

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

**United Nations Development Programme
Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa
EWASME (Empowering West African Women- SMEs in the Rice
Value Chains)
31st December 2025**



Reporting Period	1 st January 2025 to 31 st December 2025
Benefactor	Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)
Country	Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Niger
Project Title	EWASME
Project ID (Atlas Award ID) Outputs (Atlas Project ID and Description) Strategic Plan and/or CPD Outcomes	00132142
Implementing Partner(s)	UNDP
Project Start Date ¹	19/12/2022
Project End Date ²	18/12/2027
2025 Annual Work Plan Budget	USD 6 037 673
Total resources required	10,587,700 USD
Transfer/Funds received	• Regular (UNDP) USD 310 000 • Other - Donor (IsDB) USD 5 903 835 ◦ Trust Fund Cost Sharing USD ◦ Thematic Trust Fund C/S 0 USD ◦ Special Activities 0 USD ◦ EU funding 0 USD • Total USD 6 213 835
Remaining budget	USD 5 406 690
UNDP Contact Person	Njoya Tikum Manager, UNDP Sub-Regional Hub for West and Central Africa Dakar, Senegal

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I. Executive summary

During the 2025 reporting period, the EWASME project made substantial progress toward its outputs across Guinea, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone, despite significant delays in operationalizing the matching-grant mechanism. A total of 475 women-owned and women-led SMEs, VSEs and women's groups were fully selected and validated for project support across the four countries, representing 95% of the annual target. Through these enterprises, the project reached an estimated **13,500** direct beneficiaries, of whom **80% were women and 55% youth under 35**, reflecting EWASME's strong contribution to gender equality and youth economic empowerment.

Capacity development activities significantly exceeded expectations. **754 entrepreneurs** predominantly women completed structured training in governance, financial management, business development, marketing, hygiene and quality, and pitching across the four countries. Training methods adapted to low-literacy contexts, notably in Niger and Guinea, helped accelerate learning and adoption of improved business practices. Business plans were completed for nearly all selected enterprises, including 152 validated plans in Niger, 100 business plans co-developed in Senegal, and full diagnostics and coaching for 118 enterprises in Guinea and 100 in Sierra Leone.

Preparatory work for Component B advanced considerably despite donor-level delays. All four countries completed **due diligence with partner financial institutions**, and Senegal, Sierra Leone and Niger progressed to contractual or near-contractual stages for grant management. Guinea adopted a mitigation measure by initiating **direct procurement of equipment** for beneficiaries to avoid further delays.

Market-access interventions strengthened enterprise visibility and income potential. Niger supported **35 women entrepreneurs** to participate in fairs, generating additional revenue. Sierra Leonean beneficiaries showcased their rice products at national events, receiving high-level recognition. Policy and norms-change components progressed, including identification of **16 gender-related regulatory constraints** and the planned recruitment of an NGO to lead social norms activities in Sierra Leone.

Key challenges included the donor freeze on Component B, misaligned SME/VSE eligibility criteria, procurement and payment delays, insecurity in Niger, and climate-related access constraints in Sierra Leone. The project mitigated these issues through revised selection approaches, decentralised delivery, TRAC resource mobilisation, continuous donor engagement, and adaptive field strategies.

As the project enters 2026, priorities include finalizing financial institution contracting, launching grant disbursement, strengthening market-linkage support, deploying social-norms interventions, and conducting the first profitability and job-creation assessments. These steps will enable EWASME to transition from preparation to tangible economic results for women across West Africa.

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II. Background

The **Empowering West African Women Small and Medium Enterprises in Rice Value Chains (EWASME)** project is a five-year, multi-country initiative (2022–2027) implemented by UNDP with financing from the Islamic Development Bank under the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi). EWASME aims to strengthen the competitiveness of local rice value chains by enhancing the technical, financial, and organizational capacities of 1,000 women-owned or led enterprises 500 WSMEs and 500 WVSEs across Guinea, Niger, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. Rooted in the findings of the project's Situation Analysis, EWASME addresses longstanding gender-specific barriers that limit women's economic participation, including restricted access to finance, inadequate post-production technologies, limited market linkages, and socio-cultural constraints such as discriminatory land tenure systems.

The project responds to a critical development challenge: although women perform between 60% and 80% of agricultural labor and dominate post-harvest processing and marketing, they remain disproportionately excluded from value-adding opportunities that drive income growth. At the same time, West Africa continues to face a widening rice supply gap, with self-sufficiency levels ranging from 30% in Niger to 69% in Guinea, and imports exceeding 3.4 million tons in 2021. Strengthening women-led enterprises in the post-production segment is therefore essential for improving food security, raising incomes, and building more resilient national rice systems.

Since the project's inception, the operating environment has continued to evolve. The target countries remain heavily affected by multiple converging crises that heighten economic vulnerability. Inflationary pressures partly linked to global supply chain disruptions and high fuel and fertilizer prices have increased production costs for SMEs. Political instability has persisted in Guinea and Niger, with transitions and sanctions affecting trade flows and financial sector operations. Senegal and Sierra Leone have also experienced episodes of social unrest tied to rising living costs and electoral tensions. Meanwhile, climate-related shocks, including recurrent flooding in Guinea and Sierra Leone and drought in Niger, continue to disrupt production cycles and aggravate the scarcity of quality paddy for processors. These factors reinforce the relevance of EWASME's integrated approach, which combines capacity development, matching grants, business linkage support, and interventions to strengthen the enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship.

III. Progress Review

a. Overview

In 2025, EWASME significantly accelerated implementation, moving from foundational structuring to the delivery of measurable, inclusive and gender-responsive results. Across the

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four participating countries, the project supported 475 women-owned or women-led SMEs, VSEs and women's groups, representing 95% of the annual target, and completed full selection and due diligence processes.

Through these enterprises, the project reached an estimated 13,580 direct beneficiaries, 88 percent of whom are women and 41 percent youth under the age of 35¹. These beneficiaries represent the operational workforce processors, sorters, packagers, transporters, cooperative members, and seasonal workers whose livelihoods and working conditions were directly enhanced by the project's interventions.

In addition, 754 entrepreneurs (about 95 percent women) completed structured training and coaching across Guinea, Niger, Senegal, and Sierra Leone, exceeding the IRRF Year-3 milestone for capacity development (Output 5.1). Progress was substantial in business planning, market access, institutional readiness for grant disbursement, and groundwork for gender-responsive enabling-environment reforms. Despite delays in the operationalization of Component B, corrective measures put in place in 2025 position the project to transition into a results-generating phase in early 2026.

b. Component A - Capacity Development of WSMEs and WVSEs

Regional performance

Component A delivered strong results.

- * 754 women entrepreneurs trained across the four countries, surpassing the Year-3 IRRF target of 500.
- * 475 women-owned enterprises and groups benefited from tailored coaching, diagnostics, or business plan development.
- * 13,580 individuals approximately 88 percent women and 41 percent youth working within these enterprises experienced improvements in governance, financial literacy, production quality, and market practices.

This demonstrates EWASME's systemic effect, where capability improvements in women entrepreneurs translated into strengthened operations for entire teams and cooperatives across the rice post-production chain.

Country highlights

Guinea

¹ Compilation of all direct beneficiaries of the project, i.e; members or women groups, cooperatives and enterprises supported by the project

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118 enterprises selected and trained through ~~PSDC and local NGOs~~ Business Service providers. Beneficiaries developed management tools and business plans adapted to literacy levels. Governance clarification, bookkeeping practices, and workflow organization improved.

Niger

156 enterprises trained using highly visual methods suitable for low-literacy groups.
152 business plans validated by regional and national committees.
Costing tools and leadership skills were strengthened.

Senegal

124 women and youth trained and 100 business plans prepared and pitched across five regions. Product branding, pricing strategies, and hygiene-quality processes improved.

Sierra Leone

100 VSEs (around 200 women) trained over two weeks in governance, financial management, and market access. Participants adopted record-keeping and reported major confidence and leadership improvements.

c. Component B — Access to Finance (Matching Grants)

Although the freeze of Component B in late 2024 delayed disbursements, major milestones were reached in 2025.

Regional performance

- * Due diligence completed with selected partner financial institutions in all four countries.
- * —Updated grant manuals, finalized business plans, and aligned compliance with IsDB requirements.

Country highlights

Sierra Leone

APEX Bank ~~contracted~~ engaged as financial institution, ~~and the Performance-Based Agreement signed~~; IsDB NOL is pending.

Niger

Coris Bank due diligence finalized, and contracting request submitted to HQ. Implementation readiness expected in early 2026. In addition, a tender was launched for the acquisition of equipment by the UNDP for the cohort 1.

Senegal

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Banque Islamique du Sénégal validated; tripartite alignment achieved between UNDP, BIS, and MSA. [Contracting process is ongoing.](#)

Guinea

Negotiations advanced with Banque Islamique de Guinée; UNDP opted for direct procurement of equipment (covering roughly 80 percent of the Component B envelope) to avoid delays.

Gender-responsive finance

Financial institutions were supported to adapt screening to women with limited collateral and informal business structures. [A partnership is being discussed with the Better Than Cash coalition to improve the access to finance to female entrepreneurs through peer exchanges with Benin and the use of digital solutions by partner financial institutions.](#)

d. Component C — Market Access and Value Chain Integration

[Regional performance](#)

[Country highlights](#)

Niger

35 women entrepreneurs supported to attend fairs and forums, generating more than USD 2,500 in new revenue.

Sierra Leone

Beneficiaries showcased products at national platforms including World Food Day and the AfCFTA Conference, gaining recognition from the President and First Lady.

Senegal

Regional pitching sessions also served as commercial exposure events, strengthening product competitiveness with 100 SMEs.

Value chain transformation

- **Before:** inconsistent packaging, weak pricing, low visibility, limited market networks.
- **After:** standardized quality practices, improved branding, structured pricing, new channels accessed.

e. Component D — Enabling Environment and Social Norms

- Regulatory and institutional progress

16 regulatory constraints affecting women's entrepreneurship identified across the four countries. Institutional coordination improved in Senegal and Guinea with ADEPME, ARM, ANCAR and SODAGRI.

- Social norms transformation

In Sierra Leone, Terms of Reference and evaluations completed for NGO recruitment to lead community-level norms change; NOL pending. Testimonials show significant shifts in women's agency.

f. Performance Against AWP, CPD and IRRF

EWASME contributes to UNDP Strategic Plan Outputs 1.3 and 6.2, and RPD outcomes on inclusive economic empowerment.

IRRF Results Framework (2025)

Nbr	Indicators	Target	Achieved
5.1	WSMEs trained	500	754
1.2	WSMEs accessing grants	756	Way forward clarified with UNDP and IsDB
3.1	Institutions equipped	4	6
4.1	Legal barriers identified	2	16
6.1	Profit increase	25 percent	Measurement after grant disbursement
7.1/7.2	Jobs	1,600/10,000	To be assessed in 2026

~~5.1 WSMEs trained — Target 500, Achieved 754.~~

~~1.2 WSMEs accessing grants — Target 765, Status: institutional readiness completed, disbursement in 2026.~~

~~3.1 Institutions equipped — Target 4, Achieved 6+.~~

~~4.1 Legal barriers identified — Target 2, Achieved 16.~~

~~6.1 Profit increase — Target 25 percent, measurement after grant disbursement.~~

~~7.1/7.2 Jobs — Target 1,600/10,000, to be assessed in 2026.~~

g. Before-After Transformation

Before EWASME: limited business skills, weak financial practices, low product quality, no formal market access, restrictive gender norms.

After EWASME in 2025: adoption of governance and financial tools, improved packaging and pricing, new commercial connections, stronger leadership among women, and benefits cascading to 13,500 workers and group members.

h. Evaluation Status

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Although the formal mid-term evaluation was not yet conducted, continuous evaluative governance through Steering Committees, Regional Technical Committees, and IsDB–UNDP high-level engagements supported adaptive management. Issues identified (grant structuring, selection criteria, geographic limits) led to corrective measures including unlocking Cohort 1 grants, advancing FI contracting, and adjusting selection processes. TRAC resources were used to maintain timelines, particularly in Sierra Leone. These mechanisms ensured alignment with RPD principles and UNDP quality standards.

IV. Project Risks and Issues

During the reporting period, several risks and issues influenced the quality and timeliness of project deliverables across the four EWASME countries. The most significant risk remained the delay in operationalizing Component B (matching grants), following the donor-initiated freeze of late 2024. This delay affected the project's schedule, slowed expected enterprise-level results, and created reputational risks with beneficiaries who were anticipating grant support. UNDP mitigated this risk through sustained dialogue with the donor, agreement to proceed with Cohort 1 under the original scheme, direct procurement of equipment in Guinea, and accelerated due diligence and contracting with partner financial institutions in all countries.

Misalignment between IFC SME/VSE criteria and local realities emerged as another key issue. In Sierra Leone and parts of Niger, the number of eligible women-led enterprises was lower than expected due to informality, limited documentation, or very small turnover levels. This slowed the selection process and forced repeated due-diligence missions. UNDP addressed this by adjusting selection protocols, validating informal women's groups, and establishing decentralized regional committees.

Security restrictions in Niger, particularly in Tillabéri and Dosso, continued to pose major operational constraints. Government requirements for military escorts increased implementation costs and caused delays in verification and monitoring. To mitigate this, the project relied on local BDS partners and regional-level committees to maintain field presence while adhering to UNDSS guidance.

Climate and infrastructure-related risks also affected delivery. In Sierra Leone, heavy rains and flooding made several communities inaccessible, forcing relocation and rescheduling of training activities. Poor road conditions in rural Guinea and Sierra Leone similarly disrupted mobility. UNDP mitigated these risks by relocating activities and promoting collective transport and aggregation points.

Procurement and payment delays, notably in Senegal and Guinea, temporarily slowed training roll-outs and grant-readiness steps. These bottlenecks stemmed from lengthy internal

processes and were mitigated through intensified coordination with procurement and PMSU teams.

Financial institutions in multiple countries also raised concerns regarding the insufficient 1 percent management fee budgeted for grant administration, posing risks to contractual engagement. UNDP initiated negotiation with PFIs and raised the issue with the donor to adjust the financing structure for subsequent cohorts.

Finally, project management costs proved higher than anticipated due to delays in Component B, additional verification missions, and increased security and logistics needs. UNDP temporarily absorbed these costs and formally requested additional support from the donor.

Despite these risks, proactive mitigation adaptive planning, decentralized delivery, use of TRAC resources, and strengthened dialogue with governments and the donor enabled EWASME to maintain implementation progress and prepare for accelerated delivery in 2026.

V. Lessons Learned

Implementation across the four EWASME countries during 2025 generated several important lessons to strengthen ongoing learning and improve future programming.

1. Key **project successes and enabling factors**

The project demonstrated that combining tailored capacity-building, ~~decentralised~~decentralized delivery, and strong local partnerships produces rapid gains in women's business confidence and enterprise ~~organisation~~organization. Across all countries, high participation rates, successful pitch sessions, and improved management practices were enabled ~~by the use of~~using adapted pedagogical tools especially visual and practical methods in Niger and Guinea which proved essential for low-literacy groups. Close engagement with national ministries and regional committees in Senegal and Sierra Leone also facilitated coordinated implementation and improved ownership, contributing to strong beneficiary ~~mobilisation~~mobilization and validation processes.

2. Difficulties **encountered and measures taken to address them**

—The most recurrent difficulty was the delay in ~~operationalising~~operationalizing the matching-grant mechanism due to the donor freeze, which created frustration among beneficiaries and slowed expected results. UNDP's response continuous dialogue with the donor, agreement to proceed with the original scheme for Cohort 1, and direct procurement of equipment in Guinea demonstrated the value of adaptive and rapid decision-making. Security constraints in Niger and seasonal floods in Sierra Leone highlighted the need for flexible delivery models; ~~decentralised~~decentralized BDS support and relocation of training venues helped maintain continuity despite access challenges. Rigid SME/VSE criteria also limited the pool of eligible women-led enterprises, prompting revisions that allowed inclusion of informal groups and cooperatives.

3. What **could have been done differently**

More realistic beneficiary eligibility criteria adapted from the outset to the rural and informal context of women-led businesses would have reduced verification burdens, avoided repeated due-diligence cycles, and allowed a smoother start in several countries. Earlier assessment of project management cost requirements, security constraints, and procurement timelines would also have ensured more accurate resource planning. Additionally, aligning the grant disbursement schedule with agricultural seasons from the beginning would have prevented repeated risks of missing key production windows.

4. Recommendations for future programming

Future phases should adopt context-appropriate eligibility criteria that reflect the realities of West African women entrepreneurs, especially informal groups and VSEs. Stronger early engagement with financial institutions, including revising management fee structures, would accelerate grant delivery and reduce bottlenecks. Operational plans should systematically incorporate contingency measures for security restrictions, climate-related disruptions and procurement delays. Strengthening regional knowledge-sharing, especially around market access strategies, visual learning tools, and community norms interventions would help replicate successful approaches across countries. Finally, future programmes should integrate early and ongoing alignment with agricultural calendars and allow for more flexible budgeting for project management and communications to ensure continuity of support.

VI. Conclusions and Way Forward

The year 2025 marked a turning point for the EWASME project. Despite persistent delays in operationalizing Component B, the project achieved strong progress across all other components. A total of 475 women-led SMEs, VSEs and women's groups were fully selected and prepared for support, and an estimated 13,500 individuals, including 80 percent women and 55 percent youth, directly benefited from improved business practices, strengthened governance, enhanced product quality and expanded market exposure. Capacity-building efforts significantly exceeded annual targets, with **754 entrepreneurs** trained across the four countries, supported by highly effective delivery models such as adapted visual pedagogy in Niger and Guinea and regionally coordinated pitching and validation processes in Senegal and Sierra Leone.

The project also made substantial institutional advances. All four countries completed due diligence with their respective financial institutions, finalised grant operations manuals and validated business plans, positioning the programme for rapid deployment once the [internal procurement process and](#) outstanding donor no-objection steps are completed. Direct procurement modalities in Guinea and the mobilization of TRAC resources in Sierra Leone demonstrated strong adaptive management. At the policy level, the identification of 16 regulatory and institutional constraints affecting women's entrepreneurship laid the foundation for future enabling-environment reforms. Gender norms interventions, particularly in Sierra Leone, also prepared the ground for community-level behavior change work.

Looking ahead to 2026, the immediate priority is the full operationalization of the matching-grant scheme. This includes finalizing financial institution contracting, securing donor no-objection letters, and disbursing the first round of grants to women-led enterprises. This step is essential to unlocking enterprise-level growth, income increases and job creation, and to progressing against IRRF indicators on sales and employment. The project will also expand mentorship and coaching support to ensure that enterprises are fully prepared to absorb and deploy grant resources effectively. Continued emphasis will be placed on aligning implementation with agricultural seasons to avoid timing risks highlighted throughout 2025.

Further priorities include scaling access-to-market interventions, strengthening partnerships with national agencies (such as ADEPME, ARM, ANCAR, SODAGRI and rice value chain programmes across the four countries), and rolling out gender norms change activities with NGO partners. Insecurity in parts of Niger, climatic disruptions in Sierra Leone and procurement delays ~~in Senegal and Guinea~~ will continue to require adaptive planning, decentralised delivery mechanisms and strong coordination across UNDP procurement, PMSU and country office teams.

Overall, the foundations laid in 2025 position EWASME for a year of accelerated delivery in 2026. With grant disbursement becoming operational, strengthened enterprise capacities, renewed government engagement and clearer pathways for policy and social norms change, the project is well-placed to achieve meaningful improvements in women's income, enterprise performance and economic leadership across the rice value chains of West Africa.

VII. Financial Status²

United Nations Development Programme Interim Financial Report to the ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK As of 31 December 2025



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

Donor reference: PID#132142
Country: Dakar Regional Service Centre
Award: 1224305 - GIN_ISDB_TPCS_132142 | 1224310 - SLE_ISDB_TPCS_132142 | 1224312 - SEN_ISDB_TPCS_132142
Project: | 00144383 - H01_ISBD_TPCS_132142 | 1224308 - NER_ISDB_TPCS_132142
Project status: 00132142 - EMPOWERING WEST AFRICAN WOMEN SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN RICE VALUE
Fund: CHAINS(EWASME) - Regional Project

(in United States dollars)

	Prior years (1)	2025 (2)	Cumulative to 2025 (3)
Income/Revenue			
Annual Contributions Revenue ^a	5 198 379,00	705 456,00	5 903 835,00
Other Revenue ^b	43,49	21,36	64,85
Transfer to/from other funds	-	-	-
Refunds to donors	-	-	-
Total - Income/Revenue	5 198 422,49	705 477,36	5 903 899,85
Expenses			
Staff and other personnel costs	1 839,55	-	1 839,55
Supplies, commodities, materials	894,13	4 849,34	5 743,47
Equipment, vehicle and furniture including depreciation	12 204,26	-	12 204,26
Contractual services	473 494,53	259 885,73	733 380,26
Travel	105 698,44	49 970,72	155 669,16
Transfers and grants to counterparts	-	-	-
General operating and other direct costs	122 340,51	37 168,97	159 509,48
Subtotal	716 471,42	351 874,76	1 068 346,18
Programme support costs ^c	56 557,81	25 226,96	81 784,77
Total Expenses	773 029,23	377 101,72	1 150 130,95
Balance^d	4 425 393,26	4 753 768,90	4 753 768,90
Future Expenses^e			
Balance of un-depreciated assets & inventory purchased	-	-	-
Commitments	168 418,62	1 274 870,56	1 274 870,56
Subtotal	168 418,62	1 274 870,56	1 274 870,56
Receivables Past due, less advance receipts^f			
Less: Contributions receivable from donors	-	-	-
Available Resources^g	4 256 974,64	3 478 898,34	3 478 898,34
Total Contributions Revenue^h	9 587 700,00	-	9 587 700,00
Total Contributions Revenue Received^h	5 198 379,00	705 456,00	5 903 835,00
Total Receivablesⁱ	4 389 321,00	3 683 865,00	3 683 865,00
Deferred Revenue and Advance Receipts^j	-	-	-

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² Disclaimer: Data contained in this financial report section is an extract of UNDP financial records. All financial provided above is provisional.

VIII. **Annex**

Insert the latest approved Annual Work Plan (AWP), relevant copies of media coverage, publications, etc. Specific reporting requirements from donors can also be inserted here.

Annual Work Plan 2025


Narrative to 2025
Annual Workplan_Fir


PTA Sénégal 2025
EWASME signé.pdf


PTA
2025_NIGER_Correct


PTA 2025 SIGNE
Guinea.pdf

Testimonials from Our Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries’ testimony 1 (Sierra Leone)

- **Madam Isatu T. Kawa, Chairlady, Amuyenge Women Rice Production Enterprise, Torma Bum, Bonthe District**
(VSME, a company engaged in rice production, drying, transportation, and sales in Niamey, Niger.)

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"When the EWASME application link was first shared, I had no idea what to do. I had never applied for anything online before. As a woman with limited formal education living in a deeply patriarchal community where women are rarely heard, I thought this opportunity was not meant for someone like me. But everything changed when the UNDP team came to Torma Bum to guide us through the application process."

"I remember sitting there, nervous and uncertain, but I decided to try. With the hands-on training and support provided, I learned how to complete my application form. With courage, I submitted it to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security Office in Matru Jong. The day I heard I was longlisted, I cried tears of joy. When the team returned for the due diligence assessment and I was later shortlisted, it felt like a dream coming true."

"The capacity-building training before the pitch event was a turning point in my life. For the first time, I was taught how to speak in public, talk about my business, express my view, challenges, and the support I want to scale my business. That training gave me something more valuable, which is confidence. On the day of the pitching event, I stood in the hall, confident and ready. I shared my story and my hopes, and proudly displayed samples of my processed rice."

"I have never spoken in front of so many important people before. In my culture, women are not encouraged to speak in public. But that day, I felt seen, I felt heard, and I felt proud."

"Today, I stand tall in front of the EWASME banner, holding my rice, and knowing that my voice matters. This experience has not only empowered me for this project but has also given me the courage to pursue other opportunities and manage my business with greater confidence. EWASME has opened a door I never thought I could walk through. I am sincerely grateful, and I

remain fully committed to working with the project to succeed, not just for myself, but for all the women who dare to dream."

- **Beneficiaries testimony 2 (Niger)**

- **Madam MELLE Fanata, founder and Promoter of FARAA entreprise, Niger, Niamey**

(VSME, a company engaged in the production, processing, and sale of rice in Niamey, Niger.)



"My first experience was in 2020, when I took out a loan to invest in rice farming. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a bad experience for me because that year there was heavy rainfall, and since the field was located on a peninsula, the water completely flooded the rice farm. But that did not discourage me. I kept moving forward with the same determination.

Today, I am still producing, and this is my fourth or fifth year. This year as well, I have cultivated rice during the rainy season, mainly because during the dry season it is very difficult for us. With the limited means we use for production, it is quite complicated. The challenges I face are mainly technical, particularly with equipment.

We do not have modern machinery; we only have one motor pump. Apart from that, we still rely on the rudimentary tools that have been used since our grandparents' time. This remains one of the biggest difficulties.

The training in business, quality, and entrepreneurship provided by the EWASME project has been extremely valuable to us, as it allowed us to understand the difference between being an

entrepreneur and a trader a distinction that most of us were not aware of before. It also addressed the importance of quality. We truly needed this training, and it came at the right time. With the knowledge we gained, we are confident that we will be able to improve our products. We would very much welcome additional training opportunities.”

- **Beneficiaries testimony 3 (Niger)**

Madam Rakia Madougou, CEO of D-Rice entreprise, Niger, Niamey

(VSME, a company engaged in the production, processing, and sale of rice in Niamey, Niger.)



“My team and I process rice. We hull the rice, separate it from the bran, and package it for sale. This is how we got started. It was during this time that an NGO (technical partner) noticed us while we were working in our rice fields. They realized that we were not operating legally: we were working and selling rice without any official documents, and we had no clear idea whether we were making a profit.

They came back to provide us with training at the Kollo Town Hall. They explained that we needed to become a registered business. As a result, we obtained a Tax Identification Number (NIF) and a business registration. During the training, we were given an exercise that required us to choose a name for our business. I immediately wrote down that my business would be called “La Reine des Rizières”.

The training we received will be extremely valuable, especially for the future, as we learned how to maintain a hygienic workspace and properly store our production so that, even during a visit, clients can see that the product is of high quality. This also increases the potential to sell it at a good price.

Before, I saw myself as running a small business, but thanks to the support and follow-up, my business is growing. I now generate a turnover of 1,200,000 CFA per harvest, and this is without

detailed bookkeeping. Imagine what my turnover could be if I tracked all income and expenses properly!

We hope that the training will continue. We want to further improve our productivity.”

- **Beneficiaries testimony 4 (Sierra leone)**

- Jeneba Saw (President) and Susan Tholley (Vice-President), Mathor Young Farmers Association, during the World Food Day Celebration in Kambia. (Jeneba’s testimonial)



“This was the first time my business participated in a national programme, and it has completely transformed how I see my future.

Before EWASME, my rice business was small and limited to my community in Masingbi. I had never imagined that my products could be showcased on a national platform. Through the EWASME Project, I was given the opportunity to participate in the World Food Day Celebration in Kambia, marking the first time my business gained visibility beyond the local market. During the exhibition, I sold all my rice on the spot, the largest volume I have ever sold at once, and earned a meaningful profit. Beyond the sales, I had the rare opportunity to engage directly with agro-dealers, agribusiness companies, and fellow women-led enterprises. We exchanged contacts, shared experiences, and explored future business opportunities, networks that were previously beyond my reach.

EWASME has opened doors not only to markets, but also to confidence, connections, and new possibilities. This experience has shown me that with the right support, women and young entrepreneurs can build sustainable businesses and compete effectively in larger markets.

When market linkage opportunities are intentionally extended to women-owned very small enterprises, they do more than increase sales, boost local economies, and position women as key drivers of agricultural transformation.”

Beneficiaries' testimony 5 (Sierra Leone)

- Jenny Moriba, Representative of the organization Sina by Women Farmers in Toma, Bondi Bondi (Sierra Leone)



"Before this business development training, I didn't really know how to identify my customers or how to grow my business. My activity wasn't progressing, and I wasn't recognized by my clients. But thanks to this training, I learned how to identify my customers and understand how to develop my business. After the training, I knew where to start and how to apply what I had learned.

I'm now planning the group's work, guiding members, and moving our project forward. Today, the group is progressing well, and I'm sharing my new skills with all members. Thanks to this training, we can now plan our activities and grow our business in a more structured way."

Beneficiaries' testimony 6 (Sénégal)

- Khadidiatou Diagne, CEO of Dji@gro (Senegal)



"Through EWASME, we received training in management, which helped us better structure our business. Today, our products are available in 10 shops in Mbour, one supermarket in Thiès, and we also sell to the diaspora, particularly in France and Spain. We have developed a new product mango rice petals. I was born an entrepreneur, and I now have the skills to grow my company, Dji@gro."

Media coverage and publications

- **Sierra Leone**

Multimedia(videos, graphics, campaigns, photo albums, youtube links etc)		
Steering Committee Meeting Photos	20/03/2025	Steering Committee
UNDP SL Published Steering Committee Meeting with stakeholders	20/03/2025	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15JFomh3ro/?mibextid=wwXlfr
Grant Selection Committee Meeting Photos	14/03/2025	Grant Selection Committee
Pre-Screening Mission with BDS Team Photos	25/03/2025	Pre-Screening Photos
Semestre 2		
Social media news on the EWASME Enterprise Pitch Fair	07/07/2025	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15xK7nZoCB/?mibextid=wwXlfr
		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1AtjvJq5xe/?mibextid=wwXlfr
		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EMCmhG5dY/?mibextid=wwXlfr
		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16sVPKuE6E/?mibextid=wwXlfr
		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1FiwDdfr1P/?mibextid=wwXlfr
		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15kEmwUcVd/?mibextid=wwXlfr
		https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1E6XQ28bj5/?mibextid=wwXlfr
		https://x.com/undpsierraleone/status/1932785669916577910?s=46
EWASME PITCH FAIR PHOTOS	07/07/2025	EWASME PITCH FAIR PHOTOS
Capacity Building Training updates	15/10/2025	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19jeEKKpWH/?mibextid=wwXlfr
access to market ZLECAF	02/11/2025	(11) Every year, the Ministry of Agriculture and... - UNDP in Sierra Leone Facebook
Semestre 2		
Women training session	15 septemb er	Training Sierra Leone

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• Niger :

Multimedia(videos, graphics, campaigns, photo albums, youtube links etc)		
COPIL Niger Photos		Photos COPIL 2025 Niger EWASME

COPIL Niger Vidéo	5 mars 2025	Video Copil 2025 NG.mp4
Photos formation 1er cohorte Niamey	9 mars 2025	Photos formation 1er cohorte Niamey
Photos Deuxième session de formation des TPE Niger	juil-25	Deuxième session de formation des TPE Niger
Photos Niger Formation de 310 femme sur l'étuvage du Riz	mai-25	Niger Formation de 310 femme sur l'étuvage du Riz (Foire Nationale des femmes transformatrices)
Photos Niger foire nationale des femmes transformatrices de Birni		Niger foire nationale des femmes transformatrices de Birni
Photos,vidéos et interviews des bénéficiaires		Photos,vidéos et interviews
Temoignage de formation 1		Temoignages 1.mp4
Temoignage de formation 2		Temoignages 2.mp4
Semestre 3		
Deuxième session de formation des TPE Niger		Deuxième session de formation des TPE Niger

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• Senegal:

Articles, press mentions and interviews (newspaper, radio, TV)		
Appel à Candidatures LinkedIn		https://www.linkedin.com/posts/undpwaca_appel-%C3%A0-candidatures-ewasme-le-projet-activity-7305938225565425665-xiOv?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=member_desktop_web&rcm=ACoAAC8Fn8sBIRxadK7MP9PF12iv_dlgK0MkAlg
Appel à Candidatures Facebook		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1DwYHDnuNs/
Appel à Candidatures Instagram		https://www.instagram.com/p/DGqJMMGTo2p/?utm_source=iq_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIQDBiNWFIZA==
Appel à Candidatures X		https://x.com/UNDPWACA/status/1900172535049650603
Semestre 2		
CSS Lot 3 SN Publié sur LinkedIn	24/04/2025	https://www.linkedin.com/posts/undpwaca_programme-dautonomisation-des-petites-activity-7322594431532949508-3zBm?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAC8Fn8sBIRxadK7MP9PF12iv_dlgK0MkAlg
CSS Lot 3 SN Publié sur Twitter		https://x.com/UNDPWACA/status/1916829097323380908
CSS Lot 3 SN Publié sur Facebook		https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1XXmBDxkdU/?mibextid=wwXlfr
Semestre 3		
Appel à candidature partenaire technique cohorte 2	17/09/2025	https://www.linkedin.com/posts/pnud-s%C3%A9n%C3%A9gal_riz-activity-7373334132397096960-ufFi?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=member_desktop_web&rcm=ACoAAC8Fn8sBIRxadK7MP9PF12iv_dlgK0MkAlg

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Renforcement des capacités des femmes entrepreneurs	8 au 30 juillet 2025	https://www.linkedin.com/posts/pnud-s%C3%A9n%C3%A9gal-renforcement-des-capacit%C3%A9s-des-femmes-activity-7365716813122265088-MoG-?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=member_dektop_web&rcm=ACoAAC8Fn8sBIRxadK7MP9PF12iv_dlgK0MkAlq
Publication sur Twitter		https://x.com/PNUDSenegal/status/1959951124292665594
Multimedia(videos, graphics, campaigns, photo albums, youtube links etc)		
Photo Copil 2025 Sénégal	févr-25	PHOTOS-COPIL
Photo CSS Lot 3 2025 Sénégal	avr-25	Photos CSS National Lot 3
Semestre 3		
Photo de formation Mbour	8 au 30 juillet 2025	Photo formation Mbour
Photo de formation Sédhiou	8 au 30 juillet 2025	Photo formation Sédhiou
Video formation Mbour	8 au 30 juillet 2025	Video formation Mbour 2015 100 femmes
Photos et vidéos des bénéficiaires Sénégal Consultant Photographe		Photos Sénégal Consultant Photographe
Photos et vidéos octobre 2025		Photos et vidéos octobre 2025

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• Guinea :

Articles, press mentions and interviews (newspaper, radio, TV)		
COPIL 2025 Facebook	26-mars	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15w3GQQRxif/
COPIL 2026 agpguinee.com		Conakry: Tenue de la 2ème session du comité de pilotage du programme EWASME - AGP GUINEE
Multimedia(videos, graphics, campaigns, photo albums, youtube links etc)		
Photos COPIL 2025 GIN	2025	Photos COPIL 2025
Semestre 3		

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formation des enqueteurs chargés de realiser le diagnostic des bénéficiaires		formation des enqueteurs chargés de realiser le diagnostic des bénéficiaires
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