STRENGTHENING
THE WEB

SPIDER
INCLUSIVE DIGITALISATION THAT BENEFITS ALL
Annual Report 2023

Content

Message from our Director

2023 has been a year of change and growth for SPIDER as we prepare to mark 20 years in 2024. This anniversary serves as a reminder of our ability to adapt and reinforces the urgency of our work in a world where digital access increasingly determines economic and social outcomes. From the start, SPIDER has worked where technology meets human development, ensuring digital solutions serve people rather than the other way around.

Sweden, known for its early commitment to digital innovation, saw the potential of communication technologies to strengthen societies long before the rest of the world caught on. When SPIDER was founded in 2004, it reflected this thinking—bringing together researchers, practitioners, and institutions to create solutions that fit local needs. That approach has remained constant.

In 2023, SPIDER continued to connect policymakers, technologists, and community leaders to shape digital tools that are practical, accessible, and locally driven. This year's efforts have focused on digital health, STEM education, and ICT regulation, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure that technology expands opportunities rather than deepens inequalities. Expanding our International Training Programme (ITP) through the Team Europe Initiative has strengthened our ability to support African telecom regulators, increasing knowledge-sharing and collaboration across borders.

The need for digital inclusion has never been more pressing. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2.6 billion people remain offline, with Africa accounting for the largest share. Without action, this divide will reinforce existing economic disparities. SPIDER's role is to help close that gap by working with partners to ensure that digitalisation reaches those who need it most.

As we move into 2024, our focus remains on practical solutions that put people first. Digital transformation should not be a top-down process—it should be built with and for communities. SPIDER will continue working to ensure that technology serves as a tool for equity rather than exclusion.
To everyone who contributed to our work this year—partners, funders, and communities—we are grateful.

The progress we've made is a shared effort, and the road ahead will require the same spirit of collaboration.

SPIDER will continue working to ensure that technology serves as a tool for equity rather than exclusion.

Dr. Caroline Wamala Larsson

Our Mission

Ensure appropriate and accessible digital solutions to improve the opportunities and capabilities of poor and marginalised groups everywhere.

Our Vision

An interconnected world where digital solutions enable everyone to have their needs met and their voices heard.

A Glance at 2023

Over the past year, we focused on strengthening partnerships through direct engagement, taking part in international workshops, conferences, and on-the-ground visits with key collaborators. These interactions were not just formalities—they provided space for practical problem-solving, knowledge exchange, and the development of strategies that reflect real-world needs.

January

Officials from Uganda's Ministry of Health visited the SPIDER booth to explore the mobile colposcopy initiative and its role in improving cervical cancer screening and early detection efforts.

In January, SPIDER and its partners showcased AI-driven cervical cancer screening and telemedicine tools at the Uganda Africa Cancer Test and Treat Conference. Uganda Cancer Institute and Makerere University presented mobile diagnostic solutions that bring screening to women in remote areas, reducing delays in detection and treatment. Makerere's AI lab is refining machine learning models using collected images and clinical data to support early diagnosis. So far, the AI system has reached a 76% accuracy rate in identifying cancerous lesions, cutting down diagnostic wait times and expanding access to care in communities with limited health infrastructure.

February

Cancer awareness walk in Kigali, Rwanda.

SPIDER deepened its engagement with the DANCCE initiative, working alongside partners to accelerate efforts to eliminate cervical cancer across Africa. On World Cancer Day, our team met in Rwanda for in-depth discussions on how digital health solutions can improve screening, diagnosis, and treatment. Conversations focused on hybrid healthcare delivery models that integrate technology with on-the-ground medical services to expand access and efficiency.

While in Rwanda, we took part in the "Walk for Cancer," reinforcing our commitment to raising awareness and supporting community-driven action.

From there, we traveled to Kenya for meetings with the Kenya Network of Cancer Organizations (KENCO) to review ongoing efforts to map digital tools used in cervical cancer programs across the continent. This initiative is shaping a clearer understanding of where resources are most needed, improving coordination, and ensuring that technology-driven interventions reach the right communities.

In Nairobi, we also met with the Swedish Embassy to discuss Sweden's Country Programme in Somalia. The conversation focused on aligning SPIDER's work with Sweden's regional priorities and ensuring that digital health interventions in Somalia are guided by best practices in development cooperation.

March

EQUALS-EU side event, WSIS Forum 2023

In March, SPIDER advanced its commitment to reducing digital inequalities through the EQUALS-EU project. At the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum, Caroline Wamala Larsson joined a panel of global leaders to address the widening digital divide. Speaking alongside government representatives, she pressed for greater investment in STEM education and targeted initiatives that equip individuals with the skills to actively participate in the digital economy.

Caroline stressed that achieving digital equity demands a shift in how societies cultivate talent, especially among underrepresented groups. Her remarks reinforced the need for policies that support inclusive innovation to ensure that digital transformation benefits entire communities rather than deepening existing disparities.

As part of the HoliCare project, SPIDER launched the first of six webinars focused on Lower Respiratory Tract Infections. These webinars are designed to facilitate knowledge exchange within the HoliCare consortium and reach a global audience. The series provides a platform for sharing expertise on diagnostics, treatment, and prevention strategies for respiratory infections, particularly in low-resource settings.

April

Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), engages with young women studying computer science, alongside their professors, at Stockholm University.

In advance of Girls in ICT Day 2023, SPIDER had the honour of welcoming Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), to Stockholm University. With a deep understanding of SPIDER's initiatives through the EQUALS-EU project, Ms. Bogdan-Martin engaged with young women studying computer science, along with their professors. The conversations centred on addressing the digital divide, especially in underserved areas like Sub-Saharan Africa, and fostering opportunities for women in technology.

Ms. Bogdan-Martin commended SPIDER's efforts in advancing inclusive digitalisation and underscored the importance of global collaboration to close gaps in digital access and policy. Her visit served as a reminder of the critical work being done to improve digital inclusion and the ongoing efforts to shape policies that reflect a diverse and equitable digital ecosystem.

The event also celebrated the accomplishments of young women who are defying barriers and contributing to gender equality in the tech field. It reinforced the collective commitment to nurturing the next wave of women leaders and building a digital future that is accessible to all.

Additionally, SPIDER facilitated a follow-up session to the 2022B ITP Regulator Capacity Building Programme in Gaborone, Botswana, with representatives from national regulatory authorities across Benin, Botswana, Burundi, the DRC, Ghana, Liberia, and Zimbabwe. Discussions focused on strengthening collaborations with Regional Regulatory Organisations (RROs) and identifying key areas where further capacity-building initiatives could be implemented in future projects.

May

At the Stockholm Internet Forum 2023 (SIF), SPIDER's engagement highlighted the vital role of digital tools in crises and conflicts, aligning with the forum's theme of using the internet and ICTs to mitigate challenges during such times. SPIDER team interacted with partners who attended the event, including indigenous Bolivian artisans supported by SPIDER, whose street trading activities were digitised during the pandemic. Thanks to e-commerce, mobile banking, and digital literacy training, these women have quadrupled their income by selling globally. This success story showcases how inclusive digitalisation can transform livelihoods, even in times of crisis.

June

SPIDER representatives Béatrice Leuwe and Ulf Larsson meet with regulators in Switzerland.

In preparation for scaling up the International Training Programme (ITP) for Telecom Regulators, SPIDER participated in several key events with French regulator networks, including the FRATEL[1] meeting held in Lausanne, Switzerland. This event provided a valuable opportunity to build relationships and engage with key actors essential to the forthcoming programme. The interactions were highly productive, allowing SPIDER to establish connections that will be critical for the successful expansion of the initiative.

At the Broadband for All – Midsummer Conference 2023, SPIDER strengthened its relationships with key actors in the telecom regulatory space, focusing on bridging the language divides in anticipation of the scale-up for the telecommunications programme. Hosted by Ericsson at the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences and Ericsson Imagine Studio, this conference brought together global policymakers and tech leaders to discuss the evolving landscape of broadband policies, 5G deployment, and the future of 6G technologies.

SPIDER used this opportunity to engage with Portuguese-speaking regulators, introducing the ITP Regulator programme and discussing ways to support its expansion. The event also provided a platform for networking and in-depth discussions on policy considerations and innovations to secure broadband deployment globally.

As part of EQUALS-EU, SPIDER participated in the second week of a three-week summer school for hackathon and innovation camp winners across Riga, Geneva, and Valencia. SPIDER contributed to the theme of "safe and inclusive cities," building on the Stockholm hackathon's focus. In Geneva, participants participated in a gender audit walk, exploring how urban spaces and structures affect their sense of safety and inclusion. They then worked in workshops facilitated and led by SPIDER to develop innovative solutions, with digital tools playing a key role in enhancing urban inclusivity.

1   FRATEL is a network of French-speaking telecommunications regulators, uniting professionals from across the globe who share a common linguistic and regulatory interest.

July

SPIDER attended the ITU AI for Good Global Summit 2023, where the focus was on leveraging AI to address pressing global issues, including health, climate change, gender equality, and inclusive economic growth. The summit offered an opportunity for meaningful discussions with key stakeholders, ensuring that AI advancements are inclusive, equitable, and meet the needs of all communities, particularly those most affected by technological disparities.

Project partners discuss the outcomes and long-term impact of the initiative within the framework of the theory of change.

At the GeJuSTA General Assembly in Cape Town, South Africa, STEM professionals from institutions including the University of Cape Town, Makerere University, DKUT University, Sheffield University, and SPIDER, Stockholm University, gathered to assess the progress of the programme. This in-person gathering offered a chance to strengthen the collaboration between various workstreams focused on increasing African women's participation in STEM fields. After primarily working together remotely, the assembly facilitated deeper connections among team members, thus cultivating stronger partnerships and a shared commitment to the initiative's goals.

September

On September 7, SPIDER hosted the second Holicare Academy Webinar, bringing together global perspectives on the treatment and prevention of lower respiratory tract infections, particularly in children. Experts from institutions including the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Teesside University, Karolinska Institutet, Institut Pasteur de Dakar, and Mbarara University of Science and Technology shared valuable insights, with contributions from Senegal and Uganda adding regional context to the discussion of this pressing health challenge.

HoliCare workshop provided hands-on experience

October

HOLICARE workshop at the Armauer Hansen Research Institute.

In October 2023, SPIDER joined Team Sweden at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Kyoto, Japan, strengthening connections with potential partners in Sub-Saharan Africa for the iPRIS project. Through active engagement with partners and young women in tech, SPIDER reinforced its commitment to equitable access to ICT and the promotion of a safe, open, and accessible internet.

In the same month, SPIDER organised the first HoliCare Diagnostics Project Annual Workshop and Conference in Addis Ababa, in collaboration with the Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI). The workshop featured practical lab sessions at AHRI, focusing on advanced techniques such as qPCR and genome sequencing for pathogen identification. This event underscored the value of South-to-South knowledge exchange, with contributions from Senegal's IPD, Uganda's MUST (MSF), and Ethiopia's AHRI, showcasing the strength of collaborative efforts within the HoliCare project.

OCTOBER 2023

First HOLICARE Diagnostics Project Annual Workshop and Conference in Addis Ababa

November

Delegates visit Ericsson while in Sweden.

Dr. Caroline Wamala Larsson from SPIDER presented research led by SPIDER for the EQUALS-EU Project at the UK Parliament during the "Bridging the Gender Gap in Social Innovation" session. The research produced a policy brief on gender-inclusive innovation ecosystems, which generated considerable attention at the event and underscored the need for policies that ensure equitable participation in innovation.

After the House of Lords session, Dr. Wamala Larsson was invited to represent the EQUALS-EU consortium at the final conference for the CALIPER and LeTSGEPs projects in Brussels. There, she shared key findings from the research, adding to the ongoing discourse on gender equality in innovation and technology development across Europe.

Building on the success of the ICT Regulation, Policy, and Practice (ITP) programme (2016–2022), which was led by SPIDER in collaboration with the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority and focused on enhancing digital inclusion in Africa, the iPRIS project was launched. The first iPRIS cohorts, representing Eswatini, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Zambia, spent 2.5 weeks in Stockholm, working together to foster environments that help bridge the digital divide across the continent.

December

In December, SPIDER, in partnership with IT professionals from Stockholm university, visited Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to work alongside the Royal University of Phnom Penh on automating key teaching, research, and administrative processes following the implementation of critical digital infrastructure.

The workshops conducted during this visit focused on establishing strong backup systems, efficient recovery protocols, and strategies to reduce downtime—a crucial consideration given the region's frequent power disruptions.

This collaboration underscores SPIDER's ongoing commitment to building resilient and inclusive digital environments in universities, ensuring that academic institutions are equipped to support research and education effectively in the face of technological challenges.

Strengthening the Web, Narrowing the Gaps

Transparency & Accountability

Open Data and Good Governance in Cambodia

SPIDER's long-term commitment to transparency and accountability is demonstrated through its work in Cambodia, which supports Open Development Cambodia (ODC). This platform provides open access to data on critical issues such as land concessions, public services, and extractive industries, promoting government accountability and informed civic engagement. **By empowering civil society with access to relevant data, SPIDER aims to enhance public oversight and foster a culture of transparency within governance structures.** The organisation is also actively engaging in discussions surrounding Cambodia's Draft Law on Personal Data Protection, ensuring that the rights of citizens are protected in the digital age.

DID YOU KNOW?

137 out of 194 countries had put in place legislation to secure data and privacy protection. Africa and Asia show different levels of adoption, with 61 and 57 per cent of countries adopting such legislation. The share in the least developed countries is only 48 percent.

(source: UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Indigenous Women in Water Governance in the Mekong Region

In the Mekong region, SPIDER is launching the Women in Water Governance platform to support indigenous women leaders managing vital water resources. This digital platform facilitates knowledge sharing and collaboration among women facing environmental challenges. **By amplifying the voices of indigenous women, the initiative aims to highlight their critical role in sustainable water management and environmental stewardship.** The platform encourages networking, capacity building, and advocacy, empowering these leaders to address pressing issues like climate change and resource depletion.

A woman from Huayi E-Khang Village shares her views on how water challenges affect women.

Photo by: Aileen Thomson - The Tea Leaf Center

Education & Learning

Tablets Lighting the Path to Success in Rural Zambia

Chiwawatala primary school headteacher

DigiLearn Project (Zambia): Expanding Digital Learning for Inclusive Education: Launched in 2022, the DigiLearn initiative introduced digital tablets to select schools across Zambia, marking a significant move toward modernising education with technology. By 2023, with SPIDER support, the project had expanded its reach, delivering digital access to schools where educational resources and up-to-date curricula are often scarce. This expansion was made possible by additional investments in equipment and teacher training, enabling more educators to integrate technology effectively into their classrooms and spreading digital literacy throughout Zambia's education system.

The initiative aligns with Zambia's goal to standardise the national curriculum across all schools, providing students, no matter their location, with equal access to quality education. In many rural areas, schools face challenges such as outdated materials and limited resources that hinder effective learning. With DigiLearn, the entire curriculum is digitised and available on tablets, allowing teachers to deliver lessons interactively and students to engage with dynamic digital content. This approach moves beyond traditional methods, fostering a more engaging, flexible, and inclusive learning experience that improves both comprehension and student participation.

The use of digital tablets resulted in a dramatic **40% improvement in exam performance**, particularly for students who previously underperformed.

Learning in Every Tongue

Kawsang programming class

Indigenous Language Digital Learning (Cambodia): Indigenous Language Digital Learning (Cambodia): As one of the project selected in the open call of 2022, the focus was on creating localised digital content in indigenous languages for a limited number of communities. By 2023, this project will have expanded to include digital resources for five indigenous languages, significantly broadening its reach. The initiative ensured that even the most marginalised students had access to quality education, allowing more students to engage in their languages, thus fostering inclusion and reducing educational disparities.

DID YOU KNOW?

Out of the 6,700 languages spoken worldwide **40**% are in danger of disappearing.

(UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Economic Analysis)

Indigenous languages are fundamental to the identity of Indigenous Peoples, serving as a vital link to their cultures, worldviews, and ways of life. These languages are key to maintaining their heritage and represent an important expression of self-determination.
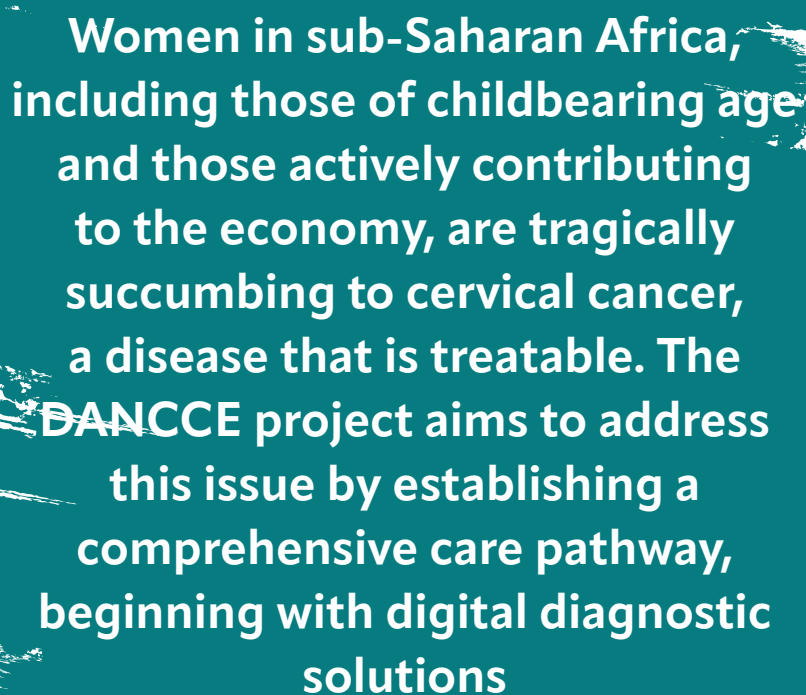
Computer Programming Curriculum for Rural Youth in Cambodia: The computer programming curriculum for rural Cambodia will essentially focus on teacher empowerment and students learning how to use or create ICTs. The teachers have been trained to improve these ICT-teaching competencies, strengthen the acquisition of confidence, and increase the interest in computer programming. As developed by SPIDER's partners, this curriculum will be introduced in "new schools" piloted in Cambodia. At the same time, negotiations are being made to incorporate the content with the Ministry of Youth Education and Sports' e-learning platform. This program will also put digital resources on tablets in underserved schools. Among the available educational resources are videos in Indigenous languages and coding lessons in Khmer, which are publicly accessible online via Open Development Cambodia's YouTube channel and code.org.

Health & Wellbeing

Fighting Cervical Cancer with Digital Innovation in Africa

DANCCE (Digital African Network for Cervical Cancer Elimination): SPIDER started working on Cervical Cancer in 2016 because non-communicable diseases such as cancer are increasing. The first step was a thorough needs assessment for telehealth in Rwanda, Zambia, and Kenya, and then the projects were implemented in Uganda and Rwanda. Mobile diagnostics tools allowed the programme to screen thousands more women, with over 4,000 screenings since the project began. The project strategically integrated AI tools, developing diagnostic models designed to support and complement the assessments made by nurses and physicians. These AI-driven models enhance diagnostic accuracy, but their effectiveness depends on access to diverse and extensive datasets. Recognising this, the initiative emphasises a regional approach to data collection and model refinement. Currently, the AI models are trained on data from Uganda, but in 2023, discussions with partners in Rwanda and Tanzania highlighted a shared need for AI-assisted diagnostics in healthcare. Stakeholders in these countries recognised the potential benefits of pooling regional data to strengthen the AI algorithm's ability to detect cancerous lesions more accurately.

Initiatives such as DANCCE advocate for collaborative regional data-sharing frameworks to enhance AI-supported diagnoses.

Women in sub-Saharan Africa, including those of childbearing age and those actively contributing to the economy, are tragically succumbing to cervical cancer, a disease that is treatable. The DANCCE project aims to address this issue by establishing a comprehensive care pathway, beginning with digital diagnostic solutions

Expanding Digital Healthcare in Somalia

The Health Alliance for Digital Development and Action (HADDA) project is playing a key role in improving digital healthcare access in Somalia. By focusing on maternal and child health, this initiative enhances data management and healthcare delivery, leading to more effective health services. Workshops tailored for Somali officials have notably strengthened health data analysis and decision-making processes. Through the training of local healthcare workers in digital skills, SPIDER is addressing long-standing gaps in healthcare delivery systems.

Another important initiative by SPIDER is Diaspora Engagement. Recognising the untapped potential of Somali professionals abroad, SPIDER launched a programme aimed at mobilising diaspora resources and expertise to bolster the health system in Somalia. Many members of the diaspora are skilled professionals eager to contribute to the development of their home country. However, a lack of organised mechanisms to engage them has often limited their impact.

To overcome this challenge, SPIDER introduced the Connect Somalia digital portal. This platform enables Somali diaspora professionals to collaborate, share knowledge, and build capacity in support of health system strengthening. Through this initiative, the Somali diaspora can now actively contribute to improving their country's healthcare infrastructure.

DID YOU KNOW?

Maternal Mortality Ratio: **692 deaths per 100,000 live births (2019),** a decline attributed to **improved access to skilled birth attendance** (32%).

Somalia's Child and Maternal Health (UN Somalia, 2020)

Digital health systems and programmes in Somalia face considerable challenges due to political and socio-economic instability. The HADDA project can potentially improve the healthcare system in Somalia through improved patient care, better management of health records, and increased access to healthcare services.

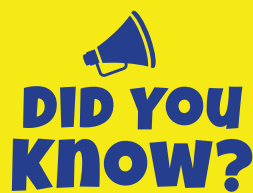**Dr Muna Elmi,** Programme Manager, SPIDER

HoliCare Project

HoliCare is tackling respiratory infections with innovative diagnostic solutions designed to improve early detection. By equipping local researchers and healthcare providers with the necessary tools and knowledge, the initiative fosters a sustainable approach to addressing health challenges and improving outcomes across the continent.

SPIDER, as a key partner in the HoliCare consortium, plays a central role in gathering and sharing expertise across the consortium, facilitating knowledge exchange between European and African researchers. Through a series of workshops, webinars, and conferences, SPIDER actively supports researchers and healthcare providers in Senegal, Ethiopia, and Uganda, building connections and fostering collaboration.

By utilising digital learning tools like YouTube, SPIDER ensures that research findings and valuable insights are widely distributed, reaching a diverse audience and encouraging engagement. Combining technology-driven dissemination with on-the-ground training and capacity-building, SPIDER strengthens HoliCare's long-term impact and helps establish sustainable networks of expertise to enhance healthcare systems across Africa.

DID YOU KNOW?

Pneumonia kills more children than any other infectious disease, **claiming the lives of over 700,000** children under five every year, or around **2,000 every day?**

Source: UNICEF

Bridging the Digital Divide with iPRIS

Through the ICT Policy & Regulation – Institutional Strengthening (iPRIS) project, SPIDER, in collaboration with the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (PTS) and the Luxembourg Regulatory Institute (ILR), are working to address digital regulatory gaps in Sub-Saharan Africa. The initiative focuses on building the capacity of National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) to better regulate the fast-evolving digital sector. By providing training and resources, iPRIS ensures that NRAs can effectively promote inclusive access to ICT services. The project also emphasises the need for regulatory frameworks that support innovation while safeguarding consumer rights and promoting fair competition.

Delegates in Sweden listening to a presentation at Ericsson

The NCA believes in diversity and inclusion and going the extra mile in providing a platform for girls to participate in digital skills. This year, NCA is looking forward to engaging girls and women in STEM and ICT in an inclusive programme that will help amplify the voices of diversity and give girls access to mentors. "

Ms. Moira Ayo Onek Leonzio- Special Programmes Officer National Communication Authority (NCA), South Sudan

Bilateral Collaborations with Universities

In 2023, SPIDER strengthened its partnerships with universities to enhance **digital infrastructure and research capacities** in low-resource settings. At the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, SPIDER supported the development system integration to improve user experiences and, as such, support UDSM research managers, lecturers and administrators in effectively using different platforms to foster high-quality research and learning.

Collaboration with **Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS)** focused on enhancing data-driven health research and expanding access to digital health solutions, addressing healthcare gaps between urban and rural areas.

MUHAS and SU staff engaging in discussions during a knowledge transfer visit in Tanzania.

At the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), SPIDER, in collaboration with (RUPP) colleagues, successfully established campus-wide digital infrastructure and connected the two campuses. In December 2023, a visit to RUPP in Cambodia sought to discuss the process of automating university processes with the infrastructure in place.

These collaborations promote inclusive digitalisation, empower local researchers, and improve educational opportunities through better ICT infrastructure.

Spinning the Web of Possibilities: Advancing Gender Equality in STEM and Innovation

STEMming the Gap

Gender Justice in STEM Research in Africa (GeJuSTA) is a collaborative initiative led by the University of Cape Town and funded by the IDRC. The project focuses on amplifying the representation of African women in STEM fields across Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia. Through a combination of research, mentorship, and advocacy for inclusive policies, GeJuSTA seeks to dismantle the barriers women face in pursuing STEM careers. SPIDER contributes by providing mentorship and supporting data collection efforts while integrating theoretical frameworks into the project. As the initiative progresses, its findings will be shared in open-access journals to foster ongoing discussions about gender equity in STEM within the African context.

GeJUSTA Project partners engage in a session to discuss the outcomes and long-term impact of the project within the framework of its theory of change

32% of R&D scientists in sub-Saharan Africa are female.

24% of women in Africa use the internet, compared to 35% globally.

20% of all scientists and engineers in Africa are women.

29% of artificial intelligence (AI) workers in Africa are women.

In the GeJuSTA project, we introduced the concept of STEM performativity while exploring the challenges and opportunities for women in STEM. This concept shows how African women in STEM balance the demands of being professionally competent with the social expectations of femininity. Instead of fitting into fixed roles, they continuously adjust their behaviour in response to cultural expectations, workplace norms, and global standards.

Dr. Caroline Wamala Larsson

Innovating for Equality

EQUALS-EU is focused on promoting gender inclusion in innovation systems. In 2023, the project marked meaningful progress, with SPIDER producing influential reports on gender equity within innovation and collaborating with global entities like the ITU. As part of its commitment, SPIDER contributed to the Summer School, an initiative designed to equip young women with the tools necessary to launch tech startups. The project garnered attention at significant events, including the WSIS23 Forum and the UK Parliament, where SPIDER shared its policy recommendations. This helped shine a spotlight on ongoing effort to bridge the gender gap in tech.

Janet Mulu (right) and her teammate Priscilla Eunita Okutoyi, pose for a photo during the pitch-off session at the final week of the EQUALS-EU Summer School.
Photo by: EQUALS-EU/Sandra Guaita

After earning my first degree in tech, I initially missed the chance to pursue a career in the field. This sparked my curiosity about the intersection of business and technology and how I could contribute to shaping innovations that position tech as a force for good. Connecting with mentors who share a deep passion for technology has only strengthened my enthusiasm for this dynamic field.

99

Janet Mulu I.T.S,
one of the three winners of the Summer School pitch-off session

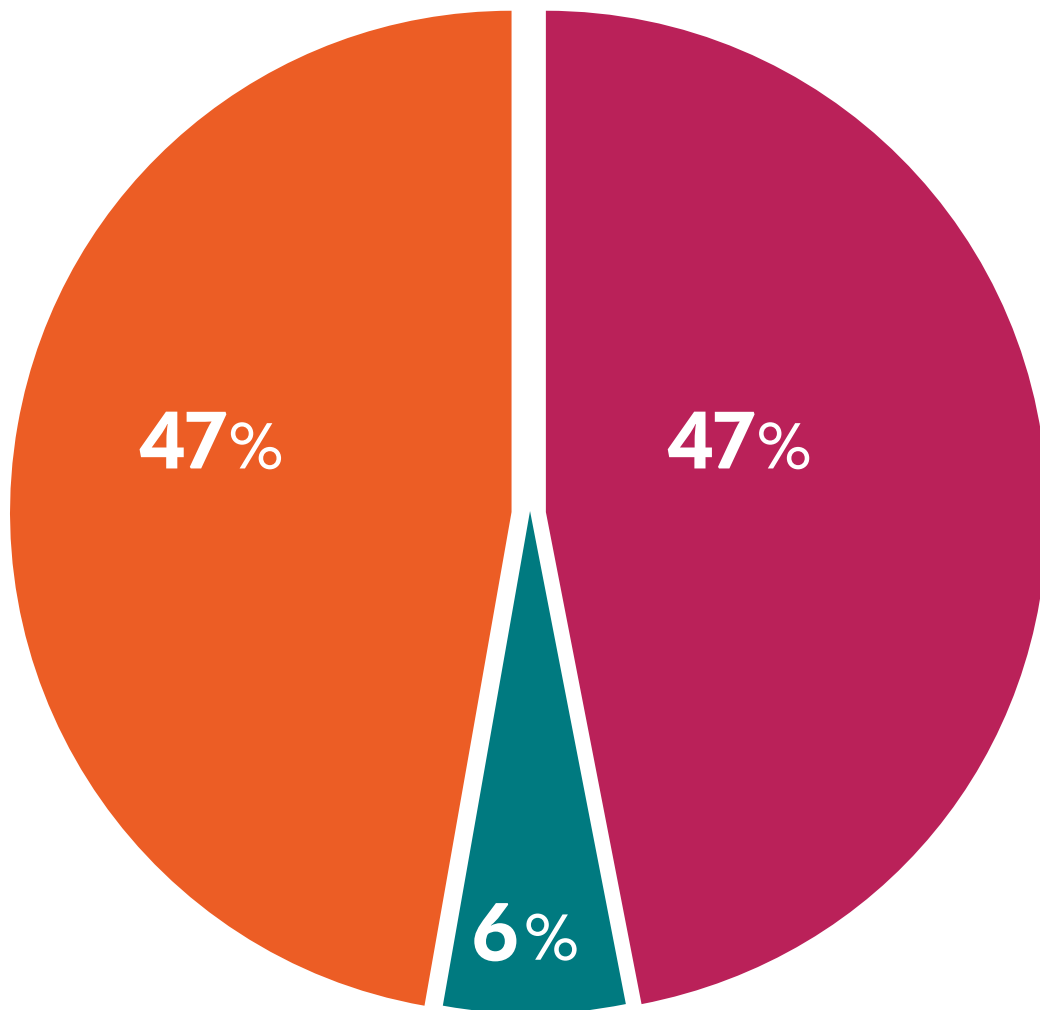# Looking Forward: SPIDER's Vision for 2024 and Beyond

As SPIDER enters the next phase of its strategy, we are driven by a commitment to advancing inclusive digitalisation and addressing global challenges through technology. SPIDER plans to expand its digital health programmes, including the further development of AI-driven health diagnostics in Africa, while increasing efforts to deliver education to underserved communities through the rollout of additional e-learning projects.

In gender equality, SPIDER is deepening its involvement in collaborative initiatives like GeJuSTA and EQUALS-EU, actively working with other projects to foster inclusive digital ecosystems. Rather than only overseeing these initiatives, SPIDER is integral in elevating marginalised groups, including women, from consumers to co-creators in the digital space. By supporting inclusive global STEM movements, SPIDER aims to ensure that underrepresented communities contribute to shaping their digital futures.

Additionally, SPIDER continues to promote transparency and accountability through open data platforms and collaborative governance models, particularly in regions such as Cambodia and the Mekong. In Sub-Saharan Africa, increased investment in capacity-building programmes like iPRIS will empower regulatory bodies to strengthen ICT policies and address digital divides. Working alongside civil society, governments, and private sector partners, SPIDER is dedicated to building sustainable, impactful digital solutions that benefit marginalised populations and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SPIDER remains at the forefront of global efforts to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that digitalisation benefits everyone, especially those in underserved communities. With its comprehensive strategy for 2023-2027 and key projects already underway, SPIDER is well-positioned to continue driving progress in education, health, gender equality, governance, and partnerships. The organisation's adaptability and collaborative approach will be crucial in navigating future challenges and building a more inclusive digital world

2023 Financial Overview

47% **47%**

6%

2023 Funding Sources

Sida   **EU Horizon**   **iPRIS Team Europe Iniative**   **IDRC**