

Self-help groups: How to empower rural women and make financial services accessible to them

Mali

June 2023



Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| AFD | French Development Agency |
| APMF | Association pour la Promotion de la Microfinance |
| CAMIDE | Centre d'Appui à la Microfinance et au Développement |
| CIDR | International Center for Development and Research |
| CRP | Community Resource Persons |
| CVECA | Self-managed village savings and credit cooperatives |
| FSP | Financial Service Providers |
| GYD | Yeredeme Group (Self-Help Group in Bambara) |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| MFI | Microfinance Institution |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| PASECA | Support program for self-managed savings and credit systems |
| SHG | Self Help Group |
| SCBF | The Swiss Capacity Building Fund |
| VO | Village Organization |

Executive summary (1)



Yeredeme Group (GYD), which means "self-help groups" (SHG) in Bambara, is an innovative methodology for rural women's empowerment based on self-management and peer-learning activities. Its implementation was possible thanks to a technical partnership between an Indian NGO, the Manjari Foundation, and the Malian NGO, CAMIDE. The model integrates livelihood activities development, financial intermediation, women's empowerment, and community development.

With the Yeredeme methodology, more than 2,500 women from 19 villages in the Logo municipality in Mali have been organized into 189 SHGs. These women were granted microcredits regularly in the SHGs. In addition, they also benefited from larger refinancing loans disbursed by Benso Jamanu, the financial branch of CAMIDE.

SCBF, the Swiss Capacity Building Facility, is an organization that provides technical assistance to financial services providers to help them build the expertise needed to develop client-centric financial products. With the support of SCBF, Benso et CAMIDE have extended the Yeredeme methodology within two additional rural municipalities (Sero Diamanou and Liberte Dembaya).

The goal is to reach 5,000 women (households) with the Yeredeme groups methodology by creating the following grassroots women's institutions: 320 SHGs in 40 village organizations and two federations. As Yeredeme groups are rooted in self-management, peer-learning activities will focus on building the capacity of women whose role will be to support the setup, management, and development of 60 CRPs (community resource persons), 320 Sebennikela (group accounting secretaries) and 40 control officers.

The SCBF commissioned this study to understand the Yeredeme methodology's effects on clients.

The project highlights the approach used to enable women to access credit and develop income-generating activities that contribute to their empowerment and give them access to microcredit; the challenges women face in accessing these services, including cultural, social, and economic barriers; and examples of results achieved and testimonials on women's financial and economic inclusion.

The project shows the economic and social advantages of including women in financial services. Women can manage their own money, start and grow businesses, invest in their children's well-being and education, and contribute significantly to household expenses when they can access financial services, especially loans.

Executive summary (2)

KPIs Achievements

- **5,270** women gained access to microcredit (for amounts under FCFA 10,000 - USD 17) via village organizations.
- **3,393** women were refinanced by Benso Jamanu (68% of women who accessed microcredits through their SHGs).
- **355** women's groups (10 to 15 women per group) have been created, enabling women to take out microcredits
- **30** Village Organizations have been created.
- **2** federations of Village Organizations have been set up.

Livelihood activities creation

Apart from the KPIs achievements, other results were noticeable:

- Creation of 20 chicken coops.
- Creation of 4 vegetable gardens.
- Field plowing for 152 women.
- Vegetable production training for 180 women.
- Access to quality seeds for 3,393 women.
- Construction of 1 onion storage facility.

Key Lessons learned

- Rural women in groups tend to be more organized and committed than male clients to repaying loans thanks to their conservative ways of taking risks and involvement.
- One of the best ways to access women for MFIs is to interact with them in community groups. But these groups need to be very well organized. Creating support and mentoring networks for women entrepreneurs can help them access credit more easily.
- The Yeredeme group model increases women's access to loans. Women's share of Benso Jamanu's loan portfolio has risen from 20% before the project to 39% today.
- Livelihood activities can be very risky due to the dependence on the climate. Coaching aspects should include risk diversification.
- According to the Yeredeme methodology, all members must take loans to improve their skills and confidence in managing credit and aiming for higher amounts. The loans granted should be monitored to avoid defaults in repayment.
- Women should have some background and basic skills in their chosen sector to succeed in livelihood activities. This is the essential condition to support their success.

Executive summary (3)



Challenges

All the stakeholders experienced challenges, such as CAMIDE, Benso, and the women members of SHGs. The main challenges reported were:

At Benso & CAMIDE's level:

- Limited financial resources to cope with the increasing demand for loans.
- Technical issues due to the age of equipment and manual processes.
- Difficulties in convincing women in some areas to join SHGs.

At SHGs members' level:

- Chicken diseases.
- Expensive sanitary products for poultry.
- High food prices on the market and market access difficulties for farmers and breeders.
- Difficult access to quality seeds during wintering, agricultural equipment, arable lands, and water during dry seasons.

At the methodology implementation level:

- The difficulty for some SHGs to meet weekly.
- Some women refuse to take out loans.
- Difficulty in finding Sebennikela in some villages.
- Leadership disputes.



Recommendations

- It is mandatory for each member of the SHGs to take a loan in the SHGs. However, not all women need the loan when they must take it, and that usually leads to the misuse of the funds. CAMIDE should define a process to determine the level of loan need in SHGs and how to follow up to make sure that members are really using them to acquire the experience needed.
- CAMIDE could define a follow-up plan and digitize the process of gathering information either on the impact of the loans or the growth of the initiatives in SHGs, VOs, and federations. That will also facilitate communication with partners seeking to understand the outcomes of such projects.
- CAMIDE should encourage women to develop various types of businesses, and not only what has already been done in the group. That will also help them minimize the risks on specific activities such as breeding or agriculture.
- CAMIDE could plan on advertising the YDGs to reach out to more people and increase the mobilization capacity of women in combination with the CRPs' actions.
- CAMIDE and Benso could integrate the follow-up of loans granted to have more data on the impact of the loans and reduce the likelihood of default.
- Benso's experience has shown that women tend to be less defaulters than men. However, it would be more beneficial for them to systematize the analysis of sex-disaggregated data to help them adjust their offer for women even for other areas and groups different from YDGs, and thus, improve women's access to financial services.
- Women face serious challenges to secure productive land or appropriate agricultural equipment. CAMIDE must develop or look for more mechanisms and solutions to support women in distress. This applies also to availing good seeds and easing access to the market.
- Benso and CAMIDE could digitalize their processes to optimize the interactions they have with the SHGs and increase their performance in serving rural customers.

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Introduction

Reducing poverty with access to financial services for women was the aim of the project

Many societies worldwide still struggle with gender inequality and discrimination, especially in financial inclusion. To tackle this issue and help reduce poverty, the Indian NGO Manjari and the local NGO CAMIDE created the Yeredeme Methodology. This approach was first applied in the Logo municipality in the Kayes region, Mali, where it achieved great results with the support of CAMIDE and Benso.

SCBF joined forces with CAMIDE to spread the Yeredeme Methodology to other areas in the Kayes region, specifically Sero Diamanou and Liberté Dembaya municipalities. The project focused on improving women's access to financial services, economic and social inclusion, and empowerment.

MSC, an international consulting firm specializing in financial, economic, and social inclusion, was commissioned by SCBF to understand the effects of the Yeredeme methodology on populations.

SCBF - Swiss Capacity Building Facility

SCBF is an innovative public-private platform that enhances inclusive finance for low-income clients in emerging contexts, especially women, smallholder farmers, and MSMEs. SCBF helps financial service providers access the expertise required to develop, tailor and scale up innovative solutions that address these populations' challenges. To achieve that goal, SCBF provides technical assistance to FSP so that they can access the expertise needed to develop customer-centric financial products. This project on the Yeredeme methodology scale-up was funded to participate in improving Malian women's lives through access to finance and the development of livelihood activities.

CAMIDE and Benso - Implementation Partners

CAMIDE - is a Malian NGO based in Kayes (Western Mali). Officially registered in 2002, CAMIDE was founded following the implementation of the PASECA program, a microfinance initiative started in 1998.

CAMIDE has merged with the PASECA OSK (Ouelessebougou-Siby-Kangaba) to create an NGO (Camide Développement) and a microfinance network called Benso Jamanu, which serves more than 80,000 rural clients in 125 villages. CAMIDE has invested in the development of a methodology for women's economic empowerment that works locally and could be scaled up to the entire Benso Jamanu network and the country.

The Yeredeme methodology

Self-sufficient model of organizations built on six pillars and used to financially include and empower rural women in Mali. It relies on peer help, self-development, and financial improvement of members

Expansion through replication by peers

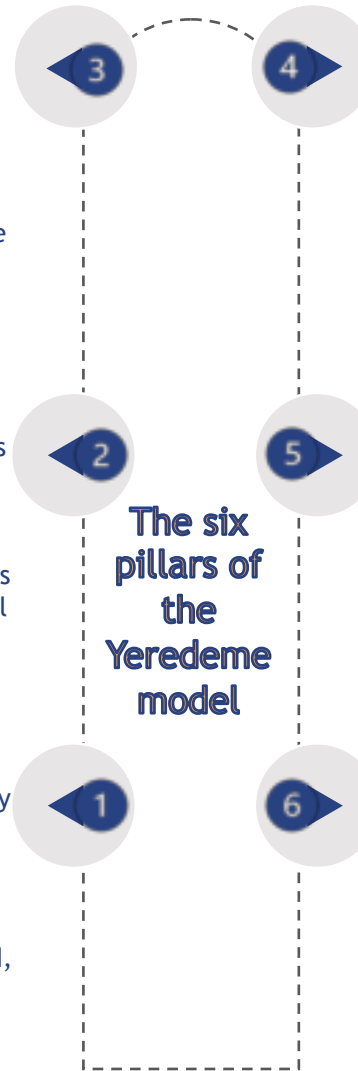
The growth of Yeredeme groups is stimulated by peer-led internal replication. The Yeredeme project is implemented village by village. When most villages in a community can participate, the effort culminates from SHGs to VOs to creating a Federation. The Federation then deploys women in a new community to facilitate the creation of SHGs and VOs.

Bottom-up organizational structure

With the Yeredeme methodology, organizations are built from scratch by women themselves. CAMIDE assists women in creating and managing their SHGs. After six months, when SHGs have shown their capacity to manage themselves, CAMIDE gathers some of the members of the same village but part of different SHGs to form the second level of the structure, the Village Organization (VO). Then VOs of a municipality are gathered through a Federation. Only the Federation becomes a formal organization with VOs as its operational subdivisions. This considerably reduces legal and administrative formalities while limiting the risk of power control by a small group of women since the Federation leadership is open to all the SHGs members and not only to women leaders in VOs.

Self-managed groups

The group's purpose is based on the real wants and needs of the members so that they can fully benefit from the group from the outset. The model is firmly rooted in the economic interests of its members. Microcredits provided to members are the first practical tool to build and enhance women's capacity for self-management. Each group has a maximum of 15 members in livelihood activities. In each group, members put together their savings and later reallocate them as micro-credits to those in need, to help them sustain and develop their livelihood activities. This allows women to control how their money is used and encourages them to learn and acquire financial and risk management skills to make sound decisions.



Peer learning and Peer role modeling

The Yeredeme group model adopts a peer-learning and role-modeling methodology quite unique in Mali, explaining its ability to inspire and teach rural women to lead and manage their organizations and livelihood activities. Peer learning and modeling methodology reinforce self-management.

Financial linkages

The Yeredeme model creates links between the MFI and VOs. Once a member has been borrowing money from the SHG, they can apply for microloans at the MFI Benso through their VOs. VOs obtain financing from Benso Jamanu, CAMIDE's microfinance service partner. A percentage of the total interest a member pays goes to the Federation, the VO, and the SHG involved. The interest retained provides a sustainable source of income to each organization level (SHG, VO, and Federation).

Livelihoods activities

The Yeredeme group model helps rural women improve the productivity and profitability of subsistence farming activities rooted in local tradition through controlled experiments and rapid prototyping. Women try new techniques, known as "experimental," alongside traditional methods, known as "control", such as using organic versus chemical fertilizers for growing onions. Women collect data and analyze the results of both groups, comparing them. Rapid prototyping is ubiquitous in the Yeredeme model to establish a continuous process of improvement centered on women's wishes and needs. Women test the design, collect data, analyze the results, make modifications, and test again. Controlled experiments and prototype testing strengthen women's critical thinking, encourage transparency and collaboration, and challenge them to make evidence-based decisions. CAMIDE structures livelihood activities alongside the formation of SHGs.

Why a study on the Yeredeme methodology?

The Yeredeme methodology has proven to be a powerful tool for empowering women and reducing poverty through easy access to financial services in Mali, especially in the Logo municipality. The success of the expansion will not only increase financial inclusion in the targeted areas but also confirm the methodology as an effective tool for economic, social, and financial inclusion that can be utilized in other regions of the country

How efficient is the Yeredeme methodology in facilitating access to credit to women and empowering them to positively impact their lives?

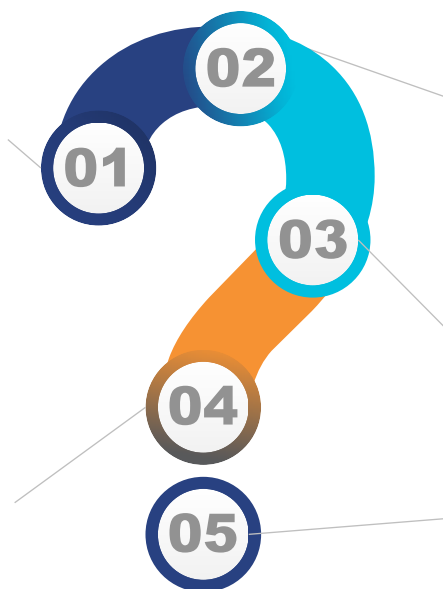
This research question was sustained by other intermediary questions that helped us address the following:

Problem and Yeredeme methodology

- What was the problem that they were seeking to solve or address?
- Was the MFI able to design discounted-rated loans? Why or why not?
- What was implemented, who benefited from it, and how well did the projects go?

Challenges

- Which considerations influenced and shaped the behavior toward loans received? Was it easy to renew the loans? What were the main challenges encountered?



Outcome and impact

- Which difference of impact was noticeable among the targets? What were the outcomes of the project? Were the targets met? Why (success factors) or why not (reasons for falling behind KPIs)?

Targets satisfaction

- How accessible were the information and the process for the targets? What was/is the perception of the clients regarding those loans?

Lessons learned

- What stood out during the project?
- What worked well? What did not? Why?

To achieve this task, MSC used qualitative research, including:

- Five focus discussion groups for a total of 44 rural women, including 65% in their place of work and 35% at CAMIDE's office.
- Four women key informant interviews in breeding and agriculture.
- Two focus discussion groups including ten people from CAMIDE and Benso's managerial staff.

This study is based on qualitative research and, thus, is a non-statistical approach. So, the above sample helps to gain a deeper understanding of the Yeredeme methodology, to explore and understand the experiences and perspectives of the stakeholders of this project.

The foundation of the Yeredeme methodology

A few institutions and the PASECA program supported the groups now known as Yeredeme groups from the beginning.

PASECA

PASECA was an innovative programme meant to support women's organizations in Mali, particularly in the Kayes area, through self-managed savings and credit groups (CVECA), and was piloted by CAMIDE from 1998 to 2002.

The PASECA.OSK, developed in the OSK zone (Ouelessebougou-Siby-Kangaba), was piloted by the APMF.OSK from 2003 to 2010. The PASECA and PASECA.OSK programs were financed by the French Development Agency (AFD). The BNDA (Banque Nationale de Développement Agricole) was the first contractor to strengthen and promote the CVECA.

The two entities merged to create Benso Jamanun to continue their financial support mission. CAMIDE kept its development activities through CAMIDE Development, closely work with Benso Jamanun.

Aliniha

Aliniha is a group support program created in 2008 following an agreement between the NGO CAMIDE in the Kayes region in Mali, a partner NGO in Tambakounda in Senegal specializing in environmental protection, and an NGO partner in Burkina Faso in charge of the social development.

The program's mission was to grant credit to women and provide support for their development with a guarantee of protecting the environment.

The program ended in 2016.

NGO Manjari

Manjari is an Indian livelihoods NGO established by PRADAN, a national NGO renowned for promoting self-help groups (SHG), in 2015 to support a network of self-help groups in Eastern Rajasthan, India.

Manjari's unique selling proposition (USP) involved livelihood development in the SHG model, successfully scaled in India.

The replication was led by the SHG members, a major competitive advantage to technical support models that rely on external expertise.

Virtue Ventures

Virtue Ventures is an international development technical assistance social enterprise that uses innovation, entrepreneurship, business tools, and sound management practices to empower social-sector organizations to solve pressing social problems.

Virtue Ventures has been working with CAMIDE since 2009 to build its capacity and support its efforts to find an appropriate women's empowerment model for Mali.

They help with the translation of CAMIDE's documents from English to French and the training of some agents.

The Marie & Alain Philippson Foundation (FMAP)

The FMAP is a Belgian Family Foundation that builds partnerships with African organizations led by Social Entrepreneurs to empower women, young people, and children to become actors for sustainable human development in their villages and regions throughout their country.

The FMAP has supported and founded CAMIDE's projects and other women's empowerment initiatives in West Africa since 2009.

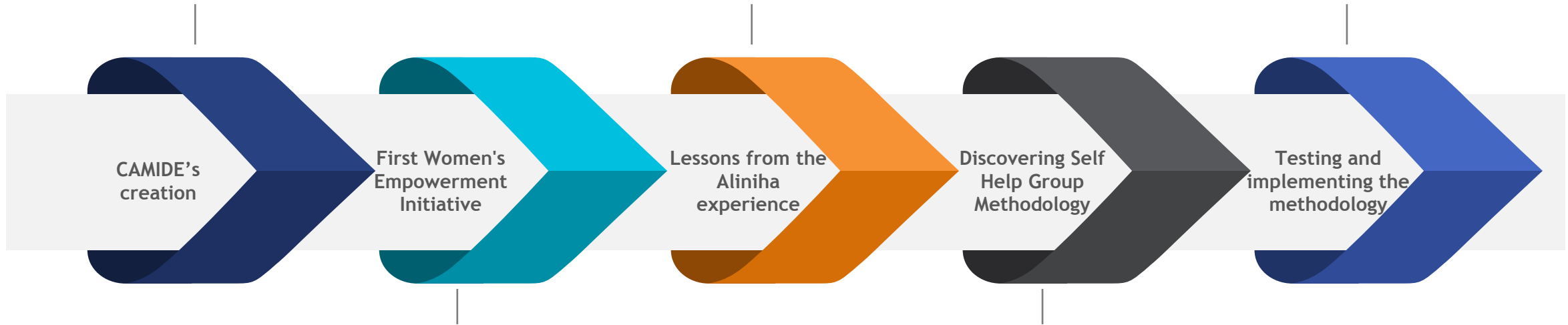
The genesis of the Yeredeme methodology

The Yeredeme methodology was first implemented in 2017 in Mali by CAMIDE with the help of Manjari.

In 1998, the AFD launched the PASECA program in Kayes (CAMIDE) and the program PASECA.OSK in 2003 (APMF) with the aim to help rural women to access loans and improve their living conditions by developing sustainable income-generating activities and collective organization.

Lessons learned from the Aliniha model revealed the importance of self-management for organizations' autonomy and women's empowerment. Self-management was also essential for scaling up, as working in rural areas was difficult and expensive.

The visit to India was successful, so the NGO Manjari sent their team to Mali to assist CAMIDE in experimenting with the SHG methodology in the rural area of Logo in 2017. They modified the Indian women's SHG model to fit the Malian context and applied a powerful methodology of peer learning and peer role modeling, now called the **Yeredeme Group methodology**.

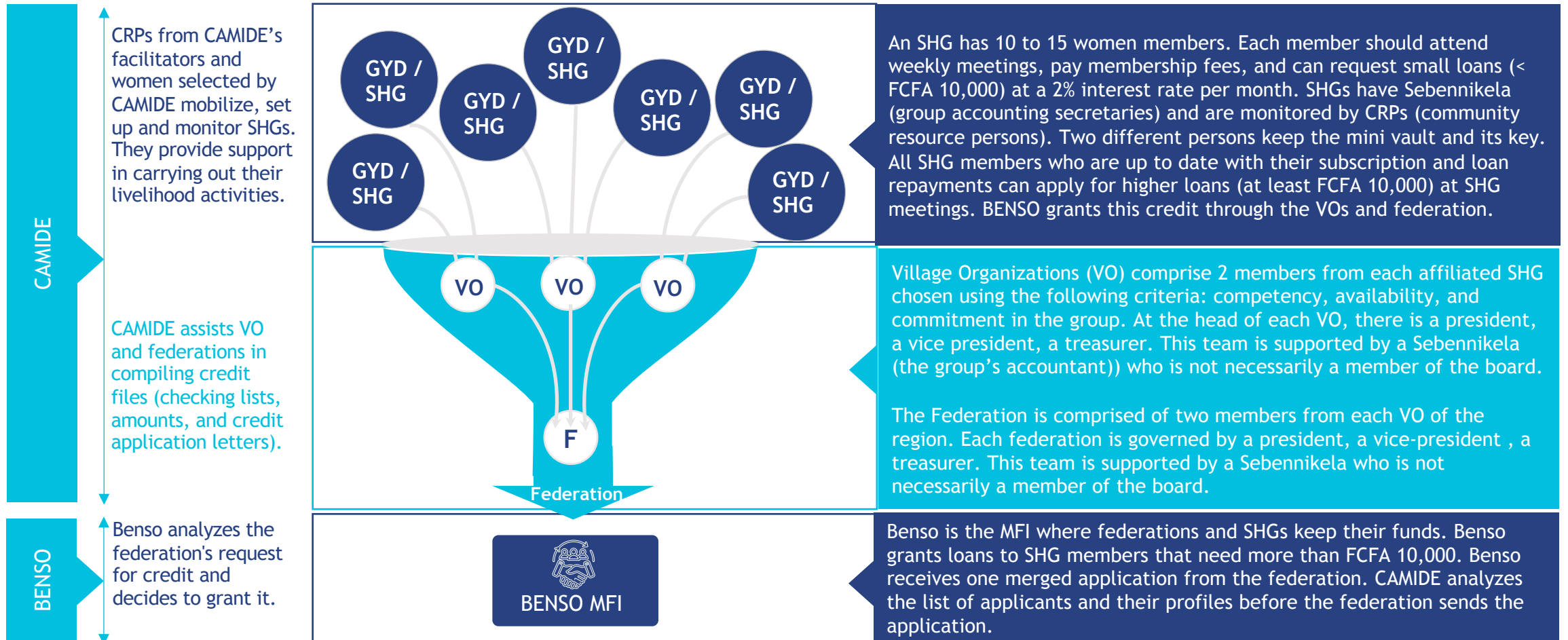


- CAMIDE started collaborating with two other NGOs in West Africa (Senegal and Burkina Faso) in 2009, with the support of the Foundation Marie et Alain Philippon and Virtue Ventures. They created the Aliniha Network (2009-2016). This methodology empowered women through a group model combining the strengths of its partners and addressing socio-economic and environmental challenges in the three countries.

- In 2012, CAMIDE and the APMF merged and led to the creation of two new institutions: the NGO CAMIDE, which focus on women's development activities, and CAMIDE microfinance now known as MFI Benso Jamanu.
- Following lessons learned from the Aliniha model, CAMIDE and its partners Virtue Ventures and Liens ASBL visited India in 2016 to learn from examples of women's empowerment and rural economic development organizations. There, they met the Manjari Foundation and learned about India's peer-led self-help group methodology and how it could be integrated with livelihood development.

How does the Yeredeme methodology work?

The model adopts a wholly unique peer-learning and role-modeling methodology in Mali, validating its ability to inspire and teach rural women to lead and manage their organizations and livelihood activities. The model engages rural women to improve the productivity and profitability of agricultural livelihood activities rooted in local tradition through controlled experiments and rapid prototyping. The key levels of interventions to support women in rural areas are as follows:



Source: SCBF

Yeredeme key stakeholder: CAMIDE, the development partner



As of May 31, 2023

SNAPSHOT PROFILE

Created in 2002 and financially sustainable in 2005

Provides Technical support to:

- GYDs (Groupe Yeredeme) in Mali and Senegal, Migrant organizations, Village associations (women, youth, market gardeners), and Local Communities.

Types of interventions

- Support GYDs, VOs, and Federations in the creation and institutional strengthening of sustainable and environmentally friendly businesses
- Support the creation of the integrated development of local initiatives
- Support the promotion of initiatives by migrants and their local partners (village associations, youth organizations, and local authorities).

Key figures

- Federations: 3 (Logo 1 - Sero 1 et Liberte 1)
- VOs: 56 (Sero 23 - Liberte 7 - Logo 19 - Sikasso 7)
- SHGs: 771

The NGO CAMIDE is the key financial inclusion stakeholder as it helps organize the groups

The process of supporting Yeredeme groups

CAMIDE's ambassadors or CRPs promote the YDGs in new places. The actions of CRPs involve the following:

- 1- **Village General Assembly:** A meeting where the methodology is explained to the population and the experience of women already in the system is shared.
- 2- **Household census:** An activity conducted to provide information on the number of households in the village, considering each married woman constituting a household.
- 3- **Village mapping:** Mapping the village's dwellings and resources to provide a socio-economic reference.
- 4- **Training women on various topics:** Training sessions on the importance of being in a GYD, benefits of being empowered women, leadership, and setting up profitable businesses.
- 5- **Group constitution:** Forming small groups of 10 to 15 women from similar socio-economic backgrounds who come together around a common interest and hold regular meetings to meet their basic financial needs through savings and credit activities. Membership criteria are: (1) Being a businesswoman, (2) Not having a conflictual relationship in the group (i.e., women married to the same husband can not be part of the same SHG).
- 6- **Sebennikela (Secretary-accountant) training:** Some women receive training after forming groups to help them record meetings. They get follow-up, supervision, and refresher sessions from CAMIDE.

Group operating rules for members

- (1) Participation in the weekly meetings
- (2) Membership dues payment

(3) Request for a loan in the SHG

(4) Non-default repayment of the loan obtained

(5) Keeping group accounts in order

How Yeredeme groups work (GYD)

- Each group holds a weekly meeting to discuss the members' concerns.
- A membership fee is charged depending on members' capacity. New groups start with a fee of FCFA 100 and grant women small loans. These credits are used to carry out income-generating activities.

Yeredeme key stakeholder: Benso, the financial enabler

As of May 31, 2023



SNAPSHOT PROFILE

Created in 2012 and licensed in 2021

Clients: 80,000 (39% women)

Points of sale: 130 (80 permanently operational)

Branches: 8

Network Areas: Kayes & Koulikoro

Loan products: Individual loans - Group loans - Agribusiness loans - Investment loans

Savings products: Sight deposit (DAV) - Term deposit (DAT) - Savings Plan

Outstanding deposits: FCFA 3.5 billion

Outstanding loans: FCFA 2.5 billion

PAR - 30 days: 18% (<1% for Yeredeme Group loans)



Benso head office: Located in Bamako, Benso's management team includes 1 Director, 1 Operations Manager, 1 Administrative and Financial Manager, and 1 Control Manager (recruitment is underway for the creation of a Legal Department and a Human Resources Department). Within the coverage area, this team manages 1 Branch Manager, 1 Operations Manager, 8 Managers, 15 Account Managers, 23 Cashiers, 15 Fixed Cashiers.

The project areas have few or no competitors for Benso Jamanu. This is mostly because only one MFI had a point of sale in a village in the Sero Diamanou municipality. However, things did not work for them for two reasons: (1) the villagers did not know the staff, so they were not confident in transacting with them, and (2) the repayment was not flexible but at fixed dates. Benso offers the following credit and savings products to its clients.

Credit products

The loan analysis and validation process includes (1) the registration of the application, (2) the collection of additional key information, (3) the financial analysis, (4) the verification of the repayment capacity, and (5) the loan decision. The level of validation depends on the amount requested (< FCFA 500,000, validation at the point of sale, FCFA 500,000 - 1,000,000, validation at the branch, > FCFA 1,000,000, validation at the Head office). There are various types of loans offered:

- Individual loans: Loans granted to individuals include monthly short-term loans between FCFA 25,000 and FCFA 1,500,000, and short-term loans payable at the end of the term between FCFA 5,000 and FCFA 300,000 per member, with an interest rate of 22% for a 12 months term.
- Group loans: Loans granted to groups (women, men, or mixed), generally cooperatives or other forms of professional or rural groups (between FCFA 25,000 and FCFA 200,000 per member) with a maximum term of 6 months. The rate is 18%, except for 12% for SHGs under the Yeredeme methodology. This type of loan requires a joint and several guarantee without any physical collateral.
- Agribusiness loans: Loans granted to producers and processors of agricultural products (from FCFA 50,000 to 1,500,000) with a maximum term of 36 months. The rate varies according to the maturity (22% short term and 15% long and short term)
- Investment loans: Loans granted to entrepreneurs with a 3 to 5 years term and an interest rate of 15%.

Savings products

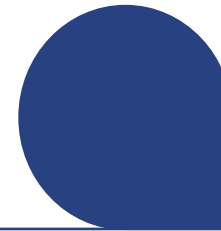
- Sight deposits (DAV): This account allows the customer to deposit and withdraw funds at any time, without restrictions or penalties (minimum amount and balance are FCFA 1,000 and no maximum amount), with an interest rate of 0%.
- Term deposit (DAT): also known as fixed-term deposit, is a savings product in which the customer deposits a sum of money (minimum amount is FCFA 2,500 and no maximum amount) for a pre-determined period (over three months) at a fixed interest rate (between 3 and 5% per annum).
- Saving plan: This is an account on which the customer can deposit over a period (variable frequency between 1 week and 1 month) for a defined duration (from 3 months) with availability on maturity. The interest rate is 2% per year.

What problem was the project solving?

Many women in the Malian rural areas have limited access to effective financial services (the index of gender disparity in market and non-market economic activities is 0.38) and lack the necessary knowledge to use effective financial services and sustainable activities to build a better life.

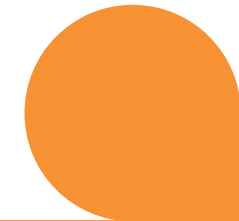


The project mainly addressed the following key issues:



Access to loans

Many factors prevent women from benefiting from loans, such as low levels of education, limited financial awareness, inadequate repayment ability and assets, and no collateral to guarantee their loan applications.



Livelihood activities development

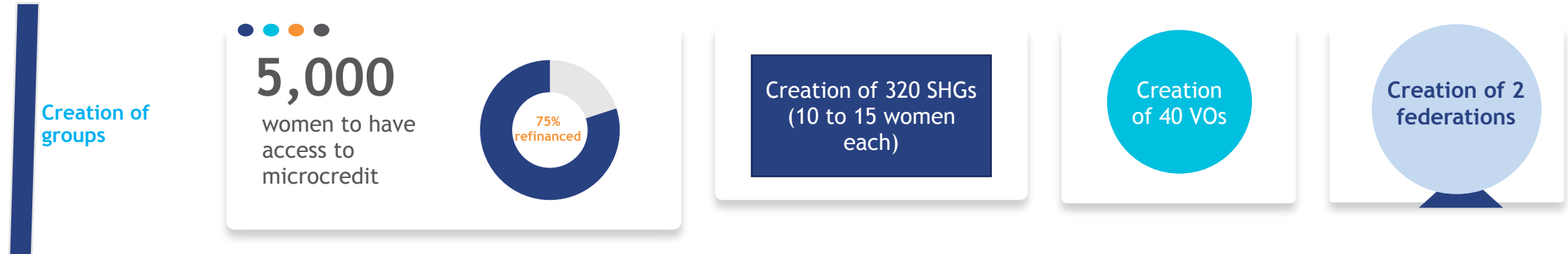
The systemic discrimination of women linked to social norms limits their access to resources and economic participation. They usually have restrained power and decision-making to manage and enhance their finances. Even when they own businesses, they lack the necessary skills that will help them develop their activities.

What was the project goal?

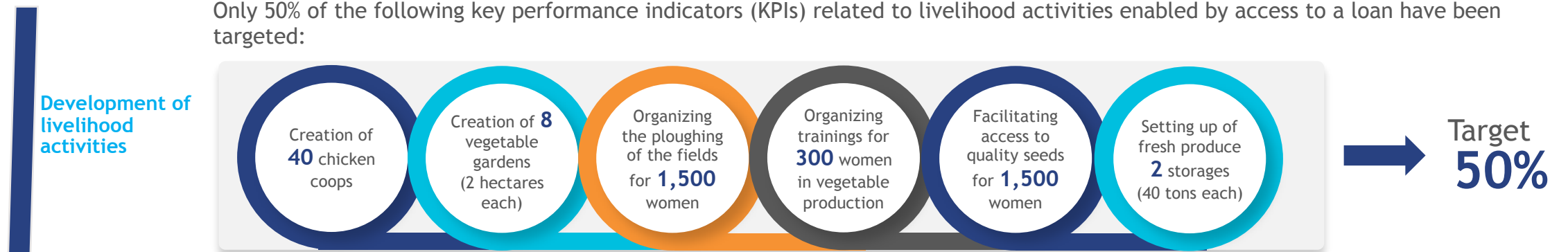
The project aimed at implementing the Yeredeme model in two municipalities to improve access to credit and livelihood activities development for women there

The project aimed to replicate the Yeredeme model in the Kayes region in Mali to help women easily access microloans and learn to use them. The model also integrates livelihood development, financial intermediation, women's empowerment, and community development. It engages rural women to improve the productivity and profitability of agricultural livelihood activities rooted in local tradition through controlled experiments and rapid prototyping.

The project ran for two years from November 2020 and was given two types of targets :

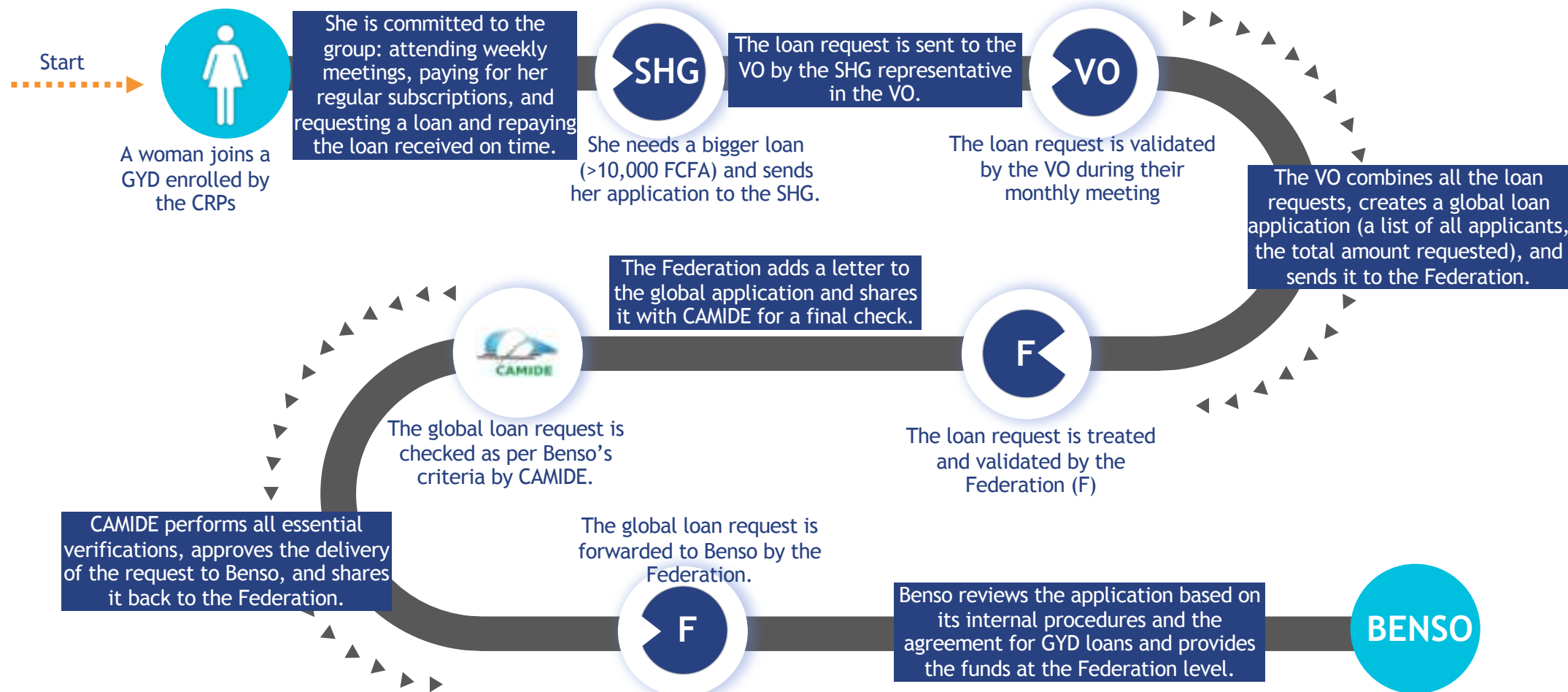


Only 50% of the following key performance indicators (KPIs) related to livelihood activities enabled by access to a loan have been targeted:



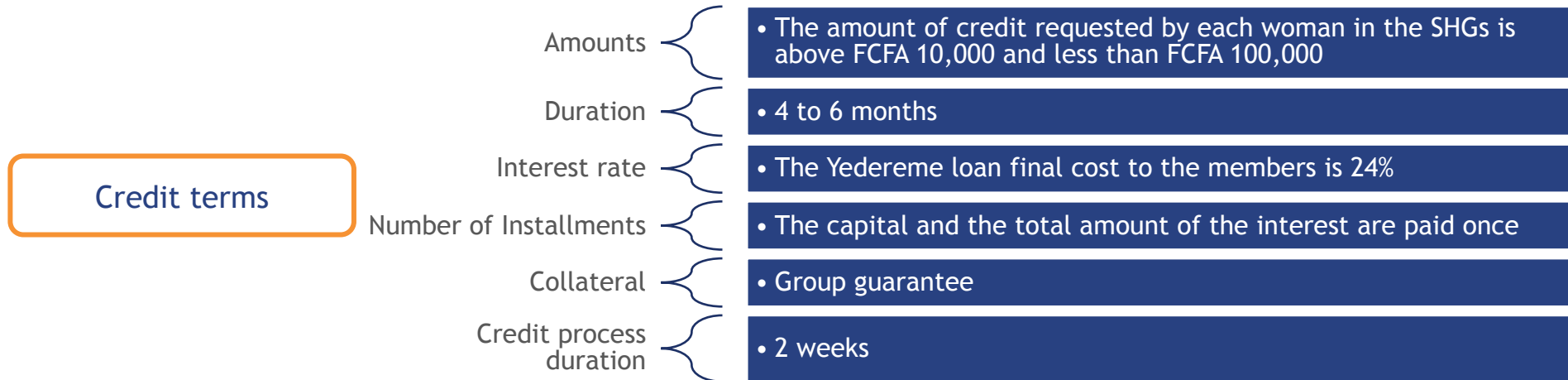
Yeredeme Group (GYD) methodology: The credit request process

The credit process of the Yeredeme methodology consists of bringing women together in small groups and granting them microcredits to teach them how to manage a loan so that they can request higher amounts from the MFI.



Yeredeme Group (GYD) methodology: Credit characteristics

The GYD credits granted by BENSO have specific terms



If a member fails to repay, the VO will cover the reimbursement. Otherwise, the Federation will repay.
 In the case of default in repayment (due from the third month), members who fail to pay back their loans will be denied other loans. Sometimes, it could be extended to the entire SHG.

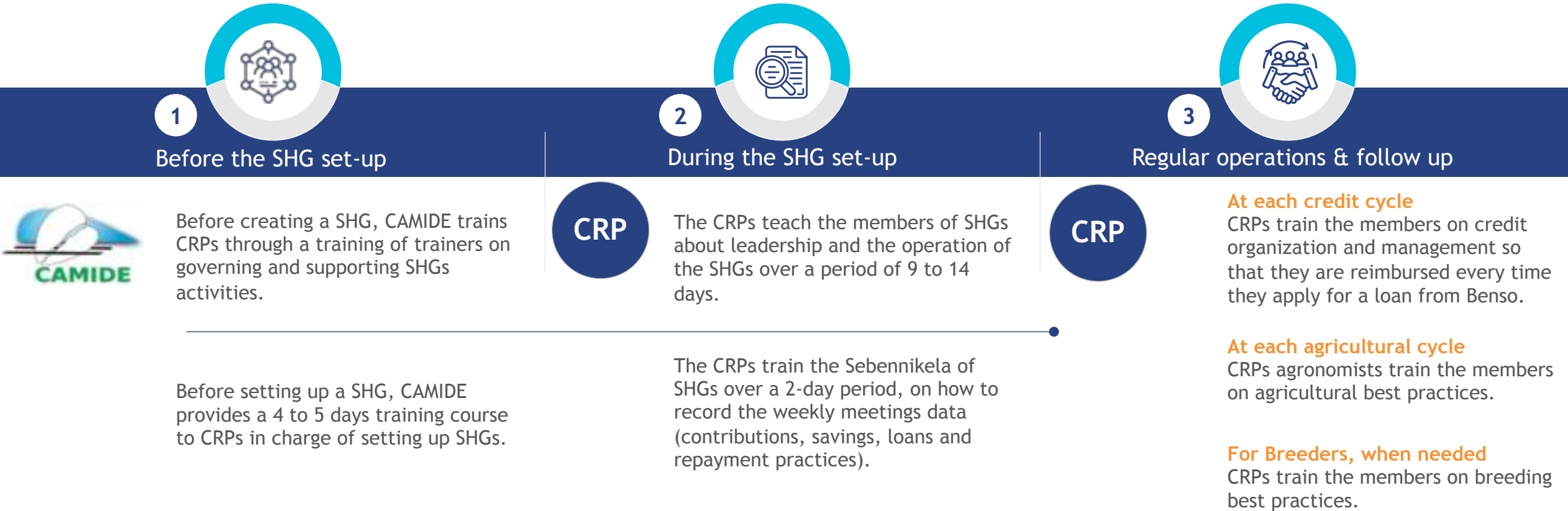


Benso receives the final payment with 12% of the total interest.

Benso lends to the federation at a favorable rate of 12% instead of the usual 18%.

Yeredeme Group (GYD) methodology: Training activities

GYD's training process is based on training of trainers and peer training



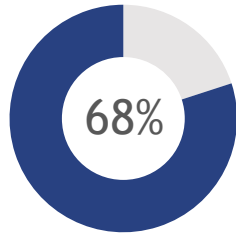
Refreshment training can be provided after a follow-up with a farmer, a breeder, or a Sebennikela.

The main goals of the project were achieved

Developing women's financial inclusion using the Yeredeme group's methodology

5,270

women had access to SHG's microcredits (105% of the target)



Women enrolled received a loan from Benso

3,393 women

members of SHGs could be refinanced by Benso with higher amounts of loans.

A few reasons explain this level of refinancing:

- Lack of higher financial needs
- Unavailability of members during the loan process
- No specific refinancing campaign from Benso or CAMIDE to encourage loan applications for higher amounts

100%

of federations created (Sero Diamanou with 23 VOs and Liberté Dembaya with 7 VOs).

30 VO

Created (75% of the target)

Although more than 5,000 women were reached, CAMIDE could only form 30 VOs due to the location of the members recruited. Indeed, specific geographical criteria are required for the creation of VOs.

355

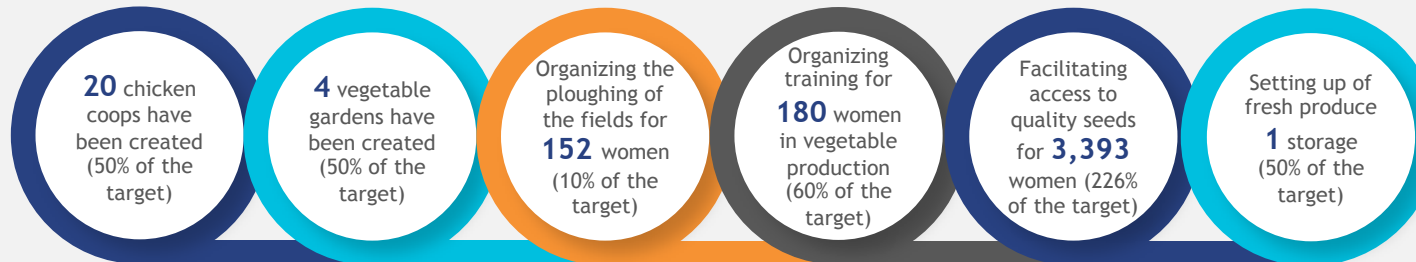
SHG created

SHG gathered a minimum of 10 women each in 34 villages.

+ FCFA 190

million (+USD 315,582) lent to farmers with a PAR <1%

Livelihood activities created



20 chicken coops have been created (50% of the target)

4 vegetable gardens have been created (50% of the target)

Organizing the ploughing of the fields for **152** women (10% of the target)

Organizing training for **180** women in vegetable production (60% of the target)

Facilitating access to quality seeds for **3,393** women (226% of the target)

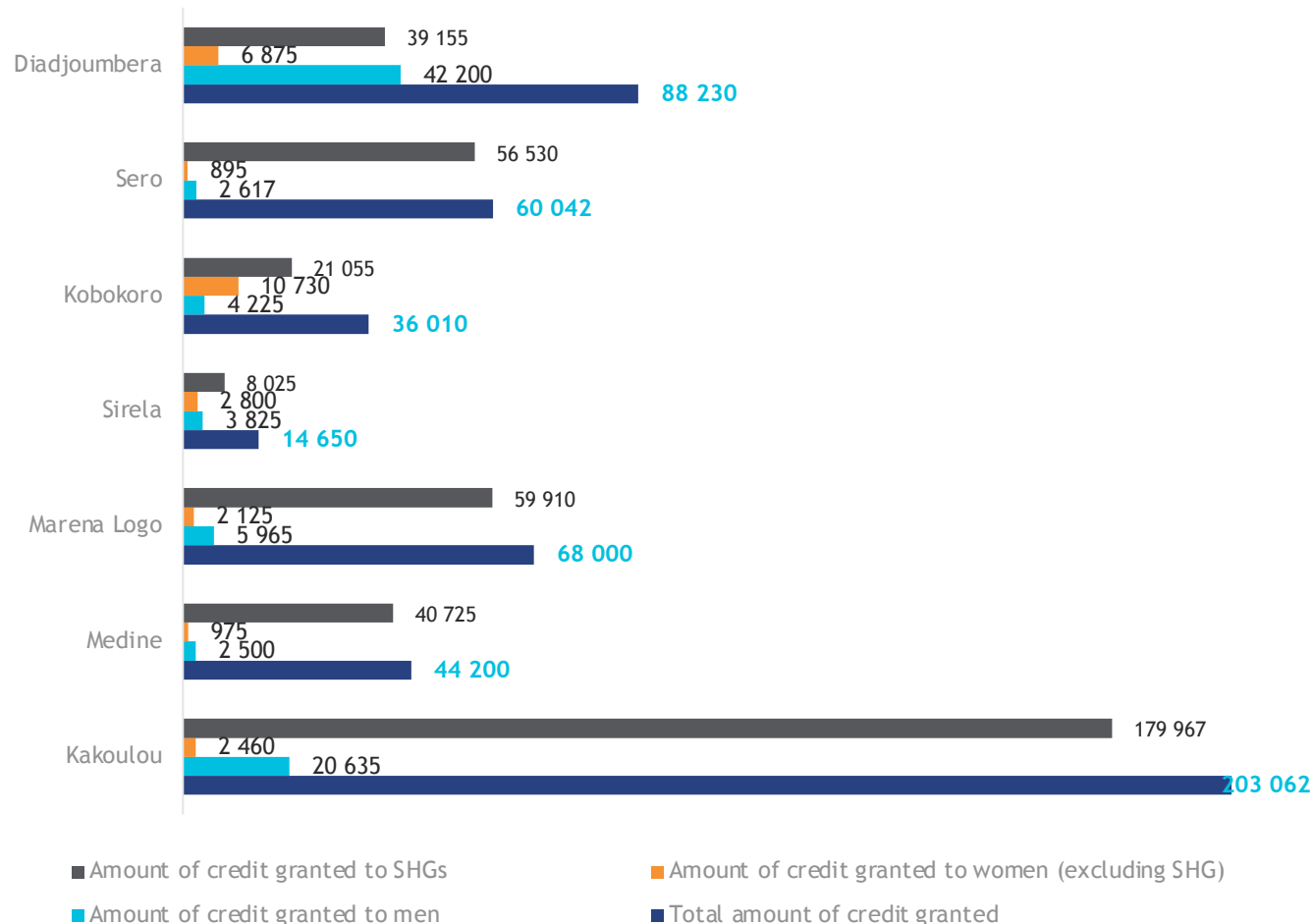
Setting up of fresh produce **1** storage (50% of the target)

In general, the targets related to livelihood activities were met (the objective was to develop at least 50% of the required targets), except for the ploughing of fields. CAMIDE did not have enough equipment (tractors) to accommodate all the needs during the necessary period.

Benso Jamanu was positively impacted by the project

In the targeted areas, loans granted by Benso to SHGs represent 79% of its total portfolio

Loan through Benso's redynamized point of sales in the project areas at the end of the project in 2022 (K of FCFA)



The constitution of SHGs in Sero and Liberté areas helped Benso reopen seven inactive sales points in the region. Benso could reactivate seven points and grant more than FCFA 500 million through them for an average loan of FCFA 120,000.

In these regions, significant growth in women customers was noticeable: 84% of women could receive a loan versus 16% of men only, thanks to the discounted loan interest and the organization around the YDGs.

Benso and CAMIDE developed a win-win partnership as Benso granted a preferential loan interest of 12% to YDGs, and CAMIDE (including the federations, Vos, and SHGs) took care of the evaluation of members' capacity to repay, financial education and monitoring, and even repayment in case of default of a member.

Even though the loan interest has been discounted for the YDGs, Benso benefits from the help of CAMIDE and the Federations throughout the loan process regarding the analysis and the evaluation of the repayment capacities of the clients. So, all the loan requests transmitted to Benso are accepted. CAMIDE and the Federations support loan analysis and loan collection.

The YDG customers in the portfolio help keep the level of the PAR low, too (<1%). In general, Benso has noticed that women are better loan managers than men due to the measured risks they take. Men tend to provide weak collaterals, be involved in risky agricultural activities, or even divert loans for other purposes such as financing trips.

CAMIDE also financially supported the Yeredeme groups

More than FCFA 13 million were invested



CAMIDE financed the rehabilitation of two water dams in the Sero and Sirela areas. The objective was to help the women farmers to have access to water and be able to irrigate their farms during long drought periods:

Sero water dam cost FCFA 3,150,000. It serves the Sero city impacting 54 SHGs and 809 women.

Sirela water dam cost FCFA 1,947,500. It helps 61 women organized in 5 SHGs.

“ SHG support has enabled me to process the peanuts I grow to make soap that I sell. Today, I supply quality soap to the village of Alahina, and I'd like to see SHGs in every village in Mali. Dindin, SHG member



FCFA 1,617,500 was used to install a solar kit to sustain the electric need of the irrigation system in the Sero region.

”



FCFA 1,623,000 was used to build onion storage in the Sero region. Women use this storage to keep their products safe and well-stored while they monitor the market and wait for the right time to sell.

“ The project gave me the skills and training to start a chicken farm. Today, I am proud to say that I am a successful and experienced breeder thanks to the support of the Yeredeme project.

Niagale, SHG member



FCFA 5,400,250 was used to build and equip 20 chicken coops for women in Sero and Liberté regions.

”

The Yeredeme methodology strengthened women

It increased access to credit, improved social inclusion, reduced poverty, and increased entrepreneurship

“ I’m now a person of interest in the village.

Mariam, Sebennikela

”

“ My husband respects me now because I can contribute to the family expenses.

Fatou, a member of SHG

”



Growing self-confidence

The leadership training helped women to increase their public speaking skills. They no longer fear discussions with other people, including partners or sellers.

Better social consideration

Members with CRP roles felt better included in the community and could perceive how much respect they earned because of the support they provided to the other women.

Increase of financial power

With good management of the loans, women could reinvest parts of their benefits and use the rest to support their families in children's care or secondary school needs, purchase quality food, and spend money on their own needs (buying a TV).

Better credit understanding

Women could understand the structure of a loan and the risks that come with it. They even acquired the ability to evaluate their business's financial needs.

Willingness to take business initiatives

Women were not reluctant anymore to build businesses, having seen what loans could help them achieve. So, many took more than three loans.

Peer learning and support

Members share advice, experiences, and best practices in the groups. Above all, they support each other to see everyone's business and life grow. Some make purchases together, discuss and share tips for repaying their loans, etc. The networking quality and social relationships are one of their best wins.

“

Because I always support the other women and encourage them, one member named her kid after me as a recognition as her life has changed since I convinced her to join the group.

Amina, a member of SHG

”

Women appreciate the Yeredeme methodology

Access to loans and support are the main appreciated factors



- The possibility of systematically being eligible for a loan is appreciated, especially because the loan can be for business or other social needs. More than 50% of the loans are for social purposes.
- Women are happy with the 12% interest rate at Benso. Even though they pay 24%, they accept this arrangement because they feel that part of the interest is used to help them, so they still benefit from their money.
- Women value the CRPs' support as they feel their challenges are acknowledged.
- The mutual support and cooperation among women is another aspect women enjoy the most.

Waraba's lifestyle change



Waraba lives with her husband and three children in the small village of Kobokro in the Liberté Dembaya region. She is a loving mother and a devoted wife. She had no activity to help her husband in his daily struggle to provide for their family through a less-than-profitable rickshaw service (less than FCFA 200 per day of earnings).

Unfortunately, their financial situation continued to worsen. The family struggled a lot. However, despite their dire living conditions, the family tried to feed and look after their children. Their eldest son could not bear their situation and ran away three times.

One day, Waraba heard about a social aid project helping and supporting women in her situation. With hope, she participated in the activities suggested by CAMIDE's animators. Her dream was to raise livestock from when she was young, and CAMIDE gave her the needed technical support. That made all the difference.

On the day of the interview, Waraba told us:

“ You see, my son, sitting next to me, has stopped running away and is helping me look after the chickens. Our situation has improved considerably. I earned FCFA 70,000 from the first breeding cycle. It was unbelievable. I never dreamed of making FCFA 70,000. After that, I increased my earnings to FCFA 90,000 in the second cycle, then to FCFA 120,000 in the third, and now I'm in the fourth cycle. Our food is now varied and regular, and we have a better diet.”

Aminata, the financially independent widow



Aminata is a single mother of five in the village of Salabougou and a member of SHG Balimaya in the Liberté Dembaya area. Since her husband's death (who left her with no income), she has been roasting doughnuts to support herself and her children.

She made a daily profit of 100 FCFA from this, which was insufficient for her family's needs. But she had no other choice, so she kept doing this to provide some food. She relied on relatives to help her with her children's needs. She said the heat from selling doughnuts affected her heart, and she gave up hope.

Then one morning, CAMIDE invited her to a village meeting.

“That's the day it all started. I asked myself why not, as I had no other alternatives. Once there, I was convinced by the explanations about the advantages I could have in the Yeredeme project. That's how I joined the Balimaya women's group (we were 12 in the group at that time). We started holding meetings and learning the basics of selling oil, spices, salt, etc. That's how I started taking out microcredits in our group. 2 or 3 months later, I obtained a first loan of FCFA 40,000 from BENSO to strengthen my business and a second of FCFA 50,000 which enabled me to set out premises for my business. My first experience selling doughnuts, combined with the training I received from CAMIDE, enabled me to organize better and repay the loans easily. I saved FCFA 500 every day regularly. After one and a half months, I raised the funds needed for repayment.”

Today, Aminata affirms that besides being financially stable, she is regularly approached by other people in Salabougou who request her help.

Project challenges: Benso's main challenges

Challenges

Limited financial resources

The total amount of credit requested by women continues to rise. In some cases, Benso could not provide the full amount requested due to its financial capacity. As a result, not all women received the full amount requested to carry out their activity.

1

Communication on GYD preferential 12% rate

Other Benso clients complained after learning about the GYD's preferential rate of 12% instead of the usual 18%.

2

Technical issues

Benso faced multiple technical problems, such as the lack of performant IT equipment that kept the process manual and the lack of interconnection of the branches that lengthened the loan process and was time-consuming.

3

Potential risk of over-indebtedness of clients

Some clients, members of SHGs, got multiple loans from Benso at the same time using the GYD and applying individually through branches or points of sales.

4

Solutions

Benso made sure always to provide YDGs loans in priority, and when they had to reduce the amounts requested, they always ensured the new amounts granted were enough to cover the financial need of the projects listed.

Benso only communicated with specific clients who expressed their concerns through special campaigns. It also gave them the required explanations upon request. No other official communication was planned. The clients seemed happy with the answers.

Benso heavily relied on the validation and analysis made by VOs, Federations, and CAMIDE. They also used WhatsApp and emails to hold credit committees.

Benso strengthened the follow-up process and reinforced the communication through CAMIDE.

Project challenges: CAMIDE's main challenges

Difficult follow-up of SHGs weekly activities

Difficulties for CAMIDE in following up SHGs, as CRPs cannot collect all meeting registers in time and forward them to the VOs, which means that data arrive late at CAMIDE (over a month for some VOs).

1

Time-consuming manual process of data consolidation

CAMIDE enters information on SHG activities in an Excel file to build up a database on each member. This is done based on registers filled in on a regular basis, which requires a great deal of time and personal resources.

2

Difficulties to convince women in some areas

For various reasons (social pressure, lack of family or spousal support, and lack of self-confidence), some women do not accept joining SHG during membership canvass.

3

The federation continues raising awareness among CRPs of the importance and implications of these delays.

CAMIDE to increase their workforce and the number of CRPs.

They usually end up being convinced, either by the first set of members or by the initial results regarding the impact on other people's lives.

Clients' challenges: Farming

The clients had to deal with a lot of external factors that affected their businesses

Challenges

Chicken diseases

The persistence of poultry diseases is one of the causes of losses for poultry farmers, in addition to the poor quality of certain products sold in the market.

Expensive sanitary products for poultry

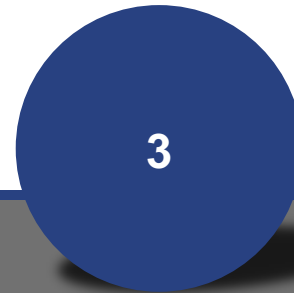
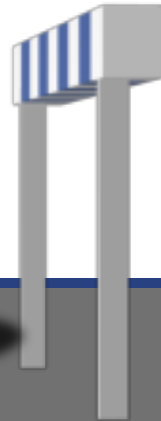
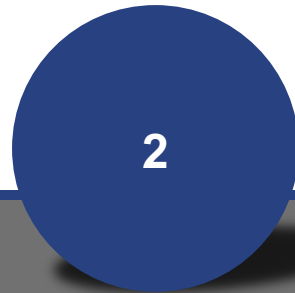
The price of poultry sanitary products is highly unstable and rising steadily.

High food prices on the market

Feed prices have soared, and supplies have dwindled, making some women resort to risky alternatives for their chickens.

Market access difficulties

Difficulties in marketing chickens are persistent and can lead to losses for the entrepreneur.



Solutions

CAMIDE trained clients on disease prevention and assists them in treating their chickens.

CAMIDE shared best practices.

CAMIDE shared advice on setting chicken pricing.

CAMIDE supported women in marketing their chicken, putting them in contact with wholesale buyers.

The Project's challenges for clients: Agriculture

Ongoing discrimination of women against land and equipment

Difficult access to quality seeds during winter

Women hardly access quality seeds during the rainy season. Men are privileged because they have more financial means and lands. Women often face discrimination because of their low buying power.

Difficult access to agricultural equipment

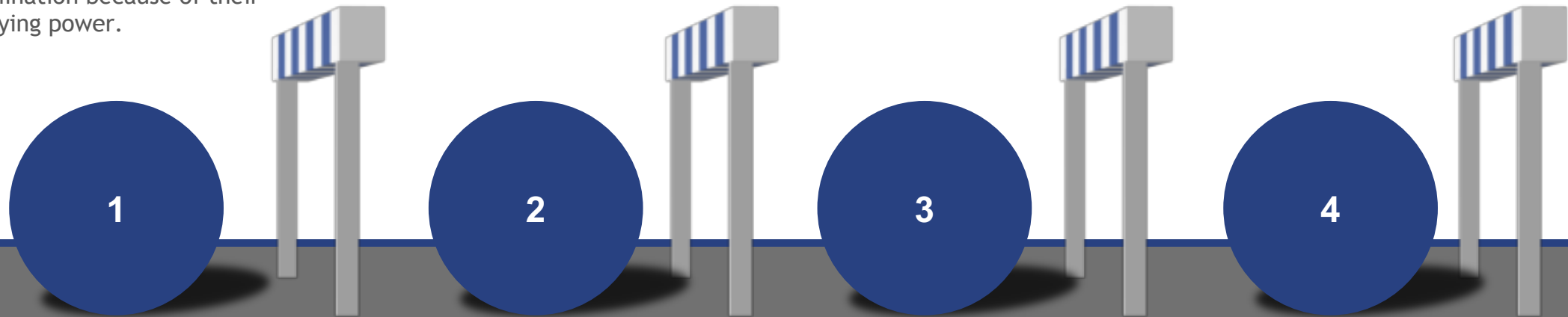
Because women usually don't have enough land, they are not trusted for the equipment rent payment.

Difficult access to arable land

Women lack financial resources and means of production to secure access to land and develop it efficiently.

Difficult access to irrigation water

Access to water remains extremely limited and seriously compromises yields.



CAMIDE could not resolve this issue immediately, but it is still under consideration.

CAMIDE has supported women by providing them with their tractors. They also act as an intermediary to facilitate their transactions when renting.

CAMIDE could not resolve this issue immediately, but it is still under consideration.

CAMIDE has provided support by developing plots of common land and building a dam at Sero Diamano.

The Yeredeme methodology implementation challenges

From the unavailability of the members to the leadership denial 1/2

The difficulty for some SHGs to meet weekly

Some SHG members often missed the meetings because of travel, sickness, or other commitments. This made it hard for the SHG to follow the YDG's principles.

Difficulty to monitor SHGs

All the processes are manual. It becomes increasingly difficult for CAMIDE to follow up in real-time with the activities developed inside SHGs, VOs, and Federations. Controls are lengthy and time-consuming.

Denial of women to take loans in SHGs

Some members resisted taking loans in their SHGs, even though it was mandatory. They had religious, cultural, or personal reasons for not borrowing.

Difficulty to enroll women

Only 90% of women engaged joined the groups. The others were either uninterested or did not feel confident enough to join the groups.

1

2

3

4

CAMIDE arranged awareness campaigns for SHG members on following the operating principles of SHGs. These campaigns helped to overcome this challenge.

CAMIDE tried to increase the number of people involved in control activities. They are also exploring digitized solutions to address the issue.

The CRPs trained the groups on the benefits and credit management and explained that this criterion was a requirement to join the groups.

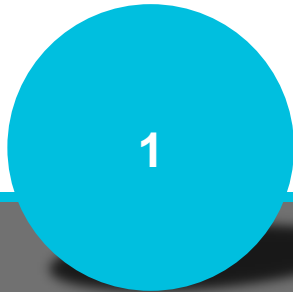
To make sure most of the women in villages participate, CRPs engaged first with other existing women's organizations or village authorities.

The Yeredeme methodology implementation challenges

From unavailability of the members to leadership denial 2/2

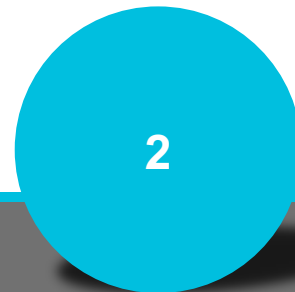
Difficulty to find Sebennikela in some villages

Literate women were scarce in some places because of the region's high illiteracy rate, making it difficult to find potential Sebennikela.



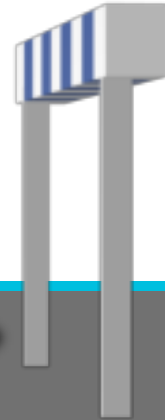
Leadership disputes

Some SHGs resisted the federation's power and guidance because they objected to paying membership fees.



Lack of experience of women in farming and breeding

Women that engage in breeding and farming activities without having experienced them in the past, face more challenges.



Sebennikela of other SHGs in the same village offered to assist the needy groups as a gesture of solidarity. When the whole village of Kandja lacked Sebennikela, CAMIDE hired a man from a nearby village who visited weekly to help the groups. This man got paid.

The presidents of the VOs and the federation visited the SHGs to discuss with them how things should work. This approach resolved the problem.

CAMIDE established that the women should have some prior experience in one of the livelihood activities they chose to receive assistance from the CRPs. They developed a comprehensive framework to support breeders in improving their practices and outcomes. They are also developing more frameworks for other sectors to enhance learning and knowledge sharing.

Lessons learned (1)



One of the best ways to access women for MFIs is to interact with them in community groups. But these groups need to be very well organized. Creating support and mentoring networks for women entrepreneurs can help them access credit more easily. They may as well benefit from the advice and experience of other women who have successfully obtained credit and developed their businesses.



It is essential to make women aware of the credit opportunities available, the benefits, the various credit options, and the risks associated with borrowing. Awareness-raising and training can strengthen women's financial understanding and encourage them to explore credit opportunities. This may involve setting up information centers or counseling offices for women.



Rural Women in groups tend to be more organized and committed than men to repaying loans, thanks to their conservative ways of taking risks and involvement. It could be a good deal for Benso to capitalize on such clients and other financial service providers to target women for a quality credit portfolio. However, credit training is a must, especially for rural women.



SHGs provide a safe place to women to grow their self-confidence and skills in leadership, finance management, decision-making, problem-solving, and best agricultural and breeding practices.



The Yeredeme group model increases women's access to loans. Benso Jamanu has adapted its financial products to meet the needs of SHG members, such as offering larger loans during the high-demand agricultural period and working capital loans for livelihood activities. Women's share of Benso Jamanu's loan portfolio has risen from 20% before the project to 39% today.

Lessons learned (2)



Solidarity and social support: SHGs create a mutually supportive environment where women can share their challenges, experiences, and successes. This develops a feeling of solidarity and friendship, strengthening their resilience when facing challenges and improving their ability to handle community issues.



SHG self-management is an effective approach to women's empowerment and organizational autonomy. The SHG identifies its members' real needs and desires to ensure that they realize economic benefits and group value through group-internal microfinance activities to strengthen women's capacity for self-management.

Education and training for rural women are key and technical skills boosts w factors for their empowerment. Access to quality education omen's self-confidence, expands their employment opportunities, and improves their participation in society.



Equitable access to resources such as land, water, seeds, credit, and agricultural technologies is essential for empowering rural women. Policies and programs that guarantee equal access to these resources have a significant impact on women's ability to improve their livelihoods.



Lessons learned (3)



According to the Yeredeme methodology, all members must take loans to improve their skills and confidence in managing credit and aiming for higher amounts. However, some women misuse the loans because they do not need them for their activities but must follow the rule. CAMIDE and Benso should monitor how the loans are used after they are granted.



To succeed in livelihood activities, women should have some background and basic skills in their chosen sector. This is the essential condition to support their success.

Livelihood activities can be very risky due to the dependence on the climate. CAMIDE should include in its coaching aspects risk diversification, such as mixing the breeding of chicken and goats, for example, as goats tend to be more resistant to drought. That way, women will feel less vulnerable while working to grow their activities.



Benso agreed to work with CAMIDE and the YDGs on a win-win model: Benso had to reduce the loan interest rate, and CAMIDE and the Federations agreed to take care of the analysis and the follow-up of repayment of loans. However, the increasing demand for the YDGs and the urgency for a better framework prompted Benso to think about digitalizing its processes to strengthen its operations.



Key takeaways

1 Designing financial products for rural women is a win-win solution for MFI Benso and its customers. Benso was able to tailor its financial products to meet the needs of SHG members, such as offering larger loans during the high-demand agricultural period and working capital for livelihood activities. In return, the quality of the loan portfolio granted remained at the best level (>1%). This adjustment has also helped Benso to reopen inactive points of sales.

2 SHGs under this project include credit activities, giving their members access to financial services, and encouraging savings habits. Better access to formal financial services helps women to increase their earnings and control over their businesses.

3 The Yeredeme methodology enables women to organize themselves into groups and help each other grow through peer monitoring, financial education and livelihood activities development.



6 SHGs include peer-to-peer training and experience-sharing programs to improve members' skills. Women who have received proper training can repay their loans more easily and feel more confident in future asks.

5 Financial education linked to tangible products, use-cases, and other services is an effective way to help women use financial services.

4 SHGs empower individuals by providing a platform to discuss and solve their problems collectively.



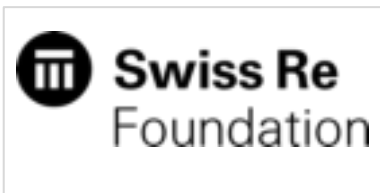
SHG-specific recommendations for moving forward by MSC

| Components | Details |
|--|--|
| Awareness on the methodology | CAMIDE could plan on advertising the YDGs to reach out to more people and increase the mobilization capacity of women in combination with the CRPs' actions. |
| SHGs follow-up | CAMIDE could define a follow-up plan and digitize the process of gathering information on the impact of the loans or the growth of the initiatives in SHGs, VOs, and federations. That will also facilitate communication with partners seeking to understand the outcomes of such projects. |
| SHG requirements | It is mandatory for each member to take a loan in SHGs. However, not all women need the loan when they must take it, which usually leads to the misuse of the funds. CAMIDE should define a process to determine the level of loan need in SHGs and how to follow up to ensure that members use them to acquire the needed experience. |
| Livelihood diversification | CAMIDE should encourage women to develop various types of businesses, not only what has already been done in the group. That will also help them minimize the risks of specific breeding or agriculture activities. |
| Advocate for access to basic infrastructure and services | Advocating with policymakers, government officials, and civil society on the importance of SHGs for women's development to promote access to infrastructure and basic services (such as electricity, drinking water, sanitation, etc.) would enable SHG members to develop their livelihoods further. |
| Increase engagement on infrastructures and market access | Women face serious challenges in securing productive land or appropriate agricultural equipment. CAMIDE must develop or look for more mechanisms and solutions to support women in distress. This also applies to availing good seeds and easing access to the market. |
| Loan monitoring | Integrate the follow-up of loans granted by CAMIDE and Benso to have more data on the impact of the loans and reduce the likelihood of default. |
| Raising Awareness and educating | CAMIDE and partners could launch specific campaigns to raise women's awareness of the existence of credit opportunities and financial education. |
| Liquidity management | Benso could develop specific communications towards SHGs members to encourage them to save more in Benso's points of sale. |
| Sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis | Benso's experience has shown that women tend to be less defaulters than men. However, it would be more beneficial for them to systematize the analysis of sex-disaggregated data to help them adjust their offer for women even for other areas and groups different from YDGs, and, thus, improve women's access to financial services. |
| Digital transformation | Benso and CAMIDE could digitalize their processes to optimize their interactions with the SHGs and increase their performance in serving rural customers (savings collection, loan requests, etc.). |

SCBF's members and partners

SCBF has co-funded projects in 50 countries

Financial inclusion leads to greater economic empowerment and directly impacts many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as gender equality, good health, and climate action. Since the SDGs launched in 2016, SCBF's financial inclusion projects globally have contributed to 12 of the 17 SDGs.

| | | |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Strategic Partners | <p>188 Projects funded</p> | <p>19.8 M CHF Grant funding invested in projects by SCBF and strategic partners</p> |
| | <p>132 Financial sector partners supported</p> | <p>60 Technical assistance providers</p> |
| |  <p>Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra</p> <p>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC</p> |  <p>برنامج الخليج العربي للتنمية - أجيستد</p>  <p>Swiss Re Foundation</p> |

Members



Source: SCBF

