

West African Papers

# Financing for gender equality in the Sahel and West Africa

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# FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

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## WEST AFRICAN PAPERS

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## Abstract

The Sahel and West Africa continue to face significant challenges in advancing towards gender equality and women's empowerment. While much progress has been made in health and educational outcomes for women and girls in the region, much more has yet to be done. Official development assistance (ODA) can play a crucial role in this respect, by mobilising support for gender equality. This paper aims to highlight the current financing for the gender equality landscape in the region. It points to a need to increase the share of ODA supporting gender equality objectives; to support local women's organisations as key actors in reaching the most vulnerable women and girls; to invest in the evaluation of gender-sensitive programmes and learning around them; and to support the generation of gender-disaggregated data to identify where action can be most effective.

**Keywords:** Official development assistance (ODA), gender equality, Sahel and West Africa, development co-operation, humanitarian assistance, Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

**JEL Classification:** F50, I15, I25, L31, O10

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# Foreword

This paper analyses the development finance available for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Sahel and West Africa, as defined by the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC/OECD): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. The analysis has been jointly developed by the Secretariats of the OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET); the DAC Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF); and the Sahel and West Africa Club.

This analysis draws on finance data reported by development finance providers to the OECD’s Creditor Reporting System (CRS), using the DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker. The OECD sets the standards for, collects, makes publicly available, and analyses development finance data – including development finance for gender equality and women’s empowerment – as part of its core mandate. It regularly publishes analyses of development finance for gender equality, in order to provide strategic guidance on policies, practice and investments for development providers. The OECD Development Co-operation Directorate, in its support for the GENDERNET, oversees this work. The most established and extensive financing data available are those for bilateral official development assistance (ODA), or “aid”, provided by the 30 members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). These data provide the foundation for the analysis in this paper.

The Sahel and West Africa is currently experiencing multiple interconnected crises – in security, health and food. Political instability, armed conflict, widespread poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, and the impact of climate change pose a real threat to women and girls across the region. In this context, gender inequality is exacerbated, and women and girls face heightened risks.

Joint GENDERNET-INCAF analysis indicates that gender inequality and fragility are inextricably linked, and that it is therefore important to look at these two elements together. This paper offers an overview of the financing landscape for gender equality in the region. It focuses on the main development partners, recipients and priority sectors of development finance and provides insights into the progress made and points to where development, humanitarian and peace actors can build on existing efforts to accelerate results.

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# Executive Summary

Countries in the Sahel and West Africa continue to face significant challenges in addressing gender inequality. These challenges are embedded in a larger context of multiple, interconnected crises (security, food, health), high poverty levels, political instability and environmental concerns. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse hard-won progress on gender equality. While members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) are mobilising financing, policies and practices to meet these compound issues, accelerated action is needed to achieve further progress on the African Union Agenda 2063, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals – and SDG 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment in particular.

To make progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Sahel and West Africa, a range of tools and efforts are necessary, all of which depend on financial investments. This paper focuses on Official Development Assistance (ODA) in support of gender equality and women’s empowerment by the 30 members of the OECD DAC. Levels of ODA with gender equality objectives in the Sahel and West Africa region has steadily increased in recent years, reaching USD 4.2 billion on average over 2018-19. This corresponds to 41% of aid in the region. The volume of ODA with gender equality as the principal objective of the programme has risen significantly, reaching USD 574 million over the same period, representing 6% of total ODA to the region. Burkina Faso, Guinea and Sierra Leone received the highest shares of ODA with gender equality objectives.

The paper identifies five key sector combinations where gender equality in the region is or should be prioritised: Education and health; Government and civil society; Food security, agriculture and climate change; Economic and productive sectors; and Humanitarian assistance and aid to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

- **Education and health** received the highest percentage of ODA integrating gender equality objectives in 2018-19. However, significant challenges remain. Child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and female genital mutilation are rooted in gender inequality and have major negative impacts on girls’ and women’s health, education and well-being. Improving sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is critical to driving progress towards gender equality. It is linked to increased food security for women and girls, improved access to education for girls and women’s economic empowerment.

- In the **Government and civil society** sector, this paper finds that restrictive social norms are a leading factor in harmful practices such as gender-based violence and female genital mutilation and in standing in the way of women's leadership – especially as political actors. This sector also highlights the lack of consistent financing towards women's rights organisations in the region, and notably for locally based women's rights organisations.
- In the area of **Food security, agriculture and climate change**, significant challenges prevail. For the third consecutive year, a major food and nutrition crisis is looming in the Sahel and West Africa, with women and children disproportionately affected. With livelihoods tied closely to agriculture and land, the share of ODA going to gender equality in the agricultural and rural development sectors needs to be increased. Climate ODA for gender equality objectives in the region, on the other hand, is quite high by comparison with the global average.
- The labour market in the Sahel and West Africa is largely informal. Women are overrepresented in the most vulnerable types of employment and have little or no access to social protection. The **Economic and productive** sectors are in general those with the least amount of aid focused on gender equality. The percentage of aid committed to gender equality in the energy, transport and urban development sectors is particularly low and offers considerable potential for further investment.
- **Humanitarian assistance and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda** play a major role in the region. Widespread conflict in the Sahel has had repercussions for the rest of the region. This has materialised into violence that not only involves military objectives, but has also repeatedly targeted civilians, many of them women. The extent to which a gender equality perspective is integrated across all pillars of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus presents mixed results. Only 20% of aid under the Humanitarian pillar integrates gender equality objectives, this figure reaches 43% for the Development pillar and 58% for the Peace pillar. However, DAC members could better address long-term challenges to gender equality by ensuring that humanitarian programming (designed for the short term) is aligned with long-term goals on achieving gender equality.

# The financing landscape in the Sahel and West Africa

To make progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in the Sahel and West Africa, a range of tools and efforts are necessary, all of which are underpinned by financial investment. This paper focuses on Official Development Assistance in support of gender equality and women's empowerment by the 30 members of the OECD DAC. These international financing mechanisms are intended to support national efforts. Partner country governments should also increase financing for gender equality through such methods as gender-responsive budgeting.

In 2020, levels of official development assistance (ODA) rose to an all-time high of USD 161.2 billion, up 3.5% in real terms from 2019. Bilateral allocable ODA (hereafter "aid" or "ODA"<sup>1</sup>) from the 30 DAC members, targeting gender equality and women's empowerment has steadily increased to an historically high level. DAC members committed USD 53 billion in total on average per year in 2018-19 for gender equality and women's empowerment (either as a significant or principal objective, see Box 1). This represents 44.5% of ODA. The bulk of DAC members' aid towards gender equality and women's empowerment was committed to programmes that integrate gender equality as a significant mainstreamed policy objective: USD 47.4 billion, representing 40% of total aid. Total support for programmes dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment as the principal objective has remained relatively stable over time. In 2018-19, it amounted to USD 5.6 billion per year, representing 5% of total aid, a slight rise from the prior period. All aid would benefit from integrating the goals of gender equality and achieving the empowerment of women and girls, and DAC members do this to varying degrees, with some reaching as much as 80% of ODA in this area.

Of all regions worldwide, sub-Saharan Africa receives the largest amount of ODA. In 2018-19, ODA to sub-Saharan Africa amounted to over USD 27.1 billion, while aid to the North Africa and the Middle East was over USD 14.3 billion. Even though the Sahel and West Africa region is host to almost one quarter of all fragile contexts<sup>2</sup> worldwide, it only accounts for 17% of global ODA and around a quarter of ODA to Africa. ODA to the Sahel and West Africa region<sup>3</sup> amounted to USD 10 billion on average in 2018-19 and represents an overall increase of 27% since 2010-11.

Levels of ODA with gender equality objectives in the Sahel and West Africa region has steadily increased in recent years, reaching USD 4.2 billion in 2018-19. This corresponds to 41% of aid in the region (see Figure 1). The volume of ODA with gender equality as the dedicated (principal) objective of the programme has risen significantly, reaching USD 574 million in 2018-19. This is 6% of total ODA to the region.

#### Box 1.

##### The DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker

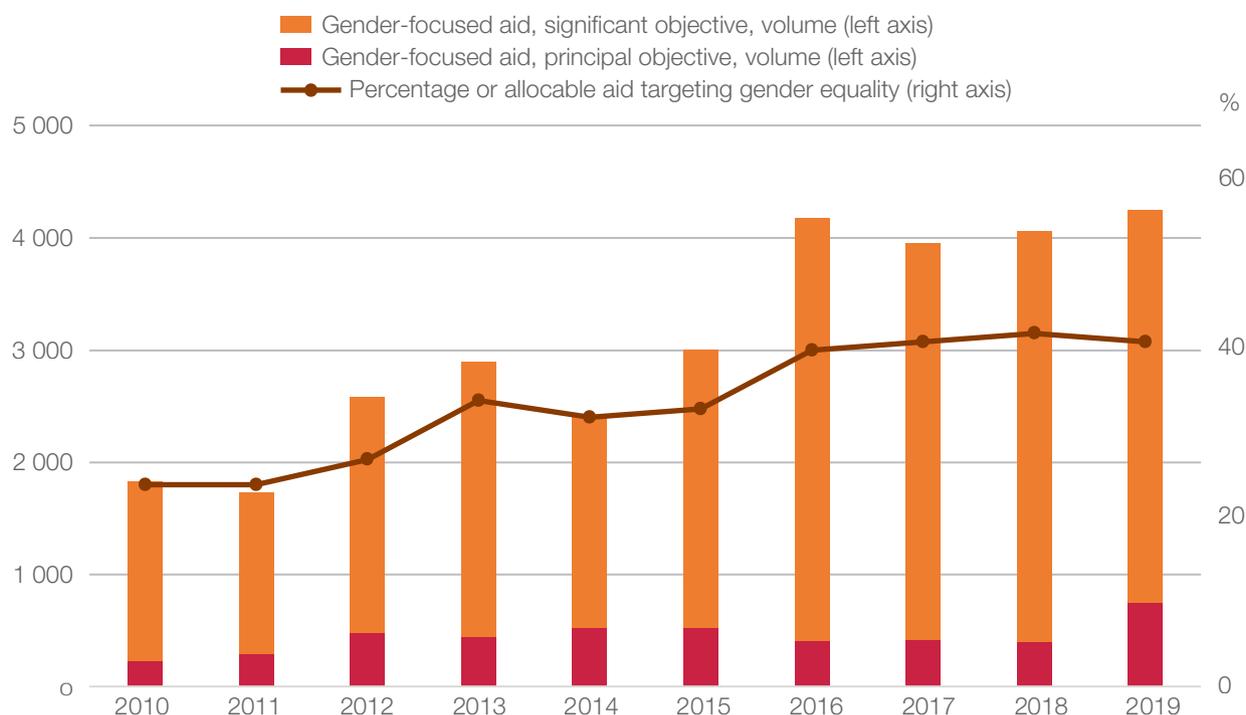
When reporting development finance to the OECD, DAC members assess the extent to which their ODA addresses gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by applying the DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker at the planning phase of development activities.

A project or programme is classified as focused on gender equality if it is “intended to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls or reduce discrimination and inequalities based on sex.” The three scores under the marker are:

- Not targeted (Score 0):** The project/programme has been screened against the marker but has been found not to target gender equality.
- Significant (Score 1):** Gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/programme.
- Principal (Score 2):** Gender equality is the main objective of the project/programme and is fundamental in its design and expected results. The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this gender equality objective.

The OECD DAC *Handbook on the DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker* sets out additional guidance: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf>.

Figure 1.  
Gender equality aid to Sahel and West African countries  
USD million in 2019 prices, commitments

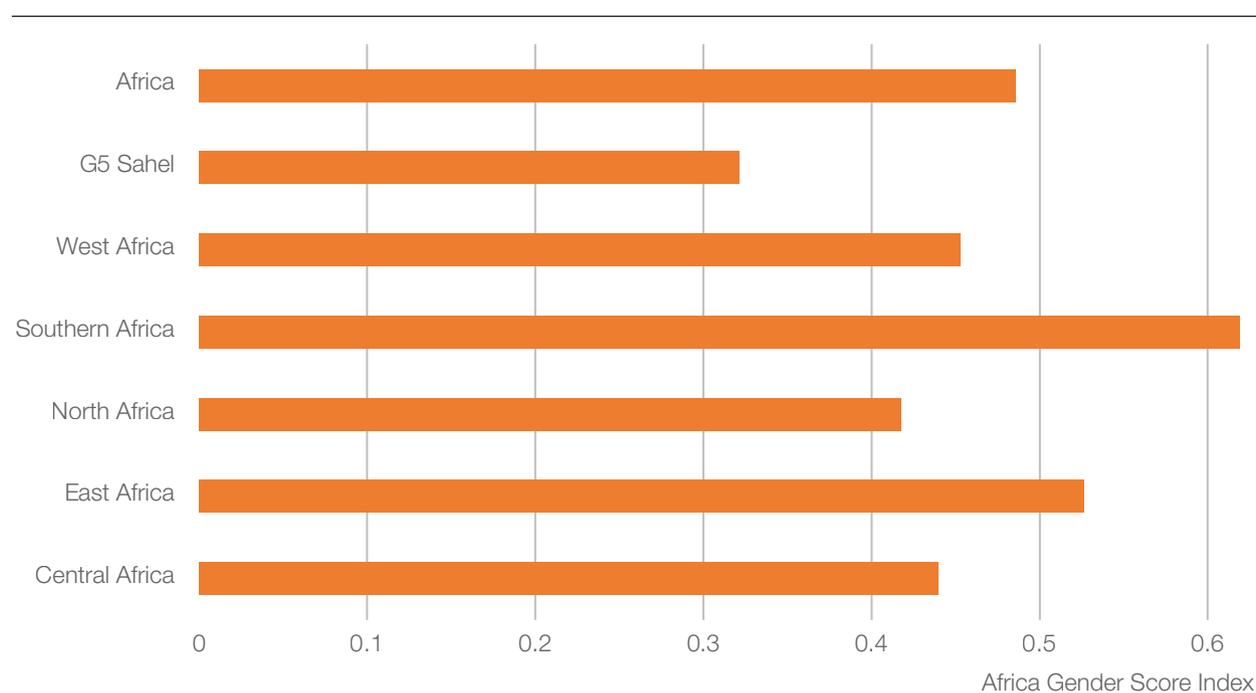


Source: Authors, based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

While ODA for gender equality in the Sahel and West Africa has risen over the past decade, the rates of gender inequality across the region remain high (UNDP, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>; AfDB and UNECA, 2019<sup>[2]</sup>).<sup>4</sup> Many factors beyond ODA have influenced progress towards gender equality in the region, but it is clear that efforts to address the root causes of gender inequality and creating transformational change have not yet yielded enough results. Stakeholders must consider that this challenge is generational, considering that the actions (or inaction) of the current generation will determine the fate of generations to come, and deserves continued efforts over a protracted period. The Africa Gender Index by the African Development Bank indicates that of the African sub-regions, the Sahel continues to face the greatest challenges in making progress on gender equality, followed by North Africa and West Africa (see Figure 2). Six West African countries (Chad, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Sierra Leone) feature in the bottom 10 countries of the index, more than any other African sub-region. Only one West African country (Cabo Verde) is among the top 10 performers in the index. A detailed review of the three dimensions of the Africa Gender Index shows that the score for countries in the Sahel and West Africa is particularly low in the empowerment and representation dimension.<sup>5</sup>

Gender disaggregated data in the region is limited. While indexes such as the Africa Gender Index and the UNDP Gender Inequalities Index can provide important overviews of the extent of existing gender inequality, data gaps can limit understanding of how and where action can be most effective. Evidence shows that gender inequality do not receive corresponding levels of resources to combat such inequalities – especially in fragile contexts (Goemans, Koester and Loudon, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>). Yet while this holds true, increasing the extent to which gender equality is integrated into ODA and programming alone is not enough to show how these resources – or a lack of them – are affecting levels of gender equality over time. A deeper review and evaluation of the impact of DAC members’ ODA and programming are needed, as well as of its impact on gender equality.

**Figure 2.**  
Africa Gender Index per sub-region



Note: The closer the score is to 1, the smaller the gender gap. A score below 1 indicates a gender parity in favour of men, while a score above 1 indicates a gender parity in favour of women. The G5 Sahel includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. Source: Authors' calculations from <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/africa-gender-index-report-2019-analytical-report>.

## WHO ARE THE MAIN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS?

In 2018-19, the United States (with USD 734 million), Germany (USD 608 million) and France (USD 515 million) were on average the largest providers of ODA for gender equality in the Sahel and West Africa. Canada (98%) and Ireland (90%) however, provided the largest shares of ODA for gender equality to the region (see Figure 3).<sup>6</sup>

Box 2.

## DAC members' strategic engagement in the Sahel and West Africa

Engagement from DAC members in the Sahel and West Africa has increased substantially in the last 10 years (see Figure 1). However, while the entire region is a priority area for many DAC members, the Sahel receives particular attention in many development co-operation and humanitarian strategies – such as the EU's Sahel strategy, the US “Regional Development Cooperation Strategy for West Africa and the Sahel”, the French “Regional Strategy for the Sahel” and the UK's “Pivot to the Sahel”. Some DAC members focus on the Sahel in their overarching Africa strategies (e.g. Irish Aid's Africa Strategy). In addition to significant amounts of ODA committed to the region, military operations and interventions aiming to stabilise the conflict-prone region and prevent violent extremism are priority areas for DAC members, with a number of members committing military forces to the Sahel.

Some development partner strategies for the Sahel and West Africa point towards the need to address gender inequalities. For example, France's Regional Strategy for the Sahel mentions women's economic empowerment as a priority area for its engagement in the region. This Strategy also includes aspects of advancing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. The US strategy both specifically mentions efforts to support WPS – in line with its WPS Act – as well as priority areas for gender equality in the region, such as education and economic empowerment.

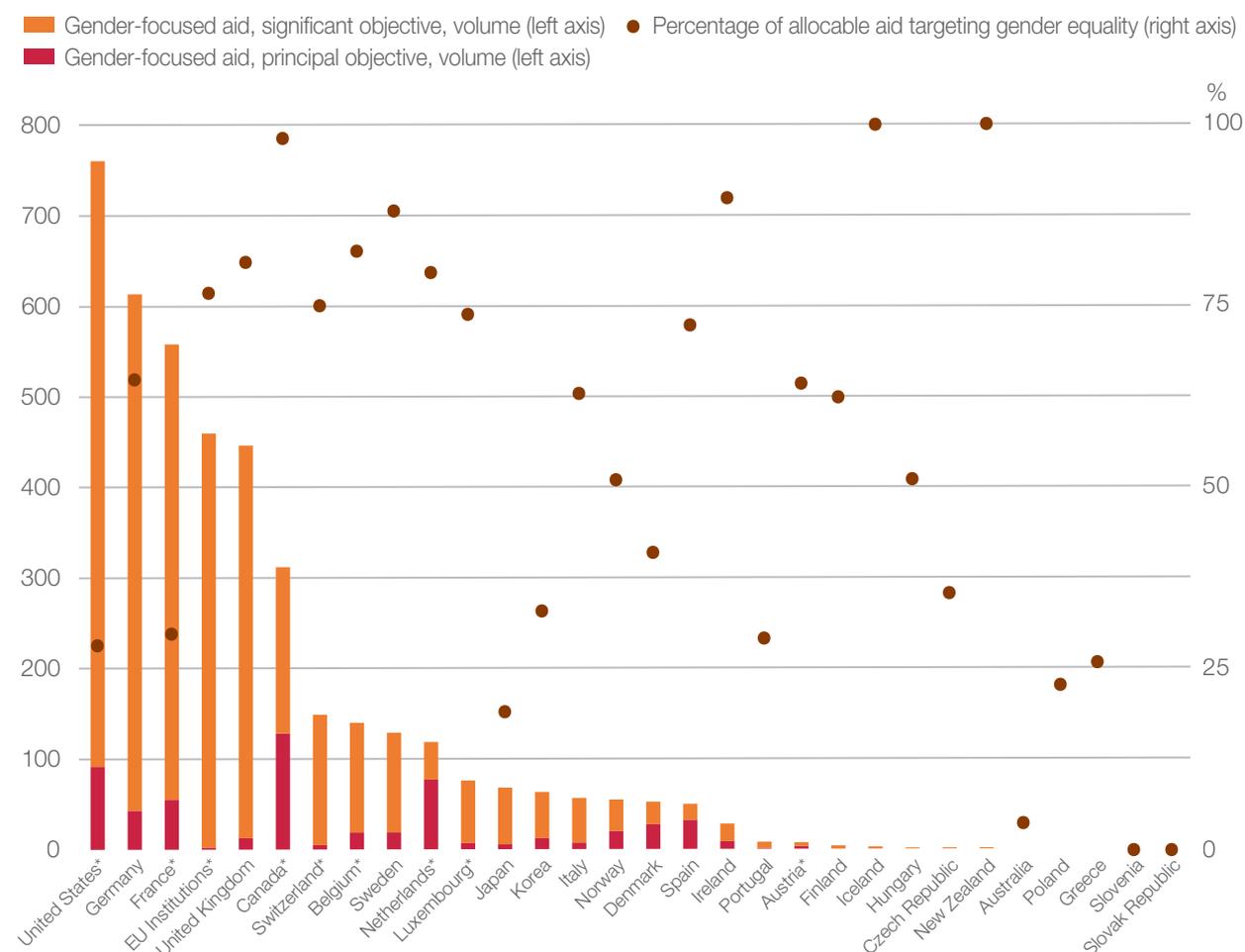
DAC members' strategies for the region also focus extensively on the transnational nature of working in the Sahel. Development co-operation strategies, in line with security objectives, prioritise conflict prevention as a regional approach rather than a focus on any particular country. Due to the cross-cutting nature of conflict prevention activities through development co-operation and DAC members' military interventions – and to some extent, the WPS Agenda – engagement in the Sahel offers opportunities for large-scale “triple nexus” approaches (approaches utilising the interlinked pillars of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus). These approaches are specifically referred to in the strategies of the United States and France for the Sahel. This includes a focus on gender equality through the WPS Agenda (see OECD (2021<sup>[4]</sup>)). Furthermore, engagement in the region offers opportunities to solidify linkages between development and diplomacy, which is especially relevant to working on gender equality in fragile contexts. This can also ensure that security objectives are supported by development initiatives and humanitarian needs.

Source: (AFD, 2020<sup>[6]</sup>; European Union, 2021<sup>[6]</sup>; UK FCDO, 2019<sup>[7]</sup>; USAID, 2020<sup>[8]</sup>).

Figure 3.

## DAC members' gender-focused aid to the Sahel and West Africa

On average in 2018-19 (USD million in 2019 prices), commitments



Note: \* denotes both a member of the Development Assistance Committee and the Sahel and West Africa Club.

Source: Authors, based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

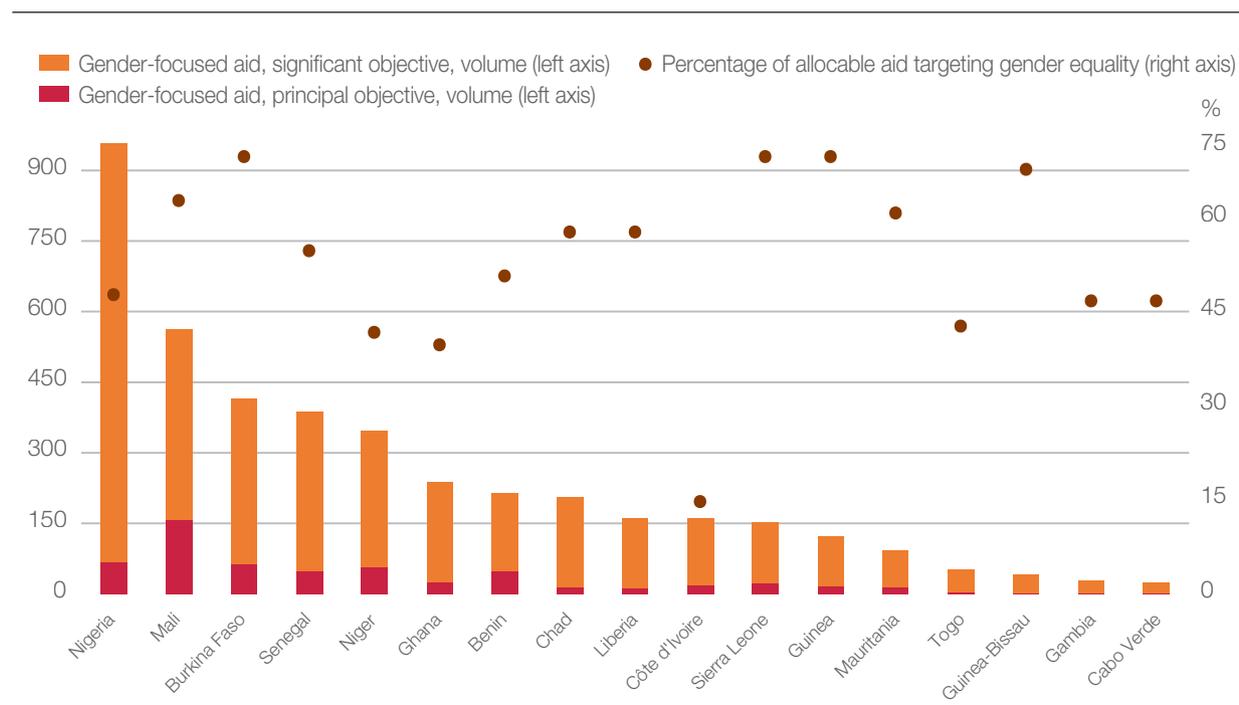
## WHO ARE THE MAIN RECIPIENTS?

The largest recipient by far of ODA for gender equality is Nigeria, followed by Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Niger (Figure 4). Nigeria has seen the largest increase in the volume of gender-focused ODA from 2012-13 to 2018-19: USD 219 million to USD 958 million. Cabo Verde, Liberia and Ghana all showed declines between 2012-13 and 2018-19. However, this is in line with the decline in global ODA to Cabo Verde and Liberia over this period.

The shares (brown dots in Figure 4) of total ODA integrating or dedicated to gender equality rose significantly across the region between 2012-13 and 2018-19. On average in 2018-2019, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Sierra Leone had the highest shares of ODA for gender equality objectives (69%)

(Figure 4), while Côte d’Ivoire had the lowest (14%). The exceptions to this trend are Benin, Ghana, Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, where the focus on gender equality has not increased between 2012-13 and 2018-19.

Figure 4.  
Aid for gender equality to Sahel and West African countries  
On average in 2018-19 (USD million in 2019 prices), commitments



Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

While ODA is not the sole modality that can, or should, be used in improving gender inequalities, it remains an important tool for doing so. Countries in the Sahel and West Africa that received the most gender-focused aid on average between 2018-19 are not always those with the largest gender gaps as ranked by the Africa Gender Index. However, countries receiving the highest share of ODA integrating gender equality – such as Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone – do show high levels of gender inequality (see Figure 5). This indicates that development partners are mobilising their ODA to prioritise gender equality objectives throughout much of their policy and programme actions in the region. However, there is still room for improvement. Countries such as Chad and Mauritania show the lowest levels of gender equality in the region but also show significantly high shares of ODA that integrates gender equality (although they are not in the top five countries receiving this type of ODA). This could indicate that development partner approaches towards gender equality in these contexts needs adjustment if they are to help bring about transformative change. With similar room for improvement, countries such as Côte d’Ivoire

and Niger show both low levels of gender equality and low percentages of ODA integrating gender equality objectives. Increasing the extent to which gender equality is integrated into ODA programming could make a substantial impact in addressing gender inequality in these countries.

Figure 5.  
Share of ODA integrating gender equality and Africa Gender Index scores



Note: Share of ODA is calculated on average between 2018 and 2019 as a percentage and then reverted to decimal format to match the scale of the AGI score. AGI score is representative of gender parity in the listed country. The closer the score is to 1, the more gender equal the country is.

Source: ODA calculations are authors', based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>; on the Africa Gender Index: authors' calculations from <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/africa-gender-index-report-2019-analytical-report>.

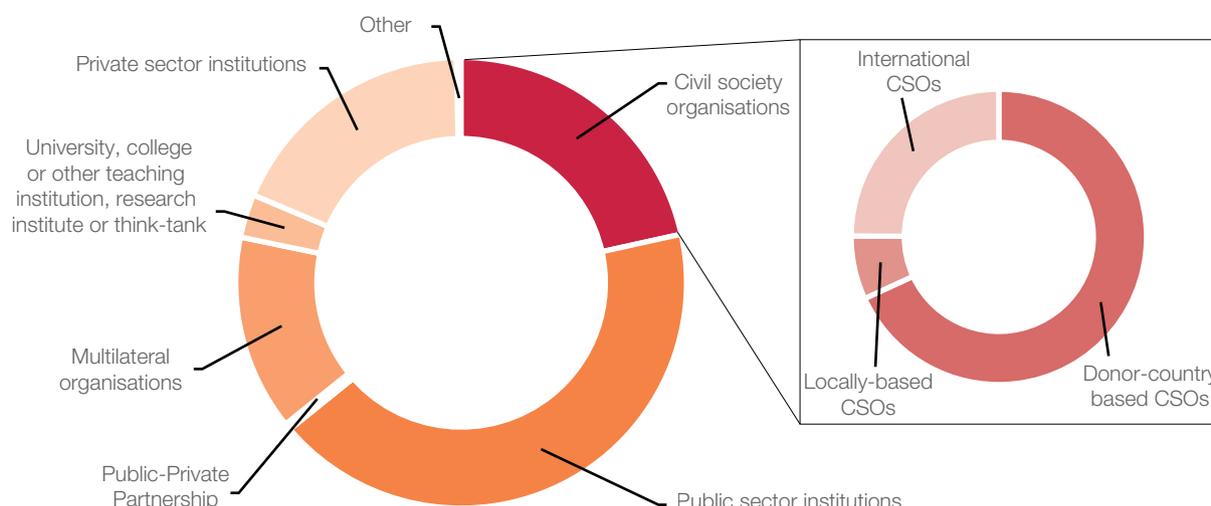
## WHAT ARE THE CHANNELS OF AID DELIVERY?

In the region, public sector institutions – such as partner country governments and development partners' country government institutions – represent the most frequently used channel for delivering bilateral ODA for gender equality in 2018-19 (Figure 6). This amounted to USD 1.9 billion.

The second most frequently used channel by DAC members was civil society organisations (CSOs), amounting to USD 948 million. Consistent financing to local CSOs and women's rights organisations is a global challenge. The same is true of the Sahel and West Africa region. ODA allocated directly from DAC members to locally based CSOs accounted for a small part of this funding, with USD 66 million flowing directly from

DAC members to local organisations (see also the section on Government and civil society). Private sector institutions (both in partner and development partner countries) and multilateral organisations followed as the next most frequently used channels, amounting to USD 805 million and USD 618 million respectively.

**Figure 6.**  
Channels of delivery for ODA for gender equality, 2018-19



Note: International CSOs are distinguished either by the existence of an international co-ordinating body facilitating the work of its members at the international level or an extensive network of country/regional offices in the field; and that have internationally diversified sources of revenue. For further information, see DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)44/FINAL.  
Source: Authors, based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

## WHICH SECTORS ARE PRIORITISED?

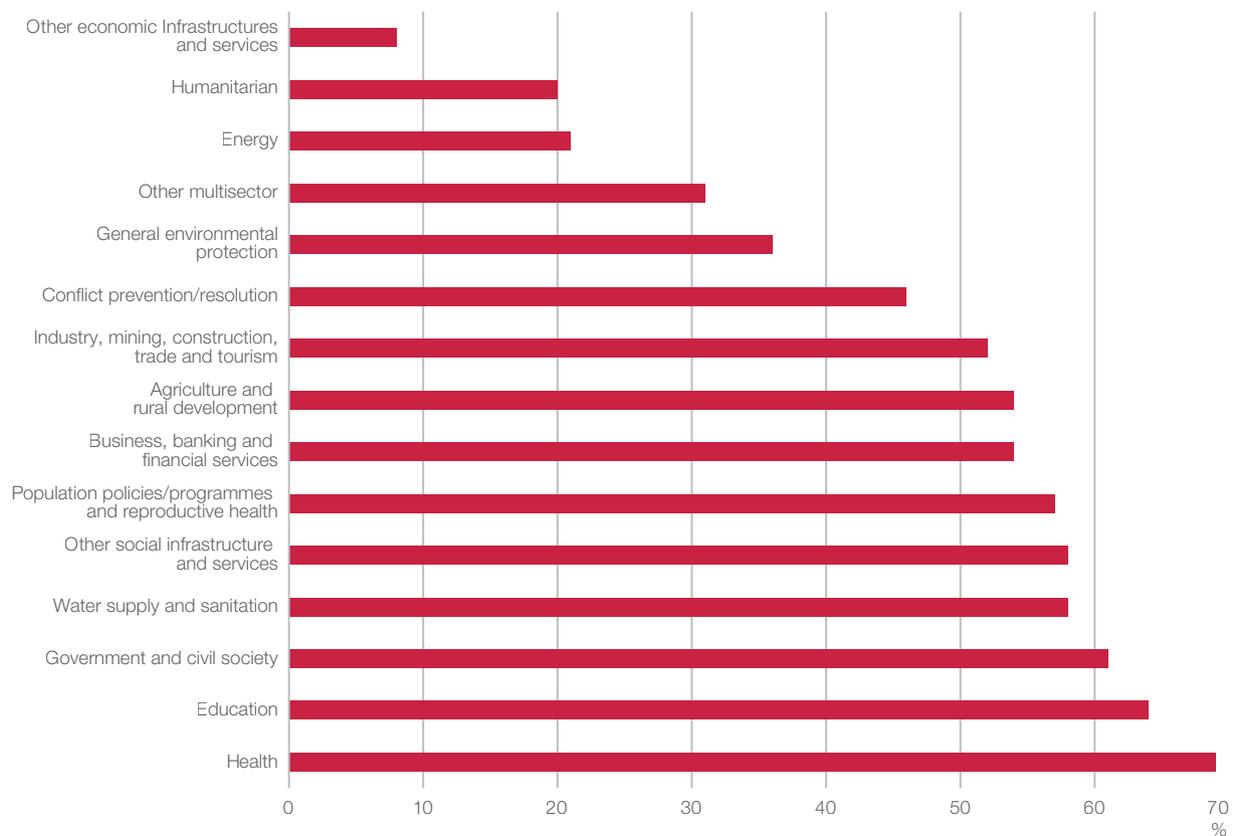
The USD 4.2 billion ODA for gender equality in the Sahel and West Africa region is mostly allocated to the following sectors: Education (USD 832 million), Government and civil society (USD 621 million), Health (USD 527 million), Agriculture and rural development (USD 475 million), and Population policies/programmes and reproductive health (USD 384 million). The share of ODA for gender equality in the region is highest in the Health (69%), Education (64%), Government and civil society (61%), and Water supply and sanitation (58%) sectors. The humanitarian sector (20%) as well as some of the economic and productive sectors, including Transport (9%), Energy (21%) and Urban development (23%), present potential for additional gender-focused aid.

Further sectoral divisions of ODA will be explored in the next sections on Education and health; Government and civil society; Food security, agriculture and climate change; Economic and productive sectors; and Humanitarian assistance, as well as the WPS Agenda.

Figure 7.

Share of ODA for gender equality by sector to the Sahel and West Africa

2018-19 on average, commitments



Note: For the purposes of this paper, "conflict prevention/resolution" is used in place of the CRS purpose code name for 152: Conflict, peace and security. The ODA calculations and methods of calculating remain unchanged.

Source: Authors, based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

# Sector analyses

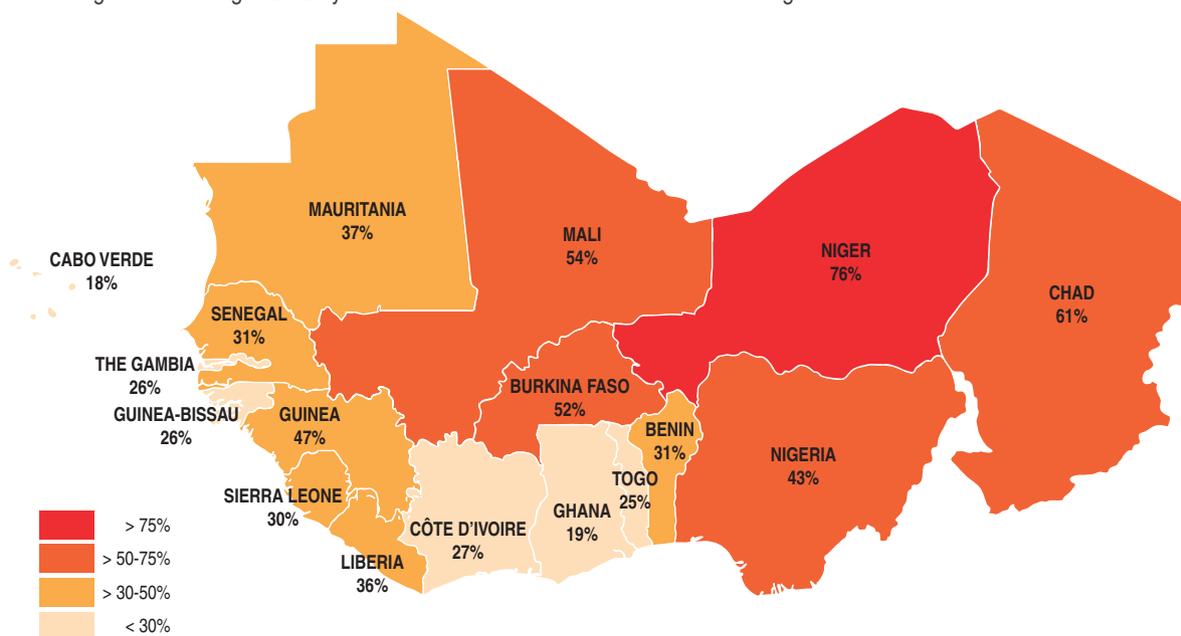
## EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Even though there has been some progress in the provision and access to essential health services in the region, health systems remain weak in most countries (WHO, n.d.<sup>[9]</sup>). Improving sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in particular, continues to be a major challenge. Child marriage (Map 1), adolescent pregnancy and female genital mutilation are rooted in gender inequality and have major negative impacts on girls' and women's health, education and well-being. The Sahel and West Africa, is home to five of the ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage in the world (Girls not brides, n.d.<sup>[10]</sup>). All five represent extremely fragile contexts. Over 26% of women in West Africa give birth before the age of 18. Even though maternal mortality rates have been dropping in recent decades, West Africa still has the highest maternal mortality rates of any region worldwide (UNICEF, 2021<sup>[11]</sup>).

Map 1.

Rates of child marriage across the Sahel and West Africa

Percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



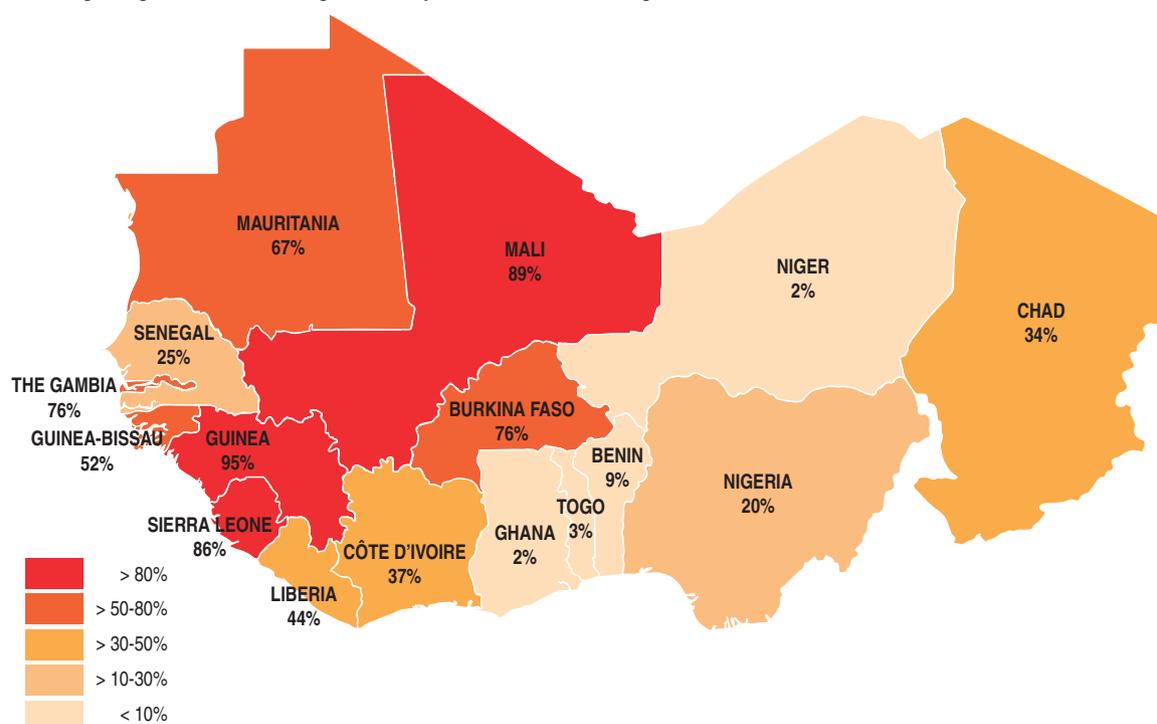
Source: UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2015; Girls not Brides © 2022. Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD).

High rates of female genital mutilation prevail (see Map 2). For example, in Guinea, 95% of women and girls have undergone some form of female genital mutilation (UNICEF, 2021<sup>[11]</sup>). The 2013-2016 Ebola outbreak, as well as the COVID-19 crisis, further compounded existing concerns around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRSH), with more limited access for women to health centres, skilled birth attendants and SRHR services (Diggins and Mills, 2015<sup>[12]</sup>).

## Map 2.

Rates of female genital mutilation across the Sahel and West Africa

Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM



Source: UNICEF, Global Databases, based on DHS, MICS and other nationally representative surveys, February 2021 update. © 2022. Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD).

Africa has the lowest COVID-19 vaccination rate of all regions globally. Only 6% of its population is fully vaccinated; and the Figure is under 2% of the population in low-income countries (Van Trotsenburg, 2021<sup>[13]</sup>). Evidence is emerging that the vaccination rate for women in some West African countries is lower than for men. For example, women in Gambia need approval from their husbands if they are to be vaccinated. Furthermore, they often hesitate to get vaccinated, fearing that the vaccine might cause fertility issues and pregnancy risks (Associated Press, 2021<sup>[14]</sup>).

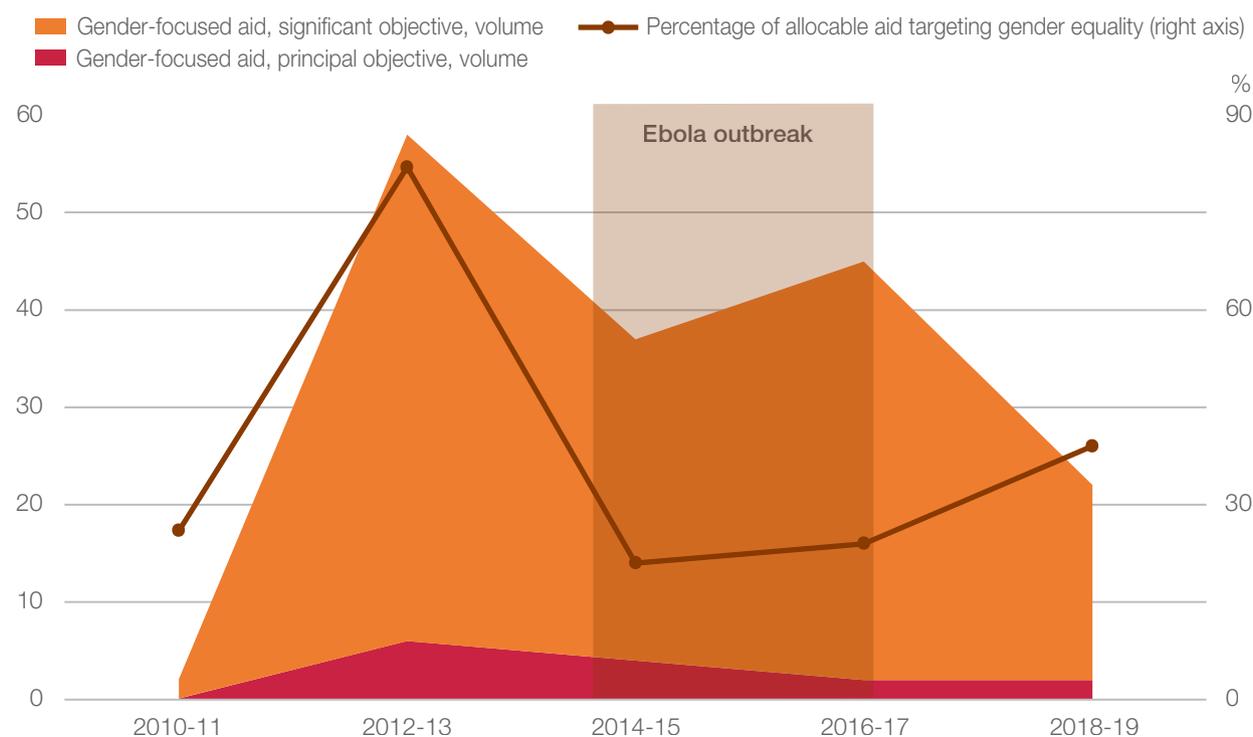
In 2018-19, 69% (USD 527 million) of aid to health in the Sahel and West Africa had gender equality objectives, of which USD 57 million (or 8%) was dedicated to gender equality as a primary objective. In the sector of Population policies and reproductive health, over 57% (USD 384 million) of aid had gender equality objectives, with 28% dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective.

With the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in 2014-15, there was a drop in the share of gender-related aid in the infectious disease sector in the region (Figure 8). The infectious disease sector integrated gender equality objectives to a considerable extent until the Ebola outbreak – and has not recovered since.<sup>7</sup> This may indicate that gender equality was not prioritised by development actors in infectious disease interventions during the Ebola outbreak, because development partners’ long-term priorities in this sector were supplanted by the “tyranny of the urgent” (Davies and Bennett, 2016<sub>[15]</sub>; Smith, 2019<sub>[16]</sub>). Addressing structural challenges (such as the effect of gender inequality on controlling infectious diseases) was, understandably superseded by the need to address immediate humanitarian concerns. Research indicates that gender equality concerns and women were invisible in the international response to the Ebola outbreak (Harman, 2016<sub>[17]</sub>). Particularly relevant in the current COVID-19 crisis is that only 39% of aid (USD 22 million) to infectious disease control in the Sahel and West Africa had gender equality as an objective on average per year in 2018-19.

Figure 8.

Infectious disease control ODA integrating gender equality objectives over time

Two-year averages, 2019 prices, commitments



Note: For relative dates of the West Africa Ebola epidemic, see *New England Journal of Medicine*, 16 October 2014; 371(16): 1 481-1 495. doi:10.1056/NEJMoa1411100; and Reuters (2016), <https://news.trust.org/item/20160609104923-cft2c>. Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

Primary education completion rates in the Sahel and West Africa display virtual gender parity. In some countries, higher percentages of girls than boys complete primary education. Secondary completion rates are low for both boys and girls in the region, but the rates are lower for girls than boys (UNESCO, n.d.<sub>[18]</sub>). Conflict and insecurity have led to school closures, particularly in Central Sahel and northeastern Nigeria, because schools have been the target of armed groups. In addition, the Ebola outbreak and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic resulted in school closures across the Sahel and West Africa. Full school closures as a result of COVID totalled 14.8 weeks on average for the region between March 2020 and November 2021, with large differences between countries in the region. This was less than the global average of 19.2 weeks for full school closures (UNESCO, 2021<sub>[19]</sub>). Crises such as the COVID-19 and Ebola pandemics have been associated with rising levels of violence against women and girls and increases in teenage pregnancies (John et al., 2020<sub>[20]</sub>; Burzynska and Contreras, 2020<sub>[21]</sub>).

Gender-focused aid to the education sector has risen significantly since 2014-15, from USD 270 million to USD 832 million in 2018-19. In the same period, the percentage of aid for gender equality in the sector has increased since 2014-15, from 40% to 64%. ODA to the education sector dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective now stands at USD 77 million; a sharp increase over earlier years. Nigeria received by far the most ODA integrating gender equality objectives to the education sector in 2018-19, accounting for almost half of the regional total, with USD 314 million. This can largely be attributed to a 2018 UK programme committing USD 306 million, with the aim of training 66 000 new teachers in the country.

## GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Many countries in the Sahel and West Africa are affected by political instability. In just over a year, there have been coups d'état (or assimilated power grabs) in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea and Mali, as well as an unsuccessful coup attempt in Niger. Democratic participation is weak, and half of the countries in the region display characteristics of authoritarian regimes (International IDEA, n.d.<sub>[22]</sub>). Women's political participation rates in West Africa remain below averages for Africa overall, although this varies widely from country to country (International IDEA, 2021<sub>[23]</sub>). The Africa Gender Index indicates that of the three dimensions of the index, the representation and empowerment dimension features the largest gender gaps. This trend is reinforced by socially valued conceptions of leadership. For example, 40% of people in West Africa believe that men make better political leaders than women and should be preferred in elections (SIGI, 2021<sub>[24]</sub>). In the majority of West African countries, policy decisions – including on gender equality – are mostly made by men. In Nigeria, Benin, Mali, Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso and Chad, fewer than 15% of

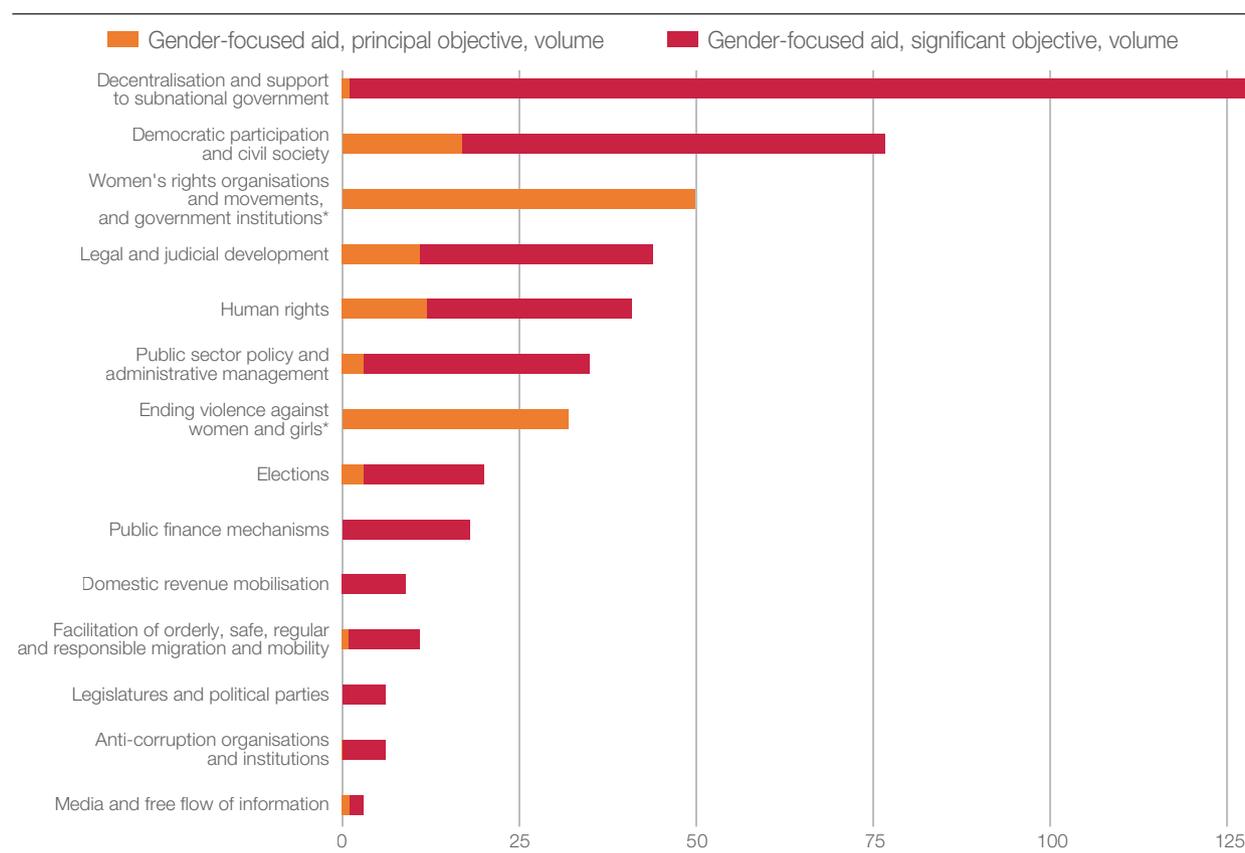
members of Parliament were women as of 1 February 2019 (IPU, 2019<sub>[25]</sub>).

In total, 61% of ODA to the government and civil society sector integrated gender equality objectives in 2018-19, corresponding to USD 621 million. Most of this aid went to decentralisation and support to subnational government (USD 129 million); democratic participation and civil society (USD 78 million); and women's rights organisations and institutions (USD 50 million) (see Figure 9).

Figure 9.

### Government and civil society ODA by subsector

Volume in USD millions, 2018-19 on average, commitments



Note: For both of the sectors "ending violence against women and girls" and "women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions", ODA is automatically given a value of "(2) principal" when screened against the gender marker. Also note that for 24 DAC members reported against the code on "ending violence against women and girls" in 2018, and 26 reported against this code in 2019. For more information on this code, please see OECD (2021), "Financing the elimination on Gender-Based Violence". Source: Authors, based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>

Local women's organisations are critical actors for delivering support across sectors. ODA to women's rights organisations and movements stands at USD 49 million, less than 0.5% of overall ODA to the region.<sup>8</sup> The volume of total commitments to this sector has increased significantly in many contexts between 2016-17 and 2018-19 on average; such as in Benin (USD 30 000 to USD 3 million), in Burkina Faso (USD 3 million to USD 6 million), in Nigeria (USD 3 million to USD 7 million), and most significantly in Senegal, from USD 2 million to USD 10 million.

**Box 3.****Financing women's organisations in the Sahel and West Africa**

Women's leadership is critical to the building of sustainable societies, as laid out in the objectives of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063. Women's rights organisations (WROs) play a critical role in this respect. Although development partners have increased ODA flows to such organisations in recent years, the amounts of funding that they receive remain very low. This is also true in the Sahel and West Africa, where a number of contexts have seen sharp increases in the volume of ODA flowing from DAC members to WROs. However, while development partners have increased ODA levels to WROs in the region, the largest programmes in 2018-19 were implemented by development partner-country based civil society organisations and not local WROs. Canada ranks as the largest development partner to this sector in the region and accounts for much of the greatest increases in ODA programming.

In Nigeria, Canada accounts for over half the ODA to WROs in 2018-19 (USD 4 million), followed by Norway (USD 1.1 million) and the UK (USD 1 million). OXFAM Quebec's Women, Voice and Leadership programme, financed by Canada, is the largest programme financing women's rights organisations and movements in Nigeria (USD 7.7 million in 2018). The next largest programme is a Norwegian-funded programme worth USD 1.6 million in partnership with UN Women, dedicated explicitly to the implementation of the WPS Agenda in Nigeria. Japan also has a significant programme here in 2018 (USD 1 million) in partnership with UN Women on women's empowerment and inclusion in the peace process.

In Benin, Canada provided USD 6 million in 2019 (Benin's only other development partner in 2019 was Switzerland, while Canada was the sole development partner in 2018). Canada had six programmes in 2019, two of which committed USD 2 million or more (including the Women, Voice and Leadership programme), while the rest were under USD 600 000.

The development partner landscape in Burkina Faso is wide-ranging, but its largest development partners in 2018-19 were Canada (USD 2.4 million), Luxembourg (USD 1.3 million) and Sweden (USD 800 000). There were 35 programmes reported in 2018-19. The Canadian-financed OXFAM Quebec's Women, Voice and Leadership programme was the largest (USD 3.2 million) in 2018.

In Senegal, Canada was also the largest development partner by far, with USD 6.7 million committed in 2018-19, followed by Spain (USD 2.3 million). The Women Voice and Leadership programme is the largest programme in 2018 in Senegal (USD 5 million), although 57 programmes were reported across 2018-19, with Canada as the largest programme funder in 2019, as well as an additional two programmes worth over USD 2 million.

Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global problem. Worldwide, around 1 in 3 women (15-49 years old) have faced intimate partner violence. The Sahel and West Africa region has the same average incidence of intimate partner violence, but there are large differences between countries (WHO, n.d.<sub>[26]</sub>).<sup>9</sup> In Liberia, for instance, up to 43% of women have suffered intimate partner violence. Most countries in the region, except for Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Togo, have legislation in place that specifically addresses domestic violence (World Bank, 2020<sub>[27]</sub>). The complexity of overlapping climate, health, political and security crises have further increased the incidence of GBV across the region. GBV is rooted in discriminatory social norms and stereotypes, and spousal violence remains socially accepted across the region. On average, 42% of women and girls in West Africa believe that a husband may be justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances – for example, if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses to engage in sexual relations. In some countries in the region, more than 90% of women and girls accept spousal violence (SIGI, 2021<sub>[24]</sub>). Regionally, ODA flowing to the elimination of violence against women and girls (VAWG) amounted to USD 32 million on average per year in 2018-19. Globally, West Africa ranks third (after Eastern Africa and South and Central Asia) in terms of the volume of this type of ODA received (OECD, 2021<sub>[28]</sub>).

## FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

For the third consecutive year, a major food and nutrition crisis is looming in 2022 in the Sahel and West Africa. The compounding crises of COVID-19, climate change and armed conflict have severely perturbed Africa’s agriculture and food systems. While around 1 in 5 people in Africa overall faced hunger in 2020, West Africa has particular challenges, with over 68% of its population suffering from moderate or severe food insecurity (FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2021<sub>[29]</sub>). According to the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA), 27.3 million people are in need of emergency food assistance. This number could rise to 38.3 million during the lean season (June-August 2022), if important measures are not taken (RPCA, 2021<sub>[30]</sub>).

Women and children are hit hardest by food and nutrition crises. In the Sahel and West Africa, more than 40% of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia across 14 countries, driving maternal and child morbidity and undermining women’s economic empowerment (SWAC, 2019<sub>[31]</sub>). Acute malnutrition rates are above the 10% alert threshold in Mauritania, Niger and Chad, and above the 15% emergency threshold in several areas of some countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Chad) (RPCA, 2021<sub>[30]</sub>). Stunting, a measure of chronic malnutrition, often has its origins in utero due to, for example, poor maternal nutrition.

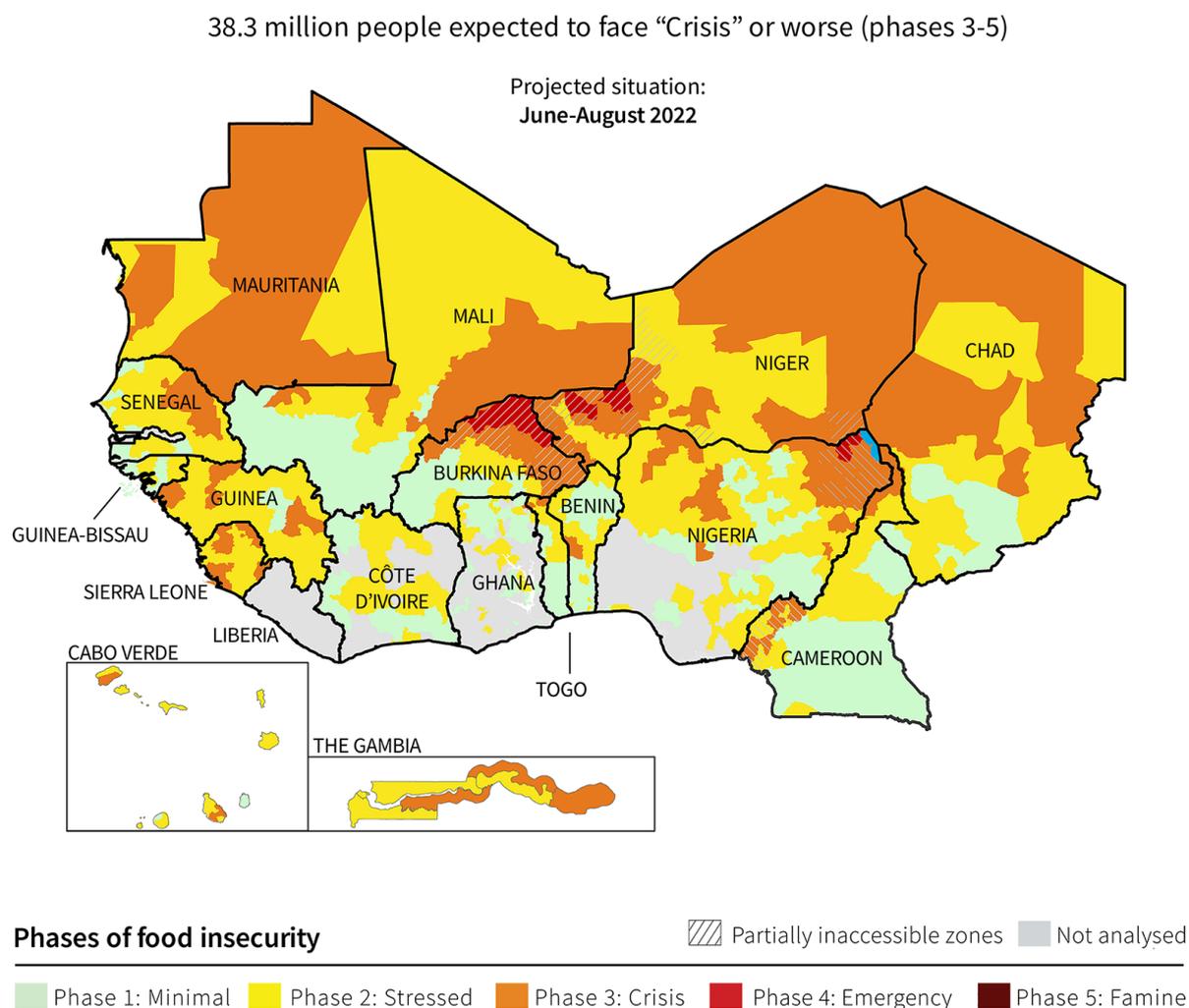
Paradoxically, women play a pivotal role in a wide range of activities supporting food and nutrition security in the region. They are the powerhouses of the West African food economy, the largest economic sector in the region, both in terms of employment and value creation. The sector generates 35% of regional GDP,

and almost 100 million West Africans, or 2 out of 3 people employed, depend on it for their livelihoods. Two-thirds of employed women work in the food sector, where they play an important role at each stage along the food value chain, from production to distribution to nutrition (Allen, 2018<sup>[32]</sup>). Women tend to have the most precarious jobs, with no or little social protection. Access to affordable and nutritious foods is beyond the reach of many women and girls. Low income and education levels, as well as discriminatory laws, social norms and practices, drive food insecurity among women, by curbing their ownership over assets such as land, water and energy, as well as access to financial services, social capital, information and technology, agricultural inputs and services. Additional factors, such as conflict, and the resulting displacement of populations, as well as the COVID-19 outbreak, have further compounded food insecurity among women and children.

### Map 3.

Projected food and nutrition situation, June to August 2022

*Sahel and West Africa: Food and nutrition outlook*



Source: Cadre harmonisé analyses, regional concertation, Saly, Senegal, March 2022. [www.food-security.net](http://www.food-security.net)  
© 2022. Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA), map produced by CILSS/AGRHYMET

Countries that face the highest levels of food insecurity do not necessarily receive the most ODA to address these challenges. For example, Liberia has some of the highest risks to food insecurity in the region (INFORM, 2021<sub>[33]</sub>), with 53% of women and 49% of men experiencing severe food insecurity (FAO, n.d.<sub>[34]</sub>). Yet on average in 2018-19, Liberia ranks in the bottom two recipients in ODA that addresses food security, and only 33% of ODA to Liberia towards food security integrated gender equality as a programme objective. Regionally, ODA integrating gender equality objectives to food security in 2018-19 on average stands at USD 184 million – amounting to 54% of total ODA to this sector.

West Africa's food economy was once predominantly agricultural and rural, but it has been diversifying over a number of decades, as rapid urbanisation drives market development and demand for more processed products. Between 1950 and 2015, West Africa's population grew from 73 million to 367 million inhabitants. Over the same period, the urban population increased from 5 million to 169 million. In 2015, the regional level of urbanisation was almost 50%, up from less than 10% in 1950 (SWAC/OECD, 2021<sub>[35]</sub>). Today, 50% of rural residents in West Africa live within 14 kilometres of a city and 90% within 47 kilometres. In this context, cities and towns not only account for the majority of food demand (67%), but food trade and markets are organised around them (SWAC/OECD, 2016<sub>[36]</sub>). Rapid urbanisation, income growth and changing diets are rapidly transforming food systems from a subsistence-oriented sector into a more commercialised, profitable and productive one (SWAC/OECD, 2021<sub>[35]</sub>).

These transformations come with some key challenges. For example, in West Africa, food systems are the largest driver of environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, water pollution and deforestation (OECD, 2021<sub>[37]</sub>). At the same time, climate change and environmental degradation pose significant risks to food system performance. Environmental pressures on food systems are likely to intensify. Climate modelling for West Africa indicates increased variability of climate, as well as increased frequency of extreme weather events that threaten crop yields and livestock production systems.

Women are among those most vulnerable to environmental shocks and the effects of climate change (McOmber, 2020<sub>[38]</sub>). Their livelihoods rely upon access to natural resources, whether in the collection of firewood and water for drinking, cooking, and washing, or acquiring animals and plants for the provision of food. Variability of climate makes reliance upon natural resources for sustenance a challenge, particularly when there are few alternative options in rural areas. For example, insufficient water sources can require women and girls to travel farther to collect water. The increased walking distance in and of itself is potentially harmful to those women collecting water, putting women and young girls at risk for violence and sexual assault (Sorenson, 2011<sub>[39]</sub>). This extra work also requires time that reduces the time women would otherwise spend on productive activities, sometimes decreasing agricultural productivity, household food security and overall household income (Jansen, 2010<sub>[40]</sub>).

Other challenges facing women against the backdrop of transforming food systems include economic barriers to participating fully in food value chains. They

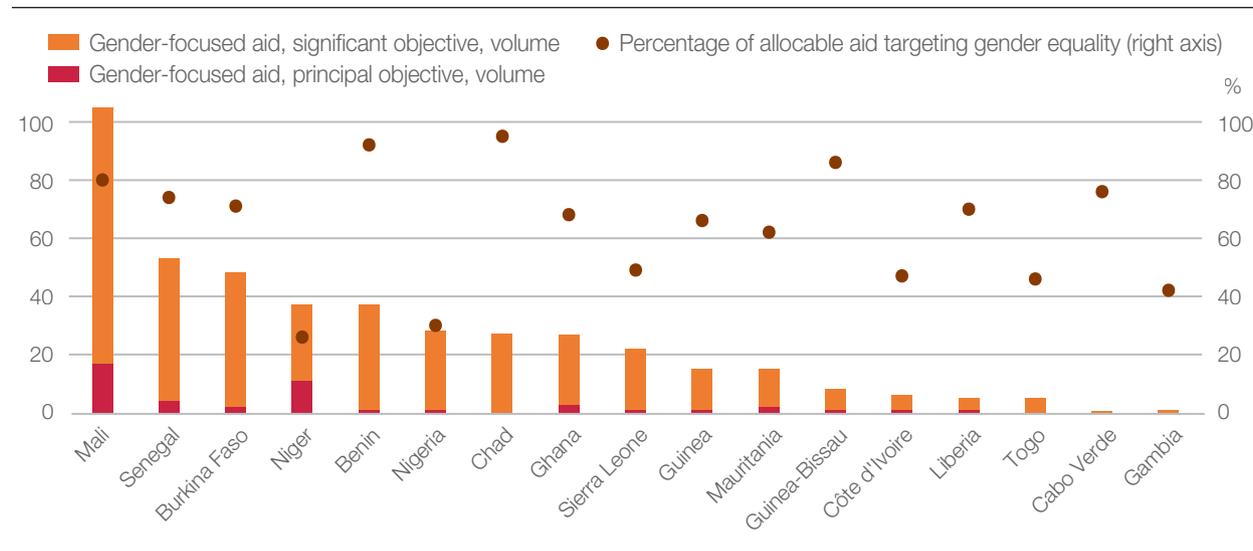
rarely have access to the resources needed to develop their activities. An analysis of the rice sector in Benin, Niger and Nigeria highlights existing gender disparities in trade networks (OECD/SWAC, 2019<sub>[41]</sub>). Women face a series of obstacles limiting their participation in trade: poor access to information and markets, male-dominated distribution networks, time and mobility constraints, lower education levels, greater difficulties in complying with regulatory and procedural requirements, etc. Women are thus less likely to hold strategic positions and are not as well-connected to central actors within value chains. Supporting employment in food value chains, with a gender equality perspective, could offer immense opportunities to women.

ODA to the agriculture and rural development sector in the Sahel and West Africa amounted to USD 858 million on average per year in 2018-2019, and 54% of this addressed gender equality objectives (USD 476 million). Only 6% (or USD 54 million) was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective of the programme (Figure 10). Globally, the sub-Saharan African region is the second-largest recipient of gender-related climate ODA (USD 4.2 billion) in 2018-19 (OECD, 2022<sub>[42]</sub>). A fourth of this is concentrated in the Sahel and West Africa region (USD 1 billion). In the Sahel and West Africa region, gender equality was integrated in 65% of the total climate-related ODA on average per year in 2018-19, which is slightly higher than the global figure.<sup>10</sup> Notably, in the region, the share of gender equality as a principal objective in climate-related ODA is much higher than at a global level, with 4% of such ODA prioritising gender equality objectives. Senegal (USD 150 million), Burkina Faso (USD 148 million) and Mali (USD 138 million) rank as the largest recipients of climate-related ODA with gender equality objectives in 2018-19. In shares of climate related ODA with gender equality objectives, Benin and Chad rank highly, with 99% and 93%.

Figure 10.

#### Agriculture and rural development ODA

On average 2018-19, USD million, 2019 prices, commitments



Source: Authors, based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

## ECONOMIC AND PRODUCTIVE SECTORS

The labour market in the Sahel and West Africa is characterised by informality. In West Africa, 95% of women are employed in the informal sector – and are 6% more likely than men to be employed in this sector (ILO, 2018<sub>[43]</sub>). These informal sector workers were hit hard when the COVID-19 crisis broke, as they have either very limited or no access to social protection. In the majority of the countries of the region, less than 10% of the population is covered by at least one social protection benefit (ILO, 2021<sub>[44]</sub>).<sup>11</sup>

The crisis disproportionately impacted women active in the informal sector, since they are overrepresented in some of the most affected sectors, such as accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade (ILO, 2021<sub>[45]</sub>). Women who are active as professionals tend to be underrepresented as public sector employees, as well as in managerial positions, in the private sector in most countries of the region (ILO, 2021<sub>[46]</sub>).<sup>12</sup> As mentioned above, the agriculture sector is one of the main sources of employment in the region, but it also features considerable gender inequality.

ODA in support of gender equality in the economic and productive sectors reached USD 778 million in 2018-19. Aid integrating gender equality objectives in the economic and productive sectors has been used by the OECD for the past decade as a proxy to monitor the evolution of aid for “women’s economic empowerment” (OECD, 2021<sub>[47]</sub>).<sup>13</sup> This ODA is primarily channelled to the agriculture and rural development sector, which is in line with the importance of the sector in the economies of the region, as well as the large gender gaps in this sector. The percentage of aid committed to gender equality in the energy, transport and urban development sectors is particularly low and offers much potential for further investment (Figure 11).

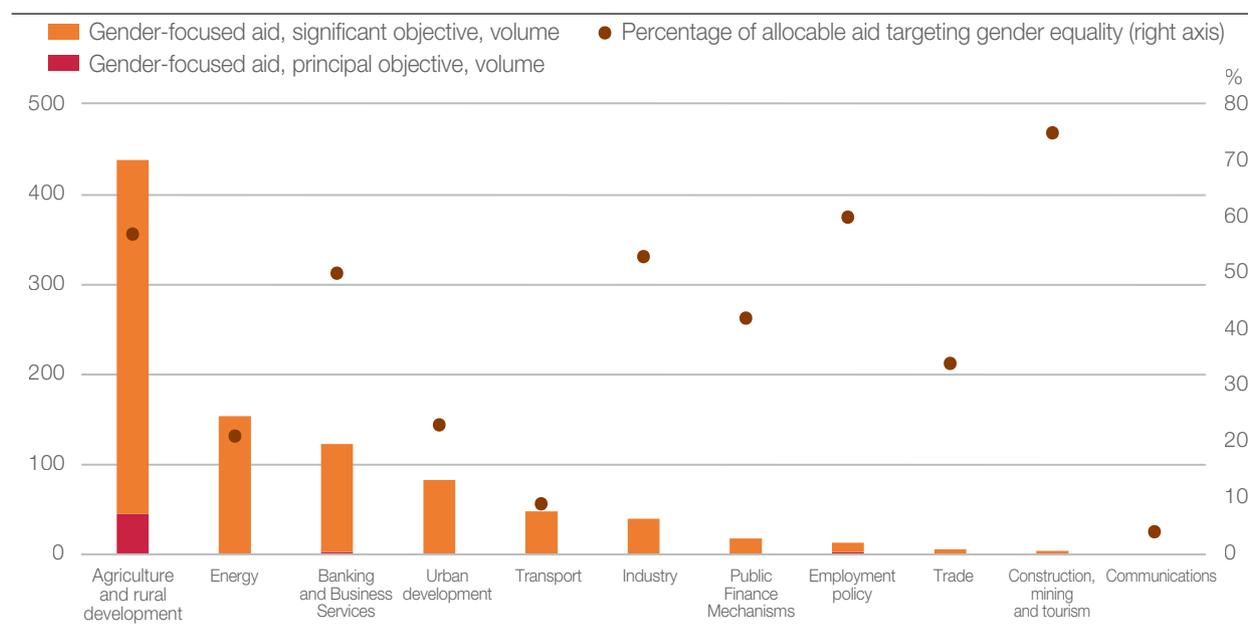
## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND AID TO THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

The Sahel and West Africa region faces serious security challenges, exacerbated not only by political, geopolitical, socioeconomic and environmental dynamics, but also by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Violent extremism, terrorist attacks and inter-community violence affect many countries in the region. Some of the highest increases in military spending worldwide in 2020 occurred in countries in the Sahel, like Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Nigeria (UNSC, 2021<sub>[48]</sub>). Evidence suggests a clear association between militarisation and gender inequality, especially in countries with lower income or lower levels of democracy (UNSC, 2021<sub>[48]</sub>). Strong calls are going out from the women and peace movement to reverse the upward trend in military spending, to encourage more investment in social infrastructure and services (UNSC, 2021<sub>[48]</sub>).

Figure 11.

Aid supporting gender equality for the economic and productive sectors in the Sahel and West Africa, 2018-19

USD millions, 2019 prices, commitments



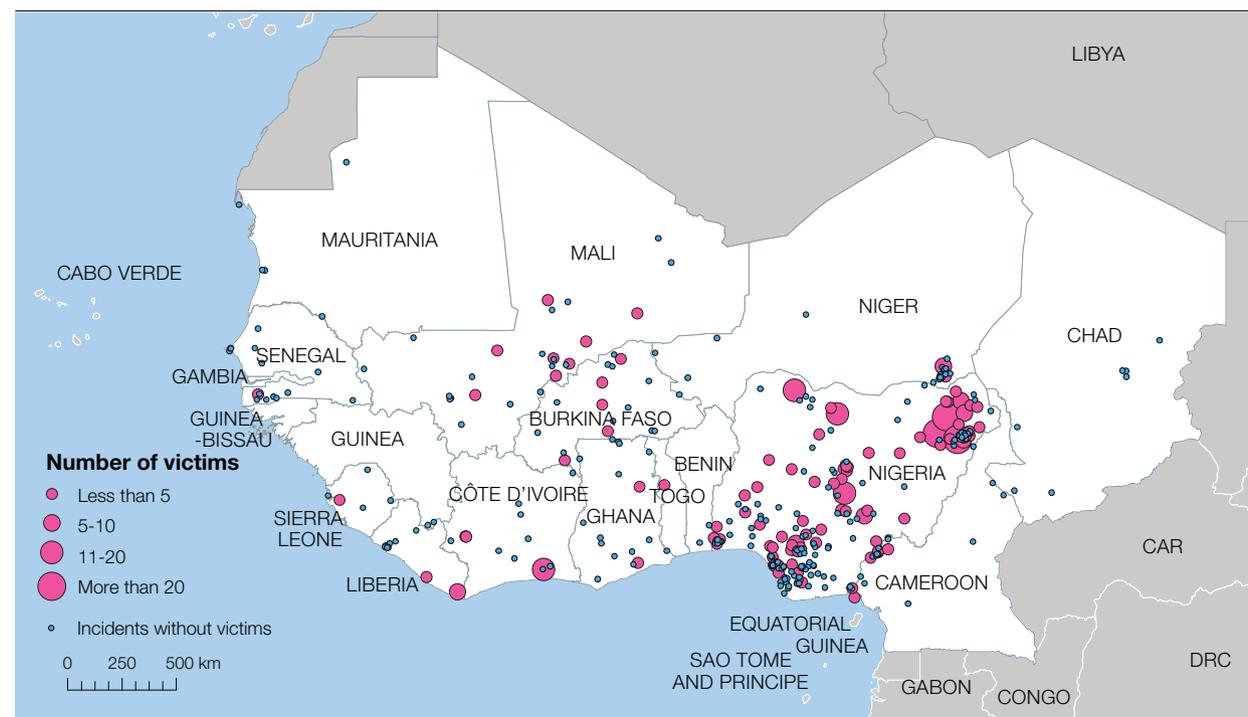
Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

Conflict has become more violent and widespread in West Africa. The Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator, developed by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat, shows that violence is particularly high in border areas across the region, with 40% of violent events and deaths recorded within 100 kilometres of a land border (OECD/SWAC, 2020<sub>[49]</sub>).

In this context of escalating violence, women pay a high price. They are victims of Islamist extremist organisations, militias and government forces during counter-insurgency operations (Walther, 2020<sub>[50]</sub>). The true magnitude of violence against women, however, remains largely unknown, because many events are not recorded and those that are recorded do not always provide sex-disaggregated data on the victims or perpetrators of violence. Nigeria is the epicentre for all types of violence in the region, including violence against women. Of all violent acts against women in the region, 87% occur in Nigeria (see Map 4). This is largely due to the three major ongoing conflicts affecting Nigeria, in the Niger Delta, the Middle Belt and the Lake Chad region. The Boko Haram insurgency is often underestimated: over six times more people have been killed in the Lake Chad region than during the entire civil war in Mali that started in 2012.

## Map 4.

Political violence affecting women in the Sahel and West Africa, 2009-19



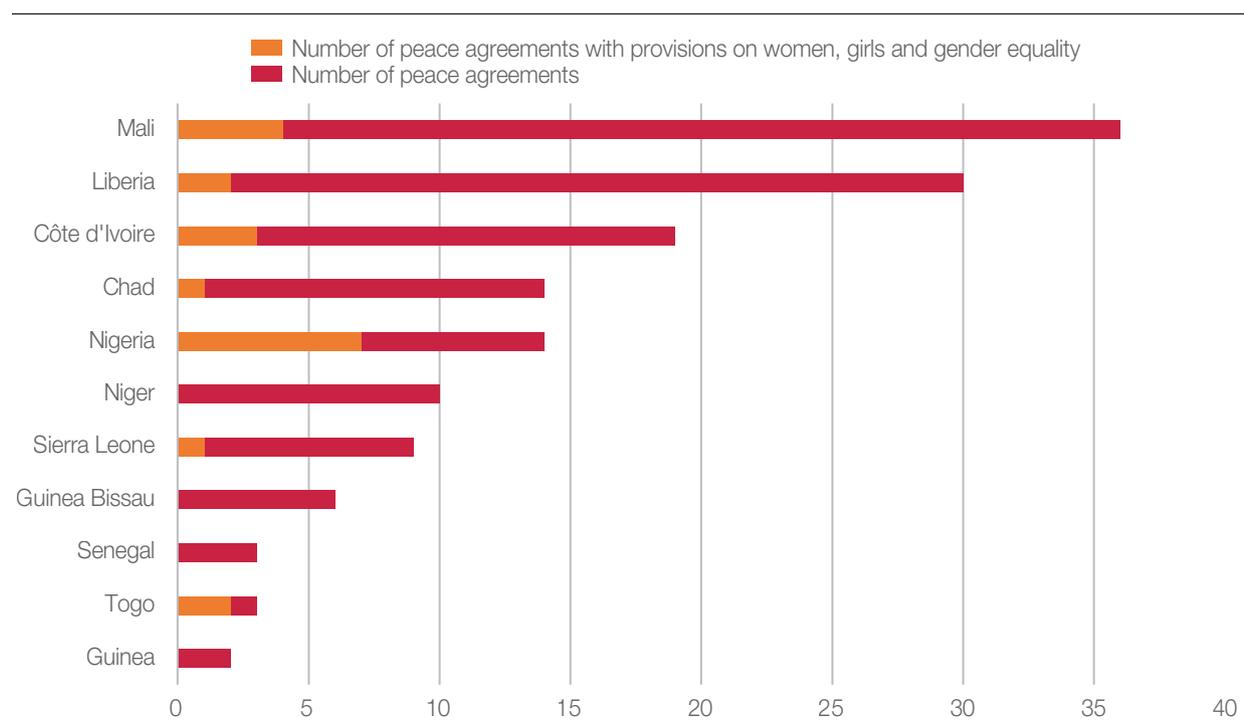
Source: ACLED, 2019. Walther, O. (2020), « Femmes et conflits en Afrique de l'Ouest », *Notes ouest-africaines*, No. 28, OECD Publishing, Paris.

© 2021. Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD)

Women and girls also make up a large proportion of internally displaced populations (IDPs) and refugees as a result of this violence. In Burkina Faso, 84% of the total population of IDPs were estimated to be women and children as of April 2020 (Oxfam, 2020<sup>[51]</sup>). They face heightened risks, including GBV, increased maternal morbidity and mortality, and forced marriage. Access to essential and life-saving services, including pregnancy care and GBV services, may be highly limited, particularly in rural areas.

In these areas, women also play a fundamental role in mediation and conflict prevention/resolution processes. This is illustrated by the example of the humanitarian peace agreement between the Fulani, Dafing and Dogon communities in central Mali, as well as the liberation of the Chibok girls who were held in captivity by Boko Haram. Poor governance and institutionalised corruption, however, have rendered many conflict management processes ineffective. In addition, the number of peace agreements in the region that make any reference to women, girls and gender equality still remains very low (see Figure 12).

Figure 12.  
Peace agreements and gender equality

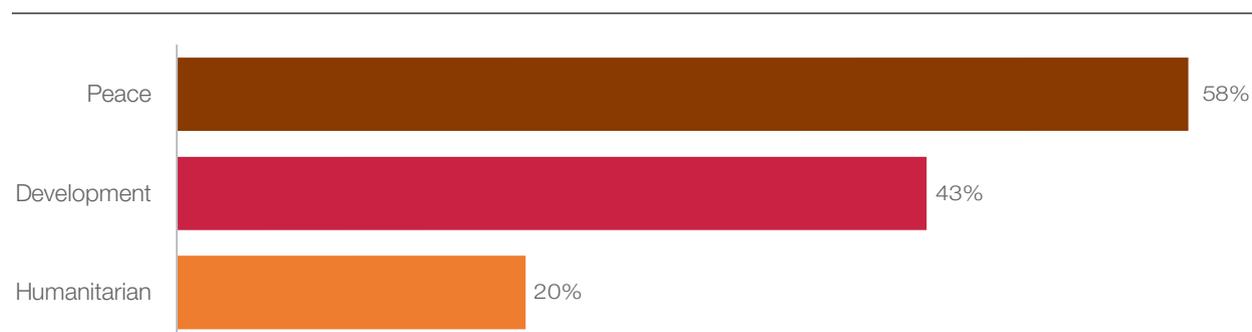


Note: The database includes all peace agreements between 1990 and mid-2021.

Source: Authors' calculations from the Peace Agreements Database, accessed in December 2021, <https://www.peaceagreements.orgsearch>.

In this light, it is important to look into gender equality funding across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, because all pillars of the Nexus should incorporate a gender equality perspective.

Figure 13.  
Gender equality financing across the HDP Nexus  
*Share of ODA integrating gender equality objectives, 2018-2019 on average, commitments*



Note: ODA to the Peace Pillar of the HDP Nexus is derived from the following sector purpose codes on government and civil society (15110, 15111, 15112, 15113, 15130, 15152, 15153, 15160, 15170, 15180) and conflict prevention/conflict, peace and security (15220, 15230, 15240, 15250, and 15261). For more information on methodology, see (Desai, 2020<sup>[52]</sup>).

Source: Authors, based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. The full dataset is available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

In 2018-19, the Sahel and West Africa region received over USD 1 billion in humanitarian ODA.<sup>14</sup> Only 20% of this amount focused on gender equality. This percentage of aid to the humanitarian sectors masks differences among the subsectors. For example, over 87% of aid to immediate post-emergency reconstruction and rehabilitation focused on gender equality, as compared to only 14% for emergency food assistance. Nigeria receives the largest amounts of humanitarian aid and gender-focused humanitarian aid, followed by Chad, Niger and Mali. Across the region, nearly 50% of humanitarian aid to each country goes to emergency food assistance, an indication of the growing food insecurity in the region.

In 2018-19, the Sahel and West Africa region received USD 968 million in ODA allocated to the peace pillar of the HDP Nexus, 58% of which integrated gender equality objectives. In the peace pillar of the Nexus, USD 321 million in ODA went to conflict prevention. Of aid to conflict prevention (USD 144 million) in the Sahel and West Africa, 46% focused on gender equality (see Figure 7). Of aid to conflict prevention in the Sahel and West Africa, 10% was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective on average per year in 2018-19. These shares are quite high, and the percentage increases are significant compared to 2014-15, when the shares were only 20% and less than 1% of ODA respectively.

The WPS Agenda, as laid out in the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and its subsequent Resolutions, is particularly relevant in the region. Most countries in the Sahel and West Africa, excluding Benin, Chad, Cabo Verde and Mauritania, have established a national action plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security to implement the UNSCR 1325. In addition, ECOWAS has issued a regional NAP on WPS (WILPF, 2021<sub>[53]</sub>). An impact evaluation of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the region indicates some improvement. Women are more often called upon for conflict prevention/resolution; participation of women in the military and in peacekeeping operations has increased; and legislation has been adopted to address violence against women. However, NAPs lack funding; some NAPs are outdated; and restrictive gender norms and stereotypes have also inhibited progress (UNOWAS, 2020<sub>[54]</sub>; DCAF, 2020<sub>[55]</sub>).

# Conclusions

While DAC members' aid in support of gender equality and women's rights in the Sahel and West Africa has increased, the different countries of the region continue to face significant challenges in addressing gender inequality, leaving large differences between countries. These challenges are embedded in a larger context of multiple, interconnected crises (security, food, health), high poverty levels, political instability, and environmental concerns. The COVID-19 pandemic risks reversing hard-won progress on gender equality.

Closing the gender gap in the region will require efforts from a variety of actors and sectors, building on commitments made in the framework of the recently launched Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action; the decade of action for achieving Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development; and the African Union Agenda 2063. These frameworks offer a critical opportunity to ensure that ambitious commitments are matched by ambitious investments. However, it is crucial to adapt their implementation to local realities and contexts, by relying on actors on the ground. This paper puts forward the following conclusions and policy options for additional and more effective financing for gender equality in the Sahel and West Africa. They are mostly addressed to DAC members, but could also be helpful to other development actors. Going forward, DAC members could:

- **Increase the share of sustained support to gender equality objectives and put more emphasis on mainstreaming a gender-equality perspective across different sectors. This could lead to significant development gains, even without increasing the overall level of ODA.**

Some of the DAC members that provide large amounts of ODA to the region could significantly increase the percentage of aid for gender equality and sustain these efforts over time. Social sectors (such as education and health), as well as the government and civil society sector, continue to receive the largest amounts of ODA for gender equality. Some of the economic and productive sectors (energy, transport and urban development), as well as the humanitarian sectors, present potential for additional gender-focused aid.

- **Provide sustained financing for local women's organisations as key actors for the region's development and stability.**

Women's rights organisations, and local women's organisations in particular, continue to be underfunded – or lack sustained financing

– even though they play a key role in reaching the most vulnerable women and provide crucial support to local communities. DAC members could be better equipped to identify and support their activities that are in line with local socio-cultural and economic realities and contexts.

- **Mainstream a gender-equality perspective throughout the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, as an integral part of Nexus implementation. This could significantly enhance the effectiveness of aid.**

The percentages of gender-focused ODA across the HDP Nexus in the region are lower in the humanitarian pillar than in the development and peace pillars. The percentage of gender-focused ODA in the peace pillar is relatively high and has increased significantly over the past five years. Gender equality should be made a priority throughout the peace, security or humanitarian response and should not be considered an *ad hoc* measure.

- **Include a gender-equality perspective throughout the health crisis response, rather than leaving gender concerns for later.**

Data suggests that during the Ebola crisis, gender-focused ODA to the infectious disease sector in the region declined. Levels of aid started to rise again once the crisis had passed, possibly indicating that gender equality concerns were not prioritised during the response to the crisis. While it is too early to draw similar conclusions for the COVID-19 crisis, concerns have been raised worldwide about the limited number of COVID-19 response measures that integrate a gender lens.

- **Provide additional investments for the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data.**

Many countries in the region face challenges in data collection, analysis and dissemination. This also holds true for gender-disaggregated data. Some indicators that are part of different gender indexes are missing recent data, making it difficult to assess all the elements of the existing gender gaps in the region. This complicates the task for development co-operation providers, humanitarian and peace actors in designing programmes that respond to the needs of the population on the ground. Additionally, this negatively impacts opportunities to learn from programmes, further limiting the capacity of development, humanitarian and peace actors to adapt both short- and long-term programming.

- **Invest more in evaluating gender-sensitive programmes in the region to benefit from the lessons learned. This should be done for programmes across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus.**

Even though gender-focused ODA to the Sahel and West Africa region has increased over time, countries in the region continue to face significant gender inequality. It would thus be helpful to analyse in further detail which gender equality programmes have led to impact and transformational

change. It would be necessary to look at gender equality programmes across the HDP Nexus, given the interlinkages between the different pillars of the Nexus in the Sahel and West Africa.

- **Convene regularly in different fora, such as the DAC GENDERNET and INCAF, to have dedicated discussions on where more support is needed for gender equality.**

The data that is available suggests that the highest amounts of ODA in support of gender equality are not always going to those countries in the region with the largest gender gaps. DAC members could engage more frequently and in a more structured way around where support is needed and how to create additional synergies and learning across development, humanitarian and peace actors.

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# Notes

1. **Bilateral flows** are provided directly by a development partner country to an aid recipient country. **Bilateral allocable aid** covers bilateral ODA with types of aid A02 (sector budget support), B01 (core support to NGOs), B03 (specific funds managed by an international organisation), B04 (pooled funding), C01 (projects), D01 (development partner country personnel), D02 (other technical assistance) and E01 (scholarships).
2. The OECD characterises fragility as the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of a state, systems and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragility is measured on a spectrum of intensity and expressed in different ways across the economic, environmental, political, security and societal dimensions, with a sixth dimension (the human dimension) forthcoming in States of Fragility 2022. Each dimension is represented by 8-12 indicators – 44 in total across all 5 dimensions – that measure risks and coping capacities for fragility. On the 2020 edition of the fragility framework, are 57 countries and territories – hereafter referred to as contexts – of which 13 are extremely fragile and 44 are other fragile contexts. Additional information on each dimension and what it measures, as well as the methodology for States of Fragility, is available on the States of Fragility platform (link: <http://www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-of-fragility/overview/0/>).
3. For the purpose of this paper, the following countries have been considered as part of the Sahel and West Africa region: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
4. The UNDP Gender Inequality Index does not include data for Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria.
5. The empowerment and representation dimension includes the following indicators: female and male shares in national parliaments; ministerial positions; land and house ownership; top management of businesses; and managers, professionals and technicians.
6. While the share of gender-related ODA provided by Iceland and New Zealand is 100% of their bilateral ODA to the region, they are not listed here after consideration regarding the volume level of this type of ODA.
7. The peak in ODA to gender equality in the infectious disease sector in 2012-13 was mostly due to the response to a polio outbreak in Nigeria. Development partner's ODA programming in this regard pointed to long-term development strategies in eradicating polio and aligned these health priorities along other long-term development priorities such as gender equality.
8. ODA to 'women's rights organisations and movements and government institutions' stands at USD 50 million. When looking at aid to women's rights organisations and movements only, deducting aid for government institutions (such as women's ministries), the figure is USD 49.2 million.
9. The percentage stands at 29.6 percent. Data was not available for Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Niger.
10. These calculations are derived from the DAC CRS in where the Rio Markers for climate adaptation, mitigation, and multi-purpose adaptation and mitigation are cross examined with the DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker. The full methodology can be found here: (OECD 2022, "Development financing for gender-responsive climate action". Development Co-operation Directorate. Paris).
11. Data only available for Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo
12. Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo are exceptions since the percentage of female managers is higher than that of male managers.
13. The economic and productive sectors, based on a number of purpose codes in the OECD Creditor Reporting System, have been used by the OECD to monitor aid for women's economic empowerment since 2011. The areas are: agriculture and rural development; banking and business; communication; employment policy; energy; industry; mining, construction and tourism; public finance management; trade; transportation and storage; and urban development.
14. Humanitarian ODA consists of aid in the sectors of emergency response; reconstruction, relief and rehabilitation; and disaster prevention and preparedness.

## West African Papers

# Financing for gender equality in the Sahel and West Africa

The Sahel and West Africa continue to face significant challenges in advancing towards gender equality and women's empowerment. While much progress has been made in health and educational outcomes for women and girls in the region, much more has yet to be done. Official development assistance (ODA) can play a crucial role in this respect, by mobilising support for gender equality. This paper aims to highlight the current financing for the gender equality landscape in the region. It points to a need to increase the share of ODA supporting gender equality objectives; to support local women's organisations as key actors in reaching the most vulnerable women and girls; to invest in the evaluation of gender-sensitive programmes and learning around them; and to support the generation of gender-disaggregated data to identify where action can be most effective.

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