



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

ETUDE DE FAISABILITE POUR L'ANALYSE DE L'ECOSYSTEME ENTREPRENEURIAL AU GHANA ET LA  
STRUCTURATION D'UN PROJET D'APPUI A L'ENTREPRENEURIAT FEMININ

FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM IN GHANA  
AND THE DESIGN OF A PROJECT TO SUPPORT WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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## Project context

Ghana has experienced strong economic growth over the past 20 years, accompanied by a significant reduction in poverty, which was more than halved between 1992 and 2013. However, the country is now facing rising inequality, which is slowing poverty reduction and threatening social stability. Growth benefits the wealthiest the most, with marked disparities between regions, particularly between the north and the south<sup>1</sup>.

The country's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2019 was 0.611, which places it in the medium human development category, with a ranking of 138 out of 189 countries. The Gender Inequality Index value of 0.538 also places the country at 138 out of 189 countries. In 2020, 45.6 per cent of Ghana's population was categorized as multi-dimensionally poor, posing a threat to national progress to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>2</sup>.

Ghana has long been one of the most peaceful countries on the African continent (Institute for Economics and Peace 2022). Strong government institutions, a tradition in the peaceful transfer of power, a vibrant civil society, and strong economic growth are significant factors contributing to this peace. However, conflict drivers are existing such as farmer-herder conflict, power struggles among customary chiefs, land disputes, and the political and economic exclusion of young people, primarily through migration and resource competition, which are pathways to conflict<sup>3</sup>.

Ghana is leading the advancement of gender equality in the West and Central Africa region. The country has strengthened women's legal rights and opportunities in the labor market and women now participating in the labor market at higher rates compared to other SSA countries. This positive trend however has not translated into better economic opportunities for all women. Improvements in human endowment outcomes have not translated into improved earnings, access to assets, and decision-making.

Women are more vulnerable in the labor markets as their employment is precarious: 77% of women are in vulnerable jobs compared to 58% of men<sup>4</sup>. Likewise, rural women are mostly self-employed and earn less due to the informality of their work. Women often choose self-employment to balance income generation with childcare and other domestic tasks, and this prohibits them from working in the formal sector and getting high-pay jobs to improve their livelihoods.

In addition to facing barriers that put women in low-earning jobs mostly in the informal agriculture sector, a vast majority of women-owned businesses lack access to fundamental assets to improve their productivity for higher revenues.

Limited access to land and other productive assets exacerbates women's financial exclusion, as they are unable to use property as collateral. Although the law protects women's property rights and ownership, restrictive social norms restrict their right to own and use property.

Many gaps persist especially for rural women and girls who have less access to education and health facilities than their urban counterparts do. Girls in rural areas lag in attendance, performance, and completion of both primary and secondary school, and are more likely to

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org/fr/node/7547>

<sup>2</sup> [Biru Muda dan Oranye Modern Laporan Keuangan Tahunan \(1080 × 1080 px\) \(1080 × 1920 px\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> Cf. [Climate Change and Conflict in Ghana - Ghana | ReliefWeb](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Vulnerable employment, female \(% of female employment\) \(modeled ILO estimate\) - Ghana | Data](#)

face socio-cultural barriers such as teenage pregnancy, child marriage, and uneven domestic burdens.

Gender-based violence continues to be high in Ghana. The most common forms of domestic violence reported by women were economic violence (13%), social violence (12%), psychological violence (9%), physical violence (6%), and sexual violence (3%)<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, women and girls with disabilities are twice more likely to have experienced sexual or physical violence. Women with disabilities are more likely to be physically dependent on an intimate partner, be poorer, have less education, and be seen as more vulnerable by that partner.

Social norms are key drivers of these gender gaps. They shape how women and men are expected to behave and define their roles in society. In Ghana, these norms continue to restrict women's access to the same opportunities and levels of empowerment as men and boys.

As these gender norms persist, new challenges such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation are further widening gender gaps across all sectors. This is especially true in rural and northern regions, where women are more likely to suffer from multidimensional poverty.

## **AFD and Ghana**

### **AFD's Social Link Strategy: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion**

Gender equality, women's rights, and their empowerment are at the heart of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and are among the AFD Group's top priorities. AFD aims to contribute to SDG 5 – “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” – while promoting gender considerations across the full SDG framework. It adopts a rights-based approach that promotes equality between women and men and the empowerment of girls and women.

AFD's 2025–2030 strategy is built around three priorities for solidarity-based and sustainable investment: “planet, social link, institutions, citizens and democracy” — with the goal of reconciling human development and environmental protection. The promotion of gender equality through a transformative feminist approach is one of two key goals under the “Social Link” priority, alongside reducing multidimensional inequalities and promoting inclusion.

Through its “Social Link” roadmap, the AFD Group reaffirms its commitment to building more inclusive and equitable societies. This commitment is reflected across all its operations and centers around two cross-cutting objectives: (i) reducing multidimensional inequalities and promoting inclusion; and (ii) promoting gender equality through a transformative feminist approach.

To strengthen its impact on reducing inequalities, the AFD Group aims to progressively scale up its support for public policies that foster inclusion and reduce social and economic disparities. Particular attention is paid to vulnerable areas, especially those facing economic hardship, climate challenges, or affected by crises and violent conflicts.

In line with its commitment to being a feminist institution, the AFD Group upholds a dual ambition:

- The systematic integration of gender considerations across all sectors of intervention, continuing the efforts undertaken over the past decade;

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<sup>5</sup>economic violence (13%), social violence (12%), psychological violence (9%), physical violence (6%), and sexual violence (3%)

- A reinforced commitment to women's empowerment through dedicated projects whose primary objective is to reduce gender inequalities.

The AFD Group is committed to promoting three forms of autonomy to support the empowerment of women and girls:

- Physical autonomy and the right of women and girls to make decisions about their own bodies;
- Economic autonomy, which plays out throughout women's lives (education, work, retirement, etc.);
- Political and decision-making autonomy, which encompasses all forms of civic, political, social, cultural, associative, union, media, or sports participation, as well as access to justice.

In its operations, AFD invests in efforts that enable a transformative approach to gender inequality, embedded across all sectors of its intervention. Key focus areas include economic empowerment, health and education, fundamental rights (including sexual and reproductive rights), combating gender-based violence and discrimination, the intersection of gender and climate change, and the participation of women in the Women, Peace and Security agenda in fragile and post-crisis contexts.

This approach seeks to challenge power dynamics between women and men, and to bring about positive change in the norms and paradigms that drive discrimination and inequality. It critically examines gender norms that disadvantage women and girls, and promotes social behavior change. This is done with respect for historical and cultural contexts, through co-construction with local actors, avoiding the imposition of external models while upholding universal rights.

AFD is also committed to contributing to the gender-related targets of France's Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy, as set out in the law of August 4, 2021, which aims for 75% of projects to be marked OECD-DAC gender marker 1 or 2 by 2025. This is in line with the European Union's Gender Action Plan III, which targets 85% of external actions marked as gender-relevant by 2025, thus facilitating the mobilization of delegated funds.

### **AFD Context in Ghana**

AFD has been present in Ghana since 1985 and will celebrate 40 years of activity in the country in 2025. Ghana was the first English-speaking country to host an AFD office. Historically, AFD's operations have focused on the energy sector, rural and agricultural development, urban development, and more broadly on financing infrastructure and green projects through support to public banks.

Currently, AFD's activities are mainly oriented toward financial intermediation loans and direct financing to public enterprises without sovereign guarantees, as well as grants (mostly in co-financing or delegated EU funds), PROPARCO financing tools, and technical assistance. Due to Ghana's public debt situation, sovereign loans backed by state guarantees have been suspended since December 2022.

As of December 31, 2024, AFD's active portfolio in Ghana comprised 19 projects, amounting to €238 million, primarily in the urban and rural development sectors. In a period marked by economic challenges, AFD has made economic support a priority — especially through support for public enterprises and financing of infrastructure and green projects, such as its contribution to the Ghana Investment Fund.

Additionally, AFD supports the development of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) — a key area for fostering social inclusion, innovation, and job creation, particularly among youth. These

initiatives aim to promote cultural entrepreneurship, especially for women, and to strengthen the capacities of local stakeholders.

### Project Preparation – Code CGN1236

As part of its 2025 business plan, AFD is preparing to launch a grant-funded project (maximum €8 million) under code CGN1236, focused on supporting women's entrepreneurship.

Supporting micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) led by women is seen as a promising avenue to boost the resilience of Ghana's economic fabric, create sustainable jobs, and improve the socio-economic inclusion of the most disadvantaged populations.

**The central objective of this project is to contribute to the economic empowerment of women through:**

- **Support for the development of women-led MSMEs**, with the ambition of adopting a holistic and inclusive approach in addressing their specific needs for both financial and non-financial services;
- **Capacity building for public and private ecosystem actors on gender and social inclusion**, in order to help create a more tailored support offer and an enabling environment for the long-term growth of women-led entrepreneurial initiatives.

The project will build on strong synergies with existing mechanisms and programs identified through the feasibility study.

### Women's Entrepreneurship in Ghana

#### Employment and MSMEs

**In Ghana, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) dominate the economic landscape.** They account for 92% of registered businesses, employ over 80% of the labor force, and contribute around 70% of the GDP.

**The Ghanaian economy is therefore characterized by a high prevalence of MSMEs and a large informal sector<sup>6</sup>**, with 75% of the labor force working informally — particularly in sectors such as agriculture, agrifood, and services<sup>7</sup>.

Moreover, **the country benefits from a dynamic and emerging business environment**, which has led to a significant drop in unemployment over the last 25 years: from 10.5% in 2000 to 6.8% in 2015, and down to 3.6% <sup>8</sup>in 2023. Ghana is now positioning itself as a major hub on the continent and ranks among the strongest ecosystems for startup development in Africa — following Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa.

However, **MSME development is hindered by several challenges**, including:

- Inadequate and incomplete data on MSMEs;
- Limited access to credit and financing;
- Limited access to equipment and technology for innovation;
- Insufficient managerial and entrepreneurial skills;
- Regulatory and legal constraints;

<sup>6</sup>Actualités économiques Nigéria, Ghana, *trésor.economie*, Juillet 2024  
<https://www.trésor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/2024/07/22/actualites-economiques-nigeria-ghana-semaine-du-22-juillet-2024>

<sup>7</sup> The experiences of female-led micro, small and medium enterprises in ghana, Participatory Development Associates, Ewoenam Afenyo-Agbe, Alexander Afram, Raymond Hodor, Lucy Ofori-Davis, Clement Sefa-Nyarko, Wen Chen, and Georg, September 2021, <https://ddn.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Female-Led-MSMEs-Main-report-1.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Trading Economics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/ghana/unemployment-rate>

- Limited access to market information.

### Women's Access to Employment and MSME Creation

As of 2019, 37.9% of businesses in Ghana were led by women<sup>9</sup>. However, 80% of these remained at the micro level and operated within the informal sector.

The main barriers faced by women-led enterprises, which explain their small scale and their concentration in the informal economy, include:

- i) **Limited access to financing**, which does not meet the needs of these businesses (World Bank);
- ii) **Limited access to entrepreneurial networks**, which excludes them from state- or private-led entrepreneurship incentives (World Bank);
- iii) **Gender stereotypes**, which limit the growth of women-led businesses — for example, some women reduce their investment levels so their husbands can retain the status of primary household provider;
- iv) **Gaps in financial literacy<sup>10</sup>, technical skills, business management, and interpersonal abilities** among women entrepreneurs compared to their male counterparts.

**During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses led by women were the hardest hit and took longer to recover, highlighting their vulnerability to economic shocks<sup>11</sup>.**

This is largely due to the fact that the vast majority of women-led businesses operate in the informal sector, making them structurally weaker. Most lacked insurance, safety nets, or crisis management plans, and were further constrained by social and economic barriers specific to women.

Moreover, most informal MSMEs were excluded from state recovery programs launched after the pandemic, as they failed to meet eligibility criteria (such as formal business registration, affiliation with recognized trade networks, or possession of a tax identification number). Since 80% of women-led businesses are informal, the majority of women entrepreneurs had to rely on support from family, friends, and informal networks to get through the crisis.

### The Public-Private Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Ghana's public-private entrepreneurial ecosystem includes Institutional actors, the financial sector, business support organizations, civil society and professional organizations, international donors and foundations.

#### • At the Institutional Level

Since 2020, the Ghanaian government has based its entrepreneurship support strategy on the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP), which aims to provide structured national support to startups and MSMEs.

Initially launched in 2014 as the Youth Enterprise Support (YES) initiative by the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the program was designed to provide resources and opportunities for young entrepreneurs. It was later renamed and expanded by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) to include technical and advisory support for startups and small businesses, along with enhanced training and incubation components. The recent appointment (January)

<sup>9</sup> MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (2019),

<https://www.mastercard.com/news/media/yxfpewni/mastercard-index-of-women-entrepreneurs-2019.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Gender and financial literacy in Ghana, African Journal of Economic and Management Studies, Emmanuel Sarpong-Kumankoma, Sayeed Ab-Bakar, Felix Narteh Akplehey, January 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Navigating the covid-19 pandemic: the experiences of female-led micro,small and medium enterprises in ghana, Ewoenam Afenyo-Agbe, Alexander Afram, Raymond Hodor, Lucy Ofori-Davis, Clement Sefa-Nyarko, Wen Chen, and Georgia Plank September 2021

of a new CEO by the NDC, now back in power, suggests an intention to continue positioning NEIP as a key pillar for entrepreneurial development in Ghana.

Additionally, both the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection are responsible for developing the national economic actors and/or promoting women's entrepreneurship.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) oversees economic development and industrial diversification in Ghana. It has implemented several programs and agencies to support entrepreneurship — particularly for women — including:

- The Women's Entrepreneurship Development Project (WEDP), which aims to support women entrepreneurs through training, access to financing, and business development services;
- The Microfinance and Small Loans Centre (MASLOC), which provides micro and small loans to MSMEs along with training for beneficiaries.
- The National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) supports small businesses with business development services, training, and access to finance.
- The Young Entrepreneurs Initiative (YEI) promotes youth entrepreneurship through training, mentoring, and access to funding.

The Ghana Enterprise Agency (GEA), under the Ministry of Trade, Agribusiness and Industry, plays a key role in MSME development by facilitating access to financing and promoting business formalization. In 2024, its annual budget was GHS 500 million (around USD 32 million).

GEA offers a range of support services including business consulting, training, and workshops to strengthen entrepreneurial skills. It also facilitates access to credit through grants and financial support programs such as the SME Growth Program. Additionally, it helps informal businesses formalize by meeting legal requirements. With over 200 resource centers across the country, GEA provides decentralized support to entrepreneurs.

Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) is responsible for addressing the specific needs of women and children. It formulates policies and promotes institutional responses to gender, child welfare, and social protection issues. It has implemented several programs and agencies aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurship:

- 50 Million Women Speak Platform (50MWSP): an online platform to improve women's access to business information and networks across 36 African countries;
- Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP): a program targeting extremely poor populations, especially women and children, through cash transfers and training (entrepreneurial skills, agricultural productivity, financial management, etc.);
- National Gender Policy (2015): a national framework to integrate gender considerations into all public policies and development programs;
- Ghana National Social Protection Policy: a policy to provide coherent and integrated social protection to vulnerable groups, including productive inclusion initiatives for women (e.g. microcredit schemes and local job creation programs).

#### • **Business Development Services (BDS)**

BSOs play a vital role in Ghana's entrepreneurial ecosystem. These organizations are diverse and numerous, spanning independent private initiatives such as hubs, accelerators, and incubators. Key examples include Impact Investing Ghana (IIGh), the Ghana Innovation Hub, and incubators such as the Ghana Climate and Innovation Center (GCIC), Ghana Tech Lab, and Impact Hub. National business networks such as Social Enterprise Ghana (SE Ghana) also play a major role in shaping and supporting the entrepreneurial landscape.

- **Civil Society and Professional Organizations**

Depending on the region, there are employers' associations, NGOs, producer organizations, entrepreneur associations (some of them women-led), as well as local authorities, cooperatives, and decentralized government services. These structures can provide local anchoring, technical support, and valuable assistance to entrepreneurs. However, their geographic distribution and maturity levels vary significantly from one region to another.

Major professional organizations active in this field include: The Association of Ghana Industries (AGI), The Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GNCCI) – which collaborated with AFD and Expertise France under the EU-funded DIRECCT project to support MSME resilience through digitalization, Trade unions such as the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) and affiliated unions, The Union of Informal Workers Associations (UNIWA).

- **Foundations and International Donors**

Several international and regional foundations and donors implement programs and collaborate with local actors to support entrepreneurship in Ghana. Notable partners include: the African Development Bank (AfDB), particularly through its Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA) initiative; the European Union Delegation (EUD); German development actors, represented by KfW and GIZ; and the Mastercard Foundation, which is also actively engaged in the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

African Development Bank (AfDB)

The African Development Bank (AfDB), whose primary objective is to reduce poverty in its member countries by contributing to sustainable economic development and social progress, implements several programs in Ghana and the region to support entrepreneurship and women's entrepreneurship:

- "50 Million Women Speak" Project – A joint AfDB/ECOWAS initiative;
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship Lab;
- YouthADAPT Program: Empowering Women and Youth for Entrepreneurship and Job Creation in Climate Adaptation and Resilience;
- 8th EPSA Initiative;
- AFAWA – Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa;
- Youth Entrepreneurship Investment Banks (YEIB).

European Union Delegation (EUD)

The European Union Delegation (EUD) represents the EU in Ghana and facilitates diplomatic and economic relations. It is responsible for implementing EU policies, coordinating cooperation projects, and supporting bilateral trade.

Key programs led by the EUD to promote entrepreneurship and women's entrepreneurship in Ghana include:

- Development Cooperation Program 2021–2027;
- WISE Project – Women Innovation for Sustainable Enterprises;
- GrEEen Project – Green Jobs and the Green Economy;
- Northern Ghana Integrated Development Project (NGIDP).

- **Financial Sector**

Ghana is one of the few countries in the world where the female entrepreneurship rate exceeds that of men, with 72% of Ghanaian women having started their own business. However, these

businesses are often small, informal, and concentrated in low-margin sectors with limited growth potential.

Data from the Global Findex shows that gender disparities in financial inclusion have widened in Ghana — from a 3% gap in 2014 to 11% in 2021<sup>12</sup>. Several factors contributed to this decline, including limited access to education, lack of familiarity with digital tools, and the poor suitability of financial products offered by financial institutions.

Women-led SMEs face significant structural obstacles that hinder their development — notably financial literacy gaps and lack of collateral. According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the financing gap for women-owned businesses in Ghana was estimated at USD 213 million in 2021.

A 2023 case study by the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) focused on the role of regulators in reducing gender disparities in financial inclusion in Ghana. The findings show that women in Ghana borrow as frequently as men to start their businesses, but have fewer opportunities and resources to save and reinvest in their businesses.

This is partly due to different priorities and lower growth expectations among women entrepreneurs. Many women prefer to run small, lower-pressure businesses that offer greater work-life balance and allow them to manage unpaid caregiving responsibilities more effectively.

In 2018, Ghana adopted a National Financial Inclusion Strategy with the objective of achieving an 85% financial inclusion rate for women. However, the strategy does not specify dedicated targets for women-owned or women-led MSMEs. These entities are addressed more broadly through the National MSME Strategy, launched in 2019.

The MSME development strategy aims to remove the structural barriers faced by SMEs in Ghana, including informality, short loan maturities offered by banks (which limit business growth), and banks' preference for larger firms over small ones.

Several financial actors support Ghana's entrepreneurial ecosystem, including the Development Bank Ghana (DBG), which funds high-impact projects; commercial banks, which provide credit and fund management services; and microfinance institutions and rural banks, which specialize in financing MSMEs and supporting entrepreneurs in rural areas. Key financial stakeholders include:

**Development Bank of Ghana (DBG):** A state-owned public development bank created in 2022 to address structural failures in SME credit markets. DBG operates as a second-tier bank, providing funding to partner financial institutions for on-lending to SMEs, especially in priority sectors (technology, agriculture, industry). DBG offers equity, loans, and guarantees. It receives grants and concessional loans from donors such as AfDB, the World Bank Group, the European Investment Bank (EIB), and Germany's KfW.

However, DBG has been the subject of allegations regarding the misuse of funds. Its primary donors — the World Bank and KfW — have launched an audit to verify these claims. While awaiting the audit's findings (due in April 2025), donor financing has been suspended. This audit will determine whether DBG can be considered a potential partner for the project.

**Bank of Ghana (BoG):** Responsible for regulating and supervising banks in the country. BoG plays a key role in the implementation and monitoring of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy, with a major focus on improving women's access to financial services.

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<sup>12</sup> [Ghana - Global Financial Inclusion \(Global Findex\) Database 2021](#)

**Microfinance Institutions Network (GHAMFIN):** The professional association of Ghanaian microfinance institutions. GHAMFIN plays an important role in poverty reduction and women's empowerment. However, it remains a marginal player in the financial sector, representing just 8.3% of banking assets in 2021 (Bank of Ghana).

### Objective of the Assignment

As part of the preparation of project CGN1236, these Terms of Reference aim to support the structuring of the project using a “transformative approach”, one that contributes to women's empowerment and addresses structural gender inequalities in the Ghanaian context. The project will also integrate other forms of inequality in order to include social inclusion as a specific project objective.

The assignment is expected to align with OECD<sup>13</sup> recommendations on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls — especially those that promote transformational change in unequal gender power relations and challenge the social norms that sustain them. The study should validate the project's transformational ambition in addressing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship<sup>14</sup>.

The study will aim to:

- **Define the geographic scope of the project**, considering gender dynamics, other inequality factors, and conflict sensitivity. This is crucial given the size of the country and the disparities between regions (urban vs. rural, border vs. non-border zones, etc.).
- **Analyze the sectors of activity of women-led MSMEs.** This should include the sector's weight in the national economy, the share of women-led MSMEs, urban/rural distribution, regional disparities, and sectoral concentrations. It should also assess opportunities for supporting women-led MSMEs in emerging sectors (e.g., high-tech, creative industries), identifying the risks and opportunities from a gender and inclusion perspective.
- **Analyze the demand side:** assess the specific (immediate and medium/long-term) and differentiated needs of women-led MSMEs — in terms of financial services (microcredit, loans, guarantees, investment, etc.) and non-financial services (information, training, mentoring, coaching, psychosocial and legal support, networking, etc.). This analysis must adopt an intersectional approach, factoring in different forms of gender-based discrimination (age, education level, socio-economic status, geographic location, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, migration status, etc.). It should also pay particular attention to vulnerabilities and specific needs of women in the Tamale region, helping refine the targeting of project beneficiaries.
- **Analyze the existing entrepreneurial and financial support offer:** map financial and non-financial services (including coverage and regional disparities), assess the capacity of public and private actors to integrate gender and social inclusion, and identify those able to provide appropriate tools and services to meet the specific needs of women entrepreneurs. This will also help refine the capacity assessment of pre-identified implementing partners and confirm their role in the project's operational setup.
- **Propose an institutional and operational project structure and produce the required documentation for AFD's internal appraisal**, including: logical framework, theory of change, draft M&E system, annualized work plan and budget, draft procurement plan, and related documents.

<sup>13</sup> [2013737d-fr.pdf \(oecd.org\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> Le projet a vocation à être noté CAD 2 selon le marqueur de l'OCDE.

## Expected Services

### Description of the Assignment

To structure a support project for women's entrepreneurship in Ghana, AFD intends to carry out a feasibility study composed of two main phases:

- A diagnostic phase of the Ghanaian entrepreneurial and financial ecosystem, including a detailed gender and intersectional analysis, to identify: i) the gaps between supply and demand in terms of gender and social inclusion; ii) levers through which the project can contribute to women's economic empowerment.
- A project design phase proposing the structuring of a support program for the development and financing of women-led MSMEs, applying an ambitious and inclusive gender approach.

This second phase will be activated depending on the results of the diagnostic and will allow for deeper exploration of critical areas and definition of implementation modalities.

The objective of this feasibility study is to propose an institutional and operational framework for the project, and to define the technical components and the scope of activities to be implemented. This operational design will enable the deployment of a coordinated support mechanism for women's entrepreneurship, based on an institutional, organizational, and strategic diagnostic of the various stakeholders within Ghana's entrepreneurial and financial ecosystem, and on the development of the project documentation required for AFD-funded implementation.

The ultimate objective of the project is to support women's economic empowerment by enabling the development and financing of their entrepreneurial initiatives. The feasibility study will thus contribute to the development of a transformative and inclusive approach capable of addressing structural barriers (economic, legal, social) faced by women entrepreneurs and reducing systemic gender inequalities and multidimensional vulnerabilities faced by women in Ghana.

The study should incorporate the OECD's<sup>15</sup> recommendations for development operations aiming to deliver transformational change, by addressing unequal gender power relations and discriminatory social norms (e.g. stereotypes, gender-based violence, and caregiving burdens).

The study must include a robust analysis of the baseline situation for women's entrepreneurship, covering: the national and sectoral context; available data on gender and multidimensional inequalities; a gender-disaggregated assessment of barriers and constraints affecting participation and access to project benefits; analysis of risks and opportunities related to gender, inclusion, and improving vulnerable populations' living conditions (e.g. through resilient value chain approaches); analysis of both the immediate and strategic needs of women to achieve empowerment, considering the diversity of their profiles and situations; Mapping and capacity analysis of stakeholders regarding gender and vulnerability considerations<sup>16</sup> in the project's geographic and/or sectoral scope.

The study should also highlight disparities in access to financial and non-financial services, and assess gender-related and conflict-sensitivity issues within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

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<sup>15</sup> [2013737d-fr.pdf \(oecd.org\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> Disadvantaged or vulnerable populations: individuals with low income levels – particularly those in the bottom 40% wealth bracket; individuals who are excluded or discriminated against on the basis of gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, etc.; displaced persons; individuals living in particularly underserved areas (informal settlements, urban or rural zones characterized by high levels of poverty, deprivation, or inequality...).

It is essential not to treat beneficiaries as a homogeneous group. The analysis must adopt an intersectional approach, considering how individuals' characteristics (real or perceived) — such as gender, age, location, community affiliation, social class, education level, disability, or sexual orientation — interact to shape inequalities. This will allow a better understanding of disparities among women and will highlight the financial inclusion challenges faced by the most disadvantaged groups, helping identify the most excluded profiles.

The analysis should also examine the activities of key actors in Ghana's entrepreneurial and financial ecosystem — including public institutions, professional associations, and public/private financial institutions supporting women-led MSMEs. In addition, the study should consider non-financial services provided by civil society organizations that support the strategic needs of women entrepreneurs — particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds — such as legal aid, access to information and rights, sexual and reproductive health, etc.

Finally, Based on the findings of the first phase, the study will propose a project structure that addresses both women's empowerment goals and the integration of men at various levels of the project — including project management, technical teams, implementing partners, public and institutional actors, local stakeholders, and actors within the social environment of the women beneficiaries.

### **Key Direct and Indirect Factors Contributing to Barriers to Women's Economic Empowerment**

The analysis will place special emphasis on the following issues (and others as identified during the study):

- At the micro level:
  - o The prevalence of gender-based violence (economic, social, physical, psychological, sexual, etc.);
  - o Limited access to productive resources (land, inputs, technology, etc.);
  - o Time constraints linked to the double burden of productive and reproductive roles, especially unpaid caregiving responsibilities ("care" work);
  - o Unequal income distribution within households;
  - o Limited access to sexual and reproductive health services (early pregnancies and marriages, school dropout), as well as to services for preventing and addressing gender-based violence;
  - o Insufficient access to basic services and infrastructure (transport, energy, etc.);
  - o Limited access to education, employment, and vocational training;
  - o Limited access to information, markets, and networks;
  - o Limited access to assets, property, and social capital;
  - o Lack of technical knowledge and skills;
  - o Insufficient access to financial and non-financial services, as well as to social transfers;
  - o Psychosocial barriers and lack of "life skills" (e.g., low self-esteem, lack of confidence, internalization of restrictive gender norms, public speaking skills, ability to negotiate with one's environment).
- At the meso level:
  - o Limited capacity for action and organization among women, both individually and collectively;
  - o Inadequate resources and capabilities allocated to public policies promoting women's economic empowerment, particularly for disadvantaged women, and gender equality more broadly;
  - o Lack of gender-related capacities within public and private actors involved in the entrepreneurial ecosystem;

- Insufficient public and private services to address “care” needs (dependents, early childhood, persons with disabilities, the elderly, etc.).
- At the macro level:
  - Legal and political environment with insufficient investment to support the implementation of operational gender and social inclusion approaches;
  - Lack of gender-disaggregated and socially inclusive data, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
  - Social norms, values, prejudices, and education systems that restrict women's — especially disadvantaged women's — access to economic opportunities and power within households (decision-making, income distribution, division of labor);
  - Insufficient infrastructure (water, energy, storage, processing) and social services (childcare, education, health/sexual and reproductive health/gender-based violence), particularly in rural areas;
  - Lack or absence of public policies on unpaid care work.

#### Part 1 (Firm Tranche) – In-depth Gender Diagnostic of the Public-Private Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (Supply and Demand Analysis)

The first part of the assignment will involve conducting an in-depth gender diagnostic — using an intersectional approach — of Ghana's public-private entrepreneurial ecosystem. This will start with an overview of gender, inclusion, and vulnerability issues in the national context, with a focus on women's entrepreneurship.

Throughout all sections, the diagnostic should perform a differentiated analysis among various groups of women to better understand the challenges to the socio-economic inclusion of the most disadvantaged. The study should highlight the specific barriers these women face, and identify the necessary levers to ensure equitable access to socio-economic opportunities.

##### 1.1. Provide a preliminary contextual analysis of gender and inclusion issues within the national context, with a particular focus on the entrepreneurship sector.

The consultant should provide a concise and operational analysis of the national and sectoral context regarding gender and inclusion. This includes:

- Structural barriers and various forms of discrimination affecting women, particularly disadvantaged women; Overview of gender inequalities in Ghana using available data, with attention to : social norms (stereotypes, representations, attitudes, caregiving responsibilities, gender-based violence); Discriminatory factors based on gender, age, socio-economic status, education level, geographic location, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc. The analysis should particularly examine disparities in:
  - Access to essential goods and services (healthcare, energy, transport, digital tools);
  - Access to rights, capabilities, opportunities, and socio-economic resources (education, training, employment, finance, land, etc.);
  - Access to civil and political rights, and access to justice;
  - Power relations within decision-making spaces (political, social, and economic).
- National and international commitments undertaken by Ghana in relation to gender equality and social inclusion, with specific attention to how these commitments impact the most disadvantaged women. This may also include policies where gender is not the primary focus but intersects with entrepreneurship.
- Policy, regulatory, and institutional framework on gender equality and social inclusion, particularly as it relates to entrepreneurship. This includes: the extent to which gender and inclusion issues are integrated into sectoral policies (e.g. national gender strategies, women's economic empowerment policies), institutional arrangements (e.g. gender focal point networks), and the human, financial, and operational capacities of public

institutions (ministries, government agencies, decentralized services) to address these issues.

- Stakeholder mapping related to gender, inclusion, and vulnerability within the project scope, covering public bodies (and possibly private actors), civil society organizations, donors, UN agencies, etc. The mapping should also highlight organizations and initiatives specifically targeting disadvantaged women.

This preliminary analysis will help identify leverage points to address the structural barriers women face in entrepreneurship.

## 1.2. In-depth Gender Diagnostic of the Public-Private Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (Incorporating social inclusion)

The study will analyze the characteristics and dynamics of Ghana's enterprise landscape (MSMEs, startups, etc.), with particular focus on: obstacles to the development and financing of women-led entrepreneurial initiatives, the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem, incorporating a robust gender dimension. This diagnostic will lay the groundwork for initial recommendations and scenarios to inform project structuring, which will be the focus of Part II of the study.

The study should systematically account for issues of inclusion and vulnerability, in every analytical dimension, to better understand structural disparities limiting women's access to entrepreneurship and socio-economic opportunities. Special attention will be paid to disadvantaged women — particularly those in the informal sector, with limited access to productive resources and finance, and/or experiencing multiple forms of discrimination.

Here are some non-exhaustive elements to be included in the analysis:

### 1.2.1. On the Economic Landscape of Ghanaian MSMEs and the Challenges of Women's Entrepreneurship:

- Socio-economic and political context and business environment (legal and regulatory framework, Doing Business indicators, etc.), with emphasis on specific barriers faced by women, especially the most disadvantaged;
- Overview of activities, sectors, entrepreneur profiles, and geographic distribution of Ghanaian enterprises: MSME categories, workforce size, company types, revenue, sectors, etc. Analysis of entrepreneur profiles and gender inequalities: gender distribution of workforce, social and geographic origins, age, etc.; Barriers to starting a business (e.g. social biases, family responsibilities, early marriage or pregnancy); Barriers to scaling up a business — particularly those affecting disadvantaged women entrepreneurs.
- Informality issues: What is the level of informality among Ghanaian enterprises? What solutions can increase formal employment and business registration? What are the key barriers (economic, social, legal, fiscal, etc.) to transitioning from informal to formal sectors?
- Needs in financial and non-financial services: Analyze both immediate and strategic needs of women entrepreneurs, particularly in terms of accessibility to financial services (microloans, guarantees, investment, etc.) and non-financial services (information, financial education, training, mentoring, coaching, family support, psychosocial services, etc.). Special focus should be placed on women most excluded from financial systems. Include data on geographic/sectoral concentration, business legal structure, and gaps in financial service access.
- Who are the most excluded profiles in terms of access to financial and non-financial services?

**Particular attention will be paid to both the immediate and strategic needs of women entrepreneurs, including the most disadvantaged, as well as the barriers they face in starting and growing their businesses—especially structural barriers (legal, judicial, social, economic, socio-psychological, etc.). In a transformative approach, part of the project may, for**

example, provide or refer to non-financial services that go beyond traditional technical support, such as programs that promote women's leadership at the scale of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (e.g., life skills, representation in decision-making spaces). One of the key objectives of the project is indeed to go beyond women's immediate needs and to fully address their strategic needs, in order to contribute to **transforming power relations between women and men in the long term**.

The study will therefore need to identify the transformational levers that the project could support, **and integrate analytical elements and concrete operational recommendations for actions that could:**

- i) Contribute to dismantling barriers related to social norms, especially those affecting the most disadvantaged women (gender stereotypes, the burden of care, limited access to decision-making spaces, gender-based violence);
- ii) Support civil society organizations advocating for women's rights and the interests of women entrepreneurs, with particular attention to initiatives working with the most marginalized female populations;
- iii) Involve men in the project (as agents of change), at every level of the intervention (steering, technical, institutional, territorial anchoring, community engagement, beneficiaries' family and social environment, etc.).

The study will identify the categories of women most disadvantaged or excluded from access to support and financing services. It will analyze **the factors of exclusion**, such as income level, education, geographic location (rural or peri-urban areas), age, migratory status, disability, or ethnic background. Special attention will be paid to women heading informal microenterprises, who face multidimensional **barriers limiting their inclusion in the formal entrepreneurial ecosystem**.

Finally, the study must take into account **two cross-cutting dimensions to be analyzed in connection with the broader gender dynamics:** i) issues of social inclusion and climate change (considering the impacts of climate change across sectors of entrepreneurial activity and multidimensional inequalities); ii) vulnerabilities and complex contexts (with a "do no harm" approach—see annex), particularly in the areas targeted by the project.

### 1.2.2. On the ecosystem supporting women's entrepreneurship in Ghana

Analyze the existing (or in-development) political and legal frameworks aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurship and improving women's access to financial and non-financial services, with a focus on their effectiveness in meeting the specific needs of women, particularly the most disadvantaged. This includes all relevant strategies, policies, roadmaps, and guidelines at the political and regulatory levels.

Provide an analytical mapping of stakeholders involved in gender and entrepreneurship in Ghana: including public and, where applicable, private entities, civil society organizations, cooperatives, donors, and technical and financial partners (TFPs). Identify key public, private, and non-governmental actors in the ecosystem, as well as existing support programs for entrepreneurship, especially those targeting women, including the most marginalized.

Analyze the capacities of stakeholders—starting with potential implementing agencies (MAs)—in terms of gender equality, inclusion of vulnerability issues, and identify needs for capacity strengthening.

Analyze the financial services offered by Ghanaian financial institutions; map the financing solutions available for start-ups and SMEs (loan sources and conditions, financial products, interest rates, loan maturity, geographical coverage, target SME segments and sectors); assess the obstacles to financing such projects (technical, financial, institutional barriers, etc.), including the capacity of financial institutions to assess risks and business models; analyze the financing gap for start-ups and SMEs, as well as the banks' and market's absorption capacities, to identify any limitations in scaling up the financing offer.

Identify the public and private actors capable of providing financial and non-financial tools tailored to the needs of the targeted enterprises. This analysis should highlight existing or potential mechanisms to improve access for the most disadvantaged women to financing, guarantees, and technical and entrepreneurial support services.

Analyze entrepreneurship support programs and vocational training mechanisms funded by other technical and financial partners (including those led by AFD in other sectors) to ensure complementarity with the future project's operational components and identify potential synergies.

Particular attention will be paid to:

**i) Benchmarking of financial and non-financial services offered to women- and men-led MSMEs:**

*This involves assessing the capacities of financial institutions and identifying best practices for integrating gender, inclusion, and vulnerability considerations. The analysis should include: distribution channels for reaching female clients, availability of tailored financial and non-financial services (such as capacity building and training programs), product offerings, human resources policies, internal change support mechanisms, access conditions, monitoring and evaluation systems, as well as initiatives related to life skills, mentorship, networking, and digital inclusion.*

**ii) Gender analysis within public and private entrepreneurship support organizations:**

*This includes reviewing governance models, the representation of women in staff and leadership, the existence of gender-sensitive or inclusive approaches, and specific initiatives addressing gender and vulnerability. It also includes examining how women entrepreneurs are guided and supported, and how accessible the services are (transportation, infrastructure, etc.). The analysis will assess the types of support and training content: are they adapted to the needs of all entrepreneurs, including the most disadvantaged women? Are the services and support pathways tailored to diverse needs and profiles? Do training contents contain gender stereotypes?*

**iii) Capacity analysis of public contracting authorities (MODs):** *From Part I of the project, an assessment will be conducted on public actors mandated to support entrepreneurship, to pre-identify those who could be involved in the institutional or, where relevant, operational implementation of the project. Special attention will be paid to their ability to adopt an inclusive approach that ensures disadvantaged women can fully benefit from the planned interventions.*

### 1.2.3. On the project's target territories and sectors:

- The Consultant will support the refinement of **the project's geographic and sectoral scope, ensuring that the analysis of the criteria leading to this framing and the structuring of the project's intervention logic takes into account its transformational, inclusive, social, and vulnerability-sensitive ambitions.**
- The geographic framing of the project is crucial given the size of the country and the disparities between Ghana's regions, as well as between rural and urban areas, and even within those areas themselves.
  - Special attention will be given to particularly disadvantaged regions, characterized by high levels of economic insecurity, numerous informal settlements, low infrastructure density, limited access to financial and non-financial services, and heavy reliance on the informal economy.
  - Specific focus should be placed on the Tamale region and Greater Accra in identifying the cities and/or regions where the future project should be implemented. For areas facing risks of crisis or conflict (Northern Ghana), the

Consultant will: i) analyze the risks through a conflict-sensitive lens, identifying causes and factors of vulnerability.

- The Consultant will analyze sector-specific issues to determine which sectors the project could potentially target, highlighting:
  - Existing market opportunities, customers, and value chains (suppliers, clients, etc.) of current women entrepreneurs;
  - Sectors where support mechanisms (financing and advisory services) for MSMEs would be particularly relevant, based on the current landscape and the realities of the target economic fabric and beneficiaries;
  - **Strategic sectors offering economic growth and structuring opportunities for women's entrepreneurship**, especially those that can strengthen the economic resilience of women, including the most disadvantaged;
  - **Specific opportunities in agro-industry, technology—including artificial intelligence—creative and cultural industries (CCIs), and digital sectors, particularly the digitalization of business processes.**
- **The Consultant will describe the socio-economic characteristics of the regions that the project will prioritize, including: gender dynamics within households and communities**, household profiles, economic and informal activities, social dynamics (youth, migration, climate, etc.). Emphasis will be placed on the poorest and most marginalized areas, including contrasts between border and non-border regions. Special attention will be given to the situation of disadvantaged women entrepreneurs operating in the poorest areas and in sectors that are least conducive to economic development.
- The Consultant will ensure that environmental and social (E&S) risks related to the project are identified and that appropriate measures are proposed for their prevention, mitigation, and/or exclusion. These may include risks such as child and forced labor; trade involving animals or plants that violate [CITES](#) regulations; GMOs; hazardous or banned agricultural chemicals and inputs; diamonds and gold; antiquities; alcohol; and money laundering.

## Part 2 (Optional Tranche) – Proposal for Structuring the Women Entrepreneurs Support Project

Based on the diagnosis and conclusions of Part I of the study, this section aims to provide a more in-depth analysis of the entrepreneurial and financial ecosystem supporting women entrepreneurs in order to:

1. Propose an institutional and operational structure for the project within the framework of a public policy dialogue with the relevant national authorities. **Several potential scenarios should be outlined** before determining the project's scope, taking into account its transformational and inclusive ambition. The selected scenario will define the project's specific targets, intended impacts, and priority sectors and regions.
2. **Propose the scale and scope of the project's operational components**, using a theory of change and a coherent framework aimed at fostering transformative changes in relation to gender inequalities. A specific focus on social inclusion must be incorporated to address the particular needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable women through a "do no harm" approach.
3. **Structure the analyses and project documents required for AFD's internal review** (Logical Framework and monitoring-evaluation system, Annual Work Plan and Budget with detailed activity breakdown, Project Monitoring and Evaluation Framework).

The following (non-exhaustive) elements will be included in the proposed scenarios, project structuring, and analyses in Part II of the study:

**a) Identification of the potential Project Owners (MOAs) and Delegated Project Owners (MODs):** Using both theoretical contributions and field research, the Consultant will highlight and justify the selection of the MOA(s), MOD(s), and other operational stakeholders of the project.

- i. To justify the selection of MOAs and stakeholders, the Consultant will draw on the analysis of these actors, their mandates, capacities, resources, and the willingness demonstrated by actors met during the field research.
- ii. Note that preference should be given to local public counterparts (the "primary Beneficiary" will be the Republic of Ghana).
- iii. If a financial institution is selected as MOA, the justification must include its positioning in the women-led MSME segment, its mission and strategy, and its capacity to manage funds from development banks, including AFD.
- iv. The roles and operational involvement of all stakeholders must be justified and detailed, in compliance with AFD's Procurement Guidelines.

**b) Capacity analysis of potential MOAs and operational stakeholders, particularly regarding gender and social inclusion (with a focus on the most disadvantaged women), and their ability to implement a support project for women's entrepreneurship:** The Consultant will assess the capacities of MOAs to integrate gender, inclusion, and vulnerability issues into their activities in alignment with the project's sector and goals. The following elements will be analyzed:

- i. Internal commitments to gender equality: gender policy or strategy documents, internal gender equity initiatives for staff, etc.;
- ii. Existing in-house expertise and resources on gender equality: designated personnel, past gender-related training, etc.;
- iii. Other ongoing or past projects and partnerships addressing gender and social inclusion issues;
- iv. Based on this analysis, training, capacity-building, and technical assistance needs will be identified. The MOAs' interest and commitment to the project's gender ambition should also be clearly demonstrated.

**c) The selected scenario must consider the following points:**

- i. Institutional and operational structure of the project (including identification of MOAs and relevant stakeholders);
- ii. Logical framework and theory of change aligned with the project's transformative and inclusive approach to gender inequality and women's economic empowerment;
- iii. An ambitious gender approach that includes men as part of the project to anchor the initiative in women beneficiaries' environments (community, village, local associations, etc.), thereby contributing to sustainable social change;
- iv. Detailed and actionable activities for project implementation. Identify opportunities to enhance the positive effects of activities through a conflict-sensitive approach, including deliberate actions to reduce multidimensional inequalities and existing grievances, structure resilient economic sectors, and improve living conditions in regions facing security challenges;
- v. Operational model and stakeholder involvement in all project activities, with particular attention to contingency measures in the event of worsening security conditions (at minimum, for interventions in the Tamale region);
- vi. Methods and criteria for selecting beneficiary profiles, with consideration for multidimensional vulnerability issues within the project's geographical scope;
- vii. Involvement of various stakeholders in the beneficiary selection process;
- viii. Proposed solutions to increase formal employment and the formalization of businesses;
- ix. Assessment of stakeholders' needs and capacities regarding technical assistance (TA): MOAs as both beneficiaries and coordinators of TA activities; financial intermediaries as both TA recipients and financial service providers for end

beneficiaries; other relevant program stakeholders as recipients of TA and providers of non-financial services to final beneficiaries;

x. Structure the management process of the technical assistance program;

xi. Draft the Terms of Reference for the technical assistance program: including contextual information, objectives and expected results, assumptions and risks, scope of intervention, tasks and activities per component, coordination/management process, logistics and timeline, requirements, and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanisms.

**d) Preparation of documents required for AFD's internal review** (in coordination with the project team, templates and internal expert review may be provided by AFD):

- Detailed presentation of the project and identified risks;
- Logical Framework (including overall objectives, outcomes, results, verifiable indicators, means of verification, and assumptions) integrating the transformative and inclusive approach;
- Annual Work Plan and Budget with detailed breakdown of activities and the technical assistance program;
- Project monitoring and evaluation system.

Based on the diagnostic conducted and the proposed project content, **the Consultant will develop, in coordination with stakeholders (AFD, MOA, partners, etc.), the various project documents.** These will include the definition of a main objective focused on reducing gender inequalities and a specific objective on social inclusion, both contributing to social transformation by addressing multiple forms of inequality. These objectives will be supported by a theory of change embedded in the logical framework and project planning. They will be broken down into a set of specific, detailed, and operational activities, each accompanied by monitoring and evaluation measures.

Environmental and Social (E&S) considerations: The Consultant is expected to conduct an E&S risk assessment and identify measures for prevention, mitigation, and/or exclusion of these risks. These elements must be clearly incorporated into the project documentation at the appropriate stage to ensure their effective integration and implementation.

Capitalization and synergies: The assignment must build on lessons learned from past and ongoing initiatives or programs that have included gender inequality reduction and/or women's empowerment and inclusion in Ghana. Operational recommendations must seek complementarity and identify possible synergies for implementation (to maximize empowerment levers) with other interventions funded by AFD and/or other donors.

Within the AFD Group, this project aligns with AFD's commitments to contribute to SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and support the implementation of France's feminist diplomacy, as well as SDG 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries).

### Expected Methodology

The Consultant shall employ methods and tools from the social sciences and humanities, adapted to the context of the study, combining theoretical insights with fieldwork. The "do no harm" approach must inform the proposed methodology, and a safeguarding protocol for survey participants must be developed to ensure their safety. The Consultant is expected to make proactive and well-founded methodological proposals.

At a minimum, the methodology should include:

- **A literature review on gender, gender equality, inclusion, and vulnerability issues in the regions of the country:** available data, policy documents, existing gender-sensitive

initiatives, academic research, socio-demographic surveys, donor and development agency publications (e.g., country gender profiles, toolkits, etc.), and research centers (e.g., ACEIR);

- **Interviews with key informants**, such as representatives of relevant national and local institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), researchers, international organizations, relevant public and private financial institutions, and other private stakeholders;
- **A field survey targeting the beneficiary groups**, including both group and individual interviews, and quantitative surveys where necessary;
- **A phase dedicated to data compilation and analysis**, followed by the drafting of deliverables;
- **Several workshops aimed at co-constructing the project with stakeholders and engaging the intended beneficiaries**;
- **Regular check-in points with AFD and project partners**, at minimum at the start and end of the assignment, and as needed during implementation, in alignment with the overall feasibility study phases.

The Consultant is expected to ensure coordination with the stakeholders involved in the project's appraisal process (in particular the project owner, other consultants working on the feasibility study, partners, etc.). It should be noted that the Delegation of the European Union in Ghana is conducting a study on Women's Economic Empowerment, and coordination with their consultants will be required.

The methodology shall be described clearly and in detail, with justification for the chosen methodological approaches and allocation of time spent in the field.

The Consultant will draw upon studies, data, and contacts provided by AFD at the start of the assignment. These documents are not exhaustive, and the Consultant will be expected to carry out additional research to complete their analyses.

#### Specific Points of Attention

The assignment must ensure that the following focus areas are fully addressed in relation to the design of the associated project:

- **Women's empowerment and the structural reduction of gender inequalities constitute the primary objective of the project and should be mainstreamed across all components**;
- This main **objective is aimed at fostering structural change**, i.e., gender-related actions should have geographical and/or long-term impact beyond the project's scope and ensure sustainability in both outcomes and in addressing the root causes of inequalities;
- **The reduction of multidimensional inequalities and social inclusion is a specific secondary objective of the project**, with the aim of addressing the issues faced by the most disadvantaged women who experience multiple forms of discrimination;
- The project's baseline analysis will therefore integrate the following elements to inform project design:
  - Data related to gender and multidimensional inequalities;
  - An analysis of barriers and constraints to the participation of both women and men (particularly disadvantaged women) in the project;
  - An analysis of the risks of exacerbating gender and multidimensional inequalities (e.g., risks of increased gender-based violence, heavier burdens of domestic

responsibilities, or community backlash), and of deterioration in women's living conditions;

- An analysis of opportunities to promote structural change in relation to gender inequalities (e.g., shifts in power relations and social norms; tackling structural barriers such as the burden of care, GBV, gender stereotypes; and advancing the strategic interests of both women and men), and to develop a specific social inclusion objective targeting disadvantaged women.
- The gender analysis must address the root causes of gender inequality and propose concrete, operational actions that contribute to the removal of structural barriers to women's empowerment.
- **The analysis of beneficiary profiles will be based on an intersectional approach, taking into account the multiple forms of gender-based discrimination** (e.g., gender, age, social class, ethnicity, disability, geographic location, religion, migratory status, etc.) that may increase the risk of discrimination and marginalization. The adopted approach will aim to strengthen disadvantaged women's access to economic resources and entrepreneurial opportunities while reducing the structural barriers that limit their economic and social inclusion. Particular attention will be paid to women working in low-profit sectors, remote rural areas, and underserved urban neighborhoods, to ensure that support measures are tailored to their specific contexts and needs.
- **The gender approach will be central to the methodology proposed by the Consultant** and must be informed by available data, insights from existing literature, feedback from donors and technical partners on similar projects (in-country or in the region), and in-depth field analysis within the project scope. Field investigations and stakeholder consultations will take into account the situated knowledge and differentiated experiences of the target beneficiaries, in relation to their multiple identities, characteristics, and social positions within the project context.
- Key information, analyses, and operational recommendations must be integrated at all levels of the feasibility study report: contextual/sectoral analysis, analysis of beneficiaries and stakeholders, detailed feasibility assessment, and detailed project presentation. It should be emphasized that gender-related analyses, issues, and perspectives will be a central decision-making factor for the final design of the project (target regions, institutions, project owner).
- The logical framework and monitoring-evaluation system must be built using a theory of change that aligns with the project's transformative and inclusive ambition, and must include realistic and relevant monitoring and outcome indicators (both quantitative and qualitative, sex-disaggregated, and gender-sensitive).
- Gender-related actions must be detailed and include: a budget, human and financial resources, clearly defined responsibilities for implementation, and capacity-building or training measures, if necessary.

The Consultant shall base their work on the methodological tools presented in AFD's Gender Toolkits, in particular:

- [La Boîte à Outils Genre : Education, Formation professionnelle et Emploi ;](#)
- [La Boîte à Outils Genre : Appui au secteur privé, Entrepreneuriat et Inclusion financière.](#)

- [Fiche-ressource sur ciblage des bénéficiaires dans les activités de formation professionnelle et entrepreneuriat en contexte de crise et conflits \(upon request\)](#)

#### Estimated Duration of the Assignment and Intermediate Steps

The assignment is estimated at 150 expert-days over the indicative period from April 2025 to July 2025. The service is broken down into several technical phases, described below:

#### **Part 1 (Firm Tranche): Ecosystem Analysis**

- **Phase A: Launch and Scoping of the Study**
  - Implementation of the assignment. This phase will first involve preparatory work with the team of experts recruited for the feasibility study, followed by a kick-off meeting/workshop with AFD and study stakeholders to clarify the study's agenda, deadlines, and associated logistical arrangements. The preparatory work will also establish a gender-specific section within the overall feasibility study scoping note for the team of experts, prior to the field mission.
  - Literature review to frame the study's focus areas (gender, social inclusion, and conflict sensitivity) and the diagnostic of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including the development and financing of women-led SMEs in Ghana.
- **Phase B: In-depth Diagnostic of the Public-Private Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (Demand and Supply) in Ghana, using a Gender and Intersectional Approach**
  - Field survey involving target groups and stakeholders identified in the literature review to refine the mapping and analysis of the ecosystem;
  - Preparation of a comprehensive diagnostic report outlining initial findings on potential actors, territories, and sectors for the project.

#### **Part 2 (Optional Tranche): Project Design for Supporting the Development and Financing of Women-Led MSMEs, Including Disadvantaged Women**

This second phase will be activated depending on the results of the diagnostic. It will allow for a deeper analysis of critical aspects identified and will refine implementation modalities.

- **Phase C: Development of Scenarios and Validation of Project Scope**
  - Data analysis and preparation of scenarios, including (i) an assessment of the potential project owners' capacities and (ii) a focused analysis of the sectors and territories proposed for the project;
  - Evaluation of the technical assistance program for all project stakeholders;
  - Selection of an institutional and operational project structure.
- **Phase D: Proposal for Structuring the Women Entrepreneurs Support Project**
  - Identification of target territories and sectors for the project (with a focus on agro-industry, textiles, technology, and creative and cultural industries), integrating gender and inclusion considerations;
  - Detailed selected scenario;
  - Analysis of the capacities of potential project owners and operational stakeholders, particularly in their ability to integrate gender and inclusion concerns, and to implement a project contributing to women's economic empowerment;
  - Detailed project presentation (objectives, planned activities, identified risks);
  - Preparation of the project documentation required for AFD's internal review;

- Drafting of the Terms of Reference for the technical assistance component involving stakeholders.

All these phases will be conducted in close collaboration with the team of experts mobilized for the overall feasibility study of the CGN1236 project. Progress meetings will be organized in alignment with the overall study phases. Timelines will be coordinated, and gender-related elements will be integrated coherently with other aspects to enable informed decision-making at each step (see timelines). Check-ins with AFD, particularly the Accra agency, may be organized during the execution of the assignment.

#### Expected Deliverables

In line with the expected scope of work described above, the Consultant will be required to deliver the following:

- **Scoping Note** for the feasibility study
- **Intermediate Deliverables:**
  - Analytical mapping of actors within the entrepreneurial and financial ecosystem;
  - Comprehensive diagnostic report of the public-private entrepreneurial ecosystem with an in-depth gender analysis;
  - Development of scenarios to validate the final scope of the project.
- **Final Deliverable:**

**A complete report** including, at a minimum:

- A detailed baseline analysis, supported by bibliographic references, and quantitative and qualitative data collected during the literature review, diagnostic note, and field surveys (see Part I);
- A detailed stakeholder analysis and the proposed institutional and operational structuring of the project;
- A description of the project implementation phases, including any challenges encountered;
- A description of the project's various partners and activities;
- A precise and detailed bibliography of the references used in the study;
- Documentation of fieldwork carried out, for example: list of individuals interviewed, interview and/or focus group summaries, quantitative databases, methodological tools, etc.;
- The above-mentioned project documents required for AFD's internal review process;
- Terms of Reference for the technical assistance component involving project stakeholders.

#### Expected Skills of the Consultant(s)

The expert must possess the qualifications and experience corresponding to the services described in these Terms of Reference in order to achieve the intended results. More specifically, the team of consultants (core and support staff) must meet the following requirements:

- Solid academic background in gender studies, gender and development approaches, and social inclusion;

- Expertise in entrepreneurial ecosystems and in technical and financial support mechanisms for entrepreneurship, particularly in designing projects/programs integrating gender approaches and/or promoting women's empowerment and social inclusion;
- Expertise in supporting SMEs and SME financing, and inclusive finance, particularly in Africa (ideally in West Africa), would be a strong asset;
- Experience in conflict analysis (structural and socio-cultural factors), "do not harm" approach and demonstrated familiarity with conflict-sensitive frameworks (actors, connectors, and dividers);
- Proven experience in social inclusion with expertise in a gender-sensitive and intersectional inclusion approach."
- Proven experience in conducting qualitative and quantitative field surveys and baseline studies for development projects that include gender equality, social inclusion, and intersectional approaches;
- Demonstrated experience in change-oriented approaches, co-construction, and participatory consultation involving multiple stakeholders;
- Expertise in Environmental and Social (E&S) issues, including experience in setting up E&S risk management measures;
- Experience in development project management and sound knowledge of donor approaches to gender and gender equality;
- Knowledge of the institutional ecosystem (national gender machinery) and entrepreneurial context targeted by the future project;
- Knowledge of Ghana and West Africa;
- Language skills: English, and local languages spoken in Ghana (e.g., Twi, Ewe);
- Proven ability to conduct meetings, workshops, and interviews;
- Excellent synthesis and writing skills;
- Interpersonal skills to work in a multicultural environment with a wide range of actors;
- Autonomy and organizational skills – responsiveness – interpersonal skills – adaptability – affinity for interaction;
- Team spirit; ability to take initiative, critical and constructive thinking, discretion;
- Strong availability during the project period. The ToRs are detailed and reflect a significant workload that must be completed within a strict and non-negotiable timeline.

Attention will be paid to the diversity of the team, particularly in terms of gender and age, as well as to the inclusion of both international and local expertise.

### **Validation of Deliverables by AFD**

#### Deliverable Validation Process

Each deliverable will be subject to a debriefing with AFD, which may request adjustments from the consultants. This debriefing/adjustment sequence must take place within the week following the submission of the deliverable before it is forwarded to the monitoring committee.

#### Criteria for Deliverable Validation

- Clarity and readability of the deliverable;
- Conciseness of the deliverable;
- Quality of analysis and writing (particularly the supporting argument);
- Respect of deadlines;
- Compliance with the scope of the requested Service;
- Operational relevance of the deliverable's conclusions;
- Added value of the content compared to existing materials;

- Quality of coordination and coherence with the overall feasibility study deliverables.

### Constraints Imposed by AFD

#### Use of the English Language

The execution of the assignment requires the consistent use of the English language in communications with the contracting authority (documents, meetings, workshops, phone calls, emails).

#### Consultants' Travel Requirements

The drafting of deliverables may be carried out in the country chosen by the selected firm. However, it is necessary that the consultants conduct at least part of the study in the Republic of Ghana (a mandatory prerequisite for selecting the service provider), in order to meet with various stakeholders and potential project beneficiaries to better understand their needs and challenges.

### Resources Made Available to the Consultant

AFD will provide the Consultant with all bibliographic resources in its possession necessary for the proper execution of the assignment. It will also facilitate, depending on availability and feasibility, contact with stakeholders involved in the future intervention.

### Provisional Service Timeline

The indicative duration of the assignment is 150 expert-days over the period from April 2025 to July 2025. The assignment is divided into several technical phases described below:

Phase	Date
Start of the assignment <i>Scoping note for the feasibility study</i> <i>Literature review</i>	May 2025
<b>Part I - Diagnostic of the public-private entrepreneurial ecosystem in Ghana</b> Analytical mapping of stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem Comprehensive diagnostic report of the public-private entrepreneurial ecosystem with in-depth gender analysis and MOD analysis	July/August 2025
<b>Part II – Structuring the AFD Project</b> Development of scenarios to validate the final project scope Final report	October 2025