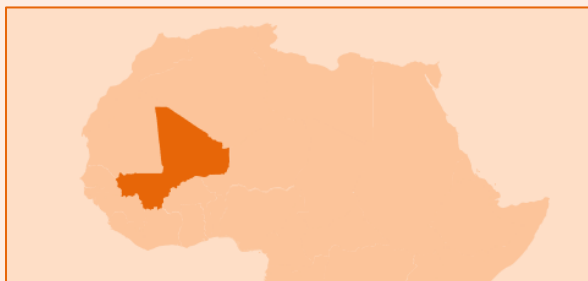


Youth employment creates opportunities at home in Mali (EJOM)



EU Trust Fund for Africa – Sahel & Lake Chad



EUTF PARTNER:
SNV



COUNTRY: Mali



BUDGET:
EUR 20M



From **06/2017**
to **12/2021**

Objective of the project

To contribute to the development of economic opportunities and social stability in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro, Gao, and the Bamako district, in Mali.

Key successes

- > 402 MSMEs supported, 20 horticultural farms established, and 8,632 young people trained, resulting in the creation of numerous jobs and increased incomes.
- > Strong consortium collaboration and high involvement of state structures leading to efficient implementation.

EJOM¹ aimed to contribute to the development of economic opportunities and social stability in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro, Gao, and the Bamako district in Mali. Implemented between 2017 and 2021, EJOM targeted marginalised youth, including women, young individuals prone to migration and returning migrants.

To achieve its objective, the project strongly promoted youth employment by 1) supporting self-employment, 2) fostering the development of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and 3) contributing to the creation of a favourable financial and educational environment, mostly in the sectors of horticulture, waste management, agro-food, and craftsmanship.

How did the EUTF help?

The project successfully supported 402 MSMEs, established 20 horticultural farms, and trained 8,632² young people, leading to the creation of numerous jobs and increased incomes for beneficiaries. For the selected youth, the training in life skills, entrepreneurship, and technical skills was accompanied by the provision of a startup kit³ to enable the launch of economic activities. The MSMEs benefitted from financial support, and horticultural farms were created, provided with boreholes and their management formalised through operating cooperatives. In total, more than 18,000 jobs were directly and indirectly created: 1,792 by the MSMEs, 732 on farms, and 15,786⁴ through the youth who were supported.

A significant increase in beneficiaries' incomes was observed throughout the project period (on average), generally ranging from 100% to 200%, and sometimes exceeding 250%. As a result of the help they were provided to formalise their businesses, obtain legal status, or open bank accounts, some youth also secured more funding outside EJOM and established partnerships with other operators. In addition to new employment and the acquisition of skills, the beneficiaries unanimously attested to greater self-confidence, ambition to succeed and an improved image within the community.

During the project's implementation, relevant adjustments were made to help combat the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With prior approval from the European Union (EU), the project's management committed to enhance support to MSMEs particularly affected by the health crisis with an additional grant equal to 20% of the initial amount. Thus, 18 MSMEs from the most affected sectors received additional assistance: nine in the agro-food sector and nine in the handicrafts sector. Part of the project's resources were also redirected towards a partnership with Kabakoo⁵ to identify and finance initiatives driven by young businesses or individuals, and provide innovative solutions based on new and/or existing technologies. Eight projects were supported, benefiting 29 youth developing products, such as a "low-cost" artificial ventilator, an automated handwashing device for people with disabilities, a 3D-printed prosthesis, an e-health platform and a precision agriculture spraying drone.



By the end of the project, two companies had been formalised, three were in the process of formalisation, and two had a marketable product. Although it was outside the project's initial scope, this initiative contributed to finding innovative solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic while generating training, jobs, and income for youth, in line with EJOM's general objective.

Keys to success

A relevant and effective institutional framework:

The project was implemented by a consortium of three international NGOs (SNV, ICCO, WASTE) along with the national Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment (APEJ).⁶ The expertise of each of these organisations in at least one of the targeted professional sectors⁷ was key to the success of the project.

At the operational level, the implementation, consortium coordination and orientation of the project were ensured through the creation of three management bodies, which brought together stakeholders involved respectively at the project, consortium, and national levels. The coordination unit, the management council and the steering board demonstrated solid coordination and met regularly, allowing for effective monitoring and adherence to deadlines, fostering regular discussions on potential obstacles, and enabling the adoption of tailored solutions and timely adjustments as necessary.

High involvement of state structures: Another asset that strongly enhanced the successful implementation of the project was the support and involvement of government structures from local to national levels. Technical directions, regional and national councils, as well as industry and commerce chambers were associated in the selection process of farm implementation sites and beneficiary MSMEs. State actors were also represented in the steering board in charge of the project's direction, through representatives from relevant ministries. The field experience and broad

territorial coverage of these entities facilitated relevant choices, greater collaboration, and the strong adherence and commitment of partners and local stakeholders to achieving the results.

The long-term commitment of SNV⁸ and ICCO⁹ in Mali – both of which have a good reputation and benefit from trust among regional authorities and technical services – buttressed this strong collaboration.

Building on success

Beneficiaries' appropriation of change and the involvement of national actors foster sustainability:

At the national level, the project's results in terms of strengthening skills and young people's appropriation of change are lasting assets. Moreover, EJOM wisely opted for the high involvement of state structures, particularly APEJ as a member of the implementing consortium. This permanent structure, present across all regions and funded by the state, represents hope for continuing efforts beyond the project's intervention.

¹ *L'emploi des jeunes crée des opportunités, ici au Mali* (EJOM).

² 4,255 women and 4 377 men, including 635 returning migrants.

³ In total, 8,602 youth received the first part of the kit, and 7,547 received the second. Those who did not receive their full kits include two reported cases of death, some youth who claimed to have benefited from other opportunities, and some declared ineligible due to improper use of the first part of the kit.

⁴ This included 7,547 self-employment opportunities, as well as an additional 2,218 permanent and 6,021 temporary jobs.

⁵ Kabakoo is a pan-African network of schools that aims to empower young Africans with the innovation skills needed to be employable within their local contexts. It relies on experiential learning, helping students develop products combining cutting-edge technologies (high tech) and local knowledge (low tech) to address sustainably local issues.

⁶ *Agence pour la Promotion de l'Emploi des Jeunes* (APEJ).

⁷ WASTE has expertise in waste management, ICCO in horticulture, SNV in horticulture and agro-food, and APEJ in agro-food and handicrafts.

⁸ Netherlands Development Organisation.

⁹ The Interchurch Organisation for Development Co-operation (Netherlands).



EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa

Disclaimer

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union through the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). Its contents are the sole responsibility of Altai Consulting and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

The research for this success story was conducted from January to April 2024, was based on project documentation, and presents the situation at that moment.

©2024 ALTAI. All rights reserved.
Licensed to the European Union under conditions.