



# 1 Billion Lives Challenge

IMPACT REPORT  
JANUARY 2023



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# Foreword



**Hans Vestberg**  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Verizon; Chairman, EDISON Alliance



**Derek O'Halloran**  
Head, Shaping the Future of Digital Economy and New Value Creation, World Economic Forum

**2.7bn**  
people remain  
offline

The digital divide separates who is part of global society and who is left out.

In January 2021, we convened leaders from the private sector and governments around the world to create the EDISON Alliance. These champions recognize that we cannot move forward as a society unless everyone in the world can participate in a digital future that empowers people to take control of their health, financial well-being and leadership of their communities.

Our founding members, Verizon, Apollo Hospitals, Mastercard, Vista Equity Partners, the Government of Rwanda and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) share the conviction that 21st-century infrastructure should be available to everyone regardless of where they were born or where they live. We made a pact to hold each other accountable to that goal.

Although 95% of the world's population lives in areas covered by a broadband network, 2.7 billion people remain offline.<sup>1</sup> Even among those connected, many struggle with connectivity speeds and cost. There is much work to be done, but by working together, the more than 100

chief executives, ministers, heads of international organizations, civil society leaders, innovators and universities behind the EDISON Alliance can bring the whole world online, and further the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the process.

In September 2021, we launched the 1 Billion Lives Challenge. Our goal is to improve 1 billion lives through affordable and accessible digital solutions across three focus areas – healthcare, education and financial services – by 2025. Verizon is proud to have committed to providing 10 million youths with digital skills training and 1 million small businesses with resources to help them thrive in the digital economy.

With 16 months into our work, we are pleased to share our first impact report, which presents the number of lives improved so far by EDISON Alliance partners. We will update this number in January every year through 2025.

We are proud of the progress made by our partners in the EDISON Alliance and invite you to join our movement and make a commitment to the 1 Billion Lives Challenge so that we can continue to advance digital inclusion around the world.

# Executive summary

The EDISON Alliance is achieving digital inclusion by demonstrating the power of commitment, innovation and collaboration.

Bridging the digital divide is a complex challenge, and the EDISON Alliance believes in the importance of demonstrating it is achievable. Responding to the challenge, the Alliance launched the 1 Billion Lives Challenge in September 2021 and set an ambitious goal: improve 1 billion lives through affordable and accessible digital solutions in three focus areas – healthcare, education and financial services – by 2025.

As such, the core metric is the outcome – a life improved through new adoption of a digital service. Members are requested to make a commitment on the number of lives they aim to positively impact by 2025. Commitments must be backed by credible initiatives. The focus must align with one of the three focus areas above, or tackle one of the three structural barriers: access, affordability and usability.

Many partners have joined the challenge and made sizeable public commitments to improve a quantified number of unique lives. They have recently reported back the progress made against their individual 2025 targets.

Since January 2021, EDISON Alliance partners have positively impacted the lives of 454 million people around the world by activating over 250 initiatives across 90 countries. This represents 45% of the 1 billion target already, with three full years left until 2025.

EDISON partners also reported back on how they have addressed key barriers, such as affordability, usability and accessibility, in different parts of the world.

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# Testimonials

## From our board members



The digital revolution is an empowering force for people and planet, yet billions, especially those most vulnerable populations of societies, remain offline or poorly connected. At UNDP, reimagining how we do development in the digital age has naturally led us to focus on no one being left behind. That is why UNDP became a founding member of the Edison Alliance, and we are very pleased to see how it has accelerated wider adoption of digital inclusion through collective advocacy and country-level initiatives.

Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme, New York



There's an opportunity to bring more people into the digital economy – that makes communities more resilient and grows markets. An important example is the EDISON Alliance. Through partnerships like this, digital tools can benefit everyone, not just a few. It is one more important step in making technology as trusted, accessible and useful as possible.

Michael Miebach, Chief Executive Officer, Mastercard, USA



Rwanda is committed to becoming a cashless economy with 100% financial inclusion for our population by 2025. To achieve this, we are implementing programmes that will ensure that our citizens have access to affordable smart devices and possess appropriate digital skills to harness the benefits of a digital, cashless economy. We invite partners, corporates and governments, within the EDISON Alliance to accelerate their commitments to ensure universal and lasting digital inclusion for 1 billion lives.

Paula Ingabire, Minister of Information Communication Technology and Innovation of Rwanda



Through the Southern Communities Initiative (SCI) powered by Vista Equity Partners, PayPal and the Boston Consulting Group, we are building sustainable infrastructure that can generate a five-times economic return to close racial equity gaps from a \$1.5 billion investment across the six southern communities home to over half of all African-Americans. Since Vista joined the EDISON Alliance, SCI has helped digitally connect 7,000 households in Charlotte, North Carolina, and 10,000 homes across Birmingham, Alabama, and will expand digital services to Historically Black Colleges and Universities in broadband deserts. The private sector must continue to complement the public sector's work if we are to digitally engage one billion people by 2025.

Robert F. Smith, Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Vista Equity Partners, USA



Inspired by the vision of the EDISON Alliance, Apollo Hospitals and ATC joined hands to launch five digital dispensaries in rural Madhya Pradesh, India. Through this partnership, we are bringing quality healthcare services to rural communities and providing them with primary, preventive and speciality teleconsultation services. I urge more organizations and governments to commit to the EDISON Alliance's 1 Billion Lives Challenge and forge similar partnerships.

Shobana Kamineni, Executive Vice-Chairperson, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise, India

## From our champions



In the past year, I saw first-hand how digital finance helped expectant mothers more efficiently receive healthcare during their pregnancies and how innovative insurance products protected rural farmers against climate-related crises during my UN visits to Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. To ensure we scale these positive outcomes, we need continued investment and advocacy in digital infrastructure that enable delivery of services across sectors, beyond finance. We also need to ensure greater connectivity, digital IDs, fair competition, interoperable payment systems, consumer protection, data governance, and digital literacy allow marginalized communities to navigate these services in ways that work for them.

Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA) and Honorary Patron of the G20's Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion

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In 2022, Hewlett Packard Enterprise committed to helping an additional 4 million people access life-saving healthcare by 2025 through our cloud-enabled eHealth centres, COVID labs and vaccination centres. We cannot do this work alone and are honoured to engage with many partners, such as central and state government agencies. I would like to invite more companies and governments to join us in leveraging the potential of technology to increase access to modern, affordable and personalized healthcare.

Antonio Neri, President and Chief Executive Officer, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, USA

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Crescent Enterprises is actively working towards our commitment to the EDISON Alliance 1 Billion Lives Challenge of impacting 100,000 youth in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia region by 2025. As part of this commitment, we have also invested in numerous start-ups that are increasing digital access across the global growth markets, along with empowering disadvantaged communities through financial inclusion, and access to digital health and digital education. While technology is an important tool in addressing global challenges, people are the true catalysts of change – working collectively towards the advancement of humanity and the protection of our planet, we can bridge the digital divide and fully harness the transformative impact of technology.

Badr Jafar, Chief Executive Officer, Crescent Enterprises, United Arab Emirates

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Empowering the next generation by ensuring that every young person has access to a quality internet connection and can acquire the necessary skills to thrive in a digital economy is critical. At Ericsson, we believe firmly in the power of public private partnerships to make lasting difference. This is why we joined the 1 Billion Live Challenge with a twofold contribution. First, we are a proud partner to UNICEF in support of the Giga initiative, which aims to connect every school to the internet by 2030. In addition, we are contributing through our Connect to Learn initiative, committing to support one million young people by 2025 with access to digital learning and skills.

Börje Ekholm, President and Chief Executive Officer, Ericsson, Sweden

## From our champions



The EDISON Alliance recognizes the importance of multistakeholder partnership in empowering people through digital inclusion. As an EDISON partner, ITU supports the 1 Billion Lives Challenge through the ITU/UNICEF Giga initiative to connect every school to the internet, our Partner2Connect connectivity pledging platform, which has already mobilized \$30 billion for digital transformation initiatives around the world, and our work to address access and digital skills for the world's most vulnerable communities.

Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Geneva

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Innovation does not happen in isolation. Through our partnership with Qure.ai, we are proud of our commitment to screen 5 million patients for potential lung cancer by 2025. Moving forward, we aim to deepen our collaboration with members of the EDISON Alliance and expand into more disease areas where scalable digital solutions can make healthcare more affordable, accessible and inclusive for patients in underserved communities around the world.

Leif Johansson, Chairman of the Board, AstraZeneca, Sweden

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Nokia joined the EDISON Alliance because we know digitalization improves lives. Look at El Salvador, where connectivity delivered to homes, schools, business and public services by Nokia is expected to add \$25 billion to GDP, and create up to 1 million jobs, by 2030. Digital means growth, productivity and opportunity – it deserves to be a global priority.

Pekka Lundmark, President and Chief Executive Officer, Nokia, Finland

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Bharti Enterprises and its companies have been consistently working towards improving the lives of 200 million people across 15 countries. With a vision to train, equip and empower unbanked or underbanked users with formal financial services, Bharti's Airtel Payments Bank has created India's largest retail banking network of 500,000 neighborhood banking points, now serving one in six villages in the country. We would encourage more organizations to join the EDISON Alliance's 1 Billion Lives Challenge and commit to fostering collaboration and bridging the digital divide.

Rajan Bharti Mittal, Vice-Chairman, Bharti Enterprises, India

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In 2022, Inmarsat included an additional 270,000 mariners into the digital society and provided communications to disaster impacted regions inhabited by nearly 7 million people. Using space technology to provide connectivity to these populations closes the digital divide, allows displaced people to connect with their families, and addresses welfare issues that are prevalent amongst the maritime community. We commend the EDISON Alliance and the 1 Billion Lives Challenge for their initiative.

Rajeev Suri, Chief Executive Officer, Inmarsat Global, United Kingdom

## From our champions



Through the execution of our Ambition 2025 strategy, we continue to accelerate digital and financial inclusion across the African continent. We have built the largest and most valuable platforms to drive financial services adoption across Africa. Our offerings include wallet, insurance, lending, payments, e-commerce and international remittance enabling Africans to engage in e-commerce activity. Over 62 million people across our markets now access affordable, inclusive and comprehensive financial services through our platforms. I am pleased to confirm that we are on course to reach our Ambition 2025 target of 100 million fintech services users as we, together with all our partners in the Edison Alliance, work towards meeting the 1 Billion Lives Challenge.

Ralph Mupita, Group President and Chief Executive Officer, MTN Group Limited, South Africa

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Inspired by the vision of the EDISON Alliance, Apollo Hospitals and American Tower joined hands to launch five digital dispensaries to provide primary, preventative and specialty teleconsultation services in rural Madhya Pradesh. The lesson of this collaboration is that multistakeholder partnerships have greater impact and encourage more organizations and governments to commit to the EDISON Alliance's 1 Billion Lives challenge. Building this kind of collaborative ecosystem will enable us to bring quality and affordable healthcare to communities in need.

Tom Bartlett, President and Chief Executive Officer, American Tower Corporation, USA

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This year 56% of the beneficiaries of the Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Programme are women entrepreneurs. This is a testament to our commitment to promote gender inclusion in entrepreneurship and democratise luck for all African entrepreneurs. Since the foundation launched the TEF Entrepreneurship Programme, we have disbursed over \$100million to over 18,000 African women and men who have gone on to solve Africa's most pressing challenges. Since 2010, we have championed entrepreneurship as the catalyst for Africa's economic and social growth. Now we are launching our Coalition for African Entrepreneurship, bringing together global and African partners, such as the 1 Billion Lives Challenges, to significantly increase the impact created by our unique platform for accessing, training and funding entrepreneurs across Africa. We look forward to a fruitful partnership with public and private sector players as we have a common goal – a strong, confident, self-reliant Africa.

Tony Elumelu, Chairman, UBA Group, Nigeria

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Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) is proud to be a member of the EDISON Alliance global movement. Our commitment of digital inclusion to reach a million people in disadvantaged communities has been a rallying call within the DOT network of young people and with our partners. We continue to forge new relationships within the Alliance that will contribute to the expansion of mutual impact.

Janet Longmore, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT), Canada

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# Progress overview

The results presented in this report speak not only to the momentum the 1 Billion Lives Challenge has activated in the span of several months, but the seriousness with which governments, businesses, investors and academic institutions are tackling digital inclusion. The commitments originate from large public and private sector organizations supported by over 250 initiatives across 90 countries.

FIGURE 1 1 Billion Lives Challenge progress overview



To date, only 12% of partners have reached at least half of their 2025 target, while 50% of partners have reached less than 20%. The Alliance anticipates a strong uptick in the numbers in the next couple of years as the initiatives supporting commitments continue to build up momentum.



## 2.1 | By Focus Area

FIGURE 2.1 Breakdown of initiatives by focus area

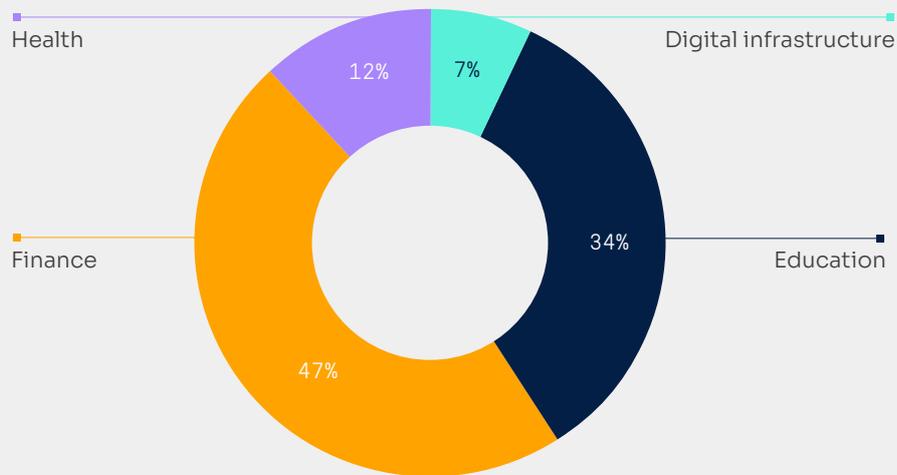
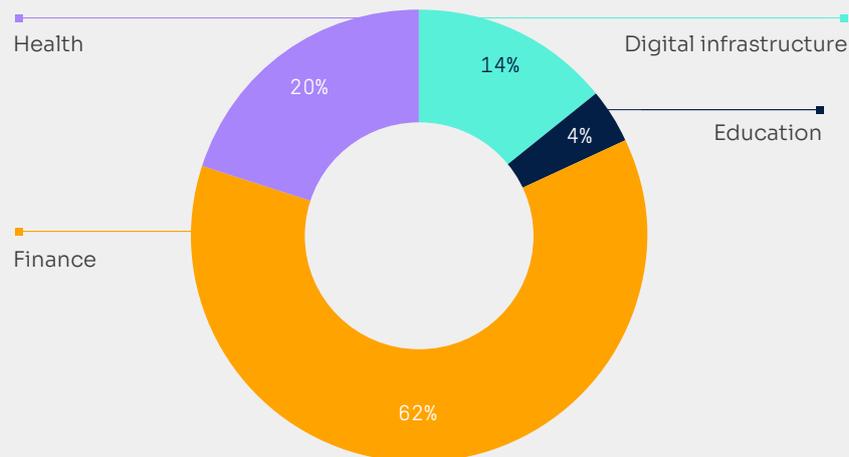


FIGURE 2.2 Breakdown of lives impacted by focus area



- In 2021, 1.4 billion adults were unbanked.<sup>2</sup> EDISON Alliance partners provided 280 million unserved and underserved people with access to digital financial services such as e-banking, mobile wallets and e-payments.
- EDISON Alliance partners brought 90 million people access to digital healthcare services such as remote/connected care, telehealth platforms and telemedicine services.

- In 2021, 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 worldwide were out of school.<sup>3</sup> EDISON Alliance partners enabled 18 million unserved and underserved people and youth to access online quality education, remote learning solutions and job skills training.
- 64 million people benefitted from digital infrastructure investment and deployment.

### Key takeaways

While one-third of the 250+ partner initiatives are pursuing online learning solutions, only 4% of the total number of lives were impacted through online education. The low conversion ratio demonstrates the difficulty and resources needed to offer meaningful services such as online education to underserved communities.

\* Less than 1% of partner initiatives could not be classified into one of these categories.

## 2.2 | By problem solved

FIGURE 3.1 Breakdown of initiatives by type of problem solved

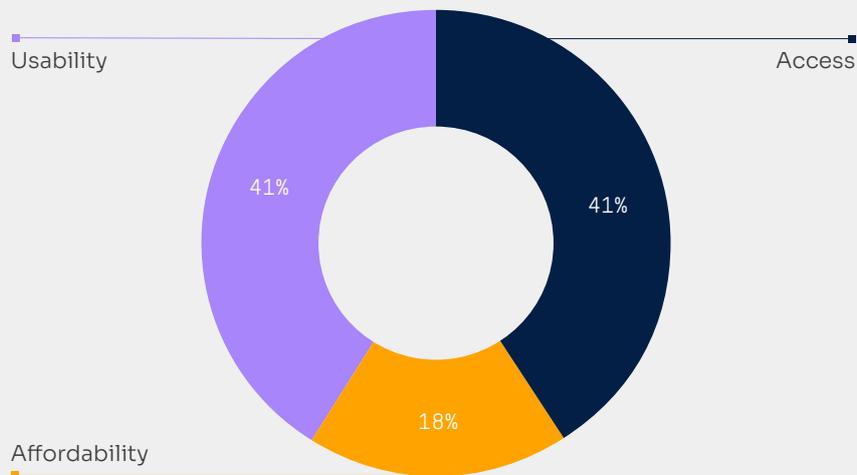
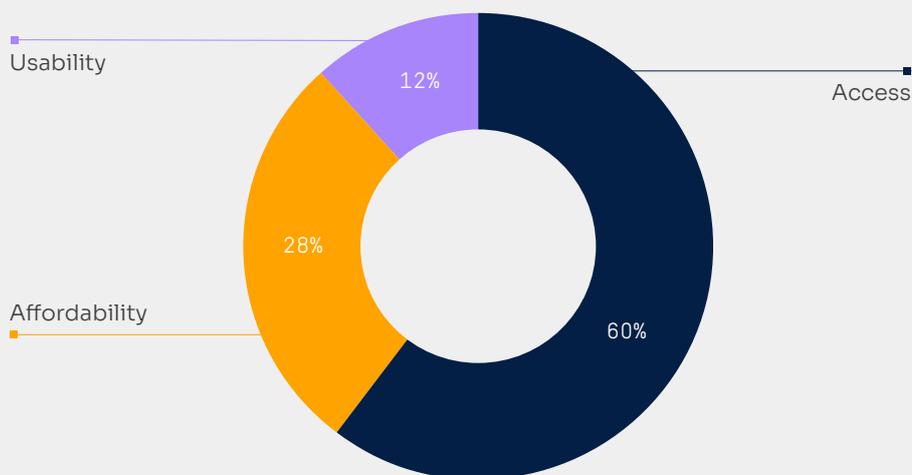


FIGURE 3.2 Breakdown of lives impacted by type of problem solved



- 128 million people benefitted from increased affordability of connectivity and/or digital services (bringing down the cost of fixed and mobile broadband and of internet enabled devices as well as online services).

- 270 million people gained access to connectivity or digital services.
- 52 million people were given access to digital skills training, and/or relevant content to connect and use digital services.

### Key takeaways

- Digital literacy is a key priority, well covered by partner initiatives (40% of initiatives are aimed at increasing digital literacy), but it also requires time, capital and effort, which explains why only 11% of the total number of lives were impacted through digital skills training at this stage.
- One of the key barriers to closing the digital divide, which remains underappreciated, is affordability.

\* Less than 1% of partner initiatives could not be classified into one of these categories.

## 2.3 | By geography

FIGURE 4.1 | Lives impacted by country and region\*

### By country



### By region



### Ranking by country with most lives impacted by EDISON partners\*

1. India	6. USA	11. Malawi	16. Tanzania
2. Bangladesh	7. Zambia	12. Peru	17. Kenya
3. Pakistan	8. Myanmar	13. China	18. Morocco
4. Ethiopia	9. Colombia	14. Philippines	19. Malaysia
5. Indonesia	10. Uganda	15. Dominican Republic	20. Viet Nam

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, GeoNames, Microsoft, Navinfo, OpenStreetMap, TomTom

#### Key takeaways

- The two regions with most lives improved by EDISON partners are South Asia (79% of total) and Africa (10%) and map to the two regions most in need.<sup>4</sup>
- Four out of the five countries with most lives improved are located in South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indonesia). The combined population of these five countries totals over 2 billion people.

FIGURE 4.2 | Number of EDISON partners implementing commitments in country\*



### Ranking by number of EDISON partners implementing commitments in country\*

- |          |                 |             |          |           |
|----------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| 1. India | 3. Kenya        | 5. Ethiopia | 7. China | 9. Zambia |
| 2. USA   | 4. South Africa | 6. Uganda   | 8. UK    | 10. Peru  |

\* Based on data submitted by partners able to report back at the country level.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, GeoNames, Microsoft, Navinfo, OpenStreetMap, TomTom

#### Key takeaways

Out of the 10 countries with most partners activating commitments, two are high-income countries and three are upper middle-income countries.<sup>5</sup> Digital deserts in rural and urban areas and the lack of sufficient connectivity speeds and skills to meaningfully connect are challenges that most countries in the world face, irrespective of GDP levels.

## 2.4 | By key enabler

Partners also reported back on the key levers used to impact lives on the ground. They rank as follows:

1. Capacity development

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2. Commercial partnerships

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3. Non-commercial partnerships

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4. Investment

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5. Policy alignment



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## Call to action and outlook

Inspiring the next wave of partner commitments and initiatives.

The 1 Billion Lives Challenge is open to any organization or initiative that either makes an existing or new commitment to improve a quantified number of lives through digitally inclusive services, or provides a defined, verified, and material resource contribution towards an initiative with a recognized commitment.

The impact on organizations that are choosing to develop targets for the first time is evident, taking inspiration and learning from those that have already done so. Success breeds success; confidence breeds confidence. There are also positive feedback

loops across the network as these commitments and related initiatives build on each other for a more significant impact.

In 2023, EDISON Alliance partners, informed by the learnings and key takeaways comprised in this impact report, will continue to address existing gaps and new ones, leverage the breadth and depth of EDISON's ecosystem of partners to ensure 2025 targets are met, and inspire new industries, governments and organizations to join this global movement.

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# Impact stories

The work of the Alliance is felt all over the world, directly impacting lives and livelihoods.



## IMPACT STORY 01

### Apollo Hospitals: Saving lives in the highest places on earth



Communities living in the farthest reaches of Himachal Pradesh in India struggle to access healthcare and medical emergencies due to a shortage of healthcare professionals, a lack of connectivity, and at 4,267 metres above sea level, the terrain is challenging.

Apollo Tele Health Services (ATHS) set out to transform the way healthcare is delivered to these communities. Along with the Government of Himachal Pradesh, they have set up telemedicine centres in four key areas, trained specialist staff, and harnessed the power of connectivity to bring virtually specialist medical expertise to thousands of people.

- 22,727 tele-consultations have taken place (as of July 2021).
- Attended and stabilized over 1,300 tele-emergency cases
- The centres have achieved a female-male patient ratio of 51:49 – enabling more women to get the healthcare they need.
- More than 4,000 people have enrolled in community outreach programmes offering screening for everything from NCDs to anaemia.

## IMPACT STORY 02

### Government of Bangladesh: Empowering entrepreneurs with access to digital services

Char Kukri Mukri is located in Bhola, the southernmost district of Bangladesh. Disconnected from the mainland, the community finds itself excluded from basic public services, banking and commerce.

a2i, the flagship digital transformation programme of the Bangladesh government, with support from UNDP, set out to transform the way public services are delivered to these communities by setting up one-stop shops known as Digital Centres in all +4,500 union councils.

Whether it is aiding secure social safety net payments, applying for passports, engaging in ecommerce, or

making the most of mobile money, the digital centres have transformed the way people – especially the poor living in remote, rural areas – look at and access services.

- +9,000 micro-entrepreneurs have delivered more than 700 million services to over 60 million Bangladeshis since 2010.
- Aggregated, citizens of Bangladesh have saved more than \$16 billion, nearly 12 billion workdays and 7.5 billion visits in the last decade due to the more efficient delivery of public services alone.

## IMPACT STORY 03

### Verizon: Inspiring students with tech innovations

Millions of students in the US lack the connectivity, technology and skills required for success in today's digital economy. Verizon Innovative Learning helps school districts, teachers and students use technology to improve learning outcomes and to incorporate STEM topics and training into curriculum. Through online resources, distance mentorships, collaborations with other non-profits and in-person events,

Verizon provides schools with resources to teach digital skills and support STEM education.

In the 2021-2022 school year, Verizon signed up more than 500 schools nationwide for its Innovative Learning programme. It has impacted more than 650,000 students, investing nearly \$1 billion since the start of the programme.

## IMPACT STORY 04

### Digital Opportunity Trust: Preparing youth for the future of work with digital skills



Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) created the Digital Skill Programme to bridge the digital divide and enhance young women and men's employability, digital engagement, and reach the most vulnerable and unserved in Jordan - where the internet penetration rate stood at 66.8% of the total population at the start of 2022 and mobile connections were equivalent to 78% of the total population. Additionally, mobile phone ownership sits around 21%

The programme is curated to provide a wide range of digital skills training, in basic digital literacy microwork, data management, design and social media management, website development, e-commerce, programming and mobile application development.

Since launching, the Digital Skills Programme has led to more youth being prepared for jobs of the future with digital skills.

- 3,933 participants have completed or are in the process of completing the Digital Skills Programme.
- 5,337 training opportunities have been provided to youth.
- 1:100 trainer to community member participant ratio - enabling 1 young trainer to empower 100 community members with digital skills for work.
- 72% of participants identifying as women worked towards bridging the gender digital divide for young women and girls.
- 40 trainers, 15 identifying as women, worked towards delivering programmes and ensuring women and girls are included and feel safe.
- 100% of content delivered in local languages and co-designed with young people.

# Appendix

## Methodology

The EDISON Alliance has gathered numerous commitments. However, tangible impact has always been the main priority for EDISON Alliance partners. The EDISON Alliance implemented a yearly commitment reporting exercise to measure impact on the ground and report progress against our collective 2025 target.

## What were partners asked to report back on?

Partners were asked to report back on:

- The total number of lives improved, based on each partner's latest reported numbers
- If the information was available, a breakdown by KPI: lives impacted by geography, focus area, problem being solved (i.e., usability, affordability, access) and key enablers

## How is progress tracked?

All data comprised in this report was submitted by EDISON Alliance partners.

Every organization and initiative have their own mechanisms for tracking and measuring the progress of their programmes; partners were relied on to track and share their progress. The EDISON Alliance wants to hold itself accountable to the aggregate impact of 1 billion lives. Therefore, we have mapped each partner's reporting process to understand what they are tracking, and how and when they are reporting progress.

To avoid force fitting a unique reporting calendar on partners, we built in flexibility for partners to report back numbers based on their own reporting cycles and availability of data provided. While collective progress will be communicated once a year at the Annual Meeting in Davos, partners follow tailored and individual reporting cadences, which remain the same year on year.

## Key considerations:

- Lives impacted before the launch of the EDISON Alliance in January 2021 are not included in reporting numbers.
- Since commitments are usually an aggregation of several digital inclusion initiatives, partners were asked, after consultations, to report back at the initiative level.
- No individual partner data is shared externally, only aggregated and collective progress.

## How have you managed potential double counting of lives?

In collaboration with partners, we eliminated or reduced possible double counting if:

- Lives were counted more than once within the same initiative; we are counting unique beneficiaries and not counting usage and the number of clicks or calls.
- Lives were counted across more than one initiative within the same focus area; for example, if a student used two separate online learning platforms (education focus area) included in the same commitment.
- Lives were counted by more than one partner. In the case where two partners have made separate commitments but a subset of their commitment includes a partnership, we have avoided counting numbers twice.

Ultimately, we want people using multiple digital services. This means there is meaningful collaboration and resources from more than one organization going into building a sustainable ecosystem and delivering a rich set of meaningful services for individuals.

# Contributors

## World Economic Forum

### **Claude Dyer**

Community Lead, World Economic Forum

### **Derek O'Halloran**

Head, Digital Economy and New Value Creation,  
World Economic Forum

### **Lisa Meng**

Programme Head, Digital Inclusion, World  
Economic Forum

# Endnotes

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**World Economic Forum**  
91–93 route de la Capite  
CH-1223 Cologny/Geneva  
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 (0) 22 869 1212  
Fax: +41 (0) 22 786 2744  
contact@weforum.org  
www.weforum.org