



A Ladder of Opportunity: Unlocking Jobs for the Poor

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The Context:

We are faced with overlapping global crises that disproportionately affect poor and vulnerable people.



In 2020, the **COVID-19 pandemic** increased the number of people in extreme poverty to nearly 700 million.



Food insecurity has affected an additional 150 million people following the COVID-19 pandemic.



Up to 122 million more people may fall into extreme poverty by 2030 due to **climate change**.



By 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor people may live in settings of **fragility, conflict, and violence**.

The Jobs Challenge:

Over the next decade, there will be an estimated shortfall of approximately 300 million jobs in the Global South.



Today, **around 400 million people are unemployed**, with women and those in low- and middle-income countries struggling the most.



By 2033, the **Global South** will host 1.2 billion people ages 15 to 24. However, unless current trends are reversed, only 480 million will attend school and 420 million will have jobs, leaving **300 million inactive**.



Informal sector “jobs” are often the most accessible economic opportunities for the poor and vulnerable.

A Solution:

Economic inclusion programs can unlock the productive potential of the poorest, increasing their incomes and assets in a sustainable way.



Economic inclusion programs are **multidimensional** and **coordinated** interventions that expand on **cash transfers** by incorporating additional support such as **skills training, business capital, coaching, and market access.**



This **layered approach** creates **pathways out of poverty** for the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and youth, by breaking down barriers to economic participation and strengthening resilience to shocks.

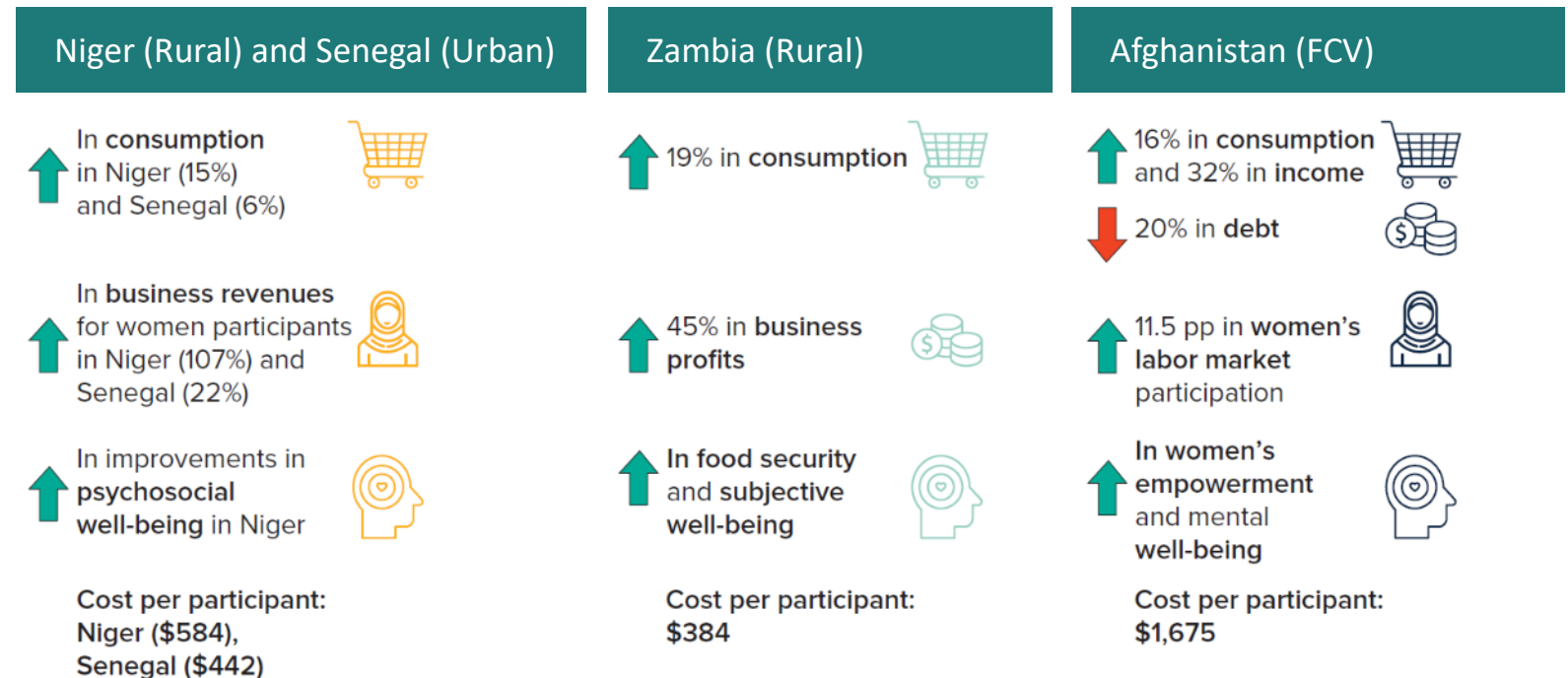


These programs enable people living in poverty to **create their own jobs through self-employment**, such as small-scale or microenterprises, non-farm work, and other livelihood activities, and **connect them to markets.**

Do they work?

Economic inclusion programs are widely tested with impact evaluations of 80+ programs in over 35 countries.

- **Yes!** They have a significant **impact on food security, consumption, income, and women's empowerment.**
- Impacts are **sustained** and sometimes even increase over time.
- These programs are also **cost-effective** and **high-return investments.**

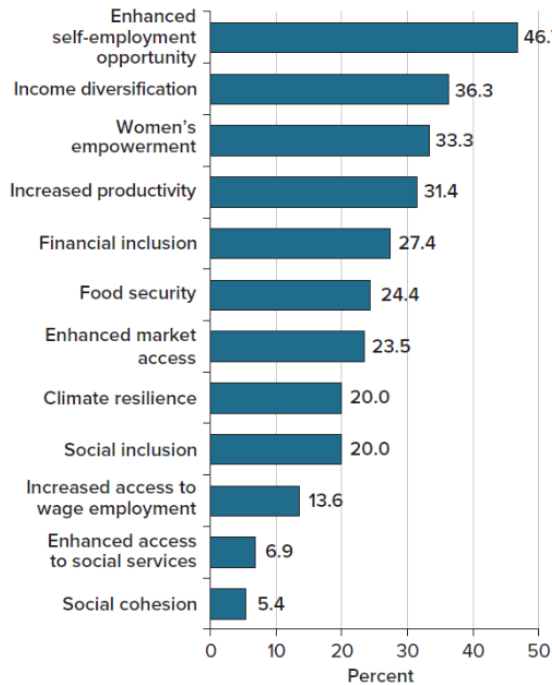


Sources: Bossuroy et al. 2022, 2024; Botea et al. 2023; Bedoya et al. 2023.
Note: FCV = fragility, conflict, and violence; pp = percentage points.

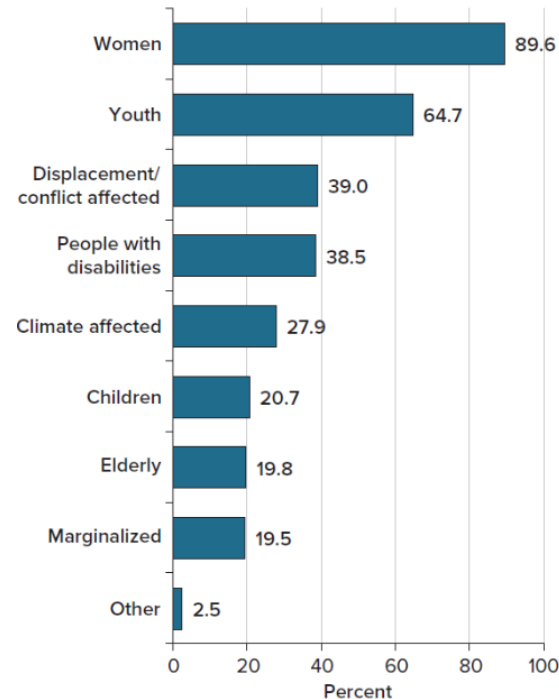
How do they work?

Programs customize the package of support based on policy objectives, constraints and vulnerability of target groups, and local context

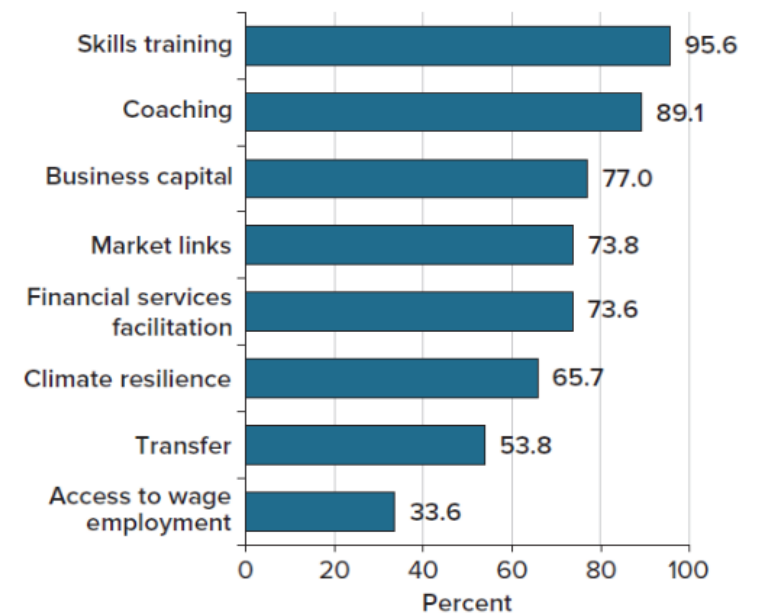
Multiple policy objectives



Diverse vulnerable groups



Program components



Source: Partnership for Economic Inclusion, World Bank.

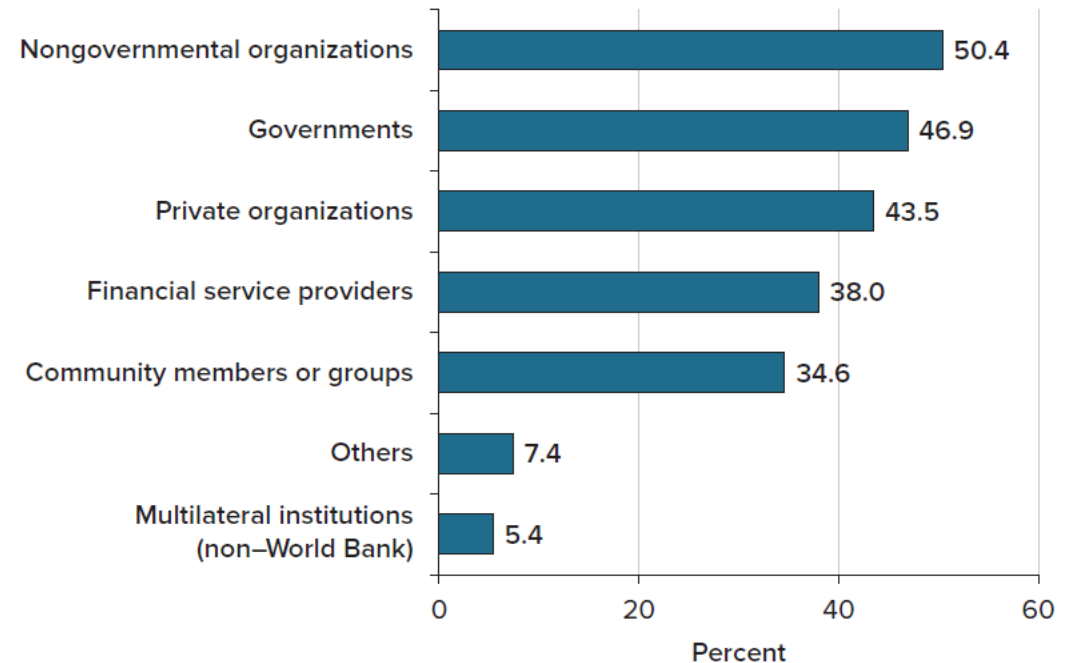
- More than 81 percent of programs include over 5 components.

How do they work?

Collaboration and partnerships are key for program quality

- **81 percent of all programs** (91 percent of government-led programs) collaborate with external agencies to deliver program components.
- **NGOs provide important critical services to enable governments to scale up** programs, especially in low-capacity contexts.

Programs with external organizations involved in service delivery



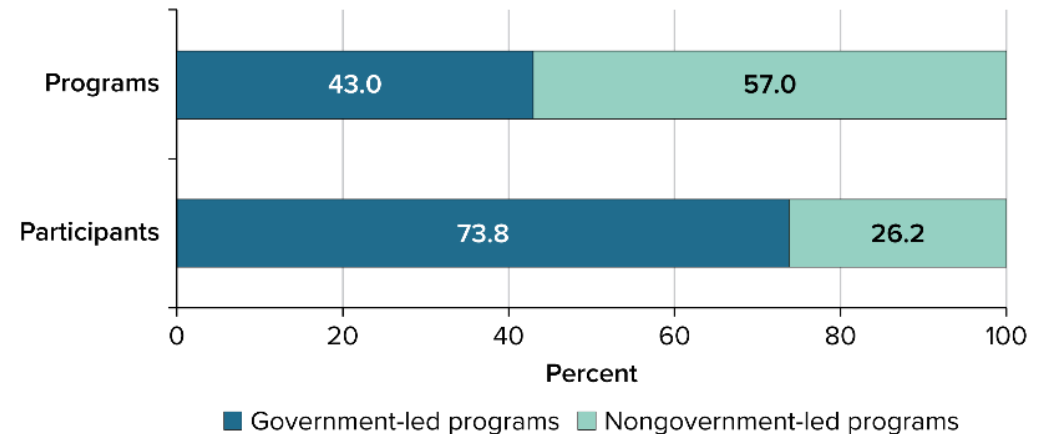
Source: Partnership for Economic Inclusion, World Bank.
Note: Percentage of all programs (N=405).

A Call to Action

The number of economic inclusion programs has doubled since 2021, yet they reach only 10 percent of the 700 million people living in extreme poverty.

- 405 programs in **88 countries** compared to 219 programs in 75 countries in 2021.
- Coverage increased by 50 percent, now reaching **15 million households** and benefiting over **70 million individuals**, directly or indirectly, globally.
- **Governments** still lead the scale-up of coverage of economic inclusion programs.
- However, **most programs remain small** reaching less than 1 percent of poor people.
- Expanding coverage must prioritize the inclusion of the **most marginalized** and **hard-to-reach populations**.

Government-led programs account for most program participants



Source: Partnership for Economic Inclusion, World Bank.

What's next?

Scaling economic inclusion programs requires replicating successful approaches *while adapting them to local contexts.*



Enabling conditions

- Sustainable **financing**
- Implementation capacity including **delivery systems**
- Stronger **coordination** among stakeholders
- Political support and **integration** in national policies



Quality of design and implementation

- **Diagnostics** to inform tailoring and sequencing of program components
- **Continuous monitoring** of participant progress, making real-time adjustments, and refining program design
- **Case management** to improve targeted interventions and delivery systems

What's next?

The next generation of economic inclusion programming should focus on enhancing the sustainability of their impacts.



Enhance sustainability of impacts by:

- Integrating participants into markets and value chains with a **stronger private sector involvement**.
- Offering time-bound support with referrals to additional services as needed to **bridge the gap** between social assistance, economic inclusion, and labor and social insurance programs.
- Embedding programs in government policies and systems and establishing **long-term funding mechanisms** for program continuity.
- Retaining **flexibility in design** to address climate-related shocks and broader development challenges.

What's next?

Building climate resilience is the next frontier for economic inclusion programming.



Improve climate resilience by:

- **Adapting existing components**, including anticipatory cash transfers, climate-smart agriculture training, and green entrepreneurship activities.
- **Introducing new components** including climate risk insurance, payment for ecosystems, and low-cost green technology.
- **Enhancing collaboration** across ministries, international organizations, and NGOs and private sector implementers in social protection, agriculture, and environment sectors.

What's next?

Outcomes for women and youth can be strengthened through more intentional design and delivery.



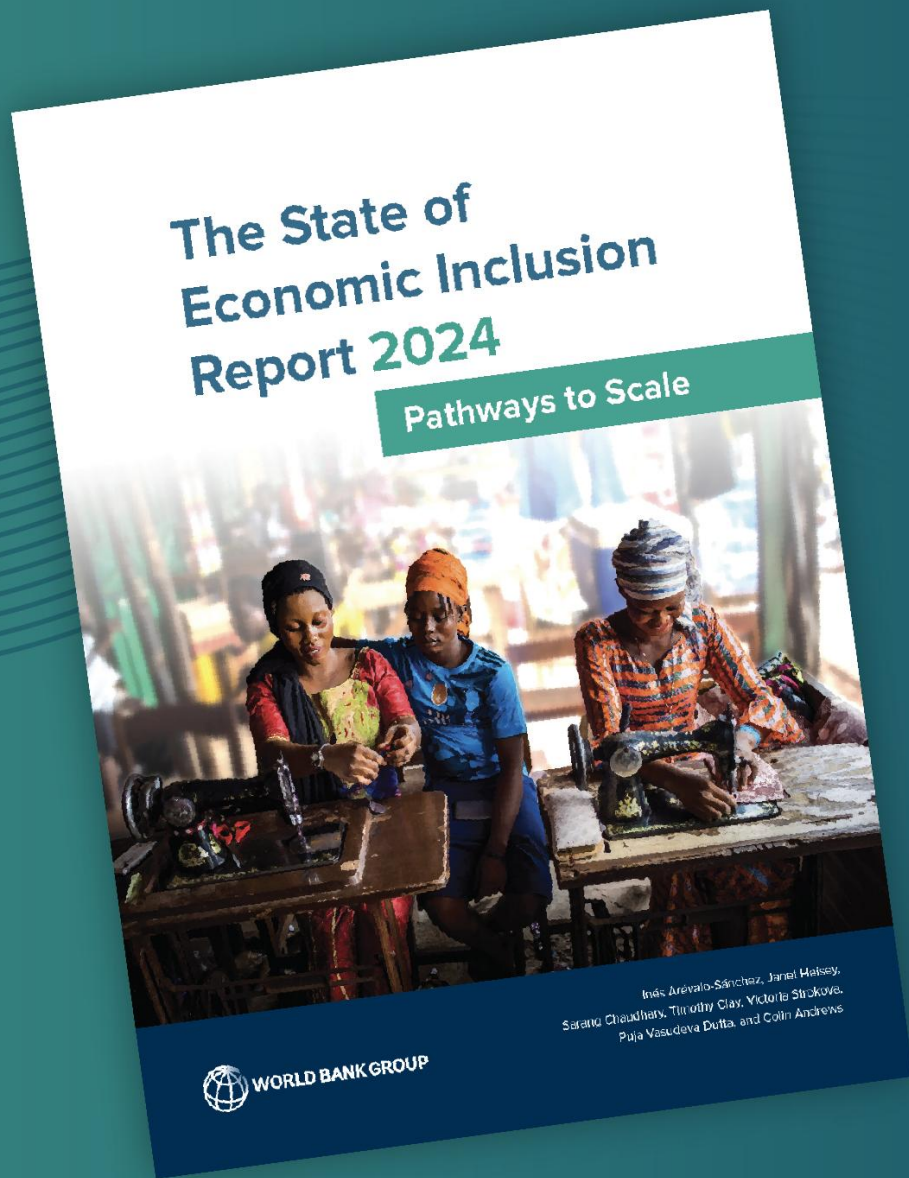
Adopting gender-sensitive designs that address the unique needs of women.

- **Address social norms** and adapt program activities to fit women's schedules and needs.
- Include measures to **reduce unpaid care work**, which limits women's economic opportunities.
- **Engage at the policy level** to leverage supportive frameworks and address legal barriers to women's participation.



Strong partnerships and engaging with employers to help boost youth employment.

- **Promote self-employment** where labor demand is low.
- **Expand wage employment** through targeted training, job placement services, and referrals.
- **Address barriers** such as skills mismatches, employer biases, and regulations.



The State of Economic Inclusion Report 2024

Pathways to Scale



Featuring data from 405 programs across 88 countries



Special focus on climate-resilient economic inclusion



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The background image shows two individuals wearing full-body white protective suits and face shields, working with a large orange container. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an indoor or shaded outdoor environment. The overall color palette is dominated by the white of the suits, the orange of the container, and the dark blue/green background.

Landscape of Economic Inclusion Programs in East Asia and Pacific Region

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Economic inclusion programs in EAP are small-scale, leaving significant gaps in coverage.



There are **16 programs across 8 countries in the EAP region**, making up only **4 percent** of all surveyed programs globally.



297,039 people benefit from economic inclusion programs, with majority of the programs covering **less than one percent of the people living in poverty** in the region.



63 percent of the programs are **government-led**, yet they represent only 15 percent of participants, reflecting **smaller scale operations**.



56 percent of programs **do not target by poverty**, which is high compared to other regions.

NGO-led programs account for most of the participant coverage.

Top five programs in EAP by cumulative participants

Program Name	Country	Lead type	Cumulative participants
Transform	Philippines	Non-government	320,000
Livelihood Enhancement and Association of the Poor (LEAP) Project	Cambodia	Government	11,312
Strengthening Rights and Economies of Adat and Local Communities	Indonesia	Non-government	8,805
Entrepreneurship-focused Socioemotional Skills for the Most Vulnerable Youth in Rural Mongolia	Mongolia	Non-government	6,114
Prevail	Philippines	Non-government	5,915

Source: Partnership for Economic Inclusion, World Bank.

Programs provide tailored solutions to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.



Market-oriented interventions as the core focus

- Most programs operate in a mix of urban or peri-urban and rural areas, with a strong focus on **market linkages, income diversification, and productivity improvement** as core objectives.



Climate resilience and women's economic empowerment

- 4 out of 16 programs prioritize **climate resilience** as a core objective and target climate-affected populations.
- Only 3 programs include **women's economic empowerment (WEE)** as a core objective, but 14 programs **target women**.



Collaboration and digital tools in program service delivery

- All 16 programs reported that an **external organization** supports program delivery.
- 14 programs use **digital technology**, especially for monitoring and evaluation.

The potential to scale is significant as the current coverage does not adequately meet the needs of the poor.

- Given the unmet need, **scaling government-led programs** can significantly enhance the reach and impact on the poor.
- Providing **targeted and differentiated support** to the most vulnerable can ensure that no one is left behind.
- Women's empowerment should be prioritized by ensuring a **gender-sensitive program design** to address economic and social constraints.
- Strengthening **climate resilience strategies** in programming can address a critical gap in the region, especially for vulnerable people affected by environmental changes.

PEI's Data Portal



Landscape Data provides a global overview of economic inclusion programs, with key design and implementation details.



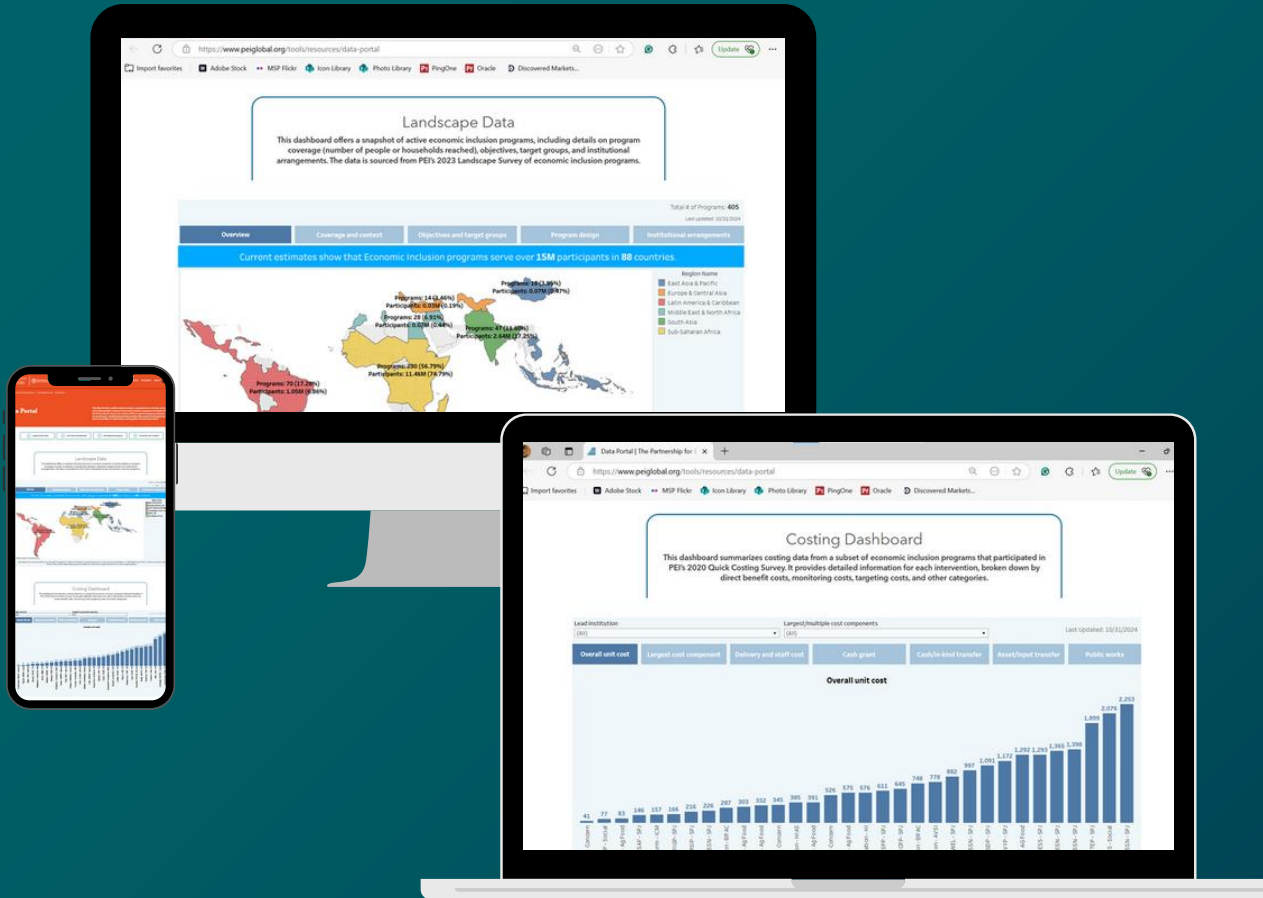
Costing Dashboard is available for select programs.



Country Factsheets offer snapshots of the economic inclusion landscape in each country where programs operate.



Program Factsheets offer a brief overview of the core characteristics of programs.



Scan to explore the
Data Portal