



**ACP–CTA-UN WOMEN CONSULTATION WORKSHOP ON WOMEN’S ECONOMIC  
EMPOWERMENT: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND**

**Final Report & Recommendations**

Brussels, 27 -28 February, 2017



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#### Introduction

A Consultation Workshop on Women’s Economic Empowerment was held in Brussels, Belgium, on February 27-28, 2017 to discuss concrete interventions and programmes that can contribute to achieving a more gender-inclusive economic development. The Workshop was co-hosted by the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the United Nations Agency for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN Women). The first day of the Workshop was rich in highly valuable exchanges on the role, opportunities and challenges of women’s economic empowerment for all women and girls in Africa, Caribbean, and the Pacific, as well as globally. The discussions have been guided and informed by the three programmatic priorities of UN Women in this field:

1. Women’s Access to land and productive resources for climate resilient agriculture;
2. Stimulating equal opportunities for women entrepreneurs through affirmative procurement, investments and supply chain policies; and
3. Promoting the representation and women entrepreneurship in the extractive industry sector.

This joint initiative came at a very pivotal time, ahead of the celebration of the *International Women’s Day* on March 8, 2017 and of the *sixty-first Commission on the Status of Women* that will be held in New York from 13 to 24 March, 2017, and at a moment when the international community has made an unprecedented commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Moreover, the workshop follows the line set by the UNSG in 2016 with the establishment of the *High Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment*, which brings together eminent leaders from the EU, governments, private sector and Civil Society organizations.

Women’s economic empowerment is at the core of European values and legal framework and its role is well reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as in EU policies. In 2015 the EU adopted the *EU Gender Action Plan for External Action (2016-2020)* to enhance coordination and coherence in the EU member states and to drive EU Delegations and EU Governments’ actions to support Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) worldwide. A mid-term review of all EU programming is currently ongoing and women’s empowerment and gender equality will be a key feature of this review. In 2014, the ACP Group also adopted a private sector development strategy that gives priority to the promotion of women entrepreneurs.

The opening remarks were addressed by Dr. Patrick I. Gomes, Secretary General of the ACP, followed by Mrs. Maria-Noel Vaeza, Director of Programme Division, UN Women, Mr. Uffe Jensen, DEVCO, on behalf of Mrs. Marjeta Jager, Deputy Director-General, DEVCO, Dr. Hjordis Ogendo, DEVCO, and Mrs. Mara Marinaki, Principal Adviser on Gender Equality and implementation of UNSCR 1325, European External Action Service. The opening session was chaired by H.E. Dr. Fatumanava III Dr. Pao'lelei Luteru, Ambassador of Samoa.

A session on the Sustainable Development Goals and the relevance of gender equality and women's empowerment for the achievement of Agenda 2030 has offered the opportunity to listen to the perspectives of ACP, the European Commission as well as UN Women. Mrs. Diana Ofwona, UN Women Regional Director for West and Central Africa has provided the gender angle to the SDGs highlighting the opportunities and challenges ahead. Moreover, Mrs. Tonni Brodber, head of the UN Women Multi-Country Office in the Caribbean has brought the experience of her region and the current programmes and interventions that aim to boost women's economic empowerment in the Caribbean.

UN Women's work on Women's Economic Empowerment, particularly through its Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs), is a key vehicle to implement its mandate and to support member states to implement and deliver on their commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment, as formulated in SDG 5.

In the framework of the Consultation Workshop, the three following thematic areas were discussed:

### **1. Women's access to land and productive resources for climate resilient agriculture**

The UN Women FPI on Women's Empowerment through a Climate Resilient Agriculture was presented by Mrs. Oulimata Sarr, Regional Economic Adviser, UN Women, and its four key components were highlighted: i) Good policies, ii) Skills development, iii) Access to finance and iv) Access to markets. Currently, the programme is in the process of being implemented in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, with three additional countries in the pipeline, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Nigeria.

A number of concrete initiatives were presented to highlight challenges and opportunities in this field. Presentations were made by Mrs. Isolina Boto, CTA, on women in agribusiness in ACP countries, Mrs. Mame Khary Diene, CEO of Bio Essence in Senegal, and Ambassador Eliane Berthe Mokodopo, International Conference on the Great Lake Region.

Additional interventions were addressed by the Ambassador of Gabon, who reported the experience of her country in promoting gender equality and agribusiness to ensure sustainability and growth, the Ambassador of Ghana, who encouraged the EU to work more closely with the Government of Ghana to provide support to the agricultural sector, and the representative of the International Organization of the Francophonie who expressed the organization's strong interest in supporting climate-resilient agriculture activities in West and Central Africa.

## **2. Stimulating equal opportunities for women entrepreneurs through affirmative procurement, investments and supply chain policies**

Affirmative procurement was widely discussed through several interventions from representatives of both public and private sector as well UN Women. The discussion stressed the key role of public and private procurement as a tool for inclusive economic growth and on the importance of influencing legislations to promote women owned businesses and to allow them to access procurement opportunities.

Challenges faced by women in accessing procurement opportunities were highlighted: i) lack of access to tailored financial tools and investment opportunities; ii) lack of capacity and expertise (e.g. labeling, branding, intellectual property rights protections); iii) lack of strong women networks through which they can learn and be supported; iv) lack of access to markets. These obstacles can be overcome through innovative solutions to allow women to go beyond the small traditional procurement practice and gain access to much larger contracts.

Field experiences have been shared by Mrs. Alberta Vitale, Women in Business Inc. in Samoa, Mrs. Yinka Bandele, Commonwealth Secretariat, Mrs. Karin Fueg, UN Women Country Office in Kenya, Mrs. Candide Leguede, Women Entrepreneurs Federation of the CEDEAO, Mrs. Pamela Hamilton, Caribbean Export Development Agency, and Mrs. Marie Engama, PROPAC (Cameroon). Contributions have also been shared by the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF).

## **3. Promoting the representation and women entrepreneurship in the extractive industry sector**

Two presentations on women's roles in the extractive industry sector covered the experience of development minerals in Uganda and the UN Women's programme in Mali on women's economic empowerment in the mining sector.

The extractive industry is often perceived as driver of growth but it does not necessarily translate in job opportunities, households and wealth, especially for women. Women are usually excluded from the formal core business and they cannot access financial support and business opportunities.

Despite the challenges, women have to be encouraged and supported to achieve high-level positions in this male-dominated sector and become decision makers to help other women benefit from the revenues of this wealthy industry.

Experiences were shared by Mrs. Caroline Ngonze from ACP-EU Development Minerals Programme, Mrs. Oulimata Sarr, Regional Economic Adviser, UN Women, Mrs. Stella Okenwa, Expert from ADNE-African Diaspora in Europe and Mrs. Yinka Bandele from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

#### 4. Recommendations

The Workshop has resulted in a set of recommended actions that are essential for the promotion of Women's Economic Empowerment in the three target regions as well as worldwide. The recommendations that have emerged from the discussion are:

- **Disaggregated data:** there is a need for gender-disaggregated data to inform policies and interventions;
- **Women's networks:** promoting women's networks to help women accessing trainings, knowledge, resources, financial opportunities and markets;
- **Access to finance:** collaborating with financial institutions to facilitate the instigation of credit lines dedicated to funding activities of potentially profitable value chains and ensure that access to finance is coupled with capacity building opportunities for women;
- **Advocate for public policy review:** grant women's access to markets and other business opportunities in various market sectors (e.g. agriculture, public and private procurement and the extractive industry) across the three regions, Africa, Caribbean and Pacific;
- **Put women in decision making positions:** in order to achieve real equality, women have to sit at the table and take decisions that can benefit other women working the value chain. It is no more the time for small scale interventions and microcredit, but women have to gain access to regular financing and scalable business opportunities;
- **South-South Cooperation:** future interventions on women's economic empowerment promoted by the stakeholders involved should include a strong South-South Cooperation component.

#### 5. Next steps

The second day of the ACP-CTA-UN Women Consultation Workshop was followed by the adoption of the ACP-UN Women Commitment to Action statement that will guide future interventions to promote and strengthen Women's Economic Empowerment through an integrated approach that calls upon governments and public and private partners, and through the upscaling and replication of successful practices.

A Plan of Action will be recommended by ACP and UN Women to provide the basis for concrete interventions in the three key areas identified, namely:

1. Women's Access to Land and Productive Resources for Climate Resilient Agriculture;
2. Stimulating Equal Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs through Affirmative Procurement, Investments and Supply Chain Policies; and
3. Promoting the Representation and Women Entrepreneurship in the Extractive Industry Sector.

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