

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **\$100 Billion Investment Agenda: The African Union, GIZ, and Sterling One Foundation Rally Private Sector to Invest in Africa's Women and Youth**

Since its inception in 2022, the [Women and Youth Financial and Economic Inclusion \(WYFEI 2030\)](#) Initiative, a key initiative of the [African Women's Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion of African Women 2020-2030](#), has created multi-stakeholder platforms to advance targeted financial inclusion strategies for African women and youth. A recently concluded high-level convening, organized by the African Union Commission Women, Gender and Youth Directorate in partnership with the Sterling One Foundation and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the GIZ African Union Portfolio, focused on mobilizing private sector capital and expertise. The high-level meeting sought to address persistent financing gaps affecting women and young people.

Held in advance of the Africa Social Impact Summit 2025 (ASIS), the convening emphasized the crucial role of the private sector in unlocking \$100 billion to support at least ten million women and youth in Africa by 2030 as part of the WYFEI 2030. The framework seeks to reform financial products and services, remove regulatory barriers, and expand blended finance models to overcome systemic barriers to capital access.

Ms. Prudence Nonkululeko Ngwenya, Director of the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate at the African Union Commission, set the scene by stressing the need for systemic reform. She stated that "A fundamental shift is needed to place women and youth at the center of resource allocation, policy-making, and accountability". Ms.

Ngwenya further emphasized that "The private sector is not a guest at this table, but a co-owner of the agenda, with WYFEI 2030 designed for co-investment, innovation, and scale to move from isolated impact to ecosystem change".

Echoing this sentiment, Ms. Olapeju Ibekwe, Chief Executive Officer of Sterling One Foundation, underscored that "Inclusion cannot be rhetoric. Women and youth are not peripheral to Africa's economy. Any agenda that sidelines them is simply incomplete. Every day, capital doesn't reach them; opportunity is withheld from the continent". Ms. Ibekwe added that "Partnerships must move beyond alignment and toward shared execution that reflects the realities of Africa's investment landscape."

Dr. Tobias Thiel, Director of GIZ African Union, also highlighted the systemic barriers limiting financial inclusion for women and youth, emphasizing that addressing these challenges is "Both a moral and economic imperative". He called on stakeholders to "Move forward together, with boldness and resolve, to create an Africa where opportunity is truly equal and potential is limitless," reaffirming GIZ's support for the AU's WYFEI 2030 Initiative.

During the convening, a panel discussion featuring public and private sector actors explored ways the private capital can be mobilized to deliver inclusive outcomes. The conversation focused on the structural changes needed to scale early-stage investment into underserved markets, from deal origination to data collection.

The meeting also featured the introduction of the EmpowerHer Africa initiative by Dr. Nadi Albino, Deputy Director of Partnerships at UNICEF. This transformative program aims to create pathways for 50 million adolescent girls and young women across Africa to access financing, technology, and entrepreneurial resources through the WYFEI 2030 Initiative, empowering the next generation of female leaders and innovators.

This private sector dialogue marks the launch of a series of coordinated engagements led by the African Union Commission's Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate, with the Sterling One Foundation anchoring ongoing conversations between public and private actors across the continent. These engagements seek to mobilize strategic partnerships, foster innovative financing solutions, and align policy frameworks that dismantle systemic barriers to women's and youth economic inclusion. By leveraging collective expertise and resources, the initiative aims to drive sustainable impact and scale solutions that will accelerate Africa's inclusive economic transformation.

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