**WOMEN AND YOUTHS’ EMPOWERMENT AND GREEN LIVELIHOODS DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AREAS OF NIGERIA**

**Executive Summary**

This project identifies potential economic opportunities for urban women and youth in the green-growth and low-carbon sectors of the economy in Nigeria. A desk review of literature on green growth and green jobs and skills for urban women and youth was complemented by interviews with one key informant based in Nigeria. The evidence was presented and discussed at a consultation with representatives from this project.

There is no single definition of green growth, however, there is some consensus that *it supports environmental sustainability and social progress and that green jobs preserve the environment and provide decent work, advance the economy, and promote social equity.* Transitioning to low-carbon and sustainable growth could deliver direct economic gains as more green jobs can be created per dollar invested compared with those created by fossil fuels. Sub-Saharan Africa is often regarded as the world’s fastest urbanizing region, which could see green growth in urban areas create new markets and significant numbers of jobs. As countries shift to a green economy, some economic sectors will shrink and others will expand – depending on availability of requisite skills, the expanding sectors could absorb the majority of its shrinking counterparts. It is important to mitigate the impact on women as they are more likely to be laid off when jobs are lost or unskilled jobs are replaced with skilled jobs (UNDP, 2013). As jobs are lost in some sectors and created in others, for example in energy and the circular economy, occupational gender stereotypes are likely to persist and women are likely to get only a fraction of the jobs created, unless measures are taken to train women in relevant skills (ILO, 2019). While estimates suggest that an investment of US$ 630 billion in green sectors by 2030 would translate into at least 20 million additional jobs globally (NCE, 2018), skills shortages in green sectors already present a major hurdle for a just transition to low carbon, sustainable growth.

Deliberate action is needed to avoid women and youth facing significant costs such from the transition towards a green economy, such as the risk of rising energy prices, the collapse of sectors they work in, and new job opportunities that are inaccessible. Governments, the UN, development partners, and the private sector are already promoting green growth through regional and national action plans, stakeholder engagement strategies, urban planning that benefits women, youth and other excluded groups, and skills development in green sectors, entrepreneurship, value chains and leadership.

Evidence is limited on the key green sectors that can create economic opportunities for urban women and youth, however there is evidence that thriving markets already exist and that cities serve as engines of social progress and economic growth. Examples from sub-Saharan Africa and the global south demonstrate the potential for urban women and youth in green sectors. Cutting across all the opportunities is the need to support women and youth to overcome social and cultural barriers – lower literacy, lower access to finance, education, access to land, mobility, and the burden of care - ensuring that skills training matches opportunities in growing and emerging green sectors, and the importance of transitioning informal workers to the formal economy to ensure they have access to decent work and employment protections. Examples of potential opportunities include:

Restoration of natural capital will strengthen resilience and boost adaptation to climate impacts and agriculture and forestry can become engines of green growth, even in cities. Urban farming and forestry can contribute to delivering greater food security, more nutritious food, more equitable growth, strengthened resilience, and valuable ecosystem services.

Green entrepreneurship could be an important driver of job creation for women and youth. With skills training, female and young entrepreneurs can take advantage of entrepreneurship opportunities to promote environmental sustainability in sectors including agriculture, food production, construction, tourism, transport, renewable energy and recycling. This could be supported through entrepreneurship training, including the development of business plans and access to technology and information, or building on and greening existing businesses and plans. Evidence from the energy sector, for example, shows the value of promoting women's entrepreneurship through business education and skills development, training on personal agency and initiative, access to finance and capital, and access to coaches, mentors, and networks.

**Project Coordinator/Team Leader**

**Ann Obiageli Okereke**

Phone No. +2347033948770

Email: [gelyokereke@gmail.com](mailto:gelyokereke@gmail.com)

**Project Partners:**

**Muazzam Musa Iro**

Phone No. +2347040803758

Email: [auwal1191@gmail.com](mailto:auwal1191@gmail.com)

**Okechukwu Oji**

Phone No. +2347033905291

Email: [okechukwuojio@gmail.com](mailto:okechukwuojio@gmail.com)

**Local Partners:**

* AFCON
* Women and Youths Groups
* Local private companies if necessary

**Project Description**

**Background and rationale:**

Modernization cut across all sectors of sectors, from transportation to agriculture, architecture, health and information technology. It has contributed to economic development globally. On the other hand, it negative effects environmentally, medically and socially. Agriculture in specific contribute to the contemporary global warming and anthropogenic climate change. This makes it necessary to practice farming that is environmentally friendly. Organic farming is now a solution to both local and global problems.

Organic farming is an eco-friendly agricultural method that do not use fertilizer, pesticides and genetically modified organisms but totally rely on methods of farming practices such as crop rotation, intercropping, agroforestry, use of manure among others. The goal of organic farming is to produce food in an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible manner, promoting healthier ecosystems and minimizing the use of synthetic inputs.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the 6th in the world but it produce below what it needs. As a result, it import a large proportion of the food that the citizen consume. Nigeria’s agriculture cannot feed its population, with food imports amounting to $10 billion in 2015 alone. Consequently, the country is heavily reliant on food imports and faces a high dependency on foreign aid and loans from development partners and multilateral agencies for agriculture related projects. Based on this background organic farming is a very vital business in the country.

The northern part of the country is a savanna zone that have soil and climate that are suitable for plants and animals production. The rainfall received in the area range from 1500mm in the guinea savanna to 500mm in the Sahel savanna. Soil range from clay loam in the guinea savanna to sand loam in the Sahel savanna. These conditions is suitable for the production of maize, groundnut, millet, beans, which are the predominant staple crops consumed by the people who live in the country. On the other hand, the domestic animals supported by the environment include cattle, sheep, goats and chickens are highly consumed in the country.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the intended farming practice is highly potential business in the area. The factors of production are available in the area and similarly, the domestic market is large enough to lift the business to a greater height.

**Opportunities in Green Sectors**

Evidence is limited on the key green sectors for urban women and youth, however thriving markets driving the development of green technologies already exist (ILO, 2019) and cities serve as engines of social progress and economic growth (UN Habitat, 2020). Broadly, green sectors that build on and enhance the Earth’s natural capital or reduce ecological scarcities and environmental risks include renewable energy, low-carbon transport, energy efficient infrastructure, improved waste management, sustainable agriculture and forest management (Avis, 2018).

In low- and middle-income countries, investing in green growth potentially offers significantly more employment opportunities when compared with further investments in the current unsustainable economic model (Rijsberman, 2020). Green jobs in urban areas can be created in sectors such as:

1. Public transport;
2. Urban and peri-urban green agriculture and urban forestry;
3. Renewable energy;
4. Green construction; and
5. Waste management and recycling (UNDP, 2013).

Innovations can contribute to making cities more sustainable and provide solutions to a wide range of challenges, such as water management, sustainable mobility, security, solid waste management, green city development, renewable energy and urban agriculture (UN, 2020).

Targeted skills development and adaptation for the female and youth labour force is necessary for a green economy, and helps prevent a mismatch between existing skills and opportunities (UNDP, 2013).

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of women empowerment and green livelihoods development in Nigeria. Women and youths comprise a significant portion of the population and their empowerment is essential for sustainable development and a thriving economy. This project plan aims to outline a comprehensive action plan for women empowerment and green livelihoods development in Nigeria, highlighting the key strategies and activities that will be implemented to achieve these goals.

**1. Research and Needs Assessment:**

The first step of the project will involve conducting thorough research and needs assessments to understand the specific challenges faced by women and youths in Nigeria. This will include gathering data on their access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and natural resources. The research findings will be used to develop targeted strategies and interventions.

**2. Capacity Building and Skill Development:**

One of the crucial components of women empowerment is providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to enhance their economic prospects. The project will focus on organizing training programs and workshops to equip women and youths with the skills needed for green livelihoods development. This could include training on sustainable agriculture practices, renewable energy technologies, and entrepreneurship skills.

**3. Access to Financial Resources:**

Access to financial resources is often a major barrier for women and youths to start their own businesses or engage in green livelihood activities. The project will collaborate with financial institutions and microfinance organizations to provide affordable loans and financial assistance to women and youths who are interested in establishing or expanding their green businesses. This will help create sustainable income-generating opportunities for them.

**4. Strengthening Networks and Collaborations:**

Building strong networks and collaborations is crucial for the success of any empowerment project. The project will facilitate the creation of networks and partnerships among women entrepreneurs, associations, government agencies, and NGOs working in the field of green livelihoods development. These collaborations will foster knowledge-sharing, resource pooling, and policy advocacy to create a supportive ecosystem for women and youths.

**5. Policy Advocacy and Awareness:**

In order to create an enabling environment for women empowerment and green livelihoods development, it is important to advocate for gender-responsive policies and raise awareness among key stakeholders. The project will engage in advocacy efforts to influence policymakers and advocate for gender equality, women's rights, and sustainable development. Additionally, awareness campaigns will be conducted to educate communities about the importance of green livelihoods and women's contribution to sustainable development.

**6. Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to measure the effectiveness and impact of the project. Regular monitoring will be carried out to track the progress of activities and identify any challenges or areas for improvement. Evaluations will be conducted at key milestones to assess the overall impact of the project on women empowerment and green livelihoods development in Nigeria.

**7. Scaling up and Replication:**

Upon successful implementation, the project will strive to scale up its activities and replicate its model in different regions of Nigeria. This will ensure that the benefits of women empowerment and green livelihoods development are realized across the country, leading to sustainable economic growth and environmental conservation.

**General Outcome of the Project**

**For Women:**

* **Increased income and economic empowerment:** Through skills development, access to finance, and market connection, women can establish and grow green businesses, leading to higher incomes and improved financial security.
* **Improved livelihoods and well-being:** Increased income can translate to better access to food, healthcare, education, and other essential needs for women and their families.
* **Enhanced leadership and decision-making:** Training and participation in cooperatives and networks can empower women to take leadership roles in their communities and advocate for their rights.
* **Greater knowledge and adoption of sustainable practices:** By learning about and implementing green technologies and climate-smart practices, women can contribute to environmental protection and resilience.

**For Youths:**

* **Increased employment and income opportunities:** The project can create new green jobs opportunities for young people, especially in areas like renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and ecotourism.
* **Enhanced skills and knowledge:** Training programs can equip youths with relevant skills and knowledge in green technologies and entrepreneurship, improving their employability and competitiveness.
* **Increased awareness and engagement in environmental issues:** By participating in the project, young people can gain awareness about environmental challenges and develop responsible behaviors towards sustainability.
* **Empowerment and participation in community development:** Young people can take leadership roles in green initiatives and advocate for sustainable development in their communities.

**Overall benefits:**

* **Contribution to Nigeria's green economy:** The project can contribute to the development of a more sustainable and inclusive green economy in Nigeria by promoting green businesses and creating new employment opportunities.
* **Improved climate resilience:** By adopting sustainable practices, communities can become more resilient to the impacts of climate change, such as droughts and floods.
* **Gender equality and social development:** Empowering women and youths can lead to positive social transformations, such as reduced poverty, improved education, and better health outcomes.

However, it's important to consider potential **challenges and limitations**:

* **Funding and resource availability:** Implementing such a project requires significant financial resources and human capital, which might be limited.
* **Market access and competition:** Establishing and sustaining green businesses can be challenging due to limited market access and competition from established players.
* **Capacity building and training:** Effective skills development and training programs require qualified trainers and adequate infrastructure.
* **Policy and regulatory environment:** Supportive policies and regulations are crucial for promoting green businesses and ensuring a level playing field.
* **Social and cultural norms:** Addressing gender inequalities and traditional power structures might require awareness campaigns and community engagement.

**Conclusion**

The project plan outlined above aims to address the crucial issues of women empowerment and green livelihoods development in Nigeria. By focusing on capacity building, access to financial resources, networking, policy advocacy, and monitoring, this project plan offers a comprehensive approach to empower women and youths and promote environmentally sustainable livelihoods. Implementing this project will contribute to a more equitable society, environmentally conscious practices, and economic prosperity for women and youths in Nigeria.