



The UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund
(UN COVID-19 MPTF)

JOINT PROJECT DOCUMENT

Women Economic Empowerment Window (WEEW)



Cover Page

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Brief Overview	<i>As a direct response to the structural issues identified the consecutive National Gender Strategies, further enhanced in the challenging context of the COVID-19, particularly those preventing the economic empowerment of São Tomean women, this concept note envisages a project that focuses on: a) developing the entrepreneurial capacities of specific women groups, b) developing an alternative mechanism for financing their economic activities, c) developing new business associative initiatives, that can create synergies between women led MSMEs and enhance market linkages, thus contributing to better business environment and dialogue, and d) creating alternative safety nets for women led households, regarding child care and education.</i>
Target Population	Women, in particular vulnerable situation (2.500 plus)
Universal Markers	Contribution to <u>Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment</u>: GEM3: GEWE is the principal objective of the Key Activity
Fund Specific Markers	Human Rights Based Approach to COVID19 Response: Yes Considered OHCHR guidance in proposal development UN OHCHR COVID19 Guidance Fund Windows WINDOW 2: Mitigate the Socioeconomic Impact and safeguard people and their livelihoods WINDOW 3: Recover Better Socio Economic Pillars Pillar 3: Economic Response and Recovery
Geographical Scope	Region: Central Africa Country: São Tomé and Príncipe
Recipient UN Organizations	UNDP, UNICEF and ILO
Implementing Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education, • Ministry in charge of Employment, Family and Vocational Training • Ministry in charge of SMEs • Ministry of Women's Promotion • Ministry of Youth

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction of Social Protection • Youth Interaction Centers • Departments responsible for the environment, urban health and community development • The Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts • Civil society organizations (CSOs) • Partner NGOs working on education • The social partners of the world of work, 		
Programme Cost	Budget	Amount	Comments
	MPTF Funds	\$382,500	To scale up ongoing agency programs
	Other sources (Participating agencies)	\$865,000	
	To be mobilized	\$467,500	
	Total	\$1,715,000	
Programme Duration	Start Date: ASAP – November 2020		
	Duration (In months): 12 months		
	End Date: November 2021		


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Country: **Sao Tome and Principe**

Programme Title: **Women Economic Empowerment Window (WEEW)**

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I. Specific problem the intervention seeks to address

Brief note on the impact of COVID19 in São Tomé and Príncipe

Based on data and experience of the epidemic in the Northern Hemisphere, WHO estimates that 30% of the population of Sao Tome and Principe may be affected by the Coronavirus 19 pandemic.

In addition, potential disruptions or excessive demand of some of the global chains, such as in relation to drugs, medical equipment or food combined with the discontinued nature of the country/island supply system based on maritime and air transportation, are likely to manifest in shortages of essential supply at certain times and in inflation.

The situation is particularly critical in the sense that, apart from the cost in human lives of the pandemic and the interruption of the school year, the economic sectors that are being particularly hit hard worldwide are tourism, transport and trade, which are precisely those that support the socio-economic fabric of Sao Tome and Principe as both a LDC and Small Island Developing State.

São Tomé and Príncipe is, therefore, likely to be disproportionately and more severely affected by this pandemic, potentially touching all spheres of its society.

Preliminary estimates made by the UN first SEIA (led by UNDP) in the country estimate a 7 to 10% loss of GDP growth this year. The IMF estimates that a minimum of USD 15 million is required on both the health and economic front as an immediate mitigation measure, potentially limiting the GDP losses to -6%.

The SEIA foresees that the GDP loss will have a significant impact in fiscal terms, as most of the revenue is collected at the customs level. Thus, tax revenues will be negatively affected by the decrease in import volume and, above all, by the reduction in commodity prices (oil). On the other hand, the tourism/hotel sector, strongly affected by the pandemic, will also reflect in significant losses in state revenues, in addition to general difficulties that companies will have to face in terms of cash flow to meet their fiscal obligations as well as the payment of workers, with the implication of job losses. The reduction in tourism is also having a negative impact on the primary sector (agriculture, livestock and fishing) whose decline is further impoverishing the most vulnerable and especially the youth and women.

Recently, the government, with the support of UNDP, has developed a package of mitigation and recovery measures in the socio-economic sphere. The package has the ambition to quantify the financial needs to guarantee basic public services, support to the private sector with particular attention to tourism, agriculture and fisheries, support to public enterprises, support to the expansion of the social protection scheme and safety nets. The package also includes measures to improve collective hygiene, ensure stocks of essential imported products, working closely with the Central Bank to support the economy and financial liquidity, as well as other measures that have been valued at around 60 million Euros.

Particularly regarding the national business tissue, a study by CCIAS (Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Services) of July 2020 with ILO support, to assess the impact of COVID19 in the formal and informal sectors, indicates that 25.4% of the 303 companies evaluated laid off their workers, 50.6% of the companies nationwide laid off 1 to 10% of the workers, 22.1% of the total companies laid off more than 41% of the staff in service. Regarding the "State of operation of companies during the pandemic", 54.8% of companies nationwide showed continued operation in their respective facilities, 7.6% in the workers' residence (teleworking), and 24.7% are working partially. On the other hand, 12.9% of the companies revealed that they were forced to close their doors, that is, they do not work while the pandemic lasts. According to the level of "Financial impact (sales) and business interruption resulting from the pandemic, 60.4% of the companies indicated a strong impact, represented by falls in turnover.

The problem

In São Tomé and Príncipe, 66% of the population lives below the poverty line and unemployment is estimated at 13.6%. Unemployment is heavily concentrated in the youth population, with 60% of unemployed people under 35 years old, but also has gender preponderance. In fact, for every 69 unemployed men there are 100 women.

According to national statistics, women have less access to employment than men, and for every 162 employed men there are only 100 women. It can also be seen that, in general, men are more numerous than women in almost all modalities of profession, with greater prominence for the categories "Military of the army or navy" (95.4%) and "Employer" (79.3%) against respectively 4.6% and 20.7% of women. The main employment categories for women are "Services and Vendors", "Unskilled Workers", "Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry" and the "Scientific Intellectual Profession", presenting respectively 39.8%, 31.1% 8.2% and 6.7%.

Overall, there is still a significant gender segregation in relation to professional activities, and many female employment niches are not necessarily profitable, socially valued or safe. In the case of "Services and Vendors" and "Unskilled Workers" categories, in which the majority of women work, it is essentially informal in nature. Added to this, women represent also the bulk of unpaid family workers. The private sector, which is characterized by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), present a similar structural discrimination reflected in the profile of the business class whereby there are only 20.7% of women entrepreneurs against 79.3% of men (RIDGSTP, 2017). According to existing statistics, women are rarely managers, owners and entrepreneurs

Women are much more present in informal activities without substantial supervision. The major issue is therefore the low empowerment and resilience of women in a crisis context such as COVID19 that greatly increase their risk of vulnerability. Indeed, the current crises is already bringing an increased weakening of women's and young people's jobs and incomes and an increased deterioration in the working conditions and economic performance of informal production units and MSMEs.

This vulnerability is also clearly reflected in the level of qualification achieved in the education since the lack of any formal qualification affects women (31.1%) even more than men (7.8%). At the secondary school level, the weakness of retention is alarming. According to data for 2011, of the 86% of young people only 15.2% reach the last year of the cycle. Girls enrollment at school has improved significantly where the gross schooling rate in secondary education is 89% for boys and 101% for girls, according to MECCC (Ministério da Educação, Cultura, Ciência e Comunicação - Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Communication) data for 2017. It is observed that in São Tomé and Príncipe the rate is slightly higher for girls at this level of education. Even so, in secondary school these rates decrease for both boys by 58 percent and girls by 71 percent. The quality of the education system remains a major challenge.

Technical and vocational education is underdeveloped and only receives 2% of young people who drop out of school (2011 data). This strong limitation in reception capacities also applies to higher education, aggravated by a mismatch of training with the needs of the job market, the predominance of private establishments; and a rather high cost of public higher education absorbing up to 45% of current expenditure in the education sector (National Development Plan -DNP- 2020-2024) . The IOF 2010 (Inquérito sobre Orçamento Familiar - Family Budget Survey) estimates at 6% the rate of the population with secondary or higher education; estimates the literacy rate of people aged 15 and over at 87.7%, of which 93.8% are men and 82.1% women. The percentage of the population aged 15 to 24 who were neither in the education system nor in employment is estimated at 29.10%, being 45.8% women and 18% men, which reflects the difficult situation in which this population extract lives, mainly women and youth

In term of access to credit and financing, so far there has not been any significant or consistent policy and reforms at the government level, nor particular initiatives at the level of cooperation partners. However, more recently, in the aftermath of the COVID19 pandemic, which further stressed the limitations of the current credit systems, some new initiatives have been brought to pipeline, for example in relation to mobile money, and could soon be launched. Regarding the few credit initiatives observed until recently, the established access

mechanisms maintained structural aspects of inequality, since they make it difficult for most women, particularly the ones in vulnerable situations, to obtain them, which limits their entrepreneurial potential and their contribution to improve the living conditions of their families and the well-being of their communities.

Thus, despite being recognized for their entrepreneurial capacity, Sao Tomeans women still face substantial challenges in establishing and increasing their entrepreneurial initiatives. For most of them, living with precarious, low-income jobs, not socially valued, with few benefits and little or no social protection (with current and future consequences), with lack of access and control on the means of production, including the land and financing, represent the norms.

It is important to note that basically half of the families in São Tome and Principe are headed by women, who in their great majority accumulate the functions of single provider and educator of their children. These conditions mentioned above have specific consequences especially for single-parent women heads of households, as the burden of unpaid reproductive work and care work affecting their ability to be fully active outside the home due to insufficient time devoted to remunerated work, coupled with the absence of a family support system, amplify the reproduction mechanisms of the poverty cycle.

The COVID19 pandemic is now further exacerbating this vicious cycle.

In March 2020, the country closed all 209 schools (90 preschools) at the national level as a preventive measure, keeping almost 30,000 children and adolescents at home. As schools prepare for reopening in September 2020, it is estimated that the most vulnerable families will be unable to send their children back to school due to socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. Indeed, although primary education in São Tome and Principe is free and the State assumes most of the costs, there are some direct and indirect costs that are financed by families. The direct costs of education represent 49% of the annual per capita expenses of the poorest families, 49% at pre-school level and 46% for primary education (SITAN 2014).

Schools are not only places of learning and socialization, but also offer social protection, health, nutrition, psychosocial support and other vital support. If the most vulnerable children and adolescents cannot return to school, compelled to contribute to the family basic needs and income, inequality in access to quality education and learning would widen further and have long-lasting impact on society. It is known from previous crises that dropping out of school exposes the most vulnerable children and adolescents to poverty, early pregnancy, child labor and deteriorating physical and mental health. Children at home represents also an added burden of women in terms of resources consumption and by not being in school, children and young people add caring responsibilities for the mothers, which without alternatives, will dedicate less time to their income generating activities.

The unequal access to education due to the COVID-19 crisis is now magnifying deep inequalities not only in the access to quality learning for all children but also amplifying effect of poverty on gender equality with significant intergenerational implications for vulnerable families. Hence, ensuring the return to school for all children and adolescents provides also a safety net to minimize disparities for female households of vulnerable families, to access work markets, sustainable livelihood and participation in public life.

It is also highlighted that gender disparity begin in adolescence with higher exposure to early pregnancies. One third of women 15-26 report not attending school because they had a child or became pregnant (IOF, 2017). More than one girl out of four gave birth before the age of 18 and one in five secondary school-aged boys and girls are still out of school, where the leading cause for dropping out for girls is pregnancy. Considering there are more than 26,000 adolescent girls in the country –and their number is expected to increase to 28,000 in 2024, investing in adolescent and young girls during the recovery phase, by improving their access to education and skills as well as providing safety nets of social protection will increase their life opportunities, enabling them to better access the labor market and accelerate human development to build back better after the crisis.

What the government/state is doing to address it and impact so far

Based on international norms and conventions, in recent decades, public policies to promote gender balance have been embodied in the successive National Strategies for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Equity (I,

II and most recently III ENIEG) adopted by the San Tomean Government in 2007, 2014 and 2019, respectively. Within the framework of the operationalization of these instruments. São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) recognizes the principle of equality and non-discrimination as an essential condition and important development tool for building a prosperous future and, through these strategies, has therefore invested efforts to effectively guarantee human rights and ensure the full participation of men and women in the process and enjoyment of development, as established in national legislation and in international commitments, reflecting the growing political commitment to effectively guarantee the fight against poverty, the elimination of social injustices and the consolidation of the democratic rule of law.

A recent assessment conducted on the II ENIEG (November 2019) found, regrettably, that the expected results of the actions undertaken to ensure the economic promotion of women in rural and urban regions during the period 2013-2017 were derisory. The established objectives were slightly achieved through awareness raising strategies, advocacy and technical capacity building on gender issues. Yet, overall the number of activities carried out was considered as too low to allow an evaluation of the results obtained and their impact on the target groups of the program.

Considering that the objective of the II ENIEG in the economic field has not been achieved, mainly due to lack of financial resources and political commitment, the III ENIEG strategy boldly recognize the need to encourage greater access of women to economic resources and activities in order to fight poverty effectively. To this end, presented as one of the main alternatives, it recommends the creation of a proper business environment at the national level, through the financing of entrepreneurial activities of women, and for this purpose, the implementation of training programs and technical assistance to ensure the efficient use of the resources placed at their disposal is fundamental. Together with the Ministry in charge of Planning and Finance, the Ministry in charge of Gender Promotion should support the implementation of measures that promote and guarantee women's access to the credit system to increase their investment capacity.

With COVID19, women have been particularly affected as they are in some of the least protected activities such as retail goods in markets, catering, maintenance activities in public services, etc. Their already difficult situation has thus become more worrying with job losses, a decrease in the volume of work, and decreases in income. These women should be supported to be more able to continue their activities by providing them additional training in terms of health and safety at the working places. In addition, there are also opportunities for employment, business creation and development or structuring into viable economic interest groups to combat the bad effects of the COVID19 from which they could benefit from, including by providing them with relevant tools and training.

Proposed Project Main Objectives

As a direct response to the structural issues identified in the consecutive ENIEGs, further enhanced in the challenging global and national context of the COVID19, and with the aim to contribute to the realization of the national gender strategy, particularly to the economic empowerment of São Tomean women, this concept note envisages a multidimensional project that focuses on: a) developing the entrepreneurial capacities of specific women groups, in particular vulnerable situations, b) developing an alternative mechanism for financing their economic activities, c) developing new business associative initiatives, that can create synergies between women led MSMEs and enhance market linkages, thus contributing to better business environment and dialogue, and d) enhancing resiliency by creating alternative safety nets for women led households, regarding child care and access to education.

II. Results expected to be achieved through this collaborative programme

In order to tackle the structural issues faced by Sao Tomean women to fully realize their entrepreneurial capacity and assure their economic empowerment, further exacerbated in the present context of COVID19, this envisaged project expects to achieve the following results:

1. Increased entrepreneurial technical capacity of startups and MSMEs led by women, particularly those in vulnerable situation;
2. Increased access to funding for startups and MSMEs led by women, particularly those in vulnerable situation;
3. Increased association of startups and MSMEs led by women, particularly those in vulnerable situation;
4. Increased education related safety nets available for adolescents' girls and households led by women, particularly those in vulnerable situation.

The project aims at building and scaling up on existing of UNDP, UNICEF and ILO programs in São Tomé and Príncipe, as the foundation for the realization of the project's expected results.

With UNDP support, the country has already established a Entrepreneurship Platform underpinned by a "Youth Entrepreneurships Challenge Fund" (YECF) that is a new and innovative competitive grant and mechanism for youth entrepreneurship, establishing four (4) business incubators for training and mentoring, including on the island of Príncipe, and a space for dialogue among local actors, including youth, CSOs, private sector and development partners represented at local level, to identify the key challenges affecting the youth and youth entrepreneurs needs. This initiative has created the basic condition for capacity building and access to seed funding for both starts ups and MSMEs. In join initiative with UNICEF and UNDP, the country also implementing the Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge, a two-year youth activity with support from Irish Aid, to inspire young people from disadvantaged context with brilliant ideas, but without the resources, to bring them support to develop their own game-changing ideas and make an impact for their communities.

ILO will contribute with its long and innovative experience on capacity building in entrepreneurial skills of identified vulnerable groups, with a particular focus in workplace hygiene, health and safety to ensure continuity of services and sustainability in contexts such as these of the COVID19, and equally important on training with a focus on business association, including cooperatives.

Together with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF has recently designed a "back to school package", based on an assessment of fixed costs that families must cover in order to send their children to school is designed to cover some direct and indirect costs that are financed by families. The package provides vulnerable families with basic school supplies (backpacks, pencil books, etc.) for children and adolescents, with the aim of eliminating and / or reducing the financial barriers that contribute to school dropout. of the most vulnerable children. As part of this program, UNICEF will also support the government with the development of reliable databased and established selection criteria to select the most vulnerable families, providing an opportunity to strengthen the capacities of education systems, namely in the creation of transparent and reliable data. To address the drop-out of school of adolescent girls and increasing their access to trainings and skills, UNICEF will build on its youth and adolescent empowerment program in São Tomé and Príncipe focused on education and skills, health and well-being, protection from violence and child marriage and participation. In particular it will leverage on the development of a life skills curriculum, the provision of counselling, training and vocational guidance and a community-based entrepreneurship program, all targeted to adolescent girls to address the issues of violence, child pregnancies, and school dropout and community-based entrepreneurship. These activities will be developed at the Youth Interaction Centers and schools.

This proposal aims at creating synergies between these three agencies experiences and programs designing and implementing an intervention that organically connect and address a number of economic and social gender discriminatory factors to make vulnerable female households and their children more resilience in the face of the COVID19 pandemic. Conceived as a Women Economic Empowerment Window (WEEW), this proposal will simultaneously address some of most critical multi-dimensional barriers affecting women

economic empowerment be it in providing support to women led starts up and micro businesses, in upgrading their business skills, access to mentoring, access to credit, promotion of business association, access to the school packages and psychosocial support and counselling, as well as business health safety in the context of COVID19 pandemic.

In term of economic impact, these services will translate into more structured micro/small businesses to be implemented through the entrepreneurship platform program that works towards an enabling environment, capacities development, availability and access to finance, leadership and markets opening. The WEEW will also identify successful existing businesses implemented by women entrepreneurship in the country, to invest for scale up, improve the quality of services and products offered, open markets and management capacity strengthening, including connecting them to financing facility offered by the local commercial bank.

In tandem, the women targeted by the WEEW will benefit from the Back to School program in two distinctive ways: in the direct support provided to their children to be able to attend school, but also as potential suppliers of the good and services required by this program. To that end part of the training and capacity building/skills development activities to be undertaken by the incubators and part of the financial grants will be geared towards achieving this specific objective. This induced demand by the program will be a critical catalytic element to test some of incubated businesses solutions and ensure better sustainability in the longer run.

Furthermore, in the COVID19 context, the WEEW will propose additional and innovative support measures to ensure continuity of services, secure workplaces, support the workforce and the productivity of factors of production. To that end, training and capacity-building tools for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will be developed and made available to them to make them better able to cope with the risks associated with COVID19 in terms of the spread of the virus in their businesses, but also to accompany them to better manage the environment and working time/methods.

Additionally, as part of the implementation of the strategy, networking between large companies and SMEs will also be established so that the dialogue framework that will be put in place, so as to identify the types of alternative jobs that can be created within a partnership framework between the public employment service, large companies and MSMEs, especially in a crisis context such as COVID19. It is the expectation of this proposal that the proposed theory of change, underpinned by a multidimensional approach will deliver on the planned results and outcomes.

The underlying theory of change in this approach is that by:

Contributes to:	Contributes to:	National Development Goal:
Increasing education related safety nets available for adolescents' girls and households led by women, particularly those in vulnerable situation;	Removes barriers that prevent women from having the same access as men to education, sexual and reproductive health, economic opportunities and productive inputs, can generate enormous productivity gains;	Transform Sao Tome and Principe into a service-oriented economy.
Increasing entrepreneurial technical capacity of startups and MSMEs led by women, particularly those in vulnerable situation;		
Increasing association of startups and MSMEs led by women, particularly those in vulnerable situation;	Improves women's living conditions results in the well-being of their families, their dependents and consequently society in general.	
Increasing access to funding for startups and MSMEs led by women, particularly those in vulnerable situation;	Increases financing and training for entrepreneurship, especially for youth.	

The ideas/businesses proposals of solely women applicants will be assessed on a modified competitive basis (to factor-in the vulnerability aspects of the target group and ensure inclusiveness by utilizing clear criteria of vulnerabilities from the outset) on *inter alia* gender-aware social investment impact and alignment with the SDGs. This specific funding mechanism for Women Economic Empowerment Window is in pre-design but reflects the outcome of national consultations, builds on other UN projects and respond to key recommendations in national strategies and international assessments.

The different UN agencies will contribute in the following manner:

UNDP - The selected young women will be trained and assisted in the transformation of the solutions identified to address communities' challenges into business opportunities. The best ideas will be selected for funding by the project through a modified competitive process to ensure inclusiveness of vulnerable young women. In addition to the new ideas, the project will also support the upgrading of scaling up of existing also support the upgrading of scaling up of existing micro-small businesses. The funding of the young women entrepreneurs will follow two approaches. For the startups, the project will provide grants in a limited amount for business installation and running. For the existing businesses upgrading and scale-up, the project will use awards facility as the funding mechanism, which will provide co-financing to existing private sector micro and small businesses for innovative inclusive businesses in several areas. Innovation and contribution to acceleration of SDGs will be among criteria for business selection.

UNICEF - For the back to school incentive package, UNICEF will work closely with the Ministry of Education and the Directorate for Social Protection to establish the selection criteria to select the beneficiaries of the package in order to avoid duplication with other existing social protection programs. The 'back to school' incentive package will be strengthened with community awareness activities on educational issues to increase student enrollment, especially for girls and vulnerable groups. In order to reach out to all areas in the country, civil society organizations will be engaged, to provide logistical support and data/information collection. Supervision and monitoring of the end beneficiaries will be carried out jointly, between UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, with support from civil society organizations, to assess the effective use of materials. The creation of counselling, training and vocational guidance services will be set up and located in all secondary schools in the country. There, adolescents will be able to receive all the information they need regarding schooling, training and career opportunities. In addition, a community-based entrepreneurship program will be developed at the Youth Interaction Centers for out-of-school adolescent girls to build "skills for learning, personal empowerment, employability and active citizenship". The initiative foresees a six-month program with a mix content of theory and practice in economic activities. UNICEF will also be reinforcing the capacities of staff at the Direction of Social Protection and to the Youth Interaction Centers in all the districts of the country. Social protection personnel will be able to deliver quality counselling services to adolescent girls with early pregnancy and drop out of school as well as victims of gender-based violence and sexual abuse. The young leaders, with focus on adolescent girls and young women working in the Youth Interaction Centers will be able to deliver sensitization sessions on skills for learning, personal empowerment, employability and active citizenship.

ILO - will support the identification of the most vulnerable women based on the selection of the best micro and small businesses and initiatives, particularly in the field of promoting the green/blue economy. These selected women will follow some training in terms of entrepreneurship, business plan, funding research file, application of modules/educational kits using the existing incubators and facility set by UNDP. Prior to the trainings some training kits for the creation and management of women's cooperatives/enterprises (CRIE, GERME, TRIE, MYCOOP, etc.) will be elaborated and contextualized for Sao Tomean vulnerable women, holders of relevant and innovative initiatives. Moreover, and innovatively, additional kits and trainings will be provided to these women regarding the health and safety at the working places, in order to ensure the continuity of their activities in the context of the COVID19 crisis and after the pandemic. Additional support will be provided to ensure that relevant employment and enterprises promotion institutions are able to continue to provide their services to women job seekers even beyond the pandemic, and to this end, the proposal will promote the digitalization and innovation of these institutions in order to maintain the delivering rate of their services. To date, the design of a digital platform to record the job seekers women and young people is carried out by the ministry of employment with the support of ILO. This platform will be enhanced and some trainings for its ownership/internalization by the employment promotion services for women, will be planned in the context of the project.

Policy Alignment

National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Equity III – ENIEG (2019)

Ultimately this proposal wants to contribute to 2 of the overarching objective of the gender national strategy, namely:

- (i) Removing barriers that prevent women from having the same access as men to education, sexual and reproductive health, economic opportunities and productive inputs, can generate enormous productivity gains;
- (ii) Improving women's living conditions results in the well-being of their families, their dependents and consequently society in general.

São Tomé and Príncipe National Development Plan (2020-24)

- Strategic Goal 1. Transform Sao Tome and Principe into a service-oriented economy.
- Objective 2.4 Provide financing and training for entrepreneurship, especially for youth.

National Action Plan for Employment and Training - PANEF (2017-2020)

- Operational program PO.7 : Diversification of vocational training offer
- Operational program PO.8 : Promoting self-employment
- Operational program PO.11 : Enterprises incubation pilot project

UNDAF (2017-2021)

- Outcome 3. Employment and competitiveness are ensured through economic diversification, developing resilience to climate change, improving the quality of life of the poor and vulnerable in rural and urban environments, as well as access to finance and the market for young people and women.
- Output 5: promote self-employment, jobs and entrepreneurship.

SDG Targets and Indicators

Main Goals			Indicator 1
Main Goals			
Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere			
TARGET_1.4	1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance		Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services
Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls			
TARGET_5.5	5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life		Proportion of women in managerial positions

	Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all		
	TARGET_8.5	8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value	Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities
	TARGET_8.8	8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment	Fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers, by sex and migrant status
Secondary Goals			
	Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all		
	TARGET_4.3	4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

III. Catalytic impact and nexus

As mentioned, in order to contribute to the efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and support private-led inclusive growth through the III ENIEG strategy, the government promotes gender equality as well as women’s economic empowerment and financial inclusion as one of its priorities. The importance attached to it is also reflected by the fact that National Conference that launch the ENIEG III was jointly supported by both the UN and the IMF. Indeed, women’s economic empowerment is an important element of the new three-year Extended Credit Facility (ECF) program between the IMF and the Government. This proposal, if approved, could greatly contribute for a successful implementation of this program thus opening-up possibilities for further funding from the IMF and other donors providing budget-support, like the EU and the AFDB for example.

The project will specifically support female workers in the informal economy who lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic, as well as small businesses that have experienced a decline in their performance indicators such as volume of the production, level of sales, turnover. It was found as a result of assessments that young people and women were negatively affected by the effects of the pandemic. In close collaboration with the Ministry of Youth, the project's interventions involving training and access to financing will enable small and medium-sized enterprises particularly in the digital and green economy to be identified and selected on a rigorous basis, to enable them not only to maintain their volume of activities in a context of crises, but also to be able to scale up their economic entities through additional financing, more ambitious business plans and broadening the level of geographical coverage of their enterprises.

The back to school activities will be implemented in collaboration and in synergy with existing intervention and programs led by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour Family and Solidarity with technical support from UNICEF and funded by strategic partners e.g. COVID-19 acceleration fund for back to school funded by Global Partnership for Education; support to access to social protection for vulnerable families funded with Joint SDG Fund; the program on parental education, funded by the Joint SDG and World Bank, Girls

Empowerment and Education Program from the World Bank. Through the development of a databased and established selection criteria to select the most vulnerable families, the Ministry of Education will also be able to capitalize on the work of collecting vulnerable family data and their triangulation, for other interventions in the long term and strengthen the capacity to respond to external shocks while improving transparency and data reliability.

The UN enjoys a position in São Tomé and Príncipe that uniquely enables it to gain consensus across the political spectrum and to convene actors from public and private sectors to harness an effective public-private partnership (PPP). Through its partnerships and reputation, inside and outside the country, the UN can leverage the participation of institutions and investors that may otherwise lack confidence to engage in a solely government-led initiative (such as, the Diaspora and commercial investors). The UN’s role in promoting the SDGs and assisting governments to explore new mechanisms to achieve those goals has global awareness and imparts a heightened sense of purpose with the UN’s involvement, while also demonstrating its value-add.

Support from this MPTF call is a new source of funding that would also encourage partners around the initiative, especially the EU, World Bank, Portugal and AfDB. As an innovative catalytic investment targeting women, donors are not forced to redirect limited resources from existing commitments and can assess the preliminary outcomes to inform their support to scale-up the initiative. Further, while alternative funding may be sought through UN core funds and donors, the involvement of the MPTF not only adds gravitas to the importance of this initiative but provides a clear anchor to its purpose in pursuit of the Decade of Action.

IV. Budget

This project is intended to capitalize on ongoing programs of UNDP, UNICEF and ILO. The current available resources for these ongoing programs ascend to 865,000 USD.

- UNDP currently has available 490,000 USD;
- UNICEF has 300, 000 USD, *and*;
- ILO has 75,000 USD.

The proposed final project has been estimated at 1,715,000 USD, with a current total gap of 850,000 USD, which of 382,500 USD is being funded by the MPTF for phase one, and the remaining 467,500 USD will be subject to further resource mobilization for a potential phase two.

The indicative budget for the MPTF funded 382,500 USD for phase one is to be distributed between each agency activities as follow:

Budget Lines	Fiscal Year	Description	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3	Total
			ILO	UNICEF	UNDP	USD
1. Staff and other personnel	2020/21	Contribution to allocated staff and new contracted personell to support activitis implementation, including M&E.	15,000	20,900		35,900
2. Supplies, Commodities, Materials	2020/21	Production of outreach and advocacy communication materials.		14,371	4,767	19,138
3. Equipment, Vehicles, and Furniture, incl. Depreciation	2020/21	Training tools, computer and digital materials for the digital platform.	18,000			18,000

4. Contractual services	2020/21	Program Cooperation Agreements with CSOs to follow up on the delivery of the Back to School package. Training and services providers. Communication services.	42,439	33,000		75,439
5. Travel	2020/21					0
6. Transfers and Grants to Counterparts	2020/21	Transfer to Ministry of Youth and Institute of Youth.		30,000	170,000	200,000
7. General Operating and other Direct Costs	2020/21	Internet, phone, other.	4,000	5,000		9,000
Sub Total Programme Costs			79,439	103,271	174,767	357,477
8. Indirect Support Costs * 7%	2020/21		5,561	7,229	12,233	25,023
Total			85,000	110,500	187,000	382,500

V. Implementation

The following agencies of the United Nations system in São Tomé and Príncipe will be involved in the implementation of the joint project:

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF);
- International Labour Organization (ILO).

In addition to the UN agencies, the national partners that will be involved are:

- Ministry of Education,
- Ministry in charge of Employment, Family and Vocational Training
- Ministry in charge of SMEs
- Ministry of Women's Promotion
- Ministry of Youth
- Direction of Social Protection
- Youth Interaction Centers
- Departments responsible for the environment, urban health and community development
- The Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Services
- Civil society organizations (CSOs)
- Partner NGOs working on education

Implementation

This proposal will position the UNRC in a strategic guidance role across a nexus of partnerships that is well suited to the office's convening power and coordination with national SDG efforts as well reflected with the launching of the Third National Strategies for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Equity that was jointly organized with the IMF.

At the technical level, the project will be implemented with NIM modality (National Implementation Modality).

Within this framework, UNDP will be the leading results 1 and 2 and closely collaborating on result 3 as the training and other capacity building activities will benefit from the entrepreneurship platform assets and facilities. UNDP will also closely cooperate on result 4 especially in the identification of vulnerable young women to be part of the program. ILO will technically lead on result 3 although it will be fully participant in the implementation of the result 1, in designing and delivering some of training curriculum and in bringing capacity building in the new aspect related to work-environment hygiene and safety methods in operating in a COVID 19 context. UNICEF will lead on results 4 while being also closely associated with result 1 and 3 and in the identification of vulnerable young women.

The initial design and evolving features of this proposal will be informed by consultations with the Ministry of Women's Promotion, Chamber of Commerce (CCIAS), the Women's Enterprise Association (WEA), Ministry of Youth and Entrepreneurship (MoYE), Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor, the national statistical office, civil society organizations, development partners and other stakeholders as required.

The selection of competitive proposals will involve a consortium of key stakeholders including UN representatives, national and local government representatives and civil society. The consortium members may also be expanded to include other international actors if they onboard contributions to the proposal.

The duration of the phase one of this proposal is expected to be from 6 months to 1 year as a proof of concept phase. If successfully the proposal will be extended and further expanded. The identification of the beneficiaries and the launching of the grant process will be key milestones benchmarked at month 3 of the proposal. This will allow for intermediary results data to be collected and assessed at the end of implementation, to determine

impact and to affect any amendments prior to a second call being conducted.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The technical and financial monitoring of the day-to-day implementation of the project’s activities will be an ongoing process and part of the responsibilities of the project implementation focal points, at the level of UNDP, UNICEF and ILO. To this end, it will be established a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the project, which will produce regular progress reports and final reports in accordance with the reporting requirements set out by the MPTF.

In accordance with the programming policies and procedures described in the UNDP, UNICEF and ILO POPP, the project will be followed by the following means:

- **As part of the project cycle**

On a quarterly basis, a quality assessment (quarterly report) should record progress in achieving the main results, based on the quality criteria and methods described in the Monitoring & Evaluation framework to be further developed. An M&E plan will be updated and improved during the initial phase of implementation. The ultimate goal of the project M&E is to learn lessons and incorporate them into the improvement of current and/or future similar projects and in the eventual phase two of this project.

- **Final Report**

A Project Final Report, based on the quarterly reports, will be conducted in the end the project or soon thereafter to assess project performance and serve as the basis for future similar projects. This evaluation will be conducted by the project management, may include national government entities, if deemed necessary, and may involve other project stakeholders as needed.

Risk Management

Event	Category	Level	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Measures	Risk Owner
Difficulties in targeting the most vulnerable women and girls	Social and Environmental	High Medium	Low Likelihood	Extensive	Outreach campaign very focused on the target group	UNDP/ UNICEF/ ILO
Internet and electricity disruptions,	Operational	High Medium	Moderate	Intermediate	Provision of internet connection, modems, generator to employment services and selected women associations	UNDP/ UNICEF/ ILO
Lack of engagement and support by girls' families and unbalanced decision making in the household, affecting girl's attendance and participation in the activities.	Social and Environmental	Low	Low Likelihood	Extensive	Development of families and community's engagement and communication strategy in order to allow young girls to meaningfully participate in the programme.	UNICEF