



G20
SOUTH AFRICA 2025



Solidarity

Equality

Sustainability



SOUTH AFRICAN RESERVE BANK

Committee on Payments
and Market Infrastructures



Invisible Senders:

Gendered Challenges in Cross-Border Payments in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Background & Context

- SSA receives \$50B+ in annual remittances, exceeding FDI.
- Remittances support households: consumption, education, healthcare, micro-enterprises.
- SSA is the costliest region for remittances (8% vs SDG 3% target).
- Global reforms (G20, FSB, BIS) focus on cost, speed, transparency, but equity is overlooked.

Problem Statement

Despite reforms, women remain disproportionately excluded.

Women are central: migrant workers, traders, caregivers.

Barriers: lower phone ownership, ID gaps, low digital literacy, mobility restrictions.

Preference for informal channels: trust, discretion, immediacy.



The background is a dark blue gradient. On the left, there is a vertical strip with a repeating geometric pattern of triangles and diamonds in red, yellow, and black. On the right, there are abstract, flowing lines in light blue and orange, along with a cluster of small white dots forming a grid-like shape.

Research Gap

Efficiency $\neq$ Equity.

KPIs track averages but ignore gendered exclusion.

National/regional projects rarely embed gender.

Women's needs remain invisible in modernization efforts.



Study Objectives

Document women's experiences across 3 corridors.

Analyze structural, technological, and socio-cultural barriers.

Examine persistence of informal channels.

Propose gender-sensitive reforms.

Reframe G20/FSB roadmap through a gender equity lens.

Conceptual Framework

- Access: IDs, devices, agent networks.
- Trust: security, discretion, familiarity.
- Agency: household decision-making power.
- Intersection shapes women's adoption of formal systems.

•Methodology

- Mixed methods: quantitative (Findex, GSMA, Remittance DB, ID4D) + qualitative (80 interviews/FGDs).
- Focus on land borders where grassroots remittances happen.



Key Findings – Structural Barriers

Non-interoperable IDs and SIM registration.

Dual KYC requirements across jurisdictions.

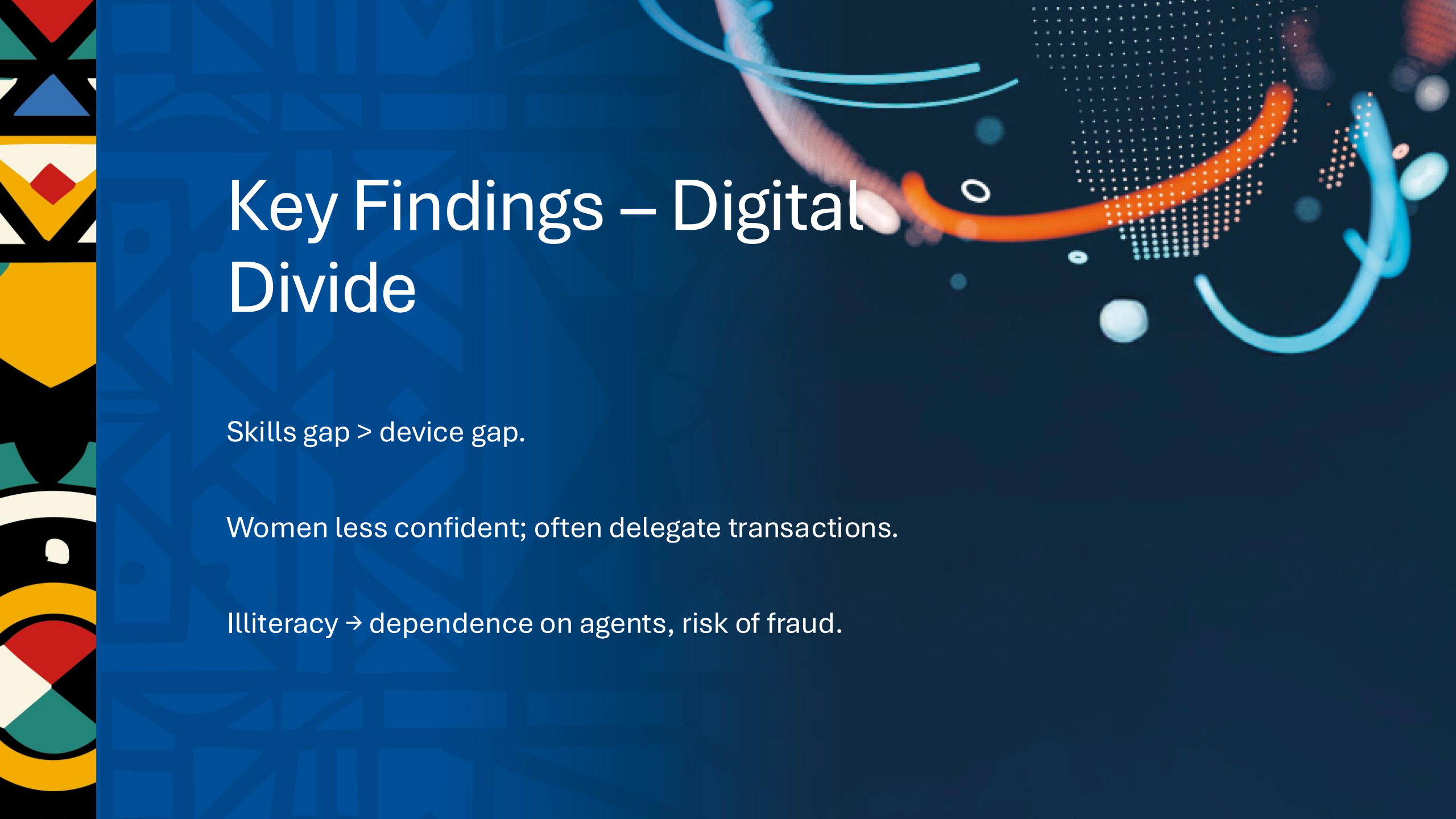
Foreign exchange controls push reliance on informal exchangers.

Example: Guinean IDs not accepted in Liberia → reliance on couriers.

Mobility restrictions and insecurity limit women's access.

Household power dynamics: men control remittances.

Trust and safety concerns reinforce informal systems.



Key Findings – Digital Divide

Skills gap > device gap.

Women less confident; often delegate transactions.

Illiteracy → dependence on agents, risk of fraud.

The background features a dark blue field with a subtle geometric pattern of triangles and squares. On the left, a vertical strip contains a series of colorful geometric shapes (red, yellow, black, green) in a repeating pattern. On the right, there are abstract, flowing lines in light blue and orange, some with a dotted texture, and several small white and blue circles.

Informal vs Formal Channels

Informal = faster, cheaper, more trusted.

Women's tontines and savings groups as resilience mechanisms.

Hybrid use: formal for small transfers, informal when barriers high.

Policy & Practice Implications

- Regulatory reforms: tiered KYC, gender-sensitive ID systems.
- Product design: recruit female agents, simplify onboarding, women-centric products.
- Data agenda: mandate gender-disaggregated reporting.
- Financial education: targeted campaigns, peer-to-peer models.
- Partnerships: central banks, MNOs, women's cooperatives.

Alignment with G20 Roadmap

- Targets: cheaper, faster, transparent, inclusive payments by 2027.
- SSA lessons: digital-first, gender-sensitive, evidence-driven reforms.
- Build on trust networks, not just infrastructure.

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Why Focus on Land Borders?

Primary channels for cross-border movement and remittances in SSA.

Heavily used by women traders, refugees, and informal workers.

Airports and seaports mainly serve formal businesses and higher-income travelers.

Land borders capture grassroots realities of financial flows.

Insights here are critical for inclusive, gender-sensitive policies.

Conclusion

- Infrastructure ≠ Inclusion.
- Women face layered exclusion: ID, literacy, mobility, norms.
- Holistic reforms: regulatory, social, technological.
- Gender-sensitive approaches unlock full developmental impact of remittances.

Conceptual Framework: Access–Trust–Agency

Access

Trust

Agency



Comparison: Informal vs Formal Channels

Attribute	Informal Channels	Formal Channels
Trust	High (family/community)	Medium–Low
Speed	Immediate–1 day	1–3 days
Cost	Negotiated, often low	Regulated fees
Discretion	High	Low (KYC required)

Call to Action

1

Embed gender equity in modernization of payments.

2

Strengthen cross-border regulatory harmonization.

3

Scale inclusive financial products & education.

4

Align reforms with G20/FSB 2027 roadmap for equity.



DISCUSSION QUESTION AND ANSWER

