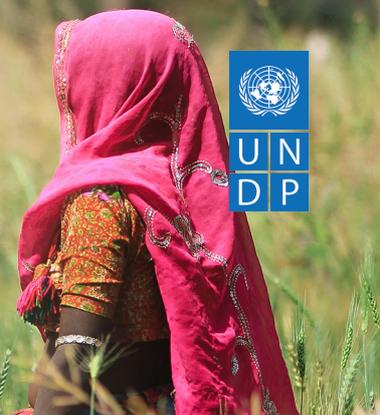


EWASME PROJECT: EMPOWERING WEST AFRICAN WOMEN SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN RICE VALUE CHAINS



OVERALL OBJECTIVE:

To **reduce** poverty, **increase** food security, and **empower** women in rural areas while **improving** the competitiveness of local rice value chains.

GEOGRAPHICAL REACH:

4 countries: Guinea, Niger, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.



TECHNICAL PARTNERS:

- EWASME activities will complement and leverage the Islamic Development Bank's Regional Rice Value Chain Programme (RRVCP).
- In consultation with the government and IsDB, the Ministry of Agriculture in each country will be identified to play the role of coordinating agency.
- Local technical partners (e.g.; NGOs) will be identified to conduct activities in each country under the supervision of the UNDP national offices.
- The financial institutions (commercial banks and MFIs) (FIs) working with the RRCVP and beyond will be engaged in EWASME to serve as the custodians of the matching grants. EWASME will also increase these financial institutions gender sensitivity and responsiveness to women owned businesses.

TIMEFRAME:

5 years: 2022 – 2027

FUNDING:



Raised: USD 9.8 Million raised by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) from the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) of the World Bank.



Needs: USD 5 Million. To expand the programme to additional businesses in the same countries or to other countries.

RATIONALE OF THE INTERVENTION

Rice is the most demanded staple food and highest traded food product in West Africa making it not only vital for food security and nutrition but fundamental for economic development, and poverty reduction. The industry is underperforming in part because women, who are a crucial resource face constraints that limit their level and quality of participation. Women in SSA produce 60% to 80% of total output, contribute 60% to 80% of total labor inputs, account for 70% of the distribution and almost 90% of sales. Despite the vital role they play in agriculture and rural enterprises gender-specific obstacles such as lack of access to training and information, access to markets and supply chain linkages and structural barriers that block women's access to land ownership and finance put women at a significant disadvantage and relegate them to peripheral positions with low economic returns.

EXPECTED RESULTS AND EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITIES

The EWASME Project aims to enhance the post-production capacity of at least 1000 Women owned or led Small and Medium Enterprises (500 SMEs) and Very Small Enterprises (500 VSEs) in selected areas of Guinea, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone in the following districts.

Country	Program Locations/districts
Guinea	Dinguiraye, Kouroussa, Sigui, Dubreka, Boké, Boffa and Coyah Wonkifong
Niger	Dosso, Niamey and Tillabery
Senegal	Thies, Kaolack, Fatick, Kolda, Sedhiou, and Ziguinchor
Sierra Leone	Torma Bum and Tonkolili

To do so, the Project will conduct four categories of support activities.

SUPPORT ACTIVITY 1

Improve WSMEs and WVSEs business practices

With an aim to improve WSMEs and WSVEs' productivity and business skills, increase their profits, as well as improve business connections and engagement in larger supply chains, capacity development activities include but are not limited to:

- Targeted technical agricultural training, coaching, and mentoring including exchange visits, and

short-term incubation in more mature agribusinesses;

- 2 Provision of business and management training including the preparation of sound business plans and product, process, or business certifications when relevant

The beneficiaries, especially WVSEs, will be accompanied by agriculture/agribusiness advisors that will work with them to customize sound projects and business plans, as well as identify specific capacity-building needs and prerequisites for their success. For example, WSMEs and WVSEs engaged in rice processing, aggregation, trade and retail will receive training on managerial and business management (quality oversight, fair and competitive business practices, and financial and personnel management) and marketing. WSMEs and WVSEs engaged in trade and retail will receive training and advisory support in business development and social capacity development (partnership development, networking).

SUPPORT ACTIVITY 2

Increase WSMEs and WSVEs' access to finance

The grants will be used mainly for:

- 1 the provision of essential capital assets,
- 2 working capital and relevant services to support the growth and expansion of their enterprises,
- 3 upgrading their products which may be through the introduction of technologies that improve the quality of products and product differentiation, and/or
- 4 improving the efficiency, for example, through reducing costs or increasing delivery.

The minimum size of the matching grant will be calibrated on a country-by-country basis and outlined in the Operational Manual with a maximum:

\$ 9,000 per SMEs	\$ 4,500 per VSE	A flexible matching ratio by the WVSEs would range 50% down to 20%.
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Depending on the income generation capabilities of the WVSEs, the matching contribution might be expressed in cash or in kind.

SUPPORT ACTIVITY 3

Increase WSMEs and WVSEs' access to market

Business linkage activities include industry trade fair participation, mentoring and other match-making activities, as well as encouraging firms to enhance the participation of WSMEs moving up the rice value chain. Suitable partnerships will be facilitated between producers and the market facing actors. The project will promote a range of approaches including linkages with market channels such as modern retail, organized national markets, e-markets, and exporters. The component will strategically invest in strengthening/developing the capacity of value chain actors in marketing aspects by organizing events, exposure visits and branding of local rice, which will improve the visibility of WSMEs' products and market accordingly. By strengthening business linkages and developing internal networks, the project will also help

strengthen the resiliency of the rice value chain and mitigate disruptions in the supply chain.

SUPPORT ACTIVITY 4

Create an enabling environment for the development of WSMEs and WSVEs

The project will address the main regulatory and traditional barriers to the development of women-owned businesses in the rice value chains. This involves community outreach activities and dialogues to raise awareness and understanding on norms and practices that create barriers for women' engagement in entrepreneurial activities. Policy and customary norms representing barriers to women entrepreneurship, such as access to collateral assets (e.g; land) will be identified and disseminated to policy makers at both national and local levels to galvanize a broad support and action for change. Advocacy and other interventions will be conducted by the Program as proactive measures to address the problems identified through the assessment. Furthermore, the project will strengthen financial institutions capacity to serve WSMEs and WSVEs by supporting the design and marketing of financial products more suitable/responsive to their needs. It will also impart staff, especially client-facing staff, with knowledge and skills to provide better support to female clients and entrepreneurs.

Besides, communication and community engagement activities will be conducted to identify barriers to the development of businesses and raise awareness.

A Growth Accelerator Programme

Businesses will be supported by cohorts through a Growth Accelerator Programme. Given the difference in maturity levels, learning curves, and needs of businesses in the ecosystems, beneficiaries will be split in three categories:

- 1 Formal SMEs,
- 2 Very Small Enterprises (VSEs) belonging to cooperatives,
- 3 Informal SMEs that are not part of cooperatives.

Selected by an investment committee, the beneficiaries will benefit from a support package that will combine:

- 1 Capacity development, training and mentorship,
- 2 Matching funding and Enhanced access to finance through local banks aiming to boost finances for beneficiary WVSEs and WSMEs, allowing them to grow and upgrade their businesses, and
- 3 Development of market linkages.

The Programme will be tailored to the needs of each the three categories of beneficiaries identified in order to maximise impact and chances of success.

DONOR

