

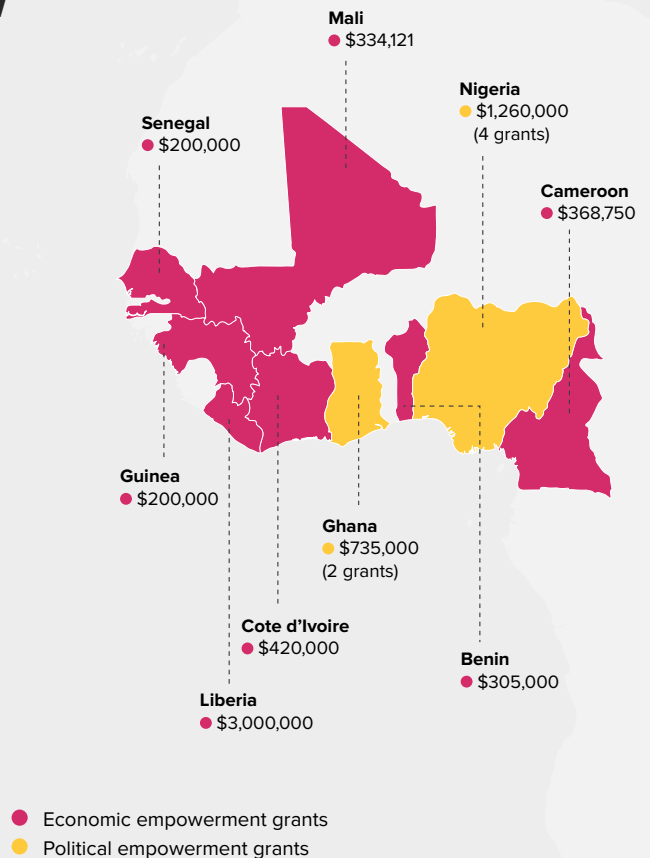
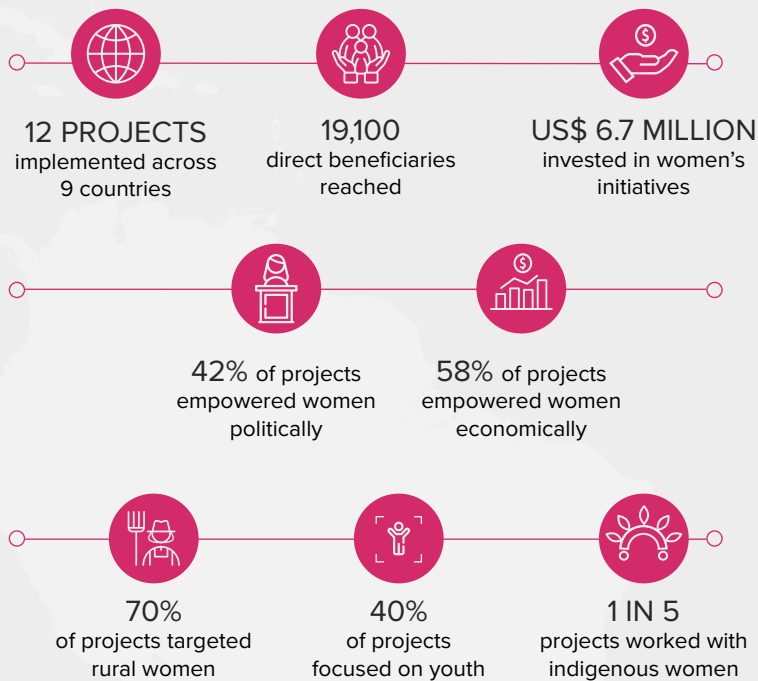
# WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA



Members of a women's cooperative in the Tristao Islands supported by grantee Partenariat Recherche Environnement Media, Guinea.  
UN Women / Joe Saade and Ginwa Daher

## 2009-2019 PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

Ten Years of Reaching the Furthest Behind



The **Fund for Gender Equality (FGE)** is UN Women's global grantmaking programme dedicated to supporting **women-led civil society organizations** to accelerate **women's economic and political empowerment**. The FGE **benefits women who are furthest behind** by funding organizations best equipped to reach them. In West and Central Africa, the Fund has worked with rural women in remote settings, youth, socio-economically vulnerable women and survivors of gender-based violence, among others.

# FROM MARGINALIZED GROUPS TO AGENTS OF CHANGE

Below are some snapshots of FGE-supported initiatives in the region:

The “Initiative for Empowering Women Farmers in **Benin**, FGE partner in ‘Miguézé!’”, led by the Association Nationale des Femmes Agricultrices du Bénin, established women’s savings and loans groups, and encouraged income-generating activities to boost food productivity and security. Over 5,200 people, mostly rural women, accessed land and gained agricultural skills, and developed self-confidence as entrepreneurs.

In **Côte d’Ivoire**, the Organisation Nationale pour l’Enfant, la Femme et la Famille campaigned for equal inheritance rights for women in the departments of Danane, Zouan-Hounien and Toulepleu. Positive male role models, such as community leaders known for personal practices upholding gender equality, were recruited to influence attitudes and behaviours. Acceptance of women’s inheritance rights rose from 28 per cent to 79 per cent. At least 145 women finally gained entitlements to land from deceased parents or husbands.

In **Guinea’s** Tristao Islands, Partenariat Recherche Environnement Média (PREM) fostered eco-friendly economic opportunities for women by helping them produce highly resilient moringa plants and adopt solar energy. Over 500 women created and maintained moringa plantations, and learned how to preserve and sell agricultural and sea products. With a growing number of women entrepreneurs, four women’s cooperatives were formed. They continue to support sustainable livelihoods, and have become the first organizations from the Tristao Islands to receive official recognition.

Almost 750 rural women entrepreneurs in **Mali’s** Sikasso and Segou regions increased their incomes thanks to a multifunctional resource centre established by the Association d’Entraide et de Développement. Women learned agro-food processing techniques and strategies to access new markets. New revenue allowed 360 women with disabilities and women heads of household to become financially independent. A cohort of 50 women leaders now participates in community debates, successfully advocating for women’s property rights.

**UNIQUE MODEL IN THE UNITED NATIONS:** Combines financial and technical support

- Puts civil society first to own the change process
- Invests in local women’s organizations
- Global knowledge and results.

**KEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT:**

Reaches the most marginalized

- Local impact (builds skills and creates women’s groups)
- Changes social norms
- Reduces inequalities among civil society organizations.



The experience [of the FGE] has reinforced our management capacities and has ensured a good financial management of the funds by PREM to promote women’s empowerment in Tristao. Every channel of communication was put in place to harmonize the viewpoints of FGE and PREM with the objective of making the programme progress.

**PREM, FGE partner in Guinea**



Onion drying at the Djiguiya unit in Ségou, Mali.

Photo: Courtesy of Association d’Entraide et de Développement, Mali



## TALES OF EMPOWERMENT

# WOMEN LEADERS DETERMINED TO OCCUPY THEIR SPACE IN NIGERIAN LOCAL POLITICS



Chief Olaleye (at the centre with a red scarf) at the presentation of an affirmative action petition.

Courtesy of CLP Nigeria

In 2015, political parties in Ekiti State, Nigeria, had never had a woman as State Party Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson. But after taking part in trainings by the Community Life Project (CLP), a group of five women politicians—Helen Idiowo, Bola Akinnadeju, Kemi Olaleye, Adesola Ojo and Mary Faje—decided the situation had to change. They formulated a clear demand: the party should have a woman Deputy.



We decided that the time had truly come for us to take a stand and reposition women, politically.

**Mary Faje**

Following what they learned in the trainings, they prepared a strategy and identified an influential male party leader who supported women's rights. "[The leader] immediately told us that it was impossible," Faje recalls. "But we persisted." The five women drew intensively on new lobbying and negotiation skills. "We cajoled and pleaded with [political leaders] and even threatened to mobilize our constituency to withdraw our support for party activities. Eventually, we won them over," Faje says.

Chief Kemi Olaleye became the first female State Deputy Chairperson. One of her earliest acts was to back an affirmative action petition.

CLP's combined strategy of capacity-building, advocacy and engagement of media partners substantially increased the number of women in political parties in Nigeria. Project stakeholders from three major political parties committed to implementing strategic frameworks to achieve a 30 per cent share. These efforts contributed to the observed 75 per cent increase in the number of women candidates for Parliament in 2016 in both targeted states - Ekiti and Osun.

# 2018-2019 UPSCALING AND SOCIAL INNOVATION INITIATIVE TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Launched in 2018, the FGE's Upscaling and Social Innovation Initiative works with grantees to enhance their abilities to accelerate the empowerment of women and girls in vulnerable and marginalized positions. The Fund is testing new approaches by providing nine existing grantees with additional funds, coupled with intensive training and coaching. In applying beneficiary-centred principles, grantees are gaining a deeper understanding of the communities they serve. They are testing scalable models and experimenting with innovative solutions to the challenges they face.

In the West and Central Africa region, FGE partner Alliances for Africa (AfA) in **Nigeria** was selected to expand its project and gain social innovation skills through an additional grant of US\$ 175,000.

AfA is working with 145 trained women politicians to mentor young women, and mobilize their communities to register to vote and support full implementation of the National Policy of 35% Affirmative Action for Women in Public Governance.

As part of their social innovation experiment, AfA is testing new approaches to social norm change by addressing the "Ilo Noyo" tradition that excludes women from being part of leadership and public life in Ebonyi State. The group is drawing on previous successful social change exercises to activate the abandonment of behaviours and practices by local community members.

AfA is also actively engaged in knowledge exchange with Uraia Trust, a grantee from **Kenya** to share good practices in identifying and overcoming barriers to women's political participation.

## Our targeted population



RURAL WOMEN



WOMEN HEADS OF  
HOUSEHOLD



SURVIVORS OF GENDER-  
BASED VIOLENCE



YOUNG WOMEN



SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY  
VULNERABLE

Do you want to learn more? Are you ready to invest in women changemakers and innovators for gender equality?  
Do you feel as excited and committed as we do about our work?

Tell us all about it at [fund.genderequality@unwomen.org](mailto:fund.genderequality@unwomen.org)