



AFRICAN POLICY DIALOGUE MALI
Increasing Women Entrepreneurship in Mali



African Policy Dialogue Mali

**A PLEA FOR SOLUTIONS IN
THE SHORT-TERM
STRENGTHENING RESPONSES
TO INCREASE
WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN MALI**



STRENGTHENING RESPONSES TO INCREASE WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MALI | A plea for solutions in the short-term

Addressed to:

Mrs. WADIDIE Founè COULIBALY, Minister of the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family
Mr. Mahmoud OULD MOHAMED, Minister of Industry and Trade
Prof. Amadou KÉÏTA, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Mr. Bakary DOUMBIA, Minister of National Entrepreneurship, Employment and Vocational Training
Mr. Harouna Mamadou TOUREH, Minister of Communications, Digital Economy, and Modernization of the Administration

This work is the product of a collaboration between the Netherlands-African Business Council (NABC), the Mali Investment Promotion Bureau (*Agence pour la Promotion des Investissements au Mali, API-MALI*), the Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (*Institut des Hautes Études de Management, IHEM*) Group, and the Global Institute for Women's Empowerment (GIWE/IMAF) on an initiative from and thanks to the support of the INCLUDE platform. The opinions, findings, analyses, and conclusions formulated in this work are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or official policy of the organizations mentioned here.

African Policy Dialogue Mali

The African Policy Dialogue Mali (APD) is a collaborative policy research initiative between the Netherlands-African Business Council (NABC), the Mali Investment Promotion Bureau (*Agence pour la Promotion des Investissements au Mali, API-MALI*), and the Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (*Institut des Hautes Études de Management, IHEM*) Group. This African policy research initiative is expected to generate research evidence and ideas on how to overcome the obstacles to women's entrepreneurship and economic participation; it is also expected to generate ideas and develop tools to improve the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem in Mali.

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SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 3 WORKSHOPS WITH KEY PLAYERS IN THE WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

The three workshops held on 9-30 September and 21 October 2021 at the offices of the Mali Investment Promotion Bureau (*API-Mali*) in Bamako brought together more than forty participants from the private sector, the government, academia, and Mali's development partner NGOs.

The themes of the three workshops were: "Obstacles to women's entrepreneurship", "Driving positive change through the actions of stakeholders in women's entrepreneurship", and "Creating a synergy of action between the different stakeholders in the women's entrepreneurial ecosystem".

The discussions, which were open to all the participants, were held in Bambara, the language common to the whole audience. The obstacles to women's entrepreneurship can be summarized as follows:

1. NEED FOR TRAINING:

- Women suffer from lack of training and of basic business management skills, both cross-cutting skills and accounting skills. So, they need technical training in their trades.

- No premium is placed on the made-in-Mali products, hence the lack of protection of the domestic market.

2. NEED FOR SUPPORT BECAUSE:

- Women have limited access to places reserved for their activities.
- They have limited access to land.
- They have limited access to finance (notably bank credit).

3. NEED FOR ACCESS TO INFORMATION:

- There is non-availability of relevant data for stakeholders in women's entrepreneurship.

4. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

- Women lack enough time for their businesses due to their social duties.
- Women also face psychological challenges, among which is lack of confidence in themselves.
- Women's financial management capacity was presented as an obstacle to the development of their businesses because of their "reckless spending" during various traditional ceremonies. To curb this bad trend, some participants suggested that women should sign a pledge to stop conspicuous spending during social ceremonies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TRAINING:

- Facilitate access to new technologies and equipment.
- Include an “Introduction to Entrepreneurship” module in the school curriculum in the different local languages from basic education onwards.
- Build a bridge between the academic world and women entrepreneurs in order to strengthen the latter’s capacities.
- Include, in university courses, modules on Entrepreneurship that are relevant to the different sectors of activity.
- Include, in the school curriculum, gender-sensitive teaching subjects and activities aimed at sensitizing children and young people to the challenge of gender issues and, thus, at fostering a new attitude towards women in society.
- Because personal skills are a key element for success in entrepreneurship, programmes should be put in place that are designed to enable women to acquire and/or strengthen life skills such as self-confidence, negotiation skills, and many others.
- Strengthen the skills of women who have already started business projects by offering them simplified training on writing simplified business plans and finding financing.
- Support scientific research in the field of women’s entrepreneurship and seek support for it from development partners.
- Build laboratories in universities to test business projects or ideas.
- Build women entrepreneurs’ capacity on corporate governance.





2. SUPPORT:

- Render the women's centre operational to facilitate their access to a place where they can carry out their activities.
 - Evaluate public policies and programmes related specifically to women's entrepreneurship.
 - Set up a discussion group for the different stakeholders, under the coordination of a cross-sectional structure such as *API-Mali*, in order to pool the efforts of each stakeholder.
 - Lobby the government to secure women's access to cheaper credit.
 - To ensure the sustainability of new businesses run by women, post-activity follow-up is necessary. To be optimally useful, this follow-up could take the form of mentoring of young women entrepreneurs by more experienced women entrepreneurs.
- Since the agri-food sector attracts women entrepreneurs most, there is a need for targeted support to address the difficulties faced by economic operators in the sector. Prominent among those difficulties are those related to packaging, marketing, and access to quality services.

3. INFORMATION:

- Increase the visibility of and communication about initiatives that support women so that these can access the information they need.
- Identify new communication channels that are more accessible and can attract more women.
- Identify women entrepreneurs' networks and strengthen them in order to facilitate their access to information and, above all, to organize them so that they can generate proposals.
- Provide information on entrepreneurship support structures to better address women entrepreneurs' needs and safeguard their interests.

- Organize a framework for physical (business to business) meetings between women entrepreneurs.
- Devise programmes dedicated to women's entrepreneurship in all media (TV, print media, radio, social networks, etc.).
- Take the local specificities into consideration when providing information on women's entrepreneurship.

4. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

- Women need enough time to devote to their businesses.
- Involve men more often so that they become the spokespersons for women entrepreneurs.
- Establish dialogue within communities by relying on model women who have been able to reconcile a woman entrepreneur's life with her role in society (as a wife, a mother, etc.).
- Mali's cultural diversity was stressed. It was therefore recommended that dialogue concerning women's entrepreneurship be more inclusive by including rural women from the different regions of the country.
- Facilitate women's access to land.



A PLEA FOR SOLUTIONS IN THE SHORT-TERM

Addressed to THE MINISTRY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND THE FAMILY:

- By December 2023, conduct a communication campaign concerning Women's Centres to encourage women to use these spaces dedicated to them
- Support scientific research in the field of women's entrepreneurship in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.
- By December 2023, seek the support of development partners to evaluate previous and ongoing entrepreneurship support programmes in order to identify their failures and successes with a view to improving future initiatives.



Addressed to THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY:

- For a wider reach of the dialogue, organize in each region of Mali that has a regional office of *API-Mali*, workshops and discussions on women's entrepreneurship and a presentation of existing initiatives on the topic, by December 2022
- By December 2022, set up a discussion platform for the various stakeholders, under the coordination of *API-Mali*, in order to pool efforts and create a synergy of action.



Addressed to the MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH:

- By the beginning of 2023, include, in university courses, modules on Entrepreneurship that are relevant to the different sectors of activity.
- Promote scientific research on women's entrepreneurship in collaboration with the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children, and the Family, in order to obtain data on the basis of which recommendations can be formulated.

Addressed to THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP, EMPLOYMENT AND
VOCATIONAL TRAINING:

- By December 2023, offer training to (aspiring) women entrepreneurs to enable them to acquire and/or develop personal soft and hard skills, such as financial management, negotiation skills, public speaking, leadership, and business management.



Addressed to THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS, DIGITAL ECONOMY, AND MODERNIZATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION

By December 2022, put in place a (TV, print, radio) programme dedicated to women's entrepreneurship and adapted to the context of each region in order to increase the visibility of and communication about initiatives that support women and give them access to information, a programme that will put in the limelight "success stories", that is successful women role models.





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