

# empowher

Business Report 2022





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# A few words of introduction

2022 was a significant year for Empow'Her. we will be celebrating our 10th anniversary in 2023, but it was during this year 2022 that we embarked on a transformative journey that renewed our purpose, reinforced our internal workings and unlocked new opportunities for our organization.

To do this, we took a step back to examine our past achievements and imagine future prospects. For nearly a decade, we have provided direct support to more than 17,000 women on their entrepreneurial journey, raised awareness among 23,000 people in their communities, completed approximately fifty projects, and delivered over 7,500 hours of training. While our original focus was promoting women's entrepreneurship, we came to recognize the difficult realities faced by these women on a daily basis. As such, we broadened our actions and expanded our scope: we launched feminist third spaces in Europe and Africa, developed a gender-based violence focus through our activities, began an awareness-raising programme through a village-based theater in Burkina Faso, and even used entrepreneurship to foster the emancipation of underprivileged young girls in Abidjan and San Pedro in Côte d'Ivoire.

Yet, it cannot be denied that in the last decade, the world has changed very little and may even have experienced setbacks in terms of rights and situations.

The hindrances encountered by female entrepreneurs persist, their path is still strewn with obstacles, and their daily struggles sadly mirror a wider unequal and patriarchal system. Across the world, women still experience significant inequality when it comes to accessing economic resources and entrepreneurship: 2.4 billion women of working age live in economies that do not grant them the same rights as men, and on average, women worldwide receive 24% less revenue than men for comparable work.

Through the course of our actions, fundamental questions have arisen within our organization: are empowerment issues restricted to the individual level? Is it fair to impose the burden of inequality on those who experience it and who are frequently deprived of decision-making authority? Can we genuinely support women without challenging the system that subjugates them?

As such, the past decade has enabled us to equip ourselves with some strong beliefs: it's not just a matter of achieving gender parity amongst individuals, as economic

and gender inequalities are intrinsically intertwined with our societal and economic framework. We comprehend that the answers entail tackling cultural standards and discriminatory practices, along with the implementation of more encompassing and impartial economic principles for all. In addition, these solutions must quicken: as stated in the recent report from the World Economic Forum, it will require 135 years to end gender inequalities, with financial parity estimated to necessitate 268 years if we keep going at the present rate.

**“ We are committed to supporting women entrepreneurs within a framework that promotes systemic change. ”**

Our goal is to create and promote a platform where women can embark on their entrepreneurial journeys without facing the obstacles imposed by a system that marginalizes them. Our vision is for entrepreneurship to be a sector that generates a positive impact, encourages solidarity and offers protection, while enabling personal growth and learning.

We aim to support female entrepreneurs within an agenda that promotes systemic change.

As such, we promote feminist entrepreneurship.

In this report, we provide a transparent analysis of our activities, our findings, and our beliefs. We highlight the experiences of the women entrepreneurs we support, as well as our own. Our journey has always prioritized experimentation and now seeks to systemize its impact. Our aim is no longer to provide only temporary solutions, but to reform the system itself.

The goal is ambitious, but we take inspiration from the bravery and perseverance of thousands of women entrepreneurs who share our desire for a juster and more sustainable world.

**Soazig Barthelemy**



# Nice to meet you!

Empow'Her is an organization devoted to promoting the social and economic empowerment of women. Since our founding, we have united behind a common purpose to achieve greater inclusivity in entrepreneurship, as a means of empowerment for women and a driver of transformation.

We dream of a world where all women are free to embark on entrepreneurial journeys and achieve their ambitions. A world which guarantees their independence and social recognition. A world in which women can act as actors of their own development.

Empow'Her fights for women's social and economic emancipation by increasing their freedom and ability to do business. To achieve this, we undertake different types of activities that converge towards a common goal: to help women bring their projects to life, enable them to attain their full potential, and equip them with the necessary tools for self-empowerment through entrepreneurship.

Over the years, Empow'Her has broadened its activities, areas of operation and methods, taking on various functions depending on the contexts and its audience: that of an incubator devoted to female business owners, of a Festival, of a women's network, of a grassroots organization supporting micro-entrepreneurs, of a business building training programme, and even of a space devoted to equality. These diverse facets showcase the wealth of activities and methods within Empow'Her. We cannot be condensed to a lone label, as every one of these obligations contributes to our overarching strategy.

## 5 Key Figures about Empow'Her



**+ 17 000**

Women supported



**+ 23 000**

People engaged in awareness-raising activities



**+30**

Countries covered by our actions  
(Since the creation of Empow'Her)



90% of women who participated in one of our programmes were introduced to the concepts of entrepreneurship for the first time.



95% of women we trained supported other women, creating a virtuous and robust ripple effect.

01

# A woman's **journey**





# Our mission is in line with the everyday experiences of the women we support.

Empow'Her was born from the wish to understand and explore the relationship between empowerment and women's entrepreneurial approach. In all, we perceive that female business owners across the globe are not given the recognition and appraisal they deserve.

Exposed to the difficulties faced by women day-to-day, our initial strategy was to construct tools and solutions to meet their needs.. On top of this technical knowledge, we quickly identified the importance of services offering support and guidance. That is why, inspired by women's needs, we built our first support programmes and supported women wishing to pursue entrepreneurship, both on an individual and collective level.

In 2015, we transitioned into a professional organization and implemented our operational model, while still upholding our exploratory approach and experimental ethos. Recognizing the importance of considering the context in which women operate, and with the aim of incorporating activities that benefit the surrounding communities, we launched awareness-raising campaigns targeted at diverse audiences. We organized events to amplify the voices often unheard, held meetings based on collective intelligence, produced resources and studies, and created frameworks for partnering. While continuing to support the women we guide, we realized that empowerment requires a framework for action that goes beyond the individual level.

In this opening section, we welcome you to join us on the entrepreneurial journey of these women. You'll witness the obstacles they face and explore the tools and solutions available to help them overcome these challenges.



# Ensuring economic security for women is a pressing issue.

## THE PROBLEM WE ENCOUNTER

As highlighted by the 2021 Oxfam report, women are only entitled to three-quarters of the economic rights that men have. Consequently, they are less protected by laws and institutions regarding pay, leave, maternity, entrepreneurship, retirement, and assets. This situation is prevalent across all continents. For instance, in Europe, women earn 13% less than men. In Africa, women are more represented than men in the informal sector, encounter more difficulties gaining wage employment, and face greater income inequalities or disparities in accessing land and financing.

The weight of tradition and deeply ingrained socio-cultural biases in patriarchal societies also has a significant impact on women's wages worldwide. They are still not regarded as equal to men, do not have access to the same economic opportunities, and are frequently deprived of the rewards of their hard work.

This limited access to income and/or resources significantly impacts women's economic prospects, obstructs their entrepreneurial efforts, and results in states of extreme instability and dependence. In some cases, having an economic activity can even worsen this instability, as taking on unpaid work perpetuates financial dependence. The present economic system, which has posed difficulties for women's integration, creates new types of discrimination and perpetuates, even exacerbates gender inequalities. In the words of Gisèle Halimi in 1992, «*all other forms of dependence for women arise from economic dependence.*»



## HOW TO RESOLVE IT

In an environment where women face barriers to accessing the labor market and earning an income, entrepreneurship offers a powerful route to self-empowerment. In the presence of structural inequalities, entrepreneurship provides an opportunity to escape dependency and take control of personal choices and development.

According to the OECD, women often engage in entrepreneurship out of necessity, as they have fewer alternatives for accessing the labor market than men. This may explain why there is a relatively high proportion of female entrepreneurs in developing countries with more difficult economic and social conditions. That is why we provide entrepreneurs with methods and advice on how to establish sustainable business activities. To take them beyond survival entrepreneurship, we work with them to explore alternative paths. We are here to encourage them to achieve their ambitious projects, help them identify opportunities and discover inspiring ways to generate sustainable income and become part of supportive networks.

To fulfill our commitment, we emphasize specific interventions for women, especially in suburban, peri-urban and rural areas. Our objective is not limited to urban centers, but to reach women in all places.

Men globally hold 50% more wealth than women, according to a report from Oxfam.



## Our Equality 2.0 programme in Côte d'Ivoire

The Equality 2.0 programme, established in collaboration with Cargill and IFC, was created upon recognizing the disproportionate leadership position of men in managing the cocoa production chain, with 94% of the industry being male-dominated, in spite of Côte d'Ivoire being the world's largest cocoa producer. Although cocoa production is a crucial economic activity for the country, the lack of female presence in top-level management positions is evident. However, it must be noted that women contribute substantially, with an average of 40% of the production. Similar to many other sectors, women's participation in informal activities within this sector often results in them not receiving fair economic value for their work.

They may work on plots owned by their husbands without receiving any payment for their contributions. Their efforts remain socially unaccepted and unrecognized.

Our aim is to empower women in this context so that they can capture and retain their own incomes. We improve the entrepreneurial capacity of individuals to establish and grow their own businesses in cocoa production or other sectors. Cooperatives are encouraged to reconsider their operational models which exclude women from income distribution. In addition, women's most immediate needs are addressed through financial aid or material resources, while they receive support for the initial steps of their activities.

Finally, alongside the programme, women's producer groups have been formed to organize other agricultural endeavors that may aid in income generation and achieving autonomy.

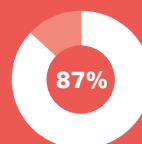


“We were taught how to make a business, so I now know how to earn income for myself.”

Marie-Pierette,  
President Yonian Group

2250

Across all locations, 2250 women participated in training activities.



of first-year participants reported having increased their income.

### Women's Economic Empowerment Project in partnership with PurProjet



In addition to coffee production, we also supported Biranesh Dumo and Ethiopian women to engage in beekeeping, with the aim of making this sector more inclusive and ensuring sustainable and decent income for women. Until now, this highly profitable activity had been primarily dominated by men.

*“Prior to participation in the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme, I engaged in small-scale beekeeping activities using local equipment and lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to enhance productivity. Firstly, the incubation phase of the programme boosted my self-confidence and leadership which empowered me to improve my communication and to think more ambitiously. With the help of this programme, I was also able to create a framework for action and a financial plan to scale up my business. The grant will enable me to obtain up-to-date bee hives and implement the newfound knowledge. In my community, I disseminate my insights through a savings group, with a focus on gender stereotypes and leadership concepts.”*

**Biranesh Dumo, Beekeeper.**

# Using entrepreneurship to regain self-confidence



## THE PROBLEM WE ENCOUNTER

Throughout the world, self-employment and entrepreneurship are the most common forms of employment. This is even more true in many low-income countries, where wage employment is the exception. However, according to the OECD, women remain underrepresented in entrepreneurship. Their potential tends to remain 'dormant', not fully realized. While global data on entrepreneurship is sometimes difficult to compile, it's known that in Europe women start fewer businesses than men and are less likely to be self-employed. Globally, only 34% of small, medium and large enterprises have a woman at the helm. In France, only 31% of new businesses created each year are started by women, even though 82% of women have considered entrepreneurship.

Apart from legal or regulatory barriers (in many countries women are still not allowed to sign contracts), women often mention feelings of inadequacy or lack of confidence. These doubts often stem from experiences of discrimination and prevent them from taking action. Discouraged by their social and cultural environment, their entrepreneurial experience may be less fulfilling, their lack of confidence may affect their level of ambition, and some may even abandon their projects.

## HOW TO RESOLVE IT

A key aspect of our approach is to build women's confidence, making it easier for them to take the first step towards entrepreneurship. In addition to technical guidance, moral support to overcome the challenges of a somewhat lonely entrepreneurial journey is crucial. This aspect is particularly important for people in more precarious social and economic circumstances (geographical isolation, unemployment or inactivity, migration experience, etc.).

To achieve this, we implement different solutions during the support period: individual coaching with professionals, peer «mirror» sessions, collective workshops inspired by collective intelligence methodologies, and more. We prioritize creating spaces for listening, taking into account women's experiences in their entrepreneurial journey and helping them to identify potential barriers that limit their potential.

**Women entrepreneurs are 70% more likely to reach the 5-year mark with the right support.**

We emphasize the creation of long-term programmes that allow women to progressively find resources to advance both their business and their personal growth. Many participants leave our programmes feeling that they have overcome fears or limiting beliefs and are better equipped to face what comes next.

## The Women Dare programme

The Women Dare programme aims to support women in Île-de-France who want to start their own business. It offers a tailor-made support path designed to be flexible and comprehensive, with open enrolment throughout the year. This «à la carte» programme runs for 12 months, allowing participants to engage while taking into account their personal or family constraints. Beneficiaries have the freedom to design their journey and training sessions. The diversity and complementarity of the approaches provide comprehensive support.

Throughout the year, participants undergo a two-day immersion bootcamp, receive personalized individual coaching and have the opportunity to meet in groups to develop their projects. The methodology emphasizes the collective intelligence of different cohorts and the social impact of the projects. Each year, 200 women in Île-de-France, 30% of whom live in priority neighborhoods, will benefit from this programme.

# +1250

women directly supported in their entrepreneurial journey.



of the women in the programme have a job, compared with **38%** at the beginning.



of them are in the process of starting their own business.



**Vi Grad** is 39 years old and the mother of two young boys. After 15 years in purchasing consulting, she ventured into impact entrepreneurship after participating in the Women Dare programme. She founded Pommy, a brand of anti-waste fruit purees made from surplus produce. Based in Melun, she produces the fruit purees herself!

## Girl Power programme

Through «Girl Power», Empow'Her has developed a programme specifically targeted at vulnerable young girls from disadvantaged neighborhoods in Côte d'Ivoire. These girls, aged between 15 and 24, face a difficult life: they are often out of school, unemployed and sometimes single mothers. We worked with these 300 young girls for two and a half years, addressing issues such as personal development, emotional management, self-esteem, public speaking, defining their career goals, problem-solving and community spirit. Our mentoring methods aimed to adapt to their needs. For example, we developed illustrated training materials to improve understanding for illiterate girls. In addition, a 6-month incubation programme supported around one hundred of them on their entrepreneurial journey. Twenty-five of their projects received financial support from our partners, UNICEF and OSCN, the Ivorian public service organization. Through entrepreneurship, Empow'Her contributes to their social and economic reintegration.



A perfect self-learner, **Massangbê has become a role model in her community.** At the age of 19, she opened her own boutique where she sells women's clothing and accessories. *«I used to be very nervous, I hesitated a lot and I couldn't speak in front of people because I thought they would make fun of me because of my bad French. Now I'm no longer ashamed to speak in front of people.»*

### Girl Power on WhatsApp!

The Empow'Her educational team took the initiative of converting the training modules into audio versions and making them accessible to young girls via WhatsApp. Background music, voices and cover images have been specifically selected according to their local environment. This approach enables us to adapt to technical constraints (internet access), as well as educational challenges (low literacy rate). Thanks to this innovation, participants found it easier to understand the modules and complete their exercises.

# Strengthening the agency of the most vulnerable women

## THE PROBLEM WE ENCOUNTER

Throughout the world, women spend at least two-and-a-half-times more time than men on unpaid work, including daily domestic tasks. From preparing meals to cleaning, collecting water and firewood, and caring for children and the elderly, this work is rarely recognised as such, yet its impact is substantial.

**“ It is estimated that unpaid care and domestic work account for around 10% and 39% of GDP respectively. In some countries, these activities can contribute more to the economy than sectors such as industry, trade and transport. ”**

— ONU Femmes

These figures are indicative of a wider context. For example, the practice of child marriage, both early and forced, is still widespread in impoverished rural areas. Every year, 15 million young girls are subjected to this practice, five times more than boys. It leads to them to drop out of school, increases teenage pregnancy and exposes them to violence. In such circumstances, it is difficult to break out of the confined domestic role they have been assigned to. It's even harder to embark on an entrepreneurial project with a sense of calm and autonomy. These socio-cultural barriers therefore hamper their agency. Working, being an entrepreneur and having an income do not necessarily equate to autonomy.



## HOW TO RESOLVE IT

For Empow'Her, it would be a mistake to ignore this context. The socio-economic barriers women face underline the need for a comprehensive approach to supporting women entrepreneurs. A key aspect of this approach is to raise awareness of gender issues and discrimination among women and their communities. This includes sharing and highlighting women's experiences, sensitizing men's groups and developing practical solutions to reduce unpaid workloads.

Empow'Her strives to create an enabling environment that allows women to focus on growing their businesses. Celebrating the «power of ordinary women» is an important goal - in the words of ecofeminist activist Vandana Shiva - freeing them from certain societal constraints and enabling them to realize their full potential. These learning experiences are often transformative for the participants. They discover new resources within themselves, strengthen their convictions and take control of their journey.

## The Perenia programme in Niger

For the past three years, Empow'Her has been running the Perenia project, a programme that trains women's groups in sustainable agriculture in three regions of Niger. The participants are mostly women over the age of 25, often without formal education and married. While most are involved in vegetable gardening or related activities (such as vegetable processing or trading), two-thirds have never had access to their own land. These beneficiaries are at the intersection of several autonomy-related challenges and are far from entrepreneurship. The Perenia programme therefore focuses on capacity building.

It works to instill feminist and ecological values while providing practical tools for working the land and starting a business. In addition, the group-based approach emphasises the collective aspect of individual development. In this way, Empow'Her encourages the emergence of a team spirit among the women, who sometimes continue to work together beyond the programme. United, these new communities value solidarity and mutual support, contributing to the autonomy of each member.

# 1925

women supported towards sustainable agriculture

# 19

agricultural plots have been serviced to facilitate access to land and water



98%

of individuals claim to have improved their economic situation or that of their business.



99%

have become aware of gender inequality and the role of sisterhood.



**37,6kg** of seeds were distributed to beneficiaries.

### In Niamey,

6 vegetable production groups and 4 vegetable processing groups, each consisting of 25 women, formed a partnership after the PERENIA programme. The processors buy and process moringa, cabbage and onions produced by the gardening groups.

A total of 250 women have come together on their own initiative and are working synergistically.

*«Before, we didn't see the benefit of keeping records to better structure and control our various expenses, but now we have realized how important it is for our activities, especially in terms of traceability. This training in financial management for a group and the use of management tools will be very useful for us. It's very important and it's a great opportunity for us to have received this support free of charge».*

**Ramatou Harouna,**

President of a group in Niamey

### Women Dare Lisboa: Entrepreneurship, a path for refugee women, in collaboration with Pão a Pão and the Escola de Turismo de Portugal.



Crises, especially when they are multiple and successive, often result in setbacks for gender equality. In recent years, the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and climate change have all contributed to increasing gender inequalities. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Portugal has received more than 36,000 refugees, two-thirds of whom are women. These women face specific challenges related to language barriers, isolation and administrative procedures.

The aim of our support is to promote the integration of Ukrainian refugee women by strengthening their skills,

providing training and increasing their employability in the hospitality industry. The programme also aims to provide the women with tools, resources and networking opportunities to develop their projects. Support is provided to build their confidence and leadership skills, and entrepreneurial training is offered, including assistance in the ideation phase and in defining the business model and strategy. Technical training is also provided by a school specializing in the hospitality industry, so that at the end of the programme, the women can choose between a salaried career or entrepreneurship.

# Shaping Entrepreneurial Networks



## THE PROBLEM WE ENCOUNTER

Sexist stereotypes still persist in the entrepreneurial sector, with men being overrepresented in media coverage and the prevailing image revolving around competition and relentless performance. These barriers prevent women from envisioning themselves as entrepreneurs. As a direct consequence, only 30% of entrepreneurs in France are women according to INSEE figures. This, in turn, contributes to the underrepresentation of female entrepreneurs in a vicious cycle.

However, these barriers could be overcome if women entrepreneurs gain real access to, can lean on, and are supported by existing networks and ecosystems. For this to happen, they need to find themselves in these networks and be better represented within them.

Furthermore, it's essential that women entrepreneurs have the ability to shape spaces and networks that reflect their own identities. According to the OECD, networks of women entrepreneurs serve as significant sources of information about successful entrepreneurial ventures, and they can enhance members' self-confidence. The decision to pursue a career, especially as an entrepreneur, relies on the ability to envision oneself in that role. But without new realities, fresh values, exemplified by role models and widely disseminated, women will continue to struggle to see themselves as entrepreneurs, and the situation won't change.

## HOW TO RESOLVE IT

Empow'Her firmly believes in the power of collective action. For us, sharing and sisterhood are sources of inexhaustible energy and empowerment, constituting resolutely feminist modes of operation. We encourage women to join communities where they can share their challenges, insights, and test their ideas. Being part of a community of peers provides the opportunity to learn from each other and collectively gain confidence and strength.

Consequently, we encourage and foster experiences of connection and mutual support so that both current and future entrepreneurs feel inspired, supported, and guided. This allows them to shape spaces and networks that resonate with their own identities. To achieve this, we have created physical and digital spaces that highlight a different image of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, serving as entry points for those who haven't found them elsewhere. Additionally, we support committed entrepreneurs who promote impact-driven entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, we connect these entrepreneurs with the right resources and stakeholders, facilitating relationships and granting access to crucial support for their development. Mentors, coaches, investment funds, support structures, networks of entrepreneurs, institutions—all must be involved, both at the local and international levels.



## Creating third places for experiences of connection and mutual support

Empow'Her is dedicated to fostering synergies among women who have ideas or projects that aim to make a positive impact on the world, no matter what the scale. These synergies take place in collective moments where women meet, exchange ideas, create and rethink together the world of tomorrow. The concept of place and space plays a crucial role in this synergy strategy, which is why Empow'Her has created Sist'Her third places to accelerate women's access to more opportunities. These spaces welcome our teams, the women we support and inspiring events for the community.

2

impact-driven entrepreneurs supported:  
**Abidjan et Paris**

**Sist'Her Paris :**  
**225m<sup>2</sup>** of space for women from diverse backgrounds  
**23** events  
**559** participants in 2023

## Bringing together social entrepreneurs committed to fighting gender-based violence

partnered with the Kering Foundation

Beginning in 2019, Empow'Her partnered with the Kering Foundation to support social entrepreneurs committed to combating gender-based violence (GBV). Through this partnership, Kering Foundation awardees received collective support to explore different strategies to develop their impact projects and businesses. The aim was to scale up sustainable economic models and offer solutions across sectors and countries to maximize their impact. This alliance also facilitated the exchange of best practices, valuable advice and essential resources, ultimately contributing to the safety and well-being of survivors.

14

entrepreneures à impact sont accompagnées

## Festivals for Shaping Spaces Aligned with Entrepreneurs

To ensure that women driving change are heard, recognized and supported, Empow'Her has created Empow'Her Festivals - both physical and digital spaces that amplify the voices of those working to create a more inclusive and sustainable future. These festivals provide a platform for women to share their visions and contributions to entrepreneurship that challenge existing norms.

**Festival Niger, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, on «Women and Climate»**

**900**  
participants

**+ 80** speakers

**+ 25** conferences and workshops



*"Strong sisterhood, skills, knowledge and a better network are essential to create impact."*

**Aminata Takoubakoye**

**Festival France, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition**

**5 300**  
participants

**200** speakers

**89** events

**38** stands



*"We will remember the strong sense of sisterhood and the feeling of being in the right place"*

**Festival participant**

# Making equality a collective responsibility



## THE PROBLEM WE ENCOUNTER

Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and achieving gender equality are core values of the United Nations. However, recent figures show a much bleaker reality for women: according to Oxfam, nearly two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women, and 153 countries still have discriminatory laws against them in economic matters. These gender inequalities have a negative impact on the lives of women entrepreneurs. The economic and social environment in which they operate is fraught with barriers, discrimination and violence. According to one of our recent studies, the main challenge that women entrepreneurs face at the start of their projects is a lack of consideration, and over 42.5% of them have experienced violence related to their entrepreneurial activities. These barriers are deeply entrenched in our societies. They come from both public and private institutions that are supposed to promote and ensure equal access to resources and entrepreneurship. However, they still act on the assumption that women are the only actors in their empowerment efforts, without taking into account

**Women's participation in the labor market in 2022 is expected to remain below pre-pandemic levels in 169 countries and regions.**

## HOW TO RESOLVE IT

Our approach is based on the recognition that unequal access to economic resources and entrepreneurship is part of a continuum of gender-based violence (GBV). Whether institutional, economic, physical, psychological or other, these forms of violence can limit women's access to different opportunities. In this context, Empow'Her initiated a reflection on how to better address GBV within its entrepreneurship support programmes.

As the patriarchal system is inherently systemic, raising awareness and creating change among all actors within this ecosystem has become a crucial condition to ensure transformation across the sector. That's why our support programmes are committed to not confining women (and men) to certain sectors or professions, or to imposing a dominant entrepreneurial culture that discourages many women from embarking on this journey.

We run several projects aimed at changing the context in which women entrepreneurs operate. We engage in pedagogical engineering to design new methods and content for support programmes that take gender into account and offer new ways of approaching entrepreneurship. We also support organizations to change their perspectives and attitudes by providing training on strategies and tools that address structural gender biases and inequalities. We raise awareness within communities to change mindsets and representations of women in the ecosystem, fostering a more equitable entrepreneurial culture. Gender equality is everyone's business and together we can make a difference.

## Development of a toolkit for Enabel

This project is in line with our aim to change the attitudes and perspectives of institutions so that they integrate a broader view of women's economic empowerment into their programmes.

After conducting diagnostics to identify the priority needs of support structures and gaining a better understanding of the specific needs of women entrepreneurs in different contexts, we developed a tailor-made toolkit and supported Enabel's teams to implement it in their different offices.

Building inclusive decision-making processes, designing gender strategies throughout a programme, creating and nurturing a supportive women's community, and positively influencing ecosystem actors - these are the challenges that Enabel's teams can now find advice and guidance on.



## The FOWOSE Project

The FOWOSE project, run in partnership with Pulse, aims to address the lack of inclusivity in entrepreneurship, particularly social entrepreneurship, by directly influencing organizations that support women. By helping these structures to be more responsive to women's needs and providing training to those who support them on a daily basis, Empow'Her is building a foundation for the future and increasing its impact on the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Ultimately, all the entrepreneurs supported by these structures will benefit from the work done.

In concrete terms, Empow'Her acts as a pedagogical partner, producing tools, training content and support pathways to enable ecosystem actors to better address gender biases in their operations and the specific needs that women entrepreneurs may face.

Three main axes will be highlighted:

- **Training and equipping trainers with gender awareness to deconstruct their own biases.**
- **Selection processes and the design of support pathways to overcome selection bias and attract more women.**
- **Community engagement and the involvement of entrepreneurs within these communities.**

Through this support, the three partner organizations - Women on Top (Greece), Reach for Change (Bulgaria) and Synthesis (Cyprus) - will be sensitized to gender issues and then disseminate these best practices to the entrepreneurs they train and their partners.

**“ The Women's Entrepreneurship Toolbox developed by Empow'Her for Enabel is an innovative and practical tool for our partner countries. The gender expertise of the Empow'Her teams and their willingness to share it with Enabel has been highly valued throughout the project. Empow'Her has clearly understood the context in which we work and the needs of our colleagues in the partner countries in relation to their respective business ecosystems. ”**

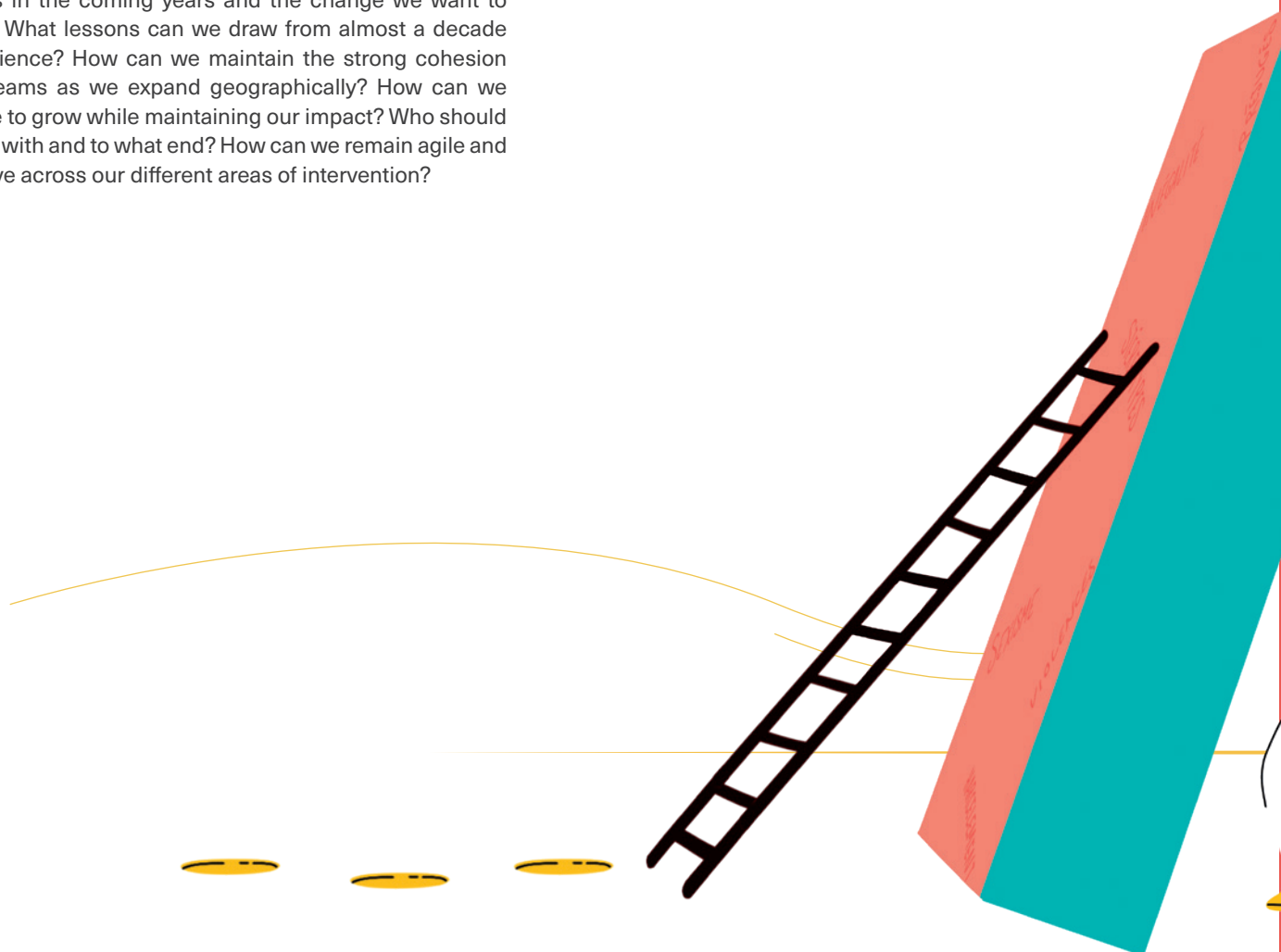
**Cyril LIANCE,**  
Private Sector Development &  
Engagement Specialist, ENABEL

# At the crossroads...

**In 2022, we have significantly accelerated our work and raised important questions about our organization, our strategy, our partners and our areas of intervention.**

These reflections have led us to think deeply about our activities in the coming years and the change we want to achieve. What lessons can we draw from almost a decade of experience? How can we maintain the strong cohesion of our teams as we expand geographically? How can we continue to grow while maintaining our impact? Who should we work with and to what end? How can we remain agile and innovative across our different areas of intervention?

The quest for meaningful impact is at the heart of all these concerns and underlines the deep commitment of our organization. Empow'Her, whose DNA is rooted in empowering women entrepreneurs, finds its purpose and methods of action by engaging in initiatives that can tangibly shift the balance for women. Every day we feel the need to do more and better. We have realized that all the obstacles women face in their entrepreneurial journey are interconnected. We have also seen that this issue goes beyond the individual and is part of a broader system.



02

# Is there **another way?**





## Our questions

Beyond this shared understanding, there was a desire to go deeper. We felt the need to connect all the elements, to revisit our journey, to examine the opportunities we have seized, the successes and failures we have encountered, and our motivations and frustrations. We gave ourselves the time to explore the underlying mechanisms of our intuitions and ultimately questioned the impact we really wanted to have.

At Empow'Her, each of us observed that women entrepreneurs are underrepresented in the business sector and face unequal access to opportunities. This situation hinders their ability to change the world and fully exercise their rights. Each of us has become aware of this reality in our respective missions and contexts.

We could not begin this thinking process with only the impact of our activities in mind. We also had to consider our strengths and aspirations as a team. Empow'Her is primarily

made up of women and men who work together to promote the economic and social empowerment of women and their ability to take action. It includes projects that are close to our hearts. It includes women with whom we have shared challenges and successes. It represents expertise to be shared and the ambition to make a difference. To do this, we asked ourselves three questions:

What are the issues that stimulate and engage us as a team?  
 What have we learned from our ten years of supporting entrepreneurs in Africa, Europe and around the world?  
 Where do we really add value?



## 03

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED  
FROM OUR TEN YEARS  
OF SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURS  
IN AFRICA, EUROPE  
AND AROUND THE WORLD?



## Our observations

Despite their courage in overcoming the obstacles in their path, women cannot single-handedly change social attitudes.

Forcing them to bear the burden of changing a system of which they are victims absolves the sexist laws, institutions and societies responsible for maintaining the status quo. Worse still, this situation forces women to bear the burden of a system from which they are excluded in decision-making processes. They are then faced with the challenge of adapting and integrating into a system that by its very nature rejects them. As a result, they unwittingly perpetuate this state of affairs and become unwitting accomplices in their own exclusion.

This problem ranges from the individual level, where women experience violence, to a system that perpetuates inequalities. From economic inequalities to feelings of isolation, from social pressures... The diversity and multiplicity of gender-based

discrimination and violence, coupled with the accumulation of other systems of oppression, requires an intersectional and holistic approach. On the one hand, this means recognizing the diversity of women's profiles and the existence of different forms of inequality, without trying to impose a one-size-fits-all solution. On the other hand, a successful approach must consider a wide range of issues and attempt to act on several fronts simultaneously, in a necessarily non-linear way. This approach makes it possible to address a maximum number of challenges, while adapting to the specificities of each context and promoting a shift towards equality.

Finally, empowerment efforts, especially economic empowerment, cannot ignore work on attitudes and social and cultural norms, both at the individual and collective levels. This is crucial not only for the sustainability of the empowerment process, but also for the soundness of the foundation of equality that institutions must ensure.

# Our strengths

As pioneers in the development of gender and entrepreneurship methodologies, our strengths today lie both in the diversity and expertise of the profiles within our teams and in our 10 years of experience in the field, working with numerous groups of women entrepreneurs.

## Our global and multi-disciplinary impact

Empow'Her operates at the intersection of several ecosystems, which we seek to bring together in order to promote a paradigm shift in society. We facilitate dialogue and collaboration between diverse stakeholders in feminism, international cooperation and entrepreneurship.

We are a creative force. Our mindset is impact-driven and solution-oriented. We enjoy creating, innovating, proposing new approaches and embarking on new projects that allow us to continually explore.

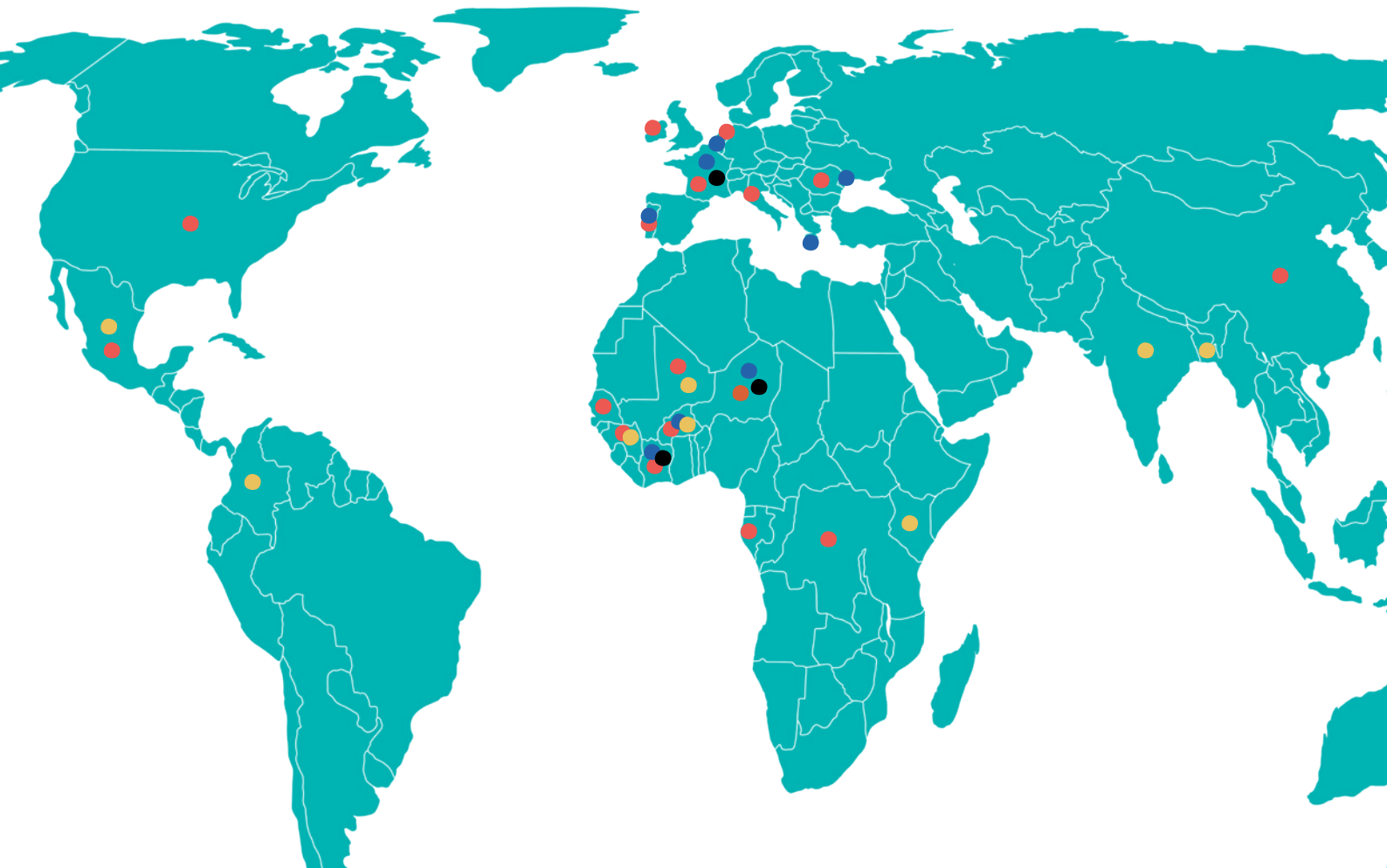
We address the needs of a wide range of women entrepreneurs and have the ability to adapt our educational tools according to the context and target audiences.

Our worldwide outreach allows us to establish relationships with a diverse group of stakeholders and offer a global perspective on the issues we address, while also providing contextualized solutions.

Crucially, we value ongoing education, drawing knowledge from our internal teams and external collaborators, adopting an impact-driven philosophy, continuously testing our pedagogies through iterations, and more importantly, listening to the women we assist.

### Our expertise

- Here, we support women on their journey as social entrepreneurs.
- Here, women engage in empowerment and support projects.
- Here, we have impact relays, where we assist civil society organizations in replicating our impact.
- Here, we conduct awareness-raising and advocacy actions.



# Our desires

During our transition, we were inspired by the thoughts and motivations that drive our team, which consists of members located in various countries and cities, and is truly diverse with a mosaic of locations, cultures, and genders. This diversity brings a multitude of expertise and experiences, creating a dynamic Empow'Her galaxy. Each team member is committed to Empow'Her's mission, and enriches our organization with their strengths and individual motivations. As we enter a new decade, our shared desires align with four key priorities.

- Firstly, we aim to enhance our impact by extending our geographical reach, while also prioritizing deeper engagement with our current women beneficiaries.
- Additionally, we are committed to facilitating the growth of like-minded organizations via the Empow'Her ecosystem.

- We place great value on fostering strong connections among women and with a wider network of allies.
- Furthermore, we take pride in enhancing women's voices, questioning established systems of representation and challenging prevailing narratives.



*"We must have a clear collective goal for our team and work together towards it. It's imperative that we identify our team's identity and communicate it concisely. Our mutual passion, voluntary spirit, and enterprising attitude bind us together. We're all resolute in our ambition to progress cohesively towards a society that's fairer, more sustainable and inclusive for all genders. We recognise the need to develop a distinctive vision that is both bright and adaptable to local challenge."*

**Aviva Markowicz,**  
Chief Operating Officer of Empow'Her

# 72

As of December 2022, Empow'Her employs a workforce of 72 individuals.



# Our vision for the future: **working for feminist entrepreneurship**

On the eve of its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Empow'Her is asserting and repositioning itself around the notion of feminist entrepreneurship.

After almost ten years of supporting women entrepreneurs on the ground, we have the conviction that the individual level is not enough to trigger change. We now want to tackle the systemic obstacles that hinder women's ability to act.

We believe another way of doing business is possible. We want to open up dialogue around feminist entrepreneurship, conceived both as a societal offer and as an acknowledgement of the various paths women can take in their entrepreneurial endeavors. We want these women to have the opportunity to gain autonomy and become the driving force behind a societal paradigm shift towards a more sustainable, equitable and feminist society.

Empow'Her is committed to taking corrective action on all the inequalities faced by women, while challenging the system that perpetuates these inequalities. We bring a gender perspective to all levels of the economic sector. Our aim is to promote impactful entrepreneurship that is both supportive and protective, valuing life experience and learning.

**We are focusing on three strategic areas:**

## 01

Making entrepreneurship a genuine path to integration and empowerment for all women

## 02

Redirecting entrepreneurship's potential towards a feminist agenda

## 03

Transforming our economies and societies through a gender-transformative approach



03

# A new **way**





# Theory of Change



Our new theory of change revolves around the notion of feminist entrepreneurship, understood as the characterization of activities that 1- are accessible to anyone regardless of their gender, 2- contribute to the readjustment of power relations and the strengthening of women and gender minorities' power, particularly economic 3- do not create or reinforce gender inequalities, but contribute to reducing them, and 4- are part of a paradigm that takes full account of the social, societal and ecological challenges of our time.

Drawing on the lessons we've learned over the past 10 years, we're determined to apply this new vision to the individual, community and societal levels - a sine qua non for maximizing and sustaining our impact.

More than ever, we continue to support women on their entrepreneurial journey, because we are convinced that entrepreneurship is a genuine path to integration and empowerment. We choose to simultaneously support activities and strategies that contribute directly to building more egalitarian communities and a more inclusive society.



## COMMUNITIES : Côte d'Ivoire-Niger-Burkina Faso



In Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger, women are particularly hard hit by economic inequalities: they are more represented in the informal sector, more excluded from access to land or have more difficulty generating profits. That is why Empow'Her has set up Communities, a 3-year holistic program designed to support women entrepreneurs while strengthening the ecosystems in which they evolve. As such, it is possible to create favorable and virtuous entrepreneurial environments.

### In practice, we aim to :

- support women entrepreneurs directly in their projects
- help them build or strengthen mutual aid and support communities
- and, lastly, to tackle the economic integration ecosystem as a whole, which creates barriers to entry and prevents women from exercising their rights.

By working on these three levels (individual, community and societal), we hope to enable women to participate in an ecosystem that is more inclusive and a vector of sustainable economic empowerment.





## A new horizon

More than all the explanations and case studies, nothing will help you understand us better than a little exercise in foresight. Here is a vision of the world in 2030 as Empow'Her sees it.

The date 2030 is not chosen randomly. It projects us a decade into the future, like a mirror to the 10 years we have just spent. Above all, it is the date set by the international community for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2015, the United Nations adopted this global call to action to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all human beings live in peace and prosperity. Among these goals, the United Nations wants to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Our experience shows us that there is still a long way to go, and by setting its objectives on this timetable, Empow'Her subscribes to this egalitarian and ecological vision of the world and wants to contribute to it in its own way.

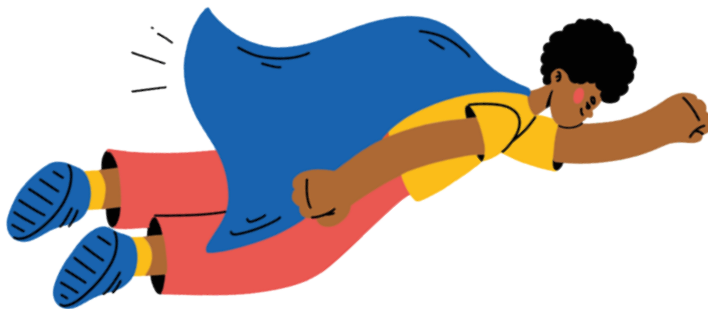
In 2030, women will have the same opportunities as men for economic emancipation, they will no longer be financially dependent on their spouses and will be able to decide freely and completely on their own future. The projects in which women are involved contribute to building a fairer, more sustainable and more inclusive world. They help each other and promote a new way of working and collaborating, favoring dialogue over competition, and societal and environmental impact over growth. They are influential and inspiring, and generate vocations among other women as well as men. The players in the entrepreneurial and economic ecosystems are aware of the increased obstacles faced by women in their path to emancipation, and have put in place corrective actions while transforming themselves towards greater inclusion. They are no longer afraid to call themselves feminists.

## Our means of action

To achieve the change we want to see, we're going to carry out new projects, work on new approaches, and open up new levels of intervention.

We have already identified a number of key areas which we consider to be of prime importance, and on which we have already begun to work in 2022.

We have neither the ambition nor the pretension of trying to carry out these projects on our own. We know that, despite the goodwill and know-how of our teams, Empow'Her will not be enough, and that the success of our approach will depend on collaboration. So we will be forging alliances, spreading our expertise to other ecosystems, and doing our utmost to replicate our impact by supporting other organizations committed to feminist entrepreneurship. To achieve the world we aspire to, we are convinced that collaboration will be the key.



- ✓ Favoring a **gender-transformative approach** in building and selecting the projects we wish to get involved in
- ✓ Emphasizing our **«systemic» approach** through long-term projects that enable us to reach several stakeholders and address several levels of impact at once
- ✓ **Engaging men** in our projects through a socio-behavioral approach that aims for sustainable social change and the creation of an empowering environment for women.
- ✓ **Systematizing the application of strong and rigorous impact measurement methodologies**
- ✓ Continuing to **adapt our actions** according to the contexts in which we operate



### The Men's School

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, we set up a program aimed at women participants' husbands, with the aim of fostering role models within communities. This was a pilot program for us, enabling us to consolidate our methodological approach and our training modules aimed at men. It enabled us to open a dialogue on the issues of gender equality, and the links with entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.



### Village theater

In **Burkina Faso**, we set up a village theater to raise community awareness of gender inequalities. We drew on the tradition of storytelling readings and mobilized local cultural associations and traditional chiefs to reinforce our approach and reach as many people as possible. We organized several theatrical and storytelling events during the day and evening in several towns in Burkina Faso.

# Our new shared governance

A theory of change is more than just a declaration of intent; it is also the operational expression of an organization, method and governance. Over the past year, we have worked a lot on reshaping our organization to be in line with the new theory of change and the impact we aim to achieve.

This process is in line with Empow'Her's strong dynamic of growth, and we see it as a healthy way to adapt at a crucial moment in our growth. We are thus moving from a phase of extensive growth to a convergence phase, from an opportunistic approach to a chosen one. From 2023 onwards, this evolution will be reflected in the expansion of Empow'Her's governance structure and the renewal of its operating methods.

Inspired by the principles of collective intelligence and holacracy, our governance system, which already includes a General Assembly, a Board of Directors and Executive Committee, will be enhanced by the introduction of «strategic committees», spaces for monitoring, reflection and study, focusing on the implementation of Empow'Her's global strategy for a specific theme or geographical area. In order to better connect the governing bodies with the teams in the field - and in particular the Board of Directors, which makes the main strategic choices - these committees will be made up of both members of the Board of Directors and employees from the various local teams. These new bodies will enable Empow'Her to gain in organizational efficiency, while facilitating the establishment of a more participative framework. In all, 5 strategic committees will be created: Africa, Europe, Impact and Gender, Advocacy and Reputation and Risk.

## Focus on ...



**The «Risk» strategic Committee** will be responsible for monitoring financial and extra-financial risks, as well as managing alerts concerning Empow'Her's existing body of rules, charters and policies.



**The «Impact & Gender» strategic committee** will act as a watchdog for the organization's impact approach. It will contribute to strategic thinking, will monitor progress on the 2030 plan, reflect on and give an external point of view on impact measurement analyses, and of the links with the external ecosystem.



**The «Advocacy & Reputation» strategic committee** will be responsible for defining campaigns and overseeing the partnership strategy and overseeing the «Advocacy & Reputation» strategic committee.

**This development is accompanied by other changes, notably the establishment of composition criteria for the Board of Directors to ensure diversity and representativeness within the governance of Empow'Her. It also comes with a reorganization of the salaried teams.**

These numerous efforts are aimed at strengthening our coherence and our strength to act. To maintain strong entrepreneurial skills to understand the mechanisms at work, innovate and support women, while strengthening our expertise and multiplying our impact. To continue to grow while controlling the growth of our organization.

# 2023 Perspectives

As part of our trajectory towards 2030, we will be launching new projects in previously unexplored territories with new themes in 2023.



## The publication of a study on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Entrepreneurship

Currently, there is a shortage of literature on the effect of gender-based violence (GBV) on entrepreneurial journeys and on how entrepreneurship can aid in defying GBV. In 2023, Empow'Her will initiate a study and research project to expand our understanding and data pertaining to this subject. This new research venture within Empow'Her is motivated by the desire to contribute to the wider discussion on this relatively unknown topic.

The objective is to substantiate findings through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, to integrate gender-based violence issues within our projects and partnerships, and disseminate the results widely among target audiences and partners. This comprehensive work will also provide new resources to Empow'Her teams and refine their understanding of observed gender-based violence mechanisms on the ground.



## A new multi-year project focusing on Eastern Europe

Empow'Her has announced a new multi-year project launching in 2023 focused on Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the wider Eastern European region.

Empow'Her is already engaged in collaboration with other NGOs in Europe. The project will include the establishment of a certified Sist'Her safe space in Sarajevo and the development of a network approach to strengthen feminist alliances at the regional level.

Drawing on its experiences in Africa and Western Europe, Empow'Her will share its expertise in entrepreneurship support, training over 1000 entrepreneurs. The project also involves significant efforts to capitalize and disseminate knowledge to other civil society organizations in Eastern Europe, as well as promoting awareness and advocacy to change the narrative in favor of gender equality.



## New Methodological Endeavours.

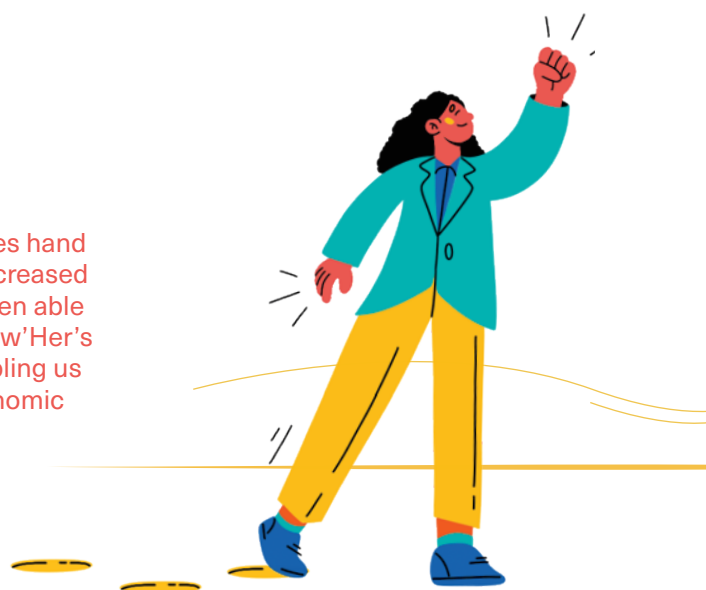
A new multi-year project focusing on Eastern Europe will reinforce various areas including improving the literacy levels of women in 2023. This will be done through the Egalité 2.0 project in partnership with the Ministry of National Education and Literacy in Côte d'Ivoire. Beneficiaries will receive literacy training and a literacy kit. Empow'Her will oversee this initiative to ensure alignment with existing pedagogy.

In parallel, a mobile day care service will be trialed from 2023 to tackle attendance challenges and support women in the project to fully concentrate on their training sessions.

The acceleration of our activities and the COVID pandemic have presented new opportunities for digitalization. 2023 sees the launch of the digital scheme project in collaboration with the Share IT association, aimed at aiding Empow'Her in managing data and the digitisation of entrepreneurial communities.

# Financial report

The strategic and operational development of Empow'Her goes hand in hand with the development of its finances. Thanks to the increased support of a growing number of financial partners we have been able to intensify our action and increase our impact. In 2022, Empow'Her's accounts will break even and even show a slight surplus, enabling us to strengthen our equity capital and thus consolidate our economic situation.



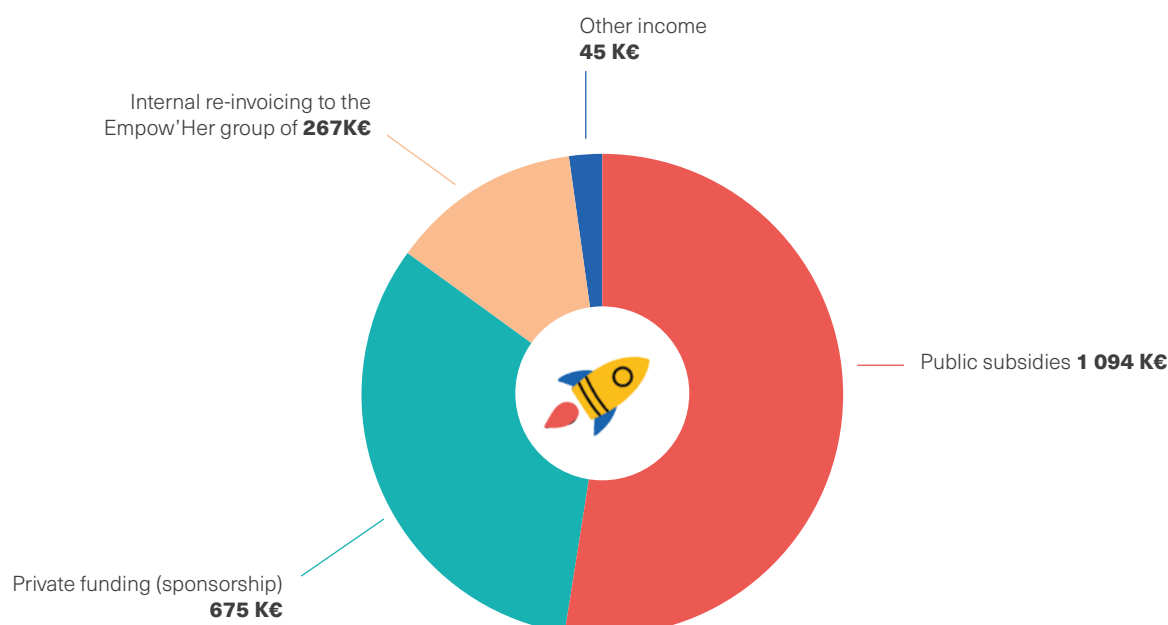
## Our resources

Operating income in 2022 will be 2774K€ , compared with 1955K€ in 2021 (pro forma accounts), an increase of +42%, reflecting the growth in projects supported by EHG. This amount includes 1,491K€ of dedicated funds still to be committed at 31/12/2021 (dedicated funds correspond to the difference between the amounts contracted during the financial years and the progress of the programmes during the following financial years). Of this amount, 621K€ remains to be committed at 31/12/2022.

In 2022, our 4 biggest financial supporters will be the Agence Française de Développement, the European Social Fund, the PIC and the Cargill Foundation, which together will account for 33% of our resources in 2022.

In terms of geographical distribution, 46% of our resources were targeted at projects in West Africa, and 38% in Europe, particularly France. It should be noted that 12% corresponded to cross sectional support.

A change in the accounting method was made this year, concerning multi-year resources acquired from 2022 onwards. From 1 January 2022, and only for new grants acquired during the year, we record the unused portion of multi-year grants in the current year as deferred income. In 2022, 2657K€ was recorded as deferred income in Empow'Her's balance sheet (whereas the dedicated funds carried forward were recorded as expenses in the income statement). This amount corresponds to the portion of multi-year grants contracted in 2022 but not used by 31/12/2022. This change is intended to make our financial statements easier to read.



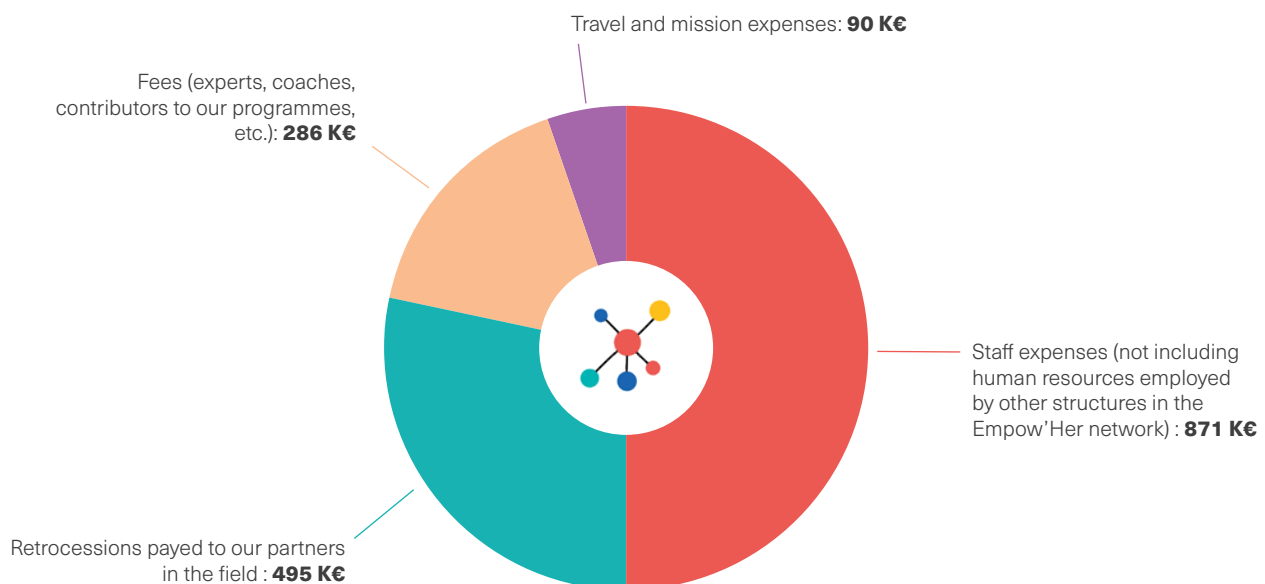
## Jobs

Operating expenses for 2022 totalled €2.698k. 1,956k in 2021 (up 38% on 2021, in line with the development of new projects and the recruitment of new staff).

It should be noted that 2% of expenses correspond to communication costs, 5% to office costs and 8% to miscellaneous operating costs (including fundraising), reflecting a reasonable and controlled level of structural costs.

Empow'Her has finished to reimburse the deferred URSSAF and pension charges it benefited from in 2020 and 2021 during the Covid-19 health crisis.

### Expenditure breaks down as follows



## Human resources

Expenditure on human resources increased by 166K€ (+ 23%) compared with the previous year, due in particular to:

- ✓ a review of the wage grid to bring it more into line with the associative ecosystem
- ✓ the recruitment of support functions in line with the group's growth (communication, anance, etc.)
- ✓ a larger workforce in order to successfully complete projects

## Valuation contributions volunteers

The association has received an estimated 144K€ in voluntary contributions in 2022, including volunteer hours, skills sponsorship from law firms and support experts, and free use of the Cité Fertile for the Empow'Her Festival.

**This compares with 89K€ in 2021 and 73K€ in 2020.**



## They work with us for a more feminist society

From the outset, Empow'Her has worked with dozens of private and public partners to carry out its programs and projects, and to work towards a more inclusive, sustainable and feminist society.

Strategic, educational, operational or financial, public or private, in Africa, Europe or elsewhere, we are surrounded by an ecosystem of supporters who enable us to carry out our mission.



## Notes

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