



Promoting of entrepreneurship amongst young people and women

PROJECT: Women, Youths and Standardization

To ensure a better integration of women and young entrepreneurs into the formal economy through the use of standards and quality control systems

Context

The Women, Youths and Standardization project aims to create conditions within the Francophonie to ensure a better integration of women and young people into the formal economy through the use of standards and quality control systems. With an approach to ensuring the sustainability of the project, *l'Association RNF* has defined four key conditions for success enabling it to accompany women entrepreneurs and young entrepreneurs in an effective and sustainable manner towards a culture of standardization:

- The bringing together of the various national players in standardization and trade towards a common goal: that of enabling women and youths in the application of standards and quality control systems;
- The reaching out to women and youths to engage their interest in the importance of standards;
- The networking of women and youths;
- The building up of skills concerning standardization and quality infrastructure.

Project Description

The Women, Youths and Standardization (WYS) project is a structuring approach to improve the African entrepreneurial environment through knowledge of standards and quality management in order to facilitate the establishment of formal enterprises. Based on the modern means of

communication, it meets the expectations of women entrepreneurs and young entrepreneurs in Africa who are well aware of the need of getting to grips with standards and quality control to improve their market access.

In practical terms, the WYS project aims to establish, coordinate and network 19 Women, Youths and Standardization National Cellules (WYSNCs) that will act as one-stop shops. These will provide women and young entrepreneurs with access on a regular basis to awareness campaigns, training activities, support and the sharing of best practices concerning standards and quality management.

The national cellules will function like a true community of practice to bring together, increase awareness in, and train women and youths who are interested in using standards and quality management as a tool to add value to their businesses. Through establishing WYSNCs, *l'Association RNF* has two main goals: to create a modern, efficient channel of communication to reach women and young entrepreneurs; and to offer, through this channel, the necessary training and support for the latter to integrate standards and quality control in their business plans.

Implementation

L'Association RNF will act as coordinator of the project and be responsible for its implementation. More specifically, *l'Association RNF* will be responsible for ensuring the convergence of actions to structure, organize and equip the WYSNC one-stop shops in the various countries.

To avoid duplicating structures and to make use of on-site standardization expertise, each WYSNC will be established under the National Standards Body (NSB) of the country requesting assistance. The NSB will be Manager of its cellule and chief beneficiary of the project, thus fulfilling one of the main objectives of the project: that of spreading the NSB's influence and highlighting the role it can play in the economy of the country in question.

L'Association RNF will assist each NSB by providing the necessary support for the establishment and the management of the WYSNCs including a toolkit for the establishment and management of cellules, communications equipment, awareness activities and training content, the social media management strategy, social media management training, accountability tools, Annual Report templates, etc. *L'Association RNF* will also see to the networking of WYSNCs using its collaborative platform for information exchange to encourage the sharing of expertise.

To maximize visibility with a minimum of resources, the social media content and the services provided by the cellules will be sustained through two main channels: digital technology for awareness raising and encouraging interest in standardization (digital strategy via social networks), and on-site training activities on a regular basis (standardization cafés, workshops, etc.).

Each WYSNC will prepare an action plan to define its strategy for the recruitment of women and young entrepreneurs and present its services. The selection of standards addressed in the services offered by the cellule will be determined by national needs expressed by the women, youths, and partners in terms of economic sectors and training needs, experience sharing, and transfer of expertise.

To recruit women and young entrepreneurs who will become members of the WYSNCs, each NSB will ensure it mobilizes developing enterprises from the business incubators in its country along with any organizations for the promotion of trade and for the support of entrepreneurship, and youth and women's associations. In so doing, the NSBs will benefit from their contacts with businesses owned by women and youths, and also from a direct line of communication to their target clientele. It should be noted that NSBs already have various channels for the distribution of information and for collaboration with these organizations and associations in their respective countries. The activities of the WYSNCs will enable them to strengthen this collaboration between NSBs and business associations devoted to women and youths, and subsequently to meet their needs proactively regarding standardization. The establishment of a WYSNC will be an excellent way to bring the various players of that country together to work in a practical manner as a network. This is also one of the objectives of the project.

Target

19 countries have been targeted for a WYSNC: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Mauritius, Seychelles, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco, and Haiti.

Objective

The objective of the WYSNC one-stop shops is to help African enterprises advance using standards as an economic development tool by:

- Creating national communities of practice for women and young people based on standards;
- Circulating information related to standards and quality infrastructure;
- Training women and young entrepreneurs in the standards applicable to their fields of activity;
- Facilitating the exchange of best practices;
- Increasing synergy between the economic players in the francophone countries right at the heart of those countries, and consequently increasing the opportunities offered to women and young people;
- Transferring expertise and the content developed for the management of the cellules to the NSBs.

In order to implement this ambitious multi-player project, *l'Association RNF* is counting on the driving forces of its partners while building on existing structures and networks. The principal partner organizations are *l'OIF* (The International Organization of La Francophonie), *l'IFDD* (The *Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable*), ISO (the International Organization for Standardization), ARSO (the African Organisation for Standardisation), the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission), and ITC (the International Trade Centre). These organizations are closely involved with the Francophonie, standardization, and trade, and will contribute a wealth of knowledge and content to the project. They have all accepted to collaborate with *l'Association RNF* and become actively involved to support the project.

Alignment with the goals of *l'Association RNF*

The WYS project at *l'Association RNF* owes its existence to the Association's strong desire to promote the importance of taking standards into account in the economic development of countries and the development of the economic Francophonie. The project is included in the strategic development plan of the Association and is directly in line with its mission, which is to enable players in the Francophonie to participate in standardization activities and use standards as tools for sustainable economic development.

Sustainability

The WYS project implemented by *l'Association RNF*, its NSB members, and its partners will consolidate the strengths of the players in Africa and develop standardization expertise open to the world, thus contributing to the economic development of the francophone countries. Once established, each WYSNC will serve as a basis for the NSBs to play a key role in the economy. It will enable them to establish themselves as service-oriented organizations actively involved in helping women and young entrepreneurs, in synergy with trade promotion organizations and youth and women's associations in their country.

Outreach and visibility

The results, whose value will be shown through the use of the accountability and communication tools from the toolkit, will enable the NSBs to promote themselves to their governments and to the various stakeholders. This outreach may also be used with a view to obtaining additional funding to ensure the sustainability of the activities of their national cellules.

The very existence of the WYS project primarily serves the needs of women and young entrepreneurs seeking tools in the context of the new economy. It is closely linked to the strength of the network of *l'Association RNF*, established since 2008, which links together more than 80 members in 27 countries. Complying with and complementary to the strategic guidelines and action plans of *l'OIF*, *l'IFDD*, ISO, the IEC, ARSO and ITC, the project will benefit from certain visibility in the international community and economic Francophonie. Finally, the social media management strategy on which the project is based will also ensure increased visibility.

Expected outcomes (over 2 years)

- 19 Women, Youths and Standardization National Cellules in the style of one-stop shops;
- 19 Inception workshops;
- 19 National action plans for the management of the cellules developed in collaboration and synergy with trade promotion organizations and youth and women's associations;

- A social media strategy to promote standards and quality management adapted to the needs of entrepreneurs in the African context;
- An action plan for the management of the WYSNC's social media activities;
- Dynamic social media presence targeting women and young entrepreneurs;
- 38 annual reports reviewing the activities of the WYSNCs (1 per year per cellule);
- A toolkit to facilitate the establishment and management of the WYSNCs, including training content on the main standards related to the economic sectors in the country;
- 190 Standardization Cafés (an average of 5 Cafés per year per country);
- 19 000 WYSNC members (a recruitment goal of 1000 members per cellule per country).