



Country/Region/Global: Senegal, Sierra Leone, Niger, Guinea
EWASME Programme Initiation Plan

Project Title: Laying the groundwork for the EWASME programme implementation

Expected SP Outcome:

Expected RP Outcome(s): Outcome 2: African citizens (especially women, and youth) benefit from a regionally integrated, structurally transformed, and inclusive economy.

Initiation Plan Start/End Dates: 1 July 2022 – 1 January 2023

Implementing Partner: UNDP

Brief Description

This 7 months Project Initiation Plan aims to lay the groundwork for a full-fledged UNDP/IsDB initiative entitled “Empowering West African Women Small and Medium Enterprises in Rice Value Chains (EWASME) 2022-2025 in Guinea, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone”, which has been funded by the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) to a tune of USD 11.5 million. The EWASME programme builds on and effective links with the existing Regional Rice Value Chain Programme (RRVCP), which is already contributing to the transformation of rice production in select West African countries. The EWASME programme extends its efforts to transform the entire rice value chain – largely dominated by women across the four countries. It will do this by empowering 1,000 Women SMEs/VMEs (500 WSMEs and 500 WVSEs) across the four countries in post-production activities that expand and upgrade their businesses across the rice value chain. This includes developing capacities in post-production and business management, combined with grant matching finance, increased access to markets, and an enabling environment achieved through legal and regulatory reforms that support women’s entrepreneurship. To effectively address the rice value chains’ constraints and challenges across the four countries, it has been deemed vital that a comprehensive understanding of the current situation, identification of critical gaps in data and evidence are needed. Such assessments are not only vital to determine EWASME programme baseline data but equally for the design more effective and targeted interventions that address identified constraints across the rice value chains - from production through to the market – while applying technical, policy, gender and socio-cultural lenses. The EWASME programme will, therefore, be implemented in two phases. In this first project initiation phase, more specifically, this project aims at conducting a gendered rice value chain assessment with focus on production constraints and post-harvest operations, including milling and storage for high quality, market access, and assessment of enabling policies and capacity development needs to drive women’s entrepreneurship.

Programme Period:	<u>Q2-Q4 2022</u>	Total resources required	<u>650,000</u>
Atlas Project Number:	_____	Total allocated resources:	_____
Atlas Output ID:	_____	• Regular	<u>187,037</u>
Gender Marker:	_____	• Other:	_____
		○ Donor	<u>462,963</u>
		○ Donor	_____
		○ Government	_____
		Unfunded budget:	_____
		In-kind Contributions	_____

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Ahunna Eziakonwa 31-May-2022
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Agreed by UNDP:

Ahunna Eziakonwa
Assistant Administrator and Director
Regional Bureau for Africa

I. PURPOSE

The pressing need for an initiation plan for this project stems from the realization that detailed assessments and evidence leads to the design of more precise project interventions, which deliver robust results. To enhance national rice production, commercialisation strategies and boost self-sufficiency, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) has been supporting the implementation of the *Regional Rice Value Chain Programme (RRVCP)*. This programme targets two million smallholder households in 10 West African countries and seeks to transform their rice production through the provision of infrastructure, equipment and capacity enhancing interventions. The RRVCP has already provided 5 countries (Gambia, Sierra Leone, Niger, Senegal, Guinea) with over USD 50 million in concessionary loans for this purpose.

However, it soon became apparent that - while RRVCP is playing a formidable role in transforming rice production and setting the basis for inclusive growth – more needed to be done to enable rice value chains' actors to expand value, create and sustain jobs and enterprises, increase profits, and realize the full economic and social potential in all the programme countries. For this purpose and potential, IsDB set out to mobilized additional resources from the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi¹) for a linked programme entitled "Empowering West African Women- SMEs in the Rice Value Chains" (EWASME). In turn, the We-Fi has provided USD 11.25 million for the EWASME programme to identify and address the bottlenecks and challenges women-owned/led SMEs and VSEs face within rice value chains in Guinea, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone. The EWASME Program contains three main and interlinked components, namely: i) Grant support; ii) Advisory/Technical Assistance Activities; and iii) Evaluation and Learning (support) activities. The programme will be implemented in Niger, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Guinea, and can significantly contribute to the attainment of SDGs: 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 16 and 17 in these respective countries.

Major constraints in the rice value chains - in these countries - are understood to be low productivity, high cost of rice production and processing, and limited access to markets. Underlying these constraints are findings that these value chains lack economic organization, finance, access to mechanization and post-harvest services, especially in rain-fed areas. Women are heavily engaged in the rice industry, and while there is significant potential to improve their livelihoods, they face a particular set of constraints. For this purpose, the EWASME programme aims to by address the following constraints:

- *Financial constraints* – cost of borrowing from commercial banks and MFIs is high (often over 20% per annum) and thus prohibitive for most women to access financing. In addition, many women are unable to meet the requirements of financial institutions for the provision of guarantors and collateral.
- *Non-financial constraints* - These cut-across several factors and include, most notably, the lack of financial management skills and the ability to develop and manage sustainably profitable businesses, as well as limited access to market information. Moreover, women access to enabling skills and knowledge is limited as well as modern and sustainable energy services that could fundamentally improve production and productivity. Finally, there are issues related to customary laws and traditions pertaining to land use rights, which are compounded by the fact that women are insufficiently represented in local decision-making bodies.
- *Poor links to existing private sector-* led value chains that could address constraints on both the input and output markets.

¹ The Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) managed by the World Bank supports women entrepreneurs by scaling up access to financial products and services, building capacity, expanding networks, offering mentors, and providing opportunities to link with domestic and global markets.

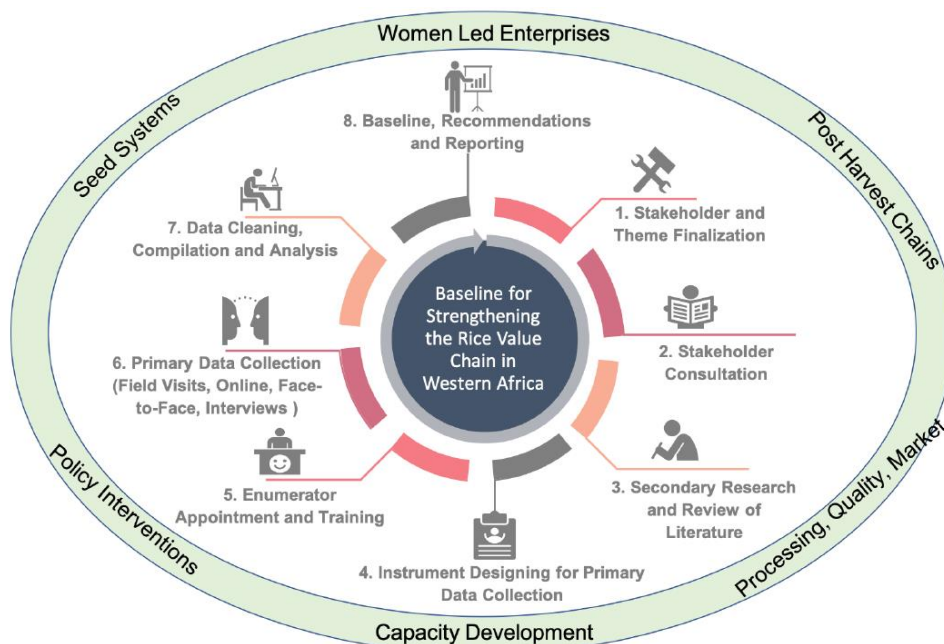
Overall, the EWASME Program seeks to: (i) improve the engagement of women-owned/ led micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) within the rice value chain; (ii) enhance their access to finance by allocating USD 6.75 million of matching grants to 1000 WSMEs and WVSE; (iii) enhance capacity of 1000 women owned/led SMEs and VSEs to upgrade their business skills and increase their efficiency; (iv) increase WSMEs and WVSEs' access to local and regional markets; (v) improve the enabling environment for WSME and WVSE to access finance and move up the value chain; and (vi) generate 5,000 direct jobs and 20,000 indirect jobs.

To deliver on these aspirations effectively, the EWASME programme believes that detailed assessments and better evidence on the technical, socio-cultural, gender, policy, institutional and market-related constraints and challenges throughout the rice value chains (in each of the four countries) should be the foundation that lays out the groundwork for implementation. In particular, such assessments will not only provide more detailed data of the current baseline situation but will provide more in-depth information and evidence for the design of appropriate interventions, as well as the better targeting and tailoring of support to the beneficiaries. Therefore, this initiation plan is about generating the required data and evidence, and constitutes the first phase of the project. The next section specifies the activities and expected outputs for phase one.

II. ACTIVITIES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The overall expected outcome of this initiation plan is to generate evidence-based strategies for building and strengthening sustainable gender-responsive and resilient rice-based value chains that contribute to food and income security of smallholder farmers in four rice growing countries in West Africa - Senegal, Guinea, Niger and Sierra Leone, to be implemented in phase two.

This project initiation plan aims at conducting a gendered rice value chain assessment with a focus on production constraints and post-harvest operations, including milling and storage for high quality, market access, and the standing of enabling policies and capacity development needs. The main activity in achieving this will be to conduct a baseline assessment drawing from secondary data reviewed and accumulated by project staff. Local staff and consultant(s) will be engaged to compile existing data (and reports) from government institutions and other key organisations, and also, to collect additional data using online interviews/meetings with key stakeholders/informants for filling data gaps. The figure below describes the research process to be followed to understand the current rice value chains situation in the four countries, and to come up with gender-responsive recommendations to upgrade the entire rice value chain.



The research will be structured around the following components:

- 1) Seed systems and Product Management: analyzing both primary and secondary data. Key informants for interviews will include: national researchers and extension scientists/officers; National Government agricultural departments' officials; farmers' collectives (with emphasis on women seed producers/ farmers); millers; private sector seed producers; government seed quality assurance officers; and credible NGOs active in the seed space.
- 2) Gendered value chain analysis: besides reviewing existing literature, a broad participatory gendered value chain mapping at the national level will be conducted with a focus on capturing dynamics of women- led MSMEs/Cooperatives/informal sector in post-production value chains. This will help to understand the participation, socio-economic opportunities, barriers and challenges for women in the rice value chain, and inform effective interventions for phase two.
- 3) Production and Postharvest value chain upgrading interventions: output would be a report on the current status of the postharvest value chain (focused on postharvest losses, postharvest-based opportunities for women, suitable technologies and practices and business models), a comparison with value chain upgrading trajectories of other countries, and recommendations for next steps in phase two.
- 4) Capacity Development: a capacity needs assessment will be conducted to evaluate the gaps in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude, processes along with strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, facilities, and other elements required for the stakeholders to achieve the desired goals for successful rice value chain establishment in the four countries. The capacity assessment will be conducted at all three levels, individual stakeholders, organizational and enabling environment; and appropriate capacity development plans and recommendations will be suggested.
- 5) Policy Reforms and Interventions: an assessment of relevant policies and guidelines will be carried out for various segments along the production to market value chain, including varietal commercialization, seed policies, private sector engagement, input/output market regulations, access to finance, market access, etc. It will also identify the policy and implementation processes and bottlenecks. Enabling policy reforms will then be recommended and catalyzed to ensure successful and sustained women-led entrepreneurs to be established in phase two.

The expected output of this baseline assessment is a synthesis report for the four countries, including: (i) situational analysis of economic empowerment of women-led/ dominated smallholder rice farmers' groups and cooperatives in the rice value chain; (ii) rice value chain mapping and stakeholder analysis; (iii) capacity needs assessment of value chain actors; (iv) evidence needs assessment for enabling evidence-based policy and institutional reforms; and (v) identification of impact pathways characterized by contextualized solutions and leverage points for improving profitability and competitiveness of women-led/dominated smallholder rice farmers' groups and cooperatives

Using the findings from the synthesis report, the second expected output is systems documents that will establish the design and govern the grants provisioning program that will be undertaken in phase two. The system documents will cover: (i) business development support needs of the beneficiaries; (ii) and operations manual for grants financing; (iii) eligibility and selection criteria of beneficiaries; and (iv) a monitoring, evaluation and learning plan.

III. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

This PIP will be implemented by UNDP under Direct Implementation Modality and it will be managed by the UNDP-RBA using the existing management structure of the UNDP Regional Programme for Africa, under the guidance of the UNDP Africa Regional Programme Coordinator. The implementation of activities and day-to-day management of the project will be operationalized by the Project Coordinator based in Dakar and supported by the country focal points. UNDP RSCA/Dakar Hub will lead operational aspects of programme implementation and will have the

overall responsibility for all contracting, procurement and recruitment of consultants where necessary under the PIP. During the PIP, the Project Board function will be performed by the Advisory Board of the Regional Programme for Africa. A Technical Committee will be formed from internal UNDP staff to guide the technical aspects of the initiative and provide guidance including from Pretoria hub.

IV. MONITORING

The monitoring functions will be fulfilled by the PIP project coordinator and country focal points following the UNDP regular monitoring procedures. Support and guidance will be provided by the RSCA (PMSU and RBM teams), as required. The PIP project coordinator will oversee and review activities to ensure they are meeting the objectives and goals set in the PIP. Quarterly progress reports will be prepared for the Regional Programme and Country offices, and inputs into Regional Programme Annual Progress reports and ROAR will be provided in line with UNDP Programme and Project Management Policy. More frequent informal written and oral briefings will be considered and agreed, including with prospective donors, once the project is launched. At the end of the PIP implementation period, a Final Report will be prepared.

V. WORK PLAN

Period²: June 1st, 2022 – January 1st 2023

EXPECTED OUTPUTS <i>And baseline, indicators including annual targets</i>	PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List activity results and associated actions</i>	PLANNED BUDGET			
		Timeline	Funding Source	Budget Description	Amount (USD)
Output 1: Baseline study completed, stakeholder sensitized and ownership established, and plans for operationalizing the RVC project completed Baseline: Indicators: A. No. of Joint Action Plans established for the RVC; B. No. of National Coordination Platforms/ meetings operationalized; C. Project Documents Finalized and endorsed; D. Legal and regulatory measures identified that will remove constraints and support women's entrepreneurship	1. Value Chain and Ecosystem Analysis, recommendations and action plan finalized -TORs developed and agreed upon for procurement and implementation; data collection instruments finalized and literature review, secondary data collection completed. - Primary data collection completed - Data cleaning and analyses, and synthesis report completed - Formulation of the business development support, grant operation manual and eligibility criteria - Mapping of FI's and their capacity to serve the MSMEs. - Monitoring, evaluation and learning plan (MEL) developed - Regulatory and Legal assessment on women owned MSMEs - Market Linkages assessment	June 1 st – Nov 31 st 2022	EWASME (Comp. C & D.3)	Consultancy Firm/NGO	462,963
	2. RVC National Coordination platform Established and operationalized including sensitization & representation of Beneficiaries and communities. <i>-Identification of key partners (Government, NGO/CSOs, Development Partners, Private Sector, Communities, Associations, etc.,</i> <i>-Quarterly meetings of the RVC National Coordination Platforms</i> <i>- Sensitization workshops and radio programmes in target districts completed</i> <i>- Validation Workshop of assessment and draft project document</i>	June 1 st 2022 – January 1 st 2023	UNDP	Workshops, Radio Programmes	50,000

² Maximum 18 months

EXPECTED OUTPUTS <i>And baseline, indicators including annual targets</i>	PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List activity results and associated actions</i>	PLANNED BUDGET			
		Timeline	Funding Source	Budget Description	Amount (USD)
Targets: (A) 4 (1 in each country); (B) 8 (2 in each country); (C) Project Documents Finalized and endorsed (D) minimum 4 (1 in each country)	3. Project M&E Framework, social & Environment Assessment, 2023 Workplan, and Risk Log Finalized and Endorsed. - <i>Technical Committee established and operationalized with Core Stakeholders</i> - <i>Steering Committee Established with high level decision makers</i> - <i>Gaps identified and potential donors for additional resource mobilization identified</i>	Nov 1 st 2022 – January 1 st 2023	UNDP	PMU	PMU budget
Output 5: Project implementation supported	Setup and operationalization of the PMU unit	June 1 st 2022 – January 1 st 2023	UNDP	PMU Staff, Travel,	100,000
GMS (8%)			ISDB		37,037
TOTAL					650,000