



APAC Cybersecurity Fund



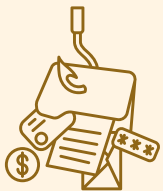
The Asia Foundation

DIGITAL GROWTH, UNEQUAL RISKS

Strengthening Cyber Resilience for Women-Led MSMEs

Overview:

Women-led MSMEs across Asia-Pacific are rapidly adopting e-commerce and social commerce platforms to expand market reach and participate in the digital economy. This transition enables growth but also exposes businesses to heightened cyber risks, including scams, fraud, impersonation, and account compromise. Structural constraints such as limited access to finance, reliance on informal channels, and lower access to cybersecurity tools increase vulnerability.



Account takeover due to weak authentication and phishing



E-commerce scams: fake buyers, fraudulent payments, and non-delivery

Key Risks



Business Email Compromise (BEC) and supplier impersonation



Social media impersonation and brand/reputation attacks



Gendered online harassment affecting business continuity

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Why Women-Led MSMEs Are More Exposed

- **Heavy reliance on social commerce** platforms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp)
- **Limited capital to invest** in secure systems and tools
- Digital skills gaps and **lower access to training**
- **High dependence on personal accounts** to run business operations

Strengthening Cyber Resilience Across the Ecosystem

Addressing these risks requires coordinated action across MSMEs, digital platforms, and policymakers. Building safer digital ecosystems will depend on both stronger individual cyber practices and more responsive institutional support systems.

Recommendations



FOR MEDIUM, SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISES (MSME)

- Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) on all accounts
- Use trusted payment platforms and avoid informal transactions
- Regularly update systems and back up data
- Build awareness of scams and phishing attacks



PLATFORMS & FINANCIAL PROVIDERS

- Strengthen seller verification and account protection
- Provide real-time alerts and fraud detection systems
- Ensure fast account recovery and customer support
- Remove fake listings and impersonation accounts



FOR GOVERNMENTS & POLICYMAKERS

- Provide subsidies for cybersecurity tools for MSMEs
- Improve reporting and redress mechanisms for cyber fraud
- Integrate cybersecurity into MSME development programs
- Strengthen cross-border cooperation to combat scams

Call to Action

Cybersecurity is foundational to inclusive digital growth. Protecting women-led MSMEs requires coordinated action across governments, platforms, and financial systems. Embedding security into digital ecosystems will ensure that e-commerce remains a pathway to opportunity rather than a source of risk.



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Learn more about how digital adoption is shaping women-led MSMEs across Asia and the Pacific, driving business growth and inclusive opportunities while highlighting urgent cybersecurity gaps.

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