



# Digital Transformation Centers for sustainable development

Creating digital networks – bringing people and ideas together

## BACKGROUND

Digitalisation thrives best when it falls on fertile ground. In many development cooperation partner countries, however, the digital ecosystem<sup>1</sup> is poorly developed or very unevenly distributed. The level of access to information and communications technology among different sectors of the population varies widely: between women and men, urban and rural areas and between different social classes. Digital solutions can make a significant contribution to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and improving people's lives. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) therefore supports its partner countries in promoting the access to digital innovations as well as self-determined digital development and fair regulation, digital skills and local ecosystems. The aim is to empower partners to bring about just digital change in order to combat hunger and poverty, conserve resources, prevent pandemics and explicitly support women. In other words: to undergo a sustainable socio-ecological digital transformation.

## OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Digital Transformation Centers are advisory and coordination hubs for the digital portfolio of German development cooperation in the partner countries. The goal of these Digital Transformation Centers is to bring people and ideas together that

advance the digital transformation in the region and sustainably strengthen the local digital ecosystem.

To this end, the Digital Transformation Centers pool technical expertise, IT skills, research and entrepreneurial spirit under one roof. This approach makes it possible to build on existing structures, identify vulnerabilities and rectify them in a targeted manner. The set-up of the Digital Transformation Centers varies. Some offer independent spaces for creative workshops, co-working or events, while others are integrated into the local GIZ project and partner structures.

The Digital Transformation Centers operate locally and regionally while at the same time sharing their experience in a global network. This enables them to react quickly and appropriately to the ongoing changes and challenges of the digital transformation. Thanks to a modular structure, each Digital Transformation Center can be adapted to local needs and preferences. The Digital Transformation Centers focus on one or more of the following topics:

- **Digital Government:** Advising partner countries in developing digital strategies and in providing digital services for their citizen.
- **Innovation Promotion:** Supporting local tech start-ups in their establishment and growth. This includes for example trainings,

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<sup>1</sup> Digital ecosystem: self-reinforcing networks of companies and people that promote digitalisation in a region or sector.

matchmaking with potential investors or innovation awards.

- **Green Digital Transformation:** Promoting start-ups focusing on green digital transformation and joint development of digital solutions for adaptation and mitigation of climate change.
- **Women in Tech:** Supporting women in the use and development of digital solutions with the aim of closing the digital gender gap. This includes for example training for entrepreneurs, women in tech awards or mentorship programs.
- **Digital Skills:** Providing educational opportunities that give learners better chances in the labor market. Besides live trainings in the partner countries, the Digital Transformation Centers collaborate with the BMZ e-learning platform atingi.
- **Disruptive Technologies:** Advising local ecosystems in unlocking the potential of disruptive technologies. Activities include for example capacity building for governments regarding artificial intelligence.
- **Digital Economy:** Supporting partner countries in the digital transformation of their economies and adapting to new regulatory challenges (e.g. platform governance).
- **Digital Health:** Strengthening local ecosystems to improve healthcare through digitalisation.
- **Data Protection & Security:** Cooperating with partner countries to reduce the risk of attacks in the digital space and to protect against unauthorized disclosure of information.

## CURRENT STATUS

There are currently more than 20 Digital Transformation Centers in Ghana, Iraq, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tunisia, Benin, Egypt, Indonesia, Cambodia, Ecuador, Cameroon, Kosovo, Morocco, Mexico, Niger, Togo, Mauretania, South Africa und Vietnam. Planning for Digital Transformation Centers in additional countries is currently under way.

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