the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) Common Cash Facility. However, she acknowledged that these

important efforts do not always translate into financial inclusion as they do not include a means to save money. Only 7% of refugees in Jordan had a formal financial account in 2017 and only 1.4% had access to credit. One difficulty is the requirement by banks that non-nationals present a passport to open an account, which many refugees do not have.

The UNSGSA suggested several measures, including a scaled-up effort by donors and humanitarian organizations to deliver cash assistance via mobile wallets, which would allow beneficiaries to store and use funds rather than simply cash out.

**Next steps**

With her partners, including the World Bank, CGAP, the Better Than Cash Alliance, and GIZ (Germany), the UNSGSA will continue to follow up with Jordanian leaders to advance the goals discussed during her visit. This will include studying various issues, including demand for Jordan’s digital financial services market and strategies for expanding the agent network.

# TO REACH JORDAN'S WOMEN, FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY EMPLOYS A HUMAN TOUCH



In technology-friendly Jordan women have yet to fully reap tech's benefits even as innovative financial products such as mobile wallets have started to proliferate. Dinarak, a mobile payment service provider (MPSP), realized that its mobile wallet was not reaching half the population and set out to change the way it does business.

So, with the support of the Arab Women's Enterprise Fund, the company launched the country's first female agent network to recruit female business owners with strong connections in their communities to provide mobile wallet services.

Dinarak was able to attract 6,000 new female customers in the first 10 months of the initiative by focusing on businesses that women frequent as part of their normal routines. The company has also gained a loyal following among its new agents, who have experienced improvements in their own financial lives.

Hana Khaled, a clothing-store owner in Zarqa, became a Dinarak agent in 2018. She told the UNSGSA that having a mobile wallet empowers

women and makes life more convenient. She herself is an enthusiastic customer, using the wallet to pay all her bills and save money securely rather than in cash. Previously, she explained, simply paying bills was a chore that could take her half a day due to the long, women-only lines at payment points, where she often received poor service.

Ms. Khaled's customers use the mobile wallet to pay bills and utilities, saving transaction fees and transportation costs. In a small survey of new users, more than half of customers said they saved more than 10 Jordanian dinars (US\$14) per month.

For Ms. Khaled, becoming an agent has provided a supplement to her income, which has helped support her husband and five children.

## Responsible Tech Innovations

Today, 1.7 billion people remain outside the formal financial system. In some nations, financial exclusion is even on the rise. Technology-led innovation in financial services, fintech, has the potential to play a transformative role to combat exclusion.

Proper infrastructure and policies that allow innovation to flourish are needed for fintech to work for customers excluded or underserved by the formal financial sector. Throughout the year, the UNSGSA reiterated the key pre-requisites for success (see pg. 13).

### Mobile money

Globally, mobile money has remained a powerful engine of financial inclusion, now with more than \$1.3 billion transacted daily and over 866 million registered accounts in 90 countries, according to the GSMA. Mobile money makes it more convenient for people to open basic accounts and make payments. Supportive policies for mobile money have been critical in the expansion of financial access.

The proliferation of mobile money is important for hard-to-reach populations at the core of the UNSGSA's strategic priorities. The potential for its global growth remains significant, as well. Throughout Egypt, Ethiopia and Nigeria, more than 110 million mobile money accounts could be unlocked in the next five years. However, it will take effort to reach that figure.

### Fintech

Rapid innovation beyond mobile money offers hope that access can be extended to remaining hard-to-reach populations. Fintech startups can create better tailored products for customers. Tech giants such as Google, Facebook and WeChat, among many others, have increasingly turned toward financial services and embedded customer-centric products into their platforms.

"Fintech solutions are rapidly changing the way customers pay, save, borrow, and protect themselves against risks. To date we have only seen the tip of the iceberg. Fintech is making products and business processes cheaper, faster, and more efficient," said the UNSGSA in a video message to the Singapore Fintech Festival in November 2018. "It is using big-data analytics to identify what customers need and make services more intuitive to use. And it's driving more



**The UNSGSA discussed regulating innovation to promote financial inclusion at the second Fintech and Financial Inclusion Roundtable at De Nederlandsche Bank in Amsterdam in September 2018.**

competition and collaboration between traditional players, start-ups, and tech companies."

There are many examples of technology-led innovations opening a range of new solutions for customers with services designed around their needs to help improve their lives. During a video message for the 2018 Foromic Conference held in Barranquilla, Colombia, the UNSGSA highlighted one such example that she encountered on a previous country visit to Mexico, called Clip.

Clip is a fintech startup that sells card readers, for debit, pre-paid and credit cards, that can be linked to mobile devices. The company helped two young restaurant owners whom the Special Advocate met to access a more user-friendly, cheaper, and faster alternative to point-of-sale devices offered by banks. Clip, now one of the largest merchant acquirers in Mexico, also helped increase digital financial inclusion in the country. Around 95% of merchants that now use this system did not accept cards previously.

### Regulating fintech: Early lessons

A key challenge for central banks and other regulators is to have regulatory tools to keep up with the fast pace of innovation. This is particularly relevant in countries that lack the resources and staff with the necessary tech skills to comprehend the rapid development of fintech.

In September 2018, the Special Advocate and Governor Klaas Knot of De Nederlandsche Bank (DNB)

hosted the second annual roundtable on fintech and financial inclusion to discuss new regulatory approaches for financial innovation. They brought together 23 leaders from regulatory authorities, innovative fintech companies, standard-setting bodies, and development partners.

At the meeting, the UNSGSA shared some preliminary findings from new research that she commissioned last year on regulatory innovations to foster fintech in a responsible way. The group reviewed the findings and offered insights on these issues.

In her opening remarks, Queen Máxima said, “We recognize the power of having regulators and fintech innovators find solutions together to tackle risks and accelerate progress. And we understand the value of coming up with new ways for pioneering regulators to share their experiences with peers in other countries beginning to address these issues.”

In March 2019, the UNSGSA Fintech Working Group and Cambridge Centre for Alternative Finance presented their final report “Early Lessons on Regulatory Innovations to Enable Inclusive Fintech: Innovation Offices, Regulator Sandboxes and Regtech.” The Monetary Authority of Singapore supported the report, which is aimed at helping regulators, particularly from emerging and developing economies. It reviews early lessons learned on innovative regulatory sandboxes, innovation offices, and regtech, from some of the most advanced regulators globally. It also contains a set of “Implementation Considerations” to regulate innovation (for an overview of the report’s key insights, see pg. 23).

In March 2019, the Special Advocate presented the report to 60 central bank governors who are members of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) in Basel. It was also distributed by the Financial Stability Board (FSB) to its Regional Consultative Groups and to numerous governors of emerging countries by different partners such as the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) and the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four on International Monetary Affairs and Development (G24).

### **Technology: Risk and mitigation**

Technology advances and inventions do not only bring opportunities, but sometimes new risks for customers and the financial sector. Innovators can amplify threats and vulnerabilities to consumers, such as large-scale frauds, breaches in data privacy, and cybersecurity



**Rapid innovation beyond mobile money offers hope that access can be extended to remaining hard-to-reach populations.**

risks. For example, CGAP noted that 4.4 million mobile money users in Kenya said they were victims of fraud last year. With the rapid emergence of new players beyond the financial sector, these risks are amplifying.

These new risks, speed, and complexities that result from fintech can trigger strong regulatory reactions that stifle innovation and prevent people from gaining access to vital financial services. At the same time, if these risks go unaddressed, customers can be harmed, and financial stability can be threatened.

It is therefore increasingly essential to balance the promotion of innovation with the mitigation of risks. “Together, we can provide the tools and support that regulators in emerging and developing countries need to tackle fintech’s challenges and seize its potential to transform people’s lives for the better,” said the UNSGSA in the video message for the 2018 Singapore Fintech Festival.

# EARLY LESSONS ON REGULATORY INNOVATIONS TO ENABLE INCLUSIVE FINTECH

In February 2019, under the supervision of the UNSGSA Office, the Fintech Working Group of the UNSGSA and the University of Cambridge's Centre for Alternative Finance (CCAF), with support from the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), published a report on early lessons from pioneering regulators using innovation offices, sandboxes, and regtech to seize the potential of fintech and address its challenges.

## Five Key Report Insights



- 1. A feasibility assessment** is often the best first step to identify the correct regulatory initiatives. It can help to discover if the benefits of an innovative regulatory initiative outweigh the cost, and whether the existing regulatory framework needs to be amended or remains effective.
- 2. The right first tool** is not always a regulatory sandbox as less resource intensive innovation offices may offer a better starting point. The Kenyan Capital Markets Authority revealed in a recent assessment that an innovation office was enough to resolve regulatory questions of startups. An innovation office could consist of a small number of people within the regulator able to interact with fintech companies. In fact, experience from regulators demonstrates most regulatory questions raised in connection to sandbox tests can be resolved without a live test.
- 3. To build institutional support**, innovative regulatory initiatives need buy-in from high-level leadership. This is particularly powerful since it can spur a pro-innovation mindset throughout central banks. Strong cultures supportive of regulatory innovations were universally recognized as a key factor for success by all 40 regulators interviewed in the making of the report.
- 4. Careful consideration is needed** regarding sequencing and combining initiatives. Some initiatives are more suited to the initial stages of regulatory innovation, while others better benefit from existing initiatives and infrastructure. The experience of the MAS's innovation office provided a solid foundation to create its regulatory sandbox. This enabled it to explore and develop regtech solutions. This also supported MAS in the development of its innovative modular, activity-based approach to regulate retail payment providers. Now, payment providers only need to hold the class of license which corresponds to the risks posed by the activities offered and the scale of services.
- 5. The facilitation of intra-agency coordination and collaboration** is crucial. Many innovative financial services cut across the mandate of multiple regulators. Intra-agency coordination is often needed for regulatory innovations to be effective. For example, to provide innovators with a single voice, the Netherlands Central Bank (DNB) and the Netherlands Authority for the Financial Markets (AFM) jointly run an innovation office. Similarly, in Canada, all the provincial securities regulators offer a single regulatory sandbox.

Full report available at [www.unsgsa.org](http://www.unsgsa.org).

# ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia has experienced a rise in financial inclusion in recent years with more than one-third of adults (35%, 2017 Global Findex) currently having access to the financial tools needed to build better lives. Now the nation aims to make further gains in access to formal financial services, hopefully to catch up to nearby countries such as Kenya, where 82% of adults have an account, and Rwanda (50%).

There is an opportunity to make gains by focusing on financial inclusion for women, a group that accounts for a disproportionate share of the unbanked in Ethiopia—a gap that is widening. In 2017, it jumped to 12% after being virtually insignificant in 2014. Now, 41% of men have an account, compared to 29% of women (in 2014 account ownership was nearly even, with 23% of men and 21% of women with an account). Digital payments are low in Ethiopia with only 12% of adults reporting they have made or received digital payments within the last year according to the 2017 Global Findex.

## Way forward

The UNSGSA visited Ethiopia in May 2019. She held meetings with President of Ethiopia Sahle-Work Zewde, and Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, along with other key government officials, including Ahmed Shide, Minister of Finance; Dr. Getahun Mekuria, Minister of Innovation and Technology; Dr. Yinager Dessie, Governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE); and Eyob Tekalign Tolina, State Minister. Queen Máxima also met private sector leaders and development partners, as well as barley farmers and mobile payments users on field visits.

While there, she identified key opportunities to increase inclusion:

### **The expansion of digital financial services through regulations and licensing of non-banks that can provide payment services**

Ethiopia has set up a national payment system (NPS), but it currently does not include providers other than banks and microfinance institutions. Mobile money penetration is low, at just 0.3%. The number of agents is insufficient with 17,000, though the country could need more than 100,000 for its population. Mobile money



**The UNSGSA and President of Ethiopia Sahle-Work Zewde discussed digital financial services, lending infrastructure, and Ethiopia's national financial inclusion strategy.**

and agent expansion could be essential for Ethiopia to achieve its potential.

The UNSGSA suggested that authorities could consider allowing non-banks to provide financial and payment services, including issuing e-money, which can be bank-owned, telecom-owned or technology companies that specialize in financial services (fintech). The UNSGSA and her partners, the World Bank Group, the Better than Cash Alliance (BTCA), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, also offered support to NBE to develop two separate principle-based regulations on agent banking and mobile money that would be complemented by more detailed directives. In addition, NBE highlighted its need to digitize payments, and the UNSGSA's partners agreed to support the central bank in developing a digital payments roadmap.

### **Improvements in the lending infrastructure**

According to the World Bank's Enterprise Survey 2015, in Ethiopia 40% of all firms identify limited access to finance as the biggest obstacle to business. Meanwhile, 90% of the total movable collateral is comprised of



In Ethiopia, the UNSGSA met with several people using BelCash’s fintech products to transform their financial lives. Tizita Tona (left), a former accounting student who owns a coffee shop in Addis Ababa, earns extra money as an agent for HelloCash, a mobile money service that allows people to access financial services with a mobile phone and at a network of shops. She also promotes other products including HelloMarket, an e-commerce platform. Muluaem Tesfaye (right), a taxi driver who never had a bank account before, deposits his daily earnings with Ms. Tona when he stops by for his regular cup of coffee. He told the UNSGSA that HelloCash is faster, safer, and helps him save toward his goals of buying a new taxi and obtaining health insurance. For him and for Ms. Tona, BelCash is offering the promise of a better future.

vehicles. While some types of machinery and equipment are also commonly accepted, banking institutions have been reluctant to take floating assets, such as account receivables and inventory, as movable collateral.

NBE has taken several steps to improve this situation and will continue to do more work on movable-asset-based lending, secured transactions laws and collateral registries.

#### **Prioritization and sequencing of National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) actions**

Although Ethiopia approved its NFIS in 2017, progress is not in line with its goal of 60% inclusion

by 2020. During her visit, the UNSGSA emphasized the importance of refreshing the NFIS with a focus on digital financial services, rural areas and women. The UNSGSA also confirmed the importance of a national identification system for financial inclusion, as well as the partial privatization of the telecom sector. She encouraged the country to continue its work to promote inclusive finance.

#### **Next steps**

The UNSGSA and her partners—including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, BTCA and the World Bank Group—will actively support Ethiopia’s efforts.



**CEO PARTNERSHIP  
FOR ECONOMIC  
INCLUSION**



With the birth of the CEO Partnership for Economic Inclusion (CEOP) in January 2018 in Davos, a new way of doing business emerged. Leaders from the 10 member companies of the CEOP gathered again during the 2019 World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos to share their experiences and progress one year after the UNSGSA first convened this initiative to accelerate financial inclusion through private-private partnerships.

At a public panel discussion moderated by the UNSGSA, the global business leaders shared how private-private collaboration can benefit unbanked and underserved populations as well as their own companies. This new way of doing business can open untapped markets for companies while bringing life-changing financial services to previously unbanked customers.

“Members of the CEO Partnership collaborate on initiatives by leveraging their complementary products, technology, and network operations to improve access to and usage of financial services. This in turn helps to improve the financial and economic well-being of their customers,” said Queen Máxima.

The discussion offered a chance for the 10 CEOs to showcase several recently launched partnerships. Panelists outlined technology advancements that are increasing the ways cross-industry companies can partner, potentially opening the door for other companies to enter similar partnerships. “It (might seem) easier to do it alone, but one company does not have the full proposition that a customer needs,” said Dan Schulman, President and CEO at PayPal.

The CEOs also recognized that customers need more than one company to fulfill all their financial needs, and that a joint value proposition can be a win for everyone. They agreed a strong business case is important for these partnerships to succeed on the ground. “If you want to go fast, walk alone, but if you want to go far we need to walk together,” said Eric Jing, Chairman and CEO at Ant Financial.

Partners can face different challenges such as receiving buy-in from the country level and business unit teams. A critical phase is when companies start to pilot a new product on the ground. This is because there is always a chance it might not meet the needs of the customers or become profitable for companies. In some cases, the companies’ initiatives will face regulatory hurdles because their products are new.

The UNSGSA noted financial inclusion is an enabler and accelerator of economic growth, job creation, and

development. She urged the private sector to continue to explore partnership opportunities that drive business growth and increase efficiency, while working to attain the SDGs.

The business leaders also hope to connect with other CEOs beyond the membership interested in collaborative business models that improve their companies’ bottom lines while fostering financial and economic inclusion.

Additionally, a CEOP workshop held in Utrecht in April 2019 highlighted how CEO Advisors, who are senior technical level representatives at each company, have been instrumental to initiate discussions between partnering in-country teams and to help ensure all legal requirements are met surrounding their initiatives.

#### **Spotlight on success: Examples of CEOP initiatives on the ground**

***Enable Pay and Credit (Pakistan):*** Telenor and Unilever started working together in Pakistan to help small mom-and-pop shops digitize inventory purchase payments. This helps merchants spend less time dealing with cash and develop a digital footprint that can be used to obtain working capital credit in the future. For Unilever, its efficiency increases from decreasing cash handling, and eventually sales from merchants will increase when they have more capital to purchase more inventory. And for Telenor, which provides the digital payments and credit facilities, the partnership will potentially bring new customers and a new revenue stream. This concept is also being replicated on PepsiCo’s distribution channel in Pakistan.

***Building Agrivalue Chain Ecosystems (Egypt, India and East Africa):*** This partnership between Rabobank and Mastercard is aimed at reaching one million farmers in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, India, and Egypt, with a digital interface to help increase their access to markets and financing. A scaled-up version of Mastercard’s Farmer Network Platform, an initiative currently operating in Kenya, aims to expand the platform into a digital agriculture ecosystem. And Rabobank will bring onboard key links in the value chain, including buyers, farmers’ cooperatives, and financial institutions.

# G20 SIDE EVENTS IN ARGENTINA AND JAPAN SHINE SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

An important component of the UNSGSA's agenda is to address obstacles to women's economic empowerment and help shape gender-inclusive financial systems on domestic and global levels. These issues were front and center at two recent G20 summits, which featured special side events that gave the Special Advocate and others a platform for promoting women's financial inclusion.



**The Special Advocate introduced the W20 Acceleration Platform during a speech in front of G20 leaders in Osaka, Japan.**

At both events, Queen Máxima highlighted the importance of the W20, a G20 “engagement group” comprised of female leaders from the public and private sectors and civil society, who are collaborating to promote inclusive economic growth for women.

In November 2018, the UNSGSA and President Mauricio Macri of Argentina organized a special side event at the margins of the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires. The event, “The Role of Finance for Women’s Economic Empowerment,” included speeches by the Special Advocate, President Macri, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Prime Minister Trudeau set the tone of the event with an emphasis on the importance of access to finance for women to drive sustainable and equitable development. Women’s access to and usage of financial services still lags behind men’s, according to

the UNSGSA, who mentioned in her keynote speech that the gender gap continues to average 7% globally and 9% in developing countries.

At a panel discussion moderated by the UNSGSA, participants highlighted that financial inclusion can have a major impact on women’s economic empowerment. This included Dr. Jim Yong Kim, then-President of the World Bank Group; Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati of Indonesia; Mr. Subhash Chandra Garg, Secretary of Economic Affairs at India’s Ministry of Finance; and Governor María Eugenia Vidal of the Province of Buenos Aires. The panelists and the UNSGSA called for leaders to implement public goods that enable technology to expand inclusion, and for private sector leaders to propose innovative solutions to meet women’s specific financial needs.

Then, in June 2019, the Special Advocate introduced

the W20 Acceleration Platform for Women's Economic Empowerment during a side event at the G20 Summit in Osaka. The Platform, which will provide the W20 with technical expertise, was welcomed with the full support of the W20 troika of Argentina, Japan and Saudi Arabia, along with Germany and Turkey, as well as the broader W20 network.

Queen Máxima delivered a short speech, along with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and U.S. Advisor to the President Ivanka Trump. Prime Minister Mark Rutte from the Netherlands, German Chancellor Angela

Merkel, and President Macri were also in attendance.

“This Platform will boost our capacity to collect data, conduct research on public goods, and develop recommendations for policies that release economic power for women. It will bring continuity and strength to the work of the W20,” said the UNSGSA. “And, it will above all, focus on implementing recommendations on financial inclusion, digital inclusion and labor inclusion in different countries. We hope that through the Platform we can build strong momentum and really spur action.”

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## ARGENTINA

In November 2018, the UNSGSA attended the G20 Summit in Argentina at the invitation of President Mauricio Macri. It marked Queen Máxima's first return to Argentina in her capacity as Special Advocate since her previous UN visit in October 2016. At that time, she had met with leaders from the public and private sector to lay the groundwork for the development of the country's first national financial inclusion strategy (NFIS).

Such a strategy is needed to boost access and usage of financial services in the country, where just under half of adults (47.9%, 2017 Global Findex) have a formal account. In 2016, the Special Advocate urged the country's public and private sectors to work together to formalize regulations, including one for allowing agent banking throughout the country.

### **An important step forward**

During her 2018 visit, Queen Máxima met with the members of the Financial Inclusion Coordination Committee (FICC), which is working with key local stakeholders and several development partners on the development of the NFIS. The UNSGSA suggested creating four working groups under the FICC on 1) implementation of agent banking; 2) digitization of financial services; 3) financial consumer protection; and 4) data collection.

The Central Bank of Argentina (BCRA) announced during Queen Máxima's visit the approval of agent regulation, a breakthrough very much in line with the discussions that took place two years before during her first UNSGSA visit. This regulation will make it possible for small shopkeepers and others to become banking



**The UNSGSA held meetings with leaders in Argentina to discuss the nation's financial inclusion progress.**

agents to serve rural dwellers and others who do not have easy access to traditional banking services.

Additionally, the BCRA has approved several regulations facilitating electronic transfers, interoperability of e-wallets and bank accounts, electronic checks, remote opening of accounts, and payments through QR code, among others. Further, the government recently launched an initiative for the digitalization of government-to-person (G2P) payments.

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# BANGLADESH

With a growing economy and increasingly connected population, Bangladesh is set for a revolution in technology-enabled financial inclusion. Recent innovations, including agent banking licenses, new payments service providers, and fintech e-commerce companies, create opportunities to welcome women and other underserved people into the formal financial system. These advances hold great potential for narrowing the gender gap in account access, which at 29% is one of the highest in the world, and making it easier for previously unbanked people to save and borrow money for their future.



**The UNSGSA and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed discussed the country's financial inclusion progress and potential.**

## Way forward

To discuss these challenges and opportunities to expand financial inclusion, the UNSGSA and her delegation visited Bangladesh in July 2019 at the invitation of the government. She met with President Mohammad Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed, as well as with leaders from the public and private sectors, including Mr. Fazle Kabir, Governor of Bangladesh Bank (BB); H.E. Mustafa Jabbar, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications; H.E. Zunaid Ahmed Palak, Minister of State for Information and Communication Technology Division; Dr. Md Abdul Razzak, Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance; Mr. Abdur Rouf Talukder, Secretary of the Ministry of Finance; and Mr. Md Ashadul Islam, Secretary of the Financial Institutions Division of the Ministry of Finance. The UNSGSA also held a pair of roundtable discussions on how fintech and the private sector can contribute

to financial inclusion. In her meetings, she emphasized five key priorities:

### **Enable the national ID system to function as a public good**

Bangladesh's National Identity Database (NID) allows financial services providers to conduct know-your-customer (KYC) authentication instantly, an important service. However, most providers and mobile network operators use their own databases for KYC verification, as it is difficult to gain access to the national database. The UNSGSA encouraged the Access to Information (a2i) initiative to review best practices from other countries for establishing an autonomous agency to oversee the ID database, with the support of the World Bank's Identification for Development (ID4D) initiative. She also recommended moving toward a holistic approach to identity in which individuals receive an ID number for life at birth rather than at age 18.

### **Support the development of an interoperable payments platform that functions as a public good between financial service providers**

The UNSGSA noted that Bangladesh has the potential to build on its existing infrastructure and increasingly tech-savvy population. Currently, users of mobile financial services cannot send money to users of another provider or to most bank accounts, which limits the value of moving from cash to a digital wallet. She encouraged Bangladesh Bank to create a real-time, low-value, high-frequency, and low-cost interoperable payments platform together with the private sector. She offered assistance on behalf of her partners to BB by sharing lessons from global best practices.



The UNSGSA visited Sumon Mohosin Hossen, owner of a general store in Dhaka, who became an agent for iPay and PriyoBank. Besides buying groceries, Sumon's customers can open a bank account at his shop for basic banking services like cash in and cash out, money transfers and paying bills. As a result, Sumon has increased his revenue by approximately 25%.

### **Promote the role of fintech and the internet economy to further financial inclusion**

Bangladesh has the potential to harness fintech to advance inclusion, with an increasing number of entrepreneurs using online platforms to develop more customer-centric products. However, it can be challenging for new businesses and fintech companies to operate without clear regulatory guidance.

In her discussions, the UNSGSA made several recommendations for allowing innovation in the financial sector to flourish, including establishing an innovation office at BB for approving new products and platforms. She also recommended that fintech players set up an innovation association to prioritize issues to raise with regulators.

### **Encourage a greater focus on women's digital and financial inclusion, including the digitization of wage payments in the garment industry**

Given the stark difference between men's and

women's participation in the financial system, it is clear that Bangladesh must make a concerted effort to reach women. The garment industry, a crucial driver of economic growth for the country and a key source of jobs for women, who make up 61% of its employees, provides fertile ground for exploring the digitization of wages. The UNSGSA asked private sector leaders to create innovative models that address the financial needs of garment workers. She recommended that they develop private-private partnerships to build a digital financial services ecosystem within the garment industry. Beyond the garment industry, Queen Maxima discussed with policy makers and private sector leaders how to deploy more female agents and identify opportunities to expand women's digital inclusion.

### **Next steps**

The Special Advocate will follow up on the country's financial inclusion progress. As Bangladesh proceeds to expand financial inclusion, the UNSGSA and her partners will provide support in the future.

# Annexes

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## About the UNSGSA

Appointed in 2009 by the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as the UN Secretary General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA), Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands is a leading global voice advancing universal access to affordable, effective, and safe financial services. She emphasizes that financial inclusion accelerates progress toward numerous development and economic goals such as poverty alleviation, job creation, food security, gender equality, and equitable growth.

Collaborating closely with global and national partners, she raises awareness, encourages leadership, works to break down barriers, and supports action to expand financial inclusion. She draws on her first-hand experiences gained through country visits and conversations with low-income families, small business owners, government and private sector leaders, and others to identify which financial services and policies can really make a difference for lives, livelihoods, and communities.

Queen Máxima regularly consults with and convenes stakeholders from diverse sectors—linking government leaders, finance authorities, mobile phone companies, agriculture experts, fintech companies, development partners, and others—helping people and institutions learn from each other and form new collaborations. Within the UN system, she engages with programs to share best practices about how financial inclusion complements and advances their missions. As Honorary Patron of the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion since 2011, she works to advance the G20 Financial Inclusion Action Plan. She also serves as a Global Agenda Trustee for the World Economic Forum's Global Challenge Initiative on the Future of the Global Financial System.

### Advisory and Administrative Arrangements

The UNSGSA works in partnership and with wide consultation among many stakeholders advancing financial inclusion—and those affected by it. She collaborates closely with an advisory Reference Group of leading international organizations in financial inclusion to share expertise and suggest strategic opportunities she can advance through advocacy and partnerships.

#### Reference Group members include:

Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI)	International Finance Corporation (IFC)	UN Development Programme (UNDP)
Better Than Cash Alliance (BTCA)	International Monetary Fund (IMF)	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Flourish Ventures	The World Bank
Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP)	UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)	

Members of the Reference Group and many other partners play an important role in converting advocacy into action. The UNSGSA also consults widely with UN country teams, standard-setting bodies, financial institutions, companies, donors, civil society organizations and UN member states in the Group of Friends of Financial Inclusion. The Office of the UNSGSA works closely with the UNSGSA and her secretariat in the Netherlands to coordinate and advance her UN and G20 activities. The Office is housed at UNDP at the Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy in New York. It is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

### UNSGSA Working Groups

A wide range of organizations provide invaluable research and guidance to the UNSGSA on her strategic areas of advocacy.

- **Development Impact Working Group:** BTCA, CGAP, World Bank
- **Fintech Working Group:** AFI, Ant Financial, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Bankable Frontier Associates (BFA), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, BTCA, CGAP, Flourish Ventures, IFC, McKinsey & Co., Monetary Authority of Singapore, De Nederlandsche Bank, Reserve Bank of India, World Bank
- **Gender Working Group:** CGAP, Global Banking Alliance for Women, IFC, UNCDF, Women's World Banking, World Bank
- **Agriculture Finance Working Group:** CGAP, Danone, Ecom, Export Trading Group (ETG), the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA), Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), Mastercard

### Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship in the Netherlands

Queen Máxima champions financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy and education, including for children and youth, in her home country of the Netherlands. In doing so she conveys best practices and insights from Dutch and international experiences. She is a member of the Dutch Committee for Entrepreneurship and Honorary Chair of the Money Wise Platform, a national partnership that promotes financial literacy.

#### More information

UNSGSA: [www.unsgsa.org](http://www.unsgsa.org) – G20 GPF: [www.gpfi.org](http://www.gpfi.org) – Royal House of the Netherlands: [www.koninklijkhuis.nl](http://www.koninklijkhuis.nl)

## UNSGSA Activities 2018–2019

### September 2018

**Speech**  
Amsterdam, Netherlands  
19 September 2018



**“Regulating Innovation to Promote Financial Inclusion”**  
Opening remarks at the second Fintech and Financial Inclusion Roundtable, De Nederlandsche Bank

“We recognize the power of having regulators and fintech innovators find solutions together to tackle risks and accelerate progress. And we understand the value of coming up with new ways for pioneering regulators to share their experiences with peers in other countries beginning to address these issues.”

**Statement**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
20 September 2018

**“Utilizing Technology and Reaching Underserved Populations”**  
Read by the Dutch Ambassador to Argentina at the People and Planet: Financial Inclusion for Social Inclusion seminar of experts organized by Banco de la Nación Argentina, UNDP, and the Institute for the Integration of Latin America and the Caribbean

“To make strong progress we need to fully utilize technological innovation and find solutions to ensure that excluded populations such as women, farmers, and the poor can become financially included.”

**Meetings, New York, USA**  
25–27 September 2018



**United Nations General Assembly**

Along with members of the CEO Partnership for Economic Inclusion, the UNSGSA participated in a breakfast meeting, hosted by Mastercard. She also met with several CEOP members; leaders from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Argentina, and Tanzania; and UN officials. In addition, she participated in a high-level event on women entrepreneurs, hosted by We-Fi, and attended the Bloomberg Global Forum Dinner.

**Interview, New York, USA**  
26 September 2018



**BBC World News**

Speaking with BBC’s Katty Kay, the UNSGSA emphasized the need to close the gender gap in financial inclusion and cited the game-changing role of innovative technology in advancing inclusion worldwide.

### October 2018

**Speech**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
3 October 2018

**“Key Opportunities for Women’s Financial Inclusion”**  
Video message to the W20 Summit

“Access to financial services is essential, allowing people to launch businesses, save money, and improve their family’s lives. But too many women are shut out of this system entirely. About 980 million women worldwide do not even have a basic bank account.”

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**Speech**  
Barranquilla, Colombia  
29 October 2018

**November 2018**

**Speech**  
Singapore  
14 November 2018

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**Speech**  
Utrecht, Netherlands  
15 November 2018

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**Speech**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
29 November 2018

**December 2018**

**G20 Meetings**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
28 November –  
1 December 2018



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**Interview**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
2 December 2018

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**“Expanding Financial Inclusion through Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean”**

**Video message to the 2018 Foromic Conference**

“If we want fintech to work for customers who are excluded or underserved by the formal financial system, we need the infrastructure and a set of policies that allow innovation to flourish.”

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**“Regulatory Tools to Tackle Fintech’s Challenges and Unleash Its Potential”**

**Video message to the Singapore Fintech Festival**

“For many regulators, creating the regulatory tools to keep up with the fast pace of innovation is extremely challenging. Thankfully, we’ve seen the emergence of new regulatory initiatives designed to safely test and engage with innovation.”

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**“Financing Smallholder Farmers to Ensure the Global Food Supply”**

**The IDH 10-year anniversary event, The Future of Sustainable Trade**

“You can travel to any small village in a war-torn country with no proper roads, and still find a bottle of soda. Can you use that last-mile delivery channel to reach rural people with financial services?”

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**“Why Does Financial Inclusion Matter for Women?”**

**Keynote address at the G20 side event Advancing Women’s Economic Empowerment through Financial Inclusion**

“With a firm commitment from public and private sector leaders, and well-designed policy initiatives and financial services, we can achieve our vision of equal access to financial services.”

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The UNSGSA met with the members of the Financial Inclusion Coordination Committee (FICC). The committee includes representatives from the ministries of finance; production and labor; education, culture, science, and technology; interior, public works, and housing; and health and social development; as well as the National Administration of Social Security; Federal Administration of Public Income; and the Central Bank of Argentina. Her visit took place during the G20 Summit, at which she and Argentinian President Mauricio Macri co-organized a side event on women’s financial inclusion.

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**CNN en Español**

During the G20 summit, the UNSGSA spoke with CNN’s Marcelo Longobardi about the need for financial inclusion, particularly among women and other underserved populations.

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## January 2019

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### Meetings

Davos, Switzerland  
22–25 January 2019

### World Economic Forum

The UNSGSA chaired a public panel discussion with members of the CEO Partnership for Economic Inclusion (CEOP) to discuss the progress they made during the first year of their initiative to accelerate private-private partnerships to promote financial inclusion. She also met bilaterally with members of the CEOP, as well as with leaders from the public and development sectors. The Special Advocate also participated in several roundtables and meetings covering a variety of issues, including supply chain innovation, financial inclusion in developed markets, cybersecurity risks, and financial and monetary systems stewardship.

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## February 2019

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### Meetings

The Hague, Netherlands  
8 February 2019

### Fintech for Inclusion Global Summit, organized by FMO in partnership with ACCION and Quora Capital

The UNSGSA met with leaders of inclusive fintech companies to learn their perspectives on what they see as the key challenges and opportunities for SMEs in gaining access to financial services.

### Jordan Country Visit 11–12 February 2019



The UNSGSA held meetings and discussions with leaders including Their Majesties King Abdullah II and Queen Rania, Prime Minister Omar al-Razzaz, Central Bank of Jordan Governor Ziad Fariz, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Mary Kawar, Finance Minister Ezzeddin Kanakrieh, and Minister of Information and Communications Technology Mothanna Gharaibeh. She attended a UN-hosted roundtable with UN agencies and international development organizations that support financial inclusion in the country, and also met with a group of private financial services providers. The UNSGSA conducted three field visits. In Al-Zarqa, she met with female agents of Dinarak, a mobile payments service provider. She visited Al-Salt to meet with female entrepreneurs who are clients of the Microfund for Women, which provides microcredit and a range of other financial services. With the support of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, she also met with refugees who live among host communities in Amman and discussed their challenges in accessing formal financial services.

*UNSGSA partners:* World Bank, CGAP, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

### Speech

Cape Town, South Africa  
18 February 2019

### “Innovative Financial Services for the Next Generation”

#### Video speech at the 3rd Annual Arise Conference

“Generation Z may provide fertile testing ground for some of the most innovative solutions aimed at expanding access and boosting usage—including those that don’t come from the banking industry.”

## April 2019

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### Meetings

Washington, DC, USA  
11–12 April 2019

### World Bank/International Monetary Fund Spring Meetings

In the margins of the Spring Meetings, the Special Advocate met with her Reference Group, several ministers of finance, and governors of central banks. She joined World Bank Interim President Kristalina Georgieva at the ID4D Mission Billion event, where she presented closing remarks.

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**Speech, Washington, DC, USA  
12 April 2019**



**May 2019**

**Speech  
Amsterdam, Netherlands  
9 May 2019**

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**“Digital Identification a Powerful Enabler of Financial Inclusion”  
Closing remarks at the ID4D’s Mission Billion: Transforming Countries and  
Empowering People Through Digital Identity event**

“If well designed, digital ID systems have the potential to be more secure and privacy-centric than traditional paper-based alternatives.”

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**“Leveraging Financial Technology to Ensure Access to Healthcare”  
Opening remarks at the Financial Times Future of Health Coverage event**

“Financial inclusion is not a goal in itself. It is also about achieving development outcomes, including Sustainable Development Goal 3: Universal Good Health and Well-Being.”

**Ethiopia Country Visit  
14–15 May 2019**



The UNSGSA held bilateral meetings and roundtables with President of Ethiopia Sahle-Work Zewde, and Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, along with other key government officials, including Ahmed Shide, Minister of Finance; Dr. Getahun Mekuria, Minister of Innovation and Technology; Dr. Yinager Dessie, Governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE); and Eyob Tesaling, State Minister. She also met with private sector leaders and development partners. In addition, she conducted field visits to barley farmers in Debre Berhan who have benefitted from a value-chain finance program established by the Habesha Brewery, and in Addis Ababa with executives, agents, and customers of the mobile-based financial services company BelCash.

*UNSGSA partners:* World Bank, Better Than Cash Alliance, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

**Speech, Basel, Switzerland  
27 May 2019**



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**“SSBs Can Have Positive Impact on People’s Financial Lives”  
Opening remarks during the Fifth High-Level Meeting on Financial Inclusion for  
global financial standard-setting bodies (SSBs) and the financial community at  
the Bank for International Settlements (BIS)**

“I am pleased to note that much has been accomplished since this group first convened in 2011. According to the latest Global Findex, 3.8 billion people have access to formal financial services. That represents nearly 70% of all adults and is an increase from 50% in 2011.”

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**Symposium  
The Hague, Netherlands  
28 May 2019**

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**Money Matters Symposium, Money Wise Platform**

This year’s symposium highlighted the new five-year strategy for the Netherlands’ Money Wise Platform, focusing on vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and people with low literacy, and on working with creditors to develop debt relief programs. During the event, the UNSGSA also had a fireside chat with Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra.

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## June 2019

**Speech**  
**The Hague, Netherlands**  
**4 June 2019**

### **UNSGSA Opening Speech at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2019: The Future Now**

“An entrepreneurial culture is the foundation to any thriving economy and society.”

**Meeting**  
**The Hague, Netherlands**  
**5 June 2019**



### **W20 Platform Meeting**

The meeting covered how to strengthen and support the W20 by providing knowledge and technological expertise for the three pillars on which women’s economic empowerment is built: financial inclusion, digital inclusion and labor inclusion.

**Speech**  
**Tokyo, Japan**  
**7 June 2019**

### **“Financial Inclusion Important for Aging Populations” Video message at the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion’s Opening Ceremony**

“By better adapting technology to the needs of older people, we could transform what is often seen as a challenge into an opportunity.”

**G20 Meetings, Osaka, Japan**  
**28 June 2019**



The Special Advocate met with G20 leaders to discuss financial inclusion, spoke about the importance of women’s economic empowerment for development and announced, along with the W20 troika, the establishment of the W20 Acceleration Platform for Women’s Economic Empowerment, which aims to amplify and support the implementation of the recommendations of the W20 Communiqué.

**Speech**  
**Osaka, Japan**  
**28 June 2019**



### **“The World has Extraordinary Opportunity to Unleash the Economic Potential of Women”**

#### **Remarks at a G20 Leaders’ Summit Side Event on Women’s Empowerment**

“While more good data is a first necessary step, we also need to do further research on what really works to actually reach and empower women... [The W20 Acceleration Platform for Women’s Economic Empowerment] will boost our capacity to collect data, conduct research on public goods, and develop recommendations for policies that release economic power for women. It will bring continuity and strength to the work of the W20.”

## July 2019

**Speech**  
**The Hague, Netherlands**  
**4 July 2019**

### **Opening Remarks at the Egmont Group Plenary Meeting**

“Remittances are the bloodlines of numerous economies and the lifelines of millions of families.”

## Bangladesh Country Visit 10–11 July 2019



The Special Advocate met with President Mohammad Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed, as well as with other public officials, including Mr. Fazle Kabir, Governor of Bangladesh Bank (BB); H.E. Mustafa Jabbar, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications; H.E. Zunaid Ahmed Palak, Minister of State for Information and Communication Technology Division; Dr. Md Abdul Razzak, Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance; Mr. Abdur Rouf Talukder, Secretary of the Ministry of Finance; and Mr. Md Ashadul Islam, Secretary of the Financial Institutions Division of the Ministry of Finance. She also met with private sector leaders, development partners, entrepreneurs, and financial services providers. During the visit, the UNSGSA had an opportunity to meet with clients of the fintech and e-commerce platform ShopUp, and agents and clients of PriyoBank's iPay banking and payments platform. She also spoke with female entrepreneurs who have benefitted from the public-private initiative SWAPNO, which provides short-term public sector jobs and training in professional skills and financial literacy, as well as with individuals who now collect government benefits digitally thanks to a program called Access to Information (a2i).

***UNSGSA partners:*** United Nations, the World Bank Group, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Better Than Cash Alliance, the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, and Flourish Ventures



لالة فاطمة  
Zobi Family

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