

FINAL EVALUATION

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

2022 – 2025



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP
GROUPE DE LA BANQUE AFRICAINE
DE DEVELOPPEMENT



we-fi
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
FINANCE INITIATIVE



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Name
AFAWA	Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
ANRMP	National Authority for the Regulation of Public Procurement
ARMDS	Public Procurement and Public Service Delegation Regulatory Authority (Autorité de Régulation des Marchés Publics et des Délégations de Service Public)
CDMP	National Guarantee Fund – Caisse Des Marchés Publics
CSOs	Civil society organizations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DG	Director General
DGMP	General Directorate of Public Procurement
ECOWAS	Economic Community Organization of West African States
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ERP	Enterprise resource planning
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
GE&HR	Gender Equality and Human Rights
GERAAS	Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
GRP	Gender Responsive Procurement
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labor Organization
IR	Inception report
IT	Information Technology
KAPPA	Kaduna State Public Procurement Authority
LNOb	Leave No One Behind
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NGO	Non-Government Organization

Abbreviation	Full Name
OCF	Open Contracting Partnerships
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation/Development Assistance Committee
RBM	Results-Based Management
REC	Regional Economic Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SP	Strategic Plan
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SWEAP	Scaling Women’s Economic Empowerment through Affirmative Procurement Reforms
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNGM	United Nations Global Marketplace
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UN-SWAP EPI	United Nations System-Wide Action Plan Evaluation Performance Indicator
UNW	UN Women
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WCARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office
WEE	Women’s Economic Empowerment
WEP	Women's Empowerment Principle
WFP	World Food Program
WLBs	Women-led businesses
WOBs	Women-owned businesses
WSMEs	Women-owned/-led small and medium businesses

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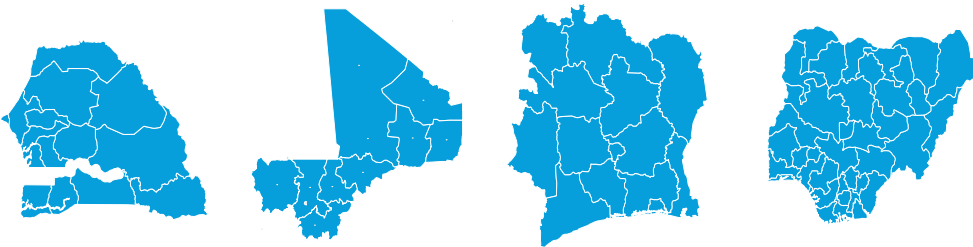




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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Capacity-building session for WSMEs in Senegal, 2023.
Photo: © UN Women



INTRODUCTION

This report presents the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation of the UN Women regional project titled “Women’s Economic Empowerment through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa,” referred to as “Affirmative Procurement.”

UN Women defines affirmative procurement, or gender-responsive procurement (GRP), as the sustainable selection of services, goods, and works that considers the impact on gender equality, extending beyond mere cost management. This approach involves leveraging, purchasing and sourcing opportunities to promote gender equality and foster social and economic advancement through gender-responsive measures implemented at all stages and tiers of procurement and the supply chain¹. By integrating these principles, the project aims to empower women entrepreneurs and enhance their participation in economic activities, ultimately contributing to broader gender equality goals in the region.

The evaluation adopted both summative and formative approaches to analyze the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and adherence to human rights and gender equality. It was framed within a human rights-based and gender-responsive context that emphasizes the principles of inclusion, participation, and equitable power relations. By applying these principles, the evaluation seeks to provide actionable insights that will inform future initiatives and enhance the overall impact of UN Women’s efforts in the region. These insights will help ensure that subsequent projects are better equipped to address the needs of women-led/owned businesses, promote gender equality, and foster sustainable development.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The evaluation focuses on the Affirmative Procurement project funded by We-Fi through the African Development Bank (AfDB), as part of its pan-African program AFAWA, with a total budget of USD 4 million. The project is executed by UN Women in collaboration with national partners in Senegal, Mali, Nigeria, and Côte d’Ivoire, running from March 2022 to March 2025. Its primary objective is to promote women's economic empowerment by improving their access to procurement opportunities. Key components include policy reforms, strengthening public sector institutions, advocating for gender-responsive supply chain practices in the private sector, and capacity building for women-owned businesses. Additionally, the project supported the implementation of gender-responsive procurement initiatives in the context of the COVID-19 response, and seeks to develop partnerships with regional economic communities such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), WAEMU, and ECOWAS.

¹ Empowering women through public procurement and enabling inclusive growth, UN Women and Open Contracting Partnership, 2021



EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation aims to enhance UN Women's approach to women's economic empowerment through affirmative procurement in West Africa by providing an independent assessment of the project's achievement of its objectives. It assessed the performance against targets and indicators, examined strategies, implementation modalities, and partnerships, and identified constraints and opportunities. The evaluation report offers a comprehensive analysis based on key criteria such as relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and gender equality and human rights. It critically assesses the project's design, implementation, and outcomes, focusing on the participation of women-owned businesses in public procurement, broader benefits for women's economic empowerment, and the project's alignment with national and regional priorities. Moreover, it explores the potential for sustained benefits beyond the project's lifespan and emphasizes the project's role in promoting gender equality and human rights.

The main objectives of the evaluation are to comprehensively assess the project's achievements, including intended and unintended outcomes, by analyzing its effectiveness, challenges faced during implementation, and lessons learned. It seeks to provide evidence-based insights on the relevance and sustainability of UN Women's efforts to economically empower women in West Africa through affirmative procurement reform, while also offering recommendations to enhance future programming and a revised Theory of Change for the Women Economic Empowerment area.

The evaluation used a comprehensive approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the project's effects on its objectives and targets. Stakeholder engagement included UN Women representatives, government institutions, implementing partners, NGOs, local CSOs, and beneficiaries. Despite participation challenges, data collection involved interviews and focus group discussions, adhering to UN Women's evaluation policies and principles. The sampling aimed for "saturation" to capture significant themes from key informants across four main groups: policymakers, advocates, the private sector, and women's groups. This ensured a thorough evaluation of the affirmative procurement project's implementation and impact on women's economic empowerment.

EVALUATION MAIN FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

Overall, the affirmative procurement project's approach is highly relevant because it addresses the root causes of gender inequality identified by various studies in the procurement sector, fosters capacity building for sustainable impact, promotes collaboration and partnerships, and contributes to inclusive economic growth. By focusing on systemic change and empowerment, the project has the potential to create lasting positive impacts for women-owned/led businesses and the wider economy.

The project's development results framework is comprehensive, outlining its development objective, outcomes, outputs, performance indicators, baseline, and target values.



Capacity-building session on procurement processes in Côte d'Ivoire, 2023.
Photo: © UN Women

This thorough approach promotes clarity and accountability, facilitating effective monitoring and evaluation. However, the evaluation team identified some weaknesses in the formulation of outcomes and indicators with respect to Results-Based Management (RBM) principles. A clearer distinction between outputs and outcomes indicators, respecting their hierarchical relationship within the results framework matrix, is necessary.

The evaluation team found that the UN Women's affirmative procurement project aligns with local needs, priorities, and policies in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Nigeria, as well as with international goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN Women's Strategic Plan. The project is also aligned with the donors' policies and priorities. Moreover, while the fundamental needs faced by women-owned/led businesses in the procurement sector remained consistent throughout the project, the UN Women Affirmative Procurement Project effectively adapted to evolving challenges and contexts. The project demonstrated adaptability, moving beyond initial advocacy and awareness-raising efforts to develop tailored training programs, improved access to information and networks, and stronger collaboration between women entrepreneurs and government agencies, and the private sector.

COHERENCE

While there is some internal collaboration and synergies within the UN Women WEE program, the project has not

yet established strong connections with other UN agencies at the country level. These synergies and interlinkages across UNW Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) unit foster a collaborative approach to addressing the barriers to women's economic empowerment and contribute to the achievement of shared goals across the organization. If strengthened, the internal coherence within WEE units and the UN System will ensure a more effective and sustainable impact on promoting gender equality and sustainable development through the project.

EFFECTIVENESS

- In each of the four countries where the project was implemented, there was a noticeable, albeit modest, increase in the number of capacitated women-led and women-owned businesses capable of accessing procurement processes and opportunities. While the contribution aligns with the project's scale and ambitions, it serves as a valuable starting point laying the groundwork for more substantial growth and enhanced economic inclusion in the future.
- The Regional Project achieved notable success in capacity building by equipping public officials with the tools needed to effectively reform affirmative procurement policies and regulations, thereby enhancing women's access to procurement opportunities, and advancing women's economic empowerment in the region.
- The evaluation team noted also, based on project monitoring data and other data collection sources,

that the project successfully contributed to the adoption of one legal reform and three policies aimed at promoting gender-responsive procurement. Therefore, the project met its overall planned objective of implementing four normative changes by the time of project completion.

- The project effectively advanced gender-responsive procurement within the private sector by fostering commitments to the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) and promoting affirmative procurement practices across participating countries.

EFFICIENCY

- The project funding allowed for the implementation of all planned activities, but it was insufficient to fully achieve affirmative procurement. While the staff possessed the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill the results framework, their numbers were inadequate given the project's scale and the many stakeholders involved. This resulted in increased demand for support from country offices and a need for shared resources. To effectively manage the diverse needs of participants and meet ambitious goals, it may be essential to increase the workforce. Doing so could enhance the project's capacity to deliver impactful results and ensure that all stakeholders receive the necessary attention and support.
- The evaluation team found substantial evidence to conclude that the project's implementation strategy was both efficient and cost-effective. Most planned activities have been successfully completed at a low cost and some funds are yet to be used. Indeed, despite all outputs being delivered, there were some delays in project execution related to the absorption capacity. This situation resulted in the approval of a no-cost extension by the donor, granting additional time to carry out remaining or additional activities and ensuring that all objectives could be fully achieved by December 2025. The project effectively maximized diverse and strategic partnerships, significantly enhancing the efficiency and success of intervention delivery and results achievement.

SUSTAINABILITY

- The Affirmative Procurement Project demonstrates a strong foundation for sustainable change through its multidimensional approach, focusing on both policy

reforms and capacity building. This strategy, by creating a supportive policy environment and empowering women entrepreneurs and stakeholders, creates a more inclusive and equitable procurement ecosystem. The project's success in implementing affirmative procurement policies in participating countries will serve as a model for wider adoption, showcasing its potential to foster a more equitable and inclusive economy.

- While the project holds great potential for sustainability, certain weaknesses hinder its full realization. The limited scope of interventions, coupled with challenges related to ongoing funding, securing widespread stakeholder buy-in, and addressing deeply rooted cultural norms, pose significant obstacles to achieving lasting impact. Furthermore, the project's current monitoring and evaluation systems require strengthening to effectively measure progress, adapt to changing needs, and demonstrate the project's full impact.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

- While the Affirmative Procurement project design incorporates human rights, non-discrimination, and gender equality principles, a more structured approach is needed to fully operationalize a "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) strategy. The absence of targeted affirmative action to reach vulnerable groups represents also a key challenge. Specifically, the selection criteria, while non-discriminatory, do not proactively identify and address the unique barriers faced by vulnerable women; outreach strategies are not sufficiently targeted; monitoring and evaluation mechanisms do not adequately capture the participation and outcomes for vulnerable groups.
- The project's implementation largely reflects HRBA and gender equality principles through targeted interventions such as participatory training sessions and tailored support services, but challenges remain in consistently reaching the most marginalized women and ensuring equitable access to project services. However, this indicates a weakness in the project design rather than in its implementation, as the targeted Women-led Small and Medium Enterprises (WSMEs) clearly excluded marginalized groups. This should be addressed in the future to ensure inclusivity and equity in UNW efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

LESSONS LEARNED



LESSON 1:

A multifaceted approach that targets public policy reforms, capacity building, and strong collaboration with the public and private sectors is essential for effectively addressing the systemic barriers faced by women-owned/led businesses in procurement. By empowering these businesses with the necessary skills, knowledge, and networks, and by equipping government officials with the tools to implement affirmative procurement policies, projects can foster a supportive environment that promotes equity and drives inclusive economic growth.



LESSON 2:

The project's alignment with other UN Women initiatives on women's economic empowerment enhances its impact by enabling cross-programmatic learning and collaboration. Engaging in joint initiatives and knowledge sharing with other UN agencies could further amplify the project's effectiveness, driving systemic change and fostering inclusive economic growth across the region. Leveraging partnerships with various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations, not only strengthens the implementation of affirmative procurement policies but also promotes a more holistic approach to supporting women-owned businesses. To maximize impact, it is essential for future projects to actively seek and cultivate collaborations that align with shared goals of gender equality and sustainable development.



LESSON 3:

While the project demonstrated exceptional performance by significantly exceeding all reported outcome indicators, it is crucial to ensure the accuracy of indicator classifications and the alignment of targets with project objectives. The analysis revealed that the reported outcome indicators were more accurately classified as output indicators, suggesting that the initial targets may have been set too low. This highlights the importance of clearly defining outcomes and outputs during project planning to facilitate meaningful evaluations and avoid misinterpretations of success. For future projects, incorporating robust indicator definitions and realistic target-setting practices will enhance the ability to measure true impact and support effective scaling efforts.



LESSON 4:

Comprehensive capacity-building initiatives that include targeted training, mentorship, and post-training support are instrumental in empowering women-led businesses to effectively engage in public procurement processes. By equipping these enterprises with essential skills in procurement strategies, digital marketing, and financial management, projects can significantly enhance their competitiveness and market reach. The creation of supportive communities through platforms like WhatsApp further extends program impacts, fostering continuous peer support and collaboration. However, the success of such initiatives depends on adapting the training format to local needs, such as providing content in local languages and accommodating different learning preferences through a mix of online and face-to-face sessions.



Technical steering committee meeting in Côte d'Ivoire, 2022.
Photo: © UN Women

LESSON 5:

The success of affirmative procurement reforms is centered on strategic partnerships with government institutions and leveraging political will, technical expertise, and investment to create evidence-based policies. Comprehensive training programs are crucial for building public institutional capacity, surpassing targets by equipping officials with skills in gender-responsive procurement, compliance, and financial literacy. Collaborating with experienced procurement professionals ensures participants gain practical insights, thus fostering the adoption of inclusive procurement processes. Additionally, integrating practical experience requirements, like DoTakeAction's bids application process, will boost the confidence and capabilities of women-led enterprises.

LESSON 6:

Effective integration of affirmative procurement principles into national and regional policies requires strategic advocacy, robust stakeholder engagement, and leveraging existing legislative frameworks to ensure sustainability and inclusivity. High-level advocacy efforts, such as workshops and partnership with government entities, are crucial for gaining support and driving systemic reforms. While political changes can pose challenges, maintaining momentum through strategic relationships and collaborative networks can sustain progress. Additionally, it is essential to address regional disparities and tailor approaches to context-specific opportunities and constraints, as demonstrated by varying commitment levels among countries like Mali and Côte d'Ivoire.

LESSON 7:

Implementing initiatives to promote Gender-Responsive Procurement (GRP) within the private sector can significantly enhance the commitment to gender equality, particularly through the adoption of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). The project's focus on increasing the number of signatories, especially to WEP 5, has demonstrated that high-level advocacy and strategic engagement with private sector stakeholders can create a more inclusive and equitable business environment. The successful integration of WEPs highlights their potential as a valuable tool for driving corporate change and advancing women's economic empowerment. Future projects should prioritize the incorporation of WEP-related outcomes, leveraging these principles to foster sustainable progress toward gender equality across various industries.

CONCLUSIONS

RELEVANCE

- The UN Women affirmative procurement project is highly relevant in its approach to effectively address the root causes of gender inequality in the procurement sector. By fostering capacity building and focusing on systemic change, the project not only empowers women-led businesses but also enhances overall economic participation. Furthermore, it is well aligned with local needs and international goals, ensuring that its interventions resonate with both regional priorities and global commitments to gender equality. *[Based on findings 1,2,3,4]*



COHERENCE

- The evaluation indicates strong internal coherence of the UN Women affirmative procurement project, characterized by effective integration of its components and collaboration with other WEE initiatives, while highlighting the need for enhanced external coherence through deeper collaboration with other UN agencies and clarity on synergies with similar projects. *[Based on finding 5]*



EFFECTIVENESS

- The affirmative procurement project has made significant progresses in advancing women's economic empowerment in West Africa by effectively developing the capacity of women entrepreneurs to access public procurement opportunities. Through targeted training programs, outreach initiatives, and strategic partnerships, the project has equipped women-led businesses with essential skills and knowledge necessary for navigating the complexities of the procurement process. *[Based on finding 6]*
- The project has effectively enhanced the capacity of public institutions and private institutions to a lesser extent, and fostered important policy reforms, demonstrating its strategic significance in promoting gender-responsive procurement practices. *[Based on finding 7, 8, 9]*
- The affirmative procurement project has effectively integrated gender-responsive principles into policies in some participating countries, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, but ongoing success requires sustained advocacy and strategic partnerships. *[Based on finding 7, 8, 9]*



EFFICIENCY

- The affirmative procurement project effectively utilized its budget to support programmatic and operational activities across participating countries; however, concerns about inadequate funding suggest a need for increased financial resources to maximize impact. While the project demonstrated an efficient and cost-effective implementation strategy, leveraging WEE initiatives to share costs, project staff were



Capacity-building session on procurement processes in Côte d'Ivoire, 2023.

Photo: © UN Women

notably overstretched, relying heavily on external consultants. To sustain effective delivery, a balanced staffing strategy is essential. Additionally, the absence of regular financial audits indicates a need for enhanced transparency and accountability in future initiatives to strengthen fiscal oversight and stakeholder trust. *[Based on finding 10, 11]*

- The affirmative procurement project successfully maximized its partnerships across various sectors to enhance the effectiveness and reach of its initiatives. By leveraging the strengths and expertise of diverse implementing partners, the project facilitated a collaborative approach that optimized resource use and fostered innovative solutions. This strategic engagement not only promoted knowledge exchange but also built local capacity, ensuring that the project's benefits extended beyond immediate results. Moving forward, continuing to cultivate these partnerships will be essential for achieving even greater impact. *[Based on finding 12]*

SUSTAINABILITY

- The UN Women Affirmative Procurement Project has established a strong foundation for sustainable change in the procurement sector through its focus on policy reforms and capacity building. However, some challenges related to the limited scope of interventions, funding, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring hinder its full sustainability. *[Based on finding 13, 14]*

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

- The Affirmative Procurement project effectively integrates Human Rights-Based Approaches and gender equality principles, promoting women's economic empowerment and inclusivity. However, there is a need to enhance targeted outreach to vulnerable groups and address intersectional inequalities. Notably, efforts to include people with disabilities will demonstrate the project's commitment to fostering inclusivity and empowerment. *[Based on finding 15, 16]*

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Recommendation 1:

To enhance the impact and sustainability of the project, continue to focus on capacity building and systemic change. Expand training and outreach initiatives to equip more women-led businesses with essential skills for public procurement, ensuring alignment with both regional and global gender equality goals. *[Related to conclusions 1, 3 and 8]*



2

Recommendation 2:

Improve external coherence by fostering deeper collaboration with other UN agencies and identifying synergies with similar projects. Continue to maximize partnerships across various sectors to enhance resource use, promote knowledge exchange, and build local capacity. *[Related to conclusions 2 and 7]*



3

Recommendation 3:

To reinforce the project's strategic significance, expand the scope of interventions to enhance stakeholder engagement and support for gender-responsive procurement practices. Address challenges related to funding and monitoring to ensure sustainable policy reforms and capacity building in both public and private institutions. *[Related to conclusions 4 and 8]*



4

Recommendation 4:

Address funding concerns by exploring additional financial resources and implementing regular financial audits to enhance transparency and accountability. Develop a balanced staffing strategy to reduce reliance on external consultants, ensuring sustainable project delivery. *[Related to conclusions 5 and 7]*



5

Recommendation 5:

Expand targeted outreach efforts to engage vulnerable groups and address intersectional inequalities, strengthening the project's commitment to human rights-based approaches and inclusivity. Continue integrating policy reforms and capacity building to establish sustainable change in the procurement sector. *[Related to conclusions 8 and 9]*

Detailed information on the implementation of recommendations, including key actions to be considered, responsible actors, priority and impact levels for each recommendation, as well as the level of difficulty, can be found in Annex 2. In addition, a number of other general recommendations have been outlined throughout the report based on the analysis of pertinent issues, aimed at guiding the development of the next phase of the project. These recommendations address key challenges and opportunities identified during the evaluation and are summarized in Box 4. By implementing these recommendations, the project can enhance its effectiveness and sustainability, ensuring a greater impact on women's economic empowerment through affirmative procurement practices.

1 INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION



Photo: © UN Women

Technical steering committee meeting in Côte d'Ivoire, 2022.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Affirmative procurement or Gender-responsive procurement (GRP) is a crucial mechanism for advancing gender equity, as procurement spending represents significant public investment in economic development. By redirecting this spending toward women-led initiatives, governments can stimulate economic growth, increase women's access to resources, and uplift entire communities². An AfDB report pointed out that although one-third (34.5%) of formal firms in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) report women ownership participation, women-owned small and medium enterprises (WSMEs) remain severely underrepresented as suppliers, securing only an estimated 1 percent of procurement contracts³. This underrepresentation is especially pronounced in West Africa, where significant disparities exist between women's economic participation and inclusive growth.



In this context, the multi-country project being evaluated in this report is part of UN Women's broader commitment to promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment in West Africa. Focusing on affirmative procurement, the project seeks to create inclusive economic opportunities for women in four West African countries: Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Nigeria. By harnessing public procurement as a strategic lever, the initiative aims to address systemic barriers that have historically limited women's participation in economic activities and decision-making processes. It seeks to advance gender equality in economic opportunities by promoting policies and practices that encourage women-owned businesses in public procurement processes.

1.2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This project is part of a broader effort to enhance women's economic empowerment by ensuring their inclusion in government and corporate procurement processes to enhance economic opportunities for women-owned businesses, an effort critical to advancing gender equality and poverty reduction in these West African nations. By highlighting the unique contexts and challenges faced by each country, we aim to tailor recommendations that support the UN Women's mission of achieving economic gender parity through systemic change in public procurement processes.

Senegal: Senegal is a country located in West Africa, known for its vibrant culture, rich history, and growing economy. With a population of approximately 16 million, about 50.8 percent (8,579 thousand people in 2021) is multidimensionally poor while an additional 18.2 percent is classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty

² Empowering women through public procurement and enabling inclusive growth, UN Women and Open Contracting Partnership, 2021

³ Women's Economic Empowerment through Affirmative procurement Reform in West Africa, Technical Assistance Request, African Development Bank, 22 June 2021

(3,069 thousand people in 2021)⁴, based on the most recent survey data that were publicly available for Senegal's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) estimation [2019].

While Senegal has made notable progress on women's rights globally, significant challenges remain in achieving gender equality. Senegal has established legal frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality, including constitutional provisions and laws against gender-based violence. However, traditional practices and cultural norms can sometimes undermine these legal protections. Access to education for girls has seen improvements, though challenges remain, particularly in rural areas. While enrollment rates for girls in primary education have increased rising to around 91.2% in 2022⁵ from 81.1% in 2000, dropout rates and barriers to secondary education continue to affect their overall academic progress. Gender-based violence remains a serious concern in Senegal. In 2021, 30.5% of women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18, and in 2018, 12.4% of women aged 15-49 reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the previous year. Although there are legal measures in place, societal attitudes and stigma can hinder women's reporting and access to justice. Initiatives exist to raise awareness and combat this violence, but efforts need ongoing support and resources.

In the area of women economic empowerment, according to UN Women, in 2021, 33% of women in the country were employed but living below the international poverty line, earning less than \$2.15 per day⁶. While women are significant contributors to the Senegalese economy, particularly in agriculture, where they represent about 50% of the agricultural labor force, generally, women's participation in the economy remains lower than desired due to systemic barriers and traditional gender roles. Nonetheless, there has been a noticeable increase in women entrepreneurship, aided by various microfinance initiatives. It is estimated that around 30% of women in Senegal own businesses, primarily in sectors such as trade, agriculture, and services. However, a significant disparity persists regarding their involvement in public procurement, highlighting the need for further interventions and initiatives to translate legal advancements into tangible economic prospects. In this respect, recognizing

this disparity, the government has made commitments to enhance economic opportunities for women, integrating gender-responsive policies within public financial management. For that, a number of initiatives have been initiated including legislative reforms, affirmative action programs, training, and awareness-raising. However, it will be essential to continue and intensify initiatives to ensure equitable participation of women in public procurement in Senegal. Through affirmative procurement, Senegal aims to increase the presence of women-owned businesses in its growing economic sectors, such as agriculture and services.

“Senegal has ambitions to become an emerging economy by 2035. But it cannot do this without including women in its economy and giving them the tools and training to economically empower themselves, becoming, if they wish to, small business owners and entrepreneurs in their own right⁷.”

Cote d'Ivoire: Côte d'Ivoire, also known as Ivory Coast, is a West African country with a population of around 29 million. It is renowned for its economic prosperity, particularly as one of the world's largest producers of cocoa, cashews, coffee, palm oil, and rubber. The economy of Côte d'Ivoire has been one of the fastest growing in Africa over the past decade, with growth rates consistently above 7% before the COVID-19 pandemic. The post-pandemic recovery has been robust, supported by investments in infrastructure and improvements in the business environment. However, in spite of these developments, as of recent data from around 2021, approximately 39% of the population in Côte d'Ivoire lived below the national poverty line. Extreme poverty affects about 10% of the population. Women represent a significant portion of the poor in Côte d'Ivoire. According to the World Bank female-headed households tend to experience higher poverty rates than male-headed households, often attributed to limited access to resources and opportunities. These figures illustrate the ongoing challenges faced by women in Côte d'Ivoire, highlighting the

⁴ Human development report 2021/2022, Briefing note for countries on the 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Index, UNDP 2023

⁵ Results of the 5th General Population and Housing Census published in 2023 by the National Agency for Statistics and Demography (ANSD)

⁶ All statistics are drawn from the UN Women Data Hub's 2021 Country Fact Sheet for Senegal

⁷ Closing the gender gap in Senegal's economy, ICR (Investment Climate Reform Facility), 27 June 2023

need for targeted policies and interventions to address gender inequities and reduce poverty. In this respect, Côte d'Ivoire has shown its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment by ratifying most of the principal human rights instruments at the international and regional levels.

In November 2016, Côte d'Ivoire adopted a constitution that enshrines the principles of gender equality and equal opportunities, including in the labor market. However, despite these commitments, there are still obstacles that hinder progress towards gender equality. In 2021, 27% of women aged 20–24 years old were married or in a union before age 18. In 2018, 16.4% of women aged 15–49 years reported that they had been subject to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months. Besides that, financial exclusion and a lack of economic empowerment present a major obstacle for Ivorian women. According to UN Women, in 2021, 24.1% of women in the country were employed but living below the international poverty line, earning less than \$2.15 per day⁸. Overall, Côte d'Ivoire has made significant strides in economic recovery and growth following a period of political instability. However, despite being one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, Côte d'Ivoire faces challenges in gender equality within business sectors. Women remain underrepresented in the formal economy, and their participation in public procurement is limited. In particular, systemic barriers such as discrimination and bias and lack of awareness and knowledge hinder women entrepreneurs from participating in procurement opportunities. Therefore, the project in Côte d'Ivoire focuses on addressing these disparities by fostering an ecosystem that promotes women-owned businesses, including advocating for policy reforms and building the capacities of women entrepreneurs to compete effectively in public tenders thus focusing on dismantling barriers that prevent women from accessing lucrative public contracts⁹.

Mali: Mali is a landlocked country in West Africa with a population of 22 395 489 million including 11 138 934 of women in 2022, known for its rich cultural heritage and

historical significance, particularly as a center of trade and learning in ancient times. Extreme poverty in Mali is a significant concern, marked by high levels of economic deprivation and vulnerability. As of 2021, approximately 42% of the population lived below the national poverty line, with extreme poverty impacting around 16% of Malian households. This situation worsened in 2022, rising to 19.1%, driven by a decline in purchasing power among the most vulnerable due to escalating prices, consumption pressures, and sluggish economic growth. Rural areas are particularly affected, with poverty rates often exceeding 60%. Notably, densely populated rural areas in the south account for 90% of the country's poverty¹⁰. In this context, women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, especially in rural regions where their access to resources and services is severely limited.

While Mali has made some progress on women's rights globally, achieving full gender equality remains a challenge. Although the country boasts a law requiring a minimum quota of 30% for each gender¹¹ in parliament, bringing the number of women's seats to 28.6% in 2021 (compared to 9.52% in the previous legislature)¹² women's political participation has yet to reach its full potential. Cultural norms frequently restrict women's mobility and decision-making power, hindering their ability to break free from poverty. Additionally, access to education and healthcare is often less favorable for women, which negatively impacts their overall well-being and economic opportunities. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence and harmful traditional practices, is prevalent in Mali. While there are legal frameworks aimed at addressing these issues, cultural stigmas and lack of enforcement can impede progress in protecting women's rights. Insecurity, particularly in rebels' occupied areas, serves as a major catalyst for violence against women, often perpetrated by members of armed groups, exacerbating an already critical situation¹³. In 2018, 18.4% of women aged 15–49 years reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months¹⁴.

Since September 2023, Mali has faced heightened tensions involving separatist forces, coupled with ongoing

⁸ All statistics are drawn from the UN Women Data Hub's 2021 Country Fact Sheet for Côte d'Ivoire

⁹ Project document: "Women's economic empowerment through affirmative procurement reform in West Africa, first narrative report 2022–2023

¹⁰ The World Bank in Mali, The world bank, 2024. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mali/overview>

¹¹ Law 2015-052, (2015): Law establishing measures to promote gender equality in access to appointive and elective positions.

¹² MINUSMA, Three times more women elected in the 2020 legislative elections: a significant progress towards equal representation, May 12, 2020.

¹³ MINUSMA, L'impact de la crise sur les femmes maliennes, 10 janvier 2024

¹⁴ All statistics are drawn from the UN Women Data Hub's 2021 Country Fact Sheet for Mali

threats from jihadist groups in the North. This ongoing security crisis and socio-political instability present unique challenges, hindering economic development, especially for women. While there is a growing trend of women in entrepreneurship, many women-run businesses operate in informal sectors and face obstacles such as lack of access to finance and markets. However, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of supporting women's economic empowerment as a means to foster peace and stability. Therefore, efforts aimed at rebuilding and developing the economy present a valuable opportunity to integrate affirmative procurement as a strategy for women empowerment. Consequently, the project in Mali focused on enhancing women's participation in procurement processes across both public and private sectors. The initiatives undertaken included targeted training programs and advocacy aimed at embedding gender considerations into procurement policies.

Nigeria: Nigeria is a West African country with a population of over 211 million of which 101.6 million are women and girls, making it the most populous and most diverse country in Africa¹⁵. The country has a mixed economy that relies on oil and agriculture.

While global progress has been made on women's rights, significant challenges remain in achieving gender equality in the country. Nigeria has various laws aimed at promoting gender equality, but enforcement can be inconsistent. The Nigerian constitution guarantees equal rights, but customary and religious laws often impose restrictions on women's rights, particularly in northern regions. In the education sector, access to education for girls has improved in recent years, but disparities remain, especially in rural areas. Factors such as poverty, cultural attitudes, and early marriage can hinder girls' education. Indeed, as of 2022, 133 million Nigerians are multidimensional poor, with 50% being women and girls. According to UN Women, in 2021, 32.2% of women in Nigeria were

employed but lived below the international poverty line, earning less than \$2.15 per day¹⁶. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence and harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, continues to be prevalent. Efforts to combat these issues include advocacy and legal frameworks, but societal norms often impede progress. About 43.4% of women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18. In 2018, 13.2% of women aged 15-49 reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the previous year.

In terms of Women Economic Empowerment, women play a vital role in the informal economy, but they are underrepresented in formal employment and leadership positions. Economic challenges and limited access to resources can restrict women's entrepreneurship. Indeed, Nigeria is home to a thriving community of women entrepreneurs, with 23 million female entrepreneurs commanding 41% of the country's micro-businesses, ranking Nigeria among the highest rates of entrepreneurship globally¹⁷. However, despite their significant contribution, women entrepreneurs face numerous barriers to accessing markets, particularly public procurement. Indeed, while there is a growing entrepreneurial spirit among Nigerian women and women's entrepreneurship frameworks exist, the gap in accessing public procurement remains a challenge. Women face substantial barriers, including limited access to finance, information, and networks necessary to compete in public procurement. However, Nigeria, with the largest economy in Africa, still presents a unique context where affirmative procurement can significantly alter the economic empowerment of women across its diverse sectors. The project's initiatives in Nigeria aimed to bridge these disparities by equipping women-owned businesses with the skills and networks needed to access procurement contracts and by working with government agencies, the private sector, and civil society to create a more inclusive procurement landscape that benefits women entrepreneurs¹⁸.

¹⁵ National Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) policy and action plan, Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs (FMWA), Nigeria, Abuja 2023

¹⁶ All statistics are drawn from the UN Women Data Hub's 2021 Country Fact Sheet for Cote d'Ivoire

¹⁷ Impact of Women on Nigeria's economy, PwC, March 2020, <https://www.pwc.com/ng/en/>

¹⁸ Project document: "Women's economic empowerment through affirmative procurement reform in West Africa, first narrative report 2022-2023



Capacity-building session on gender responsive procurement in Côte d'Ivoire, 2023.
Photo: © UN Women

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBJECT OF EVALUATION



Technical steering committee
meeting in Côte d'Ivoire, 2022.

Photo: © UN Women



Photo: © UN Women



The project also includes specific activities aimed at supporting the implementation of gender-responsive procurement initiatives within the context of the COVID-19 response in the region. Overall, the project operates primarily at the national level, with some regional involvement, particularly in developing partnerships with Regional Economic Communities (REC) such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the West African Economic Community and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and Economic Community Organization of West African States (ECOWAS).

2.1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The subject of this evaluation is the project titled “*Women’s Economic Empowerment through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa*” shortened as “*Affirmative Procurement*” in this report. Funded by We-fi through the African Development Bank (AfDB) with a total budget of USD 4 million and executed by UN Women in close collaboration with a range of national partners in participating countries, the project is set to run from March 2022 to March 2025. As mentioned earlier on, its primary objective is to promote women's economic empowerment by enhancing their access to procurement opportunities in four countries: Senegal, Mali, Nigeria, and Côte d’Ivoire. The project encompasses a number of key components: policy reforms and the strengthening of public sector institutions and officials to adopt and implement affirmative procurement provisions; advocacy to encourage the private sector to adopt gender-responsive supply chain practices; and capacity building for women-owned businesses to enhance their access to procurement opportunities.

2.2. RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

The project's development objective is to “*improve women’s economic empowerment through women-led businesses’ access to procurement opportunities.*” This objective aligns with both long-term and short-term international development goals.

Overall, the project comprises five main outcomes and nine outputs, summarized in the following table:

Table 1: Project results framework

Component 1: Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa	
Outcome 1.1: Strengthened capacity of women-led businesses to access procurement processes	Output 1.1.1: Database of women-led businesses compiled
	Output 1.1.2: Women-led businesses trained and accessing advisory services to improve capacity to access procurement
	Output 1.1.3: Communications, awareness raising to reach out women-led businesses
Outcome 1.2: Strengthened capacity of public institutions to formulate and implement affirmative procurement policies	Output 1.2.1: Training of government officials to formulate and deliver affirmative procurement reform
Outcome 1.3: National and regional policies and regulations adapted to integrate affirmative procurement principles	Output 1.3.1: Review of national laws and regulations and technical assistance to public sector institutions
	Output 1.3.2: Regional advocacy, policy dialogue and peer learning
Outcome 1.4: Increased awareness among private sector top level corporate leadership to foster gender-responsive procurement policies and practices	Output 1.4.1: Communications campaign
	Output 1.4.2: Private sector supply chain Forum.
Component 2: Affirmative Procurement Initiatives in COVID-19 response and recovery in West Africa	
Outcome 2.1: Increased capacity of women-led businesses to operate and provide goods and services as part of the COVID19 response	Output 2.1.1: Mapping of women-led businesses capacity to pivot to COVID related production.

Finally, as the economic impact of COVID-19 lessened in the participating countries, it was considered to consolidate the interventions from Component 2 into Component 1. This strategic adjustment aimed to streamline resources and efforts, thereby enhancing the project's overall effectiveness and focus.

2.3. THEORY OF CHANGE

Based on the definition used by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), a theory of change is a method that explains how a given intervention (or set of interventions) is expected to lead to a specific change in development through an evidence-based analysis of cause-and-effect links¹⁹.

For the affirmative procurement reform project, the project document does not explicitly include a Theory of Change. However, in its initial funding proposal to We-Fi, the AfDB developed a theory of change (ToC) model

based on the project's objectives, as outlined in its procurement budget. It reads as follows²⁰:

1. If national and regional regulatory environments includes procurement policies and practices designed and implemented in a gender-responsive manner;
2. If procuring entities make concerted efforts to source from WSME, including as part of the COVID-19 recovery in West Africa;
3. If the capacity of women entrepreneurs is strengthened to facilitate access to finance, information, networks and skills, then,
4. The gender gap in economic opportunities will be reduced because women entrepreneurs will have access to a more equal share of the market.

This ToC was articulated within a project results framework that accurately provided a structured approach to outlining expected outcomes, outputs, and indicators. However, it does not identify any assumptions, which may bring some challenges in fully identifying potential risks and obstacles. This omission can lead to inadequate planning and insufficient risk mitigation strategies.

¹⁹ UNDAF Companion Guidance: Theory of Change, United Nations Development Group (UNDG)

²⁰ Women's Economic Empowerment through Affirmative procurement Reform in West Africa, Technical Assistance Request, African Development Bank, 22 June 2021

BOX 1: SUGGESTED ASSUMPTIONS RELATED TO THE PROJECT TOC AND HOW THEY INTERACT WITH THE PROJECT

THEORY OF CHANGE:

If national and regional regulatory environments includes procurement policies and practices designed and implemented in a gender-responsive manner; If procuring entities make concerted efforts to source from WSME, including as part of the COVID-19 recovery in West Africa; If the capacity of women entrepreneurs is strengthened to facilitate access to finance, information, networks and skills; then, the gender gap in economic opportunities will be reduced because women entrepreneurs will have access to a more equal share of the market.

1 ASSUMPTION

Government and regulatory bodies remain committed to implementing and enforcing gender-responsive procurement policies.

Associated Risk: Changes in government or policy priorities could disrupt momentum.

Interaction: Effective implementation of policies depends on sustained political will and administrative commitment

2 ASSUMPTION

Procuring entities are willing and able to adapt their processes to incorporate sourcing from women-owned small and medium enterprises (WSMEs).

Associated Risk: Resistance or inertia within organizations could impact progress

Interaction: Transitioning procurement processes requires not just intention but also the ability to implement necessary changes effectively.

3 ASSUMPTION

Adequate resources (training, funding, mentors) are available for strengthening the capacity of women entrepreneurs.

Associated Risk: Any scarcity of resources could hinder the capacity-building effort

Interaction: Capacity-building efforts need targeted resources to be effective, ensuring that women entrepreneurs are equipped to compete.

4 ASSUMPTION

The broader economic environment remains stable, allowing for robust procurement and entrepreneurial activities.

Associated Risk: Economic downturns or crises could derail efforts or change priorities.

Interaction: The stability of the economic and business environment directly affects both procuring entities and entrepreneurs alike.

5 ASSUMPTION

Social and cultural norms will support or at least not hinder women's increased participation in the market.

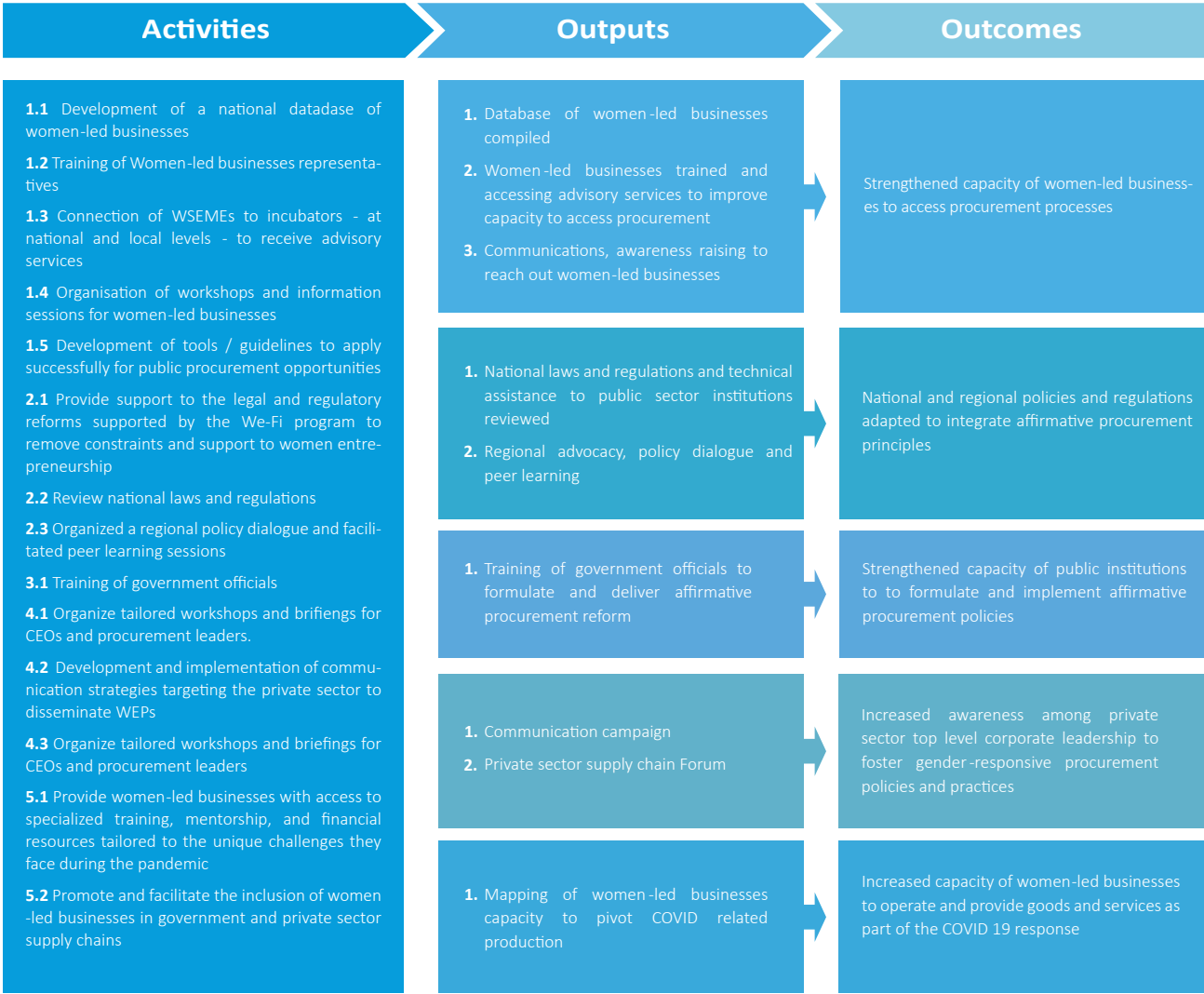
Associated Risk: Prevailing stereotypes or biases could create additional barriers for women entrepreneur

Interaction: Empowerment initiatives often face hurdles when existing cultural norms conflict with Project goals.

Without explicit assumptions, the rationale behind why and how certain activities are expected to lead to desired outcomes becomes unclear. Conversely, by clearly articulating the assumptions that underpin the project’s strategy, a ToC can assist in identifying potential risks and factors that may influence the project's success. This clarity enables more effective planning and risk management.

For this evaluation, addressing the absence of explicit assumptions would enhance understanding of the project dynamics and contribute to a more robust evaluation process. For the reconstructed ToC, the evaluation team suggested the assumptions in Box 1, related to the ToC defined by UN Women WCARO, and associated risks, as well as how they interact with the project's logical flow.

Figure 1: The theory of change visualization diagram



2.4. GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF INTERVENTION

As mentioned earlier on, the project operates in four West African countries: Senegal, Mali, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire. While the project primarily focuses on the country level, it is implemented mainly at national level but with specific interventions at the local level. In Nigeria, the project is implemented in Lagos and Kaduna states, with project management overseen by the UN Women country office in Abuja. In Senegal, the project has been implemented in Dakar, Tambacounda, Bakel, Kaolack, Ziguinchor, Kédougou, Louga, and St Louis. In Mali, training of women enterprises has been conducted in different regions of the country, either online or face-to-face trainings, and in Côte d'Ivoire, the project has been implemented in Abidjan with the participation of some women entrepreneurs located in other regions of the country.

2.5. KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Generally, UN Women does not create results directly but through its boundary partners. The boundary partners include responsible parties (implementation partners) in the execution of programs and projects. In the case of the "Affirmative Procurement", the project partnered with a wide range of stakeholders from Governments, organizations, the civil society and the private sector²¹. The project operated predominantly at the country level, with some communication and capacity development outreach at the regional level, by the UN Women Regional Office (WCARO).

At the regional level, within the framework of developing a Protocol for Women in Trade as part of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the project has established strategic partnerships with the AfCFTA Secretariat. The AfCFTA Regional Stakeholder Consultations, held in Ghana in April 2022, brought together representatives from AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), development agencies, the private sector, women's business associations and networks, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the academia. This meeting yielded significant progress, culminating in an outcome document that identified affirmative procurement as a crucial component to be integrated into the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade. This highlights a commitment to actively promote women's and youth's participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area.

A partnership has been established with the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP), a global think tank dedicated to promoting transparency in procurement processes. This collaboration has enabled UN Women to expand its outreach to policymakers in the procurement community across Africa and globally. OCP's role as a co-host was instrumental in facilitating a successful policy dialogue on gender-responsive public procurement reforms in West Africa, held in June 2023. Ongoing policy dialogue and advocacy efforts are being conducted with the WAEMU Commission, which has expertise in areas such as gender-responsive budgeting, public procurement, and gender issues, among others. At the country level, partnerships have been established with government agencies, the private sector, and women's business associations to support the implementation and sustainability of project activities.

The stakeholder mapping revealed that the project stakeholders can be categorized into four main groups based on their roles in the implementation of the project, namely: (i) strategic partners, (ii) development partners, (iii) executing partner organizations, and (iv) direct beneficiaries of the interventions. The table in Annex 3 outlines the key stakeholders of the project in all countries and the table in annex 7 outlines key stakeholders consulted during the evaluation.

²¹ This information on partnerships was taken from the first and second UN Women project narrative donor reports

3 PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, USE, AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION



High-level advocacy meeting on GRP, Mali, 2024.
Photo: © UN Women

3.1. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION



Photo: © UN Women

As outlined in the Terms of Reference, the overall purpose of the evaluation is to contribute to enhancing UN Women’s approach to women’s economic empowerment through affirmative procurement in West Africa²². In this respect, the evaluation will give an independent assessment of the extent to which the project objectives outlined in the project document have been achieved. It will evaluate performance against the specified targets and indicators at the output level, as well as provide indicative insights into outcome achievements. The assessment will also examine the strategies and implementation modalities employed, partnership arrangements, and identify any constraints and opportunities encountered. Furthermore, the evaluation will offer recommendations aimed at enhancing performance, refining strategies, improving institutional arrangements and partnership collaborations, and addressing any other areas where the evaluation team believes recommendations could be beneficial.

Accordingly, this evaluation report provides a comprehensive assessment of the project, applying the key evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and gender equality and human rights. In so doing, the report critically analyzes the project’s design, implementation, and outcomes. It examines the project’s alignment with national and regional priorities for gender equality and economic growth (relevance), the internal logic and consistency between different elements of its interventions (coherence), and the efficiency of resource utilization (efficiency).

3.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The overarching objective of the final evaluation is to assess the project’s achievements in relation to both intended and unintended outcomes. This includes²³:

- Determining the extent to which the project has achieved its intended outcomes.



The report further investigates the project’s success in achieving its intended objectives of increasing women-owned businesses’ participation in public procurement (effectiveness), its wider quick benefits on women’s economic empowerment and the economic landscape in the target countries, and the likelihood of sustained benefits beyond the project’s lifespan (sustainability). Finally, the evaluation considers the project’s contribution to upholding and promoting gender and human rights, particularly the economic and social rights (Gender equality and human rights).

²² Project Evaluation terms of reference: Affirmative procurement reform in West Africa, UNW, July 2024

²³ Ibid.

- Providing an in-depth analysis and understanding of why certain intended or unintended outcomes have, or have not, occurred.
- Analyzing the challenges encountered during project implementation.
- Documenting lessons learned for the improvement of other ongoing projects in the Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) sector in participating countries, as well as for future programming in general.

The project evaluation had the following interrelated specific objectives²⁴ as provided in the evaluation ToR (Annex 1):

- To provide evidence-based analysis of the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of UN Women work to economically empower women of West Africa through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa;
- To identify what can be enhanced in the way the project interventions are designed and implemented in the region of West Africa.
- To identify lessons learned, strengths and current trends of the project initiatives that have implications for future managerial and programmatic decisions;
- To provide forward-looking recommendations and a reconstructed Theory of Change to strengthen programming in the area of WEE in the region.

3.3. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation covered the project period from March 2022 to March 2025, encompassing all geographical areas: Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Nigeria. It assessed all outputs produced since the project's inception and analyzed the level of achievement of the four immediate

outcomes. The evaluation also provided recommendations for future work in the area of women empowerment through affirmative procurement. Gender equality was integrated as a cross-cutting concern throughout the evaluation methodology and deliverables, and progress in capacitating both immediate and ultimate beneficiaries was assessed.

The project evaluation involved an analysis of progress towards achieving the expected results, measured against the project's Results-framework and targets, and through the use of project indicators. The evaluation identified and documented the short-term, intermediate, and long-term results achieved by the project. It also assessed progress towards achieving the project's intended outcomes at the end of the project's implementation period.

3.4. USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The project final evaluation report will be used by different stakeholders to inform the design and implementation of future similar interventions. Specific users of the evaluation findings and lessons learned include the Regional Office for West and Central Africa and the Country Offices, which are looking to refine their focus and strategies related to women's economic empowerment, and the donors for ensuring the accountability of their investments and for improving project management. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be used also for strategic policy and programmatic decisions, organizational learning and accountability as well as for the identification of good practices addressing the structural impediments to gender equality and the women's economic empowerment. Findings will also feed into UN Women's efforts to promote 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the agenda 2063 of the African Union.

²⁴ Project Evaluation terms of reference: Affirmative procurement reform in West Africa, UNW, July 2024



Photo: © UN Women

4 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS



Photo: © UN Women

Capacity-building session on gender responsive procurement in Côte d'Ivoire, 2023.

4.1. OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation consisted of five main phases:

- i) **Preparation:** The evaluation commissioning unit, UN Women WCARO WEE, finalized the ToR and selected the evaluation team. This phase established evaluation management structures, assembled the team, organized kickoff meetings, and distributed essential documents. Initial contacts were made with key project personnel, and UN Women assisted in organizing the inception meeting for the evaluation team to present the Inception Report.
- ii) **Inception:** The evaluation team conducted a thorough review of project documents to understand the project's background, scope, objectives, implementation, strategies, and emerging results. This informed the development of the Inception Report, supported project and stakeholder analysis, and established the evaluation scope. A comprehensive review of key policy and strategy documents, the project document, and country-specific component documents (including plans and implementation reports) was conducted. The inception meeting was held to establish a shared understanding of the terms of reference, agree on the methodological approach, tools, and timeframe for the evaluation.
- iii) **Data Collection:** Data collection methods outlined in the Inception Report were implemented, including document review, key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), case studies and success stories. Briefing notes summarizing key findings were developed and discussed with stakeholders during debriefing sessions for validation.
- iv) **Data Analysis:** All data gathered during the evaluation was analyzed using agreed frameworks and methods, interpreted, and a judgment made about the meaning of the findings in the project context. Interpretation involved looking beyond the raw data to ask questions about what they mean, what the most significant findings are, and what conclusions and recommendations should be drawn from these findings.



Photo: © UN Women



The inception phase culminated in the development of an inception report, which outlined the evaluation methodology²⁵, a detailed work plan, a comprehensive set of proposed data collection and evaluation tools, and the proposed roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the evaluation process. The evaluation team addressed various comments received on the inception report, which allowed the team to improve on various issues including the evaluation methodology.

²⁵ Inception report, September 2024



National seminar on trade opportunities, challenges, and solutions within ECOWAS and AfCFTA, Côte d'Ivoire, 2024.

Photo: © UN Women

Data from different sources was triangulated for validity and reliability. Gaps in data were identified, and additional data collection and analysis were conducted as needed. Preliminary findings were developed and presented to stakeholders, followed by feedback incorporation and online consultations to address any outstanding issues.

- v) **Reporting:** The Inception Report was the first deliverable in this evaluation process. After data collection was completed, the Evaluation Reference Group discussed the preliminary findings. Subsequently, the evaluation team drafted a comprehensive interim report based on the data analysis. Once the interim report was reviewed and approved by the ERG, it served as the foundation for the final evaluation report which was adopted by the ERG.

4.2. THE PROJECT EVALUABILITY

The Inception Report (IR) addressed four key aspects for the evaluability assessment: i) the **ToC** was assessed for its suitability for evaluation in its current form; ii) the quality of performance **indicators** within the results framework was evaluated; iii) the availability, validity, and quality of project **documentation and data** were analyzed; iii) the **conduciveness** of the context for conducting the evaluation was reviewed.

Although a formal Theory of Change (ToC) was not included in the project document, it was present in the initial project proposal submitted by AfDB to We-Fi in its technical request, albeit without outlining the underlying assumptions. The evaluation team reconstructed the ToC, adding assumptions and associated risks, as well as how they interact with the project's logical flow. A visual diagram outlining the flow of activities, outputs, and outcomes was proposed in figure 1. This more complete framework offered compensatory strengths, supporting the project's evaluability. In addition, there was adequate information available to answer many evaluation questions, but additional data collection was required in the field to provide robust and consistent evidence on the project's effectiveness and the sustainability of its contributions. These aspects are crucial for ensuring a successful and insightful evaluation. Moreover, the absence of comprehensive budgeted annual work plans regularly updated and expenditures per budget line, presented a sig-

nificant challenge in assessing the efficiency of expenditures, particularly regarding the project's overall value for money.

The evaluability assessment in the IR also focused on the quality of the project's results framework, including a detailed examination of performance indicators for both outcomes and outputs. This examination was guided by the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) and principles of results-based management (RBM) to ensure that the project's objectives were clearly defined and effectively measured. The project's results framework demonstrated strengths, as the project clearly outlined its overall development objective, specific outcomes, and outputs. Performance indicators, baseline values, and target values were meticulously specified, ensuring completeness and clarity. These strengths facilitated effective monitoring, evaluation, and accountability. However, the evaluation team identified some weaknesses in the formulation of outcomes and their indicators related to RBM principles, which will be addressed in the findings (see Relevance). Nonetheless, the strengths outweigh the weaknesses by far, to guarantee the project's evaluability.

Finally, the evaluation team assessed whether the quantity and quality of the collected documentation would support an in-depth analysis of the entire scope of the project's interventions. While the document collection carried out during the start-up phase indicated that the documentation on the project interventions at the country level was initially not comprehensive, the situation improved over time, and eventually, the available documentation, combined with primary data collection, provided sufficient information to conduct the evaluation and draw reasonable conclusions.

4.3. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The evaluation used a comprehensive approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the project's overall effects (intended and unintended, long-term and short-term, positive and negative) in relation to its objectives and targets. A participatory approach engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including UN Women representatives, government institutions, implementing partners, NGOs, local civil society organizations (CSOs), and end-beneficiaries. Key project stakeholders, such as regional and country coordinators, the Evaluation Management Group (EMG), and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), participated to ensure accountability, promote learning, foster ownership, facilitate future buy-in, and generate comprehensive recommendations. Direct and indirect beneficiaries, including young and older businesswomen, participated in various stages of the evaluation, including Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Case Studies, to share their perspectives on the project's performance.

The evaluation gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was collected through document review, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, while quantitative data was derived from project reports summarizing expenditures, outputs, and results. Furthermore, the evaluation adhered to UN Women's evaluation policy²⁶, including the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS)²⁷ evaluation report quality checklist, the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan Evaluation Performance Indicator (UN-SWAP EPI)²⁸, and UN Women's Evaluation handbook²⁹. It adopted a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and the "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) principle, including disability inclusion³⁰. The evaluation also adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards³¹, as well as ethical guiding principles³².

²⁶ Evaluation policy of UN-Women, September 2020

²⁷ Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS), IES, 2013

²⁸ The UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator, UN Women-UNEG, 2018

²⁹ How to Manage Gender Responsive Evaluations- Evaluation Handbook, IES, 2022

³⁰ According to the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy the term "disability inclusion" refers to the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity, the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights, the development of disability-specific programs and the consideration of disability-related perspectives, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

³¹ United Nations Evaluation Group: Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016

³² UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation, UNEG, 2020

4.4. EVALUATION SAMPLING

The evaluation used non-probability sampling techniques, aiming for "saturation", the point at which no new information or themes emerged from the data. Based on research, the evaluation team considered that data saturation was typically achieved within the first twelve interviews, and three to six focus group discussions were generally sufficient to capture at least 90% of significant themes³³. Participants were selected based on specific characteristics such as level of involvement with UN Women, or their contributions to the project's design, implementation or advancement³⁴, to avoid the limitations of convenience sampling. A stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted by the evaluation team and finalized with the project team. Key informants were selected in a

consultative manner with the project team in each country.

The target population for the evaluation included those who participated in the affirmative procurement project in each country. These participants were categorized into four key informant groups: policymakers (government officials responsible for procurement policies and women's empowerment), advocates (multilateral organizations, international and local NGOs working on women's economic empowerment and procurement), the private sector (mainly, the associations of employers), and women's groups (associations, cooperatives, and collectives of women who benefited from the project).

Table 2: Evaluation participants by country and sex

Evaluation Participants	Nigeria				Mali				CDI				SEN				WCARO				Total
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		
	No.	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Key informant interview	13	68	6	32	9	56	7	44	6	40	9	60	4	40	6	60	3	50	3	50	66
Focus group discussion	48	72	18	27	13	72	5	28	4	67	2	33	13	81	3	19	5	0	3	0	114
Total	61	72	24	28	22	65	12	35	10	48	11	52	17	65	9	35	8	50	6	50	180

Table 3: Evaluation Participants by Category and sex

Evaluation Participants	Female		Male		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
Government ministries	11	8.9	12	21.1	23
Procurement agencies	13	10.6	17	29.8	30
Other Government structures	5	4.1	7	12.3	12
Development partners/UN	17	13.8	3	5.3	20
Implementing partners	20	16.3	10	17.5	30
UN Women	10	8.1	8	14.0	18
Direct Beneficiaries	47	38.2	0	0.0	47
Total	123	100	57	100	180

³³ Guest, Greg, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson. "How Many Interviews Are Enough?" *Field Methods: (Formerly Cultural Anthropology Methods)* 18.1 (2006): 59-82

³⁴ Detailed methodology in the Inception Report, September 2024

4.5. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

The evaluation was conducted using the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The evaluation also took into consideration gender equality and human rights as separate standalone criteria. These were used as the main analytical frameworks in line with the UN Women evaluation policy³⁵. The evaluation questions suggested in the Terms of Reference (TORs) for each evaluation criterion were used to define areas of focus. The evaluation team developed an evaluation matrix (Annex 4), which connected these questions, the areas they addressed, the criteria for evaluating them, the indicators, and the means for verification. This matrix served as a vital tool for the evaluation, providing a centralized overview of the evaluation criteria, key questions related to each criterion, data sources, data collection and analysis methods, and indicators of success.

4.6. DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE MEASURES

Tough measures have been taken to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data used in this evaluation. A robust data quality assurance strategy was implemented to minimize errors and biases, enhancing the credibility of our findings. By employing mixed methods and gathering data from different sources, the evaluation findings were triangulated to ensure consistency, validity, and reliability.

ity. This involved comparing, contrasting, verifying, and substantiating various views and perspectives on information. Mixed methods aimed to overcome the data limitations and biases that can arise from relying on single informants, single methods, or a single observer. By incorporating diverse perspectives and data sources, mixed methods enhanced data accuracy³⁶. Data gathered using one method was compared and triangulated with data collected through other methods as a data quality assurance measure. Moreover, evaluators prioritized data security. All collected data was kept securely by evaluation team members, ensuring that only authorized individuals had access to it. At the end of each mission, evaluators reviewed and "cleaned" their data to address any errors that may have occurred during writing, reading, storage, transmission, or processing. Raw data was meticulously cleaned to remove inconsistencies, duplicates, and missing values.

4.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The evaluation was conducted according to the highest ethical standards, adhering to UNEG guidelines and codes of conduct. The evaluation team maintained impartiality and independence, ensuring all judgments were grounded in transparent reasoning and verifiable evidence. All aspects of the process upheld principles of honesty and integrity. The evaluation is credible, grounded in reliable data, and informed by accurate observations. Evaluators respected cultural diversity and ensured methods were culturally appropriate. Confidentiality was maintained, with informed consent obtained from all participants. The team communicated transparently with stakeholders throughout the process. In brief, the evaluation team was committed to upholding the highest ethical standards throughout the process, ensuring transparency, respect, and integrity in all interactions and reporting.

³⁵ Evaluation policy of UN-Women, September 2020
³⁶ United Nations Evaluation Group: Resource Pack on Joint Evaluations, 2014



Meeting with women business leaders and board chairs to promote gender-responsive public procurement and the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPS), Nigeria, 2023.

Photo: © UN Women

4.8. LIMITATIONS AND RISKS-MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The primary constraint was the restricted time frame for country visits, with each visit limited to just five days. This limitation hindered comprehensive engagement with all categories of stakeholders, especially those located outside the capital cities housing the country offices. As a result, the evaluation team was only able to meet with stakeholders from Abuja and Kaduna in Nigeria, excluding those in Lagos. To address this issue, the team organized remote consultations for stakeholders in Lagos; however, it was not possible to meet beneficiaries in Focus Groups. This was also the case with Senegal where most consultations were done online, especially those with the regions, including Focus Groups Discussions. Consequently, the focus group intended for gathering diverse perspectives was instead conducted as an interview with the group representative. In Mali, beside Bamako, the team was able to engage with only one beneficiary who travelled to Bamako from Kayes, despite the project's interven-

tions also extending to Sikasso and Segou. In contrast, this issue did not arise in Côte d'Ivoire, as the project was only operational in Abidjan, except a few learners who received online trainings with DoTakeAction.

With the support of in-country project teams, the evaluation team implemented several strategies to mitigate the potential impact of the time limitation:

- i) Key stakeholders whose input was critical for the evaluation were identified, and meetings were prioritized to ensure representation of diverse perspectives;
- ii) Remote consultations via online calls enabled the team to gather input from stakeholders who could not be met during the visit, thus extending the reach beyond the limited timeframe;
- iii) Utilizing existing documents, reports, and data supplemented onsite findings and enriched the evaluation;
- iv) The Regional Office provided valuable project insights, facilitating a more focused evaluation scope;
- v) In some instances, the evaluation team conducted follow-up consultations remotely after the visits to collect additional information and validate findings.

4.9. EVALUATION GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The evaluation governance structure comprised several key components, designed to ensure a rigorous and transparent process. As stipulated in the Terms of Reference (ToR), UN Women maintained ultimate responsibility for the evaluation. UN Women's West and Central Africa Regional Office (UNW-WCARO) appointed a Regional Evaluation Analyst to serve as the Evaluation Manager. They were responsible for the day-to-day management of the evaluation, ensuring adherence to relevant UN policies and standards.

To facilitate collaboration and ensure quality, two groups were established:

- **Evaluation Management Group (EMG):** Chaired by the UN Women Regional Evaluation Specialist, the EMG comprised the WEE WCARO Adviser, the UN Women Monitoring & Evaluation Analyst, the Regional Program Coordinator, and the National project coordinators. It provided guidance and oversight throughout the evaluation process
- **Evaluation Reference Group (ERG):** Chaired by the Evaluation Manager, the ERG comprised a representative of AfDB (the donor), a representative of UNW headquarters, a representative of Open Contracting Partnerships (OCP), and one government representative per project member country, in addition to the EMG members. It ensured the quality of the evaluation report and its adherence to United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) standards and norms.

The EMG and ERG collaborated with the Evaluation Manager and the evaluation team to ensure the evaluation process was comprehensive, rigorous, and aligned with international best practices.

The evaluation quality assurance process included a rigorous checklist of four key steps, meticulously followed by the evaluation team to ensure a high-quality product. These steps encompassed:

- **Inception Report Review and Alignment:** A thorough discussion of the inception report and plans of action was conducted to ensure that the evaluation team's understanding of the requirements aligned perfectly with UN Women's expectations and evaluation standards. This critical step laid the foundation for a robust and relevant evaluation.
- **Preliminary Findings Presentation and Discussion:** The evaluation team presented and discussed their preliminary findings with stakeholders, soliciting feedback and ensuring the evaluation was on track. This open dialogue helped to identify any emerging issues and refine the direction of the evaluation.
- **Interim Report Review:** A comprehensive review of the interim evaluation report was undertaken. This provided an opportunity for stakeholders to provide valuable insights and suggestions for improvement before the finalization of the report.
- **Final Report Review and Acceptance:** A final review of the completed evaluation report was conducted to ensure it met the highest quality standards. Adjustments were made to reflect feedback received at each stage of the process, ensuring that the final report was comprehensive, accurate, and aligned with UN Women's expectations.

This multi-layered quality assurance process ensured that multiple opportunities were provided to address issues and challenges throughout the evaluation exercise.

5 EVALUATION FINDINGS



High-level advocacy meeting on gender-responsive procurement, presided over by the Prime Minister of Mali, 2024.

Photo: © UN Women



This section of the report presents the evaluation findings, adhering to the objectives and criteria outlined in the terms of reference. The evaluation assessed the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, gender mainstreaming, and adherence to human rights principles. It aimed to answer specific questions given in Annex 4 as outlined in the inception report, and the findings presented here are supported by evidence gathered through the methods detailed in the methodology section of this report. The analysis framework used a multi-level approach, examining the project's design, implementation, and results. This comprehensive approach was necessary because even well-designed programs can face challenges during implementation, potentially leading to outcomes that fall short of projections. By evaluating both design and implementation, the evaluation sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the project's success, positively or negatively.

5.1. RELEVANCE

Relevance refers to the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities, and the policies of partners and donors (OECD-DAC³⁷).

The evaluation indicates that the UN Women affirmative procurement project is highly relevant to both local and international contexts. By addressing the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs such as market entry barriers and inadequate support networks, and aligning with global gender equality goals, the project demonstrates a strong relevance to its target communities and stakeholders, enhancing its potential for sustainable impact and contributing to broader gender equality and economic empowerment objectives.



Evaluation Question:

To what extent is UN Women strategically positioned to enhance WEE through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa?

RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT DESIGN: APPROACH USED BY THE PROJECT

FINDING 1:

Overall, the affirmative procurement project's approach is highly relevant because it addresses the root causes of gender inequality identified by various studies in the procurement sector, fosters capacity building for sustainable impact, promotes collaboration and partnerships, and contributes to inclusive economic growth. By focusing on systemic change and empowerment, the project has the potential to create lasting positive impacts for women-owned/led businesses and the wider economy.

The affirmative procurement project's approach, focusing on public policies and regulations reforms, capacity building for women-owned/led businesses, government officials, and the private sector, is highly relevant. By targeting public policies and regulations, the project directly tackles the systemic barriers that often hinder women-owned/led

³⁷ OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second Edition), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/632da462-en-fr-es>.

businesses from participating in procurement processes³⁸. This approach promotes greater equity and fosters a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs.

The project's emphasis on capacity building empowers women-owned/led businesses with the skills, knowledge, and networks necessary to compete effectively in procurement. It also equips government officials and private sector stakeholders with the understanding and tools to implement affirmative procurement policies effectively. The project's focus on engaging both the public and private sectors encourages collaboration and partnerships that are crucial for the success of affirmative procurement initiatives. This collaborative approach fosters shared responsibility and strengthens the overall ecosystem for women-owned/led businesses.

By increasing the participation of women-owned/led businesses in public procurement, the project seeks to contribute to inclusive economic growth and empowerment. This, in turn, will benefit the broader economy by promoting innovation, job creation, and economic diversification.

RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT DESIGN: QUALITY OF THE RESULTS FRAMEWORK

FINDING 2:

The project's development results framework is comprehensive, outlining its development objective, outcomes, outputs, performance indicators, baseline, and target values. This thorough approach promotes clarity and accountability, facilitating effective monitoring and evaluation. However, the evaluation team identified some weaknesses in the formulation of outcomes and indicators with respect to Results-Based Management (RBM) principles. A clearer distinction between outputs and outcomes indicators, respecting their hierarchical relationship within the results framework matrix, is necessary.

During the inception phase, the evaluability assessment focused on the overall quality of the project's results framework and involved a brief examination of the performance indicators for both outcomes and outputs. The examination was guided by the SMART criteria, ensuring that the indicators were Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound, as well as by the principles of results-based management (RBM). This approach

helped determine whether the project's objectives were clearly defined and effectively measured to facilitate accurate evaluation and meaningful insights.

The main findings were that the project has clearly outlined its overall development objective, as well as the specific outcomes and outputs it aims to achieve, as articulated in the development results framework. In addition, the project has established performance indicators, along with baseline values and target values at completion. Each of these elements has been meticulously specified, ensuring there are no missing values. However, the evaluation team identified some weaknesses in the formulation of outcomes indicators as they relate to the principles of Results-Based Management (RBM). A primary concern is the need for a clearer distinction between the two levels of results indicators, outputs and outcomes, and the importance of respecting their hierarchy within the results framework matrix. Specifically, most outcome indicators are rather output indicators, which complicates their monitoring and evaluation as they fail to adequately capture changes in behavior, relationships, capacity, or performance. This lack of clarity undermines the project's ability to assess its impact effectively and may hinder decision-making processes aimed at optimizing project implementation. It is essential to refine these indicators definition to ensure that they are expressed in a way that reflects meaningful changes resulting from project activities, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the evaluation process.

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE: ALIGNMENT WITH LOCAL NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

FINDING 3:

The evaluation team found that the UN Women's affirmative procurement project aligns with local needs, priorities, and policies in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Nigeria, as well as with international goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN Women's Strategic Plan. The project is also aligned with the donors' policies and priorities.

The project addresses critical barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in accessing public procurement markets, a pressing issue in all four countries. By focusing on enhancing women-owned businesses' capacity and op-

³⁸ Project document "Women's economic empowerment through affirmative procurement reform in West Africa", African Development Bank, October 2021



Meeting on the national strategy for gender-responsive public procurement in partnership with the GUDE PME, Côte d'Ivoire, 2025
Photo: © UN Women

portunities to participate in these markets, the project directly responds to the economic disparities and employment challenges within local contexts. Furthermore, the project's alignment is underscored by its strategic approach to support the adaptation of national policies and regulations to integrate affirmative procurement principles. Indeed, the project's efforts to align policies and regulations with affirmative procurement principles create a more conducive environment for women's participation in public procurement, fostering an equitable environment for women-owned businesses, thus addressing gender equality and women empowerment priorities in participating countries. This is complemented by strengthening the capacity of public institutions to formulate and implement affirmative procurement policies. By equipping public institutions with the knowledge and skills to develop and implement effective affirmative procurement policies, the project ensures that these policies are not only established but also effectively implemented on the ground. Finally, the project's focus on increasing awareness among private sector top-level corporate leadership to foster gender-responsive procurement policies and practices plays a crucial role in promoting gender-responsive procurement practices across the entire supply chain, not just within the public sector. By engaging private sector leaders, the project encourages a more inclusive and equitable approach to procurement across the economy thus aligning perfectly with SDG 5 (Gender

Equality and women empowerment) by actively promoting gender-responsive policies and practices in procurement processes, and contributing to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by facilitating equitable access for women to economic resources and opportunities, especially SDG target 8.3 “Promote policies to support job creation and growing enterprises”.

The UN Women affirmative procurement project is also closely aligned with UN Women’s Strategic Plan for 2022-2025, particularly with Development Result 2 (Impact 2), which focuses on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) by stating that “Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy.” This alignment is further strengthened with the UN Women global flagship project initiative³⁹ titled “Stimulating Equal Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs through Affirmative Procurement, Investment, and Supply Chain Policies” by championing gender-responsive procurement practices that create equitable opportunities for women in business. As part of this flagship initiative, the Affirmative Procurement project contributes to advancing global gender equality goals by fostering an enabling environment where women entrepreneurs can participate fully and equally in the economy, thus driving sustainable growth and enriching communities.

The project development objective and resulting outcomes are also in line with the policies and priorities of

³⁹ Flagship programming initiatives: Stimulating Equal Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs through Affirmative Procurement, Investment, and Supply Chain Policies, UN Women, 2015

the donors, AfDB and We-Fi, including with the High 5s of the African Development Bank's Ten-Year Strategy (2013-2022) aimed to accelerate economic growth, achieve sustainable development, and improve the quality of life for the people of Africa. In particular, the project is aligned with the fifth key priority "improving the quality of life for the people of Africa". It also aligns with the African Development Bank's (AfDB) "Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA)" initiative, which aims to bridge the finance gap for women in Africa and unlock their entrepreneurial potential⁴⁰.

Nevertheless, the apparently limited engagement with government institutions, women's business associations, and civil society organizations during the project formulation phase, has significantly reduced the likelihood of the project design being tailored to the specific needs and contexts of each country. As a result, the project's relevance and effectiveness have been a bit compromised due to the adoption of a one-size-fits-all approach, which fails to account for the diverse realities and priorities of each participating country. To address this issue, UN Women has exercised enough flexibility, allowing adaptation to change as was required. This aspect will be discussed in finding 4 below, in more details.

OPERATIONAL RELEVANCE: PROJECT ADAPTATION TO CHANGES

FINDING 4:

While the fundamental needs faced by women-owned/led businesses in the procurement sector remained consistent throughout the project, the UN Women Affirmative Procurement Project effectively adapted to evolving challenges and contexts. The project demonstrated adaptability, moving beyond initial advocacy and awareness-raising efforts to develop tailored training programs, improved access to information and networks, and stronger collaboration between women entrepreneurs, and with government agencies, and the private sector.

While the Affirmative Procurement project's initial focus remained consistent, empowering women-owned/led businesses through affirmative procurement, the project team recognized the dynamic nature of the chal-

lenges facing women entrepreneurs. Indeed, early assessments highlighted a common need for advocacy and to raise awareness about affirmative procurement policies and their benefits. However, as the project progressed and country-specific studies were conducted, including the mapping and assessment of the capacities of women-owned micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), as well as the review and audit of procurement laws, policies, regulations, and institutions in Lagos and Kaduna States in Nigeria, for example; along with the study on women's entrepreneurs' access to public procurement and the study on production processes for enhancing the competitiveness of women-led enterprises in Côte d'Ivoire, a deeper understanding began to emerge. These studies provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs, informing more targeted strategies for promoting gender-responsive procurement and fostering an inclusive business environment. As a result, the project team proactively identified and addressed emerging challenges, tailoring interventions to each country's context. This included developing targeted training programs recognizing the diverse needs of women-owned/led businesses across various sectors, addressing specific skills gaps and industry challenges.

In Nigeria, for instance, the affirmative procurement project has recognized the significant impact of social norms on women's entrepreneurial development, particularly the unequal distribution of unpaid care work and gender-based stereotypes. These, combined with gender-blind procurement laws and a perception of limited capacity, have hindered women's participation in public procurement, further exacerbated by an elevated risk of sexual harassment, including the alarming practice of "contracts for sex." To address these challenges, the project has adapted its interventions to specifically challenge limiting social norms and confront gender-based violence within the procurement process. Recognizing the interconnected nature of access to public procurement, social norms, and sexual harassment, the project has adapted a state-level action plan focusing on implementable strategies and practices. Key initiatives include advocating for and supporting the appointment and training of gender desk officers to promote gender-responsive procurement and combat sexual harassment. This approach has gained traction, with Kaduna State including a gender desk in its affirmative procurement policy, within the State Procurement Agency.

⁴⁰ Affirmative finance action for women in Africa (AFAWA), African Development Bank, Funding request document, 4 February 2019

In Mali, the affirmative procurement project has adapted its interventions to strengthen the capacity of women entrepreneurs to participate in private procurement, including tenders from the UN system. Beyond the strategic approach to fostering women's participation in private sector supply chains through the use of Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) as a framework to promote gender equality in business, recognizing the unique opportunities presented by UN contracts, the project has prioritized training programs specifically tailored to the contracting procedures of the UN Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and UN agencies like UN Women. These programs equipped women entrepreneurs with the essential knowledge and skills to navigate UN contracts successfully.

In Senegal, the project quickly adapted to the growing need for women-owned/led businesses to access financing by partnering with local institutions to develop targeted loan programs. Indeed, to address the significant challenge of financing for women-owned small and medium enterprises (WSMEs) in procurement, the project partnered with Senegal's National Guarantee Fund (CDMP). Through a memorandum of understanding, the partnership provides crucial guarantees for public contracts, helping women entrepreneurs secure financing and access larger procurement opportunities, ultimately fostering their business growth. During an interview with the evaluation team, the CDMP African guarantee fund (AGF) and the Sovereign National Fund for Strategic Investment (FONSIS) through its WEE sub fund, revealed that they are planning to partner with a guaranty fund to better support women entrepreneurs.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the affirmative procurement project is actively leveraging technology to enhance women entrepreneurs' access to markets and empower them to thrive in the post-COVID-19 context. Recognizing the need to facilitate market access and help women-led SMEs pivot to digital business models, the project has designed a new section on the BuyfromWomen digital platform, showcasing key information about women-led SMEs. A list of women-led businesses has been compiled, and a digital platform has been developed to store the data.

5.2. COHERENCE

Coherence refers to the extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention, and vice versa (OECD-DAC⁴¹).

In assessing the internal coherence of the UN Women affirmative procurement regional project, the evaluation team will examine how its components and activities are synergistically integrated within the project structure and whether they are any synergies and interlinkages between the project and other interventions carried out by UN Women. It was found that in all four participating countries, there is strong evidence of joint activities with WEE programs, and EVAW in the case of Nigeria to fight against sexual harassment. By fostering cross-functional collaboration among different departments and integrating feedback mechanisms within its processes, the project maintains continuity and consistency in pursuing its mission to increase women's participation in procurement.

Regarding external coherence, the evaluation team examined also the consistency of the project with the interventions of other actors in the same context, including complementarity, harmonization, and coordination with others, to add value while avoiding duplication of efforts. However, it was noted that no similar projects existed in any of the four countries. Nonetheless, it was found that in Nigeria, with the support of the World Bank, DoTake-Action has started a new training project called “Scaling Women’s Economic Empowerment through Affirmative Procurement Reforms (SWEAP)”, which is a copy-Paste of the UN Women’s training program under the WEEAP project. This new project was not assessed but it looks more or less like the program for new cohorts. It would be useful for the project in Nigeria to clarify synergies and/or complementarities with the UN Women’s Affirmative Procurement project to avoid a possible duplication of efforts.



Evaluation Question:

To what extent are country level project interventions strategically consistent with similar interventions by other key players, including United Nations agencies?

⁴¹ OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second Edition), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/632da462-en-fr-es>



Capacity-building session on gender responsive procurement in Côte d'Ivoire, 2023.
Photo: © UN Women

FINDING 5:

While there is some internal collaboration and synergies within the UN Women WEE program, the project has not yet established strong connections with other UN agencies at the country level. These synergies and interlinkages across UNW Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) unit fosters a collaborative approach to addressing the barriers to women's economic empowerment and contributes to the achievement of shared goals across the organization. If strengthened, the internal coherence will ensure a more effective and sustainable impact on promoting gender equality and sustainable development through the project.

The evaluation team noted that the project's focus on women's economic empowerment through public procurement aligns with other UN Women WEE initiatives, such as programs aimed at enhancing women's access to finance, women entrepreneurship, and skills development in areas like ICT. This alignment creates opportunities for cross-programmatic learning and collaboration. Moreover, the project actively participates in knowledge sharing and capacity building initiatives within the UN Women WEE program, leveraging expertise and experiences to strengthen the project's impact and support other WEE initiatives. For instance, this collaborative effort includes the joint ICT training program held with young women involved in different projects in Mali and Nigeria. Even more compelling was the initiative in Mali where solar panels were distributed to women-owned businesses (WOBs) to sustain their small transformation units during periods of electricity interruption. This initiative was part of a partnership with another Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) project, which focuses on enhancing women's resilience to climate change. By providing renewable energy solutions, the project not only supported business continuity for WOBS but also promoted sustainable practices that contribute to environmental resilience.

Within the UN System, while the project's objectives align with the goals of other UN agencies on gender equality, economic growth, and sustainable development, because of time constraints, the evaluation team did not have the opportunity to investigate interventions implemented by other UN agencies or other key actors involved in WEE Affirmative Procurement. However, whether from the desk review or stakeholders consultations, the evaluation team has not observed any evidence in any country of formal substantial collaborative initiatives with other UN agencies beyond the UN Women WEE program although opportunities do exist. The project's focus on public procurement can be leveraged to enhance other UN agency programs

working on economic development, gender equality, and sustainable development at the country level. Indeed, the project's expertise in promoting gender-responsive procurement practices could be valuable to other UN agencies working on gender equality, ensuring their procurement processes are inclusive and non-discriminatory. At operational level, a strong partnership was observed with the UN System in Mali, and particularly through the UN procurement networks in Nigeria.

At country level, the project partners with relevant governments agencies, ensuring alignment with national policies and strategies. This collaboration fosters a more effective and sustainable approach to implementing affirmative procurement policies. The project also engages with a range of NGOs and CSOs working on issues related to women's economic empowerment, gender equality, and sustainable development⁴². This collaboration strengthens the project's reach and ensures a more holistic approach to addressing the challenges facing women entrepreneurs. The project also collaborates with private sector actors⁴³ including businesses, chambers of commerce, and industry associations, to promote gender-responsive procurement practices and support women-owned businesses. This engagement strengthens the project's impact by promoting broader systemic change within the private sector.

For improved performance at the UN System Level, the project could explore opportunities for collaboration with agencies like UNDP, ILO, UNCDF, WFP, UNHCR, and others to strengthen its impact and broaden its reach to ensure public procurement projects contribute to job creation, promote decent work conditions, and support local development initiatives. For example, in Nigeria, the project worked with other agencies interested in affirmative procurement, such as the World Bank, Bill and Gate Foundation, ILO, and the UN procurement network, to ensure that women can access and have more access to public contracts and make it a priority for the procurement officers within all the UN agencies in Nigeria to start prioritizing gender-responsive procurement. The project could also leverage the expertise and experience of other UN agencies by participating in joint training and capacity building initiatives. By sharing its knowledge and expertise, the project can amplify its impact and contribute to a more coordinated and effective response to the challenges facing women entrepreneurs.

In each country, the UN Women affirmative procurement project can expand its impact by leveraging collaboration with other country development partners outside the UN system. The project could partner with private sector organizations, including companies committed to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and business associations, to promote gender-inclusive procurement practices across their supply chains. Collaboration with financial institutions, such as microfinance institutions or banks with women-focused lending programs, especially those offering innovative financial solutions, could unlock more substantial financial investments for women-led businesses, providing better access to capital and financial resources. Furthermore, the project can integrate green initiatives into its affirmative procurement framework, aligning with global sustainability goals. By working together, affirmative procurement and affirmative finance could create a more integrated approach to promoting inclusivity and ensuring that the benefits of economic growth reach all segments of society. The project could also leverage collaboration with NGOs and CSOs working on gender equality and economic empowerment to advocate for policy changes that support women-owned businesses and promote inclusive procurement practices. These partnerships would allow the project to broaden its reach, increase its influence, and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive economic landscape.

5.3. EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness refers to the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups⁴⁴.

The effectiveness of the project was primarily evaluated through an in-depth analysis of its final achievements at both the outcome and output levels. This comprehensive assessment provided valuable insights into the project's impact and success, highlighting areas of strength and identifying opportunities for future improvement.

⁴² Annex 3: stakeholder mapping

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second Edition), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/632da462-en-fr-es>



Capacity-building session on gender responsive procurement in Côte d'Ivoire, 2023.
Photo: © UN Women

At outcomes level, the evaluation presents a compelling scenario: One is witnessing a remarkable achievement where all targeted outcome indicators have been surpassed, well ahead of the project's planned completion. However, while it's commendable that the project implementation has exceeded expectations, this situation led the evaluation team to raise a legitimate question: was this outstanding performance solely due to strong project management and execution, or were there some other key drivers behind these figures, besides the outstanding project performance? To fully understand the factors driving this performance, the evaluation team conducted a deep dive into the project's design, analysing various aspects including, essentially, the indicators' targets setting. Examining the targets helped determine if they were appropriately ambitious, or if their setting potentially underestimated the project's potential. The evaluation also examined the contribution of the output results to the outcomes to assess how effectively they supported the achievement of these outcomes. By analyzing the link between outputs and outcomes, the evaluation aimed to determine the degree to which project activities and deliverables facilitated progress toward the intended goals, thereby providing a clearer understanding of the project's overall impact and effectiveness.



Evaluation Question:

To what extent have the project's expected results been achieved, in terms of both outcomes and outputs?

The desk review analysis of the project's final achievements reveals that all the four reported outcome indicators have been significantly overachieved (table 4). While the remaining outcome [2.1] has been implemented to a certain extent, it has not been well reported in the annual reports. The UNW regional office explained that, after consulting with the donor, the project focused on Component 1, due to the reduced impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the subject of component 2. Nevertheless, some training activities of this component (outcome 2.1) have been integrated into Outcome 1.1. The exceptional performance noted by the evaluation team underscores the project's success in exceeding its established goals and highlights the effectiveness of the strategies implemented. The impressive results obtained suggest a robust framework and dedicated execution, paving the way for sustained progress and potential scaling in the future. Nevertheless, as explained earlier on, these results are to be taken with caution. Indeed, at first glance, such achievements should be celebrated as evidence of the project's outstanding performance. However, a closer examination paints a more nuanced picture. A detailed review of the indicators definition reveals that all four outcome indicators reported can be more accurately classified as output indicators resulting from activities; they are “*number of entities that benefited from a service.*” This suggests a potential issue in how the project's goals and objectives were initially framed. It raises the possibility that targets have been set too low, contributing to the seemingly exceptional results (see Annex 9 for an alternative formulation of outcomes and indicators).

OUTCOME 1: STRENGTHENED CAPACITY OF WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES TO ACCESS PROCUREMENT PROCESSES

FINDING 6:

In each of the four countries where the project was implemented, there was a noticeable, albeit modest, increase in the number of capacitated women-led and women-owned businesses capable of accessing procurement processes and opportunities. While the contribution aligns with the project's scale and ambitions, it serves as a valuable starting point laying the groundwork for more substantial growth and enhanced economic inclusion in the future.

UN Women's interventions in affirmative procurement reforms in West Africa were guided by the project priorities outlined in the results framework. These efforts resulted in significant contributions to strengthening the capacity of women-led and women-owned businesses to access procurement opportunities in the four participating countries. By the time of the evaluation, a total of 2,000 women entrepreneurs had been trained, with the following country-specific numbers: 271 in Mali, 870 in Nigeria, 619 in Senegal, and 240 in Côte d'Ivoire.

Through targeted training and support initiatives, the project equipped these businesses with essential skills needed to thrive in procurement processes. The training curriculum encompassed advanced procurement strategies, digital marketing, and financial management, empowering women-led small and medium enterprises (WSMEs) to effectively navigate public procurement, expand their market reach via digital tools, and manage their finances prudently. As a result of this capacity-building initiative, 1,695 women accessed new procurement opportunities across the countries, including 173 WSMEs in Mali, over 1,000 in Nigeria, 300 in Senegal, and 181 in Côte d'Ivoire. Notably, 611 WSMEs successfully registered as vendors on the United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM). Among those accessing new opportunities, a substantial number secured contracts across public, private, and international sectors, including 72 women-led SMEs in Côte d'Ivoire, at least 30 women-owned businesses in Mali securing 17 contracts, around 1,000 WSMEs in Nigeria, and approximately 300 women in Senegal⁴⁵. These achievements reflect the growing capacity and competitiveness of wom-

en-led enterprises in these regions, although no evidence was collected in the field to verify these reported figures.

To streamline training efforts across the four project countries, the UN Women regional office contracted DoTakeAction, a non-profit organization based in Abuja, Nigeria, specializing in community-focused program development and management. With their expertise in online training, DoTakeAction delivered programs across all participating countries, significantly increasing the number of trainees and surpassing expected indicators. However, while all four countries benefited from online training, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire showed a preference for face-to-face training conducted by local consultants and Business Services Organizations, which helped mitigate some challenges linked to online training, such as non-country-specific modules, internet connectivity issues, and electricity interruptions. Additionally, the lengthy training schedules led to high absenteeism rates. Many participants also struggled to follow content delivered in English or French, highlighting the need for local language interpretations. Nonetheless, all those who attended trainings expressed appreciation for both the training content and the professionalism of the training delivery. Notably, DoTakeAction's graduation process required participants to successfully apply for at least five bids, regardless of the outcomes of those applications. This criterion emphasizes the importance of gaining experience and familiarity with the bidding process, encouraging women-led enterprises to pursue opportunities actively and build their capacities in navigating public procurement.

In addition to training for women-led businesses (WLBs), several countries implemented initiatives aimed at the formalization and registration of these enterprises to ensure their full participation in public procurement. Nigeria introduced the "Compliance Incubator," while Mali utilized the Women Business Centre at the Agency for the Promotion of Investments. Both countries also organized an event titled "Meet the Vendor," which facilitated direct interaction between businesses and potential clients, thereby promoting procurement opportunities and fostering new relationships within the procurement landscape. Furthermore, a mentorship program was established for WLBs, connecting them with more experienced entrepreneurs who provided guidance and support in navigating public tender processes. These mentors offered invaluable insights, assisting WLBs in making informed decisions.

⁴⁵ Women's economic empowerment through affirmative procurement reform in West Africa, UN Women donor report number #2, May 2024, and stakeholder consultations



BOX 2: TAKING AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT TO THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL IN RURAL AREAS: THE CASE OF BIGNONA REGION, IN SENEGAL

Affirmative procurement should not be a privilege reserved for women living in urban areas, closer to public institutions. On the contrary, supporting rural women in their businesses is essential for ensuring economic development in these areas and can significantly contribute to the achievement of SDG goals. Empowering women in rural communities fosters greater inclusivity and addresses systemic inequalities that can hinder progress.

In the Bignona region of Senegal, the affirmative procurement project has successfully extended its efforts to the grassroots level, bringing significant changes to rural areas. Prior to the intervention, public procurement opportunities were largely unknown to local women entrepreneurs. Through targeted training courses facilitated by ARCOP, these women have gained essential skills and knowledge, empowering them to access and participate in public procurement processes. One notable change is that women entrepreneurs, who previously had to pay XAF 100,000 for an agent to complete procurement forms, are now able to fill them out independently. The ICT training provided has not only enabled them to manage local tenders but has also given them the potential to expand their horizons to international opportunities, significantly increasing their business prospects. Nonetheless, local contracting authorities in the public sector should actively facilitate the involvement of women entrepreneurs by simplifying the procurement process and offering clear guidance on require-

ments. Providing platforms for networking and collaboration, organizing regular information sessions, and ensuring transparency in tender opportunities can help bridge the gap between public procurement and women-led enterprises in rural regions. Such proactive measures will support women in overcoming challenges and foster a more equitable procurement environment.

Overall, the women of Bignona have expressed deep appreciation for the training and are eager to build upon these achievements. They recognize that women in rural areas face greater challenges compared to their urban counterparts, particularly due to limited educational opportunities. Therefore, more training and direct support are needed to help them grow their very small businesses. To address these needs, women groups have organized a mentoring system, drawing from the project's successes in Nigeria and Mali. However, they continue to require the project's support to develop this system further, ensuring sustained empowerment and access to procurement opportunities.

The initiative in Bignona highlights the project's potential to create lasting impacts at the grassroots level, fostering an inclusive economic environment that empowers women entrepreneurs in rural areas. By continuing to support such efforts, the affirmative procurement project can further advance gender equality and economic empowerment across West Africa.

Following the training, participants created WhatsApp discussion groups across all four countries, which have become vital platforms for ongoing peer support, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. These groups have developed into vibrant communities of practice where women share information on procurement opportunities, offer mutual assistance, and seek advice from one another. Additionally, these networks have enabled participants to collaborate on joint bids for larger contracts, enhancing their market competitiveness. The program's reach has expanded significantly due to this post-training support; approximately 40% of new training cohort participants joined based on positive feedback from previous attendees or direct mentorship experiences⁴⁶. These women not only serve as motivators for future sessions but also act as advocates, thereby amplifying the program's influence and outreach.

OUTCOME 2: STRENGTHENED CAPACITY OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS TO FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT POLICIES.

FINDING 7:

The Regional Project achieved notable success in capacity building by equipping public officials with the tools needed to effectively reform affirmative procurement policies and regulations, thereby enhancing women’s access to procurement opportunities, and advancing women’s economic empowerment in the region.

Reforms in affirmative procurement policies and regulations are among the key outcomes of the Regional Project. Critical to this success are partnerships with government institutions and the project’s ability to leverage political will, technical expertise, and investment to produce evidence-based policies and regulations. In this respect, the project marked significant progress in enhancing the capacity of public institutions by training a total of 450 officials across 104 institutions, Mali (179), Nigeria (180), and Senegal (91), exceeding the initial target of training 270 officials. This intervention aimed to ensure the adoption and implementation of affirmative procurement policies. By emphasizing the training of public officials and incorporating gender-responsive procurement (GRP) practices within institutional frameworks, the project has established a strong foundation for sustainable and inclusive

economic growth across the region. The training modules encompassed crucial areas such as gender-responsive procurement (GRP) practices, integrating gender perspectives throughout the entire procurement cycle, including policy development and implementation, compliance requirements, digital marketing, and financial literacy. These programs were designed to equip officials with the skills needed to effectively support affirmative procurement policies and incorporate gender-responsive clauses into procurement regulations, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable procurement process.

In all four project countries, UN Women collaborated with experienced procurement institutions to conduct the training, which included procurement regulatory authorities and procurement management agencies. This collaboration allowed the procurement processes and procedures to be explained by the professionals who design and implement them, ensuring that participants received comprehensive and practical insights of the procurement system. Other training facilitators were mainly senior experts retired from the public service.

The Regional Office also played a pivotal role in achieving this outcome. In this respect, UN Women strengthened the capabilities of more than 50 national and regional public procurement agents from 10 African countries by focusing on regional gender-responsive public procurement practices. This was accomplished through the dissemination of a policy brief, "Improving Access to Public Procurement for Women-Owned and Women-Led Small and Medium Enterprises in West Africa," and hosting a regional policy dialogue webinar. These initiatives highlight UN Women's dedication to promoting gender equality and economic empowerment through strategic policy advocacy and institutional capacity-building across West Africa.

OUTCOME 3: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICIES AND REGULATIONS ADAPTED TO INTEGRATE AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT PRINCIPLES.

FINDING 8:

The evaluation team noted, based on project monitoring data and other data collection sources, that the project successfully contributed to the adoption of one legal reform and three policies aimed at promoting

⁴⁶ Women’s economic empowerment through affirmative procurement reform in West Africa, UN Women donor report number #2, May 2024, and stakeholder consultations

gender-responsive procurement. Therefore, the project met its overall planned objective of implementing four normative changes by the time of project completion.

The affirmative procurement project has made significant progress in adapting national and regional policies to integrate affirmative procurement principles. In all four countries, high-level advocacy workshops and meetings were organized to raise awareness and gather support from government stakeholders for affirmative procurement reforms. In Mali, a notable highlight was the attendance of the Prime Minister at one such workshop, where he affirmed his commitment to support the program to the fullest extent and urged his cabinet ministers to take the necessary actions. UN Women in Mali should capitalize on the momentum generated by these advocacy efforts to pursue and accomplish all project objectives.

To date, the AFAWA program has successfully supported the implementation of 4 legal and regulatory reforms aimed at promoting women entrepreneurship, with 2 in Nigeria (1 in Kaduna and 1 in Lagos), and 1 each in Senegal and Mali. The primary provision of the public procurement policy in Nigeria mandates that 30% of all public procurement contracts be allocated to women-owned enterprises. In contrast, Senegal has opted for a more cautious approach, implementing an initial quota of 2%. This prudent quota is designed to be increased once women-owned businesses (WOBs) have demonstrated the capacity to fully utilize the current allocation, thereby minimizing the risk of poor performance associated with a larger quota. Additionally, Nigeria's policy includes a significant requirement that mandates every company or organization engaging in business with the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to ensure female representation in their corporate governance structures by the year 2026. This dual approach not only aims to enhance the participation of women-owned enterprises in public procurement but also seeks to strengthen gender representation within the corporate sector. Overall, the implementation is on track, particularly in Nigeria and Senegal, but further efforts are needed in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, and to review regional laws for comprehensive impact.

In Mali, a country in crisis and post-conflict recovery, efforts to persuade relevant authorities to enact profound reforms faced significant challenges. In this context, to avoid wasting time and resources on unsuccessful policy reforms in a complex situation, the project made significant progress by providing essential support to the Ministry of National Entrepreneurship, Employment, and Vocational Training in developing and officially adopting

a national entrepreneurship strategy that incorporates affirmative procurement considerations as a major component in Axis 3- "Facilitate access to public procurement opportunities for women and youth". This strategy was validated in July 2024. The evaluation team interviewed the consultant overseeing this initiative; he expressed confidence that the strategy will be adopted soon by the government, with the next step being its transformation into law. The consultant has already begun drafting the legislation. Concurrently to this strategy, the project supported the Public Procurement and Public Service Delegation Regulatory Authority (Autorité de Régulation des Marchés Publics et des Délégations de Service Public- ARMDS) to conduct a thorough review of Decree No. 2018-0473/PM-RM from May 28, 2018. This initiative focused on enhancing measures that direct public procurement towards small and medium-sized enterprises, placing particular emphasis on women-led and women-owned enterprises (WPMEs), thereby advancing equitable economic opportunities. The expected outcome is to establish a distinct niche for affirmative procurement within the 20% quota designated for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This will ensure that women-led businesses have increased access to public procurement opportunities as SMEs, ultimately fostering greater inclusivity and equity in the procurement process.

In contrast, Côte d'Ivoire, as previously mentioned, did not include this outcome into its project agenda. However, both the National Authority for the Regulation of Public Procurement (ANRMP) and the General Directorate of Public Procurement (DGMP) have expressed their willingness to support the initiative. This commitment from key regulatory bodies indicates a positive openness to enhancing gender integration in public procurement, which could pave the way for future collaborative efforts and the development of gender-responsive procurement policies in the country. Following the main recommendations from the forum organized by the African Development Bank (AfDB) on March 28-29, 2019, in Johannesburg, South Africa, on the theme "Integrating Gender in Public Procurement in Africa: The Way Forward", the ANRMP commissioned a study in 2021 to assess the legislative, regulatory, and institutional frameworks related to gender in public procurement at both international and national levels. The aim was to produce indicators measuring women's access to public procurement and to develop a methodological guide for promoting gender in public procurement. Unfortunately, to date, this study has yet to be utilized. In addition, a study conducted in 2023-2024 examined women entrepreneurs' access to public procurement, aiming to identify the chal-



Capacity-building session on gender responsive procurement in Côte d'Ivoire, 2023.
Photo: © UN Women

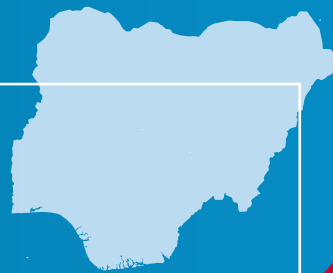
allenges faced by Women-Led Enterprises throughout the entire public procurement ecosystem, including regulatory issues, access to information, transparency, financing, and the contract award process. To address the constraints associated with the regulatory and institutional framework, a consultant is developing a gender-sensitive public procurement policy strategy in Côte d'Ivoire to advocate for affirmative procurement policies that promote equitable opportunities for women entrepreneurs and enhance their participation in public procurement activities. That said, the authorities at the ANRMP, while not opposed to integrating gender considerations, expressed a certain level of pessimism, particularly regarding the time it may take for these changes to be implemented, which hinders the prospect of beginning to implement the recommendations.

Conversely, the DGMP expressed great enthusiasm about engaging in such reforms in the near future. They acknowledged that these changes are long overdue and noted that, in addition to UN Women, both the World Bank and GIZ have shown interest in the issue. As a result, they have been encouraged to establish a coordination mechanism to work in synergy with these organizations. The DGMP officials believe it is possible to leverage Article 8 of the public procurement code, which establishes the Fundamental Principles of procurement, to integrate gender considerations to some extent. One of these principles includes "compliance with environmental, social, and labor regulations, as well as the protection of individuals with disabilities and gender considerations." Additionally, they are exploring ways to allocate a specific percentage of tenders not requiring public calls for bids

to women-led enterprises, using preferential measures to support this initiative.

At regional level, although no regional laws have been reviewed, the project has made significant strides in this area. In addition to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the regional office initiated a policy dialogue aimed at institutionalizing gender considerations and establishing regional quotas reserved for women-led businesses (WLBs) to access public contracts within the WAEMU zone. This dialogue seeks to create a framework that not only enhances the visibility and participation of WLBs in public procurement but also fosters an equitable business environment that supports gender equality and women's empowerment in the region. By implementing these measures, the regional office aims to strengthen the economic contributions of women-led enterprises and promote sustainable development across member states. More specifically, UN Women is pushing for gender integration into WAEMU's Directive No. 04/2005/CM/WAEMU of December 9, 2005, which outlines the procedures for the awarding, execution, and settlement of public contracts and public service delegations, as well as Directive No. 05/2005/CM/WAEMU of the same date, which addresses the control and regulation of public contracts and public service delegations. Integrating gender into these directives will promote the inclusion of gender-responsive policies in the national procurement laws of member states, as they are mandated to align their regulations with WAEMU's directives. This approach will enhance women's participation in public procurement and foster gender equality within the regional economic framework.

BOX 3: KADUNA STATE: PIONEERING AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT.



Background: Kaduna State, Nigeria, has demonstrated a strong commitment to affirmative procurement, aiming to uplift women-owned businesses and promote economic growth. At the forefront of this initiative is the Kaduna State Public Procurement Authority (KAPPA), led by a dedicated Director General (DG), whose leadership has been instrumental in reshaping procurement practices to be more inclusive and equitable.

High-Level Commitment: KAPPA has taken critical steps towards fostering affirmative procurement by reorganizing its structure to promote these initiatives effectively. The establishment of a UNW project unit, managed by a project manager from KAPPA, underscores this commitment. Furthermore, a gender desk has been created within KAPPA, providing a dedicated resource for addressing women's issues in procurement, including the initiation of a complaints database to ensure transparency and responsiveness.

Strategic Policy Development: Recognizing the need for a robust framework, KAPPA undertook a baseline study to identify gaps in the procurement process. This led to the drafting of a new procurement policy that was validated and signed by the Governor of Kaduna State. The Attorney General played a vital role in championing this initiative, advocating for the support of women as a key driver of state development. Influenced by advocacy efforts from Zamani Foundation, he underscored the importance

of alternative funding mechanisms, highlighting that enhancing women's access to public procurement would help alleviate poverty in the region.

Implementation and Support Structures: To facilitate the successful implementation of the new policy, KAPPA is planning to establish various support mechanisms. The Attorney General will assist in applying alternative dispute resolution methods, including fact-finding, arbitration, and mediation, through the department of citizens' affairs. This will link to the new KAPPA complaint database, ensuring that women entrepreneurs have the necessary support to navigate challenges.

Capacity Building for Women Entrepreneurs: A key component of KAPPA's strategy has been the training of selected businesswomen in essential business skills. Courses have covered topics such as business management, leadership, communication, and digitalization—areas that were highly appreciated and yielded immediate positive outcomes. Specifically, the introduction to procurement has equipped these women with the tools they need to access both public and private tender opportunities.

Success Stories: The impact of this training is evident in the transformations experienced by the beneficiaries. One inspiring example is Mrs. Hajiya Halima Garba, who reported a remarkable 35% increase in her sales and revenues within a year of completing her training. With new found confidence, she



has even begun expanding her business activities to Egypt. Narrating her journey from humble beginnings to a pan-African success, as she put it, she expressed disbelief at her success, illustrating the profound impact of the training on her professional life. Initially operating with a small team of fewer than eight full-time staff and 13 ad-hoc employees, Mrs. Halima's business, HM & S Global Investment Limited, has significantly expanded its workforce thanks to the knowledge and opportunities gained from the project training. The business now employs 20 skilled professionals, in addition to 13 ad-hoc staff members, thereby enhancing its capacity to deliver quality services and meet growing demand. This growth not only reflects the successful impact of the training but also illustrates the potential for women-led enterprises to thrive when provided with adequate support and resources.

Understanding Procurement: The second phase of training focused on demystifying procurement for women, many of whom had previously been unaware of the procurement processes, legal requirements, and necessary documentation. This knowledge enabled them to register their businesses as micro and small enterprises (MSEs), which is crucial for participation in public tenders. The excitement among women after completion of their registration processes illustrates the doors that have opened for them.

Empowering Communities: Focus group discussions with trained women highlighted a unanimous sentiment: the training has been an eye-opener, replacing prior misconceptions with a clear understanding of procurement. Participants expressed renewed self-confidence, knowing they could now bid for contracts under more favorable conditions. While acknowledging the limitations of their current business scales, they remain optimistic about future opportunities.

Call for Continued Support: All stakeholders—including public authorities, implementation partners, and beneficiaries—expressed a strong desire for a continuation of the project. They called for mentoring programs that would sustain the achievements made, support business management post-training, improve access to procurement information, and establish partnerships to advocate for easier access to funding for women-led enterprises.

Conclusion: The affirmative procurement initiative in Kaduna State represents a transformative model for empowering women and facilitating their participation in the economy. With strong leadership and a clear commitment to fostering an inclusive environment for public procurement, Kaduna serves as a beacon of hope and progress in Nigeria's journey towards gender equity and economic development. Future phases of the project promise to build on these achievements, ensuring that more women can benefit from public procurement opportunities.

By implementing all the targeted reforms, the project aimed to remove existing barriers and create a more equitable environment for women entrepreneurs. The policies reforms involved detailed consultations and collaborations with multiple stakeholders, including government bodies, industry leaders, and civil society organizations. This comprehensive approach ensured that the reforms were well-informed, contextually relevant, and widely supported. The policies introduced empowered public institutions to integrate gender considerations into procurement strategies, thereby fostering an ecosystem where women-led enterprises could flourish. By laying the groundwork for sustainable gender-responsive procurement practices, the project has established a model that can be emulated in other regions, further advancing the global push towards gender equality in economic participation.

OUTCOME 4: INCREASED AWARENESS AMONG PRIVATE SECTOR TOP LEVEL CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TO FOSTER GENDER- RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Generally, this outcome has not received significant attention, as the primary focus has thus far been on public procurement. However, the evaluation team observed that many women-owned SMEs tend to feel more comfortable operating within the private sector that offers less restrictive conditions compared to public procurement. For instance, the emphasis on business turnover is not as high and stringent, making it easier for these businesses to engage and succeed. This indicates a potential area for further development and support, highlighting the importance of recognizing and fostering opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the private sector as part of a comprehensive strategy. In this regard, several initiatives have been launched and have demonstrated notable success. Specifically, in Senegal, this outcome is being realized through a new agreement with ADEPME, which includes post-training monitoring to ensure sustained support and effectiveness. This is an added value that will enhance the impact of training programs in the private sector environment.

FINDING 9:

The project effectively advanced gender-responsive procurement within the private sector by fostering commitments to the Women's Empowerment Principles and promoting affirmative procurement practices across participating countries.

In the participating countries, the project has implemented several initiatives to promote gender-responsive procurement (GRP) within the private sector. In these countries, concerted efforts were made to increase the number of signatories to the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), particularly focusing on WEP 5, which promotes gender-responsive supply chains. High-level meetings have been convened in all four countries with some private sector companies and employer associations to encourage the integration of affirmative procurement practices into their operations. These entities have been also encouraged to leverage their influence on national issues such as employment, investment, and supply chain management to contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, especially through women's economic empowerment (WEE). As a result of these efforts, 237 new signatories have adhered to the WEPs, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable business environment.

The introduction of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) within the procurement project served as a pilot initiative that proved to be somewhat successful, warranting further pursuit of this effort. The process facilitated a comprehensive journey for companies, starting from their initial awareness of the WEPs to becoming signatories committed to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment within their operations. Given this positive outcome, UN Women may consider incorporating a robust outcome related to WEPs in future projects, emphasizing their potential to drive meaningful change in corporate practices and contribute to broader goals of gender equality.



Table 4: Achievement level of target indicators

Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Achieved
Component 1: Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa				
Strengthened capacity of women-led businesses to access procurement opportunities	Number of WSMEs trained/ linked to networks (market linkages, procurement opportunities, investment opportunities, etc.)	0	1,360	2000
Strengthened capacity of public institutions to formulate and implement affirmative procurement policies	Number of Government officials trained	0	270	450
National and regional policies and regulations adapted to integrate affirmative procurement principles	Number of the legal and regulatory reforms supported by the We-Fi program to remove constraints and support to women entrepreneurship	0	4	1 (regulation on GRP) 3 (policies promoting GRP)
Increased awareness among private sector top level corporate leadership to foster gender- responsive procurement policies and practices	No of new private sector companies signing to the WEPs/implementing gender responsive supply chain practices	Senegal: 2	Senegal: 8	11
		Nigeria: 15	Nigeria: 20	116
		Mali: N/A	Mali: N/A	6
		Cote d'Ivoire	Cote d'Ivoire	9
Component 2. Affirmative Procurement Initiatives in COVID-19 response and recovery in West Africa				
Increased capacity of women-led businesses to operate and provide goods and services as part of the COVID19 response	Number of Women led businesses accessing procurement opportunities in the context of COVID national responses	0	300	Integrated in outcome 1

5.4. EFFICIENCY

Efficiency refers to the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way⁴⁷.

Assessing the efficiency of the UN Women Affirmative Procurement entails a comprehensive assessment of how financial, human, technical, and organizational resources are strategically allocated, skillfully managed and utilized to accomplish the defined project objectives. The evaluation team also examined whether these resources have been sufficient and available over time to ensure the sustainability and scale of outcomes.



Evaluation question:
Were the activities and strategies implemented in a cost-effective manner?

⁴⁷ OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second Edition), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/632da462-en-fr-es>

ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE (HR, FINANCIAL)

FINDING 10:

The project funding allowed for the implementation of all planned activities, but it was insufficient to fully achieve affirmative procurement. While the staff possessed the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill the results framework, their numbers were inadequate given the project's scale and the many stakeholders involved. This resulted in increased demand for support from country offices and a need for shared resources. To effectively manage the diverse needs of participants and meet ambitious goals, it may be essential to increase the workforce. Doing so could enhance the project's capacity to deliver impactful results and ensure that all stakeholders receive the necessary attention and support.

The affirmative procurement project is funded by a USD 4 million grant from the African Development Bank (AfDB), which received the funds from the World Bank's Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-fi). The project budget was allocated to the participating countries and then revised in December 2023 as follows⁴⁸:

Table 5: Distribution of budget among project countries

Country	Initial budget	Revised budget
Senegal	1,250,000	1,200,000
CDI	360,000	510,000
Mali	500,000	500,000
Nigeria	1,250,000	1,200,000
Regional Office	360,000	310,000
Operational costs	280,000	280,000
Total	4,000,000	4,000,000

Project activities in Côte d'Ivoire were originally scheduled to conclude in December 2023. However, due to the excellent progress made and the enthusiasm generated by the project, the regional office requested that the donor approve an extension of the project's duration until March 2025, aligning it with the timelines of other participating countries⁴⁹. This extension could allow for the continuation and expansion of successful initiatives, further enhancing the project's impact and sustainability. The project was granted a further extension up to December 31, 2025, providing additional time to complete new or outstanding activities and ensuring that all objectives can be fully achieved.

In addition, the budget was allocated to activities as follows: Programmatic Activities (93%) and Operational Costs (7%) to cover project management, administration, and other essential operational expenses. It was generally found to be aligned with the project's action plan; however, many project coordinators raised concerns that the allocated funds were insufficient to cover all necessary expenses, underscoring the need for additional funding. They emphasized that an increased budget would enable them to effectively implement project activities, enhance resource availability, and ultimately maximize the project's impact. Ensuring adequate financial sup-

port is crucial for achieving the project's objectives and sustaining its success in the long term. In response to this challenge, certain countries participating in the project aimed to minimize expenses by leveraging staff from the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) initiatives within UN Women country offices, thereby sharing costs. This strategic approach not only helped reduce operational expenses but also facilitated greater integration and synergy between the project and existing WEE programs, enhancing overall project effectiveness and cohesion. However, it was also apparent that in some countries, the project staff are significantly overstretched. They are tasked with managing multiple projects or large portfolios as Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) appointed personnel, often handling extensive interventions and numerous stakeholders without adequate support within the project. To compensate for this, the team has relied heavily on outside consultants, many of whom have long-standing associations with UN Women. While these core expert consultants bring valuable skills and have made substantial contributions to UN Women's efforts, overreliance on consultants is a challenging model to sustain. Indeed, it is important to note that while external services can be beneficial, their effective utilization requires sufficient capacity for monitoring and oversight, which the small teams currently lack. This situation underscores the need for a more balanced staffing strategy to ensure consistent project delivery and support.

THE PROJECT'S OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY: ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURES AGAINST BUDGET AND ACHIEVEMENTS

FINDING 11:

The evaluation team found substantial evidence to conclude that the project's implementation strategy was both efficient and cost-effective. Most planned activities have been successfully completed at a low cost and some funds are yet to be used. Therefore, despite all outputs being delivered, there were some delays in project execution related to the absorption capacity. This situation resulted in the approval of a no-cost extension by the donor, granting additional time to carry out remaining or additional activities and ensuring that all objectives could be fully achieved.

⁴⁸ Project document "Women's economic empowerment through affirmative procurement reform in West Africa", African Development Bank, October 2021
⁴⁹ Email dated 7 Dec 2023 from WCARO to AfDB, Elena Ruiz Abril

Given that most of the planned activities have been successfully completed, it can be concluded that the overall efficiency of the project is satisfactory. Operational support by UNW country offices during the project implementation has generally met expectations, despite some delays in recruitment and payment processes, which are inherent to UN Women heavy procedures. Additionally, financial resources for the program were regularly monitored by both the country offices and the UN Women Regional Office, and narrative and financial reports regarding activity execution were provided to the donor, the African Development Bank (AfDB), by the UN Women Regional Office, on annual basis. However, it is important to note that no annual financial audits were conducted, a practice typically expected in UN Women projects. This provision was not outlined as a requirement in either the project document or the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the donor. Looking ahead, it may be beneficial to consider incorporating annual financial audits into future agreements to enhance transparency and accountability.

Although a complete quantitative analysis can only be performed with more recent budget data and comprehensive annual budget plans, the current figures in the table below, which are two months old, confirm that the project's implementation strategy has been both efficient and cost-effective. The decision to utilize trainers from government institutions and NGOs has proven to be a cost-effective approach, allowing for the delivery of high-quality training while maximizing resource utilization. This strategic choice not only optimizes expenditure

but also enhances the overall effectiveness of the training initiatives by drawing on the specialized knowledge and expertise of trainers who possess a deep understanding of the local context and procurement processes.

Notwithstanding the commendable performance described above, it is crucial to emphasize that the funds allocated to projects are intended to be utilized effectively to achieve substantial results and create a lasting impact. On the other hand, an analysis of the interim financial statements reveals that, as of October 31, 2024, a total of \$2,504,072.22, representing 62.6 percent of the budget, had been spent just five months before the project's completion. This indicates an unused balance of \$1,495,927.78 or 37.4 percent of the budget, which could have been better managed by the project team to enhance the absorption capacity. To explain this low absorption rate, the Regional Office highlighted challenges related to the length and complexity of processes, as well as external factors like delays in payments from partners, which are often beyond the project's control. Furthermore, during the project implementation, UN Women underwent an IT ERP migration, which introduced additional delays. In response to these challenges, the project has initiated acceleration plans, which have been communicated to the relevant teams to enhance delivery rates and ensure more efficient progress moving forward. This situation resulted in the approval of a no-cost extension by the donor, granting additional time to carry out remaining or additional activities and ensuring that all objectives could be fully achieved by December 2025.

Table 6: Financial implementation Summary

Financial year	Opening balance	Expenses	Closing balance	Implementation rate (financial) in % of the total budget of 4M
2022	2,850,000.00	485,363.38	2,364,636.62	12.13408
2023	2,364,636.62	931,819.61	1,432,817.01	23.29549
2024	2,582,817.01*	1,086,889.23	1,495,927.78**	27.17223
Total		2,504,072.22		62.60181
2025	DATA	NOT	YET	AVAILABLE

* closing balance 2023 (1,432,817.01) + contribution revenue 2024 (1,150,000.00)

** as of 31 October 2024



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MAXIMIZATION OF PARTNERSHIPS TO DELIVER RESULTS

FINDING 12:

The project effectively maximized diverse and strategic partnerships, significantly enhancing the efficiency and success of intervention delivery and results achievement.

The project's partnerships were varied and operated at multiple levels, integrating a range of strengths and expertise to deliver comprehensive outputs. Strategic alliances allowed the project to leverage the specific strengths of each implementing partner, thereby approaching affirmative procurement from multifaceted perspectives. Key areas of expertise contributed by these partners included procurement laws and procedures, financial management, and digital marketing. This collaborative approach ensured that each component of the project benefited from specialized knowledge, fostering innovative solutions and optimizing resource use. Moreover, engaging with partners from different sectors, including government, private industry, and civil society, enhanced the project's reach and impact. These partnerships facilitated not only knowledge exchange but also the harmonization of efforts across various domains, fostering a more coherent and unified implementation strategy. The cultivated partnerships also played a crucial role in building local capacity and ownership, enabling the project's benefits to extend beyond immediate results. By involving local stakeholders, the project promoted sustainable change and established a foundation for continued progress in affirmative procurement. In a nutshell, the strategic maximization of partnerships was instrumental in achieving the project's outputs towards expected results, illustrating the value of collaborative approaches in complex, multi-stakeholder initiatives. Future projects should continue to build on these relationships, seeking opportunities to further align goals and resources for even greater impact.

5.5. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability refers to the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue⁵⁰.

The UN Women Affirmative Procurement Project has made significant progress in establishing a foundation for sustain-

⁵⁰ OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second Edition), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/632da462-en-fr-es>

able change in the procurement sector. Its focus on policy reforms and capacity building holds immense promise for long-term impact. However, the project's sustainability is still under development, with a number of challenges limiting its full realization. Indeed, while the project has laid a solid groundwork, with promising initiatives for promoting women-owned/led businesses and fostering a more inclusive procurement landscape, the limited scope of interventions and challenges related to funding, stakeholder buy-in and monitoring, may prevent the project from achieving a level of sustainability that would fully outweigh its existing weaknesses.



Evaluation Question:

What is the likelihood of enduring results or program continuation over the long run after UN Women support?

FINDING 13:

The Affirmative Procurement Project demonstrates a strong foundation for sustainable change through its multidimensional approach, focusing on both policy reforms and capacity building. This strategy, by creating a supportive policy environment and empowering women entrepreneurs and stakeholders, creates a more inclusive and equitable procurement ecosystem. The project's success in implementing affirmative procurement policies in participating countries will serve as a model for wider adoption, showcasing its potential to foster a more equitable and inclusive economy.

The sustainability of the affirmative procurement project lies in its multi-faceted approach, which focuses on both policy reforms and capacity building, which are intertwined to create a lasting impact.

Policy Reforms: By advocating for and implementing public policies and regulations that promote affirmative procurement, the project creates a sustainable framework that benefits women-owned/led businesses. These policies act as a cornerstone, ensuring equal opportunities and providing a conducive environment for their participation. This element of sustainability ensures that even after the project's direct interventions end, the policies remain in place, continuing to support women's businesses. Furthermore, engaging government officials in the development and implementation of these policies and regulations fosters a sense of ownership and commitment

to the project's goals and objectives. By actively involving them in the process, the project ensures that officials gain a deep understanding of the rationale behind affirmative procurement, its benefits for women's economic empowerment, and its positive impact on the broader economy. This sense of ownership translates into a greater likelihood of sustained commitment to implementing and enforcing these policies even after the project support comes to an end. This approach strengthens the project's sustainability by creating a pool of government officials who are champions for women's empowerment and champions for the continued success of affirmative procurement initiatives. Of course, it is essential to maintain momentum to foster ownership, as the progress made so far in this area is just a small drop in the ocean of needs.

Capacity Building: The project's focus on empowering women entrepreneurs with skills and knowledge, alongside training government officials and the private sector, fosters a sustainable ecosystem. By building the capacity of all stakeholders involved, the project ensures a self-sustaining system where women-owned/led businesses can thrive, navigate procurement processes confidently, and contribute effectively to the economy. This element of sustainability empowers participants to continue the project's work even after external support ends, ensuring lasting changes. By creating a supportive environment with trained government procurement officials and equipping women with the necessary skills, the project enables increased participation of women-owned/led businesses in public procurement, contributing to a more inclusive economy. At the end of this pilot project, its success story will become a catalyst for wider adoption, as other stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector organizations, and even other countries, recognize the tangible benefits of affirmative procurement and its positive impact on women's economic empowerment. This ripple effect will definitely expand the project's reach beyond its direct interventions, creating a positive domino effect that empowers more women and fosters a more inclusive and equitable economy. Of course, it is essential to maintain momentum to foster ownership, as the progress made so far in this area is just a small drop in the ocean of needs.

Partnerships and collaboration: The project's sustainability is further enhanced by fostering partnership and collaboration between different stakeholders:

Government Officials: By engaging with government officials, the project ensures the ongoing support and implementation of affirmative procurement policies.

Private Sector: Collaborating with the private sector allows for the creation of partnerships that offer opportunities for women-owned/led businesses and create a more inclusive market environment.

Non-Government organizations (NGOs): Through training and capacity-building programs, NGOs can equip women-led businesses with the skills necessary to compete in procurement processes and NGOs can advocate for policy changes and raise awareness among public and private sector stakeholders about the importance of integrating gender-responsive practices into procurement frameworks.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Alongside NGOs, by advocating for policy reforms that promote gender-responsive procurement, and fostering collaboration between public bodies, private enterprises, and local communities, CSOs can facilitate the establishment of equitable procurement practices, thereby enhancing women's economic participation and nurturing inclusive economic growth.

In a nutshell, the affirmative procurement project's focus on both policy reforms and capacity building creates a robust foundation for sustainable impact. The project's legacy extends beyond its direct interventions, setting a positive precedent for future initiatives, demonstrating the potential for increased participation of women-owned/led businesses in public procurement, and promoting lasting change for women-owned/led businesses.

FINDING 14:

While the project holds great potential for sustainability, certain weaknesses hinder its full realization. The limited scope of interventions, coupled with challenges related to ongoing funding, securing widespread stakeholder buy-in, and addressing deeply rooted cultural norms, pose significant obstacles to achieving lasting impact. Furthermore, the project's current monitoring and evaluation systems require strengthening to effectively measure progress, adapt to changing needs, and demonstrate the project's full impact.

Notwithstanding the important aspects of the project that will positively influence its sustainability, there are also weaknesses that may negatively impact the affirmative procurement project's long-term success. To highlight

just a few, a lack of ongoing funding or resources can hinder the continuation of key activities once the initial funding has been exhausted. This vulnerability highlights the need for securing sustainable funding mechanisms or exploring alternative funding sources to ensure the project initiatives' continuation beyond the initial funding period. Additionally, the project's advocacy efforts, while promising, are currently too limited to guarantee widespread stakeholder buy-in in all participating countries. Without strong commitment and support from all relevant stakeholders, including the government, the private sector and the civil society, the project may face challenges in gaining momentum and impact. Strengthening advocacy efforts and engaging with a broader range of stakeholders are crucial to ensure the project's widespread adoption and long-term success.

In some regions, especially in Mali and Nigeria, deeply ingrained cultural and social norms may impede the acceptance and implementation of affirmative procurement initiatives aimed at gender equality. Therefore, integrating the project more effectively with the overall gender equality program is essential to address these deeply rooted societal norms and create a more conducive environment for affirmative procurement. In Mali, for instance, supportive partners from government have chosen to call the project "affirmative procurement for access to public procurement for women, young people and people living with disabilities". Furthermore, economic downturns or instability in the region can affect both the supply and demand sides of procurement, making it difficult to maintain project gains and initiate new activities. Therefore, the project needs to develop strategies for mitigating these risks and adapting to changing economic conditions to ensure its long-term impact.

Finally, the project's monitoring and evaluation systems require strengthening. Without robust systems for monitoring and evaluating project outcomes, it can be difficult to measure success, make necessary adjustments, and demonstrate impact, which can threaten sustainability. Investing in a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework will be essential to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate the project's effectiveness to key stakeholders.

By proactively addressing these weaknesses, the project can build resilience, strengthen its impact, and create a more lasting and impactful contribution to women's economic empowerment.



Photo: © UN Women

5.6. GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights and gender equality evaluation refers to assessing which groups benefit and which groups contribute to the intervention under review, disaggregated by relevant criteria: disadvantaged and advantaged groups depending on their gender or status. Both Human Rights and Gender Equality seek, inter alia, to balance power relations between or within duty bearers and right-holders⁵¹.

The Affirmative Procurement project integrates Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA) and gender equality principles throughout its design and implementation. This is evidenced by a focus on women's economic empowerment as a human right; the inclusion of participatory approaches in project design and implementation; the use of a non-discriminatory selection process of beneficiaries; and the commitment to transparency and accountability in all project activities. The project's commitment to gender equality is further demonstrated by its prioritization of women-led businesses and its efforts

to address gender-based barriers to economic participation. However, lack of specific targeting of vulnerable women and the incorporation of specific measures to address their needs, limited attention to intersectional inequalities, are areas that need particular improvement.

Moving forward, the project should strengthen targeted outreach to vulnerable groups; develop specific indicators to monitor the project's effect on gender equality and human rights; incorporate regular consultations with beneficiaries to ensure responsiveness to their needs. Nevertheless, the evaluation team noted with satisfaction that during implementation, some steps were made to encourage the participation of people living with disability. For example, the project steering committee in Nigeria includes the association of people living with disability and, as mentioned earlier on, in Mali, the project focus itself was expanded at government level, to include the youth and people living with disability. In Senegal, the project extended its efforts to the grassroots level in various regions, successfully reaching the most disadvantaged segments of the population. This approach ensured that the benefits and opportunities provided by the project were accessible to marginalized communities, fostering greater inclusivity and empowerment among those who are often overlooked.

⁵¹ United Nations Evaluation Group (2014). Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations. New York: UNEG.



Evaluation Question:

To what extent have gender and human rights considerations been integrated into project design and implementation?

INTEGRATION OF HRBA AND GENDER EQUALITY PRINCIPLES IN THE PROJECT DESIGN

FINDING 15:

While the Affirmative Procurement project design incorporates human rights, non-discrimination, and gender equality principles, a more structured approach is needed to fully operationalize a "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) strategy. The absence of targeted affirmative action to reach vulnerable groups represents also a key challenge. Specifically, the selection criteria, while non-discriminatory, do not proactively identify and address the unique barriers faced by vulnerable women; outreach strategies are not sufficiently targeted; monitoring and evaluation mechanisms do not adequately capture the participation and outcomes for vulnerable groups.

The Affirmative Procurement project strives to advance gender equality and uphold human rights by prioritizing support for women-led and women-owned businesses (WSMEs). Central to its mission is ensuring equal economic opportunities for women, who often encounter distinct barriers in the business landscape. All four participating countries use a consultative non-discriminatory selection process to identify WSMEs beneficiaries of the project. This inclusive approach, accepting all women who meet the project's established selection criteria regardless of their background, demonstrates a commitment to reaching women from diverse groups, including those considered vulnerable, fostering inclusivity and diversity in participation. However, the evaluation found no specific affirmative actions or targeted advocacy efforts directed towards particularly vulnerable groups, such as women from marginalized communities or those experiencing socio-economic disadvantages. While the open selection process is a positive step, further efforts to proactively identify and support vulnerable women's participation would strengthen the project's impact on gender equality and human rights. This can be achieved through targeted outreach and advocacy campaigns specifically designed for vulnerable women entrepreneurs, and dedicated support systems to address their unique barriers to access

and participation, as well as partnerships with grassroots organizations that intimately understand and work within these communities. Promoting awareness and facilitating participation of women from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds would strengthen the project's alignment with its gender equality and human rights goals.

In a nutshell, while the project effectively promotes inclusion within its selection framework, to strengthen the LNOB approach, the project should develop targeted outreach strategies for vulnerable groups; refine selection criteria to better identify and accommodate the needs of vulnerable women; incorporate specific indicators to track the participation and outcomes of vulnerable women in the monitoring and evaluation framework; and establish partnerships with organizations working with vulnerable communities. This will enhance the project's impact on the most vulnerable women, ensuring equitable distribution of benefits across all segments of the female population.

INTEGRATION OF HRBA AND GENDER EQUALITY PRINCIPLES IN THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

FINDING 16:

The project's implementation largely reflects HRBA and gender equality principles through targeted interventions such as participatory training sessions and tailored support services, but challenges remain in consistently reaching the most marginalized women and ensuring equitable access to project services. Strengthened outreach, robust monitoring, and enhanced partnerships are needed to fully realize the project's potential for equitable impact.

The Affirmative Procurement project's implementation demonstrates a commitment to integrating Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA) and gender equality principles through participatory training sessions designed to empower women entrepreneurs; the provision of tailored support services to address the specific needs of women; regular consultations with beneficiaries to ensure responsiveness to their needs; and the production of knowledge to follow up on training results and other outcomes. These actions reflect the project's understanding that women's economic empowerment is a human right, and that achieving gender equality requires addressing systemic inequalities. Consequently, while the project faced potential sensitivities surrounding women's

economic empowerment (WEE) and affirmative procurement, UN Women encountered no insurmountable constraints to implementation. Project delays, primarily related to initial setup, staff recruitment, and implementing partners engagement in some countries such as Cote d'Ivoire and Mali, impacted progress at the beginning. Limited instances of resistance were observed in Mali and potentially in Côte d'Ivoire, where some procurement officials raised concerns that incorporating affirmative procurement into the law could be seen as discriminatory and in violation of equal treatment principles. This is a significant issue that requires immediate strategic attention. To address these concerns effectively, more aggressive advocacy efforts are needed to educate stakeholders about the benefits of affirmative procurement and to clarify how such measures can coexist with principles of equality and inclusivity.

To mitigate implementation challenges, the project strategically expanded partnerships beyond traditional gender-focused agencies, engaging a diverse range of institutional and non-institutional partners. For example, while the trained women represented a heterogeneous group with varying social backgrounds and educational levels, a more tailored gender equality training program could have enhanced their empowerment and advocacy skills. This is particularly relevant given the noted resistance to affirmative procurement in at least one instance, as mentioned above. A more targeted approach to training could better equip beneficiaries to navigate potential obstacles and effectively promote their rights.

Again, challenges remain in consistently reaching women with disabilities, and mainstreaming gender considerations throughout all project activities. To further strengthen the integration of HRBA and gender equality, the project should strengthen outreach to the most vulnerable and marginalized women, ensuring equitable access to all project services; implement more robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress on gender equality and human rights; build stronger partnerships with local organizations working with vulnerable women; and develop clear accountability mechanisms to address complaints and ensure responsiveness. Additionally, most of those interviewed highlighted the issue of limitation on the categories of women who can benefit from these opportunities in line with their education level. This restriction could pose a human rights concern, as it discriminates against women who may not be well-educated or lack other resources. Moving forward, it is essential to incorporate strategies into the project that address this potential limitation and promote broader inclusivity for all women.



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6 LESSONS LEARNED



Technical steering committee meeting
in Côte d'Ivoire, 2022.

Photo: © UN Women



Photo: © UN Women



The evaluation confirms that, overall, the project shows great promise and has generated numerous effective practices that can be replicated in similar initiatives across other countries. These good practices exemplify innovative approaches to affirmative procurement and can serve as valuable models for future projects. Building on these insights, along with other evaluation findings discussed in previous sections, the evaluation highlights the following key lessons learned from the project experience. These lessons not only reflect the strengths of the project but also provide critical guidance for enhancing the effectiveness of upcoming interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and economic empowerment.

LESSON 1:

A multifaceted approach that targets public policy reforms, capacity building, and strong collaboration with the public and private sectors is essential for effectively addressing the systemic barriers faced by women-owned/led businesses in procurement. By empowering these businesses with the necessary skills, knowledge, and networks, and by equipping government officials with the tools to implement affirmative procurement policies, projects can foster a supportive environment that promotes equity and drives inclusive economic growth.

LESSON 2:

The project's alignment with other UN Women initiatives on women's economic empowerment enhances its impact by enabling cross-programmatic learning and collaboration. Engaging in joint initiatives and knowledge sharing with other UN agencies can further amplify the project's effectiveness, driving systemic change and fostering inclusive economic growth across the region. Leveraging partnerships with various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations, not only strengthens the implementation of affirmative procurement policies but also promotes a more holistic approach to supporting women-owned businesses. To maximize impact, it is essential for future projects to actively seek and cultivate collaborations that align with shared goals of gender equality and sustainable development.

LESSON 3:

While the project demonstrated exceptional performance by significantly exceeding all reported outcome indicators, it is crucial to ensure the accuracy of indicator classifications and the alignment of targets with project objectives. The analysis revealed that the reported outcome indicators were more accurately classified as output indicators, suggesting that the initial targets may have been set too low. This highlights the importance of clearly defining outcomes and outputs during project planning to facilitate meaningful evaluations and avoid misinterpretations of success. For future projects, incorporating robust indicator definitions and realistic target-setting practices will enhance the ability to measure true impact and support effective scaling efforts.

LESSON 4:

Comprehensive capacity-building initiatives that include targeted training, mentorship, and post-training support are instrumental in empowering women-led businesses to effectively engage in public procurement processes. By equipping these enterprises with essential skills in procurement strategies, digital marketing, and financial management, projects can significantly enhance their competitiveness and market reach. The creation of supportive communities through platforms like WhatsApp further extends program impacts, fostering continuous peer support and collaboration. However, the success of such initiatives depends on adapting the training format to local needs, such as providing content in local languages and accommodating different learning preferences through a mix of online and face-to-face sessions.

LESSON 5:

The success of affirmative procurement reforms is centered on strategic partnerships with government institutions and leveraging political will, technical expertise, and investment to create evidence-based policies. Comprehensive training programs are crucial for building public institutional capacity, surpassing targets by equipping officials with skills in gender-responsive procurement, compliance, and financial literacy. Collaborating with experienced procurement professionals ensures participants gain practical insights, thus fostering the adoption of inclusive procurement processes. Additionally, integrating practical experience requirements, like DoTakeAction's bid application process, will boost the confidence and capabilities of women-led enterprises.

LESSON 6:

Effective integration of affirmative procurement principles into national and regional policies requires strategic advocacy, robust stakeholder engagement, and leveraging existing legislative frameworks to ensure sustainability and inclusivity. High-level advocacy efforts, such as

workshops and partnership with government entities, are crucial for gaining support and driving systemic reforms. While political changes can pose challenges, maintaining momentum through strategic relationships and collaborative networks can sustain progress. Additionally, it is essential to address regional disparities and tailor approaches to context-specific opportunities and constraints, as demonstrated by varying commitment levels among countries like Mali and Côte d'Ivoire.

LESSON 7:

Implementing initiatives to promote Gender-Responsive Procurement (GRP) within the private sector can significantly enhance the commitment to gender equality, particularly through the adoption of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). The project's focus on increasing the number of signatories, especially to WEP 5, has demonstrated that high-level advocacy and strategic engagement with private sector stakeholders can create a more inclusive and equitable business environment. The successful integration of WEPs highlights their potential as a valuable tool for driving corporate change and advancing women's economic empowerment. Future projects should prioritize the incorporation of WEP-related outcomes, leveraging these principles to foster sustainable progress toward gender equality across various industries.





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7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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7.1. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions presented by the evaluation team are based on a thorough analysis of the findings gathered during the evaluation process. This analysis was organized according to the established evaluation framework and the specific evaluation questions, employing a mixed-methods approach that incorporates gender-responsive and human rights-based perspectives. These conclusions will undergo final validation by the UN Women's Regional Office, the Evaluation Reference Group, and the Evaluation Management Group to ensure accuracy and alignment with the project's objectives and standards.

Overall, this project not only addresses the immediate needs of women-led enterprises but also lays the groundwork for sustained progress toward gender equality in economic participation. The accomplishments achieved thus far highlight the potential for replicating successful strategies in other regions, reinforcing the global commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable economic landscape for all.



This section presents the key conclusions drawn from the evaluation of the UN Women affirmative procurement regional project in West Africa, along with recommendations for future initiatives. The findings highlighted the project's significant achievements in promoting gender-responsive procurement, empowering women-owned and led businesses, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. However, the evaluation also identified areas for improvement and challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the project's long-term sustainability and impact. Based on a comprehensive analysis of project implementation, outputs, outcomes, and stakeholder feedback, the following conclusions and recommendations are intended to guide UN Women and its partners in refining their approaches and maximizing the effectiveness of affirmative procurement initiatives in the region and beyond.

RELEVANCE

CONCLUSION 1:

The UN Women affirmative procurement project is highly relevant in its approach to effectively address the root causes of gender inequality in the procurement sector. By fostering capacity building and focusing on systemic change, the project not only empowers women-led businesses but also enhances overall economic participation. Furthermore, it is well aligned with local needs and international goals, ensuring that its interventions resonate with both regional priorities and global commitments to gender equality. [Based on findings 1,2,3,4]

Overall, the evaluation concluded that the UN Women affirmative procurement project is very relevant in both local and international contexts. Indeed, the evaluation underscored the significant relevance of the UN Women affirmative procurement project in addressing the root causes of gender inequality within the procurement sector. By fostering capacity building, promoting collaboration, and focusing on systemic change, the project not only empowers women-owned and led businesses but also contributes to broader economic growth. Moreover,

the project's alignment with local needs, priorities, and international goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN Women Strategic Plan, reinforces its strategic importance in the context of regional development. The project's adaptability in responding to the consistent challenges faced by women entrepreneurs illustrates its commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring that interventions remain relevant and effective.

COHERENCE

CONCLUSION 2:

The evaluation indicates strong internal coherence of the UN Women affirmative procurement project, characterized by effective integration of its components and collaboration with other WEE initiatives, while highlighting the need for enhanced external coherence through deeper collaboration with other UN agencies and clarity on synergies with similar projects. [Based on finding 5]

The evaluation of the UN Women affirmative procurement regional project reveals notable internal coherence, demonstrating effective integration of its components and activities within the project structure. Evidence from Nigeria, Senegal, and Mali indicates strong collaboration with other Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) initiatives, such as enhancing women's access to finance, entrepreneurship, and skills development in ICT. This alignment has created valuable opportunities for cross-programmatic learning and collaboration, enhancing the project's overall impact. Notable initiatives, such as the joint ICT training programs in Mali and Nigeria, and the distribution of solar panels to women-owned businesses in Mali, illustrate the project's commitment to sustainability and resilience.

In terms of external coherence, while no similar projects were identified in the four countries, a new initiative in Nigeria, supported by the World Bank, called "Scaling Women's Economic Empowerment through Affirmative Procurement Reforms (SWEAP)," closely mirrors the UN Women training program. Clarifying the synergies and complementarities between these projects would be beneficial for maximizing impact and avoiding duplication of efforts. Within the UN system, while the project's objectives resonate with the goals of other UN agencies addressing gender equality and sustainable development,

there remains significant potential for deeper collaboration with these organizations. The lack of formal collaborative initiatives with other UN entities, despite existing opportunities, indicates a missed chance for synergy that could further amplify the project's impact.

EFFECTIVENESS

CONCLUSION 3:

The affirmative procurement project has made significant progresses in advancing women's economic empowerment in West Africa by effectively developing the capacity of women entrepreneurs to access public procurement opportunities. Through targeted training programs, outreach initiatives, and strategic partnerships, the project has equipped women-led businesses with essential skills and knowledge necessary for navigating the complexities of the procurement process. [Based on finding 6]

The affirmative procurement project has laid a strong foundation for sustainable growth and systemic change in the economic landscape for women entrepreneurs in West Africa. The UN Women's interventions in affirmative procurement have demonstrated substantial effectiveness in strengthening the capacity of women-led and women-owned businesses to access procurement opportunities. By the evaluation date, around 2,000 women entrepreneurs had received targeted training, significantly contributing to their empowerment and ability to navigate the complexities of public procurement processes. The diverse training curriculum, which included advanced procurement strategies, digital marketing, and financial management, has equipped participants with essential skills, facilitating their growth in competitiveness and market reach. Despite the successes, the lack of field verification for reported figures underscores the need for robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure accurate assessments of project impact.

CONCLUSION 4:

The project has effectively enhanced the capacity of public institutions and private institutions to a lesser extent, and fostered important policy reforms, demonstrating its strategic significance in promoting gender-responsive procurement practices. [Based on finding 7, 8, 9]

The project has demonstrated its effectiveness in fostering policy reform and enhancing the capacity of public institutions. By successfully training 450 officials across 114 institutions in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal, it has exceeded its initial target and laid a strong foundation for sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The collaboration with local organizations and engagement with high-level political figures has been instrumental in raising awareness and securing support for affirmative procurement reforms. Additionally, the project's focus on promoting gender-responsive procurement within the private sector, particularly through initiatives like the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), will ensure ongoing support for women entrepreneurs and create a more equitable business environment.

CONCLUSION 5:

The affirmative procurement project has effectively integrated gender-responsive principles into policies in some participating countries, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, but ongoing success requires sustained advocacy and strategic partnerships. [Based on finding 7, 8, 9]

The affirmative procurement project has made substantial progress in integrating gender-responsive procurement principles into national and regional policies across West Africa, significantly contributing to gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Through high-level advocacy, strategic collaborations, and targeted policy reforms, the project has effectively raised awareness and garnered support from government stakeholders. Despite challenges such as leadership changes in Mali and the need for greater advocacy in Côte d'Ivoire, the project's efforts have resulted in significant legislative advancements, particularly in Nigeria and Senegal. Additionally, ongoing dialogues aim to institutionalize gender considerations at the regional level, enhancing women-led enterprises' participation in public procurement. However, the continued success of these initiatives hinges on sustained advocacy, strategic partnerships, and the integration of gender-responsive policies within regional frameworks like WAEMU. By addressing these factors, the project paves the way for a more inclusive and equitable procurement environment, setting a replicable model for other regions committed to advancing gender equality in economic participation.

EFFICIENCY

CONCLUSION 6:

The affirmative procurement project effectively utilized its budget to support programmatic and operational activities across participating countries; however, concerns about inadequate funding suggest a need for increased financial resources to maximize impact. While the project demonstrated an efficient and cost-effective implementation strategy, leveraging WEE initiatives to share costs, project staff were notably overstretched, relying heavily on external consultants. To sustain effective delivery, a balanced staffing strategy is essential. Additionally, the absence of regular financial audits indicates a need for enhanced transparency and accountability in future initiatives to strengthen fiscal oversight and stakeholder trust. [Based on finding 10, 11]

The evaluation team found substantial evidence to conclude that the project's implementation strategy was both efficient and cost-effective. The affirmative procurement project, funded by a USD 4 million grant from the AfDB via the AFAWA initiative, effectively utilized its budget to support programmatic and operational activities across participating West African countries. Despite the alignment of the budget with the project action plan, concerns about inadequate funding suggest the need for increased financial resources to maximize impact. Financial resources were managed in accordance with UN Women procedures, and overall, the project's efficiency is considered satisfactory due to the successful completion of most planned activities at a low cost. To mitigate resource constraints, WEE initiatives were leveraged to share costs, promoting integration and synergy. However, project staff are notably overstretched, relying heavily on external consultants, which highlights the necessity for a balanced staffing strategy to maintain effective delivery and support. Despite the generally effective operational support from UN Women country offices, the evaluation identified delays in recruitment and payment processes that highlight procedural challenges. Furthermore, the absence of annual financial audits, although not stipulated in the project document or memorandum of understanding (MOU), indicates a need for enhanced transparency and accountability in future initiatives. Implementing regular financial audits would help to further strengthen fiscal oversight and trust among stakeholders.

CONCLUSION 7:

The affirmative procurement project successfully maximized its partnerships across various sectors to enhance the effectiveness and reach of its initiatives. By leveraging the strengths and expertise of diverse implementing partners, the project facilitated a collaborative approach that optimized resource use and fostered innovative solutions. This strategic engagement not only promoted knowledge exchange but also built local capacity, ensuring that the project's benefits extended beyond immediate results. Moving forward, continuing to cultivate these partnerships will be essential for achieving even greater impact. [Based on finding 12]

The project's partnerships were varied and operated at multiple levels, integrating a range of strengths and expertise to deliver comprehensive outputs. Strategic alliances allowed the project to leverage the specific strengths of each implementing partner, thereby approaching affirmative procurement from multifaceted perspectives. Key areas of expertise contributed by these partners included procurement laws and procedures, financial management, and digital marketing. This collaborative approach ensured that each component of the project benefited from specialized knowledge, fostering innovative solutions and optimizing resource use. Moreover, engaging with partners from different sectors, government, private industry, and civil society, enhanced the project's reach and impact. In particular, utilizing trainers from government institutions and NGOs proved to be a very cost-effective approach. Consequently, while all outputs have been delivered, some funds remain unutilized. In response, the donor approved a no-cost extension, providing additional time to complete new or outstanding activities and ensuring that all objectives can be fully achieved by December 2025. In a nutshell, the strategic maximization of partnerships was instrumental in achieving the project's outputs toward expected results, illustrating the value of collaborative approaches in complex, multi-stakeholder initiatives. Future projects should continue to build on these relationships, seeking opportunities to further align goals and resources for even greater impact.



SUSTAINABILITY

CONCLUSION 8:

The UN Women Affirmative Procurement Project has established a strong foundation for sustainable change in the procurement sector through its focus on policy reforms and capacity building. However, challenges related to the limited scope of interventions, funding, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring hinder its full sustainability. [Based on finding 13, 14]

The Affirmative Procurement Project has laid a strong foundation for sustainable change through its multidimensional approach that emphasizes both policy reforms and capacity building, thus creating a more inclusive and equitable procurement ecosystem. However, to fully realize its potential for sustainability, the project must address weaknesses such as the limited scope of interventions, challenges in securing ongoing funding and stakeholder support, and the need to tackle entrenched cultural norms. Additionally, enhancing the monitoring and evaluation systems will be essential for accurately measuring progress and adapting to evolving needs, ultimately ensuring the project's lasting impact on gender equality and economic empowerment.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

CONCLUSION 9:

The Affirmative Procurement project effectively integrates Human Rights-Based Approaches and gender equality principles, promoting women's economic empowerment and inclusivity. However, there is a need to enhance targeted outreach to vulnerable groups and address intersectional inequalities. Notably, efforts to include people with disabilities will demonstrate the project's commitment to fostering inclusivity and empowerment. [Based on finding 15, 16]

The Affirmative Procurement project integrates Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA) and gender equality principles throughout its design and implementation. This is evidenced by a focus on women's economic empowerment as a human right; the inclusion of participatory approaches in project design and implementation; the use of a non-discriminatory selection process of beneficiaries; and the commitment to transparency and accountability in all project activities. The project's com-



WSMEs capacity-building training session in Nigeria, 2023
Photo: © UN Women

mitment to gender equality is further demonstrated by its prioritization of women-led businesses and its efforts to address gender-based barriers to economic participation. However, a lack of specific targeting of vulnerable women and limited attention to intersectional inequalities are areas that need particular improvement. Nevertheless, the evaluation team noted with satisfaction that steps were taken to encourage the participation of people living with disabilities during implementation. Overall, the Affirmative Procurement project has shown considerable promise in reducing inequalities in public procurement and fostering the economic empowerment of women. However, to maximize its impact, it is essential to continue addressing systemic barriers and investing in innovative, inclusive approaches. Improved coordination among public, private, and community stakeholders will be critical in sustaining these achievements and extending the benefits to a larger number of beneficiaries, ultimately creating a more equitable and inclusive economic landscape.

7.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

(see detailed information on their implementation in Annex 2)

The following recommendations are directly informed by the evaluation findings and were developed in collaboration with Country Offices and ERG stakeholders through various consultations and workshops to ensure ownership and alignment with on-the-ground realities. Additional opportunities to refine these recommendations will be available during the review processes for both the interim and final reports by WCARO, the Country Offices, and ERG. These recommendations are designed to guide and enhance future efforts in advancing the affirmative procurement project, ensuring it remains effective and aligned with regional and global priorities for promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment. By focusing on refining strategies, strengthening partnerships, and expanding outreach, they seek to ensure

that the project's interventions are both comprehensive and inclusive. These recommendations also emphasize the importance of continuous improvement in resource management, stakeholder engagement, and policy formulation to further bolster the project's effectiveness. They are to be addressed essentially by UN Women in partnership and consultation with relevant national stakeholders in the region. Through concerted efforts, the objective is to ensure that the project's positive impacts are sustained and scaled, ultimately contributing to a more equitable economic environment for women entrepreneurs throughout the West African region.

Recommendation 1: To enhance the impact and sustainability of the project, continue to focus on capacity building and systemic change. Expand training and outreach initiatives to equip more women-led businesses with essential skills for public procurement, ensuring alignment with both regional and global gender equality goals. *[Related to conclusions 1, 3 and 8]*

Recommendation 2: Improve external coherence by fostering deeper collaboration with other UN agencies and identifying synergies with similar projects. Continue to maximize partnerships across various sectors to enhance resource use, promote knowledge exchange, and build local capacity. *[Related to conclusions 2 and 7]*

Recommendation 3: To reinforce the project's strategic significance, expand the scope of interventions to enhance stakeholder engagement and support for gender-responsive procurement practices. Address challenges related to funding and monitoring to ensure sustainable policy reforms and capacity building in both public and private institutions. *[Related to conclusions 4 and 8]*

Recommendation 4: Address funding concerns by exploring additional financial resources and implementing regular financial audits to enhance transparency and accountability. Develop a balanced staffing strategy to reduce reliance on external consultants, ensuring sustainable project delivery. *[Related to conclusions 5 and 7]*

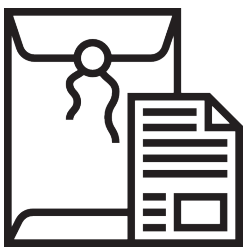
Recommendation 5: Expand targeted outreach efforts to engage vulnerable groups and address intersectional inequalities, strengthening the project's commitment to human rights-based approaches and inclusivity. Continue integrating policy reforms and capacity building to estab-



lish sustainable change in the procurement sector. *[Related to conclusions 8 and 9]*

Detailed information on the implementation of recommendations, including key actions to be considered, responsible actors, priority and impact levels for each recommendation, as well as the level of difficulty, can be found in Annex 2. This annex serves as a comprehensive guide to facilitate understanding and execution of the recommendations outlined in the evaluation report.

A number of other general recommendations have been outlined throughout the report based on the analysis of pertinent issues, aimed at guiding the development of the next phase of the project. These recommendations address key challenges and opportunities identified during the evaluation and are summarized in Box 3 below. By implementing these recommendations, the project can enhance its effectiveness and sustainability, ensuring a greater impact on women's economic empowerment through affirmative procurement practices.



BOX 4: A FEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT PHASES OF THE PROJECT



If UN Women is to implement a new phase of the project, which is essential given the aspirations and needs expressed by women who previously had little interest in procurement, several key priority actions could significantly advance the creation of a more inclusive environment that empowers women-led businesses to effectively access and compete for procurement opportunities. This, in turn, would promote greater economic empowerment.


- 1 Address Turnover Thresholds:** Advocate for the revision of eligibility criteria that impose minimum turnover levels for public procurement. Engaging with policymakers to create more inclusive standards will allow smaller women-led businesses to compete effectively.
- 2 Enhance Access to Financial Resources:** Develop partnerships with financial institutions to create tailored funding solutions, such as grants or low-interest loans, specifically for women-owned businesses. This would facilitate their ability to execute contracts and manage cash flow effectively.
- 3 Enhance Business and Contract Management Skills:** Expand training programs to include comprehensive courses on business management and the effective implementation of contracts following successful procurement bids. This will equip women entrepreneurs with the essential skills needed to grow their businesses and manage awarded contracts successfully.
- 4 Establish a Real-Time Information Network:** Create a platform that provides timely and relevant information on procurement opportunities, including tenders and contracts. This network could be supported through partnerships with local organizations and utilize technology to ensure accessibility.
- 5 Strengthen Mentorship and Support Systems:** Launch mentoring initiatives that pair women entrepreneurs with experienced professionals in the procurement field. This support can help businesses improve their bidding strategies and enhance their understanding of procurement requirements.
- 6 Promote Collaboration with Private Sector:** Foster partnerships with private sector companies to create opportunities for women-led businesses to participate in supply chains. Encouraging corporate social responsibility programs that prioritize women-owned enterprises can enhance their procurement access.
- 7 Develop Policy Advocacy Initiatives:** Establish targeted advocacy campaigns to influence policymakers and government institutions to implement gender-responsive procurement policies. Engaging women entrepreneurs in these advocacy efforts will ensure their voices are heard in policy dialogues.

ANNEXES



Capacity-building session on gender responsive procurement in Côte d'Ivoire, 2023.

Photo: © UN Women

- 
1. **Terms of reference**
 2. **Detailed recommendations**
 3. **Stakeholder mapping**
 4. **Evaluation matrix**
 5. **Data collection tools**
 6. **Celebrating success: Three transformative procurement journeys**
 7. **List of documents reviewed**
 8. **List of stakeholders consulted**
 9. **Reformulation of outcomes and performance indicators**

ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

PROGRAM EVALUATION : WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT REFORM IN WEST AFRICA

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Type of Evaluation	Final Project Evaluation
Project Locations	Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, and Côte d’Ivoire
Type of Contract	1 Senior consultant (60 days) SSA contract
Duty Station	homebased
Languages Required	English, French
Starting Date	25 th August 2024
Ending Date	25 March 2025

1. BACKGROUND

UN Women, grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security.

UN Women support women’s economic empowerment through enhanced opportunities of women-led businesses in West Africa to access public and private procurement.

The Project Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa supports women economic empowerment through policy reforms, institutional strengthening of public sector institutions and capacity building of women-owned/-led businesses to access procurement opportunities in West Africa. The project budget is USD 4 million funded by the African Development Bank through the Women entrepreneurs Finance initiative trust fund (We-fi) and is being implemented by UN Women Regional office for West and Central Africa and UN Women’s Country Offices in Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, and Cote d’Ivoire.

The project aims to achieve the key following outcomes:

- Enhance the capacity of 1360 women-led SMEs in Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, and Cote d'Ivoire to access procurement opportunities.
- Ensure that at least 400 women-led SMEs can access new procurement opportunities in the four countries.

- Improve the understanding of 270 government officials on how to implement affirmative procurement reform.
- Adopt four legal/regulatory reforms that facilitate women-led businesses' access to procurement opportunities.

Following on Through this initiative, UN Women is undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of its project on women's economic empowerment in West Africa. This evaluation taking place **from June to December 2024** aims to assess the project's impact and effectiveness in achieving its key outcomes. By focusing on lessons learned and programmatic insights, the evaluation seeks to refine UN Women's approaches to integrating gender perspectives into program development and policy formulation. Additionally, the evaluation will contribute valuable insights to UN Women's knowledge management efforts, enhancing its ability to promote Affirmative procurement and women's empowerment in West Africa.

Furthermore, the evaluation will provide specific recommendations for prioritizing interventions in future project phases. These recommendations will identify areas requiring ongoing support, successful interventions for capitalization, and strategies to maximize impact. By incorporating these recommendations, UN Women aims to improve project management practices and enhance the engagement of key stakeholders.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE THEMATIC AREA

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women). The mandate of UN Women is guided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); UN Security Council resolutions; the recommendations and resolutions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); and other applicable United Nations instruments, standards and resolutions.

UN Women's work is focused on responding to its integrated mandate:

- Normative work: to support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the General Assembly, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms ;

- Operational work: to help Member States to implement international standards and to forge effective partnerships with civil society; and
- Coordination work: to hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress, and also the broader role of the entity in mobilizing and convening key stakeholders and partnerships

The **UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025** outlines strategic direction, objectives, and approaches to support efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The Strategic Plan outlines five strategic priorities for UN Women in 2022–2025:

- A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies, and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women is strengthened and implemented.
- Women lead, participate in, and benefit equally from governance systems.
- Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy.
- All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence.
- Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action.

The project will **contribute to women's economic empowerment** by strengthening equal opportunities to access procurement and strengthening the capacity of women led businesses. This is in alignment with the strategic priorities of UN Women and will directly contribute to the achievement of SDG 5 : Gender Equality.

Gender and social effects: this project addresses critical gender gaps in entrepreneurship and private sector development in Africa by promoting women's economic empowerment through capacity building, institutional strengthening and reform in the area of affirmative procurement. UN Women's project's vision is to promote equal opportunities for women entrepreneurs through the creation of an enabling environment for WSMEs to participate and contribute to public procurement, the promotion of gender responsive procurement practices among the private sector, and through strengthening the capacities of WSMEs and women business associations. The project will also contribute to mitigate the socio-

economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SMEs, and on smaller SMEs in particular among which women-led businesses are overrepresented.

- Other social effects: To the extent possible, the project will target women-led businesses led by young women as well as women with disabilities.

3. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND USE OF THE EVALUATION

The **main purpose** of this regional evaluation is to contribute to enhancing UN Women's approach to women's economic empowerment through affirmative procurement in West Africa.

The **specific objectives** of this evaluation are:

1. To provide evidence-based analysis of the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of UN Women work to economically empower women of West Africa through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa;
2. To identify what can be enhanced in the way the project interventions are designed and implemented in the region of West Africa.
3. To identify lessons learned, strengths and current trends of the project initiatives that have implications for future managerial and programmatic decisions;
4. To provide forward-looking recommendations and a potential Theory of Change to strengthen programming in the area of WEE in the region.

Findings will be used by the Regional Office West and Central Africa and Country Offices to refine its focus and approaches to women economic empowerment. Knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used for strategic policy and programmatic decisions, organizational learning and accountability as well as for the identification of good practices addressing the structural impediments to gender equality and the women's economic empowerment. Findings will also feed into UN Women's efforts to promote 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the agenda 2063 of the African Union.

Targeted users of the evaluation are the UN Women WCARO Senior Management, and key stakeholders. Ultimately, the results of the evaluation will be publicly accessible through the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (or GATE) system for global learning.

4. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION AND TIMELINE

The scope of the evaluation will include the West and Central Regional Office and the implementing country offices: Nigeria, Mali, Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire.

The timeline for this evaluation extends from August 2024 to March 2025.

5. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology will use mixed methods, including quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analytical approaches to account for complexity of gender relations and to ensure participatory and inclusive processes that are culturally appropriate. The detailed methodology for the evaluation will be developed and presented at the inception of the evaluation. Participatory and gender sensitive evaluation methodologies will support active participation of the beneficiaries of the project interventions. The Evaluation Team will undertake the following tasks: review of documents, key informant Interviews, country visits, online surveys, preliminary finding presentation and report writing.

The Inception Report will include details on how the evaluation team will guarantee protection of subjects and respect for confidentiality. During the inception stage, the evaluation team will also develop a sampling frame of interventions in the region and specify how it will engage with respondents.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with UN Women evaluation Policy, the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS evaluation report quality checklist), the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan Evaluation Performance Indicators (UN-SWAP EP) and UN Women Evaluation handbook. All the documents will be provided by UN Women at the onset of the evaluation.

6. INDICATIVE EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND CRITERIA

The evaluation should be guided but not limited to the evaluation questions listed below. During the inception phase, the Evaluation Team, members of the Evaluation Management Group and the Evaluation Reference Group will have the opportunity to raise any other relevant issues.

RELEVANCE

- To what extent has UN Women established a relevant, realistic, strategic, innovative and clear approach for its work in support of women’s economic empowerment through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa?

COHERENCE:

- To what extent is UN Women strategically positioned to enhance WEE through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa?
- How are project interventions at country level aligned with approaches recommended by UN Women?
- To what extent are country level project interventions strategically consistent with similar interventions by other key players, including United Nations agencies?

EFFECTIVENESS:

- To what extent have implementation and partnership strategies been most effective in helping to achieve results? Have satisfactory results been achieved in relation to the objectives set? What are the causes of the achievement and non-achievement of expected results?
- To what extent have the project's expected results been achieved, in terms of both outcomes and outputs?
- What are the reasons for the achievement or non-achievement of project results? Did the project produce any unforeseen results, either positive or negative? And for whom? What are the best practices and obstacles or shortcomings encountered? How were they overcome?
- How effective were the strategies and approaches selected to achieve the project's results?
- To what extent were the products of behavior change in line with the real needs of the communities?
- To what extent was the project implemented in a coordinated manner with the various stakeholders? How did coordination positively or negatively influence project implementation?

- To what extent have monitoring mechanisms been effective in measuring and reporting project performance and progress towards project objectives?
- To what extent have monitoring data been used objectively for management action and decision-making?

EFFICIENCY

- Have resources (financial, human, technical, etc.) been allocated and used as economically as possible to achieve objectives? Are they sufficient and available to achieve results over time? Have available resources been managed rationally to achieve results?
- Has the project improved the efficiency of resource management, and what has been the relationship between increased/decreased efficiency and (potential) environmental, economic and welfare outcomes?
- Were the activities and approaches/strategies cost-effective?

SUSTAINABILITY:

- What is the likelihood of enduring results or program continuation over the long run after UN Women support?
- How have partnerships (with governments, NGOs, civil society organizations, UN agencies, regional institutions, etc.) been established to foster sustainability of results?

GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS (GE&HR)

- To what extent has gender and human rights considerations been integrated into program design and implementation?
- Were the processes and activities implemented during the intervention free from discrimination to all stakeholders, including those living with disability?

The questions above are a suggestion and could be changed during the inception phase in consultation with members of the Reference Group. The evaluation will be gender sensitive focused.

7. SCOPE OF WORK AND TASKS

INCEPTION PHASE:

- Support the scoping and design of the evaluations by supporting document collection, management and review.
- Conduct scoping interviews to inform the evaluation design.
- Contribute to the design of data collection instruments including the evaluation matrix and other gender analytical frameworks.

CONDUCT PHASE:

- Lead interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders.
- Lead assigned case study (to be determined) and summary reports.
- Work with team members to produce data visualization, data analysis, coding and synthesis of data.
- Support synthesis of findings from data coding and analysis for input into evaluations reports.

REPORTING PHASE:

- Preliminary analysis of data collected, including providing inputs to the evidence map and other analyses.
- Lead the drafting of assigned sections of evaluation report.
- Support drafting of sections of the evaluation report and provide inputs to the annexes and for final evaluation report

8. TIMING AND DURATION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The evaluation will take place during Q3 of 2024 and will require 45 working days over the span of six months. This includes both in-country and home-based assignments.

9. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Ideally, rights holders who have directly participated in or are affected by UN Women programming efforts will be engaged in discussing the outcomes of the programming efforts from their perspective. However, the cost/benefits to the participation of rights holders as evaluation participants will be assessed during the inception phase, as the evaluation does not want to take time away from livelihoods activities and a do no harm approach will be applied. In case it would be too costly for rights holders to participate, a representative of the rights holders engaged by UN Women will be contacted for feedback and this may need to be done remotely. Limitations to the evaluation will be clearly explained in the final report.

An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will be established representing UN Women RO, key government, civil society, donor and UN system partners. The ERG will be asked to engage and provide input at every stage of the evaluation process, from design to preliminary results and final draft report. The ERG plays a critical role through remote and in-person meetings in ensuring a high quality, transparent process, providing insights on the key questions and approach, ensuring factual accuracy, ensuring gaps and misinterpretation of information is avoided. They will also be key informants. The ERG also plays a key role in the dissemination of the evaluation findings and recommendations and ensuring the use of the information by UN Women and key partners.

10. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Consultants' performance will be evaluated based on timeliness, responsibility, initiative, communication, accuracy, and quality of the products delivered.

11. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

The evaluation consultant will be key member of the evaluation team, engaged in all phases of the evaluation process and in each type of evaluation to produce concise and analytical evaluation reports. Deliverables for

the evaluation consultant include the following: desk review, portfolio analysis, stakeholder analysis, interview notes, qualitative and quantitative data analyses, contributions to the inception report, presentations and final synthesis reports and annexes for evaluations. These deliverables must be high quality and in line with the criteria established in UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator and UN Women GERAAS evaluation criteria.

The consultant is responsible for the following deliverables:

- 1. Inception Report**, outlining the refined scope of the work, a detailed outline of the evaluation design and methodology, evaluation questions, and criteria for the approach for in-depth desk review and field work to be conducted in the data collection phase. The report will include an evaluation matrix and a detailed work plan.
- 2. Facilitate participatory meetings** with stakeholders, partners, and selected project beneficiaries at the national level and target states to collect relevant data, and report generated.
- 3. Presentation of preliminary findings report** (conducted at the national level and target states). A presentation detailing the emerging findings of the review will be shared with UN Women and key partners for feedback. The revised presentation will be delivered to key stakeholders for comments and validation. The consultant will address the feedback received in the draft report.
- 4. Draft evaluation report** which will be shared with UN Women for initial feedback.
- 5. Final evaluation report** taking into consideration comments and feedback collected from UN Women. The report shall include the following chapters: executive summary, introduction and background, evaluation approach and methodology (including limitations), findings, conclusions, lessons learned, recommendations, and relevant annexes, including evaluation brief (3-4 pages). **The final evaluation report will be considered finalized when it has taken into account all comments received from the management group and the reference group, and is aligned with the GERAAS parameters.**



Photo: © UN Women

An **evaluation report template** will be provided to the consultant based on the below outline.

- 1. Title and opening pages
- 2. Executive summary
- 3. Background and purpose of the evaluation
- 4. Programme/object of evaluation description and context
- 5. Evaluation objectives and scope
- 6. Evaluation methodology and limitations
- 7. Findings: relevance, effectiveness (normative, coordination, operational), efficiency, sustainability, and gender and human rights
- 8. Conclusions
- 9. Recommendations
- 10. Lessons and innovations
- 11. Annexes:
 - Terms of reference
 - Literature- documents consulted.
 - Lists of institutions interviewed or consulted and sites visited (without direct reference to individuals)
 - Analytical results and methodology-related documentation, such as evaluation matrix,
 - List of findings and recommendations

All payments to the consultant will be made subject to the approval of deliverables by the evaluation management group, in line with conformity to GERAAS evaluation guidelines. Payments will be effected as follows:

S/N	Key Deliverables	Number of days	% to be paid
1.	Submission of an approved inception report and conduct of the inception workshop	10	30%
2.	Facilitate participatory meetings with stakeholders, partners, and selected Project beneficiaries at the national level and target states to collect relevant data, and report generated.	25	30%
3.	Submission and approval of the first draft of the evaluation report	15	
4.	Submission of the approved final evaluation report	10	40%
Total		60	

12. MANAGEMENT OF EVALUATION

The ultimate responsibility for this evaluation rests with UN Women. The evaluation is managed by UNW-WCA-RO Regional Evaluation Specialist in consultation with the Evaluation Management Group EMG, Evaluation Reference Group, External consultants.

The EMG, Evaluation Reference Group will be established to participate in the evaluation process and quality assure the evaluation report on the basis of UNEG standards and norms,[UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator.](#)

To enhance the quality of this evaluation, the Evaluation Management Group and Evaluation Reference Group will be asked to provide:

- 1. Feedback to the draft inception and evaluation report;
- 2. Recommendations on how to improve the quality of the final inception/evaluation report.

The Evaluation Manager (EM) will review feedback and recommendations from EMG and ERG and share with the Evaluation Team leader, who is expected to use them to finalize the inception/ evaluation report.

The Evaluation Management Group (EMG) is comprised of the UN Women Regional Evaluation Specialist, and Project Focal Points and WEE WCARO Adviser. The EMG will be chaired by the UN Women Regional Evaluation Specialist who will provide approval of the deliverables in compliance with UN Women’s Evaluation Policy.

The EMG provides oversight, makes key decisions and quality assurance of evaluation process and deliverables. Specific responsibilities will include the following: ensure oversight of the evaluation methodology, review draft reports; ensure that the deliverables are of quality; participate in meetings as key informant interviewees; manage the evaluation by requesting progress updates on the implementation of the evaluation workplan, approve deliverables, organize meetings with key stakeholders, and identify strategic opportunities for sharing and learning. EMG substantive inputs are expected throughout the evaluation process.

The Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) is an integral part of the evaluation management group and is established to facilitate the participation of relevant stakeholders in the evaluation process, with a view to increase the chances that the evaluation results will be used, enhance quality, clarify roles and responsibilities, and prevent void real conflict of interest. The ERG will be engaged throughout the whole evaluation process and will review the

draft Inception report and evaluation report. The ERG will be chaired by the Evaluation Manager. The Consultant is expected to integrate comments from the ERG into the Final Report, with an audit trail of responses. To ensure transparency the process in line with the UNEG norms and standards, justification should be provided for any recommendations that the Evaluation team omits.

The evaluation is managed by UN Women WCARO Regional Evaluation Specialist in consultation with the EMG, Evaluation Reference Group, and External consultants in the following matrix:

Management Structure and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities are arranged in line with the Joint Evaluation modality

	Partner	Responsibilities
Evaluation Management Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WEE regional policy advisor • UN Women Monitoring & I Evaluation Analyst • Regional Program Coordinator • National program managers 	Finalizes the TOR; contracts and manages the evaluation team; ensures deadlines and milestones are met; supports data collection activities; consolidates and solicits feedback that will feed into the key deliverables; provides the following lists: key informants, region offices, and country offices, sub grantees; provides key programme documents, and list of locations for site visits; accountable for its robustness; meticulously reviews all deliverables based on their role in the evaluation, provides substantive comments and approves on the context of the joint programme; ensures the quality and independence of the evaluation are in alignment with UNEG standards and principles; ensures evaluation questions, findings, and recommendations are in alignment with the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria; endorses the evaluation dissemination process; contributes to the management response; and provides logistical support for mission; provides logistical support for the presentation of the inception report and the final report; participates in meetings on: progress updates on the work plan, preliminary findings briefing, key informant interview, and final report presentation.
Evaluation Reference Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sakinatu Balde_ Principal Enabling Environment Officer_ AFA-WA_AfDB (donor) • Anna Gollub policy analyst on Women’s Economic Empowerment_ HQ UN Women • Carey Kluttz_Head of partnerships at Open Contracting Partnerships (OCP) • One government counterpart per country to be identified by COs 	Plays a key role based on their expertise providing their perspective as an external individual on the way the programme has rolled out; shares views on the feasibility of the recommendations; makes recommendations on the dissemination of the findings of the evaluation; makes recommendations on the implementation of the management response; and participates in meetings as a key informant interviewee.
External consultants	Independent National consultant and International Senior Consultant	Carries out the external evaluation; prepares evaluation reports, including the inception report, work plan, bi-weekly progress updates, preliminary results briefing, final report, and holds a dissemination presentation. The independent national consultant(s) will report to the International Senior Consultant.

13. EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

The evaluation team will consist of two consultants: an international evaluation team leader and a national evaluation team member. The team leader will be responsible for the overall evaluation, including field visits, data analysis and report writing. Both consultants will report to and be managed by UN Women.

REQUIRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE SENIOR CONSULTANTS

Education

Master's Degree in social sciences, Monitoring and evaluation, development studies, gender studies, international relations or related fields.

Experience and Skills

- The candidate should also have a minimum of ten (10) years of experience in conducting evaluation of projects and programmes in the development context, including in WEE.
 - Demonstrated experience in evaluating interventions/ thematic knowledge related to WEE.
 - Strong understanding and experience in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming, gender analysis and the related mandates within UN Women, particularly in relation to women's leadership interventions preferred.
 - Excellent analytical, facilitation and communications skills and the ability to engaged and negotiate amongst a wide range of stakeholders.
- Experience and knowledge on human rights issues, the human rights-based approach to programming and evaluation, human rights analysis, and related mandates within the UN system
 - Experience in West and Central Africa Region context is an asset

Language and other skills:

- Fluency in English and French is required.

14. ETHICAL CODE OF CONDUCT

The United Nations Evaluations Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system are available at: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/100>;

Norms for evaluation in the UN system: <http://unevaluation.org/document/detail/21>

UNEG Standards for evaluation (updated 2016): <http://unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

15. SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to a competency-based interview. UN Women may ask shortlisted applicants to share a sample of a report they have recently authored.

16. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION

Interested candidates are requested to submit electronic application to the link provided.

ANNEX 2: DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROJECT EVALUATION

Building on the findings and conclusions drawn from the evaluation, these recommendations are designed to guide future efforts in enhancing the affirmative procurement project. By focusing on refining strategies, strengthening partnerships, and expanding outreach, they seek to ensure that the project's interventions are both comprehensive and inclusive. These recommendations also emphasize the importance of continuous improvement in resource management, stakeholder engagement, and policy formulation to further bolster the project's effectiveness. Through concerted efforts, the objective is to ensure that the project's positive impacts are sustained and scaled, ultimately contributing to a more equitable economic environment for women entrepreneurs throughout the region.

Recommendation 1: Strengthening Capacity Building and Systemic Change for Sustainable Impact

To enhance the impact and sustainability of the project, continue to focus on capacity building and systemic change. Expand training and outreach initiatives to equip more women-led businesses with essential skills for public procurement, ensuring alignment with both regional and global gender equality goals.	
Key actions for consideration	<div><div>i)</div><div>Develop Specialized Training Modules for training programs focused on advanced procurement strategies, financial management, and gender-responsive procurement practices to enhance the skills of women-led businesses.</div></div> <div><div>ii)</div><div>Scale Up Outreach Initiatives to reach more women-led businesses across the region, ensuring diverse representation, including those from underserved or remote communities.</div></div> <div><div>iii)</div><div>Leverage Digital Platforms and e-learning tools to increase the accessibility and scalability of training programs, allowing wider participation and flexible learning opportunities.</div></div> <div><div>iv)</div><div>Forge Strategic Partnerships with regional and international organizations, government entities, and private sector stakeholders to enrich training content, share best practices, and foster systemic change.</div></div>
Responsible actors	<div><div>•</div><div>UN Women Country and Regional Offices: Lead the development and organization of training programs and manage partnerships and outreach initiatives.</div></div> <div><div>•</div><div>Local Women’s Business Associations: Facilitate connections with women entrepreneurs and drive outreach efforts.</div></div> <div><div>•</div><div>Technology Partners: Develop and maintain the online platforms and e-learning tools necessary for training accessibility.</div></div>
Priority	High. Focusing on capacity building and systemic change is essential for enhancing the project's sustainability and impact. By expanding training and outreach initiatives, the project can significantly empower more women-led businesses, ensuring they have the necessary skills to thrive in public procurement and align with broader gender equality objectives.
Impact	Significant. This recommendation has the potential to create substantial positive change by increasing the number of empowered women entrepreneurs who can actively participate in procurement processes. As a result, it will promote greater inclusivity and drive systemic improvements in gender-responsive procurement practices, ultimately contributing to sustainable economic growth.
Difficulty	Moderate. It involves expanding training initiatives and outreach efforts while ensuring alignment with regional and global gender equality goals.
Linked Conclusions	Anchored in conclusions 1, 3 and 8

Recommendation 2: Enhancing External Coherence Through Collaborative Partnerships and Synergies

Improve external coherence by fostering deeper collaboration with other UN agencies and identifying synergies with similar projects. Continue to maximize partnerships across various sectors to enhance resource use, promote knowledge exchange, and build local capacity.	
Key actions for consideration	<p>i) Establish Formal Collaboration Mechanisms for regular communication and collaboration between UN Women and other UN agencies around affirmative procurement.</p> <p>ii) Conduct a Synergy Assessment: Identify and analyze existing similar projects within other UN agencies and organizations to uncover synergies. This assessment will help to pinpoint areas for collaboration, leveraging shared goals to enhance project impact.</p> <p>iii) Organize Joint Training and Capacity-Building Initiatives: Develop and implement joint training programs and workshops with partner organizations to promote knowledge exchange and enhance the capabilities of local stakeholders. This can facilitate cross-learning and improve the implementation of affirmative procurement practices.</p> <p>iv) Create a Resource Sharing Platform that enables local partners, NGOs, and government agencies to share resources, best practices, and lessons learned. This platform can foster greater collaboration and strengthen local capacity in implementing gender-responsive procurement practices.</p>
Responsible actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UN Women Country and Regional Offices will take the lead in establishing formal collaboration mechanisms and coordinating joint initiatives with other UN agencies.• Partner UN Agencies (e.g., UNDP, ILO) will collaborate with UN Women to conduct synergy assessments and participate in joint training efforts.• Local NGOs and Civil Society Organizations will engage in resource sharing and capacity-building initiatives, ensuring that local stakeholders benefit from and contribute to enhanced collaboration and knowledge exchange.
Priority	<i>High.</i> This recommendation is crucial for maximizing the project's overall impact and enhancing resources utilization, promoting knowledge exchange, and building local capacity more effectively. This alignment will not only improve implementation efficiency but also extend the project's reach and sustainability, making it essential for achieving long-term goals in women's economic empowerment.
Impact	<i>Significant.</i> The recommendation has the potential to yield significant positive effects on the project's outcomes. By improving coordination and resource sharing, the project can enhance its effectiveness in promoting gender-responsive procurement practices, leading to increased empowerment and participation of women-led businesses.
Difficulty	<i>Moderate to High</i> due to the need for strategic coordination and potential resistance among diverse stakeholders.
Linked conclusions	Anchored in conclusions 2 and 7

Recommendation 3: Expanding Interventions to Strengthen Stakeholder Engagement and Support for Gender-Responsive Procurement

To reinforce the project's strategic significance, expand the scope of interventions to enhance stakeholder engagement and support for gender-responsive procurement practices. Address challenges related to funding and monitoring to ensure sustainable policy reforms and capacity building in both public and private institutions.	
Key actions for consideration	<div><div>i)</div><div>ii)</div><div>iii)</div><div>iv)</div></div> <div><div>Conduct Stakeholder Engagement Workshops</div><div>Develop a Funding Strategy</div><div>Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks</div><div>Create a Communication Plan</div></div> <div><div>and meetings with key stakeholders, including government officials, private sector representatives, and civil society organizations, to discuss gender-responsive procurement practices and gather their input on expanding project interventions.</div><div>that explores diverse funding sources and partnerships to secure additional financial resources, ensuring the sustainability of interventions and capacity-building efforts.</div><div>to track progress, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and gather data to support ongoing policy reforms and capacity-building initiatives.</div><div>to raise awareness about the benefits of gender-responsive procurement practices, thereby fostering a supportive environment among stakeholders and encouraging their active participation in the project's objectives.</div></div>
Responsible actors	<div><div>•</div><div>•</div><div>•</div></div> <div><div>UN Women Regional and Country Offices</div><div>Government Agencies</div><div>Local NGOs and Civil Society Organizations</div></div> <div><div>will lead stakeholder engagement initiatives, organize workshops, and facilitate communication and collaboration among various partners.</div><div>will play a crucial role in supporting stakeholder engagement, providing policy insights, and ensuring alignment with national strategies.</div><div>can help mobilize community support, contribute to capacity-building efforts, and advocate for gender-responsive procurement practices among local stakeholders</div></div>
Priority	<div>High.</div> <div>This recommendation is crucial for reinforcing the project’s strategic significance and facilitating broader acceptance and implementation of policy reforms, thereby maximizing the impact on women's economic empowerment.</div>
Impact	<div>Significant.</div> <div>Significant improvements in stakeholder involvement and resource mobilization are expected, which will enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of gender-responsive procurement initiatives.</div>
Difficulty	<div>Moderate.</div> <div>It involves coordinating diverse stakeholders and overcoming potential funding and engagement challenges.</div>
Linked Conclusions	<div>Anchored in conclusions 4 and 8</div>

Recommendation 4: Securing financial sustainability and strengthening project delivery through enhanced transparency and staffing strategies

Address funding concerns by exploring additional financial resources and implementing regular financial audits to enhance transparency and accountability. Develop a balanced staffing strategy to reduce reliance on external consultants, ensuring sustainable project delivery.	
Key actions for consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Conduct a Funding Needs Assessment to identify specific gaps and explore potential additional funding sources, such as grants, partnerships, and sponsorships. ii) Establish Regular Financial Audits to enhance transparency and accountability, ensuring adherence to financial management standards and stakeholder trust. iii) Create a Staffing strategy that outlines the necessary roles and responsibilities, aiming to increase the number of key internal staff while reducing dependence on other projects staff and external consultants. iv) Provide Training for Internal Staff: Offer training and professional development opportunities for existing staff to build their capacity and enable them to take on more responsibilities, thereby enhancing project sustainability and effectiveness.
Responsible actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Women Regional and Country Offices will take the lead in conducting the funding needs assessment, coordinating the implementation of regular financial audits, and developing the staffing plan. Finance and Budget Management Teams will be responsible for overseeing financial audit processes and ensuring compliance with financial management standards. Human Resources Departments will play a crucial role in creating and managing training programs for internal staff to enhance their capacity and ensure a balanced staffing strategy is effectively executed.
Priority	<i>High.</i> Addressing funding concerns and enhancing transparency through regular audits is crucial for the sustainable delivery of the project, and a balanced staffing strategy will ensure that the project can maintain its operations without over-reliance on external consultants, thus strengthening overall effectiveness.
Impact	<i>Significant.</i> Implementing these actions is likely to lead to improved financial management and accountability, which will enhance stakeholder trust and support, and by reducing reliance on external consultants and developing internal capacity, the project will achieve greater sustainability, ultimately contributing to its long-term success and impact.
Difficulty	<i>Moderate.</i> It requires securing additional funding, managing financial audits, and balancing internal staffing needs while reducing reliance on external consultants.
Linked conclusions	Anchored in conclusions 5 and 7

Recommendation 5: Promoting Inclusivity and Human Rights Through Targeted Outreach and Sustainable Policy Reforms

Expand targeted outreach efforts to engage vulnerable groups and address intersectional inequalities, strengthening the project’s commitment to human rights-based approaches and inclusivity. Continue integrating policy reforms and capacity building to establish sustainable change in the procurement sector.	
Key actions for consideration	<div><div>i)</div><div>Develop Targeted Outreach Campaigns</div><div>specifically aimed at vulnerable groups, utilizing local channels and community organizations to ensure that information about procurement opportunities reaches all potential beneficiaries.</div></div> <div><div>ii)</div><div>Conduct Intersectional Needs Assessments</div><div>to identify the unique barriers faced by various vulnerable groups, including women from marginalized communities, to effectively tailor interventions that address their specific challenges.</div></div> <div><div>iii)</div><div>Establish Partnerships with Local Organizations</div><div>that work with vulnerable populations to enhance outreach efforts and build trust within these communities.</div></div> <div><div>iv)</div><div>Integrate Policy Reform Workshops</div><div>with stakeholders in the procurement sector to collaboratively discuss and develop policy reforms that promote inclusivity and address intersectional inequalities, while also providing ongoing capacity-building initiatives for participants.</div></div>
Responsible actors	<div><div>•</div><div>UN Women Regional and Country Offices</div><div>will lead the development and execution of targeted outreach campaigns, ensuring alignment with project goals and facilitating key partnerships.</div></div> <div><div>•</div><div>Local NGOs and Community-Based Organizations</div><div>can provide essential insights and support in conducting intersectional needs assessments and enhancing outreach efforts to engage vulnerable groups effectively.</div></div> <div><div>•</div><div>Policy Advocacy Groups</div><div>can facilitate and participate in the integration of policy reform workshops, bringing together various stakeholders to promote inclusive and equitable policy changes in the procurement sector.</div></div>
Priority	High. Ensures that the benefits of the affirmative procurement project are inclusive and reach those who are often marginalized. This commitment to human rights and inclusivity strengthens the project's overall effectiveness and impact.
Impact	Significant. Will likely lead to increased participation of vulnerable groups in the procurement sector, fostering greater equity and promoting sustainable change.
Difficulty	Moderate. It requires effective outreach strategies and collaboration with diverse stakeholders to engage vulnerable groups and address intersectional inequalities.
Linked Conclusions	Anchored in conclusions 8 and 9

ANNEX 3: STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Stakeholder category	Boundary partners				Main contribution to the project
Responsible parties	UN Women WCARO and Country offices in Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Nigeria.				Manage and coordinate all project implementation activities, ensuring quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation throughout the project lifecycle. Provide technical support to implementing partners by facilitating data collection, reporting, and other key tasks related to monitoring and evaluation
Government and other public or semi-public structures	Senegal	Cote d'Ivoire	Mali	Nigeria	Guide the implementation of the project by providing policy and legal framework expertise. Collaborate with the Country Office and implementing partners to ensure effective implementation across relevant entities and sectors. Participate in and contribute to capacity building initiatives to strengthen the project's impact and sustainability
	National Procurement Agency (ARMP); the SME Agency (ADEPME); National Guarantee Fund (CDMP). Regional Chambers of Commerce, agriculture and Industry	Ministry of Women; Ministry of Trade, Industry and SME Promotion agency; Chamber of Commerce and Industry; national confederation of employers; General Confederation of Enterprises of Côte d'Ivoire (CGECI)	National Procurement Agency; Chamber of Commerce	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA) State Ministries of Women Affairs in Lagos and Kaduna Ministry of Finance Central Bank of Nigeria Lagos State Public Procurement Agency (LSPPA); Kaduna State Public Procurement Authority (KADPPA)	
NGOs and Civil Society Organizations	Senegal	Cote d'Ivoire	Mali	Nigeria	Implementing partners: Lead the development and planning of project activities, including the creation of monitoring and evaluation indicators to track progress and assess impact. Manage project communication and knowledge management to ensure effective dissemination of information and lessons learned.
		SEPHIS Foundation, Kaizen International	Women's associations (Impact Her),	Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR), Zamani Foundation, and the Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC) The Women's Wing of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD)	

Stakeholder category	Boundary partners				Main contribution to the project
United Nations Agencies	Senegal	Cote d'Ivoire	Mali	Nigeria	Support UN WOMEN to ensure the alignment and coherence of the project with the UNCDF and its integration in the overall UN work.
				United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)	
Bilateral and multilateral donors	Senegal	Cote d'Ivoire	Mali	Nigeria	Lead strategic partnerships for resource mobilization, ensuring adequate funding for project and program activities. Manage project and program financing, ensuring transparency and accountability. Provide feedback on periodic narrative and financial reports submitted by UN Women WCARO to ensure alignment with project objectives and budget guidelines.
	African Development Bank (AfDB)	African Development Bank (AfDB)	African Development Bank (AfDB)	African Development Bank (AfDB)	
Private sector	Senegal	Cote d'Ivoire	Mali	Nigeria	Provide a range of financial products, including loans and savings options, to women entrepreneurs and traders. Deliver financial education and business development training to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. Offer technical expertise to support specific project areas, such as market analysis, business planning, or marketing strategy.
		Harley Reed Consultancy limited	Conseil National du Patronat du Mali (CNPM)	Association of Nigeria Businesswomen Network (ANWBN) NACCIMA Businesswomen Group Women in Management and in Business (WIMBIZ)	
Direct beneficiaries	Senegal	Cote d'Ivoire	Mali	Nigeria	Participate in project activities as direct beneficiaries, receiving the services and benefits intended for the target group.
	Women-owned/led businesses	Women-owned/led businesses	Women-owned/led businesses	Women-owned/led businesses	

Source: compiled by the evaluation team from the WCARO narrative reports.

ANNEX 4: EVALUATION MATRIX

Relevance: To what extent is UN Women strategically positioned to enhance WEE through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa?

Evaluation sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection	Data Sources
To what extent has UN Women established a relevant, realistic, strategic, innovative and clear approach for its work in support of women's economic empowerment through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of alignment between the project interventions with national and regional policies and strategies for women's economic empowerment Number of women-owned businesses (WOBs) benefiting from affirmative procurement initiatives as a result of the project's interventions 	<p>Review of project documents (work plan, strategy documents), interviews with key stakeholders (government officials, implementing partners), and document analysis of relevant national and regional policies</p> <p>Interviews with beneficiary WOBS, and analysis of project monitoring data.</p>	Project documents, policy documents, interviews, relevant reports
How relevant is the project to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, national, regional and international priorities? Were beneficiaries consulted during the program's design and implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of integration of beneficiaries' needs into the project Evidence of alignment with relevant national policies, strategies, and frameworks for WEE Evidence of beneficiary participation in the program's design 	Review project documents, conduct interviews with beneficiaries, government officials and policy experts, and analyze relevant national policies and strategies.	Project documents, policy documents, interviews
Have the needs and problems identified at the beginning of the program remained the same throughout implementation, or have they evolved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of activities adjusted, removed, or added in response to the evolving needs of beneficiaries 	Review project documentation, including work plans, reports, and meeting minutes, to identify changes in program activities over time. Conduct interviews with project managers to understand the rationale behind these changes.	Project documents, interview transcripts
Coherence: To what extent are country level project interventions strategically consistent with similar interventions by other key players, including United Nations agencies?			
How are project interventions at country level aligned with approaches recommended by UN Women?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of project activities that align with UN Women's strategic priorities for WEE, as outlined in the UNW Strategic Plan or relevant policy documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review project documents (workplan, strategy documents), conduct interviews with key stakeholders (project and UNW staff, implementing partners), and analyze UNW's strategic documents 	Project documents, UN Women strategic plans, policy documents, interviews.
Are synergies and inter-linkages created between the project and the WEE programmatic areas as expressed in the UN Women Strategic Plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of project activities that align with UN Women WEE Strategic Plan objectives Number of joint activities or partnerships between the project and other UN Women WEE initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review project documents (work plan, strategy documents), conduct interviews with key stakeholders (UN Women staff, implementing partners), and analyze relevant UN Women strategic documents 	Project documents, UN Women strategic plans, policy documents, interviews

Evaluation sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection	Data Sources
What is the project's engagement with other UN system entities, regional organizations, and national actors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of partnerships established with other UN system entities, regional organizations, and national actors • Number of joint activities or initiatives undertaken with other UN system entities, regional organizations, and national actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review project documents (work plans, agreements), conduct interviews with project staff, and gather information from partner organizations • Analyze project documents, interview project staff, and collect information on collaborative activities from partner organizations 	Project documents, interview transcripts, reports
Effectiveness: To what extent have the project's expected results been achieved, in terms of both outcomes and outputs?			
To what extent have implementation and partnership strategies been most effective in helping to achieve results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of effectiveness of implementation approaches, such as the use of specific methodologies, tools, or partnerships • Level of effectiveness of partnerships and collaboration with other organizations and stakeholders in achieving project goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review project documents, analyze project monitoring data, conduct interviews with beneficiaries, and review relevant reports • Conduct interviews with project staff, implementers, and beneficiaries, review project documentation, and analyze the implementation process • Conduct interviews with project staff, partners, and beneficiaries, review project documents, and analyze the outcomes of collaborative activities 	Project documents, monitoring data, interview transcripts, reports, and evaluations of joint activities
Have satisfactory results been achieved in relation to the objectives set?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of achievement of project objectives and outcomes, including quantifiable results related to women's economic empowerment • Percentage of targets achieved for key project indicators related to the project's objectives • Beneficiary satisfaction with the project's outcomes and its impact on their lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze project monitoring data and conduct interviews with project staff to verify the accuracy of the data and understand the reasons for any gaps in achieving targets • Conduct interviews with beneficiaries to gather their feedback on the project's achievements and its impact 	Project documents, monitoring data, interview transcripts
What are the causes of the achievement or non-achievement of expected results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific factors, strategies, or interventions that contributed to the achievement of positive results • Specific factors or barriers that hindered the achievement of expected results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, partners, and beneficiaries, and analyze relevant data • Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, partners, and beneficiaries, and analyze relevant data 	Project documents, interview transcripts, monitoring data

Evaluation sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection	Data Sources
Did the project produce any unforeseen results, either positive or negative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive outcomes or impacts that were not anticipated in the original project design or objectives • Negative outcomes or impacts that were not anticipated in the original project design or objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, partners, and beneficiaries, and analyze relevant data. Look for unexpected successes, positive unintended consequences, or emerging opportunities • Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, partners, and beneficiaries, and analyze relevant data. Look for unintended negative consequences, unforeseen challenges, or emerging risks 	Project documents, interview transcripts, monitoring data, reports
To what extent was the project implemented in a coordinated manner with the various stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of stakeholder engagement in the project's implementation, including their involvement in planning, decision-making, and activities. • Effectiveness of communication and coordination among project staff, partners, and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, partners, and stakeholders, and analyze records of stakeholder engagement activities • Conduct interviews with project staff and stakeholders, review project documents, and analyze communication records and meeting minutes 	Project documents, interview transcripts, records of participatory activities, meeting minutes
To what extent have monitoring mechanisms been effective in measuring and reporting project performance and progress towards project objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and completeness of data collected through monitoring mechanisms. Look for accuracy, consistency, timeliness, and relevance of the data • Assess whether the monitoring system is comprehensive, covering all relevant aspects of the project and its objectives • Clarity, timeliness, and usefulness of reports generated from monitoring data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review project monitoring data, conduct interviews with project staff responsible for data collection, and analyze data quality and completeness • Review project monitoring plans and tools, conduct interviews with project staff, and analyze the scope of monitoring activities • Review project reports, conduct interviews with stakeholders who receive these reports, and analyze the quality and usefulness of the reports 	Project monitoring data, interview transcripts, Project reports

Efficiency: Were the activities and approaches/strategies cost-effective?

Evaluation sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection	Data Sources
Have resources (financial, human, technical, etc.) been allocated and used as economically as possible to achieve objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efficiency of resource allocation, considering the project's objectives, activities, and outputs• Efficiency of resource utilization, considering the project's activities, outputs, and outcomes. Look for evidence of cost-effectiveness, value for money, and appropriate use of resources• Cost-effectiveness of the project, considering the resources invested and the outcomes achieved. Compare the project's cost to its impact on beneficiaries and the achievement of its goals• Efficiency of resource management practices, including financial management, procurement, and human resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review project budgets, expenditure reports, and conduct interviews with project staff involved in financial management• Review project documents, analyze project monitoring data, conduct interviews with project staff and beneficiaries, and assess the efficiency of resource use in specific activities• Analyze project budgets, expenditure reports, and monitoring data. Conduct interviews with project staff and beneficiaries to understand the cost-effectiveness of specific activities• Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, and assess the effectiveness of resource management procedures	Project budgets, expenditure reports, interview transcripts
Does the project have an adequate staff size and access the skills, knowledge and capacities required to deliver project results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project's staffing levels are sufficient to effectively implement the project's activities and achieve its objectives• Project's ability to access external expertise, such as technical assistance, consultants, or partnerships with other organizations, to address specific needs or challenges• The project's contribution to building the capacity of partners or stakeholders to implement the project's activities and sustain its results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, and analyze staffing data• Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, and analyze the project's use of external expertise• Conduct interviews with partners and stakeholders, review project documents, and analyze any capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the project	Project documents, interview transcripts, staffing records, reports

Sustainability: What is the likelihood of enduring results or program continuation over the long run after UN Women support?

Evaluation sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection	Data Sources
How have partnerships (with governments, NGOs, civil society organizations, UN agencies, regional institutions, etc.) been established to foster sustainability of results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Types and scope of involvement of partnerships established (e.g., with government agencies, NGOs, UN agencies, regional institutions) Alignment of partner organizations' goals, strategies, and activities with the project's objectives and sustainability goals Existence of the project's sustainability plan, focusing on continued implementation, resource mobilization, and institutionalization of project outcomes after the project's formal completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff and partners, and analyze relevant agreements and MOUs Review project documents, conduct interviews with partners, and analyze partner organizations' strategies and activities Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, and assess the effectiveness of the sustainability plan in ensuring long-term impact 	<p>Project documents, agreements, MOUs, interview transcripts</p> <p>Project documents, partner organization strategies, interview transcripts</p>
To what extent were institutional capacities strengthened to ensure the sustainability of efforts and achievements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of specific capacity-building activities undertaken by the project to enhance the skills, knowledge, and resources of target institutions Extent to which the project's outputs and achievements have been integrated into the structures, systems, and practices of target institutions. Evidence of institutionalization, such as policy changes, new procedures, or the establishment of ongoing programs or initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff and beneficiaries of capacity-building activities, and analyze any training materials or records of capacity-building initiatives Conduct interviews with staff from target institutions, review project documents, and analyze any relevant policies or procedures 	Project documents, interview transcripts, training materials, records of capacity-building activities, policy documents
What is the level of commitment from the government and other stakeholders to sustain the project's results and continue initiatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the government has adopted policies and legal frameworks that support the project's objectives and contribute to the sustainability of its outcomes Government's financial commitments to supporting the project's activities and ensuring the continuation of its efforts beyond the project's formal completion Level of institutional support from government agencies and other stakeholders in terms of providing technical assistance, resources, and collaboration to ensure the sustainability of project outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review relevant government policies and legislation, conduct interviews with government officials, and analyze any policy documents related to the project's thematic area Review government budgets, conduct interviews with government officials, and analyze any financial commitments related to the project Conduct interviews with government officials and stakeholders, review project documents, and analyze any records of institutional support 	Policy documents, interview transcripts, Government budgets

Gender Equality and Human Rights (GE&HR): To what extent has gender and human rights considerations been integrated into program design and implementation?

Evaluation sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection	Data Sources
Has the portfolio specifically considered disability in its interventions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of the needs and perspectives of people with disabilities explicitly in the project's design and planning Specific interventions or activities designed to address the needs and challenges of people with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review project documents (work plans, strategy documents), conduct interviews with project staff, and analyze any relevant reports or documents on disability inclusion Conduct interviews with project staff, partners, and beneficiaries with disabilities, review project documents, and analyze any records of specific initiatives for people with disabilities 	Project documents, interview transcripts, reports
To what extent has the principle of "leaving no one behind" been taken into account by the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts to reach marginalized groups, including those with disabilities, ethnic minorities, people living in poverty, and other vulnerable populations Inclusivity and accessibility of project's activities to marginalized groups. Evidence of activities adapted to address the specific needs and challenges of these groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, and analyze data on the project's target groups Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff and beneficiaries, and observe project activities 	Project documents, interview transcripts, monitoring data, observations (if possible)
Were the processes and activities implemented during the intervention free from discrimination to all stakeholders, including those living with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project's activities, communication materials, and processes were accessible and inclusive to all stakeholders, particularly those with disabilities Existence of reports or complaints of discrimination that may have been filed during the project's implementation, particularly from people with disabilities Efforts to raise awareness among staff and stakeholders about disability inclusion and non-discrimination practices. Evidence of training programs or workshops on accessibility and inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff and stakeholders, and observe project activities to assess the level of accessibility and inclusivity Review project documentation, conduct interviews with project staff, and analyze any reports of discrimination Review project documents, conduct interviews with project staff, and analyze training records 	<p>Project documents, interview transcripts, field observations (if possible)</p> <p>Project documents, interview transcripts, training records</p>

ANNEX 5: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

A) SYNOPSIS OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION/STATUS OF PROGRAM OUTPUTS AND RESULTS

Regional Priority (WWE):				
Project Outcome 1:				
Indicators	Baseline/Reference	Targets	Current Status	Evaluation
Output 1.1 :				
Indicators/Targets		Actual values		
Indicator :				
Baseline :				
Target :				
Indicator :				
Baseline :				
Target :				
Current Status of Output 1.1:				
Output 1.2 :				
Indicators/Targets		Actual values		
Indicator :				
Baseline :				
Target :				
Indicator :				
Baseline :				
Target :				
Current Status of Output 1.2:				
Conclusion/Progress Towards the Outcome 1:				

B. SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation criteria	Findings/Conclusions	Recommended actions	
		Actions	Responsible
Relevance			
Effectiveness			
Efficiency			
Sustainability			
Gender, Equity and Human Rights			

C. INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interviews with stakeholders will be semi-structured. They will primarily be open-ended conversations, aiming to put respondents at ease and collect as much information as possible. In particular, interviews with low-literacy beneficiaries will be non-directive, with questions serving as guidance for discussions.

Semi-structured interview with Project Team Members (Implementing Partners)

Information Sought	Research Questions
Introduction	<p>Hello! My name is [interviewer’s Name], and I am part of the consultant team conducting the final evaluation of the "Affirmative Procurement" regional project, which operates in Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and Nigeria. Thank you for agreeing to meet with us and for your valuable contribution to this evaluation. The goal of this exercise is to assess various aspects of the project's performance, such as its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, gender equality and and human rights of its results. Additionally, the evaluation aims to identify lessons learned, best practices, and innovations, and to provide concrete recommendations for designing and implementing future UN Women interventions in this area. With this in mind, I'd like to ask you a few questions. You have the option to choose not to answer any of the questions. You can also stop this interview at any time. If you have any questions, I will try to answer them to the best of my knowledge.</p> <p>With your consent, I'd like to take notes during this interview. These notes will help us analyze and identify common aspects across various data sources. If we decide to use quotes from your interview to highlight emerging issues and questions, we'll ensure they remain confidential and cannot be traced back to you.</p> <p>If that is alright, I will proceed with the questions.</p>

Information Sought	Research Questions
Respondent's quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What roles have you filled in the project? • Were you personally involved in the implementation of the project?
Relevance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of the project's relevance to its beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent was the project relevant to national stakeholders and target beneficiaries? • What elements of the project were found to be most relevant to the beneficiaries? Why? • What elements encountered resistance (from any stakeholders)? Why? • With the remaining time in the project, what could you do to ensure maximum relevance of the Project to national stakeholders and the project's end beneficiaries?
Partnerships	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with other organizations • Synergies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you aware of other projects aiming at gender sensitive procurement (GSP), implemented by your organization or other organizations in the zones of intervention? • If so, how does this project differ from the other projects you know? • Did you coordinate the implementation of this project with other United Nations agencies, development partners, and other organizations that were not directly involved in the implementation of the project? • How did this coordination go? • Do you see any synergies created through this cooperation?
Effectiveness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the Project achieve its objectives? • Unexpected but achieved results • Contribution to affirmative procurement • Evidence that the allocated resources were sufficient • Evidence of sufficient capacity of paid Project staff/consultants • Evaluation of the effectiveness of the management structure • Evidence that monitoring data was used for Project management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about the level of achievement of the planned activities? • Do you see changes in the attitudes and behaviors of members of the groups targeted by the Project? • What are the most important results of the Project in your opinion? What results are you most proud of? Why? • Do you see any results that were not expected when the Project was designed? • What factors facilitated the implementation of the Project? • What factors hindered the implementation of the Project? • In the continuation of the Project, what would you like to see done differently? • Do you believe that you and your colleagues have sufficient skills to effectively carry out the Project's tasks, or is training needed? • How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the Project's management structure? Why? • What was the design of the Project's monitoring system? How did you use the monitoring data? Do you think you need to make changes to the monitoring system in the future? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project monitoring and evaluation system? • How do you rate the Project's communication approach? • Based on your experience with this Project, what management approaches would you recommend using in future similar Projects?

Information Sought	Research Questions
Efficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that the planned activities of the Project were implemented as planned • Evidence that the planned deliverables were delivered efficiently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent was the implementation of the Project consistent with the initial Project plan? • Did you complete all planned activities on time? Did you receive all planned deliverables on time? • How much resources were invested in this intervention? • How were the allocated resources used? • Were the allocated resources sufficient to achieve the Project's objectives? • What resource expenditure deficits/surpluses were recorded and why? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of the management mechanisms? • Are the results achieved commensurate with the resources used? • What is the quantity of volunteer activities catalyzed by the Project?
Sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probability of continuation of the benefits created by the Project • Evidence of strong ownership of new practices introduced by the Project among implementing partners and NGOs • Evidence of replication and/or scaling up of the practices introduced by the Project • Evidence of the existence of a Project exit strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent will this Project be beneficial to its beneficiaries beyond the end of its interventions? • What measures have been put in place to ensure the sustainability of the benefits achieved through this intervention? • Does your organization plan to use new practices that you have learned or developed within the framework of this Project? • Are you aware of an organization that was not involved in the implementation of the Project that is interested in adopting or has already adopted some of the approaches developed within the framework of this Project? • Did the Project develop an exit strategy? What are the elements of this strategy?
Gender Equality and Human Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that the Project team has paid special attention to the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, particularly those living with disabilities, conflict-affected communities, including internally displaced persons, survivors of SGBV, ex-combatants or women and girls associated with armed groups, refugees and returnees. • Evidence of the integration of gender and human rights considerations in the design of the Project. • Evidence of the respect for gender and human rights considerations during the implementation of the Project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Process and Considerations: What process was used to design the Project? What considerations guided the design of the Project? • Vulnerable Group Inclusion: Did you pay attention to the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups (survivors of SGBV, internally displaced persons, minorities, persons with disabilities) in the Project activities? If so, to what extent were they involved? • Gender and Human Rights Integration in Implementation: Could you provide examples of how you and other members of the Project team have integrated gender and human rights considerations in the implementation of the Project? • Beneficiary Empowerment: How did this Project ensure that beneficiaries know, understand, enjoy and are even able to fight for their human rights, especially women's rights? • Respect for Beneficiary Rights: How has this intervention helped those in positions of authority to better understand and respect the rights of beneficiaries?
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main lessons you have learned during the implementation of this project? • Are there any important aspects of your experience within the framework of this project that we have not discussed?
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have asked all the questions we had. Do you have any questions for us? • We thank you for your contribution. If you have any further questions, you can contact us via the program office or UN Women.

Semi-structured Interview with Public Sector Partners (Governmental Component)

Information Sought	Research Questions
Introduction	<p>Hello! My name is [interviewer’s Name], and I am part of the consultant team conducting the final evaluation of the "Affirmative Procurement" regional project, which operates in Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and Nigeria. Thank you for agreeing to meet with us and for your valuable contribution to this evaluation. The goal of this exercise is to assess various aspects of the project's performance, such as its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, Project, and the sustainability of its results. Additionally, the evaluation aims to identify lessons learned, best practices, and innovations, and to provide concrete recommendations for designing and implementing future UN Women interventions in this area. With this in mind, I'd like to ask you a few questions. You have the option to choose not to answer any of the questions. You can also stop this interview at any time. If you have any questions, I will try to answer them to the best of my knowledge.</p> <p>With your consent, I'd like to take notes during this interview. These notes will help us analyze and identify common aspects across various data sources. If we decide to use quotes from your interview to highlight emerging issues and questions, we'll ensure they remain confidential and cannot be traced back to you.</p> <p>If that is alright, I will proceed with the questions.</p>
Respondent's quality	<p>Are you familiar with the "Affirmative Procurement" project (If necessary, recap key elements of the project)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What support have you received and implemented from the project?• How has your institution/department interacted with the project team?
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In your opinion, what are the main challenges facing Senegal/Cote d'Ivoire/Mali/Nigeria in the area of women access to public and private procurement?• What are the most effective mechanisms and actions to address these challenges? Why?• Do you believe that the “affirmative Procurement” project contributes significantly to addressing the challenges you have mentioned? Is it relevant to the government's priorities for the women economic empowerment (WWE) in your country?
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you believe the project has reached its objectives regarding your area of action?• Do you think the planned resources were sufficient compared to the intended outcomes within the framework of the partnership?• What do you believe are the main progress/achievements of the project in your area of action to date?• What difficulties have been observed in the implementation of the project within your area of action?• Do you think that, in the long run, this program will have achieved its objectives in your area of action?• What would you recommend to be done differently in the future in your area of action?
Sustainability/Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you aware of other programs/projects aiming at gender sensitive procurement (GSP), implemented by your organization or other organizations in the zones of intervention?• If so, to what extent is this project innovative compared to other projects that you know in gender sensitive procurement (GSP)?• What is the level of ownership of the project in your area of action by national authorities?• To what extent will this project be beneficial for its targets beyond the end of its interventions?• What measures have been put in place to ensure the sustainability of the benefits achieved through this intervention?
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How could UN Women further contribute to advancing the project over the next one year?
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have asked all the questions we had. Do you have any questions for us?• We thank you for your contribution and wish you an excellent day

Non-directive interviews with women-led businesses organizations/SMEs and beneficiaries (FGD)

The interviews with beneficiaries will be non-directive. In this regard, the present guide is provided as an indicative framework to guide the discussions.

Information Sought	Research Questions
Introduction	<p>Respondents can speak in French or in national languages, with a volunteer willing to interpret.</p> <p>Hello! My name is [interviewer’s Name], and I am part of the consultant team conducting the final evaluation of the "Affirmative Procurement" regional project, which operates in Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and Nigeria. Thank you for agreeing to meet with us and for your valuable contribution to this evaluation. The goal of this exercise is to assess various aspects of the project's performance, such as its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, Project, and the sustainability of its results. Additionally, the evaluation aims to identify lessons learned, best practices, and innovations, and to provide concrete recommendations for designing and implementing future UN Women interventions in this area. With this in mind, I'd like to ask you a few questions. You have the option to choose not to answer any of the questions. You can also stop this interview at any time. If you have any questions, I will try to answer them to the best of my knowledge.</p> <p>With your consent, I'd like to take notes during this interview. These notes will help us analyze and identify common aspects across various data sources. If we decide to use quotes from your interview to highlight emerging issues and questions, we'll ensure they remain confidential and cannot be traced back to you.</p> <p>If that is alright, I will proceed with the questions.</p>
Respondent's quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First, I would like you to clarify your activities when you speak.• Are you familiar with the "Affirmative Procurement" project implemented by UNW (If necessary, recap key elements of the project)?• How did you participate in the project? If not, why did you not participate?
Relevance/Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which project activities were most important to you?• What results have you obtained from the project? Are there any changes for you, your organization, your business, or your family?• Do you see any changes in the business community?• Do you have examples of success stories or changes, and how would you describe them?• Which of these changes are the most important? Why?• What difficulties are you facing?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once the project is finished, will the changes you mentioned continue? Why?• What is needed to ensure they continue? By whom?
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Considering the project's results for you, your family, and your business community, what recommendations do you have?
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have asked all the questions we had. Do you have any questions for us?• We thank you for your contribution and wish you an excellent day

ANNEX 6: CELEBRATING SUCCESS: THREE TRANSFORMATIVE PROCUREMENT JOURNEYS

6.1. FROM VISION TO VICTORY: HAJIYA HALIMA GARBA ELEVATES HM&S GLOBAL INVESTMENT THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT TRAINING



Hajiya Halima Garba CEO of HM&S Global Investment Limited Kaduna State, Nigeria, an Indigenous Pan-African enterprise specialized in handcrafted corporate gifts, branding, and Indigenous products, aiming to celebrate African culture through vibrant artistry.

After training with “Do Take Action,” she gained valuable skills and a clearer vision, allowing HM & S to thrive. She exclaimed... “Before the training, HM & S had eight full-time staff members, and now there are twenty skilled professionals and thirteen ad-hoc staff. Thanks to the knowledge and opportunities gained through the training, this united team excels in production, administration, and management, ensuring exceptional craftsmanship and client satisfaction”.

Currently, the company has achieved a 35% increase in sales and serves over 1,000 clients across Africa, including corporations and government agencies. In the past three years, it has generated over \$30,000 in revenue while expanding its services.

The journey faced several challenges, including a lack of procurement knowledge, fierce competition from established vendors, financial risks, and accepting contracts without fully understanding market conditions, resulting in minimal profits. These issues were largely resolved through training with Do Take Action on Affirmative Procurement, which strengthened the company's capabilities, improved negotiation skills, and built credibility. This training also helped establish visibility and trust in the competitive procurement ecosystem through consistent networking efforts. Halima testifies that training by Do Take Action also improved her communication skills and leadership qualities, and confidence to pursue key procurement opportunities, enabling the company to operate more strategically and enhance decision-making and collaboration.

The company has evolved with a website, www.hmands.ng, and a strong presence on social media, including Instagram @hmandsng, enhancing product visibility. The company collaborates with the procurement departments of KADPP (Kaduna State Procurement Process) and KADFAMA (Kaduna State Facilities Management Agency), as a trusted vendor in the procurement ecosystem. In addition, the company is dedicated to giving back to the community and promoting sustainability through a partnership with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Kalam Waheed Foundation, in empowering youth, underserved women and girls by providing hands-on training in tailoring, shoemaking, and bag making. So far, they have trained 79 orphans in these skills, as well as in baking and ICT, while also offering mentorship to empower the next generation of women entrepreneurs.



6.2. BREAKING BARRIERS: HOW UN WOMEN’S AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT PROJECT EMPOWERED A WOMAN ENTREPRENEUR FOR THE AFRICAN CUP OF NATIONS 2024

Mrs. Yahamatou Kano Memel, founder and CEO of BURINFORT SA, embarked on a transformative journey by participating in training on Affirmative Procurement in Côte d'Ivoire. Eager to enhance her company’s market presence and boost sales, Yahamatou recognized the importance of equipping herself with the right knowledge and skills to navigate the competitive landscape. Throughout the training, she gained insights into the critical legal aspects and government regulations that govern procurement processes. Yahamatou learned effective communication techniques that empowered her to engage with her employees constructively, fostering a collaborative work environment. Additionally, the training equipped her with essential tools to enhance the preparation of submissions, enabling her to respond more proficiently to calls for tenders.

With her newfound expertise, Mrs. Memel successfully secured three significant contracts with the organizing committee for the African Cup of Nations in Côte d'Ivoire, which took place in January 2024. This achievement not only marked a major milestone for BURINFORT SA but also spotlighted the potential of women entrepreneurs in the procurement space. Yahamatou’s story illustrates the positive impact of the UN Women’s Affirmative Procurement Project, breaking down barriers and paving the way for future female leaders in business. Through determination and support from initiatives like these, women entrepreneurs can thrive and contribute to large-scale events, driving economic growth and innovation in their communities.



6.3. EMPOWERING CHANGE: DIALLO FATOUMATA SACKO'S JOURNEY TO SUCCESS THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE PROCUREMENT

Diallo Fatoumata Sacko, a dedicated pharmacist and manager of Pharmacie Kadiatou Konta in Niamana, Mali, embraced the opportunity to participate in training with Do Take Action, focusing on Affirmative Procurement strategies. Recognizing the importance of staying competitive and expanding her business horizons, Fatoumata committed herself to applying the knowledge gained from the training. After completing the program, she took proactive steps to reach out to Cigna United Nations Insurance, which was actively seeking a pharmacy partner to enhance its services. Through her strategic approach and newfound capabilities, she successfully negotiated a partnership that would enable Pharmacie Kadiatou Konta to provide essential insurance services and facilitate access to a wide range of pharmaceutical products for Cigna's insured clients.


This collaboration not only positioned Fatoumata's pharmacy as a vital resource in the community but also opened the doors to a broader customer base. As a result, Pharmacie Kadiatou Konta experienced a significant increase in revenue and visibility. Fatoumata's accomplishment stands as a testimony to the power of training and strategic networking in driving women’s businesses growth. Her story inspires other women entrepreneurs to harness their skills and seek out opportunities that enable them to make impactful contributions to their communities while achieving personal and professional success. Through such initiatives, women are empowered to break barriers and thrive in the competitive business landscape.

ANNEX 7: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Affirmative finance action for women in Africa (AFAWA), African Development Bank, Funding request document, 4 February 2019
2. Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa program monitoring and evaluation framework, Nigeria, 2023
3. Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa project newsletter no. 1, March 2024
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5. Affirmative Procurement Reforms in Nigeria: status, gaps and opportunities, 2024
6. Certified Financial Statements for Periods ended 31 December 2022, 31 December 2023, UNW Headquarters
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8. Cocktail sur les Opportunités des Femmes Entrepreneures en Côte d'Ivoire, Rapport de Panel, ONU Femmes et Deloitte, octobre 2023
9. Compliance Report on UN Women Affirmative Procurement Initiative in West Africa, DO Grassroots Forum and Citizens Empowerment Foundation, Abuja, Nigeria, 2023
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11. Décision no. 2024/0168/MENEFPSG portant création d'un cadre de concertation pour faciliter l'accès des entreprises féminines aux marchés publics et privés, Ministère de l'Entreprenariat National, de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle, Bamako, 28 août 2024
12. Empowering women through public procurement and enabling inclusive growth, UNW and Open Contracting Partnership, 2021
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- 26. Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS), Guidance note, Independent Evaluation Service (IES) Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) UN Women, 2021
- 27. Human development report 2021/2022, Briefing note for countries on the 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Index, UNDP 2023
- 28. Impact of Women on Nigeria's economy, PwC, March 2020
- 29. Interim Financial Statements for Periods ended 30 September 2022, 31 December 2022, 30 September 2023, 31 December 2023, 30 April 2024, 31 October 2024, UNW Headquarters
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- 31. Mémorandum d'accord entre l'entité des Nations Unies pour l'égalité des sexes et l'autonomisation des femmes et IMPACTHER FOUNDATION LTD/GTE, Bamako, 28 février 2022
- 32. L'impact de la crise sur les femmes maliennes, MINUSMA, 10 janvier 2024
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 40. Partner Agreement between the UN Women and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA), Abuja, Nigeria, 2022
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 54. Séminaire de sensibilisation des entreprises privées, publiques et internationales en vue de la signature d'accords de partenariat pour des contrats d'approvisionnement, Ministère de la femme, de la famille et de l'enfant, ONU Femmes, CDI, août 2023
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 57. The World Bank in Mali, The world bank, 2024.



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63. United Nations Evaluation Group (2014). Resource Pack on Joint Evaluations
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65. Women's Economic Empowerment through Affirmative Procurement Reform in West Africa, First Donor's narrative report, WCARO, reporting period: April 2022-June 2023
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ANNEX 8: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

No.	Organization, Title	Method (interview/FGD)	Female	Male
UN Women				
1	Project Coordinator, WCARO	Interview	1	
2	M&E Regional Analyst, WCARO	Interview		1
3	Feminist Economist/Gender and Economics Policy Specialist WCARO	Interview	1	
4	Deputy Resident Coordinator, CO Nigeria	Interview	1	
5	Feminist Economist & Program Specialist, WEE, CO Nigeria	Interview		1
6- 7	Program Associate WEE and a colleague, CO Nigeria	Interview	1	1
8	Country Resident Representative, CO Mali	Interview	1	
9	Program Officer WEE CO Mali	Interview	1	
10- 11	Gender Economist and a colleague, CO Mali	Interview		2
12	Procurement Associate, CO Mali	Interview	1	
13	Resident Coordinator a.i., CO Côte d'Ivoire	Interview		1
14	Project Coordinator WEE CO Côte d'Ivoire	Interview	1	
15	M&E CO Côte d'Ivoire	Interview		1
16	Program Management Support CO Côte d'Ivoire	Interview		1
17	Programme Manager WEE- Affirmative Procurement Reform CO Senegal	Interview		1
18	Analyste Programme- Affirmative Procurement Reform CO Senegal	Interview	1	
UN System				
19	UN Procurement Network, UNS Nigeria	Interview		1
20	UNCDF Mali	Interview	1	
Government Institutions, Public And Semi-Public Institutions				
21- 37	Director of Economic and colleagues, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA) Nigeria	Interview and FGD	10	7
38- 44	Director General and colleagues, KPPA, Kaduna, Nigeria	Interview and FGD	4	3
45	Attorney General, Ministry of Justice Kaduna, Nigeria	Interview		1
46- 48	Director General and colleagues, Lagos State Public Procurement Agency (LSPPA) Nigeria,	Interview	2	1
49- 50	Secretary General and Focal Point, Ministère de l'Entrepreneuriat National, de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle (MENEFP) Mali	Interview	1	1

No.	Organization, Title	Method (interview/FGD)	Female	Male
51- 52	Deputy Director and colleague, Ministère de la Femme, de la Famille et de L'Enfant/ Direction de l'Autonomisation Economique des Femmes (MFFE/DAEF)- CIV	Interview		2
53	Focal Point, Ministère de la Famille et de la Solidarité Nationale- SEN	Interview		1
54-56	Focal Point and colleagues, Autorite de Regulation des Marches Publics et de Delegations de Service Public (ARMDS) Mali	Interview	1	2
57- 59	DGA and colleagues, Direction Générale des Marche Publics et des Délégations de Service Public (DGMP-DSP)- MLI	Interview	2	1
60- 62	Director and colleagues, Direction General des Marches Publics/ Direction de la Formation, de la Communication et de la Qualite (DGMP/ DFCQ)- CIV	Interview	1	3
63- 64	SGA in charge of Policy Definition and Training and colleague, Autorité Nationale de Régularisation des Marches Publics (ANRMP) – CIV	Interview		2
65- 71	Focal Point and colleagues, Autorité de Régulation de la Commande Publique (ARCOP)- SEN	FGD	3	3
72- 73	Director General and Focal Point, Caisse des Marchés Publics (CDMP)- SEN	Interview		2
74	Focal Point, Conseil National du Patronat du Mali (CNPM)	Interview		1
75- 76	Director and CD-ETI, CI-PME/Direction de la Croissance et de Développement des Affaires des PME et EFI (DCDA)- CIV	Interview	1	1
77	Focal Point, Confédération Générale des Entreprises de Cote D'Ivoire (CCECI) La Patronat Ivoirien- CIV	Interview	1	
78	Focal Point, Agence de Développement et d'encadrement des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (ADEPME)- SEN	Interview		1
79	Focal Point, Chambre de Commerce de Kédougou- SEN	Interview		1
80	Focal Point, Chambre de Commerce de Kaolack- SEN	Interview	1	
81- 87	Other trained government Officials- Mali	FGD	3	3
Implementation partners				
88	CEO, Zamani Foundation Kaduna State, Nigeria	Interview	1	
89	CEO, Do Take Action	Interview	1	
90- 97	Do Take Action staff	FGD	6	3
98- 111	CEO, Focal Point and colleagues, Private and Public Development Corporation Nigeria	FGD	10	3
112- 113	Trainers, Sephis Foundation CIV	Interview	2	
114	Trainer, Kaizene Foundation CIV	Interview	1	
115	Head of Africa, OCP	Interview		1
116	Focal Point, WAEMU	Interview		1
Private sector				

No.	Organization, Title	Method (interview/FGD)	Female	Male
117- 120	CEO and colleagues, Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR) Nigeria	Interview	3	
121	CEO, Women in Management and in Business (WIMBIZ) Nigeria	Interview	1	
122- 125	Consultants Mali	Interview	1	2
126	Focal Point, Union des Femmes Cheffes d'Entreprises- SEN	Interview	1	
Donors				
127- 128	Senior Procurement Operations Manager and colleague, Banque Africaine de Développement (BAD) Mali	Interview	1	1
Beneficiaries				
129- 138	KADPPA Nigeria Beneficiaries	FGD	9	
139- 152	Zamani Foundation Beneficiaries	FGD	13	
153	Do Take Action Nigeria Beneficiaries (27 online)	FGD	1	
154- 165	Groupe de femmes bénéficiaires, Mali	FGD	11	
166- 169	Groupe de femmes bénéficiaires, CIV	FGD	3	
170- 179	Réseau des Femmes Entrepreneures pour le Développement (RA. FED)- SEN	FGD	9	
180	Groupement de femmes entrepreneures dans la région de Ziguinchor (19 online)	FGD	1	
Total			123	57

ANNEX 9: REFORMULATION OF OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following table presents a revised formulation of our outcome indicators, a response to the need for more precise and informative measures in line with Results-Based Management (RBM) principles. While our outcome statements successfully capture the intended impacts, the corresponding indicators have largely been oriented towards outputs rather than outcomes. This has limited our capacity to gauge true progress towards our strategic goals. Through a comprehensive review, we identified the necessity to shift from output-centric to outcome-centric indicators. Suggestions for refining outcomes formulation and examples of associated indicators more closely aligned with the desired outcomes have been outlined in the table. These changes are intended to enhance the project performance measurement framework, ensuring it supports effective decision-making and continuous improvement.

Outcomes and indicators	Reformulated Outcomes and indicators	Explanatory comments/remarks
Outcome 1.1: Strengthened capacity of women-led businesses to access procurement processes	Strengthened capacity of women-led businesses to access procurement process through improved access to resources and training for WLBs to effectively engage in procurement processes, and enhanced skills and network opportunities for WLBs to successfully participate in procurement markets.	This is a good project outcome statement. It shows the objective to enhance the abilities of women-led businesses to navigate and succeed in procurement processes. The statement could be refined, specifying how this capacity will be strengthened. Alternatively, this can be mentioned in the indicator's statements, and considered in setting activities.
Indicator 1.1: Number of WSMEs trained/ linked to networks (market linkages, procurement opportunities, investment opportunities, etc.)	Percentage/Number of WSMEs that successfully bid for tenders after training (focus on results). Increase in the number of WSMEs participating in procurement processes post-training (behavior change)	This indicator focuses on the output and doesn't necessarily measure whether these businesses actually improved their ability to access procurement opportunities. To more directly measure outcome, use indicators that assess changes in capabilities or behaviors.
Outcome 1.2: National and regional policies and regulations adapted to integrate affirmative procurement principles	National and regional policies and regulations adapted to integrate affirmative procurement principles, thereby increasing opportunities for underrepresented groups.	This is a solid project outcome statement. It clearly indicates the project's goal of influencing policies to incorporate affirmative procurement principles, likely aiming for more inclusive and equitable procurement practices. Could clarify the impact of this adaptation, adding "..., thereby increasing opportunities for underrepresented groups."
Indicator 1.2: Number of the legal and regulatory reforms supported by the We-Fi program to remove constraints and support to women entrepreneurship	Percentage/Number of reforms implemented that effectively support women entrepreneurship in procurement. Increase in the number of women-led enterprises participating in public procurement as a result of policy changes.	This indicator provides a measure of activity related to the outcome but not the changes brought by the outcome. We still need a comprehensive measure of how effectively national and regional policies are integrating affirmative procurement principles to support women entrepreneurship.

Outcome 1.3: Strengthened capacity of public institutions to formulate and implement affirmative procurement policies	Strengthened capacity of public institutions to formulate and implement affirmative procurement policies through training and resource allocation to strengthen the capacity of public institutions, and improved frameworks and partnerships	This is a clear and well-articulated project outcome. It highlights the dual focus on both the development and execution of policies, suggesting a comprehensive approach to enhancing public institutions' effectiveness in this area. To be more specific, one can add through which means "... training and resource allocation to strengthen the capacity of public institutions, and improved frameworks and partnerships"
Indicator 1.3: Number of Government officials trained	<p>Number of affirmative procurement policies formulated or revised by trained officials.</p> <p>Number of public institutions implementing affirmative procurement policies after training.</p> <p>Percentage of trained officials who report improved capacity to formulate and implement affirmative procurement policies.</p>	This indicator does not directly assess whether Officials' capacities have been strengthened or if they are effectively formulating and implementing affirmative procurement policies as a result of the training. Therefore, consider incorporating measures that assess the effectiveness and impact of the training on public institutions.
Outcome 1.4. Increased awareness among private sector top level corporate leadership to foster gender- responsive procurement policies and practices.	Increased awareness and commitment among private sector top-level corporate leadership to implement gender-responsive procurement policies and practices, leading to measurable changes in procurement practices.	While the outcome statement is relevant, it would benefit from greater specificity and clarity regarding how awareness will be measured and the actions that will follow to more effectively guide evaluation and assess progress towards fostering gender-responsive procurement within the private sector.
Indicator 1.4: Number of new private sector companies signing the Women Empowerment Protocols / implementing gender responsive supply chain practices	<p>Number of companies signing the Women Empowerment Protocols after participating in awareness campaigns.</p> <p>Number of companies that report changes in their procurement policies due to greater awareness of gender-responsive practices.</p>	This indicator primarily reflects outputs rather than outcomes according to RBM principles. It does not measure the awareness level of corporate leadership itself, nor does it specify that the signing or implementing actions are direct results of this increased awareness. Instead, it reflects the activity or engagement of companies in the project.
Outcome 2.1: Increased capacity of women-led businesses to operate and provide goods and services as part of the COVID19 response	Enhanced operational and financial capacity of women-led businesses to deliver goods and services, resulting in increased participation in the COVID-19 response efforts and improved resilience in their operations.	While the outcome statement is relevant and highlights an important aspect of the project, refining it to include specific, measurable elements will make it more effective within the framework of RBM principles. By clarifying what "increased capacity" entails and connecting it to concrete outcomes, the statement can more clearly guide the evaluation of progress and impact.
Indicator 2.1: Number of Women led businesses accessing procurement opportunities in the context of COVID national responses.	<p>Number of Women led businesses accessing procurement opportunities in the context of COVID national responses.</p> <p>Increase in total value of contracts awarded to women-led businesses in the context of COVID national responses.</p>	This indicator is a relevant measure of the outcome regarding the capacity of women-led businesses. However, by enhancing the indicator to focus not only on access but also on the impacts and experiences of women-led businesses, it can provide a fuller picture of the outcome in line with RBM principles.

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UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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