

# Chapter 22

## Women's Entrepreneurship in Promoting Sustainable Development Goals Through Digital Space in Africa

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter explores transformative potential of women's entrepreneurship in advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa's digital landscape. Despite facing numerous challenges, women entrepreneurs leverage digital technologies to overcome barriers, drive innovation, and promote sustainable development. Through a comprehensive review of literature and empirical insights, this chapter highlights the pivotal role of women's entrepreneurship in achieving SDGs, particularly Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The chapter examines the opportunities and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Africa's digital space. It also showcases successful initiatives and policies supporting women's entrepreneurship and digital inclusion. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the need for stakeholders to empower women entrepreneurs, foster inclusive digital ecosystems, and unlock the full potential of women's entrepreneurship in driving sustainable development and achieving SDGs in Africa.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Women's entrepreneurship has emerged as a pivotal driver of economic growth and development in Africa, with the digital space offering unprecedented opportunities for women entrepreneurs to access markets, resources, and networks. The continent's burgeoning entrepreneurial ecosystem, coupled with the rapid expansion of digital technologies, has created a fertile ground for women-led businesses to flourish. However, despite this promising landscape, women entrepreneurs in Africa continue to face a

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myriad of challenges that hinder their potential and undermine their contributions to sustainable development (Nyagadza, Gwiza & Hove, 2022).

The significance of women's entrepreneurship in Africa's development trajectory cannot be overstated. Women-owned businesses are crucial for job creation, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Moreover, women entrepreneurs are more likely to invest in their local economies, fostering community development and social cohesion (African Development Bank, 2019). The digital space, with its inherent scalability and reach, presents a unique opportunity for women entrepreneurs to transcend geographical boundaries, tap into global markets, and access a vast array of resources and networks.

Notwithstanding these opportunities, women entrepreneurs in Africa's digital space face a range of challenges that limit their growth and potential. These include limited access to financing, inadequate digital literacy, and a lack of role models and mentors. Furthermore, gender-based stereotypes and biases, as well as inadequate policy and regulatory frameworks, continue to hinder women's participation in the digital economy. It is against this backdrop that this chapter examines the role of women's entrepreneurship in promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa's digital space, highlighting the challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for future research and development. Background Here is the text with citations:

Women's entrepreneurship, a pivotal driver of economic growth and societal progress, encapsulates the creation and management of businesses by women, showcasing their resilience, creativity, and determination in the entrepreneurial landscape (Brush et al., 2009). In the context of Africa, where entrepreneurship plays a fundamental role in shaping economies and communities, women-led enterprises have emerged as key contributors to innovation, employment generation, and sustainable development (African Development Bank, 2019). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of global objectives established by the United Nations to tackle pressing challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change, provide a comprehensive framework for guiding international efforts towards a more equitable and sustainable future (United Nations, 2015). In the African context, the SDGs serve as a beacon of hope, offering a roadmap for addressing the continent's most pressing socio-economic and environmental issues (African Union, 2015).

Africa's digital space represents a dynamic and rapidly evolving ecosystem characterized by a surge in internet penetration, widespread mobile phone usage, and a growing embrace of e-commerce platforms (Internet World Stats, 2022). This digital transformation has not only revolutionized the way businesses operate but has also democratized access to information, markets, and opportunities, particularly for women entrepreneurs (World Bank, 2020). By leveraging digital technologies, women-owned enterprises in Africa are breaking down traditional barriers, expanding their reach, and tapping into new markets both locally and globally (Chapman et al., 2018). However, amidst the opportunities presented by the digital revolution, women entrepreneurs face a myriad of challenges that threaten to impede their progress. Issues such as limited access to finance (IFC, 2020), inadequate digital skills and infrastructure (ITU, 2020), gender-based discrimination (UN Women, 2020), and a lack of supportive policies and regulations (AfDB, 2019) often act as barriers to their full participation and success in the digital economy.

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