



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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**WAEMU
REGION**

**JANUARY
TO MARCH
2025**



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EDITORIAL



Rica Rwigamba,

Interim Director for the
WAEMU Region

“ I am convinced that together, with the passion and determination that drive us, we will succeed in making our continent stronger, more united, and more prosperous.”

Dear Partners,

It is with immense honor and great joy that I take over from the brilliant and visionary Serge-Auguste Kouakou at the head of the Senegal office for the WAEMU region.

I feel deeply privileged to join such a talented team and to work alongside you to bring to life projects that drive meaningful change and transformation.

The year 2025 marks a decisive moment for our efforts in support of the young men and women we are fortunate to serve a year of acceleration. The urgency of our mission has never been greater, in a global context full of challenges, but also rich in unprecedented opportunities for collective action.

Today, I want to reaffirm my commitment, as well as that of our entire team, to you our valued partners. This work is only possible because of your support and dedication.

We stand by your side to support you in implementing our Young Africa Works strategy.

I also want to reaffirm the Foundation's commitment to young women. More than ever, they are the driving force behind the economic and social development of our societies. By ensuring they have their rightful place, by supporting and empowering them, we will build stronger and more resilient communities.

I am convinced that together, with the passion and determination that drive us, we will succeed in making our continent stronger, more united, and more prosperous.

Thank you for your trust and commitment. I look forward to working with you to make 2025 a year of success!

Rica

BREAKING NEWS



Moving into a new, fully renovated office in the Ndeye Sokhna building

We are excited to announce that on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, we moved into a newly renovated office, at L'immeuble Ndeye Sokhna, Point E, Avenue Birago Diop.

At the Mastercard Foundation, we believe in the power of connection, oneness and creating environments that foster learning and prosperity. Our new office space, optimized to better serve your needs, our team, and young people, is a testament to that.

What to look forward to Enhanced Collaboration:

- Our redesigned office spaces will offer ample opportunities for ideation, discussion, and co-creation.
- Innovative Features: Our state-of-the-art technology and modern amenities aim to improve the overall experience for everyone who walks through our doors, inspiring new ideas and fostering a sense of belonging.
- Community Engagement: We are committed to creating spaces that benefit our team and encourage connections with our partners, stakeholders, and the young people we serve.

We look forward to welcoming you to our new office!



NEWS

International Women's Day celebration: Empowering Young Girls: Creating Pathways to Success



On March 6th, WAEMU team members, in partnership with the Consortium Jeunesse Senegal, celebrated International Women's Day by hosting a special event at their Youth Space in Dakar. The event brought together over sixty young girls from various WAEMU programs, providing them with a day of learning, empowerment, and inspiration.

The event kicked off with a panel discussion focused on gender equality and the role of young women in the socio-economic life of our societies.

The panelists discussed the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for young women, addressing the barriers they face, and emphasizing the value of their participation in shaping the future.

Following the insightful discussion, the young girls had the opportunity to benefit from coaching sessions and capacity-building workshops in key areas included:

- CV Writing Coaching
- Public Speaking Coaching
- Introduction to Artificial Intelligence

Through these masterclasses, the young girls were able to gain valuable, actionable skills that they can apply to their everyday lives, whether in education or in their future careers.

One of the most inspiring moments came from a panelist who shared her personal journey: *"I had no diploma, but I had a solutions-oriented mindset. That's what helped me build and grow my business."*

This quote resonated deeply with all of us, reinforcing the idea that determination and resilience can open doors, even in the face of challenges.



Our goal is to sustain these workshops and support throughout the year in order to provide young girls with long-term mentorship.

The day was filled with emotions, insights, and life lessons that reaffirmed our belief that young women are the future of the continent.

It was a powerful reminder of the importance of empowering young girls and giving them the tools they need to succeed.

3 QUESTIONS TO



VOGEL DEZA,

Program Lead at Mastercard Foundation

Vogel Déza is a graduate of ENSEA Abidjan, specializing in statistics and economic engineering. He is in charge of the WEECAP program at the Mastercard Foundation, which focuses on developing the cashew nut value chain.

What are the main challenges facing young people, particularly young women, in the cashew nut value chain, and how does WEECAP intend to address them in concrete terms?

The WAEMU zone accounts for around 50% of the world's cashew production, yet almost 90% of this production is exported in its raw state, without any added value. Within this value chain, women play an important role, intervening at various stages of the value chain, notably in nut and apple picking, as well as in the roasting process, accounting for over 80% of jobs. However, they face a number of challenges in this sector:

- Limited access to land: cashew nut production generally requires vast tracts of land to which very few women, and even fewer young women, have access.
- Difficult working conditions: young women often work in precarious conditions involving health risks, coupled with particularly low wages.
- Poor market access: small and medium-sized producers have insufficient outlets to sell their produce, due to a lack of supply and lower quality.
- Limited access to finance: young women and men involved in the cashew value chain have

little access to credit, mainly due to guarantees, low levels of formalization and the risk aversion of traditional financial institutions. each of the program's interventions.

In response to these challenges, **the WEECAP program (Women Economic Empowerment through Cashew Processing Program), aims to support young women and men operating in the cashew value chain to create fair and equitable access to dignified and fulfilling work, by deploying an integrated approach based on 5 main intervention pillars:**

- Improving competitiveness: developing the commercial viability of processing companies by strengthening their capacity and increasing their productivity.
- Developing the supply chain: promoting the establishment of an integrated supply chain to facilitate market access and guarantee a reliable, high-quality supply of cashew nuts.
- Strengthening access to financing: contribute to the mobilization of financial resources to address the financing needs of processors to improve their productivity.
- Creating a favorable legal and institutional framework: working with governments and local institutions to put in place policies conducive to the sustainable development of the cashew value chain.
- Implementing policies and approaches that ensure the inclusion of gender, social protection and the mobilization of young people within each of the program's interventions.

3 QUESTIONS TO

With ambitious target of 330,000 job opportunities created, what strategies will be put in place to ensure the sustainability of jobs and guarantee dignified and fair working conditions, particularly in terms of remuneration and social protection?

According to the African Cashew Alliance (ACA), there is a clear link between poverty reduction through job creation and the sustainable development of the cashew sector (Prioritize Cashew Processing to Reduce Poverty - African governments advised | African Cashew Alliance, February 2021). Indeed, each 1,000 tonnes of locally processed cashew nuts has the potential to generate 80 to 200 jobs, particularly for young people, at all levels of the value chain, with improved income generated through the added value created.

Aware of this reality, the WEECAP program will be deployed in a holistic approach, integrating the major challenges encountered at value chain level, with the support of a consortium of partners with expertise in each of the identified areas of intervention.

This integrated approach, which focuses on improving local processing while ensuring fair and dignified working conditions for young people, will ultimately have a systemic effect on the value chain, with the result that the jobs generated in each link of the cashew value chain will be sustainable.

The program aims to catalyze \$150 million in private investment for the development of a local cashew processing industry. What mechanisms will be used to attract this financing and encourage companies to make a lasting commitment to this transformation?

The establishment of the Catalytic Fund is a key success factor for the WEECAP program. It is designed to promote access to financing for players in the value chain, particularly young women. Valued at \$27 million, the Fund aims to catalyze some \$150 million in private investment. This multiplier effect will be the result of the implementation of innovative financing instruments likely to attract and encourage other investors to commit to this process of strengthening the cashew value chain:

- A subsidy fund to catalyze the financing of micro and small domestic processing businesses run by young women and men.
- A guarantee fund designed to promote and facilitate the granting of loans to micro and small businesses by financial institutions, by reducing the level of risk.
- Incentives for financial intermediaries to stimulate the supply of credit to small-scale players (small producers, cooperatives, micro-processors) who are difficult to reach by conventional means of financing.
- Results-based financing for producers and cooperatives to secure the supply of quality cashew nuts in sufficient quantities for micro and small-scale processors.
- A subsidy for high-potential young entrepreneurs from the cashew value chain acceleration and capacity-building program.

THE FOUNDATION'S IMPACT



The Mastercard Foundation uses several means of verification to regularly measure and evaluate progress and impact: baseline study, periodic partner reports, impact monitoring, strategic reviews, partner-specific studies, etc.

The global impact of the Mastercard Foundation in the WAEMU region at the end of March 2025

259 000

young people in employment,
47% of which young women



7 200 000

people have been reached on the
ground, including 49 % women

61%

of partner organizations are
from Africa

9%

of partner organizations are
lead by the youth (Youth Led
Organizations)

IMPACT STORY



LASSANA DIEME, the Young Entrepreneur Transforming His Community

In the village of Sitoukéne, Senegal, 20-year-old Lassana has successfully transformed barren land into a thriving agricultural space. Participant in the APTE program, he envisioned a project that meets a crucial need in his community: access to fresh produce.

His initiative is based on two distinct plots: one dedicated to the village women, providing them with financial independence and leadership opportunities, and another reserved for high school students, allowing them to learn the basics of agriculture. Through his hard work and family support, Lassana sold 100 bags of peanuts during the 2023 harvest, generating 2 million CFA francs (\$3,336 USD). His project has become a model of sustainable development and an inspiration for other young people in the region.

A Life-Changing Encounter

During a visit to Mboro Camp, Lassana met Mr. Faye, an entrepreneur in fruit production. Mr. Faye explained the importance of marketing, illustrating his points with concrete examples. This exchange was a turning point for Lassana, giving him the

confidence to launch his agricultural project.

Lassana embodies the impact of youth entrepreneurship on local development. His story demonstrates that with support and determination, dreams can be transformed into sustainable realities.

The impact of the APTE Program in figures

- 37,185 CEM pupils and 8,708 CFP learners took part in courses
- 267 entrepreneurship clubs and 544 savings and credit groups were set up, empowering young people and promoting local economic initiative.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



Seni Diop,

PFPI Program Director

During the Partner Convening, EDC Senegal was recognized as the «most effective partner» for the implementation of the PFPI. In your opinion, what are the key factors behind this outstanding performance, particularly in terms of youth employment and women's empowerment?

EDC Senegal's recognition as the «most effective partner» in the framework of the **Professional Training and Integration Project (PFPI)** is based on several key factors that have significantly contributed to the project's success:

First, the existence of a committed and high-performing human capital: whether within EDC-Senegal or among partner organizations, the project relies on competent, dynamic, and highly dedicated teams striving to achieve

Moreover, EDC-Senegal benefits from strong institutional and technical anchoring through seamless collaboration with the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, and their decentralized services in the implementation of the project.

With impressive results, what specific strategies have enabled you to meet and exceed these targets?

Several specific strategies have contributed to these remarkable results:

First, EDC-Senegal's unique approach to PFPI implementation. Indeed, in collaboration with five other partner NGOs, EDC-Senegal ensures the implementation of PFPI across different regions of Senegal:

- YMCA (Dakar)
- JED (Thiès and Matam)

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

- Caritas-Kolda (Kolda and Sédhiou)
- Caritas-Ziguinchor (Ziguinchor)
- Écoles au Sénégal (Dakar, Thiès (Tivaouane), Saint-Louis, Kaolack (Porokhane), Diourbel (Touba), Louga)
- EDC-Senegal (Fatick, Kaffrine, Kaolack, Louga, and Saint-Louis)

This extensive territorial coverage allows for an effective response to local specificities and ensures better proximity to beneficiaries, thereby strengthening the project's impact.

Beyond employability and entrepreneurship training, PFPI provides financial support to young people to help them launch income-generating activities (IGAs).

A total of 7,721 young people, organized into groups of 5 to 7, have received initial funding of 125,000 CFA francs per group, with an additional 250,000 CFA francs to be allocated later.

One of the major challenges in vocational training remains the inclusion of young women and low-literacy populations.

How does EDC-Senegal adapt its teaching methods and support mechanisms to ensure equitable and effective access for these groups?

EDC-Senegal's training program is available in multiple formats: written, audio in local languages, braille, and sign language for courses involving deaf and mute youth.

Young volunteers equipped with audio devices travel to remote areas to deliver employability and entrepreneurship training to young men and women. This proximity helps make training accessible to vulnerable groups and facilitates the socio-professional integration of young women, who often face early marriage, pregnancies, and heavy domestic responsibilities. Already, 38,484 young women have been trained and have received financial support to develop their independent businesses.

EDC-Senegal continuously engages in action research through context-specific approaches. As new needs emerge in the field, EDC-Senegal provides innovative solutions. For instance, it is currently introducing image-based booklets as apprentice workbooks to complement training and enhance understanding of the modules.

Additionally, 80 young people with disabilities have been trained and received funding to start income-generating activities.

Finally, EDC-Senegal includes graduates from Quranic schools (daaras) in its target group, providing them with technical training in computer programming, market gardening, or poultry farming to facilitate their professional integration.

DIGITAL SPOTLIGHT



EdTech Mondays WAEMU - "Local Innovation: Public Authorities and EdTech"

The new edition of EdTech Mondays WAEMU, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, Dentsu and TV5 Monde, highlighted the key role of governments in the digital transformation of the education sector. The program explored how public policies and EdTech initiatives are strengthening access to quality education in West Africa.

The growth of EdTech in the WAEMU region is hampered by several challenges. The first is poor digital access: in 2022, the Internet penetration rate was around 30%, with marked discrepancies between urban and rural areas. Investment also remains insufficient, with less than 5% of education budgets allocated to digital transformation,

limiting the integration of technology in public schools. In addition, the lack of infrastructure is a major brake, as 25% to 40% of rural schools have no electricity, making it difficult to adopt digital solutions. Finally, the high cost of equipment is a barrier for many households, more than half of which cannot afford EdTech tools.

The discussion brought together several experts in the field:

- Aba Dieng, Technical Advisor to Senegal's Ministry of Higher Education.
- Adenike Bancole, Head of Program, Mastercard Foundation.
- Lamine Barro, Founder of Etudesk.

Watch the TV show here.

BEHIND THE SCENES



BE YES Program - Launch of BeYes and the new D-Hub

The «BE YES» program (Building viable Ecosystems for Young Entrepreneurs in Senegal), piloted by DER/FJ, aims to build a decentralized entrepreneurial ecosystem, offering more inclusive and equitable training and employment opportunities for young people and women throughout the country, with a particular focus on innovative sectors with high development potential.

The program aims to create an environment conducive to the emergence of new sustainable businesses. It will facilitate access to 13,515 jobs for young people aged 18 to 35, 70% of whom will be young women. In addition, the program plans to finance 2,000 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and offer training, mentoring and coaching opportunities,

with a particular focus on high-potential talent in remote areas.

On Thursday January 30, DER/FJ inaugurated the new D-Hub, designed to be a catalyst for innovation, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. The event brought together local authorities and partners such as Orange Money and Wave Mobile Money. The center, which will be deployed in 7 hubs across the region, integrates financing, support, incubation, training and awareness-raising for new technologies.

The infrastructure includes a FabLab, an event space, a Gaming/VR/AR area, offices, a coworking space, a GUFÉ facilitation center, a multimedia space and a cafeteria.



E4Y - Open Days in Abidjan

The E4Y program's Open Days were held in Abidjan to raise awareness about the program and the support mechanisms available to young entrepreneurs and women in the agro-industrial sector. This initiative aims to strengthen their skills, improve market access, and facilitate access to financing.

Implemented by Teranga Gestion, ESP Partners, and Club Tioassane, E4Y is deployed in four countries: Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Togo.

The program aims to support nearly 50,000 women and create 70,000 jobs over six years while improving the incomes of approximately 500,000 people.

The event brought together various economic and institutional stakeholders, providing a platform for discussions and the development of innovative solutions to address the challenges of the agro-industrial sector.



THE FOUNDATION WORLDWIDE



Mastercard Foundation podcast inspires tomorrow's leaders

Transcending Boundaries invites listeners to reflect on the importance of leadership based on strong values, and to engage in actions with lasting impact for a better future.

The Mastercard Foundation launches Transcending Boundaries - Conversations with Reeta Roy, a podcast series exploring the inspirational journeys of global leaders. Hosted by Reeta Roy, President of the Foundation, the series highlights exceptional figures, such as former heads of state, human rights defenders and pioneers of social change, who share their experiences and values.

The first episode, broadcast on March 10, 2025, features Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia and Nobel Laureate. She talks about her journey, the challenges she faced and the influences that shaped

her worldview. This first interview perfectly illustrates the spirit of the podcast: a sincere exchange on leadership, the impact of values and resilience in the face of obstacles.

Each episode will feature leaders who have made history in their respective fields, such as Louise Arbour, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland. These conversations offer inspiration for those wishing to make a difference in their communities and beyond. The podcast is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, YouTube and the Mastercard Foundation website.

Watch the episodes here.





If you would like to contribute to our next edition, please
contact Sophie Diakité and send us your content for
publication.

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