

Africa Minigrids Program (AMP) – Mali national project

Gender Analysis and Action Plan

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Gender Analysis

Rationale

The gender analysis is key to integrate gender mainstreaming in any GEF project including the AMP Mali project. Adopting a gender-responsive approach is critical to achieving the overall objective of the project. It aims at supporting equal opportunities to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from project resources, activities and results for women, men, youth and people with disabilities.

It shall be the basis for the gender action plan to provide concrete approaches to address gender inequalities and identify strategies to advance women's and other marginalized groups' participation and empowerment in the project. As each group is heterogeneous and their interactions differ at various levels, the gender analysis not only helps preventing a harshening of imbalances but also supports the reduction of the latter to contribute to a meaningful participation of women and other vulnerable social groups.

A number of factors demonstrate the importance of taking a gender-sensitive approach to energy access. In many developing countries for example, women and men have different health sensitivities towards firewood usage, as well as the source of CO2 exposure in the workplace and in daily life. Women and men often have different levels of access to participation, decision-making, information, education, or justice, and face different constraints in their efforts to improve their environment and living conditions. They may also play distinct roles and have different power in making decisions about energy, pollution prevention, waste management, natural disasters, and building safer environments for communities.

Based on these potential differences and imbalances, and other important links between gender and energy, this gender analysis serves as the basis for the Gender Action Plan for the Mali AMP project. During project implementation with the support of the project management unit and relevant experts, an updated baseline and monitoring will be undertaken in Mali.

Methodology

The methodology used for the gender analysis is the framework provided in the **Guide to Conducting a Participatory Gender Analysis and Developing a Gender Action Plan for projects supported by UNDP with GEF financing**.

The gender analysis, herein, identifies:

1. National and local context around gender, including policies and strategies
2. Gender roles (women, men, youth, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable people) in terms of labor in general and energy in particular
3. Gender-specific access to and control over resources
4. Power and decision-making processes
5. Capacity needs, skills, knowledge levels depending on gender

The assessment will ensure the disaggregation and targeting of interventions towards addressing the needs of women, men, youth and persons with disabilities are included in the final project design, implementation plans and monitoring and evaluation plans.

The assessment is based on:

- I. Desk research of key literature (policies, national strategies, statistics, reports, articles and project documents)
- II. Face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders during PPG.
- III. AMP Mali project result framework and project document (incl. theory of change)
- IV. UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025

Context

Overall Context

According to 2021 UN Human Development Reports data, Mali ranks 186 of 191 on the Human Development Index and 155 of 169 on the Gender Inequality Index.¹ The concurrence of both low scores signifies women and girls in Mali, on average, experience exceptional levels of vulnerability to various macroeconomic, climate, or other shocks. That is, they are disadvantaged even among the disadvantaged.

Demographics

The population of Mali, about 20.7 million inhabitants in 2022², has an annual growth rate of 2.9% and is expected to double by 2045³. This landlocked country, made of 60% of desert areas, has 45.4% of its population living in urban areas (with an urbanization rate of 4.6% per annum), mostly located in the Southern part of the country and at the border with Burkina Faso. This Least Developed Country (LDC) is one of the poorest countries in the world with 41.1% of its population living below the national poverty line in 2020 (under \$1.15 a day). According to the World Bank, the sanitary, security, social and political crises in 2020 have increased the poverty rate by 5%⁴. Only 58% of women (vs. 77.4% of men) are part of the active population in 2021⁵.

Mali has a high fertility rate of 5.7 births per woman⁶ and adolescent birth rate of 150.1 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19⁷. High fertility rates increase the dependency ratio of a society, resulting in greater caregiving burdens for women and, in precarious settings, fewer resources able to be devoted to each child. Adolescent childbearing impedes girls' educational and work prospects and gravely endangers their health and that of their children through pregnancy complications.

Since the military coup of 2012 and the occupation of the Northern part of the country by armed groups, Mali and its population are facing multiple crises including instability, conflicts and insecurity. There are over 400,000 internally displaced people in addition to nearly 48,000 refugees and asylum-seekers mainly living in the insecure northern and central parts of the country⁸. This security situation makes women and girls increasingly vulnerable. Many women have become heads of households (the men are either killed, abducted or have fled) and are left to fend for themselves. The displaced are scattered in camps, in families and in houses under construction.

Health

Nutrition and Food Security

Food insecurity and hunger rates are high in Mali. According to OCHA, 3.5 millions Malians were food insecure and 757,000 were facing severe food insecurity in 2020⁹.

¹ <https://hdr.undp.org/>

² <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mali/>

³ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mali/>

⁴ <https://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/country/mali/overview>

⁵ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.MA.NE.ZS?locations=ML-NE-BF-TD-MR>

⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=ML>

⁷ <https://hdr.undp.org/>

⁸ <https://reporting.unhcr.org/mali?year=2022>

⁹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2020. Mali: Humanitarian Response Plan. New York: OCHA. Available at: <http://www.unocha.org/mali>

Inadequate child feeding practices exacerbate undernutrition¹⁰: two-thirds of children under six months of age are not exclusively breastfed, and only 9% of children 6–23 months receive a minimum acceptable diet¹¹. Poor child feeding practices, along with inconsistent iron-folic acid supplementation for pregnant women, the country's high malaria burden, and high prevalence of diarrheal disease and parasitic infections, are also responsible for high anemia prevalence¹². Early childbearing exacerbates these risks. By age 19, 61% of adolescent girls have begun childbearing¹³. This has serious consequences because, compared to older mothers, adolescent girls are more likely to be malnourished and have a low birth weight baby who is more likely to become malnourished and be at increased risk of illness and death, than those born to older mothers¹⁴. There is significant disparity in stunting based on maternal education and wealth levels. Overall, 22.1% of children under five exhibit stunting (low height for age)¹⁵, but only 13% of children whose mothers have secondary education are stunted, while the rate rises to 30% of children whose mothers had no formal education.

Gender and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic, which was officially declared in Mali in March 2020, has resulted in 32,580 contaminations and 740 deaths in Mali¹⁶. COVID-19 further weakens the most vulnerable groups, namely women and girls. In particular, those who sell food in markets, near offices and in schools have seen a drop in their income and have been trapped in their daily activities, in most cases without taking any appropriate measures for their protection. The daily tasks of informal activities of women in urban centres, even in conflict zones, put them at greater risk. The closure of international borders and market restrictions have had significant impacts on informal traders. The households economic situation has been further weakened by the increased expenditure related to the purchase of sanitary kits (masks, bleach, soaps, hand washing buckets etc.).

The configuration of Malian society means that women are in constant contact with other members of the community and are therefore more likely to be contaminated and to transmit the disease to the rest of their family. In times of conflict, the pandemic increases the vulnerability of women, who are deprived of shelter and whose livelihoods are undermined, and who can only suffer from the onset of a pandemic of the magnitude of COVID-19.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, access to basic social services has become problematic, especially health services, GBV services and education services. Access to health services has been the most problematic during the pandemic. Unprepared for the pandemic, like other public sectors, the health sector offers little security to users and health workers. The current quality of health service delivery by health professionals suggests that they are at the same level of psychological preparation as the population. The fear of being infected, the absence of specific protection measures for health workers, to name but a few, mean that users do not see health services as a recourse. Women's work schedules have been increased with the supervision of children who no longer attend school.

A study commissioned by UNFPA highlights the fact that cohabitation could lead to intra-household violence. Inactivity and lack of income have also been identified as factors leading to GBV in Mali. The dominant position of men within the household, due to their financial situation, could be affected and cause stress and anger¹⁷. Also, with the pandemic, women suffer more GBV due to the general social stress combined with the increasing tensions surrounding the family living in unusual proximity, in addition to limited access to food and basic

¹⁰ Mal: Nutrition profile, USAID, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/tagged_Mali-Nutrition-Profile.pdf

¹¹ Institut National de la Statistique (INSTAT), Cellule de Planification et de Statistique Secteur Santé-Développement Social et Promotion de la Famille (CPS/SS-DS-PF) et ICF. 2019. Enquête Démographique et de Santé au Mali 2018. Bamako, Mali et Rockville, MD: INSTAT, CPS/SS-DS-PF et ICF.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Cellule de Planification et de Statistique (CPS/SSDSPF), Institut National de la Statistique (INSTAT/MEFB), INFO-STAT, and ICF International. 2014. Enquête Démographique et de Santé au Mali 2012-2013 : Rapport de synthèse. Rockville, MD: CPS, INSTAT, INFO-STAT, and ICF International

¹⁵ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.STNT.ZS?locations=ML>

¹⁶ <https://covid19.who.int/>

¹⁷ United Nations, UNFPA: A Gender Perspective, Protecting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Promoting Gender Equality, Technical Briefing, March 2020 https://plateforme-elsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/French.COVID-19_A_Gender_Lens_Guidance_Note_edits_clean_file_0.pdf

supplies. The informal social safety nets and networks that many women previously depended on for support are now weakened due to reduced physical mobility and social distance.

Misinformation is more easily accessible than official information. People rely heavily on traditional and miracle healers or medicines and rumours spread faster than official information from authorities that communities do not trust. In addition, programmes sharing information are usually shared at times when women are doing domestic work such as cooking or fetching water. Curfew and restrictive measures further penalise women. In remote areas, they do not have access to either good information or materials to protect themselves against disease. While many people know that there are health provisions in place, they do not have precise and clear information on containment and health regulations. They do not know the care facilities, let alone the care protocol. The telephone and community radio are effective means of communication to reach the most vulnerable women and girls, while email is not available to them.

Access to drinking water has also been problematic during the pandemic, as women and girls have to travel to obtain supplies. This may seem trivial in large cities, where the source of drinking water is available in the family's backyard, but in rural areas, it is necessary to travel several metres, if not kilometres, to obtain drinking water. And these water points represent potential sources of contamination, since masks are not worn at all, and other distancing measures are not respected.

The government of Mali took emergency measures at the beginning of 2020 to support the most vulnerable households, including covering their electricity and water bills for the categories belonging to the so-called social groups (vulnerable poor) and exemption from Value Added Tax (VAT) on electricity and water bills of all consumers from April to June 2020¹⁸. However these were only short-term measures that were not commensurate to the loss of livelihoods and further socio-economic consequences that resulted from the pandemic for the most vulnerable households.

The needs and interests of women and girls (and people with disabilities) are not specifically represented or addressed in the planning and response to the pandemic. In terms of governance, women and girls are not consulted in the planning of interventions or in those related to COVID-19, including economic, health, sanitation and hygiene measures to mitigate the risk of gender-based violence (GBV).

Nevertheless, and according to the United Nations, women are still considered to be a lever in the response to COVID-19. Following the UN Secretary General's call to put women at the heart of the response to COVID-19 worldwide, many countries have developed gender-sensitive strategies. The reason, he said, is that while the COVID-19 pandemic affects men and women equally, its socio-economic and security consequences are far more pronounced for women and girls, calling into question the progress in gender equality achieved in recent decades. And that gender equality and women's rights are essential to get through this pandemic together, to recover faster and to build a better future for all women.

It is within this framework that the **Action Plan for the Prevention and Response to COVID-19 in Mali** has been developed. It sets out a number of important activities for women to help them adapt and become resilient. Among these, it is important to highlight the involvement of women in community dialogue and the creation of **income-generating activities** with the aim of empowering them.¹⁹

Violence against women, the fight against excision

Analysis of the data of the fifth Demographic and Health Survey in Mali shows that the Malian population is very tolerant of violence within the couple. There is still no specific law on violence against women (domestic violence, sexual harassment, forced and/or early marriage, excision). The rationalisation of these acts of violence and the social pressure on the victims explain the widespread impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators. The practice of excision is almost universal in Mali, as it concerns 91% of women aged 15-49. The **National Programme to**

¹⁸ The impact of COVID-19 on the ECOWAS energy sector, ECOWAS Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), July 2020, http://www.ecreee.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ecowas_energy_sector_ecreee_brief_2020.pdf

¹⁹ Policy Brief on the impact of COVID-19 on women, 9 April 2020. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

Combat the Practice of Excision (PNLE) is an important achievement. However, like some neighbouring countries, Mali has not yet legislated on the prohibition of female genital mutilation.

The scale of gender-based violence (GBV) has been exacerbated by the political-institutional and security crises that began in 2012, the persistence of inter-community conflicts, and the abuses of armed groups and violent extremism. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducted in Mali in 2015, female genital mutilation is the most common form of GBV in Mali (83% of women aged 15-49) and 48.8% of girls were married before the age of 18. 4,617 incidents were reported in 2019, 4,411 incidents were recorded from January to September 2020.

These figures only partially reflect the real situation of GBV in the country, given the weakness of the judicial system and impunity. Women have very little access to justice services (4%), unlike men (9%). A draft special law developed and validated in 2017 by a national multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder committee is still in the process of internal adoption at the executive level.

Education

Mali's Human Capital Index, measuring the amount of human capital (educational and health status) a child born today can be expected to accumulate over their first 18 years, is 0.32, which is among the lowest in the world²⁰.

In general, school enrolment and adult literacy rates in Mali are low at the national level, and vary by area, income and gender. There are also significant gaps between the enrolment rates of girls and boys. According to the Human Development Report 2021, only 8.0% of female population aged 25 and older has at least some secondary education, against 15.5% male population²¹. The school enrollment rate at tertiary level was 3% for women and 8% for men in 2015²². Several reasons can help explain the gaps between girls and boys, including: the distance from schools, especially those of the second cycle and the reluctance to send girls away from the family for her studies and early marriages and pregnancies that lead girls to drop out of school early. In 2021, the adolescent birth rate in Mali is at 150.1 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19²³.

One part of the solution to Mali's low human capital will lie with investments into social institutions. Health clinics and schools constitute critical infrastructure in a country where 47% of the population is under the age of 14. Electrification not only enables lighting, cooling, medical equipment, and information technology in these settings for the benefit of students and patients seeking healthcare, but it also plays a role in attracting and retaining professionals who work in these institutions.

Agriculture and land tenure

Mali's economy is dominated by the agricultural sector, which accounts for 42% of its GDP - mainly subsistence farming and herding. About 80% of its population works in the agricultural sector. About 80% of Mali's export revenues are related to gold mining and agriculture (especially cotton), depending on commodity prices set abroad, according to World Bank²⁴. Mil, sorgho, rice and maize are the most important cereals cultivated in Mali.

Women are victims of discrimination in access to land and land management, which is linked more to socio-cultural constraints whereby in most communities, women cannot inherit land. Traditionally, women in most ethnic groups in Mali have only indirect access to land, as they generally only benefit from plots of land acquired through the intermediary of a third party (usually a man: husband, head of the lineage, other relative with the agreement of the husband). This situation thus significantly limits women's contribution to the fight against food insecurity. The proportion of women with access to land was around 20% in 2009. According to the results of the 2014-2015 Agricultural Business Survey, out of a total of 3,216,337 plot owners, only 454,085 (14%) are owned by women compared to 86% by men. The male plot owners have an average of 1.7 ha against 0.6 ha for

²⁰ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital#Data>

²¹ <https://hdr.undp.org/>

²² <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR.FE?locations=ML>

²³ <https://hdr.undp.org/>

²⁴ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/631411559671220398/pdf/Mali-Growth-and-Diversification.pdf>

women. **Even though the land code sets equal access conditions for men and women to own land, in reality, customary law - which gives great privileges to men over women -, is applied²⁵.**

Through the Agricultural Land Law in 2017 (Loi Foncière Agricole -LFA, N°2017-001 of 11 April 2017), the government also created Land Commissions (CoFos) set up at the level of all communes. Village CoFos are not set up but village chiefs are members of communal CoFos. While this is an improvement to the previous situation, the communal CoFos are not yet functioning satisfactorily, because they are not yet well known at the village level (need for information and awareness-raising), and at the communal level because they do not take charge of their functioning. Women are so far poorly represented in these CoFos.

In the agricultural sector, women are present throughout the agricultural chain, but they do not have the means to increase their production and productivity (lack of access, control and ownership of land and means of production, etc.). They are usually involved in small-scale livestock, farming and fish processing activities (drying, smoking, product maintenance). Their role as a full-fledged producer is not always valued or accounted for. An important value chain for rural women in Mali is shea, also known as “women’s gold”. Stakeholders involved in this value chain, most of whom are women, are now organised in cooperatives and federations to improve the organisation of processing and marketing of shea products. According to estimates, income from the sale of shea butter represents up to 90% of the cash income of women in some production areas. The shea value chain has a relatively high rural growth multiplier effect as it is often sold for cash in weekly markets to earn money to buy ingredients for sauces served with meal cereals, medicines, school supplies (including school fees)²⁶.

The gender analysis reveals that women have specific and relevant knowledge, skills and experiences as natural resource users and producers.

- **As users**, they have knowledge, skills and experience in the areas of plant production and reforestation. They also have knowledge in sensitising communities, women and young people on the issues and problems of natural resource management, as leaders and members of monitoring committees, they ensure the rational management of natural resources.
- **As producers**, they have a key role in the valorisation, processing and marketing of harvested products.

Energy

It remains a challenge to find quality and recent data on gender and energy in Mali. The paucity of data forces the project preparation team to rely primarily on anecdotal information and will require yet more gender and energy fact-finding and data collection during the implementation phase. On the other hand, it signifies that any gender-specific or sex-disaggregated data collected by project as part of its monitoring and evaluation process may have outsize value, even for other practitioners in the sector.

A recent gender assessment conducted for a rural electrification project²⁷ highlights that in a traditional setting, women’s daily agenda contains activities as varied as they are painful (pounding cereal grains, looking for firewood with rudimentary technologies). Added to this is the family expenses they face, such as the cost of renting the cart to collect wood. It is to these multiple problems of women that the national energy policy and the national gender policy want to tackle, so that equal access to energy is a solution to create opportunities for women's entrepreneurship in rural areas. To date, one of the remarkable responses has been the concept of Units for the Transformation and Marketing of Local Products with use of Energy-Efficient Equipment operating with renewable energy sources. This low access to energy (mainly for women) is a national challenge and particularly for improving the quality of women life (lightening household work and increasing income). Other challenges are the reduction of the rate of biomass use in the energy balance; the increase of the rural and urban electrification rate; the increase of the quota of renewable energy in the production of electric power; the improvement of women's access to modern energy services and technologies or equipment including

²⁵ Profil national genre des secteurs de l’agriculture et du développement rural, Mali, FAO, 2018, <https://www.fao.org/3/i8706fr/i8706FR.pdf>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Gender Assessment, FP102 : Mali solar rural electrification project, Mali, BOAD, B22.07, Green Climate Fund, may 2019, <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gender-assessment-fp102-boad-mali.pdf>.

professional training for a best use of that equipment; and the systematization of gender mainstreaming in all energy programs and projects²⁸.

Through its gender action plan further described in this document, the AMP Mali project intends to address many of these challenges, in particular by mainstreaming gender in its activities related to the enhancement of agro-sylvo-pastoral value chains in the Great Green Wall areas of Mali.

International, regional and national conventions, policies and strategies

Key gender considerations in the overall policy and regulatory framework

The **Malian Constitution** clearly states the principle of equality and non-discrimination. In its Article 2, it states that “*All Malians are born and remain free and equal in rights and duties. Discrimination based on social origin, colour, language, race, sex, religion and political opinion is prohibited*”. In addition, Mali has ratified several regional and international conventions and treaties relating to the protection and promotion of women's rights, such as the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1985) and its additional protocol (2000)**, as well as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the “**Maputo Protocol**”.

In 2011, with the support of the United Nations system, Mali adopted a **National Gender Policy** which includes an important component to improve women's access to appropriate technologies that are less costly and use less energy use. This national policy sets the country's vision and strategic directions in terms of priorities and strategic directions for strengthening gender equality and equity. At the sectoral level, a **national strategy to combat gender-based violence (GBV)** was developed in 2018. In addition, **Law N°2015-052 was adopted in 2015** to promote gender equality in elective and nominative public positions. This law increased the percentage of women in nominative positions from 10.4% in 2014 to 15.73% in 2017²⁹. However, the minimum representation of 30% provided for by this law has not yet been reached. According to the Human Development Report 2021, the share of seats in parliament by women is only 27.3%³⁰.

On 25 September 2015, States including Mali adopted a new international development agenda, including a set of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. This agenda includes Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and Goal 2 to eradicate hunger, ensure food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Concrete actions have been identified as critical conditions for achieving the SDGs, including (i) undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control of land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources in accordance with domestic law (ii) strengthen the use of key technologies, in particular information and communications technology, to promote women's empowerment; (iii) adopt and strengthen appropriate policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Around the same period, Mali adopted a reference framework for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the various programmes, policies and strategies that the country has developed in recent times at both national and sectoral levels. The first generation of the **Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development (CREDD)** covered the period 2016-2018 while the second generation covers the period 2019 - 2023. It aims to make it possible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, building on the potential and resilience to promote inclusive development to reduce poverty and inequality in a peaceful and united Mali. The new Government Action Programme for the transition period was adopted on Monday 2 July 2021. All public policies will have to integrate gender, employment and climate change in the development and monitoring-evaluation of public policies. The most relevant objectives of the CREDD for this project are the following:

- Axis 3 of the CREDD, in relation to SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, which aims at inclusive economic growth. This is challenged in Mali as (i) there is poor access of women to information, financial services, productive

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Note Stratégique ONU Femmes 2020 – 2024.

³⁰ <https://hdr.undp.org/>

resources or factors of production; (ii) women do not have access to banking services; (iii) women are confined to informal and precarious sectors with unpaid working conditions and burden of domestic work;

- Axis 4 of the CREDD, in connection with SDGs 12, 13 and 14, which aims at the protection of the environment. To achieve this in Mali, it is necessary to remedy the following: (i) women's poor access to productive resources or factors of production and climate change, to sources of information on climate change; (ii) women's limited knowledge of the sustainable management and rational use of natural resources.
- Axis 5 of the CREDD, in connection with SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, which aims at capital development. The challenges noted at this level are: (i) Women are victims of gender-based violence and harmful practices (child marriage, gender-based violence, FGM, levirate, sororate); (ii) The existence of socio-cultural constraints on women's rights; (iii) The socialisation process which relegates women to domestic tasks and the household economy; (iv) The legislative and political framework is inadequate for the protection of women's and girls' rights.

In most of the policies developed over the last ten years, the principles of equity and/or equality are announced. In strategies and/or programmes, gender is specifically or indirectly mainstreamed through the targeting of women, youth or mixed, marginalised and vulnerable groups. We can mention here also in particular specific strategies and policies for taking gender into account in certain sectoral areas, notably the Social Orientation Law, the Labour Code, the measures taken for caesarean sections and AIDS, the vigorous women's literacy programme and the girls' schooling policy.

Nevertheless, these development policies and reforms are characterised by weak gender mainstreaming in planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation processes, largely due to insufficient capacity of actors to take gender into account, insufficient gender-sensitive and disaggregated data, and weak coordination and monitoring-evaluation mechanisms. All of these deficits affect the level of funding for gender equity and equality needs and the impact of development interventions on the target groups of women and men. Overall, there is a poor harmonisation of national legislation with international instruments, certain legal gaps in positive law (violence against women), and discrimination against women. Moreover, customary law, which is often unfavourable to women, is applied to the detriment of the law, especially in rural areas, particularly with regard to succession to rural land.

The Support Fund for Women's Empowerment and Child Development (FAFE) is a fund initiated by UN Women as part of the implementation of the national gender policy in support of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family. It targets the financing of actions for the development of women's entrepreneurship in Mali. This programme aims to improve the profitability of women's economic activities through capacity building, setting up processing units and facilitating access to credit and financing. The main targets are rural women and women engaged in informal cross-border trade. It should be noted that the FAFE has a strategy and an action plan. In the scope of this project and in particular the support to agro-sylvo-pastoral value chains in the Great Green Wall (GGW) areas, the project could draw on the FAFE's experience in financing and supporting women's market gardening activities through capacity building (support in terms of farming equipment and inputs).

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is now integrated into Mali's budgetary planning system, which allows for the consideration of gender-specific concerns in different development sectors in order to create opportunities in the fight against women's poverty. In 2011, Mali adopted its **National Strategy for Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (PBSG)** which is part of the implementation of strategic orientation N°6 of the National Gender Policy relating to good governance in public policies and reforms in the context of decentralisation and deconcentration. This strategy focuses on three areas of intervention: (i) taking into account the PBSG approach in budgetary processes at the national level (ii) taking into account women's priorities in budgetary allocations at the sectoral and local levels (iii) setting up a mechanism for regular monitoring of the implementation of the PBSG. Funding for the PBSG process is provided by UN Women and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The contribution of UN Women is US\$ 500,000 per year, but the contribution of the Ministry is not known. It is also worth noting at this level that the Ministry of Economy and Finance produces a gender report every year with the support of UN Women. Without specifying the amount allocated to the promotion of gender equality, this report nevertheless gives an overview of all the activities carried out by the ministries involved in the implementation of the national gender policy. Finally, it should be noted that the PBSG strategy and related

tools are currently being revised in order to boost PBSG Mali. The stakeholder ministries (Agriculture, Livestock, Environment) of the project are part of the PBSG process and have gender focal points in charge of gender issues, which make these ministries gender sensitive ministries.

Gender considerations in the energy policy and regulatory framework

Mali is a Member State of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), which has developed the **ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access**. This provides specific guidance on gender mainstreaming in the energy sector in West Africa. In addition, it has set up the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), which is actively supporting gender mainstreaming in energy access, with the aim of achieving sustainable energy for all in West Africa.

In 2017, ECOWAS was also the first regional organization globally to issue a **Directive on Gender Assessments in Energy Projects**. The Directive provides a framework for Member States to ensure that women and marginalised groups in project-affected communities are adequately protected from adverse impacts of energy projects. In Mali, this directive was translated in a **proposed Decree on Gender Assessments in Energy Projects** in 2020 which has been endorsed but is yet to be effectively implemented. Among others, the objectives of this decree is to intensify the integration of gender assessments at all levels of the value chain of energy projects, ensure that specific interests of women and men involved in energy projects are taken into account, and ensure that potential negative and discriminatory impacts of energy projects on women and men are avoided or mitigated to the extent possible.

In 2020, the government of Mali also endorsed a **proposed National Action Plan on the Implementation of the Regional Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access**, which aims at more concretely applying the principles laid out in the 2011 Gender National Policy in the energy sector, in alignment with the abovementioned ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access.

Gender Roles

Decision-making

In Mali, social norms and the sexual division of labour largely exclude women from public decision-making and conflict resolution. The representation³¹ of women in all the institutions showed a timid increase of 0.6 points between 2014 and 2015. This improvement depends on institutions such as: the Prime Minister's Office (13.3% against 14%), the National Assembly (13.5% against 13.9%), the one dissolved by the President at the time of his resignation, had 41 women out of a total of 147 deputies, i.e. 27.89%; the Supreme Court (29.1% against 30.2%), the High Council of Territorial Collectivities (7.3% against 9.1%), and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (15.3% against 18.2%). The National Transition Council has 28% women, and the last government from Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta had 23.68% women. The first government of the transition had only 4 women out of 25 members, i.e. 16%. The current government has 6 women out of 28, i.e. a percentage of 21.42%. The causes of this low representation of women in decision-making bodies are: (i) political will, (ii) negative social perception of women politicians, (iii) the low political maturity of women, their low level of education and literacy, (iv) the exclusion of women from decision-making bodies and structures that grant economic resources or for development at all levels.

Regarding decision making, according to the 2018 Demographic and Health Survey in Mali, less than one third of women (28%) participate in the decision for visits to their family or relatives, 20% participate in the decision for major household purchases and 20% for their own health care. Only 10% participate in all three decision categories and 63% declared not to participate in any of the three decision categories mentioned above.

The 2.36% representation rate³² of women in conflict management bodies (such as the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, the Office of the Commissioner for Security Sector Reform, special advisors to the Governors, interim authorities, etc.) is another demonstration of this situation.

³¹ Report on the Representation of Women in Senior Positions in the Public Administration, 2015.

³² Data, Bulletin Statistique, La Femme et l'Enfant en chiffres au Mali, CNDIFE, 2018, updated.

According to the results of regional and national consultations, it should be noted that although older women are highly regarded, their role is generally limited to mediating family disputes, transmitting social values and raising children. With the agreement of the men, women can temporarily exploit small plots of land. Among pastoralists, women have the right to use the income from the sale of milk. In both cases, they have little voice in governance and conflict management. Recent consultations in the region of Mopti (a region included in the GGW areas of Mali) show for instance that even when women participate in the exploitation and development of the areas (market gardening and reforestation), they cannot own them, even though they have a great deal of knowledge about natural resources, the impacts of socio-climatic changes and ideas to put forward for better management. **In this same region, women represent only 2.08% of regional officials (Directors, Prefects, Mayors, etc.),** which shows the little influence women can have in such constituencies in Mali.

We have also seen a recent evolution of the gender relations due to the increasing insecurity in many regions of Mali, in particular an accentuation of the dependence of women on the men in their families to protect them from violence. This situation may lead some women to encourage young men to join armed groups, for protection against other armed groups, whom they may not trust. Where male family members are absent due to conflict or migration, women have to provide for their families. Many have become heads of households and income earners, particularly by developing economic activities. They have demonstrated their resilience by finding endogenous solutions to meet their needs. On the other hand, this real reproductive role and the contribution of women to economic production and family management remain unknown and underestimated by the community, which accentuates their marginalisation and exclusion from the prevention and management of conflicts.

Gender division of labour

There is a strong discrepancy between labour force participation of women (57.7%) and men (79.7%) aged 15 and older in Mali³³. The domestic production process is based on the rules of land sharing, the division of tasks and the division of work time of each member according to age and gender. In terms of the social division of labour, both men and women carry out agricultural work, but domestic tasks remain the prerogative of women.

The social or sexual division of labour also obliges them to take care of housework, the education and health of the children, the daily chore of supplying drinking water and firewood, the farmyard and small livestock, the sale of foodstuffs and other basic necessities, etc.

The entire labour force and resources of the extended family are mobilised for the cultivation of the common or family field. From the point of view of the organisation of work in many rural areas in Mali, a large part of the week (generally five or six days, Christians do not go to the field on Sundays and Muslims on Fridays) is reserved for work on the collective field. The rest of the time is reserved for rest and work in the individual fields, especially for the women on the plots of land that the male heads of the family have granted them. The products of the family fields are used to feed the family, to pay the first marriage expenses of each man, to buy collective equipment and to solve other collective problems. This agricultural economy, which is not very mechanised, requires many hands. The work of women and children is therefore very important.

The roles and responsibilities of men and women are specific to each culture and time. They may also vary from one community to another. The gender analysis shows that in many cases, both women and men, as well as girls and boys, may engage in activities related to one or the other category (reproductive and community), but their responsibilities are mostly different. The division of work is often based on traditions and customs but some commonalities can be observed. The paragraphs below illustrate a typical distribution of labor in rural areas targeted by the project.

Regarding land, women and men, girls and boys do the sowing; after the fields are prepared, men and young men are responsible for weeding. At harvest time, everyone participates but at different levels. The men and young men cut the millet, rice and sorghum with knives, the women and young girls, young men and boys pack and sack. The transport home with the help of carts is done by women and girls, sometimes helped by men and

³³ <https://hdr.undp.org>

boys. They do this for the families. The modernisation of agriculture (the use of multi-cultivators, herbicides etc.) has reduced the involvement of women in the common fields. When analysing agricultural production in some areas of Central Mali for instance, we see that women are much more involved in the production of groundnuts, cowpeas, millet and rice, while men are involved in rice (especially in the flood zone), millet and sorghum. Pottery is an activity exclusively carried out by women and where they use the land resource.

Regarding pasture / livestock, in the traditional environment, livestock rearing is mainly extensive. The men raise cattle for the needs of their families. They also fatten cattle for the Ramadan celebrations, either individually or as a family cooperative, in stalls or on pasture. The men market the live animals locally, to individuals and to wholesalers, sometimes from outside. As for the women, they raise small ruminants (traditional, artisanal breeding) but increasingly improved in families or in the bush (fattening) and poultry for themselves. The by-products of this breeding belong to them, but they inform their husbands before using them, and the same applies to organic manure. They are also much more involved in gathering at this level. Traditionally, livestock parks are the property of the whole family, and roles are shared between men and women. Generally, the man is responsible for grazing, for transhumance. The woman is responsible for the whole process of milking and its management. The young boys raise the pigeons for themselves. The young boys act as shepherds for their families or for other families in return for wages in kind or in cash. Veterinary care is the responsibility of the men.

Regarding water points/reservoirs/fishing, women use water points and reservoirs for washing, men and women, especially young girls, fish. The men do fish farming in the developed areas. Some women also do fish farming in their families, often with the support of development projects. Women and girls are involved in processing and marketing the fish.

Regarding market gardening, everyone (women and girls, men and boys) can have a plot. They participate in all stages, from the preparation of the plots to the harvest, including sowing and maintaining the beds. It is worth noting that women outnumber men, and that young girls and boys in particular help their mothers at the market gardening sites. Marketing is done by the women with the help of their daughters. Given the illiteracy level of the women, the men present often play the role of administrative secretaries (keeping administrative documents). Generally, the women are supported by certain development partners such as the WFP, the FAO and UN Women in various ways, such as the development of sites, the installation of drainage and solar systems, small-scale farming materials and equipment such as wheelbarrows, picks, watering cans and shovels, inputs (improved seeds) and capacity-building/training in farming techniques.

Regarding forests, the search for firewood is carried out by women for family consumption all year round on the eve of the winter season, through the search for and storage of wood for the entire rainy season. Surplus wood can be sold to individuals to meet their own needs and those of their families. This wood is sold either at the family level or at wood markets. The women also seek out the products of the harvest (shea, *néré*, etc.) for sale in raw or processed form. The men and young boys also look for wood, but for wholesale, transport is by tricycle or cart. The hunters hunt for themselves and sometimes for sale in the dry season.

Legal Rights and Status

Perception of women and men treatment in customary and formal legal codes and judicial systems

Based on consultations, a differentiation is perceived in terms of how men and women are viewed and treated by customary and formal legal codes, as well as by judicial systems. In the formal legal codes men and women are treated in the same way, no distinction is made, contrary to customary codes which treat men and women differently. As for the expiation of wrongs and legal representation, it is the legal provisions that prevail, no distinction is made between men and women. Nevertheless, we can often see discrimination against women, for example if a woman asks for a divorce, if the judge or magistrate is a man, he tends to incriminate the woman without trying to understand the reasons that led the woman to ask for a divorce³⁴. In this respect, it is also

³⁴ Ministry of Justice framework.

worth noting that formal legal codes straddle religious codes, so that when the woman is a Muslim, for example, it is Islamic law that prevails.

Assessment of state-issued documents

According to the texts in force, the conditions for obtaining identity cards are identical for men and women. But the reality is quite different for women. In rural areas, in most cases, birth certificates that are to be used to issue identity cards are held by men, and it is a very difficult process for women to obtain them. Men equate women's need for a card with women fleeing or leaving the marital home. In some cases, women do not have the necessary resources to obtain identity documents, often it is the procedures for obtaining cards that they do not know.

Women also encounter difficulties in registering on electoral lists due to illiteracy among women, socio-cultural constraints, refusal by husbands, etc.

In rural areas, women have difficulty accessing property titles. The main reasons are lack of financial means and customary management of property. For example, according to a household survey conducted by the Mopti Planning Department, **only 9.7% of 100 farm managers are women.**

Conflict prevention and management mechanisms

Regarding women's involvement in conflict resolution, conflict resolution and prevention issues in Mali remain under the almost exclusive management of men in the communities and therefore highly discriminatory for women beyond any religious and cultural consideration, although they have a proven potential and capacity for conflict resolution and prevention and more generally for peacebuilding. As of 2012, women represent less than 10% of peace negotiators, and this figure has not changed much since the adoption of resolution 1325 in 2000. In addition to challenging local leaders, the exclusion and discrimination of women and the lack of awareness of their roles in revitalising conflict management mechanisms exacerbates women's vulnerability. Women have however proven skills in social mediation due to their strong roles in family and community units on social cohesion and conflict management. Past experience, particularly with peace huts in Mali, has shown that if women are mobilised and involved, this can have a positive impact on the prevention and resolution of conflicts at the community level, especially as they themselves can play an active role in triggering these conflicts.

Gender-specific access to and control over resources

Land, grazing and forests

Men and women, girls and young people access and use all resources but with the agreement and/or permission of the heads of household. Also and especially women through their groups can easily have plots of land for their market gardening activities and this with the contribution of elected officials, village chiefs/customary chiefs/councillors and land chiefs.

Control over land is often subject to certain social constraints. It is the responsibility of the heads of families, chiefs or landowners or holding families. Women have only indirect access to land. They generally benefit from plots of land acquired through a third party (usually a man: husband, head of the lineage, other relative with the agreement of the spouse, etc.) for their production, but have no control over the resource. Discrimination against women in terms of land management is linked more to socio-cultural constraints which mean that in most communities, women cannot inherit land. They generally only have precarious access to land that is often marginal.

Regarding grazing, in the flood zone, the management of the *bourgoutières* (vegetation formation forming floating pastures in flood plains and coveted by herders, farmers and fishermen) is the responsibility of the *djoros* who decide/determine the order in which the animals pass for grazing. Note that their animals are the first to pass for grazing. The sale of household animals is generally the responsibility of the men. For the sale of their own livestock, women consult their husbands first. For marketing or selling, women entrust their animals

to the men of the family, this is because women do not frequent livestock markets as animal sellers. It should be noted that the emergence of armed groups has led to the emergence of new actors who have replaced the Djoros, thereby reducing their level of control over bourgoutières resources. These new actors are the armed groups who increasingly manage the bourgoutières by saying that they belong to God, allocate them to whomever they want and collect almsgiving on their exploitation.

Control of the forests is in the hands of the management committees, village chiefs/councillors and landowners in the flooded zone. As for the women, they control the products of gathering such as gum arabic, néré, acacia albida pods whose sale is very profitable and their income, with the advice of the men or after having consulted them. But the production of these pods is still usually insufficient to build a value chain. In agropastoral circles, the exploitation of natural resources is generally considered abusive by some and even anarchic by others. These resources are partly exploited by the community (management committees and heads of families) for production purposes in agriculture, livestock, handicrafts, traditional medicine and play a particularly important role in meeting their daily food, energy and medical needs, and more specifically by the women and young people who supply the families with firewood and other forest products. Thanks to the by-products of the forest, based on herbs and leaves, women also carry out income-generating activities.

Water

Women have typically the responsibility to fetch water for the household which, in addition to the time and physical effort it represents, also presents security risks in many areas of Mali where water access points can be located relatively far away from the home. In certain regions in Mali (mostly Northern part), women have experienced increased labor burdens from drought in the past years, traveling further to access water for their families and livestock. Rural girls spend 0.6 hours per day fetching water and 0.2 hours fetching wood (compared to 0.1 hours for each activity for boys)³⁵. This unequal distribution of domestic tasks does not give girls and boys the same opportunities to have a normal schooling. In addition, there is little involvement of women in the main decisions regarding the process of setting up, managing and maintaining water points, even though they are the main users of these facilities and therefore the first victims in case of breakdown. This is an important issue, the resolution of which would help to improve women's access to and control of water points.

Lack of access to water also typically leads to limited sanitation services, which impacts women more than men in the households and at schools. According to UNICEF, only about one-half of schools have an improved water point, and less than 20% of schools have functional, separate toilets for boys and girls. In addition, more than one million people in Mali still practice open defecation, which has a direct impact on the health, dignity and the safety of communities. While 80% of Mali's population now has access to improved sources of drinking water, this number drops significantly in rural areas, where it is only 70%. Displacement in conflict-affected areas of Mali has further limited the access of families on the move to clean water and sanitation³⁶.

Energy

Wood remains the main source of energy in rural areas, and the strong use of firewood and charcoal as domestic fuel has significant negative impacts, such as deforestation of about 400,000 ha per year, the emission of greenhouse gases (15.45 MT of carbon dioxide), the dependence on biomass and the increase in the workload of rural women because the collection of firewood is getting farther away from homes. The extensive traditional use of biomass for cooking also has a negative impact on the health of households (in particular women and children) due to indoor air pollution³⁷.

Women have lower access to energy than men in Mali. Despite the fact that women have more energy access needs because of the type of their activities, the weak level of access to efficient energy equipment reduces men and women potential and makes women more vulnerable socially and economically. Rural women generally have not enough information on opportunities related to energy to modernize their income-generating

³⁵ Profil national genre des secteurs de l'agriculture et du développement rural, Mali, FAO, 2018, <https://www.fao.org/3/i8706fr/i8706FR.pdf>

³⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/mali/en/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

³⁷ Gender Assessment, FP102 : Mali solar rural electrification project, Mali, BOAD, B22.07, Green Climate Fund, may 2019, <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gender-assessment-fp102-boad-mali.pdf>.

activities, nor the resources and training to use for instance solar energy equipment such as motor pumps for gardening, dryers for agro sylvo pastoral products transformation, solar fridge, slicer, grinder, etc. that could significantly facilitate some of their domestic and income generating activities. Past projects have shown repeatedly that providing access to energy services to women can allow them to significantly develop their business opportunities, bringing significant positive socio-economic impacts³⁸.

Income, benefits and finance

In terms of access to and control of benefits, the analysis reveals that only men have full access to benefits and income and decide who can access them. As far as women's own income is concerned (market gardening, fattening, processing of harvested products), they control it, but they have to inform their husbands beforehand. The use of resources is decided by the heads of household.

In rural Mali, men and women do not have the same financial opportunities. The rural women are less likely to have access to financing for activities they would like to initiate through the traditional financial system: less than 5% have access to campaign loans³⁹. The credits granted in the agricultural sector are generally loans in cash or in kind (agricultural equipment, plowing oxen, bicycles, mopeds, inputs, insecticides, herbicides, etc.). It is important to note that agricultural credits are repayable with cotton or rice money and this is not to the advantage of women. Agricultural credit services usually do not deal directly with women because they do not have a guaranteed source of income. In most cases, it is the men (husbands) who are the endorsers for the women. Nevertheless, women who form a group and work a collective plot of cash crop land can benefit from credit.

At the national level, men have more access to credit than women. Women with low incomes take out small loans because they are not only afraid of debt but also of the burden of collection services⁴⁰. Microcredit development programs have loosened previous restrictions associated with low incomes and the fact that women could not provide collateral. The Malian women now have access to hundreds of associations offering mutual credit, independent village savings management mechanisms and short-term loans. Women account for almost half of the beneficiaries of these credit institutions. Despite this progress, women still have less access to credit and find it harder to obtain individual loans despite their reputation for repaying them faithfully.

Information, services and technologies related to natural resource management

In the villages, it is usually the village chief who is the first to be informed, then he informs the heads of the families who in turn inform their family members, including the women. Information is also shared through town criers, family heads and djoros. Men are also informed through village meetings, through national and local radio, during awareness-raising missions, and through cooperatives. The missions of the technical services (water and forests, livestock), talks in the grins, and 'word of mouth' are also a source of information for the men. It should be noted that some women obtain information through radio and meetings. In the field of livestock, the head of the family is informed by the shepherd in case of disease and by the veterinary service for vaccination.

With regard to **access to technologies and services**, the beneficiaries identified are first of all the rural populations concerned (men, women, young girls and boys) by the different types of intervention, i.e. villagers, women, young people, farm managers, wood and charcoal transporters, craftsmen and blacksmiths, and all producers in general. This access helps men and women to improve farming methods and techniques, increase productivity and income, improve living standards and raise the social and educational standards of rural life. Despite the equity efforts of support partners (national and international NGOs), women have little access to technologies and services. The constraints to this access are: (i) land tenure issues; (ii) modes of access to land that do not encourage women farmers to invest; (iii) women's illiteracy, which limits their possibility of accessing technologies and services; (iv) customs and practices that make them dependent on the men in the families.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Profil national genre des secteurs de l'agriculture et du développement rural, Mali, FAO, 2018, <https://www.fao.org/3/i8706fr/i8706FR.pdf>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Concerning time availability, the analysis shows that women invest more time than men in daily activities, regardless of the season. Thus, men are more available than women. Actions in favour of women must take this aspect into account and provide for actions to lighten women's tasks and raise men's awareness so that they can take on certain activities for women.

Gender Action Plan

Approach and Methodology

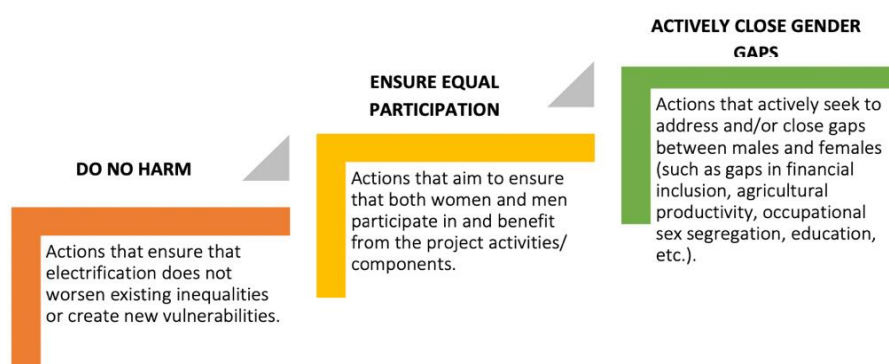
The gender analysis above provides a holistic understanding of how relationships between men and women, as well as youth and persons with disabilities, affect their ability to participate in and benefit from the opportunities and impacts offered by the AMP Mali project.

Based on the gender analysis above, the project's theory of change and its results framework, concrete tailored measures to mitigate identified challenges are drawn and reflected in a gender action plan with targeted indicators. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) will be monitored and adapted if needed via corrective measures during project implementation. The GAP is key for the project management unit to ensure that gender outputs and activities are well-integrated in the annual workplan and budget.

Various aspects need to be considered to ensure the successful integration of the gender aspect throughout the project, combined with the Social and Environmental aspect (see the SESP and ESMF as annexes to the project document) and its effective impacts:

- **Sex-disaggregated data:** Collect sex-disaggregated data as a baseline and monitoring purposes during project implementation with the support of the implementing partner and responsible parties of the project;
- **Gender mainstreaming:** Ensure that gender aspects are well-integrated in the entire project document, including the results framework and the budget;
- **Stakeholder mapping:** Map all relevant partners, counterparts and stakeholders, collaborate with them, and involve gender focal points, women and youth associations in the project (as a continuity of the PPG phase);
- **Action plan:** Develop an action plan specific to gender with specific indicators, targets, baseline, budget, timeline and responsibility.

Three levels of gender actions are considered in the project⁴¹:



In addition to the activities to be considered, gender-sensitive indicators are incorporated in the project's Results Framework including:

- Quantitative indicators: that can be counted (in absolute and relative terms);

⁴¹ ESMAP (2017), Minigrids & Gender Equality: Inclusive Design, Better Development Outcomes – Key Issues, and Potential Actions

- Qualitative indicators: that are evaluated based on experiences, perceptions, opinions, attitudes of the different gender and are collected thanks mainly to participatory approaches such as focus groups, social mapping tools, etc.

A preliminary list of indicators can be found in the results framework included in the project document. Changes might occur at project inception phase and during implementation.

Recommendations

Empowering and supporting women is a key channel through which to raise the human capital stock (health and educational status) of the youngest generation, which is a critical development challenge for Mali where 47% of the population is under the age of 14. Studies from other settings reveal that women divert much higher percentages of their earnings towards investments in the well-being of their children as compared to men. Thus, a rural mini-grid program in Mali can consider ways of helping women invest in their children through first investing in themselves and their own productivity,⁴² in parallel with investments in community infrastructure and social institutions.

The relationships between intrahousehold dynamics (e.g., fertility rates and dependency ratios, gender norms governing time use and bargaining power), reproductive work, and economic productivity, can be further explored through this project. A workable business model for improved water or cooking fuel provisioning, for example, is hard to achieve so long as the shadow price of those goods is unaccounted for and household members can be compelled to supply “free” labor to fetch them. Alternatively, it may be impossible for women to devote enough time to succeed with productive uses of electricity until they can first free up their time from domestic chores, either by receiving more help from other family members or by adopting new appliances. Both these examples demonstrate that gender equality, in particular valuing women’s time and labor, can function as a key for unlocking the economic potential of electricity sector investments; thus the project can tackle gender equality from the outset rather than assume it will be a natural byproduct of providing energy access.

Component 1

For Component 1 (Policy and Regulation), efforts will be made to meaningfully include women in the national dialogue (for participation and decision-making) and training activities, especially practical, hands-on learning activities. Work on regulations and tariffs will be informed by and grounded in realities faced by women, such as widowhood, divorce, or living in polygynous arrangements. To the extent possible, gender-relevant data layers will be added to complement existing pre-feasibility studies of minigrid sites to inform design choices and appropriate levels of program support/concessionality.

Components 2 and 3

In the rural settings where the Mali minigrid program will be implemented, women and girls are central to three key electricity service delivery opportunities that can reduce gender gaps, increase human capital, and provide foundations for economic growth: Water, agriculture, and social institutions.

These three spheres of opportunity—water, agriculture, social institutions—will be included as gender focus areas of Component 2 (Business Model Innovation with Private Sector) and Component 3 (Scaled-up Financing), especially as it relates to demand-side solutions. Cost-reduction levers (and benefit maximization ones) are critical to these areas, and perhaps more so for women because women have less disposable income, access to finance, and decision-making power. One such lever could be a group-based and/or collaboration consumption model, with which there is already some experience in the country.

Component 4

⁴² If returns to women’s productivity and girls’ human capital accumulation are high enough, this could theoretically influence age at first marriage and lifetime fertility.

Component 4 (Digital and knowledge management) can seek innovative ways to capture data beyond the meter. This includes understanding users (not just customers) and their behaviors and needs. Possibilities include low-cost phone-based surveys (e.g., via interactive voice recordings or SMS) or the use of female community liaisons to collect information on users, appliances, payment responsibilities, and more. Gender mainstreaming is among the topics where insights can be shared to/from the regional AMP.

Component 5

Component 5 (Monitoring and Evaluation) will be an important part of gender mainstreaming. The results framework in the project document includes sex-disaggregated indicators as well as specific indicators related to the gender action plan. Gender considerations will also be central to the mid-term and terminal evaluations, in alignment with **UNDP's Guidance for conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects**.