



AFRICAN POLICY DIALOGUE MALI
Increasing Women Entrepreneurship in Mali



African Policy Dialogue Mali

Workshop 2:

**DRIVING POSITIVE CHANGE
THROUGH THE ACTIONS OF
STAKEHOLDERS IN WOMEN'S
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



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 of Advanced Studies in Management (*Institut des Hautes Études de Management, IHEM*) Group, and the Global Institute for Women's Empowerment (GIWE) 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.

Photo: Flacoro Diallo, SaoKiss Picture

Designed by: Guna Alvika, NABC, The Hague

November 2021

OBJECTIVES OF THE AFRICAN POLICY DIALOGUE

Within the framework of the "African Policy Dialogue" (APD) programme of the INCLUDE platform, in partnership with the Mali Investment Promotion Bureau (*Agence pour la Promotion des Investissements au Mali, API-Mali*), the Netherlands-African Business Council (NABC), and the Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (*Institut des Hautes Etudes de Management, IHEM*), a study has been conducted to identify the specific difficulties encountered by women in venturing into entrepreneurship and in growing their businesses, in order to contribute to scientific research in women's entrepreneurship.

The study's results will enable the APD to formulate proposals and tools for an environment that is conducive to women's entrepreneurship development in Mali. The APD dialogues bring together all the stakeholders in women's entrepreneurship to discuss obstacles to it and the solutions to them, and the implementation of measures for a more enabling environment for women entrepreneurs.



WORKSHOP 2:

DRIVING POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH THE ACTIONS OF THE STAKEHOLDERS IN WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The workshop took place on 30 September 2021 at the offices of *API-Mali* in Bamako. It brought together more than thirty participants from the private sector, the government, academia, and representatives of Mali's development partners.

After a recap of the conclusions of the previous workshop (APD 1), representatives of the Women's Empowerment and Children's Well-being Fund (*Fonds d'Autonomisation de la Femme et de l'Enfant, FAFE*) and those of the *API-Mali's* Women's Business Center presented their structures and introduced the theme of the discussion, namely "How to drive positive change through the actions of the stakeholders in women's entrepreneurship".

The discussions, which were open to all participants, were held in Bambara, the language common to the whole audience. The recommendations can be grouped as follows:

1. TRAINING:

- Include, in the school curriculum, gender-sensitive modules aimed at sensitizing children and young people to gender-inequality issues. It is hoped that this inclusion will lead to a behavioural change towards women in society.
- Develop awareness campaigns in all regions of Mali on the importance of education for girls and young women.
- Incorporate, into the school curriculum, modules and teaching practices that are likely to stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit in pupils and students so as to promote an entrepreneurial culture.
- As personal skills are a key element for success in entrepreneurship, programmes should be designed that can enable women to acquire and/or strengthen skills such as self-confidence, financial management, negotiation skills, and public speaking.
- Strengthen the skills of women who have already started business projects by offering them simplified training on writing simplified business plans and finding financing.

2. SUPPORT:

- With several initiatives being already operational in supporting women's entrepreneurship in Mali, it was recommended that a discussion platform be set up between the different stakeholders and be coordinated by a cross-sectional structure such as *API-Mali*, with the aim of pooling the efforts of each stakeholder. The platform could take the form of a WhatsApp group, a LinkedIn group, of regular physical meetings, etc.
- Since banks' interest rates were identified as one of the many barriers to women's access to finance, it was recommended that more schemes be developed to facilitate women's access to credit at lower interest rates.
- To ensure the sustainability of new businesses run by women, post-activity follow-up was recommended. 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:

- Ensure that the mode of communication is effective for the target audience. Find new communication channels that are more accessible and attract more women, so that women entrepreneurs are aware of the challenges they are likely to face, and also of the programmes and support structures that are available to them.

4. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

- Societal change will not happen without men. That is why it was recommended that communication about women's entrepreneurship involve men as well. This will allow them not only to be allies of women and to accompany them in the entrepreneurial adventure but also to engage in transgender dialogue. In the same vein, it was also recommended that dialogue be established 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.) in order to make the issue of women entrepreneurs an everyday one.
- 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.





AFRICAN POLICY DIALOGUE MALI

Increasing Women Entrepreneurship in Mali