



# WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT REFORM IN WEST AFRICA

PROJECT NEWSLETTER # 2. MARCH 2024

## EMPOWERING WOMEN, TRANSFORMING ECONOMIES THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT

Welcome to the second edition of the Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa project newsletter. We are excited to share with you the results we've achieved in promoting women's economic empowerment across Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal. Our three-year journey, funded by We-Fi through the African Development Bank with a total budget of USD 4 million, promotes inclusive change of procurement practices and policies, thereby enhancing the access and participation of WSMEs in procurement opportunities. Over the past year, significant progress has been made in advancing gender-responsive procurement practices (GRP) and fostering an enabling environment for WSMEs.

Let's delve into the impactful outcomes and inspiring stories!

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## ADVANCING GENDER-RESPONSIVE REFORMS AND PIONEERING CHANGE THROUGH POLICY REFORMS



No of policies promoting affirmative procurement: **4**  
No of regulations on affirmative procurement: **1**

In **Senegal**, working closely with the government, the project has led to the integration of gender-responsive principles into regulatory frameworks, resulting in the [adoption of Decree No 2022-2295](#), which introduced a clear definition of women-owned enterprises and a quota system for women-owned enterprises in public procurement. The decree also includes preferential clauses aimed at promoting gender diversity and inclusion by prioritizing the evaluation of offers submitted by women entrepreneurs in calls for tender.

In **Nigeria**, the project supported the Federal Government in the development of Nigeria's **first Women Economic Empowerment Policy** which included affirmative procurement as one of its key drivers,

which was approved by the president, who in turn established a high-level advisory council with UN Women as the secretariat. Additionally, at the **subnational level, Kaduna State Government** has drafted an **Affirmative Procurement policy** with a specific quota for WSMEs, in **Lagos State, specific gender-responsive procurement clauses** have been included in procurement regulations and guidelines.

In **Mali**, as part of activities to create a conducive environment for women's business growth, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Entrepreneurship, the project provided support in developing the **National Entrepreneurship Strategy** to incorporate women's access to public procurement as an essential pillar.

Number of officials trained : **191**  
Number of institutions trained : **22**



**Application and sustainability of reforms.** One can have beautiful policies that do not translate into reality because they are not applied. To address this, the project has invested in building capacity of public officials to implement them! **191 officials** from **22 institutions** across the implementing countries have been trained on different aspects of Gender-Responsive Procurement (GRP), contributing to institutionalize gender-sensitive practices in procurement processes beyond the project itself.

## GETTING WOMEN READY TO ACCESS PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES: INVESTING IN PREPAREDNESS

Number of women trained : **1900**



In **Senegal**, **over 500 women** entrepreneurs have acquired key skills to get them ready to access markets in both, the public and the private sector. Trainings topics included procurement processes, digital marketing, and financial inclusion. In **Mali**, **capacity building, training and technical support to 270 WSMEs** has enhanced their capacity to access contracts. In **Nigeria**, the project's support has

reached **over 800 women**, enhancing their ability to leverage technology and improving financial literacy, resulting in increased participation and success in procurement processes. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, support for almost **280 WSMEs** has significantly shifted women's own perceptions about public procurement, with comprehensive training facilitating women access to procurement opportunities.





### SUSTAINING CONNECTIONS AND ENHANCING COMPETITIVENESS: INSIGHTS FROM SENEGAL

Since 2018, UN Women has been supporting women’s access to procurement in Senegal, first through a We-Fi funded project via the World Bank, and now through ongoing We-Fi support via the African Development Bank. Following training to women entrepreneurs on how to access public procurement, UN Women has set up WhatsApp groups among participants in the training. These groups remain highly active today, serving as vital platforms for women to sustain connections and foster collaboration. Within these virtual spaces, participants exchange tender information, share tips, support each other in navigating application processes, and engage in subcontracting. Under the current project, this strategy is being reinforced with the creation of new WhatsApp groups in Mali, Nigeria and Senegal, following training sessions.

## EXPANDING PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN LED SMES



Number of women applying to procurement opportunities: **482**  
Number of women registered as vendors on UNGM : **188**  
Numbers of successful bids : **79**

At **least 670** WSMEs across all four countries have gained access to new procurement opportunities. In Mali, **30 WSMEs secured 17 new procurement contracts**, totaling **\$ 745 977.48 USD**. The impact of these contracts extends beyond financial gains, fostering confidence and sustainability among women entrepreneurs.

In Nigeria, in December 2023, a **gender-responsive symposium** was organized for 100 WSMEs. All **the participants have now been registered as vendors across all United Nations (UN) Agencies**. Overall, more **than 200 tender bids were registered** from women entrepreneurs in public and private sector procurement opportunities, with at **least 10 recorded successes**.



Photo: UN Women

In Cote d’Ivoire, training sessions on digital tools and procurement procedures have equipped WSMEs to compete effectively, **resulting in 52 successful bids**.

Furthermore, across the four implementing **countries, 188 WSMEs have been supported to register as vendors on the United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM) platform, thereby opening opportunities to contract with the UN system in the future**, and beyond the end of this project.

### ADDRESSING COMPLIANCE CHALLENGES FOR WSMEs IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, compliance issues pose significant barriers for WSMEs in both public and private procurement processes. In public procurement, challenges often stem from complex documentation requirements and bureaucratic procedures, which can deter WSMEs from participating effectively. Similarly, in private procurement, WSMEs face obstacles such as limited access to information about procurement opportunities and difficulty in meeting the stringent supplier criteria set by larger companies. In response, we introduced the Compliance Help Desk to assist in navigating the process and provide access to professional assistance. Through this initiative, we supported 116 women in enhancing their processes to achieve readiness regarding compliance.





## SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE FIELD

**THE PROJECT HAS ENABLED WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS TO SECURE CONTRACTS FOR MAJOR EVENTS LIKE THE AFRICAN CUP OF NATIONS 2024.**

“The training helped me update my company’s legal framework, allowing me to qualify for larger contracts. As a result, I successfully secured three contracts for the African Cup of Nations 2024 in Côte d’Ivoire.” Mrs. Yahamatou Kano Memel, CEO BURINFORT



Link Video interview : [Video Interview \\_Mrs Memel](#)

**DIALLO FATOUMATA SACKO, PHARMACIST AND MANAGER OF PHARMACIE KADIATOU KONTA IN NIAMANA, MALI**

Mrs Diallo had the opportunity to take part in a training course on public procurement strategies organized under the project implementation. At the end of this training course, and knowing of the opportunity, the UN project team approached the technical services of the Cigna insurance company, which was looking to sign an agreement with a pharmacy in the area, thus facilitating access to pharmaceutical products for their policyholders. “After discussions, we signed the agreement in September and underwent training in prescription processing according to their guidelines. It was an opportunity for our pharmacy to gain new customers and increase our sales”.



## WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY IN SUPPLY CHAINS

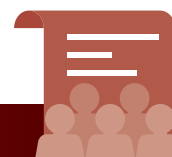
Number of signed WEPS: **197**

In **Nigeria**, we have created private sector forums to drive supplier diversity with a gender lens. While in Kaduna State, 35 private sector organizations are part of the forum. In 2024, the forum’s focus in Lagos will drive women’s representation in their supply chains and enhance access to procurement opportunities.

In **Côte d’Ivoire**, a meeting co-organized by the project and the National Association of Employers focused on affirmative procurement and advocating for the completion of reforms in favor of women’s economic empowerment. The seminar emphasized

the pivotal role of private sector support in achieving SDG5, given its influence on national issues of employment, investment, and supply chain management.

Overall, almost **200 new companies signed UN Women’s Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs)** since the project started. The Women’s Empowerment **Principle 5 aims to** implement supply chain and marketing practices that empower women enables companies to influence business partners through inclusive supply chain policies and standards of engagement.





## BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to the private sector, the project has established a number of strategic partnerships aimed at improving outreach of project activities, amplifying impact of the project, and building ownership and sustainability of project actions.

At the country level, UN Women has established partnerships with government agencies, private sectors, and women's business associations to ensure the delivery and sustainability of project activities. The partnership with DO Take Action has **supported almost 800 WSMEs across the four implementing countries, enabling them to benefit from public and private sector procurements.** The ongoing program includes leveraging technology, enhancing business development skills, and improving financial literacy.

In **Nigeria**, partnerships with the Lagos State Public Procurement Agency (LSPPA) and the Kaduna State Public Procurement Authority (KADPPA) aim to integrate affirmative procurement practices, along with collaborations with non-profit organizations like WISCAR, Zamani Foundation, and PPDC advocating for transparency. Discussions with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) are ongoing to support women entrepreneurs' digital inclusion and access to finance.

In **Senegal**, UN Women collaborates with the National Procurement Agency (ARCOP), the National SME agency (ADEPME) to enhance women entrepreneurs' access to procurement, while the partnership with the National Guarantee Fund (CDMP) supports them in obtaining guarantees for public contracts.

In **Mali**, partnerships with the National Procurement Agency, MINUSMA, Impact Her, and the Chamber of Commerce leverage digital technologies to support women entrepreneurs.

Similarly, in **Côte d'Ivoire**, UN Women collaborates with government bodies, the Ministry of Women, Family and Children, the Authority of public procurement, SEPHIS Foundation, the National SME promotion agency, and Kaizen International to support women entrepreneurs post-COVID-19.

**At the regional level**, the project is working with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) to improve understanding of the links between affirmative procurement and regional/continental integration and push for improvement of regional legal frameworks in the area of procurement. In 2023, UN Women's collaboration with OCP amplified the project's advocacy in policy circles, including a successful policy dialogue on regional gender-responsive procurement reforms in West Africa that gathered 86 participants including national procurement agencies and intra-regional institutions and women-business organizations from 10 countries.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

#### **Working Women in West Africa represent 95% of the Informal Sector<sup>1</sup>**

Redefining Opportunity: With women currently making up a staggering 95% of informal employment in West Africa, prioritizing their access to public procurement isn't just about gender equality—it's about reshaping the economic landscape.

By empowering women to participate in formal economic activities such as public procurement, we unlock a significant source of untapped potential, thus fostering innovation, driving economic growth, and creating a more inclusive society for all.

<sup>1</sup> ILO, The Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy in Africa, Background paper for the GEPR Chapter 5 "The transition to formality: Comparing policy approaches in Africa, Asia and Latin America", Background Paper N°2 December 2020







## PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

- Nigeria\_UN, Federal Government, Others Partners On Procurement Opportunities For Female Entrepreneurs
- Nigeria\_Affirmative Procurement: Lagos Procurement Agency, Un Women Collaborate On Trainings
- Senegal\_Partenariat ONU Femmes ARCOP En Faveur De La Commande Publique Sensible Au Genre
- Senegal\_Formation De Femmes Entrepreneures Sur La Commande Sensible Au Genre
- Mali\_ONU Femmes Ministere De l'Emploi Et De La Formation Professionnelle ARMDS\_Formation Acteurs Publics
- Mali\_ONU Femmes Ministere De l'Emploi Et De La Formation Professionnelle ARMDS Formations
- Cote d'Ivoire\_Autonomisation De La Femme : ONU Femmes Forme Plusieurs Femmes Sur La Commande Publique
- Cote d'Ivoire\_ONU Femmes Engagé A Promouvoir L'accès Des Femmes Entrepreneures Aux Marchés Publics

Senegal

Mali

Nigeria

Côte d'Ivoire