



Photo: WOSWA

# FROM COMMITMENTS TO ACTION: YOUTH-LED PATHWAYS TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC JUSTICE

LESSONS FROM THE ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS  
ACTION COALITION SMALL GRANTS INITIATIVE



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ACTION COALITION SMALL GRANTS INITIATIVE

Economic Empowerment Section  
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# INTRODUCTION

The Economic Justice and Rights (EJR) Action Coalition launched the maiden EJR Small Grants Initiative for Youth Commitment Makers as a strategic response to persistent gaps faced by youth-led organizations, including limited access to flexible, catalytic funding to advance their commitments under the Generation Equality Forum. Rooted in Generation Equality's vision of promoting multi-stakeholder, intergenerational and intersectional approaches to women's economic empowerment, the initiative was designed to position young feminist leaders as key agents of change in shaping inclusive and equitable economies, dismantling structural barriers to women's economic participation and increasing access to productive resources to enhance women's economic autonomy.

With financial support from the Government of Germany, a prominent Leader of the EJR Action Coalition, the programme specifically aimed to address financial barriers that had prevented many EJR Youth Commitment Makers from implementing their commitments. Through targeted grants of US\$5,000 per project, the initiative enabled eight youth-led organizations to undertake policy, advocacy and programmatic activities aligned with EJR priorities, while strengthening their institutional capacity and visibility within the broader gender equality and women's empowerment ecosystem. The initiative marks the first of its kind within the broader Generation Equality framework, signalling UN Women's commitment to drive pledges into full implementation and a results-oriented outcome.

The rollout of the initiative was both structured and highly intentional. Building on UN Women's small grants policy, the EJR team implemented a competitive yet tailored selection process focusing on verified youth-led organizations already engaged as Commitment Makers. This ensured alignment with

EJR objectives while enabling disbursement of resources to those best positioned to deliver impact. Upon close review of the 22 shortlisted applications, a cohort of 8 youth organizations across diverse geographic regions were subsequently selected, representing a broad range of thematic priorities and local contexts.

The implementation phase demonstrated both the relevance and effectiveness of this approach. All supported organizations successfully delivered their activities. Beyond implementation, the initiative generated tangible outcomes in terms of strengthened institutional capacities, enhanced skills, advanced economic participation of young women and increased community engagement. Most notably, the eight projects provided valuable lessons on adaptive, locally grounded programming, advancing policy and advocacy objectives that have significantly contributed to implementing the four EJR blueprints on:

1. Decent Work
2. Care Economy
3. Productive Resources
4. Gender-transformative Economies.

Thereby, the projects advanced the overall Global Acceleration Plan of Generation Equality.

Importantly, the successful rollout has also enabled the consolidation of knowledge and evidence for future scale-up. This publication has been developed to capture the achievements, challenges and best practices emerging from the initiative, centring youth leadership and transformative action, and contributing to broader learning within Generation Equality to inform future investments in youth-led economic justice programming.

CAMEROON

# DEVELOPING CONCRETE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS ECONOMIC AND CLIMATE CRISES IN RURAL AREAS

Association au Secours des Filles Mères (ASFM)



# BACKGROUND

In Cameroon, poverty remains heavily rural—nearly 7 in 10 poor people live outside cities—and starkly regional, with the highest rates in the Far North, North-West and North.<sup>1</sup> Cameroon’s northern regions are among the most vulnerable to climate change: about 2 million people live in drought-affected areas and livelihoods heavily dependent on climate-sensitive agriculture.<sup>2</sup> These intersecting challenges disproportionately affect women and girls. Rural women’s limited access to and ownership of productive resources, coupled with negative social norms and limited participation in decision-making processes exacerbates their vulnerability, hindering their ability to adapt to climate shocks and engage in sustainable livelihoods.

Association au Secours des Filles Mères (ASFM) is a women-led organization located in Maroua, Northern Cameroon. It was founded in 2016 to promote and defend the rights of girls, especially young mothers, survivors of child marriage and other at-risk rural women and girls. ASFM focuses its efforts on income-generating activities, awareness raising and literacy.

## ACTIVITIES

ASFM took a multi-pronged approach focused on capacity-building at multiple levels, fostering community engagement and promoting climate-smart livelihoods. Institutional strengthening and capacity-building workshops enhanced four ASFM members’ competencies in project management, while targeted training equipped three community facilitators with skills to deliver effective awareness-raising interventions, with a strong emphasis on risk mitigation and contingency management. Moreover, entrepreneurship and leadership training directly supported 15 rural young women across 3 villages in order to start and maintain sustainable income-generating activities.

1. [Institut National de la Statistique du Cameroun.](#)
2. World Bank Group. 2022. [Cameroon Country Climate and Development Report.](#)



Training workshop. Photo: ASFM

The project also introduced climate-smart agricultural practices through the establishment of a community-managed off-season onion field, demonstrating adaptive and resilient solutions to climate variability. Prior to this, it was “unimaginable that a group of women and girls could manage a community field from the late season until harvest time”.<sup>3</sup> These combined efforts were reinforced through community dialogues and campaigns, which directly engaged 150 young women and girls across 3 villages, to catalyse positive changes in attitudes and perceptions of women’s leadership, decision-making and role in the local economy.

## IMPACT

The project contributed to strengthened institutional capacity and improved facilitation skills among ASFM members and community facilitators, enabling more effective community outreach and engagement. The project’s advocacy campaign successfully reached an additional 100 indirect beneficiaries, including women and girls. Through these community-led campaigns, the project attracted interest from other young women and girls in neighbouring remote villages. Their comments included: “Please, neighbour, you must also take me to your boss so she can write my name down next time” and “Auntie, I also want to be part of your group of girls”.



Workshop 1. Photo: ASFM

Young women and girls who participated in the training demonstrated increased confidence, leadership and economic agency. In parallel, the successful implementation of off-season agriculture enhanced participants’ resilience to climate shocks and provided a practical model for building sustainable livelihoods. Currently, 20 women and girls are heading 100-square-metre off-season onion fields.

The project also catalysed positive shifts in community perceptions, with increased recognition of the role of women and girls as agents of change. These outcomes were achieved despite significant resource constraints, which underscored the resilience and commitment of ASFM, the project participants and the indirect beneficiaries.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The project leveraged a strong and multi-layered partnership model that brought together ASFM, trained community facilitators, and a range of local stakeholders, including community leaders and grassroots actors. These partnerships were critical in ensuring effective outreach, contextual relevance, and sustained engagement with target communities. By working closely with locally embedded facilitators, the initiative strengthened trust and enabled culturally appropriate delivery of activities, particularly in awareness-raising, capacity-building, and climate-smart livelihood interventions. Collaboration with community stakeholders also facilitated broader participation, allowing the project to engage not only direct beneficiaries but also indirect participants through community dialogues and campaigns. This collective and participatory approach fostered a strong sense of ownership at the local level, enhanced the diffusion of knowledge and practices beyond the initial project sites, and contributed to building resilient, community-driven ecosystems to support women’s economic empowerment and climate adaptation efforts in Northern Cameroon.

3. ASFM 2025 Baseline survey.

UGANDA

# FINANCING FOR CARE ECONOMY FELLOWSHIP

Global Learning for Sustainability  
(GLS)



# BACKGROUND

Unpaid care and domestic work remains a significant barrier to women's full economic participation globally, and Uganda is no exception. Women spend 5.5 hours on unpaid care and domestic work daily, compared to 3.8 hours for men.<sup>4</sup> Limited public investment in care infrastructure, inadequate social protection systems and the impacts of climate change further intensify care burdens, particularly among vulnerable populations including low-income households, refugee women, persons with disabilities and elderly persons.

Global Learning for Sustainability (GLS) is a youth and women-led organization in Uganda, founded in 2015 that focuses on empowering youth, particularly young women and girls, to address global challenges aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality) and 13 (climate action).

The GLS project, supported by the EJF Small Grants Initiative for Youth Commitment Makers, aimed to strengthen capacities to advance gender-responsive care systems in Uganda. Through a fellowship model, the project equipped advocates, particularly in the informal sector, with knowledge and tools to address unpaid care work, promote policy change and foster community-led solutions. By linking capacity-building with community advocacy and local partnerships, GLS contributed to advancing women's economic empowerment within the care economy.

## ACTIVITIES

GLS implemented the Financing for Care Economy Fellowship, training 20 care economy fellows from civil society, as well as the public and private sector, as Cohort 1. The fellowship aimed to strengthen their knowledge on feminist approaches for care economy financing and advocacy, including the 5Rs: Recognize, Respond, Report, Record and Refer.<sup>5</sup> Through a series of capacity-building workshops and engagements, participants were introduced to key national, regional and global frameworks on care,

enabling them to apply feminist macroeconomic analysis to their work.

The Fellowship programme resulted in the formation of three thematic working groups focusing on:

1. Healthcare and care systems
2. Vulnerable populations, particularly children, refugees, persons with disabilities and the elderly
3. The intersections between climate change and care.

4. Economic Policy Research Centre. 2024. [From Promises to Actions: Shifting gender norms and public perceptions about unpaid care work in workplaces and families in Uganda – Baseline Quantitative Survey Report](#). Research Report No. 34.

5. UN Women. 2022. [A toolkit on paid and unpaid care work: From 3Rs to 5Rs](#). New York: UN Women.

In addition to the Fellowship programme, GLS conducted four advocacy and community meetings to identify priority care interventions and advocacy issues affecting women and girls. As part of these efforts, 30 families facing socioeconomic and health-related vulnerabilities were identified and connected to a community-based health facility providing basic medical and psychosocial support. This strengthened community linkages to childcare, healthcare and legal support.

Further practical, community-driven solutions included the distribution of five washing machines at the Namavundu Laundrette and Skilling Centre in collaboration with the Washing Machine Project to reduce time Ugandan women and girls spend on unpaid domestic work, promoting women's re-integration and ensuring their access to potable water.

Moreover, 20 young women and girls were supported to pilot eco-friendly livelihood initiatives, including through the production of recyclable menstrual health products, linking care, environmental sustainability and economic empowerment.



Distributing washing machines to communities to alleviate burden of hand washing laundry. Photo: GLS

## IMPACT

The project contributed to both strengthening individual and collective capacities to advocate for gender-responsive care systems in Uganda. Fellows, including women in the informal sector, are translating training into action through engaging in policy advocacy and local initiatives that address gaps in social protection and care infrastructure.



Capacity-building workshop on the care economy. Photo: GLS

Notable lobbying includes to lower the eligibility age of Uganda's Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) from 80 to 65 years to better meet the needs of elderly persons and related advocacy efforts. Fellows are also advocating for the establishment of a dedicated Parliamentary Committee on elderly persons to ensure more coordinated efforts at the national level.

At the community level, women's care burdens have been alleviated. The introduction of labour-saving technologies, such as washing machines, has reduced the time the women at the Namavundu Laundrette and Skilling Centre spend on unpaid and domestic work, allowing for increased participation in income-generating activities.

Contributions to national dialogues and policy processes on care and women's economic empowerment further illustrate the project's role in linking grassroots action to broader, structural change.

## PARTNERSHIPS

As well as the partnership with the Washing Machine Project, GLS engaged with national networks such as the Network of Child Development Actors, contributing to ongoing efforts to ensure childcare is more accessible and inclusive. These partnerships were instrumental in driving community-based solutions and connecting local initiatives to wider policy processes.

GLS also collaborated closely with community-based health providers, including the Ayesha Siddiq Medical Centre, Rotary Club partners and Wellness for All Africans, to deliver essential health and psychosocial support to vulnerable families.

PAKISTAN

# EMPOWERING RURAL YOUNG WOMEN THROUGH LIVELIHOOD SKILLS AND FINANCIAL LITERACY

Rural Infrastructure & Human Resource Development Organization (RIHRDO)



# BACKGROUND

Rural young women in Pakistan's Lakki Marwat District face structural and socioeconomic barriers that limit their participation in economic activities, including restricted access to vocational training, financial services and market opportunities. The project "Empowering Rural Young Women through Livelihood Skills and Financial Literacy" was launched by the Rural Infrastructure & Human Resource Development Organization (RIHRDO) to directly address these challenges by strengthening the economic empowerment of marginalized young women through an integrated approach combining vocational skills development, financial literacy and entrepreneurship support.

The project specifically targeted vulnerable young women with limited or no prior opportunities for income generation. By equipping participants with both technical competencies and essential business skills, the project aimed to foster sustainable livelihoods while enhancing women's agency, self-reliance and decision-making capacity within their households and communities. The approach recognized that skills training alone is insufficient without complementary financial knowledge and access to markets, and therefore emphasized a holistic pathway towards economic inclusion.

## ACTIVITIES

The project was implemented through a structured and community-driven approach that ensured both inclusivity and effectiveness. It commenced with extensive community mobilization and consultations with local stakeholders, including community elders, local authorities and community-based organizations. These consultations facilitated transparency in the process and helped build trust within the target communities. As a result, 60 marginalized young women were identified, screened and enrolled in the programme through a participatory and inclusive selection process.

Following participant selection, the project delivered comprehensive vocational skills training in sewing, tailoring and embroidery through two structured batches, each lasting six weeks. The training was

practical, hands-on and tailored to ensure that participants developed market-relevant skills aligned with local demand. To enable their immediate application of learning, each participant received a training kit that included fabric and essential sewing materials, thereby supporting both skills acquisition and early-stage income generation opportunities.

In parallel, the project conducted financial literacy and entrepreneurship workshops designed to strengthen participants' knowledge of budgeting, savings and income management, as well as small business development. Sessions incorporated practical exercises and introduced participants to digital financial tools, including mobile banking and e-wallets, contributing to increased financial inclusion and awareness of modern financial practices.

To bridge the gap between training and economic participation, the project placed a strong emphasis on market linkages and mentorship. Participants received guidance on key aspects of micro-enterprise development, including pricing strategies, customer engagement and product presentation. The project also facilitated partnerships with local traders, enabling participants to access markets and gain real-world business exposure. Notably, participants were provided with stalls at a local community fair (mela), where they showcased and sold their products, thereby applying their skills in a practical market setting.

Throughout implementation, a robust monitoring and evaluation system was maintained to ensure quality, accountability and continuous learning. This included systematic attendance tracking, regular field monitoring visits, structured documentation of activities, and the collection of participant feedback. The monitoring approach enabled the project team to capture both quantitative outputs and qualitative changes in participants' confidence, skills and agency.

## IMPACT

The project achieved significant results in advancing the economic empowerment of marginalized young women in Lakki Marwat. A total of 60 young women successfully completed vocational skills training in sewing, tailoring and embroidery, representing the full cohort of enrolled participants. All participants also completed financial literacy and entrepreneurship training, strengthening their capacity to manage finances, plan small enterprises, and engage with formal and digital financial systems.

The project significantly ensured that training translated into tangible economic outcomes. All 60 participants were linked to income-generating opportunities, with trainees collectively producing and selling at least 120 children's garments during a community fair. This initial income generation provided not only financial benefits but also critical exposure to real market conditions.



Photo: RIHRDO

Beyond these quantitative achievements, the project generated meaningful qualitative impacts. Participants reported increased self-confidence, improved decision-making capacity, and greater ability to contribute economically within their households. The visibility of women as active economic participants contributed to their enhanced social acceptance within the community. Furthermore, the integration of entrepreneurship training fostered a stronger business mindset, enabling participants to engage more effectively with markets and explore future income opportunities. The project's holistic approach—combining technical skills, financial literacy and market exposure—supported a transition from training to sustainable livelihood pathways.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic partnerships played a critical role in enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of the project. Collaboration with the Anjuman Tajran (Traders' Association) in Serai Naurang facilitated participants' access to local markets and enabled practical engagement with buyers and traders. Through this partnership, participants were able to secure stalls at a community fair, providing a platform to showcase and sell their products while gaining valuable market experience.

Moreover, engagement with community stakeholders, including local leaders, authorities and community-based organizations, was instrumental in ensuring transparent beneficiary selection, fostering community buy-in and promoting the participation of marginalized groups. These partnerships contributed to creating an enabling environment for women's economic participation and helped ensure that project outcomes extended beyond training into sustained livelihood opportunities.

SOUTH SUDAN

# STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' ECONOMIC SKILLS AND RESILIENCE IN CONFLICT SETTINGS

Wider Aid & Development Agency South Sudan  
(WADA-SS)



# BACKGROUND

In Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, South Sudan—an area affected by protracted conflict, economic fragility and limited access to services—Wider Aid & Development Agency South Sudan (WADA-SS)’s mission aims to empower women and girls by expanding access to education, economic opportunities and leadership participation, while addressing gender-based violence, systemic barriers and social norms that limit their progress. Its commitments to Generation Equality’s Economic Justice and Rights Action Coalition include advancing gender-responsive policy and advocacy, delivering economic empowerment programmes (including skills training, microfinance and resource access), and creating an enabling environment for women’s entrepreneurship through finance, mentorship and partner-driven engagement.

With support from the EJR Action Coalition, WADA-SS implemented a grassroots project to strengthen women’s economic resilience and agency, focused on vulnerable women and girls in Aweil, the state capital. The project prioritized locally led, community-based solutions to advance women’s economic empowerment and rights by addressing the intersecting challenges of trauma, financial exclusion and limited livelihood opportunities.

## ACTIVITIES

Through a community-based delivery model, the project engaged women directly at the grassroots level, reaching over 85 participants through targeted trainings. The first activity included a three-day training on trauma awareness and psychological first aid for 25 women and girls in Northern Bahr el Ghazal to address conflict-related vulnerabilities.

The second activity involved a two-day practical capacity-building training for 30 women on business skills, value addition and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), complemented by a one-day training for an additional 30 women and girls on microfinance and access to resources. These were successfully completed, enabling women and girls to participate in and benefit from local economic

opportunities. Training activities were supported by local facilitators and were made more effective through hands-on learning approaches rooted in the community context and participatory methods.



Business Skills Training. Photo: WADA-SS

## IMPACT

In a community impacted by prolonged conflict and disruptions to sustainable economic livelihoods, this project showcases the power of community-led action to contribute to enhancing women's resilience, economic skills and access to financial resources, as evidenced by the establishment and operationalization of VSLAs.

Moreover, beneficiaries demonstrated improved capacity to save and manage finances, and continued mentorship and supervision has provided sustained outcomes. At the same time, trained participants are passing on their knowledge by forming and supporting additional VSLA groups, indicating early signs of community-level impact and the scalability of the intervention.

The project has successfully promoted peaceful coexistence and trust building and has improved the lives of women and girls affected by trauma from prolonged crises. It has also mitigated gender-based violence by enhancing women's economic status to engage in autonomous economic activity.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The project has demonstrated the critical role of grassroots actors in advancing women's economic empowerment in conflict-affected settings. The initiative effectively fostered community networks to advance women's and girls' rights in Aweil, the capital of the South Sudan Northern Bahr el Ghazal State. It harnessed the capacities of youth facilitators and local leaders to deliver context-specific interventions and build trust among women and girls which then enhanced their economic potential for greater productivity.

The project further catalysed peer-to-peer partnerships, as trained participants reinforced locally driven impact and knowledge transfer by forming new VSLA groups and supporting others in their communities. This partnership model highlights how investing in youth-led, community-based organizations not only strengthens immediate project delivery but also fosters sustainable, locally driven ecosystems for women's economic empowerment and resilience.



Business skill training for VSLA groups. Photo: WADA SS

KENYA

# WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN CAMPUS ECONOMIES

Women Students Mentorship Association  
(WOSWA)



# BACKGROUND

Women Students Mentorship Association (WOSWA) was established in 2018 with a mission to empower female students and young women across Kenya by promoting education, leadership development and women's rights across Kenyan universities. Under the Generation Equality Initiative, WOSWA pledged programmatic and advocacy commitments to the EJR Action Coalition focused on addressing unpaid care work and the gendered division of labour by providing targeted mentorship to over 10,000 young women in Kenya.

Despite their education, many Kenyan female students still face economic insecurity due to informal work, unpaid work and care burdens, and limited access to finance, networks and innovation opportunities.

In response to these challenges, WOSWA implemented the project Women's Economic Empowerment in Campus Economies, with the support of the EJR Action Coalition, to address systemic barriers limiting young women's economic participation in university settings. The project was designed to unlock campus-based economic opportunities for young women aged 18 to 35, through a holistic model combining skills development, enterprise promotion, mentorship and seed financing to support students to transition into full employment. The project targeted young women from low-income backgrounds, students with existing businesses or innovations and women with disabilities.

## ACTIVITIES

WOSWA operationalized an integrated package of interventions. The project kicked off with a total of 109 female students receiving entrepreneurship training—exceeding the initial target of 50—on design thinking, business modelling, financial literacy, digital tools and gender-responsive enterprise development. To translate skills into income opportunities, the project organized four campus-based pop-up markets—three at the University of Nairobi and one at Kibabii University—showcasing 10 female-led enterprises and reaching over 1,050 students, significantly amplifying visibility and sales opportunities.

The project also piloted an Innovation and Enterprise Hub, establishing both an online and physical prototype to promote enterprise profiling and peer learning. Moreover, US\$500 (KES 64,000) in seed funding was disbursed to two high-potential student enterprises, complemented by three mentorship sessions supporting peer-to-peer skills exchange.

Finally, a Decent Work Roundtable Dialogue convened 26 young women to discuss barriers to equitable employment pathways and identify solutions.

## IMPACT

The project delivered strong results across multiple dimensions of women's economic empowerment. It surpassed initial targets, significantly enhancing participants' capacity to formalize business ideas, monetize skills and generate income, with beneficiaries reporting increased entrepreneurial confidence and improved access to markets.

The establishment of enterprise platforms and peer mentorship structures contributed to sustained production and sales of goods, reinforcing income-generation pathways beyond the project cycle. Importantly, the intervention elevated institutional recognition of women's economic contributions within campus economies, while amplifying young women's voices on critical issues and challenging social norms of unpaid labour including care work, unsafe work environments, and inequitable access to services and opportunities.

The project created entrepreneurial pathways to foster youth-led innovation and economic participation. The reallocation of resources to prioritize direct economic outcomes strengthened tangible results for beneficiaries, demonstrating sustainable, adaptive and results-oriented management.



Pop-up market at Kibabii University on 9 December 2025, student entrepreneurs and WEE Student beneficiaries selling products. Photo: WOSWA

## PARTNERSHIPS

The project leveraged strategic partnerships with University of Nairobi and Kibabii University, utilizing existing institutional platforms such as Innovation Weeks and campus exhibitions to host markets, trainings and dialogues. The activities enabled high visibility, outreach and engagement with student communities and key stakeholders.

The initiative also engaged peer networks and mentorship circles to foster collaborative learning ecosystems, while highlighting the importance of future partnerships with employers, financial institutions and development actors to scale impact—particularly in expanding access to decent work pathways, financing and market linkages for young Kenyan women.

WOSWA entrepreneurship training at University of Nairobi, Kenya Science Campus Hall, 30 September 2025. Photo: WOSWA



CAMEROON

# ENHANCING THE ECONOMIC SKILLS AND RESILIENCE STRATEGIES OF YOUNG GIRLS

Amis Cameroun



# BACKGROUND

Amis Cameroun is one of the two Youth Leaders of the EJR Action Coalition. The youth organization's project focuses on empowering young girls to improve their current economic situation and sensitize people on the importance of care and unpaid domestic work as well as the need to share these responsibilities.

In the Far North region of Cameroon, young women and girls face significant structural barriers to economic empowerment, including limited access to education, vocational training and income-generating opportunities. These challenges are further compounded by entrenched sociocultural norms that restrict their participation in economic life and decision-making processes.

Limited awareness of economic justice and rights, coupled with insufficient institutional support and access to resources, contributes to high levels of economic vulnerability. Addressing these constraints requires targeted interventions that combine capacity-building, community engagement and advocacy to promote gender equality and economic justice and rights in the region.

## ACTIVITIES

Amis Cameroun implemented a comprehensive set of activities aimed at enhancing the skills and economic resilience of young women and girls, while fostering an enabling environment for their economic empowerment.

The project began with the engagement of both community leaders and local authorities to build support for economic empowerment initiatives for women and girls. A total of 15 young women were selected from 15 villages and neighbourhoods in

the Far North region and enrolled in a structured vocational training programme. The training covered diverse and innovative fields, including tailoring, project management and marketing, and equipped participants with market-relevant skills.

Following the training, all participants received start-up kits to facilitate their entry into the market with income-generating activities. These included sewing machines, financial support and other essential tools tailored to their chosen fields.

Photo: Amis Cameroon



In parallel, the project organized 20 educational discussion sessions with groups of young women and girls, addressing economic justice and rights, pathways out of poverty, access to financial and technical resources, and strategies to overcome sociocultural barriers. The project concluded with an evaluation and knowledge-sharing workshop, which reviewed implementation progress, identified key lessons learned to inform future programming and documented challenges.

## IMPACT

The project helped in strengthening the economic resilience and agency of the participating young women and girls. All 15 beneficiaries successfully completed vocational training and were supported to access income-generating opportunities, which enabled their integration into viable economic sectors. At the community level, awareness of women's and girls' economic rights and gender equality was greatly enhanced through community outreach and engagement, contributing to gradual shifts in attitudes and increased support.

Strategic engagement with stakeholders led to strengthened partnerships with regional institutions, including actors responsible for trade, women's empowerment and youth affairs. These collaborations enhanced local ownership and institutional backing for women's and girls' economic empowerment initiatives. The project also contributed to strengthening the organizational and technical capacities of Amis Cameroun, improving its ability to design and implement structured projects, expand local engagement and increase its visibility within the region.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The project was implemented through a collaborative, multi-stakeholder partnership model that brought together local and regional actors, including community leaders, local authorities, sectoral institutions,

and grassroots organizations. These partnerships were instrumental in ensuring the effective delivery of activities, as they supported community mobilization, facilitated beneficiary identification, and enhanced the contextual relevance of interventions. Engagement with regional actors responsible for trade, women's empowerment, family affairs, and youth enabled strong alignment with local development priorities and strengthened institutional linkages, contributing to sustainability beyond the project cycle. The initiative also fostered participation in broader regional and transnational networks, including the "Nos Voix Comptent" platform of Francophone African organizations, which created opportunities for peer learning, knowledge exchange, and the amplification of youth-led voices in policy and advocacy spaces. Collectively, this ecosystem of partnerships reinforced local ownership, enabled cross-context collaboration, and contributed to more coordinated and more enabling environments with the overall aim of advancing women's and girls' economic empowerment.



Photo: Amis Cameroun

BURKINA FASO

# STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMIC AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE OF YOUNG WOMEN

African Network for Gender Equality and  
Sustainable Development (ANGEL-SD)



# BACKGROUND

In the commune of Bingo, in Bam Province, Burkina Faso, rural women face significant structural challenges, including poverty, climate vulnerability and limited access to economic opportunities and resources. These constraints hinder their full participation in economic activities and decision-making processes.

The African Network for Gender Equality and Sustainable Development (ANGEL-SD) implemented the LEAD-Fem project (Leadership and Economic Empowerment of Women) to address these challenges by strengthening young women's resilience to climate change. The project aimed to promote women's economic empowerment, enhance their advocacy capacities and support their active participation in community dialogue on gender equality and climate justice.

## ACTIVITIES

The project was implemented through a participatory, community-centred approach, placing rural women at the core of its design and delivery.

The first activity involved a community launch forum, which brought together local stakeholders to raise awareness on women's economic empowerment and climate resilience, while introducing the project's objectives and activities.

Next was an integrated training programme with three modules: financial management, the production of energy-efficient cookstoves (Roumdé stoves) and the production of ecological charcoal. The training included both theoretical and practical components, enabling participants to directly apply newly acquired skills. All participants successfully produced functional cookstoves and contributed to the collective production of ecological charcoal.

A media outreach campaign was also conducted through a radio broadcast, which served as a key platform for awareness-raising on women's economic empowerment, climate resilience and sustainable technologies. The programme reached an estimated 5,000 people. Last follow-up activities were organized to assess progress, document lessons learned and reinforce the sustainability of outcomes.



Photo: ANGEL-SD

## IMPACT

The project generated tangible results in strengthening women's economic empowerment and climate resilience. Participants demonstrated strong ownership of the skills acquired, independently replicating the production of improved cookstoves and ecological charcoal shortly after the training, highlighting the sustainability of learning outcomes.

The initiative also contributed to strengthening ANGEL-SD's institutional capacity, including improved coordination, logistics management, monitoring and evaluation and communication. This has enhanced the organization's ability to design and implement impactful programmes.

At the community level, the project contributed to positive behavioural change and increased recognition of women's role in local economic development and climate action. It also generated interest beyond the initial beneficiaries; community members asked for additional income-generating activities and further training opportunities.



Photo: ANGEL-SD



Photo: ANGEL-SD

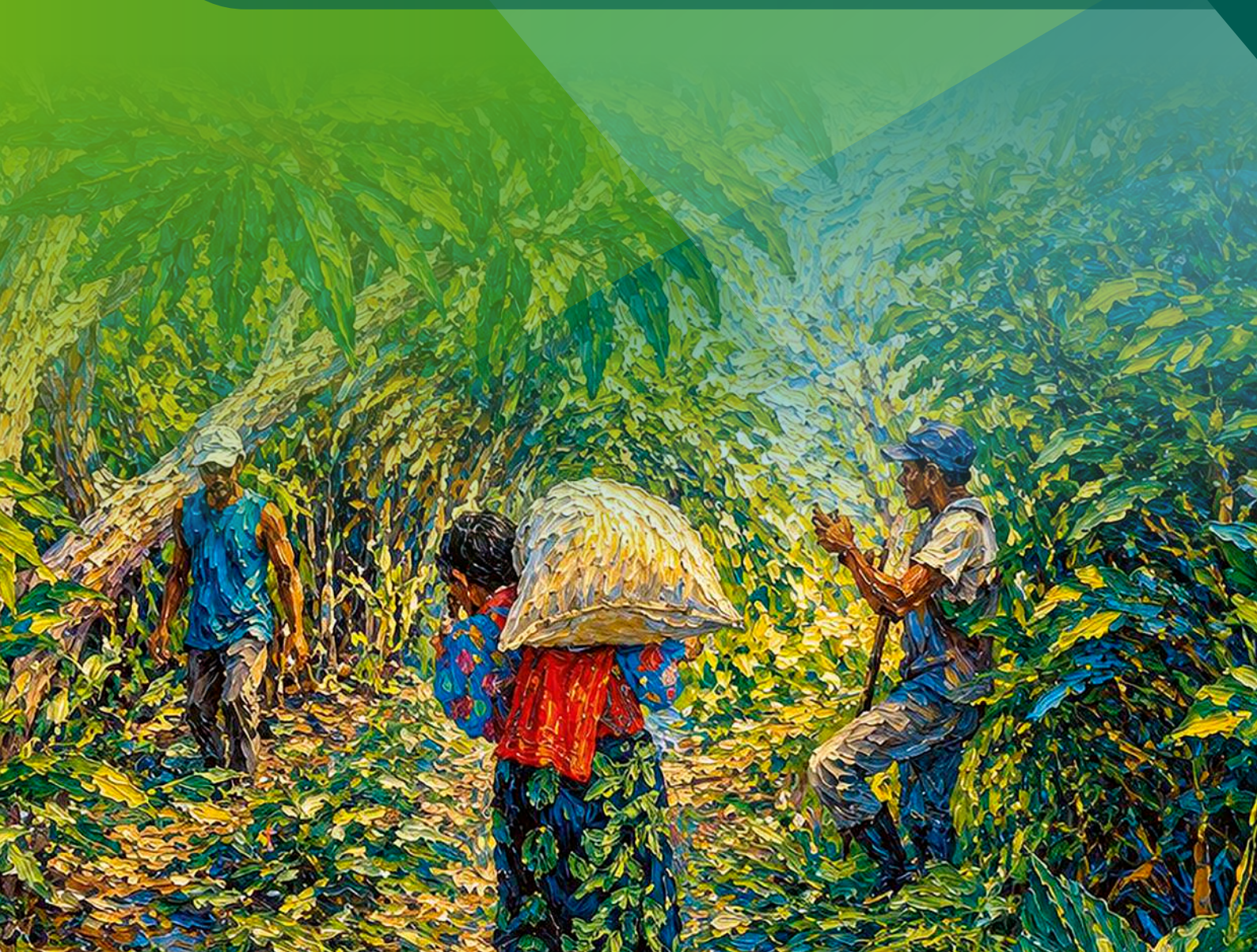
## PARTNERSHIPS

The project leveraged excellent collaboration with community-based organizations, grassroots actors and other local stakeholders, which facilitated effective community mobilization and implementation. Moreover, technical expertise was provided by specialized trainers, while collaboration with local partners supported the delivery of training, awareness-raising and follow-up activities. These partnerships were central to ensuring locally grounded implementation, strengthening community ownership and enhancing the sustainability and scalability of project outcomes.

PANAMA

# STRENGTHENING THE ADAPTION OF PRODUCTION SYSTEMS WITH GREEN ECONOMY APPROACHES

ANYAR



# BACKGROUND

ANYAR is one of the two Youth Leaders of the EJR Action Coalition. It is led by indigenous youth based in the Gunayala Region of Panama. The organization's goal is to promote gender equality among youth and economically empower young women and girls as agents of change by developing community-based projects focusing on Indigenous knowledge on climate change adaptation, sustainable food systems and green economy practices.

In the Guna Yala region of Panama, communities face increasing vulnerabilities linked to climate change, food insecurity and limited access to sustainable livelihood opportunities. These challenges are compounded by structural inequalities affecting women and youth, as well as the need to preserve Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage.

Youth in the Wissubwala community, particularly young women, encounter barriers to accessing technical skills, economic opportunities and decision-making spaces. Strengthening institutional capacity at the community level, while integrating Indigenous knowledge with sustainable development approaches, is essential to building resilience and advancing gender-responsive climate action.

## ACTIVITIES

ANYAR implemented a series of community-based training and capacity-building activities aimed at strengthening local knowledge and institutional capacity on climate change adaptation, sustainable food systems and green economy practices.

The project adopted a participatory, intercultural and community-based approach, aligning implementation with the traditional governance structures and cultural calendar of the Guna people. This ensured that activities were culturally appropriate and fostered ownership among community members.

A total of 30 young people (14 women and 16 men) were trained on climate change awareness, food security, sustainable agriculture and basic economic and entrepreneurial skills. Practical training was a core component of the project and included:

- Nursery management and soil preparation techniques
- Organic fertilizer production
- Reuse of organic and plastic waste as productive inputs
- Establishment of community vegetable gardens.

Through these activities, participants applied both technical knowledge and ancestral Guna practices, including traditional planting techniques and identification of native medicinal plants. Moreover, community clean-up campaigns were organized, promoting environmental stewardship and circular economy principles.

## IMPACT

The project contributed to strengthening the institutional capacity of ANYAR to deliver community-based training programmes, while reinforcing youth leadership in climate action and sustainable development. At the individual level, participants improved their technical skills and capacity to engage in sustainable agricultural practices and income-generating activities. The project had a particularly strong impact on women, creating safe and enabling spaces that enhanced their participation, leadership and economic potential.

Community vegetable gardens established as part of the training contributed to improved food security and provided a practical platform for applying acquired knowledge. Despite climate-related shocks—including intense rainfall and flooding—participants demonstrated resilience by re-establishing gardens with improved techniques, highlighting strengthened adaptive capacity. The initiative also contributed to the preservation and transmission of ancestral Guna knowledge, including agricultural practices and traditional food systems. The documentation of traditional recipes and the planned dissemination of a community recipe book further support the safeguarding of cultural heritage. Moreover, ANYAR produced a video highlighting the project's impact.



Photo: ANYAR

## PARTNERSHIPS

The project benefited from strong collaboration with community authorities and local stakeholders, whose support ensured the legitimacy and sustainability of activities, as well as participation in them. Community leaders facilitated participation to be inclusive, contributed to monitoring and helped guide the project's implementation.



Photo: ANYAR

A strategic partnership was established with the organization Ibercocinas to develop a recipe book based on Guna gastronomy. This collaboration promotes using locally produced agricultural goods for cooking while promoting the cultural heritage of the region.

The partnership also includes plans for a festival of gastronomy, which will engage tourists and strategic partners while showcasing local products and strengthening links between culture, economic empowerment and sustainable tourism.



# CONCLUSION

The eight projects funded by the EJR Small Grants Initiative for Youth Commitment Makers demonstrate the breadth and depth of impact that locally rooted, youth-led organizations can achieve when provided with targeted resources and institutional support. Implemented across a variety of countries, the projects reached hundreds of young women and girls in marginalized and rural communities. The projects had measurable impacts on improving their economic empowerment, including in areas such as the care economy, climate resilience and entrepreneurship.

A cross-cutting finding across all projects is that capacity-building, while important, is not sufficient on its own. Programming is needed that combines technical capacity development with mentorship, financial literacy, market access, and advocacy for structural change. By adopting this holistic approach, outcomes become more sustainable and more likely to contribute to longer-term shifts.

Looking ahead, the youth organizations identified clear priorities for sustaining and scaling up their results. These include continued investment in

mentorship and peer learning networks; access to start-up capital, microfinance and seed funding for women-led enterprises; the development of producer cooperatives and women-led enterprise hubs; advocacy on the recognition of care work, gender-responsive workplaces and institutional standards; and sustained investment in further capacity-building opportunities.

The achievements of the small grants projects are practice-based evidence on what works for advancing women's and girls' economic empowerment in diverse and challenging contexts. Translating this evidence into sustained impact will require multi-year, flexible funding; stronger linkages between local organizations, governments and private sector actors; and policy environments that address the structural barriers to achieving gender equality.

The findings and recommendations emerging from the EJR Small Grants Initiative for Youth Commitment Makers should inform both future grant-making strategies and broader programmatic and policy engagement in the context of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

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